

Interview with Rusty Brown

Date of Birth:

By Len Evans

On 7/7/83

OHC 00-04

One Tape

Code 1S1:000-099 = Tape One, Side One, Counter 000-099

Code 1S2:000-099 = Tape One, Side Two, Counter 000-099

Tape One, Side One

1S1:000-099

RB: There was really no place to go where you could meet gay people. There were one or two gay bars in New York but they were predominantly for men. And when I was very young, I didn't even know what was wrong with me. Ah, they had me to a psychiatrist and for a while, I was beginning to wonder if the psychiatrist, if they were right. Maybe I did need a psychiatrist. I got along fine with the boys in school, but as one of the boys. I felt very embarrassed and uncomfortable when I was with the girls. And I couldn't understand why. I'm supposed to be a girl. How come I can't talk about the things that they talk about, and I'd get very embarrassed and I'd get red in the face. And they'd make fun of me. But with the boys, I didn't have that. I got along fine with them, until I got a little bit older. And then it seemed like I was competing with them. I could outrun them, outfight them, outclimb them. And girls, as they said, wasn't supposed to do that. I said what am I supposed to do if I can run faster, what am I supposed to do? They said then you're supposed to let them win. I said the hell I'm going to let them win. If they can't win on their own, I'm not going to let them. So I got into a little bit of trouble.

But it wasn't until I was about eight going on nine, eight years old and had run away from home a few times. And they sent me to an institution. They called in the SPCC, it was the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children. And it was there I came up against some older girls. And I walked into the room, this first time I got there, I walked into the room, the first thing I heard them say is Hey, we got another dyke. And I turned around and looked at them and I says "I am?" And I didn't, the first time I had a name for it. And I breathed a sigh of relief. I'm not alone, maybe I'm not crazy after all. And that was when I found out who and what I was from the older ones.

But there was no place you could turn to read anything. What was there, *The Well of Loneliness*, *The Unlit Lamp*, and a couple of other books that had been written on that subject. But they weren't, they were both on a, were negative. All four books that [I] read before were on a negative side. So I couldn't really relate to them. At first I wasn't as rich as the woman in the one. I wasn't as stupid as the one in the other one, and I wasn't a male so I didn't apply to the other two. So I was, you know, hanging there until I met these girls in the school, and then that's when I found out who and what I was. And they says you're a dyke and I says "I am?" And they says you like girls, don't you, better than boys? I mean, you know, I says well yes, but I like boys. I said I get along with them fine, I says. They said do

you let them touch you? I said, the hell, I said. I'd break their arm if they tried it. And he says you're a dyke.

LE: You were, you were eight at the time?

RB: I was about eight at the time. And I'd already experimented, because didn't know what I was doing, but I was having a good time.

LE: About when was this?

RB: Ah, in New York.

LE: What time period?

RB: Ah, '30s. By the '40s, I'd had a bit of education, thanks to the girls in the school. Also, I got sent away to another place called the Edwin Gould Foundation, and I was there for about nine months, and then I went to another place they called Five Points House of Industry, and there I got my education. Not quite what they had anticipated, but let's say I graduated *cum laude*. The comical part was that when I left the school in 1939, they had on my record I had homosexual potential. The fact that I had been caught in bed with every girl over the age of twelve, and at least two of the school teachers, I only had the potential. I don't know what they would have called it otherwise. When I came home and my father saw that on my record, I was home about a year. I got home in '39. And he tried to keep me away from my younger sister. He thought I was going to corrupt her or whatever. Then things got bad at home. I ran away again. By this time I was older and they had a bit more trouble finding me this time. But when they did, then they book me to the Florence Crittenden Home and, of course, I met quite a few there, older ones, plus prostitutes, you name it. I could have had a variety of vocations. A couple didn't appeal to me like the madams wanted to put me to work. I said what's that doing? They said you go to bed with men. I said forget it right there, right there, forget it. I said I'll be a pickpocket, I'll do, shop lift I said, but go to bed with a man, that's out. They said well if you get hungry. I said I couldn't get that god damned hungry.

Well, I did do a little pickpocketing and some shop lifting, and I did a little second story work until I almost fell one day off a fifteen-story building. That was the end of that profession. I think there's got to be an easier way to make a living. That was out.

And then the war came along and I went into the service and ah, I really . . . and there was no question of my homosexuality. There was no questions about your sexual preference or anything else. All this didn't come up until about now that they're getting this homophilia (sic).

LE: So you had no problem in the service?

RB: I had no problem. And I met quite a few men and women in the service with me that were gay, but there was never any problem. We had one code of law, never hassle straight people, and don't mess with the people in your own outfit. Those were the two laws that we had. Otherwise, we'd do our own thing. But don't mess with anybody in your own outfit, and don't mess with anybody that's straight. And we kept that a code. I don't ever remember any

problems of a homosexual getting caught and being busted out of the service for it. And I was in the whole time. But after World War II, then a couple of gay women's bars started opening up in New York, but very uptight, very straight. All right, it's a little less now, but still New York is uptight compared to out here. There's no way I could live back there for a number of reasons, not just because of the homosexual uptightness, but the whole atmosphere back there. They couldn't pay me to go back. But that was when a few gay bars . . . up until then, even in the '30s, the only real place where gay men and women were together, and was similar to the, to the Finocchio's here, it was called the Howdy Club. Then they got busted, there was a fight, they got busted. The guy opened up another club exactly the same, and called it the Eighty-Two Club. Well, a year or two went by, that got busted, he opened the Eighty-Five Club. And as far as I know, it's still going in New York. But it's a tourist thing, something like Finocchio's here.

Ah, but I would say the gay places really didn't open up, that is for women anyway, until after World War II. But they were small, they were out of the way, you had to know somebody to even find out where the hell they were. And ah, you had to be on your tippy toes. They didn't want any trouble and ah, it was just the tight, it was just so damned uptight that it was pathetic. You couldn't really enjoy yourself. You couldn't relax and enjoy yourself. They were afraid to have, to have, for us to even put our arms around each other. Dance together? Yes. But to sit at a table and hug and kiss, that was out. Because you never knew when the cops were going to come in. They would just walk in, decide one day they wanted to come on it, and they'd start hassling for one thing or another. Any piddling little thing, nit picky. So ah, it was very uptight.

LE: And this was after the war?

RB: This was after the war. It was after the war before there was any place for a woman to go, a women's bar. And then, as I said, you had to know somebody to know where it was. And then you had to be careful when you went, look around to see that nobody saw you going in, slipping in there.

1S1:100-199

LE: Yeah. Do you remember the names of those bars?

