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2 VOICES of the Oral History Project of GLHSNC
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6 Interview with Betty Deran
7 Date of Birth: ca 1931
8 By Len Evan, 1 Tape
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11
12 LE See, the area I'm primarily concerned with is
13 that period about 1950 to '55.
14 BD (inaudible) later than that.
15 LE But you said you were in the Army then.
16 BD Oh, oh that's true; that's true. Is this in the
17 way? I'd forgotten about that part of it.
18 LE Yeah, 'cause that was very interesting - you
19 were in Washington?
20 BD Part of the time I was in Washington, about ah,
21 about a year. That's be right 'cause I was almost a
22 year at the training base and about a year in
23 Washington.
24 LE What were the years on that?
25 BD So July '51 I went in and let's see, let me

Page 1

1 were, there were no gay issues in that part. I guess
2 the thing which I mentioned to you on the on the
3 telephone, kind of interesting, was when I was in
4 Washington, I was assigned as kind of an aide to the
5 WAC Major who was generally in charge of all of the
6 women, all the Army women in Washington; there were
7 several companies and ah she was something kind of
8 like the personnel officer in charge. You wouldn't
9 really really amount it to a job description. But ah,
10 generally responsible for the public relations in
11 connection with the sort of image they gave and ah,
12 that sort of thing. And while I was - there were just
13 the two of us, this office consisted of a Major and
14 myself and there was this problem that came up with
15 the sort of lesbian nest in one of the, in one of the
16 companies, in fact the company I belonged to. The
17 problem what to do about it. And you know, I'm sure
18 that the interviews you've done up to this point that
19 the ah - what do they call the invest - the Army. G-2
20 is, G-2 is a much higher level, I mean, G-2 really is
21 sort of spies and espionage, but then there's a level
22 that - like the code of a detective in civilian life.
23 Do you remember that?
24 LE I've, I haven't dealt with the military that
25 much so I not aware.

Page 3

1 I think, it must have been more than a year in
2 Washington because basic training runs what, 2 or 3
3 months, something like that. And then I got hooked -
4 oh this is kind of interesting. I got chosen for
5 something called leader training, and I later heard
6 that lesbians weren't particularly picked for that
7 because the women rarely related to them. I mean this
8 was told to me unofficial, unofficially - some other
9 WAC told me that and I really bristled at that because
10 well why'd they pick me? (laughter) (inaudible) more
11 than I did. But ah, I really didn't, didn't like the
12 whole situation for some reason and managed to get
13 assigned up to Washington, DC which was considered a
14 very plush post, and ah so I must have been in
15 Washington for about a year and a half. That was
16 probably about '52, '53 and then I went to Italy and
17 all that stuff. Also, there also was a little period
18 there I went, I went back to the training base for OCS
19 which I flunked right at the end.
20 LE What's OCS mean?
21 BD Officer, Officer Candidate School, non-military
22 attitude.
23 LE Oh that was your problem basically.
24 BD Ninety-nine (inaudible) average, but non-
25 military attitude, with which I agree. But there

Page 2

1 BD CIA or something, I can't remember the
2 initials but it sounded real good; I'll have to think
3 about it, my mind is useless. I'm getting old
4 (laughter).
5 LE I feel like it sometimes.
6 BD I just noticed on your resume, well you didn't
7 give a date.
8 LE I'm 40 years old.
9 BD Youngster. Well, anyway the question whether
10 to, whether this order sort of put the investigating
11 people on this one, which would have resulted in
12 dishonorable discharge and court martial and all that
13 junk. (Inaudible) there was no many of them, and to
14 uncover that many would give a very, very bad image
15 and so on. And, my boss, god knows what she was. A
16 little bit too fond of me I would say but then ah, I
17 don't know, decided and had got the concurrence of the
18 general that rather than trying to prove these women
19 were doing, what they were doing, (inaudible)
20 overwhelmingly clear, overwhelmingly clear that
21 something was going on. But just to avoid the
22 messiness of it, the investigating - they identified
23 who they were and as far as possible identified
24 pairs, and then shipping orders were cut and they were
25 also dispersed. (Inaudible) which sounded terrible in

Page 4

1 a way, I mean, I remember having very mixed feelings
2 about it, feeling it was good that anyone didn't get
3 court martialed. And also feeling that they were just
4 damned stupid to let - so open in their activities
5 that they got caught, you know. They were sent
6 everywhere and I don't know if they realized that this
7 was intentionally done or not.

8 LE You said that they were identified through
9 investigation. Do you remember who, sort of official
10 investigation? Sounds like they were keeping this out
11 of the hands of the investigative -

12 BD Well, ah, I guess all that was asked of the
13 detective, sorry I can't remember the name of that
14 group, all that was asked of them is to, was to
15 pinpoint all the people who were in this group. My
16 impression was that it might (5 seconds inaudible).
17 So that was my first military brush.

18 ISI:100-199

19 LE When you said general, was it the male general
20 over the ranks?

21 BD The male general 'cause there aren't any - as
22 far as I know there may be now a WAC general, but
23 actually the highest rank was (5 seconds inaudible).
24 Which, with, you know, I mean this is okay for
25 straight people in a way, isn't it. I mean, the law,

Page 5

1 was really a step through a door that I wasn't going
2 to step back out of. And then it was so risky, I
3 mean, especially, you know I hadn't just gone through
4 this stuff not just, I think this was six months after
5 that.

6 LE You had no inkling when you were in Washington
7 that -

8 BD That there was a possibility for me? Oh, I
9 think (inaudible). One of the people who read
10 (inaudible) and ah. The whole idea of games always
11 interested - I discovered, actually, just, just by
12 vibes which has nothing to do with, with history. I
13 discovered many, many years later that my mother was,
14 was gay before she got married. I just, you know,
15 just by a fluke I found that out. And I said, this -
16 the inevitable result of that was that she spoke a
17 certain amount of, you know, to the degree that that
18 generation would. Understand my mother is now 80, 82
19 years old, so that generation (inaudible and
20 laughter). What's a hermaphrodite, momma? (laughs)

21 LE So she, she accepts, she's spoken to some of
22 your friends?

23 BD Well, she's spoke, she's spoke of it, it was,
24 it was, it was (inaudible). She has friends who are
25 married (inaudible). And it's not, it is not good to

Page 7

1 military law was that, that, that they, that, that's
2 grounds for discharge.

3 LE Well especially in '52, '53 in Washington,
4 'cause it was right in the heart, you know, of
5 (Inaudible).

6 BD Well, you understand this, this ah, enlightened
7 self interest and wish was, (inaudible) but primary
8 wish was - and boy we came into it (inaudible) the
9 reputation of, of our women and so on. Something had
10 to be done because, because it was being so blatant
11 and open that pretty soon, you know (laughs).