RB: No, I don't, it was so long ago. I don't remember the name of them, but, of course, there are more of them now and it's a bit more open, but not like it is out here. I like the scene out here much better. It's freer. But ah, I'll tell you, growing up gay for a man or a woman was damn rough. But especially back East. Of course, I imagine it was rough out here too back in those days. But somehow out here, 'cause when I came out here, when I was stationed out here during the war, I didn't have this, or I didn't have the trouble that I had back in New York. Oh, I had been arrested in New York more times than I have fingers and toes, for wearing pants and a shirt.

LE: Oh really?

RB: Yeah, because you had to have three pieces of female attire. Now, let's put it this way. At the time I was young, I had nothing on top so what the hell was I going to put in a brassiere? I'm not exactly the type for lace panties. And if I'm wearing pants, I sure as hell didn't need a petty coat. So there goes your three pieces of female attire. So I have a rap sheet, they probably have a rap sheet on me now as long as my arm right here, if they still have it.

Then once I got dressed up. I was dancing with a male, a female impersonator. I was a male impersonator, he was a female impersonator, and we were doing a take-off on Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire. I don't know to this day how I let him talk me into getting one of his evening gowns on and a pair of his high heels, and we were going to go somewhere. We got out on the curb, and were getting into a cab, when a cop comes along and says, "All right, buster, you're under arrest," and I said oh Christ, he said he finally got caught. Uh uh, it was me that got busted. Well, I had rather hairy muscular legs. I cannot walk on high heels worth a damn, and, of course, he was accustomed to it, so he walked like any woman would walk in high heels. I'm going over like this, and here's my hairy, the hair on my legs sticking out through the stockings. I look like a fag in drag. And I got busted, for wearing women's clothes.

I'm in the jail, there's five guys in the jail for an assortment of things, and they're screaming, Bad enough you got us in this jail, you have to put this damn fag in here with us. Get him the hell out of here, we don't want him in here with us. We don't want his kind in here with us, and they're screaming bloody murder. And I couldn't go to the, I couldn't go to the head because it's in the corner and . . . Finally, my boss came down. Usually he doesn't. Anybody in the club gets busted, he sends his lawyer. But when he found that I was busted for female impersonation, this he had to see. They brought him to the jail and he gets one look at me in the evening gown and the high heels, he says Jesus Christ. He said, you had to go and do it, didn't you? I says blame John for that. He said did you have to listen to him? I says did I know I was going to get busted. We were getting right in a cab. He said yeah, I see you're in the taxi. But he paid, ah, he paid the fifty dollars to get me out on bail, and it cost a hundred and fifty for my fine, which was a lot of money back then. But for the sake of seeing me in an evening gown and high heels, we was willing to pay it. Of course, he took it out of my pay later on, but that was . . . and I haven't had a dress on to my knowledge from that day to this.

LE: (laughs) Also know for a good (both speak at once).

RB: I wouldn't even know how to walk in one. But it was rough, it was rough though. 'Cause I, well first place, I was raised in the country, so wearing pants for me was easy 'cause we had did it up on the farm. But when my grandparents died, and I had to move to New York with my family, my mother and my father, it was like a culture shock. Dresses? Bows? Shoes and socks? I mean, it's summertime, what do I need shoes and socks for? And what the hell's this damn dress? I can't do the things I want to do with a dress on. But I did them anyway, to my mother's horror. I'd come home looking like anything but the little lady she sent me out, I was supposed to be looking like. I'd get out the door, the bow would come off first, the socks would go in the shoes, the shoes would be tied together and would be over my shoulder. This is New York City. I just could not get used to living with them and living in

The City. And everything, you had to, you couldn't even go out to the grocery store that you weren't dressed up. To a certain extent, it's still like that in New York. People just won't go out without being dressed up. I don't care if you're going to the neighborhood grocery store to get a newspaper. You got to look as if you're though you're going to church. And I wasn't exactly the type for that, as my mother found out.

Oh, how many dresses she put on me, nice clean dresses. Of course, I hated the thought of putting on the dress, and all those god damned ribbons and bows and flounces didn't appeal to me no end either. And then she insisted on this damn big bow. It was the custom, but little girls used to wear these great big bows on the back of their head. And my hair, up until I was about ten, was so blonde, it was almost white. So, all youse could see coming down the street was the bow, you couldn't see my blonde hair. So that would be the first thing I'd rip off when I got outside the door. I'd hide it some place. Usually came home without it. I'd lost, I'd lose it some place along the way.

But I used to hang out, where we used to live, there used to be a place, it was called San Juan Hill. It was named after San Juan Hill from the Spanish American War, and there used to be a slaughter house across the street where we lived. And I used to run errands for the guys in there, and I'd get a nickel for running getting coffee and doughnuts, and they'd give me a nickel. And I used to hang around there a great deal. And then we moved further uptown, what was considered uptown at that point in New York's history. And ah, I hung out by the railroad tracks. It used to be called Grand Central then. And the guys, that's how I was able to get on the freight trains whenever I wanted to run away, because they were so accustomed to seeing me around the tracks that none of the guys paid any attention. Again, I used to run errands for them, they'd give me a nickel or a dime, which was . . . hell, you could buy an awful lot at that time for a nickel. God, the candy I could get for a nickel. And a dime, that would keep in candy for a week!

And so whenever, and I'd always know, they'd let me know the trains are going here and there. I wasn't so dumb, I always had a chum. New York in the winter time, I'm going to go north? Oh no, I'd head south. Once I got as far, the farthest I ever got was Washington, DC. No, once I got a little bit outside of Washington, DC. That was the last time, and that was when I wound up in the, in the home and got sent away. And that's when I began to find out who and what I was. But up until then, I had nothing. I was in the dark. I really began to think I was crazy. Maybe they're right, maybe I do need a psychiatrist. But the comical part, I was every year, I mean, I didn't understand what he was saying, and he'd . . . and I heard him talk to another doctor. And he says, I don't understand it, he said, that little girl in there is extremely intelligent. How come she has these abnormal desires? Well, at the time, when you're eight years old, you didn't understand what he meant.

1S1:200-299

But when I heard it again, when I was sixteen, and they sent me back again to the, to Bellevue for psychiatric, and that's when I found out they were going to give me shock treatments. And I didn't know what shock treatments was. So I wandered around and wandered into another ward. I went to a nurse who didn't know me from my ward. And I says ah, can I ask you something, nurse? She says it depends, I says I understand one of

your patients is getting shock treatments tomorrow. I says, what are they? And she explained to me what they were. I thought oh, no, they don't. Oh, no, they don't. And that was when I split. I found a nurse's uniform in the closet, I put it on and I just walked out of the hospital. Well, Bellevue is so damned big and there's so many exits, and anybody wearing a nurse's uniform, who's going to stop them? And that's how I got out.

LE: Good thing, huh?

RB: Yeah, and that was about 1939 so, and I could see World War II was coming, since I was old enough and I had enough intelligence. I could read the newspapers and understand what Hitler was doing, and I knew it was a matter of time before we'd be in the middle of it. So I just joined the service. That was the answer to my problem. Because getting a job without a high school diploma, I mean, I hadn't been really trained for anything. The work I liked to do they wouldn't let me do because I was a girl. They wouldn't let me in the machine shop and I was always sneaking in there and working with the tools, but they chased me out again. So I got in the Navy and I got to do all the stuff I wanted to do, worked with all the tools and machinery I wanted. And I had no problems.

LE: Where did you serve?

RB: I served overseas, predominantly in Asia. And you would be surprised how many Asians I found were gay. I mean, considering their culture and their lifestyle, you wouldn't think so. But oh boy, I had no problems finding companions wherever I went. And until you get there, and there's always somebody that has been there before you, and it's on the, it's the grapevine. So they leave word. You can always find out through the grapevine where this and that and the other thing was. But it really surprised me how many Asian women and Asian men, 'cause you wouldn't think so because of their, you know, at least not over there, raised and born over there. Those that are raised over here might become a little bit more Americanized. But you wouldn't think so within their own culture to the extent that I found it. Which really shocked me, I mean, really blew my mind, 'cause I know how they treat women. Women are nothing, they're their slave. There's no way I was going to be any man's slave. His friend, yes. His companion, yes. But slave? Hell, no. What else particularly did you want to know?

LE: Well, why don't you just tell me what happened to you after the war. That's the period, that's the period, really, that I'm . . .

RB: After the war, well it was after I came back from Korea. And ah.

LE: You were in Korea?

RB: Yeah.

LE: But that was during the Second World War though?

RB: Yeah. No, that was after the Second World War. That was in the '50s.

LE: Okay. Bring up to then. I want to know what happened . . . well, from the time, the end of the Second World War, up to the '50s.

RB: Well, after the Second World War, I stayed in, and then I was over in Korea. And when I came back is when I got out.

LE: So you were, you were in Asia from . . .

RB: From say ah, '40, 1940 until 1953, predominantly in Asia. I made a couple of stops where I was in England once and I was in Russia once, but I would say predominantly in Asia. But after the war, after I came back from ah, well, it was while I came home on leave from Korea, I was home on leave. And I met my girlfriend, or she was to be my girlfriend then. When I met her, she was a stripper. And I went to the striptease show. Naturally, what else was going on? And I saw her. And I was right in the front, and somehow our eyes met, and she left a message, would I like to meet her in her dressing room? I thought, now wait a minute, what gives? This chick, this chick has got to be straight. Anybody that looks like that, you know, has got to be straight. Well, she must know, or does she just have a thing on sailors? But she knows that, you know, so anyway I went back anyway out of curiosity. Found out she was gay and we became lovers and it lasted twenty-eight years until she died in '79 of a stroke. But that was how I met her was that night in the, in the girlie show. 'Cause she used to be a very high-class stripper at one time, but then it was beginning to get to a point where they wanted you to do things that she just refused to do. They wanted you to mingle with the customers, sit on their lap, get them to buy drinks, and let them maul her. And this was not about to do. Dance and strip, yes. But let them maul her and stuff like that, that she would not do.

So she missed out on a lot of jobs, so had to take whatever small job she could find. And it happened to be in this little show with - oh, I can't remember - Ginza? Or something like that her name was. It was out in Coney Island. She used to have this act where she took a bath in wine. And ah, she worked in her show, and that was where I met her. And then after, that, shortly after I came back from Korea and got out of the service for good, she quit it altogether, because then it was reaching a point they wanted her to take more than she wanted to take off, and a few other things that she wasn't about to do. So she got out of show business altogether. Then she had been in it about thirty-eight years by that time. But she was a stripper when strippers really was an art. Today they take it all off, and what in hell do you do for an encore. I mean, once you're down to your birthday suit, what else is there to do? Here it is, here is all of it, there's nothing left. Whereas they had an art in stripping, that you always left so much to your imagination, and they did it in such a way that you really would egg on more and more, and then they would just get down to the G-string and that was as far as they'd go. But by the time they'd gotten down there, you had a hell of an hour's show. But today where they go back, topless and bottomless, there's no act to it. But we lived together.

LE: This, as you say, you met in New York then?

RB: Yeah, oh, yeah, 'cause she ain't never been . . . well, she'd been outside of New York a little bit with the various shows, but she'd never really been any farther west, I think Cleveland, Ohio, is about as far west as she ever got.

1S1:300-399

Until we came out here in 1971, she'd never been on the West Coast. And I had been talking to her for years about it, how nice it was out here. But it took me until '71 when New York started to get so bad that you could get mugged going three blocks, and ah, when I got mugged for the third time going four blocks to work and home, and then the cops wanted to arrest me for assault? I said shit on this, I says we're getting out of New York, I said, and this time we're getting out for good. I said we're going out to California, and finally she agreed. And that's when we came out here, 1971. But up until then, really, we didn't live as sisters or anything. We just lived as friends. Landlords never asked us any questions. As long as we paid our rent, we didn't cause any trouble, there was no problems with neighbors or anything else. Only once, we had this small apartment with this Italian land, woman, that lived in the house. And a couple of times, ah, she would make snide remarks - well home come we had no boyfriends? So I says to my girlfriend, I says, Terry, I said I'm going to fix Della once and for all tonight. She said what in hell are you going to do? I says you know Angelo that works with me - I was working in a hotel in Brooklyn - he was a gay fellow and he was assistant manager. I said I'm going to have Angelo bring me home. And she says, and I said and we're going to smooch right in front of her house. She says you wouldn't. I says I will.

So I told Angelo what was going on 'cause he was Italian. He says oh, you got one of them kind of landladies. And I said yeah, Della's about eighty-some odd years old and she's been wondering why we don't have any boyfriends. And I kept saying that I don't like to bring the boyfriend home, I said, 'cause Terry doesn't have a boyfriend, and it wouldn't look right for me to have one. He says, come one, we'll fix it. Well, we put on an act that night in front of her and we could the window, the curtain was rubbing and shaking like hell, every left and right. You could almost see her face out the window. We gave her an eyeful 'cause we were right underneath the street lamp right outside the window. And we really poured it on. And then I left and I came in the house. Well, Terry was looking out the window. She just roared; she could hear Della's feet all over the apartment, stamping and excited and coming back to the window. Terry had been looking out the window too. She said god, she said you two really went to work. So I got to work that night. So later on in the day, 'cause we were working, I was working nights. So later on in the day, Della says, ah, you had company last night. I said Della, I said what were you doing, looking out the window? I said I was coming home from work. I said he brought me home from work. She says do you usually kiss boys like that that bring you home from work? Well, I says, I happen to like Angelo. Oh, he's Italian? I says yes, he's *Italiano*. Oh, she says, Italian boys make good husbands. Who said I'm going to marry him. Just because he's a good friend of mine doesn't mean I'm going to get married.