12 LE You said that, what, ah, you said that you
13 later came out just before you left the Army?

14 BD Oh, well, yeah, I myself then, let's see,
15 after, after that I went down to OCS, then I came back
16 and, and then I got maneuvers, doing maneuverings,
17 which you can do when you're in Washington, got
18 assigned to Italy, 'cause I wanted some overseas
19 travel. And ah, when I got to Italy, I came out in
20 Florence (laughs). I presume you don't care for the
21 lurid details. Someone also - so far as I know, ah,
22 no prior experience. Just, just was smitten, and we
23 went traveling to Florence to see the art museums.
24 And I remember being very scared. The next morning,
25 just, just, butterflies, 'cause, 'cause, you know, it

Page 6

1 grow up as a child (inaudible); it's very tough. You
2 must get married to a macho man, which is how all men
3 were in those days.

4 LE Yes. When you say, when you (inaudible) you
5 said you stepped through a door that you were unable
6 to step back, was that, that was your realization?

7 BD That, you know, I had, I had, I had finally
8 met my nature and accepted it, which I, there I was in
9 the, a corporal in the United States Army, you know,
10 having stepped through a door with a sergeant in the
11 United States Army. And I knew perfectly well that,
12 that extreme caution had to be followed. It's very
13 awkward.

14 LE Well, how did you feel about it?

15 BD You mean how did we manage our personal lives?

16 LE That, and, and how did you, well how did you
17 see your future about -

18 BD Well, of course, you know, in the beginning it
19 was - primary concern was having time together and,
20 and ah, fortunately the sergeant had a car which was
21 not common (inaudible) and they were very generous
22 with weekend passes and just little - we said that we
23 would control ourselves, that's all. I spent a lot of
24 time talking and never - there were, there were three
25 or four other people, you know, became gentle, careful

Page 8

1 overture to my (inaudible). Well, we lived in open
2 bays, you know. (inaudible). People perhaps
3 suspected, I don't know. I had been, ah, socially
4 involved with local Italians before, before this
5 happened. I was a great believer in when you're in a
6 foreign country, associate with foreigners, and I met
7 a bunch of people from the University of Pisa. And,
8 well it was hardly humorous was that, that ah, perhaps
9 half the base stopped not having sleeping with
10 Italians because of me, which was considered very,
11 very low class, you know, quite humorous. Because
12 university students, in terms of class, were miles
13 above others. And ah, then, actually I also had a
14 very nice friend, a guy named
15 Richard who, he was in the same office that I was,
16 and without question, a gay man. And he never, never
17 knew absolutely 100 percent totally straight, as
18 straight out as everyone. Richard was a very nice
19 man. Between my Italian friends and Richard, during
20 the week people were thoroughly confused and I sort of
21 like to some degree deliberately, allowed the talk to
22 go that way, to cover. It's a farce (laughter).
23 LE Well had you planned to stay in the military
24 before this period of time?
25 BD It was, I suppose at some deep level, when I

Page 9

1 ah, you know, sort of, spoken to the other people in
2 the dorm - it was a relatively small dorm. She had
3 spoken to the house mother - the house mother would
4 have thought Oh my goodness, I must do something about
5 this. House mother would have spoken to Dean
6 Whiffens. Dean Whiffens would sent a message that we
7 should come see him. At which point we heard that,
8 that charges had been leveled.
9 LE Was this like an interrogation?
10 BD Yeah, separate. She interviewed each of us
11 separately (inaudible). I think both of us were
12 sufficiently stunned (laughs). But it was quite clear
13 that if, if the charges had been provable, then we
14 have both been out of school. Or something would have
15 happened, I don't know (inaudible).
16 LE So were you, what happened after that? Sort of
17 (inaudible) (Phone rings).
18 BD No, excuse me for a second.
19 LE No, what were, were there any other
20 repercussion from this as far as how people treated
21 you?
22 BD You mean at the University. Only, no, I'd say,
23 I'd say that the other women in the dormitory were
24 really embarrassed and ashamed of themselves having,
25 you know, gone along with, with this suggestion.

Page 11

1 I really simply knew (inaudible) my people.
2 LE So you saw that, in some way, it would -
3 BD I should actually cut back. Cutting back, I
4 hadn't, I hadn't thought, when I was in, when I was
5 in, I was a student in Northwestern University and had
6 a most, most traumatic experience in which, in which
7 (inaudible) And ah, I had a roommate who was a
8 psychology major. And my psychology roommate leveled
9 the charge that (inaudible) and I were in a gay
10 relationship, which we weren't. We could have been,
11 if she'd waited, she'd waited about three weeks
12 (laughter). So there was that history too, knowing
13 that, knowing that, in that period that, let's see,
14 that would have been in the '40s where it was taken
15 very seriously these, these, no phone calls, closed
16 door interviews, separately and collectively, with the
17 Dean of Women. Very vigorous, sort of talking, with
18 this, this paranoia imagination and jealousy of my
19 roommate, who did indeed prevent my spending a lot of
20 time with that other person. She's right but -
21 LE What was the procedure (inaudible)?
22 BD What, at the university? Oh well, I suppose
23 (inaudible) I mean, this is really good from a
24 historical - but ah, the ah, I wish I, I can't
25 remember the girl's name, my roommate, (inaudible) was

Page 10

1 And, as a matter of fact, next semester, Anne and I
2 were roommates. We got (inaudible) was kind of like a
3 statement. No, ah, I'd say the only impact of it was
4 that it showed you (inaudible) in that period, I mean
5 (inaudible). And ah, I would say probably prevented
6 anything developing then, which (inaudible).
7 LE How did you make it so you could go into the
8 Army?
9 BD Well, it was, believe it or not, in those days
10 we were most patriotic. It was partly that and when I
11 think the, the sort of image, image of the gay
12 movement (inaudible) lesbian WACS and you did. You
13 knew that's where they were.
14 LE Is that more of the subconscious?
15 BD Volunteer, yeah, yeah, at some, at some level I
16 think I felt that (inaudible) and you know, small town
17 girl (inaudible) get out and see the world. So far,
18 all I'd seen of the world was Evanston, Illinois. You
19 know, Chicago was very, seeing the world. And I knew
20 there was more to it than that. Well, so that was
21 (inaudible) Korea period in
22 which ah we really, really weren't very anxious, we
23 had these maps, take these stickpins and just see the
24 enemy (long pause).
25 LE You said earlier before you left the military

Page 12

1 that you, did you get in trouble or were discovered?
 2 I thought you said (inaudible) words.
 3 BD I had clearance troubles in the Army. It
 4 wasn't, it wasn't related to homosexuality. I had
 5 clearance troubles. My clearance troubles, ah, you
 6 know, you never know, how (inaudible) ordinarily you
 7 don't know why you're denied clearance. Washington
 8 didn't want you to (inaudible) the whole shebang.
 9 And she kind of took a peek at my records and I really
 10 was puzzled. And she told me that it had something to
 11 do with my relatives and nothing I could do anything
 12 about and even to suspect something I didn't know and
 13 that she couldn't, she didn't dare tell me any more
 14 than that. (Phone rings) I don't believe this;
 15 really Len, I didn't expect any phone calls.
 16 Please (inaudible) you don't need; you can't just
 17 ignore them. Garbage is easy to throw away.
 18 LE Well maybe we should go back to, you had this
 19 relationship with this woman in Italy. So what
 20 happened with that?
 21 BD Oh yeah, okay.
 22 LE I'm interested in how, how the Army affects -
 23 BD Yeah, okay. Well, I was discharged first. I
 24 must confess, she tried to persuade me to stay on and
 25 I couldn't see it. And ah, I took, 'cause I wanted to

Page 13

1 LE That was around '55, '56
 2 BD I think it was about '55. But her discharge
 3 had nothing, overtly, to do with gay life (inaudible
 4 for about ten seconds).
 5 LE (inaudible) on the phone you mentioned you said
 6 you would talk about your attitudes and also about
 7 other people's attitudes (inaudible) Washington.
 8 BD Oh, that, the Washington thing, yeah. But I
 9 meant the Washington, the subsequent, the Treasury
 10 thing. Which now comes a lot of years later.
 11 LE (inaudible) I want to backtrack for a second on
 12 Washington - I want you to tell me about both your
 13 attitude and other people's attitudes.
 14 BD No, I didn't mean Washington military, I meant
 15 Washington, Washington Treasury.
 16 LE Well, let me ask you a couple more questions
 17 about Washington. Were you aware of the anti gay
 18 (inaudible) current in Washington at all?
 19 BD You mean the McCarthy stuff and so on.
 20 LE Yeah, as far as it was -
 21 BD Scarcely at all, you know, because, because I
 22 (inaudible) and it came to a sort of peak and in fact
 23 it wasn't until I was living in New York City with yet
 24 another lover who dragged me all the time to art shows
 25 and so on, that ah, and we're outside (inaudible) and

Page 15

1 go back and go to school. I had not found the Army a
 2 real career opportunity, shall we say. It sort of had
 3 served its purpose, right? I got travel, I got the GI
 4 Bill, I'd spent three years saying Yes Sir to total
 5 idiots. So I took my discharge with the idea that she
 6 would try to get herself reassigned to San Francisco.
 7 And I ah, (inaudible). And I had to do a semester in
 8 undergraduate work that I did down at Fresno State
 9 (inaudible) and she did get herself reassigned to the
 10 Presidio so she did get to San Francisco. You're a
 11 very good interviewer, and let me think. Bought a
 12 mobile home, and she was assigned to the motor shop at
 13 the Presidio - there was some kind of mess there, but
 14 I can't quite figure out when (inaudible) she got
 15 reassigned to Monterey - she resisted tremendously,
 16 and she's kind of a goofy person actually, but she
 17 really was. Unfortunately (inaudible) pretty
 18 neurotic. (Inaudible) consequence of environment.
 19 And ah, I can't remember - in Monterey, in Monterey,
 20 she just, she just really ah became battle scarred I
 21 felt and it had nothing to do with (inaudible) and
 22 got, got an honorable discharge that had some illness
 23 attached to it. (several seconds inaudible) a
 24 neurotic, neurotic, neurotic woman who couldn't resist
 25 me but who also wished she weren't gay. (inaudible)

Page 14

1 she says, went to one of those documentaries about
 2 McCarthy and, that was even the first I had seen any
 3 video - newspapers - we were really quite unaware of
 4 those things, really were, I mean it just wasn't in
 5 the focus of our attention at all. And curiously, I
 6 had a job, I had a (inaudible) that involved giving
 7 ah, I was the training person in that once a week I
 8 had to do certain things - news (inaudible) and so on;
 9 it just never came up somehow. It's just, I don't
 10 know, it just wasn't in the forefront anyway.
 11 LE No, that's interesting. You, you really look
 12 at the period now that's called the McCarthy period
 13 and everybody makes the assumption that that was
 14 everybody was, you know, more or less concerned with
 15 the thing and, you know, I don't think it was.
 16 BD I guess I could say - like answers, like
 17 before, before I became involved with Joan, anyway,
 18 there were, there was, there was, there were a number
 19 of these sort of stereotype gay/butch sergeants, all
 20 sergeants, you know, with all kinds of stripes down
 21 their arm. I forget, master sergeants (inaudible)
 22 high ranking sergeants, and they were, they were, they
 23 were always two or three of those in any company and
 24 you simply knew that they were sort of diesel dyke
 25 types that fit the caricature of (inaudible). Which,

Page 16

1 of course, (inaudible) you pictured yourself.
 2 (laughs). And when a, when Joan and I became
 3 involved, then we sort of, sort of delicately found
 4 some others. These were not at all obvious. I, I
 5 think Joan is obvious. She almost, she approached the
 6 stereotype (inaudible) During that, that sort of nest
 7 of people (inaudible) I was sort of surprised that
 8 they were part of the group.
 9 LE Was that the term that was used, lesbian
 10 nest?
 11 BD The word nest was used. (inaudible)
 12 speculation on what they did also.
 13 LE Within the office, or -
 14 BD Yeah, very imaginative I must say. Speculation
 15 on things that have never subsequently (laughter) -
 16 somebody does these things (laughter).
 17 LE Well, maybe you should tell me about what
 18 happened later.
 19 BD Okay, so years go by, and fortunately I part
 20 company with Joan. I get my doctorate with the GI
 21 Bill, and, find a good head shrinker and work out all
 22 this stuff about Joan (inaudible) and ah, let me
 23 think, go back.
 24 LE (Inaudible). That's what I'm kind of
 25 interested in is how people bear the thing (inaudible)

Page 17

1 his (inaudible) degree (inaudible) and ah, and he
 2 seemed to be, you know, sort of neutral and stuff.
 3 But a point came that I met ah, Alma, and ah, that's
 4 began, began a relationship. And when it came to let
 5 him know that that had happened, he essentially,
 6 essentially just about had a hernia. And he basically
 7 said, in fact he actually said that ah, you can be
 8 relatively happy with her, and he essentially said
 9 stick with me and I'll make you perfect. And you have
 10 to choose and, and sent me back to think about it.
 11 I'd been using, you know, tranquilizers all over the
 12 place and all kinds of problems and so on, god, you
 13 now. At least when I was with Alma, dropped the
 14 tranquilizers and life looked good (Laughter).
 15 (Inaudible) dropped these damn tranquilizers which I
 16 was taking, you know, four times a day. And when I
 17 thought about it, I went back and I said hey you know,
 18 I thought about what you said. And there are very few
 19 people who are just relatively happy, and so I'm
 20 happy. So I don't know you (laughter). But I mean he
 21 really did force a choice. And he really said he
 22 wouldn't see me if I didn't drop her. So anyhow, the
 23 two extremes. Whether Dr. Hill would have done
 24 something like that if I got into a relationship, one
 25 doesn't really know, but I, I really don't think she