Well, I told Angelo about it that night. Well, he just roared. He says if she's waiting for me to get married, she's going to wait a long time. Well, he came to the house for dinner a couple of times and deliberately stayed late. It was on our days off. Deliberately stayed real late, and he'd sneak out about two o'clock in the morning. And she'd be wondering, two of us, and

the one man. What was going on down there? The next day, she'd be looking at me, she'd be looking at Terry, she'd be grinning, and she said did you enjoy yourself last night? Well, we'd rush to say something. Oh yes, Della, we had a grand time last night. I said we had a friend for dinner. She says, he left awful late. I said Della, I said, what are you doing? Spying on us? Knowing damn well she was. Well, she says, it seemed like, is it customary for a man to stay so late with two women? I said we were having a good time! And I just let it, it dropped it right there. My girlfriend went in the kitchen 'cause she was ready to laugh, start out laughing. That would have given the whole thing away. I said we were having a grand time, I said, the three of us together. You should have seen the look on her puss. Three of you? Well, I said, why not? I said, the more, the merrier. Well she just, at that point, she couldn't say a word. She just ran back upstairs and we could hear her running back and forth across the apartment. She didn't know what the hell to think.

To this day I don't think she knows that we weren't doing anything but watching TV the whole night. And he could have left earlier, but we deliberately wanted to keep him there until two or three in the morning and let her sweat it out. And when I said well the three of us were having a grand time, the more the merrier. She couldn't figure that one out. But we moved out of there because she was just getting . . .

LE: It sounds like she was awfully nosy.

RB: She was one of the nosiest. She'd talk about the neighbor upstairs, the guy upstairs. And he never brought any women home. Of course not, the guy that lived upstairs, how could he bring home any, he wouldn't have been bringing home any women. He was about eighty years old. Of course, he could have, but I don't know what he'd have done when he got it, he got her upstairs, if the two of them managed to make it up the stairs in one piece. He got up, his idea of going up the stairs was one step, then stops for ten minutes, takes another step, waits another ten minutes, and he's going to bring a woman home? And it takes him a half hour to get up one little flight of stairs. I says Della. Well, she says, I tried to make it up, make it with him, she says, but he didn't seem interested.

And we've had some really landlords, we've had some landlords that really asked pertinent questions about our life. Well, are you two going to be married, getting married? So Terry would say she was divorced, and she was through with marriage. I said I've never been married but after hearing what she went through, I said, I don't think I want to try it. But actually, we didn't have much trouble with our landlords. She was about the only one.

LE: Did you have any trouble with jobs or?

1S1:400-499

RB: No, because most of the jobs I had ah, I did have to wear a uniform like in the hotel in the front desk, but I was able to wear slacks. But they just gave me a uniform jacket. Well, you're standing at the front desk, they don't see you down there anyway. All they see is the top half. And I did, well, when I was bell-hopping I wore pants. I had pants on when I ran the elevator. And then from there, I got ah promoted to the front desk. I was on Information. Then I became a room clerk, and then I went into the front office there where I was doing

cashiering. So I really started out in the hotel business as a, as an elevator operator. So I really, and then I worked in factories where pants was the norm, so I never had any problem.

LE: Well, things loosened up a bit after the war then?

RB: Yeah, they did. Well, then too, ah, they demanded slacks on women working in factories because of the machinery and everything - which suited me just fine. Of course, I would rather some of the other women had been in skirts, but then they might have made me wear one, and that I wouldn't have wanted. No, I never had any trouble with any of my jobs. I got along well with the men. A few of the men that would get real fresh, I'd put them in their place in a polite way. Only once did I get into a fight. This guy had ah, well, not exactly. Well, yes, twice, I would say. Once we really came to blows. The other time I put him down verbally, and he never got over it. He had said, what's the matter, don't you like men? And said, of course, I like men, I said, but I'm fussy. I said I like a man, and I emphasized man. Well, he says, what do you think I am. I looked at him, and I said, for a minute, and I said do you really want me to answer that question? Boy, did his face turn, turn red, and the other guys started snickering, you know? And that was how I got out of that one very nicely.

The only other time was some guy kept grabbing me on the behind, and I warned him. I said keep your hands to yourself. He said, what's the matter, don't you like a man to touch you? I said I'm fussy who touches me. I said and that does not include you. I said if I want a man to touch me, I said, I'll let him know about it. I said but it won't be you, I says, so don't do it again. Well, he did, and I happened to have a piece of steel in my hand at the time that he did it, and I just turned around and I let him have it, right over the head. I was mad. Well, it took three men to get me off of him. By this time I had dropped the piece of steel, but I was on top of him punching him in the face. I lost that job - so did he - because they did tell the truth. The guys did say it was not her fault, it was his. They said he had grabbed her on the behind and she had warned him, and she had the piece of steel in her hand at the time he grabbed her, and she just turned around and let him have it. But we both got fired anyway.

But it wasn't hard getting jobs back then. I mean, as long as you were a good worker, a good factory worker, and you had good experience, and you could prove your ability, there was no problem. So I never really had any trouble. But I didn't care for office, the hotel work. It was too confining in the hotel all the time. I just didn't like it. I took it off and on if I couldn't get anything else. I could always go back to it because I had the good reference from it. But if I had my druthers, I'd prefer factory work, and that's what I did predominantly. So I had no, had no trouble with jobs.

LE: Let me ask you, were you aware of the anti-gay aspects of, of McCarthyism?

RB: Oh, definitely, oh, definitely. That was, ah, he was masking it. Did you see that movie last week on TV about McCarthyism?

LE: No, uh uh.

RB: Ah, yes, there was a great deal of homosexuality - he equated homosexuality with communism. Now how you work that one out, I don't know. Because they are not cohesive.

The communist party is as much against homosexuality as anybody else. They're just as homophobic (sic) as anybody else. But he did definitely equate one with the other. And he was seeing hobgoblins behind every tree. One word against the government, and you were automatically classified as a communist. And if you were a communist, you had to be a homosexual, of course, the fact that you might have five or six women on the string notwithstanding. But there were careers ruined, not just political careers, but there were more actors and actresses whose careers in Hollywood were ruined because of him. Some committed suicide. Quite a few committed suicide, they just couldn't take it. Oh definitely, there was definitely a homophobia attached to that, that . . . and I never figured out how he equated homosexuality with communism. I mean, it just . . . the knowledge of the way they're treated. If they're found out in communist countries would tell you that the two were not, they could not live together in harmony, not if they found it out. It exists, yes, that I know. But it's not open. It's clandestine. And god damn careful 'cause you never know who was going to - see in the first place under communism, you can't even talk to . . . be careful what you even say to your wife or your own husband or your mother or your father, because you never know what this . . . or in front of your children, that it isn't repeated. It's the same as under Nazis. Each one would tell on the other one, so you had to keep your thoughts to yourself. So having a relationship, gay or straight, was not exactly the easiest thing.