Page 19

1 What was -
 2 BD Okay, let me see about when it was I went to
 3 the head shrinker. It was that period, ay, let's see,
 4 was it right after I, just after I finished my
 5 doctorate, I had taken a job at the
 6 UC Santa Barbara. That would be 1959. And I was
 7 just very, very lucky. There are two head shrinker
 8 parts here. One, obviously you're not, you're not
 9 going to able to generalize because we were so
 10 opposite. The first was a really wonderful old woman
 11 that had been a child psychiatrist all her life and
 12 was retired and ah, Dr. Hill, just a wise old woman
 13 more than a psychiatrist by the book. And not, not
 14 any way surprised or critical or alarmed or anything
 15 about the whole episode of Joan, very supportive. It
 16 was, Joan was overwhelmingly (inaudible), she looked
 17 like my mother. When we would go down to visit my
 18 parents, people would often take her for the daughter,
 19 not me - that kind of thing, you know. Then all this
 20 stuff, I mean. You can document this, just let it
 21 through, I mean. It was not as much an issue as a lot
 22 of other things which is quite a - total thing. Then
 23 I went back to the University of Illinois on Dr.
 24 Hill's advice - I know she moved away, and ah, found
 25 another psychiatrist who was a young man working for

Page 18

1 would have. I think she would have told to me
 2 investigate further, I'm just repeating and getting
 3 the same kind of person, getting into the same kind of
 4 mess and all those things. It's just a total idea; I
 5 doubt she would have had any objection, but this guy,
 6 you know I can't even - Johnson - he was really, I
 7 mean, just, really it's, he was alarmed, he was
 8 scared, he was stressed, he couldn't handle it.
 9 (pause) Her previous lover, by the way, was one of
 10 his colleagues, although she was very closeted.
 11 LE Oh really. Did he know that?
 12 BD I mean I - so then I was married to a wimp.
 13 She was, she was the height of it, you know - I mean
 14 she, I mean the kind, the closet's a closet, I mean,
 15 some people in the
 16 closet can be scared to death. And there's
 17 something that (inaudible). I mean some people are in
 18 the closet because they're ashamed of themselves.
 19 That category.
 20 LE You sometimes tend to really force each other.
 21 BD And be practical and scared.
 22 LE Well, you know (inaudible) it's hard enough to
 23 be ashamed (inaudible).
 24 BD Oh, I see what you're saying, yeah, yeah. I
 25 think, I think some people are closeted because they

Page 20

1 haven't, they haven't come out to themselves. And I,
2 I, I, I'm really, I'm sorry about it because I should
3 be patient with them, but I'm not (inaudible) to some
4 degree. I'm afraid I would just (inaudible).
5 LE I guess this brings us to the -
6 BD Oh, okay. Alright, so, so, ah, Alma and
7 (inaudible) and I and both of the families and, you
8 know, once again, she wanted me to stay on it and lie
9 and sort of be a satellite of the family. She was
10 very, you know, you can come with me if you want, or
11 not - I'm going. And I was offered a job at a
12 treasury which - my specialty is tax, public finance
13 and it's an assignment that if you're going to be a
14 successful tax economist, you really, really would
15 have to (inaudible) and take extensive treasury so
16 when I was offered it, there was no way I was going to
17 turn that down in order to, you know, this - really
18 nice relationship (inaudible) so she divorced me.
19 Then after I had been there about nine months or ten
20 months, my boss asked would I consider doing one more
21 year. Ordinarily, ordinarily you do just, you do a
22 year or maybe two. And I said yeah, but did he
23 realize I hadn't got my clearance yet. What?
24 (inaudible) must just be some bureaucratic tangle, and
25 so again, came back a couple days later, absolutely

Page 21

1 remember at a staff meeting shortly after all this had
2 come up, we were sitting around the table discussing
3 some issue of, I don't know, (inaudible) and I
4 happened to look up and see Surrey looking at me in a
5 kind of a, kind of, I mean, I caught him in, and he
6 went absolutely red (laughter). Harvey was my
7 immediate boss, extremely supportive, and ah, you
8 know, he'd say, I mean little things, told me to be
9 careful, and he acknowledged. And I sort of, you
10 know, I had to decide what to do because it really, it
11 really was funny. They really didn't have anything
12 against me, but on the other hand, I could, you know,
13 as long as I, as long as I didn't live my private
14 life, they didn't have anything against me, and ah.
15 And we were at that point going to the doctor for
16 something, a lady doctor (inaudible) and she said
17 well, she'd been in Washington a long time and it was
18 her experience that once there was a question about
19 your security, you're never going to go anywhere.
20 Anyhow, three or four weeks after that, I was, I was
21 home sick. Alma had gone to work (inaudible) I was
22 getting a little nervous; I knew my job could
23 disappear. Anyway, I had a cold of all things just
24 like today, and ah, she had borrowed my only clean
25 girdle (laughs). This phone came, and Harvey said,

Page 23

1 stunned. He said I have just discovered that your
2 clearance papers have been sitting in the code box ah.
3 You'll notice I have trouble with clearance. I don't
4 suppose you remember who was head of Secret Service in
5 19, 19, late 1960s. Anyway, this man had been holding
6 my papers, absolutely. They'd been in some box and
7 they'd been.
8 BD At that point. And they weren't that, they
9 weren't that widely used. By now we know a lot about
10 them. I knew they so little respected admiration
11 coming from. Not very many people really realized
12 that they couldn't go in until a polygraph. And it
13 was like, you know, you're right. (laughter) And we
14 wouldn't go through it ourselves. But anyway part of
15 it (inaudible) about it. Meanwhile, - and I suppose.
16 What was, what was sort of between meaningful was the
17 support of the people around me. Stanley Surrey,
18 these are names (inaudible) Stan Surrey was an
19 extremely eminent way up in the world economist-
20 financier and so on - Harvard professor - important
21 part of the Treasury staff. Very, very shy guy,
22 workaholic. And Harvey Kooten, then Stanley Surrey
23 said, well couldn't we just send her to a psychiatrist
24 or something and keep her? (laughs) He was like
25 this, you know, he was a very jumpy nervous. I

Page 22

1 said there were some, there's some people from New
2 York who were looking for an economist and if I could
3 come in, they would like to talk to me. (laughs) You
4 know, I didn't have anything to wear, dirty clothes,
5 got my dirty girdle out, and went zooming in, my nose
6 running. You know a job in New York, the dream of
7 every gay person to live in New York. My great good
8 fortune, my blackboard was full of these very
9 impressive mathematical squiggles where I had tried to
10 work something out. I mean it meant nothing, but it
11 looked very impressive. And ah, they then talked,
12 they just went ahead and made me an offer, and I took
13 it. So, so I knew I was denied clearance. I just
14 moved out of it. So with the help of my boss, he set
15 it up for me. And the other thing that was beautiful
16 was that, that I would be (inaudible). They were
17 told. I asked Harvey to tell before I came in that,
18 that I had this clearance problem. So they knew the
19 only reason they could hire me was because of that
20 clearance.

21 LE (inaudible)

22 BD They knew generally, yeah, they knew generally.
23 (inaudible) and ah, it was, it was a lesser job than
24 I would have taken (inaudible). I don't know if you
25 know about economists, they're very snooty like well

Page 24

1 (inaudible). Rungs of elite and people who get their
2 doctorates from the Ivy League, the Ivy League and
3 Berkeley and University of Michigan are top. And you
4 only work at these institutions or like the job at the
5 Treasury, and there are certain, there are certain
6 places you work if you're from those, those schools.
7 I mean, if you, if you, are, I mean, elite at those
8 schools. You get your straight A's and all that
9 stuff. And Tax Foundation was definitely not a place
10 that, that (inaudible) went to at that time. I was
11 the first, first - they had this, this, this man that
12 came to interview - professor at Columbia, who was
13 there as a kind of a consultant, and because Lowell
14 was there as a consultant was the only reason I was
15 willing to end all my desperation, you know. And the
16 desire to go to New York, but so, so I took a sort of
17 a lesser job because of the circumstances. Actually,
18 as it turned out, it was the beginning of the
19 upgrading of the institution. Yeah, yeah. When I
20 went there then, you know, there was one person from a
21 top drawer university, and more came and its
22 reputation shot up. (inaudible). And, and then
23 because I had been hired simply because I was gay, I
24 didn't have to be closeted anymore; it was marvelous,
25 marvelous. It was the end of that.

Page 25

1 classic. Well, you know about books, their short life
2 and so on, right? Patience and Sarah not only we
3 published ourselves back in ah, about 1960. She was,
4 she was a published author; this was the first gay
5 book she wrote. And her agent wouldn't handle it,
6 publisher turned it down, I mean, it got, it got
7 rejected so many places so many times, because of the
8 subject matter. And we simply finally decided to
9 publish it ourselves. And then McGraw-Hill picked it
10 up (inaudible) and that was in '65 and it's still a
11 (inaudible).
12 LE Yeah, I promise I'll look it up.
13 BD And there are, there are, there are Patience
14 and Sarah quotes. You scarcely ever meet a, meet a
15 lesbian who hasn't read it.
16 LE (inaudible)
17 BD Good, sure, I mean you guys know ah.
18 (laughter) Well, yeah, but you have classics over
19 your, for instance, Fritz, Fritz' book, Fritz Peters'
20 book.
21 LE Oh, (inaudible)
22 BD Yeah, Fritz, by the way, being a friend of
23 mine.
24 LE Oh well, he isn't gay though, is he?
25 BD (inaudible) that happened later on. I didn't

Page 27

1 LE So it did work out very well for you.
2 BD It actually worked out real well, yeah, real
3 well. (inaudible)
4 LE That wasn't these, the feeling you had of -
5 BD Well, at the moment it was, it was mixed. I
6 mean, I, I, I really, you know, I spoke to myself very
7 sternly about the fact that Lowell was a Columbia man
8 was with them and that it was okay. But I also knew
9 that I really didn't have that much choice and, I
10 mean,
11 1S2:100-199
12 I knew that I couldn't, couldn't (inaudible) long
13 enough in, in Washington to, to - I mean finding these
14 other jobs takes a while. And here, here this came
15 out of nowhere, I mean ah. And actually, come to
16 think of it, when I, when I took the thing was a, was
17 a, was a special project assignment that - then later,
18 later got moved into a permanent job. So there we
19 were in New York, Alma and I, and a whole new life
20 began. As a matter of fact, shortly thereafter she
21 began writing Patience and Sarah.
22 LE I'm afraid I'm not familiar with her.
23 BD (inaudible) Well, Patience and Sarah is, is
24 a, it's, well, when New York Times reviewed it, they
25 said it was a successful Well of Loneliness, it's a

Page 26

1 meet him in the gay world; I met him in the
2 (inaudible) world. (long pause) I don't balance it;
3 it makes this horrible noise (inaudible and laughter).
4 So, I suppose, see, part of, part of what's wrong with
5 it here is, is I went through seven of the agents,
6 but, I mean, Alma was the author of Patience and
7 Sarah, was also experiencing the Secret Service
8 thing.
9 LE Oh, is that, that part of it?
10 BD Well, it's not in it, no. Patience and
11 Sarah is a, is a historical novel. Well, it's, it's,
12 ah, it's about, ah, two, it's semi, semi, it's based,
13 it's a fiction spin-off on a real life situation.
14 There was a painter, early American painter, named
15 Mary Ann Wilson who lived with her, as they say in
16 those days, her (inaudible) friend, Miss Brundage.
17 And she did these beautiful, beautiful primitives.
18 One day when Alma and I were traveling upstate in
19 Cooperstown. You know it? Doesn't matter - there's a
20 lot of early American stuff up there, walked into a
21 museum, and there's some of Mary Ann's paintings with
22 this little explanation. And Alma had gone and I
23 (inaudible sound) and anyway she came back and, looked
24 at the paintings and (inaudible) historically - they
25 just caught her imagination. And she'd been stuck -

Page 28

1 she'd been trying to write new material and just
2 couldn't because she worried so about invasion of
3 privacy and, here was the perfect format because she,
4 she then made, made her, a story based on these two
5 women - the way she thought it could have happened to
6 them. And placed it back in ah, in their period of
7 time, which was what, really 1800, and placed the
8 characters on her and me. I was, I was Mary Ann, and
9 the book gets (inaudible) she was Miss Brundage
10 (inaudible) Sarah. When we published it, we called it
11 A Place for Us, which was a much nicer title but
12 when McGraw-Hill bought it, they renamed it. If it's,
13 it now has, it has editions in, well of course English
14 first, ah, French, Spanish, German, Dutch, Swedish,
15 on, on, on, and this month, end of this month, it's
16 being produced as the London equivalent of off-
17 Broadway is - it's being produced in London. The
18 play, under a Fine Arts Grant of the British
19 government, and it has almost come as a movie
20 (inaudible). Contract for a movie is very, very
21 profitable and it's, it's always fallen through at the
22 last. Please (inaudible). (Inaudible) took an option
23 on it (inaudible). I mean it stays alive, it stays
24 alive, and one of the maddening things is, is people
25 have, it's, it's still available in paperback, but

Page 29

1 but it's written that
2 beautifully. And I still own half of it. Every
3 time, every time one hopes for money, I keep thinking
4 oh maybe that movie will come. The agent by now hopes
5 that (inaudible) When I, when I went to New York, I
6 had that job which I got simply because I was gay. It
7 was so relaxing; it's kind of like, I remember I had
8 surgery once, and it wasn't until after I'd had
9 surgery I realized (inaudible) had paid for some
10 years, you know, you just, you just hardly noticed it,
11 it was just part of your total environment. Every,
12 every sentence - well you know, really, even before
13 you actually come out of (inaudible) closet,
14 LE You mean even before you come out to yourself?
15 BD Yeah, yeah, I mean, you really know, you know
16 in yourself, a long time before, okay, because of what
17 happens. It's interesting to watch the young people
18 nowadays; they don't have to be so careful. There's a
19 part of me that says you don't get as good a class of
20 lesbians these days (laughter). I mean I, I sort of
21 scold myself for that idea, but at the same time, Len,
22 in, in the '50s and '60s, you had to really need to
23 live our life, because you had to pay such a high
24 price for it, you know. So there's a kind of a
25 screening process and, and, we certainly didn't have