LE: Well, did that bother you? 'Cause you were still in the Navy during the beginning of . . . did that worry you that you might be found out in the Navy because of what was happening with McCarthy and?

RB: Well, he wasn't, well, he was . . . when he was honing in on any members of the military, it was predominantly those in Washington. Ah, he didn't seem to have any knowledge of anybody overseas or that was not in, within the United States boundaries or within Washington itself, unless he caught them with somebody from outside Washington. But there was nothing to do with anybody that was not directly in Washington or Hollywood.

LE: So, so you saw this as something that was in Washington and not . . .

RB: It was predominantly, well, Washington and, of course, it had to do with Hollywood. That was natural. And show business in general, not just Hollywood, but even a lot of actors that were on the stage but never had been in movies, were also affected in one way or another. And ah, he'd go back and he could hang you just by if you knew somebody when you were twelve years old that was a communist. Now at twelve, you didn't know what the hell a communist was, but their father was and you were a friend of them so, you know, this is the sort of thing he would do. But we didn't worry about being caught as homosexuals as I remember so much because we figured well we're not in Washington. We're predominantly overseas and he's spending all his time there. He doesn't know what's going on over here. And it was predominantly among, actually what he was going after was the higher up in the hierarchy of the military, the commanding officers, not anything below - I don't even think he bothered much with majors. Usually had lieutenant colonels, colonels, and on up from there was where he was because he figured they had to deal with the Pentagon and the military per se and he paid absolutely no attention to the little guy. There were more of us than there was of them. There were millions of us, Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, Air Force. And that was a comedy, that was, that was really was making us laugh. Here he is, all this to do

about being a homosexual in Washington and there's millions of us wearing the, wearing the military uniform.

LE: You did talk about it then?

RB: Oh yeah, we did talk about it and we just couldn't understand how he could equate homosexuality and communism as one and the same thing, and here he is honing in on these big wigs in Washington, All right, granted, there may have been one or two big wigs that were homosexual, but the predominantly, the predominant number of homosexuals were all under the rank of major. None of them, I don't think, none of them that I had met were more than captains, in the Army or in the Navy. And a captain in the Navy was pretty high up. But most of them were overseas. It was admirals and rear admirals in Washington. So I just, we just really didn't worry about that too much because he wasn't honing in on the little guy in the military. He was going after the big guys.

LE: When you got back to New York, it was there any talk of it there or any fear of it?

RB: Oh, there was a lot of fear of it in New York in certain areas, particularly among people that were in show business. And ah, they were scared stiff because we knew a lot of men and women in show business that were gay, especially quite a few ballet dancers. Not all, naturally, not all. 'Cause somehow people seem to think that if a man is a ballet dancer, he's automatically gay. All right, there is a good chance that he could be, but there's also a good chance that he isn't too. He could be a womanizer as well as the other. So that wasn't true but there were a lot of them that were very damned scared and were walking on eggs for fear of being found out through some mutual acquaintance or whatever, or even producers were frightened of who they hired for a play for that very reason. It went all the way from producers, directors, all the way down to the actors. In fact it was even, the phobia was reaching even cameramen and stage hands.

LE: These were people that you knew then, you were in sort of (both speak at once)

RB: Yeah, well through my girlfriend who was in show business. I met them through her and ah, it was really getting to be a phobia with all of them.

1S1:600-699

They were scared of who they talked to, who they went out with. Producers got scared of who they hired in a show. Cameramen were afraid of losing their jobs or the guy, the producer or the director would ask certain pointed questions of just ordinary stage hands, for fear that if there was a stage hand that was caught, it could reflect on them because they hired them. It was this sort of phobia.

LE: And this was, this was about being homosexual?

RB: Yeah, homosexual or being, yeah, well homosexual or communist, 'cause he equated the one with the other. And really, everybody was just scared stiff. And I had trouble understanding it when I came back 'cause we weren't that worried in the service. But then I

realized that they were here in the United States and they were more vulnerable that we were overseas. 'Cause he didn't go overseas or interfere with anything over there. It was too much keeping the pot going over here. So we didn't worry about it but I was really shocked at the phobia in the United States among show people. It was weird the questions they would ask an ordinary stage hand before hiring him. But before there was no question. You were a good stage hand, you had references, you had good references, you were hired. But it reached a point where . . . in fact there were very few shows even being put on for that very reason. Producers, directors, cameramen, actors, actresses, they were all so uptight, they were afraid to talk to each other. Oh it, it really reached ah proportions that would be hard to understand. And not just in show business. It reached into areas of radio. Of course, there wasn't TV then or it was just beginning to come in but it wasn't really an "in" thing then, but even in radio, among radio announcers and newspaper men and everything else. There was a lot . . . 'cause he was honing in on newspaper editors and newspaper men and reporters too. So ah, it really was ah one hell of a phobia.

LE: Well, did it affect like the gay bars then or?

RB: Oh yes, it affected gay bars. A lot of them were closed, a lot of them were closed because they were just so damned scared stiff. Because some of them that go into the bar had good jobs. They were businessmen, business people. And if they were caught in there, they'd be branded a communist by virtue of being in a gay bar. So a lot of them did close and a lot of them didn't open up until well after the McCarthy era and some never opened up, or new ones opened up. But some of the old ones never did. It was just, it was just chaotic. As I say, they were just seeing, everything, hobgoblins behind every tree, behind every lamp post.

LE: Let me ask you, you said you worked in factories?

RB: Yeah.

LE: Ah, did you have get security clearances in any of these factories or were they that type?

RB: Ah, only one I needed a security clearance and there was no problem because I'd been in the military.

LE: So you weren't worried about that?

RB: No, I wasn't worried about that either. Besides which, there was nothing on my military record so I didn't have anything to worry about there 'cause one job was security. It was with the ah, it was a shipyard for the United States Coast Guard, and that was classified. But because of my military training, I had no trouble getting a clearance card. But, as I say, I didn't worry about it either because they had held there was nothing on my military record. So I didn't worry about that. But that was the only job I had with clearance during the McCarthy era. Most of my other jobs, there was no question of clearance or anything. But ah, it was one hell of a time, I'll tell you.

LE: Well, could you tell me just what - I don't know if you were going to bars then or not or what was your social life like, your gay social life?

RB: Our gay social life, we went to gay, a few gay bars and we had a lot of gay friends and we'd meet in their home or they'd come to our home.

1S1:700-714

Ah, sometimes we'd go to a gay bar. But somehow my girlfriend and I really never really cared for the bars itself so much. Ah, not that we didn't have a lot of gay friends but, as I say, we usually met in homes, people's homes and we'd give a party, they'd give a party, somebody else would give a party, and we'd always meet new people at these parties. So we had a wide circle of friends - some were straight, some were gay. And ah, we got along just fine.

End of Side 1, Tape 1

1S2:000-099

RB: . . . or if I suspect he was straight. It turned out, his daughter was gay. I tried to keep it cool because I knew he was my boss, but when she let it be known that she was gay, I asked her does your father know? She says not yet, she says I haven't told him yet. Well, I says, until he knows it, I says, I'm going to keep hands off. I says, because remember, he is my boss at work. I don't want any trouble. And she respected that. But I never had any problems, there was no problems. There wasn't this business of homophilia that there is between, among straight people today, particularly among young people. I think what it is, is a lot of the young, young men especially, feel intimidated. They feel their manhood, quote-unquote, is on the line. I don't know why. I think it's, they really are having an inferiority complex, because I never had any problem with the young fellows or young girls when I was younger, and I don't ever remember a gay person being beat up simply because he was gay, by a bunch of young thugs, not that New York was a lily-white place to live, even in those days. But it certainly didn't reach the proportions that New York is today. But there was never any - I was never attacked simply because I was suspected of being gay. I might have been approached on a different but ah, never any trouble. Not the way it is today. I don't know, it seems like, it seems like they're going backwards.

LE: Yeah, I think so.

RB: But predominantly it's among, well some of the older men too, real older men. But it shouldn't be among the older men because you figure at the time that I was . . . this period during the '50s, they had to be young at that time. And why is it that they'd be more tolerant when they're young than they are when they're older?

LE: Well, I think that were some people that weren't tolerant.

RB: Oh yes, there definitely were. It's just that I never had any trouble with that. Only once, that one man that I worked with once, tapped me on the shoulder, he said are you a man or a

woman? And knowing just what, I put my hand on my shoulder, I says why darling, what do you think? He says, Jesus Christ, one of them. He thought I was a fag. He got mad, he threw a hunk of steel across the room. Every night that he worked, he'd come in, he'd look around to see what machine I was on, he'd go way on the other side of the room. And I did that just for spite. I just put my hand on my hip as nice as you please, I said why darling, I says, what do you think? He goes Oh Jesus. You talk about the fur flying.

He would, if I was on the right, he'd go to the left. If I was on the left, he'd go to the right side of the room. He would not work on a machine anywhere near me. And if the boss sent him to a machine that was within ten feet of me, he wouldn't do it. I don't know what the hell he thought. The funny thing was, he wasn't that old either at the time, but he was not an American. I mean, he wasn't born and raised over here, he was from Europe. That could account for it. I think he was from Russia, Russia or some place in that neighborhood, Russia or Poland, I don't remember which. But that was the only trouble I had with, that was the only problem in all the time I'd been working. I never had any trouble. And I think people are more uptight, more young people are more uptight today than they were when I was younger, when I was their age. 'Cause I made no, ah, I made no attempt to hide that I was gay. I certainly was never in the closet. All right, I didn't go around screaming it at the top of my lungs, but one, just take one look at the way I always dressed and wore my hair. It didn't take much to figure it out. You'd have to be pretty dense. And yet I never, as I say, I was never approached, I had no snide remarks made or nasty remarks of somebody deliberately coming over and trying to make a fight just because they figured I was gay. There was none of that. I can honestly say that I can't relate to half the problems that are going on now and I fail to understand why. I would think today, people would be more enlightened than they were in the '40s and '50s. I mean, I know it was rough in the '30s, but by '40s and '50s, it began to loosen up a bit and there was more tolerance. All right, there was always the exception to the rule naturally. But I would say predominantly I never ran into any trouble.

LE: So it was almost like coming from Washington and McCarthyness, you had this anti-gay stuff but among people you worked with and socialized with, it was, there was tolerance.

RB: Yeah, yeah, there was tolerance. But then you figure I got out of the service in 1953. McCarthy was at the height of his era at that point in time. He hadn't been stopped yet. And why some of the presidents hadn't stopped him before, before that, before he went as far is something I never figured out. Truman could have stopped him, Eisenhower could have. But they didn't, and I just didn't, ever understood why. But coming from the one end to the other, it was like a whole different world.

LE: The fear was just perceptible.

RB: Oh, it . . . Perceptible? You could cut it, it was so thick you could cut with a knife. I mean, it was just ridiculous. And it wasn't just in show business or in radio, it had to do with big business too. Anybody in a big corporation.

LE: Anybody that had anything to lose, in other words?

RB: That's right, people that had something to lose. All right, the little worker was more or less ignored. But you got above the rank of supervisor, and especially if you were an executive, you were really walking on eggs. And ah, but that was it. And since I was mostly in, you might say, one of the little cogs in the wheel instead of being one of big rungs, I didn't have anything to worry about. I never had any problem. But I do know it was very . . . I know Terry had a rough time in show business. She was low on work because of the way things were shut down. In fact, I think there were - during the whole McCarthy era, I think there were only three plays in all Broadway put on. And very few movies, and then they had to be so damn uptight of how they, what movie they made, that it was stilted, that you really couldn't go to the movies and say, oh, I'm going to go to the movies for enjoyment. Because you had to be careful of the script, who they had acting in it, who they had producing it, who they had directing it, who the cameraman was, the costume designers, the whole bit. And you know how much goes into making a movie, all the different people involved. Well, you start tearing each one of them down, you know, you're not going to make much of a movie that anybody can enjoy. And you just, you just went on that way.

But I was away from it mostly until I came back in '53. And I'm hearing about what they're doing. We read, we'd hear over the radio or we'd get an old newspaper, usually it'd be months old by the time we got it, about they're investigating some guy in Washington and we'd make jokes. We'd say yeah, those god damned bastards sitting on their ass in a cushy job in Washington and we're, we're damned, we're putting our neck on the line over here, or something like that. But it didn't affect us. And it wasn't until I came back and saw how it was really affecting people over here that it really hit me. Up until then, we were making jokes about it. We joked about the whole McCarthy thing. We figured it would all blow over in no time, that people would get so damned sick and tired of his bullshit, that they'd get rid of him. And the fact that when I got back in '53 and he was still going strong, just blew us away.

1S2:100-199

We could figure it out. Well, why the hell doesn't the president stop it. He sees all this bullshit he's doing. But I can honestly say I never had any trouble. And the other people never gave me any trouble.