Page 31

1 hardback, of course, they don't last very long. The
2 people who have the paperback rights are really,
3 really (inaudible) about it, just
4 barely keep it in print 'cause they keep hoping
5 that the movie will happen, at which time -
6 Ballantine's trying to buy it and they won't let go of
7 it. Fawcett Press (inaudible). Since '69 it's
8 (inaudible) And, as I say, I hardly ever meet anybody
9 who, who, if it comes up, hasn't - - well I mean
10 women. 'Course now there are lots and lots of lesbian
11 books around (inaudible). And I guess it was, it was
12 the first one in which ah, there's a certain genre
13 that ah, where there's a fair amount of lesbian
14 activity but always, you know, the, the man gets the
15 girl in the end - one of them, one of them is
16 tragically left behind the other, you know, one sees
17 the light, kind of thing. And this is, this is the
18 first one that's not, not tragic, just, just loving
19 happy. It's a beautiful book, it really is
20 (inaudible). You know, you know basically, you know
21 (inaudible) at all?
22 LE Not really.
23 BD (inaudible) Generation gap (laughs). Maybe,
24 maybe it's, it's the most eminent living woman poet,
25 but ah, but May said it's not really a novel, it's,

Page 30

1 any (inaudible) people who were weak. I, I mean you
2 were, you were strong, or you, or you, or you
3 capitulated and tried to lead a straight life and just
4 were miserable. Now, of course - you get dabblers I
5 think - seriously.
6 LE That's was our - people say well that was not
7 my concern; it was just too easy for me to do things
8 (inaudible).
9 BD OH, I should tell you, I should tell you, one
10 of the things that are interesting in terms of, of how
11 the people around me responded was that when all this
12 became an issue and while it was, you know, while I
13 was deciding and the signature, was holding off on
14 making the decision, Harvey, my boss, deliberately
15 gave me more highly classified work to work on than I
16 had worked on up to that point. Yeah, ah. I remember
17 for instance, I think, general - I, my specialty was
18 minerals taxation, and had to work on, on some
19 proposals that required my having access to Defense
20 Department documents that involved such things as, as
21 estimates on supplies of various critical materials
22 that (inaudible) essentially (inaudible) and things,
23 things like, you know, how many days we would need to
24 fold up in case of atomic attack and how many days in
25 case of this kind of attack, so, but but, but it

Page 32

1 required just unlimited access to these Defense
2 Department documents, which before I had never seen at
3 all. I know, I know Harvey brought those out, out, as
4 his, as his way of saying, hey, I trust you. I mean,
5 I really was very, very touched that ah, that ah, it
6 was stamped all over Top Secret, etc. etc. But, if I
7 had know that that job required clearance, I probably
8 wouldn't have gone 'cause of that other clearance
9 problem. But
10 LE But you never really expected 'cause you were
11 gay (inaudible)?
12 BD Well, I think also, also because of, of gay -
13 No, I knew gay, I knew gay was a clearance problem.
14 And, and I wouldn't, I wouldn't have asked, I
15 wouldn't have accepted the job. I just, it never
16 occurred to me that working for the Treasury
17 Department making economic decisions would seem to be,
18 but it seemed that the job was considered vital to the
19 policy of the United States.
20 LE To the point where they even put things in the
21 ceiling.
22 BD Yeah, yeah, it, it, it, I don't know, I mean it
23 was a lot of nonsense, but it was just a job that was
24 considered - and there was a kind of job there. I
25 mean, it was really neat, it was a nice time - Kennedy

Page 33

1 was going on a lot. The official policy might be very
2 anti-gay whereas people, I think, tend to be more
3 liberal minded.
4 BD Yeah, especially when there's a question of
5 somebody who had already been in the department, they
6 already knew of, was functioning well. I think, ah, I
7 think the other thing too is, is, you know, especially
8 in the old days when we had to be closeted, people
9 didn't know what a gay person looked like. And so,
10 they had only, only the, you know, our, our outer
11 extremes to go by - swishy fellows and diesel dyke
12 women, and ah, so, it always was puzzling to them when
13 there was somebody who looked to them like just an
14 ordinary human being. By some fluke they find out
15 this person is living a double life. I remember when
16 I was in the Unitarian Church, this is where
17 (inaudible) was, anyway. I was always being taken for
18 ah, Mrs. Lathrop, who was the mother of something like
19 seven children (laughter) I had just, kind of, that
20 sort of frumpy look, the mother of seven children.
21 Although I'm sure you've noticed that, that, that most
22 lesbians are, I mean, lesbians usually have a history
23 of being straight, in the old days.
24 LE (inaudible) usually coming out after marriage
25 or after a long period of time. That had lots to do

Page 35

1 was president then, and it was the kind of job where
2 once in a while Harvey would say well the President
3 liked your memo. Yeah, so it was nice, you know
4 (laughs) to think that one really had that kind of
5 influence - it was, it was, it was - all the same, it
6 was.
7 LE All through this period, I suspect that, that
8 people, these people you come in contact with,
9 (inaudible) official anti-gay policy, I suspect these
10 people you came in contact with were more accepting
11 than, than the policy.
12 BD Oh sure, sure. People, I mean, you know,
13 people who knew you - and then there was nothing
14 alarming about you. You lived your life - I think, I
15 think people often, often were surprised. 'Course,
16 we're talking about Washington now?
17 LE Washington and in general I think. I know one
18 of the criticisms - there was a, there was a report
19 made in ah 1950, and one of the criticisms was the
20 department heads
21 were either covering, like we talked about in the
22 WACS, or they really, you know, had, didn't want to
23 bring any problems down on these people and they were
24 either transferring them or doing something to, to
25 cover up the issue. And I, and I suspect that that

Page 34

1 with when women couldn't support themselves.
2 BD Oh, yes. I know a lot of, well a whole large
3 circle that I was in in New York City, there were only
4 three, three of us who had never been married; I'm one
5 of them. And most of them who had been married lots
6 of grandchildren. So, of course, we looked kind of
7 like housewives, except (inaudible) Bay Area career
8 women. Well, I don't remember (inaudible). I'm
9 sorry, you know, my eye

END OF INTERVIEW

Page 36

	-#-		-9-	anti (1) 15:17	basic (1) 2:2	British (1) 29:18
	#00-01 (1) 1:10		94103 (1) 1:4	anti-gay (2) 34:9	battle (1) 14:20	Broadway (1) 29:17
	#1 (1) 1:5		973 (1) 1:3	35:2	Bay (1) 36:7	brought (1) 33:3
	#400 (1) 1:3			anxious (1) 12:22	bays (1) 9:2	Brundage (2) 28:16
			-A-	Anyhow (1) 23:20	BD (61) 1:14 1:16	29:9
	-'-			anyhow (1) 19:22	1:20 1:25 2:21	brush (1) 5:17
	'40s (1) 10:14		A's (1) 25:8	Anyway (2) 22:5	2:24 4:1 4:6	bunch (1) 9:7
	'50s (1) 31:22		able (1) 18:9	23:23	4:9 5:12 5:21	bureaucratic (1)
	'51 (1) 1:25		above (1) 9:13	anyway (6) 4:9	6:6 6:14 7:8	21:24
	'52 (2) 2:16 6:3		absolutely (4) 9:17	16:10 16:17 22:14	7:23 8:7 8:15	butterflies (1) 6:25
	'53 (2) 2:16 6:3		21:25 22:6 23:6	28:23 35:17	8:18 9:25 10:3	buy (1) 30:6
	'55 (3) 1:13 15:1		accepted (2) 8:8	approached (1) 17:5	10:22 11:10 11:18	
	15:2		33:15	Area (1) 36:7	11:22 12:9 12:15	-C-
	'56 (1) 15:1		accepting (1) 34:10	area (1) 1:12	13:3 13:21 13:23	CA (1) 1:4
	'60s (1) 31:22		accepts (1) 7:21	arm (1) 16:21	15:2 15:8 15:14	ca (1) 1:7
	'65 (1) 27:10		access (2) 32:19	Army (10) 1:15	15:19 15:21 16:16	calls (2) 10:15 13:15
	'69 (1) 30:7		33:1	3:6 3:19 6:13	17:11 17:14 17:19	Candidate (1) 2:21
	'Course (2) 30:10		acknowledged (1)	8:9 8:11 12:8	18:2 20:12 20:21	capitulated (1) 32:3
	34:15		23:9	13:3 13:22 14:1	20:24 21:6 22:8	car (1) 8:20
			activities (1) 5:4	art (2) 6:23 15:24	24:22 26:2 26:5	care (1) 6:20
	-1-		activity (1) 30:14	Arts (1) 29:18	26:23 27:13 27:17	career (2) 14:2
	1 (1) 1:8		admiration (1) 22:10	ashamed (3) 11:24	27:22 27:25 28:10	36:7
	100 (1) 9:17		advice (1) 18:24	20:18 20:23	30:23 31:15 32:9	careful (3) 8:25
	1800 (1) 29:7		affects (1) 13:22	assigned (4) 2:13	33:12 33:22 34:12	23:9 31:18
	19 (2) 22:5 22:5		afraid (2) 21:4	3:4 6:18 14:12	bear (1) 17:25	caricature (1) 16:25
	1931 (1) 1:7		again (2) 21:8	assignment (2) 21:13	beautiful (4) 24:15	case (2) 32:24 32:25
	1950 (2) 1:13 34:19		26:22	26:17	28:17 28:17 30:19	category (1) 20:19
	1959 (1) 18:6		agents (1) 28:5	associate (1) 9:6	beautifully (1) 31:2	caught (3) 5:5
	1960 (1) 27:3		21:25	assumption (1) 16:13	became (5) 8:25	23:5 28:25
	1960s (1) 22:5		against (2) 23:12	atomic (1) 32:24	14:20 16:17 17:2	caution (1) 8:12
	1S1:100-199 (1)		23:14	attached (1) 14:23	beginning (2) 8:18	ceiling (1) 33:21
	5:18		agent (2) 27:5	attack (2) 32:24	25:18	certain (5) 7:17
	1S2:100-199 (1)		31:4	32:25	behind (1) 30:16	16:8 25:5 25:5
	26:11		agents (1) 28:5	attention (1) 16:5	believer (1) 9:5	30:12
	-2-		agree (1) 2:25	attitude (3) 2:22	belonged (1) 3:16	certainly (1) 31:25
	2 (1) 2:2		ahead (1) 24:12	2:25 15:13	Berkeley (1) 25:3	characters (1) 29:8
	-3-		aide (1) 3:4	attitudes (3) 15:6	Betty (1) 1:6	charge (3) 3:5
	3 (1) 2:2		alarmed (2) 18:14	15:7 15:13	Between (1) 9:19	3:8 10:9
	-4-		20:7	author (2) 27:4	between (1) 22:16	charges (2) 11:8
	40 (1) 4:8		alarming (1) 34:14	28:6	Bill (2) 14:4 17:21	11:13
	415 (1) 1:5		alive (2) 29:23 29:24	available (1) 29:25	Birth (1) 1:7	Chicago (1) 12:19
	-5-		allowed (1) 9:21	average (1) 2:24	bit (1) 4:16	child (2) 8:1 18:11
	5 (2) 5:16 5:23		Alma (8) 19:3	avoid (1) 4:21	blackboard (1) 24:8	children (2) 35:19
	5/7/83 (1) 1:9		19:13 21:6 23:21	aware (2) 3:25	blatant (1) 6:10	35:20
	-7-		26:19 28:6 28:18	15:17	book (6) 18:13 27:5	choice (2) 19:21
	777-5455 (1) 1:5		28:22	away (2) 13:17	27:19 27:20 29:9	26:9
	-8-		almost (3) 1:21	18:24	30:19	choose (1) 19:10
	80 (1) 7:18		17:5 29:19	awkward (1) 8:13	books (2) 27:1	chosen (1) 2:4
	82 (1) 7:18		along (1) 11:25	ay (1) 18:3	30:11	Church (1) 35:16
			Alright (1) 21:6	-B-	borrowed (1) 23:24	CIA (1) 4:1
			always (6) 7:10	backtrack (1) 15:11	boss (5) 4:15 21:20	circle (1) 36:3
			16:23 29:21 30:14	bad (1) 4:14	23:7 24:14 32:14	circumstances (1)
			35:12 35:17	balance (1) 28:2	Bought (1) 14:11	25:17
			American (2) 28:14	Ballantine's (1) 30:6	bought (1) 29:12	City (2) 15:23 36:3
			28:20	Barbara (1) 18:6	box (2) 22:2 22:6	civilian (1) 3:22
			amount (3) 3:9	barely (1) 30:4	boy (1) 6:8	class (3) 9:11 9:12
			7:17 30:13	base (3) 1:22 2:18	bring (1) 34:23	31:19
			Ann (2) 28:15 29:8	9:9	brings (1) 21:5	classic (1) 27:1
			Ann's (1) 28:21	based (2) 28:12	bristled (1) 2:9	classics (1) 27:18
			Anne (1) 12:1	29:4		classified (1) 32:15
			answers (1) 16:16			