LE: Let me ask you, ah, you said, ah, this is something I hear from a lot of people in the '50s. Ah, the socializing seemed to be more men and women socializing than today, more mixing and . . .

RB: Well, yeah, we tried ah, yeah, there was more - the men stuck with the men and the women stuck with the women, and, in some cases, you would have men and women in one, together in a gay bar, ah, tried to make it look like we were social. If men and women were together in a bar, whether we were sitting together or not, or if we happened to be sitting all lined up at the bar, a man and a woman, a man and a woman, if a cop walked in, what was he going to say? I'm sitting at the bar along side of me and I've got a man to the side of me. Or I'm at a table, so my girlfriend's along side of me, but there's two men sitting at the table with us.

LE: Yeah. Well, it seemed like it carried over into parties and stuff too. There just was more mixing and socializing.

RB: There was a great deal of mixing. I really think that even today, I think there should be more communication between the lesbian and the gay male group.

LE: That's something I miss. I was just . . .

RB: I do miss that. And I would like to meet more gay men and get to talk to them. I'd really, I really miss that communication. I don't like the isolation. A lot of young lesbians have this idea, you're a lesbian. Stay away from the men. I've been condemned a lot of times because I said that I don't hate men. Well, I don't hate them, but I don't want to go to bed with them, but that, that doesn't mean I hate them because I don't want to go to bed with them. I get along very well with men. I have a good rapport with them. I like to talk to them on many levels, levels that I can't talk to some of the women I know on. First place, a lot of the younger women, they're so damn tight, they didn't . . . like the SOL group. I stopped going to it because they started getting these little cliques and I wasn't politically correct or I didn't dress correctly to suit them. And little petty, petty stuff like this. I says, you know, I says for lesbians, I says, you're not a damn site better than a bunch of other nags that get together. I said you're just as catty as any other woman. And then they get mad at me.

LE: This SOL, what's this?

RB: The SOL, Slightly Older Lesbians.

LE: Oh.

RB: In fact I started it, I helped found it here in San Francisco. But the way it's gotten to be now, that I hardly - well, I'm in school anyway on Wednesday nights. I might go, maybe next week I might go. During the summer until school starts again. But that's one thing that kept me away from them is all their pettiness. I found that I didn't, I couldn't really carry on what I considered an intelligent conversation with any of the young women that I knew. On any subject. We'd get into politics, there'd be a fight. We'd . . . ah, almost anything else. I mean, if I want to talk about something else on business or sports, that was out. So what was there left to talk about? Who went out with who last night? What the hell do I care who went out with who? All I care about is who I'm going out with.

LE: You don't need to talk about that.

RB: No, I'd rather do it than talk about it. And ah, another thing that I find with a lot of lesbians, they're very uptight about talking about sex. I have found that I can talk to a lot of gay men that I know. I talked, spoken openly, on sex and we've had a wonderful conversation, but I try to get into a conversation like that with some of the lesbians I know, my god! You'd think I was talking about Satan or some other damn thing. I never knew that for lesbians that are supposed, young women, that are supposed to be so liberated, they're so uptight about sex.

LE: I know this one woman and she, ah, she writes about sex, sexual things. And ah, she says, she says I can't write for either lesbian publications or the women's publications 'cause they won't accept my stuff. She says I have to write in the gay men's publications in order that I can get published.

RB: Yeah, the same thing. If I were to do some writing, it would be the same thing with me. Because they just don't want to face their own sexuality. Now there was one time in the group in SOL, this is a prime example, somebody decided, what subject are we going to . . .

(recorder turn off momentarily)

LE: Was there ah any local trouble during the '50s in New York, like the police raiding bars or?

RB: There was some, but not too much, because we tried - everything was on a very low profile. Ah, once in a while they would come in deliberately to hassle, which was one reason there was a lot of mixing between men and women, one of the reasons. They were less likely to hassle a bar where there were men and women together. There was no real way of telling that it was gay. But strictly ah, strictly men's bars or women's bars had to be very, very careful, or they had to be in a small out-of-the-way place where there wasn't a great deal of police footwork, and there wasn't the problem of them hassling. But it didn't happen all that often at that time. It didn't happen until a lot of the, a lot of the trouble started in the '60s. That was really when the real trouble started was more in the '60s than the '50s. Not just because there was a lot of more mixing than there is now, but things were quieter. People, it wasn't until all the revolution, revolutionary action in the '60s that, really, the trouble started.

LE: Do you remember any of the bars from that ah?

RB: I can't remember any of them by name, no. I'd be guessing. I remember there was one that used to be near a club, near Union, near Herald Square. There used to be a club, regular club, called the Zebra Club and it was a perfectly straight club, but near there, there used to be a gay bar. In fact Terry and I were in the Zebra Club one night. I was wearing white tie and tails, and she was in an evening gown. There was no problem. Nobody questioned, we were ushered to a table, we got up and we danced. We had our drinks, we had our dinner, we had our pictures taken, and ah we had a ball. Two doors away the Zebra Club there was a gay bar, but I can't remember the name of it. It was ah, had like a tropical name to it and I can't remember. It wasn't Oasis, but it was something along that line.

LE: Did you often go out together like that or? Oh.

RB: Yeah, often. In fact, we went to a big party at one of the big hotels in New York, ah. Yeah, that was ah, it was in drag. And the hotel knew everything was going to be in drag. So.

LE: This was in the '50s then?

RB: Ah, it was, yeah, it was 1958, '59. And ah, I think it was at the Sheraton Hotel in New York. At the time I was working at the Sheraton but not that particular Sheraton, locally, not that it would have mattered anyway. But the funny part that came that night, was they were trying to steer the men to the men's room and the women to the women's room.

1S2:200-299

Well, how do you do this with the men are wearing evening gowns and we're wearing tuxedos. Well, this gay boy and I both had to go to the men's, had to go to the bathroom. He's starts going to the men's room, I head for the women's room, the bartender, the bell boy grabs us, says, oh no, buster, you go over there. Hey lady, you go over there. Well, he walks in and here's these women putting on makeup, some real women, straight women, putting on makeup. I go in the men's room. Well, I couldn't stand up. So I had, luckily there was one with a door on it, and I came out and he was so embarrassed. I just walked on by the men standing at the urinal, didn't bother me in the least. But he was upset, he had to walk by these women and go in and sit down, and ah, they're putting on the makeup and one woman is hooking up her brassiere and asked him to help her with her brassiere, and he said he almost died. Here's these, here's these two bellboys trying to send the men to the men's room, the women to the women's, and they couldn't tell which of us was which in the first place. I got sent to the men's room. After the first time, I said the hell with it. I'd automatically go to the men's room and he automatically, they, the women, the men dressed in evening gowns, they automatically went to the women's room. And at one point, every woman in the bar, every woman in the women's room was not a woman, and half of us in the men's room were not men. None of us could use the standup urinal if our life depended on it.