clean (1) 23:24	covering (1) 34:21	discharge (5) 4:12 6:2 14:5 14:22 15:2	eminent (2) 22:19 30:24	few (1) 19:18
clear (3) 4:20 4:20 11:12	critical (2) 18:14 32:21	discharged (1) 13:23	END (1) 36:10	fiction (1) 28:13
clearance (13) 13:3 13:5 13:5 13:7 21:23 22:2 22:3 24:13 24:18 24:20 33:7 33:8 33:13	criticisms (2) 34:18 34:19	discovered (4) 7:11 7:13 13:1 22:1	end (5) 2:19 25:15 25:25 29:15 30:15	figure (1) 14:14
closed (1) 10:15	curiously (1) 16:5	discussing (1) 23:2	enemy (1) 12:24	finally (2) 8:7 27:8
closet (4) 20:14 20:16 20:18 31:13	current (1) 15:18	dishonorable (1) 4:12	English (1) 29:13	finance (1) 21:12
closet's (1) 20:14	cut (2) 4:24 10:3	dispersed (1) 4:25	enlightened (4) 6:6	financier (1) 22:20
closeted (4) 20:10 20:25 25:24 35:8	Cutting (1) 10:3	divorced (1) 21:18	environment (2) 14:18 31:11	finding (1) 26:13
clothes (1) 24:4	-D-	doctor (2) 23:15 23:16	episode (1) 18:15	Fine (1) 29:18
code (2) 3:22 22:2	dabblers (1) 32:4	doctorate (2) 17:20 18:5	equivalent (2) 29:16	finished (4) 18:4
cold (1) 23:23	damn (1) 19:15	doctorates (1) 25:2	especially (4) 6:3 7:3 35:4 35:7	first (10) 5:17 13:23 16:2 18:10 25:11 25:11 27:4 29:14 30:12 30:18
colleagues (1) 20:10	danned (1) 5:4	document (1) 18:20	espionage (1) 3:21	fit (1) 16:25
collectively (1) 10:16	dare (1) 13:13	documentaries (1) 16:1	essentially (4) 19:5 19:6 19:8 32:22	Florence (2) 6:20 6:23
Columbia (2) 25:12 26:7	Date (1) 1:7	documents (2) 32:20 33:2	estimates (1) 32:21	fluke (2) 7:15 35:14
coming (2) 22:11 35:24	date (1) 4:7	Doesn't (1) 28:19	etc (2) 33:6 33:6	flunked (1) 2:19
common (1) 8:21	daughter (1) 18:18	doesn't (1) 19:25	Evan (1) 1:8	focus (1) 16:5
companies (2) 3:7 3:16	days (9) 8:3 12:9 21:25 28:16 31:20 32:23 32:24 35:8	done (4) 3:18 5:7 6:10 19:23	Evanston (1) 12:18	fold (1) 32:24
company (3) 3:16 16:23 17:20	DC (1) 2:13	door (4) 7:1 8:5 8:10 10:16	everybody (2) 16:13 16:14	followed (1) 8:12
concern (2) 8:19 32:7	dealt (1) 3:24	dorm (2) 11:2 11:2	everywhere (4) 5:6	fond (1) 4:16
concerned (2) 1:12 16:14	Dean (3) 10:17 11:5 11:6	dormitory (1) 11:23	except (1) 36:7	force (2) 19:21 20:20
concurrency (1) 4:17	death (1) 20:16	double (1) 35:15	excuse (1) 11:18	forefront (1) 16:10
confess (1) 13:24	decide (1) 23:10	doubt (1) 20:5	expect (1) 13:15	foreign (1) 9:6
confused (1) 9:20	decided (2) 4:17 27:8	down (7) 6:15 14:8 16:20 18:17 21:17 27:6 34:23	expected (1) 33:10	foreigners (1) 9:6
connection (1) 3:11	deciding (1) 32:13	Dr (3) 18:12 18:23 19:23	experience (3) 6:22 10:6 23:18	forget (1) 16:21
consequence (1) 14:18	decision (1) 32:14	dragged (1) 15:24	experiencing (1) 28:7	forgotten (1) 1:17
consider (1) 21:20	decisions (4) 33:17	drawer (1) 25:21	explanation (4) 28:22	format (1) 29:3
considered (4) 2:13 9:10 33:18 33:24	deep (1) 9:25	dream (1) 24:6	extensive (1) 21:15	fortunately (2) 8:20 17:19
consisted (1) 3:13	Defense (2) 32:19 33:1	drop (1) 19:22	extreme (1) 8:12	fortune (1) 24:8
consultant (2) 25:13 25:14	definitely (1) 25:9	dropped (2) 19:13 19:15	extremely (2) 22:19 23:7	found (4) 7:15 14:1 17:3 18:24
contact (2) 34:8 34:10	degree (4) 7:17 9:21 19:1 21:4	During (1) 17:6	extremes (2) 19:23 35:11	Foundation (1) 25:9
Contract (1) 29:20	deliberately (2) 9:21 32:14	during (1) 9:19	eye (1) 36:9	four (3) 8:25 19:16 23:20
control (1) 8:23	delicately (1) 17:3	Dutch (1) 29:14	-F-	Francisco (3) 1:4 14:6 14:10
Cooperstown (1) 28:19	denied (2) 13:7 24:13	dyke (2) 16:24 35:11	fact (6) 3:16 12:1 15:22 19:7 26:7 26:20	French (1) 29:14
corporal (1) 8:9	Department (3) 32:20 33:2 33:17	-E-	fair (1) 30:13	Fresno (1) 14:8
country (1) 9:6	department (2) 34:20 35:5	early (2) 28:14 28:20	fallen (1) 29:21	friend (3) 9:14 27:22 28:16
couple (2) 15:16 21:25	Deran (1) 1:6	easy (2) 13:17 32:7	familiar (1) 26:22	friends (3) 7:22 7:24 9:19
course (6) 8:18 17:1 29:13 30:1 32:4 36:6	description (1) 3:9	economic (1) 33:17	families (1) 21:7	Fritz (3) 27:19 27:19 27:22
court (2) 4:12	desire (1) 25:16	economist (3) 21:14 22:19 24:2	family (1) 21:9	Fritz' (1) 27:19
cover (2) 9:22 34:25	desperation (1) 25:15	economists (1) 24:25	far (4) 4:23 5:22 6:21 11:20 12:17 15:20	frumpy (1) 35:20
	detective (2) 3:22 5:13	editions (1) 29:13	farce (1) 9:22	full (1) 24:8
	developing (1) 12:6	either (2) 34:21 34:24	Fawcett (1) 30:7	functioning (1) 35:6
	diesel (2) 16:24 35:11	elite (2) 25:1 25:7	feeling (3) 5:2 5:3 26:4	funny (1) 23:11
	dirty (2) 24:4 24:5	embarrassed (1) 11:24	feelings (1) 5:1	future (1) 8:17
	disappear (1) 23:23		fellows (1) 35:11	-G-
			felt (2) 12:16 14:21	G-2 (3) 3:19 3:20 3:20
				games (1) 7:10
				gap (1) 30:23

willing (1) 25:15
Wilson (1) 28:15
wimp (1) 20:12
wise (1) 18:12
wish (3) 6:7 6:8
 10:24
wished (1) 14:25
Within (1) 17:13
without (1) 9:16
woman (5) 13:19
 14:24 18:10 18:12
 30:24
Women (1) 10:17
women (11) 2:7
 3:6 3:6 4:18
 6:9 11:23 29:5
 30:10 35:12 36:1
 36:8
wonderful (1) 18:10
word (1) 17:11
words (1) 13:2
workaholic (1) 22:22
worked (2) 26:2
 32:16
world (6) 12:17
 12:18 12:19 22:19
 28:1 28:2
worried (1) 29:2
write (1) 29:1
writing (1) 26:21
written (1) 31:1
wrong (1) 28:4
wrote (1) 27:5

-Y-

year (7) 1:21 1:22
 1:22 2:1 2:15
 21:21 21:22
years (8) 1:24
 4:8 7:13 7:19
 14:4 15:10 17:19
 31:10
yet (2) 15:23 21:23
York (9) 15:23 24:2
 24:6 24:7 25:16
 26:19 26:24 31:5
 36:3
young (2) 18:25
 31:17
Youngster (1) 4:9
yourself (3) 17:1
 31:14 31:16

-Z-

zooming (1) 24:5