But that was a big party that night. That was the largest public gay party that I remember in New York at that period in time. And I can't remember for the life of me who sponsored that party.

LE: It was around '50s.

RB: Well, '58, '59. I can't for the life of me remember who sponsored that party. But they rented the great big ballroom in the hotel. It was the Sheraton Hotel on Herald Square, down on Union Square I mean, near Macy's. I don't even know if that's there anymore.

LE: Were there, were there other balls during, during the '50s?

RB: Yeah, there were other balls, some of them in smaller hotels, but that's the first one I remember in a really big hotel like the Sheraton. And I, for the life of me, as I say, I can't remember who sponsored it. But boy, it was some, it was some big, I'll tell you. God, there were thousands of people showed up, and there were some straight people in the party too. And they didn't think, any of the straight women, didn't think of winding up in the ladies' room with a bunch of boys, fellows in drag. The men thought nothing of going into the men's room and finding some of us in there.

LE: (laughs) That's great.

RB: 'Cause they knew we didn't bother them and they weren't going to bother us. And the women knew that they weren't going to bother them in the ladies' room, so there was no problem. But there was quite a few of them, big shindigs, but as I say, most of them were in smaller hotels. It's the only one I remember in '58 or '59 that was in a really big hotel like Sheraton.

LE: But even early in the '50s, there were some balls.

RB: Oh yeah. There were smaller ones, not as big a turnout as that one did, but oh boy.

LE: So you and your girlfriend, you'd go, you went out when you dressed in?

RB: Yeah, I often wore a shirt, and I still often wear a shirt and tie and three-piece suit.

LE: And that was, that was, there was never anything ever said or?

RB: Never, we never had any hassles, we were never questioned, just taken at face value.

LE: Great.

RB: I'm in a shirt and tie and a pair of pants - I must be the male. She's wearing an evening gown, she's all made up, earrings, she's the female, there was no question. And I just automatically, I had to go to the bathroom, I just automatically headed for the men's room. Didn't take me long to learn. I'd had enough experience at it. But I can't honestly say we had any trouble. Nobody ever bothered us. We were never questioned, waiters or anybody in the hotel never questioned. But it was funny that night with those two bellmen tried to keep everything straightened. They couldn't tell which was which in the first place.

LE: It was funny, I was in New York in '60, '64. I had a friend that I knew out here 'cause her father lived out here and her mother lived in New York, and I met her when she was out during the summer. She'd come out and visit her father. So I went back to visit her. And we went to her mother's house. It was one of these sort of, well, apartment houses where they have an elevator and a doorman and the doorman let us in, and we got the elevator. And two lesbians came down and one was, one was very butch and one was . . .

RB: Fem?

LE: Fem. And they were, I would say, probably then they were in their eighties. And one was on, I think the butch one actually had a cane but dressed to the, you know, with a tuxedo and everything going on. And she said, you know, she said I grew up here in this apartment. She said I never thought anything of it, just a normal couple, you know, like everybody else and yet, she said, my parents never say anything about them and they were just totally accepted in this apartment as a, as a couple that lived here.

RB: Yeah, and it never . . . and I've seen several other couples in various apartment houses that my girlfriend and I lived in and I always dressed masculine, and I was, never had any

problems. Even the young kids never ah made any remarks or anything else. Everything was just taken at face value.

LE: It doesn't . . . well, it happens now that this, there is . . .

RB: Yeah, but I can't understand. It's supposed to be more liberated, more open than it is now, and it's worse that it was then. Oh, I don't say that there might not have been some people that might not have been uptight and less than a little, more than a little less tolerant, but I'd say on the, on the whole, people were more tolerant. And there was tolerance even in the '30s and the '40s. More so I think than there is now. I honestly am. Ah, it's as if I'm looking at things going backwards. And ah, one of the one things I do miss the most, as I said, is not mixing in with more gay men, because I feel very comfortable among them.

LE: There was something I noticed was, yeah, when, you know, it's funny when I, I was living in Santa Barbara and I got to know a lot of women in Santa Barbara. Then I moved to San Francisco and it took about a year before, you know, you become very . . . when you move to a new place, you just become very segregated.

RB: Yeah, you become segregated for a while until you can feel your way around.

LE: Yeah, now I'm finally starting to know a lot of women again. But I hate, I feel very cut off from a lot of things when I'm, when I'm not around women.

RB: Well, most of the women you know, are they straight or gay?

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LE: Well, most are gay.

RB: Hm. I wish I could meet some older gay women. I'm getting a little sick of these young snots, that don't know whether they're coming or going, don't know what they want or if they want. They want this, then they want that, then they ah, they're this, then the next thing they're something else and this isn't correct and that isn't correct. Bullshit! If you don't know where you're coming from or where you're going . . .

LE: It's all theory.

RB: Yeah, it is, it's a lot of theory. And they're anything but tolerant, even among themselves, let alone of anything outside of their own little group. And I just can't see that, I can't understand it. I just didn't grow up that way. And it's not that there's a generation gap between me and the young women, as much as a culture gap.

LE: Yeah.

RB: 'Cause I'm as young in many respects as they are, and in some respects, I'm younger.

LE: Well, those women seem to . . . this woman that I was talking to was more or less telling me that she has to write for the gay male papers, she said she suddenly that it was, that the women's movement is, by and large, very middle class women and they have middle class attitudes toward sexuality, which is essentially don't talk about it. And she says the minute I talk about sex, you know, that dispossesses.

RB: Yeah, I notice that too, that suddenly a wall goes up.

LE: And she says, she says but I, she says, you know, the more I thought about it - I am working class, that's my background. She says, and sex was a natural part of that. There wasn't, there wasn't the uptightness about sex, you know, she says that's part of that cultural . . .

RB: Well, it's like when I thought of joining the business woman, the business women's group. I went to a couple of their meetings. I couldn't stand it. They were so insufferably uptight about even admitting that they were gay or wanting to be acknowledged on the street if you ran into them. I says wait a minute. When I reach a point in my life that I don't want somebody I know coming up and acknowledging me, I said, forget it. And I just never bothered going anymore, and I had thought of joining them. But they were just too much for me.

LE: I think I've asked pretty much . . . one thing I'd like to do is I'd like to go home and listen to it again and then, then if I have any other questions, I could call you and ask.

RB: Sure. I have somebody else coming Monday at four o'clock, a woman that I met at the conference.

LE: Oh. I hope you don't mind.

RB: No, not in the least. No, I enjoy talking.

End of Side 2, Tape 1 - End of Interview