

Interview with Rosemary Lane

GALA Interviews, 2006

Narrator: Rosemary Lane [RL]

Interviewer: Katrina Maksimuk [I]

Videographer: Sara Goener

Location: The home of Rosemary Lane, San Luis Obispo, CA

Length: Approximately 1 hour, 10 minutes (File 1: 47 minutes. File 2: 23 minutes).

Interview starts at 00:00:01.

Transcript prepared by: Steven Rusczycky and David Weisman (February 11, 2020)

[00:00:01] Interviewer: Maybe the year you were born, where you were born at, I don't know if you want to disclose that, you can make up an age.

[00:00:09] Rosemary Lane: I don't care, dear, I am seventy-God-damn-nine. And I don't mind that as long as I don't really look at all these lights, though. I'm going to look older than that. But whatever. I mean, I was born in 1927 and the only thing was that I missed getting in the WASP [Women Airforce Service Pilots], which I wanted to be in because that was the women's flying thing during the war. And I was madly in love with Earhart. And she had started the WASP program, as you probably know. And unfortunately, she disappeared in 1937. But the WASP program was initiated just before the war. Well, just when the war started, I would say. And I don't know how many women volunteered, but off they went and they flew everything I mean, everything in the inventory that the Air Force had. And later that the army had. And I wanted so much to be a pilot and I admired Earhart so much. But in 1937, she disappeared. I was ten years old and I cried myself to sleep. And then, when I had to give up that, well, what happened was they disbanded the program in 1945-46 when it looked like we were winning the war. They disbanded the program. And do you know what they did with those women?

[00:02:03] RL: They offered them jobs as stewardesses because they couldn't, they wouldn't allow women to be professional pilots. I mean airline pilots and know them of course accepted that kind of a job. But. So what I did at that time that this was going on, I was working for the FBI and they had hired the FBI, had hired a lot of new graduates, or new--well, I would say graduates from high school because they needed women-power types in those days to type little cards of fingerprints, fingerprint information. And so that's where I was working. And they didn't ask any questions. You just got a job right out of high school, didn't have to know anything as long as you could pass a test. And their requirements were a little that. Harder to harder than the regular civil service people required.

[00:03:21] RL: So, yes, Winnie. Come on, honey, come here to Mommy. This is Winnie, she's my baby. And I think the rate of pay was something like \$1260 a year mind you, and this was in 1945. I graduated high school in 1944. Yeah, I was seventeen. And. Yes, honey. Come on up here, baby. Come on, come on. Show them how you can jump. When we touch and--.

[00:04:12] RL: So it was pretty low pay, but I was glad to have some kind of a salary. But the best part about working there as it happens was that one of the agents was learning to fly and he got really excited about that. So, he started a ground school and sixty women joined up to go to the ground school, among them myself. And if we got through the round school, the idea was that we could then go at the airport and get on this airplane that we were going to all buy. For a hundred dollars we were going to buy an airplane, sixty of us. So, I bought a share in this airplane and I passed the ground school test and we were all excited and we went out to the airport. Well, ten of us out of sixty actually got to the airport and got brave enough to get in the airplane. Rest of them kind of gave up before it got that far. And then out of the ten who actually went in, got in the airplane, which was a--it was a tandem

Taylor craft, only in that particular model airplane, you sat in the front seat and the instructor sat in the back seat.

[00:05:29] RL: The reason I tell you this is because of what happened later. One of the gals was killed in it. And the reason she was killed was being in the front seat. They were doing a simulated forced landing. And she pulled up a little too steep and they went. The instructor should have caught it, of course. But this particular airplane was very dangerous for stall spin characteristics. And they knew that, I mean, that we were told that in the beginning. And so if you pull up too fast and you don't catch it, Zap goes in. Well, she did. And she was killing. The instructor was thrown out. The thing that the airplane was demolished so we couldn't use it anymore. And so out of the ten people or the nine left, ha, two of us actually went on to fly.

[00:06:28] RL: Well, we had to start buying our time and we were getting pretty good right on the Taylor craft because we owned it. Now we had to do what they did, what was known as by our time. And that meant we had to pay a little more to get flying time. And in those days, we put we paid seven dollars an hour solo and ten dollars an hour dual. That means that the four instructors were only making three bucks an hour. Well, when you made twelve sixty a year, you can see where it's three dollars an hour wasn't all that bad. So anyway. So that's what we did. I did. And one other girl in the club did that, ADA, old Ada and I we went ahead with it. The rest of them dropped. I mean, that scared them to death when this one gal got killed. So out of sixty us two were left and two succeeded in getting a license. And that was a what was they called it. A private license, which means that to the FAA, you can fly as a private pilot, can fly and take passengers.

[00:07:47] RL: Well, that wasn't good enough for me. I wanted to, I wanted to become an instructor. Now, in the meantime, of course, I had fallen madly in love with my instructor. Well, my instructor was an ex-WASP because the program had been disbanded.

Then the, some of the WASPs had worked. We're now working as instructors, you see. So this really cute woman, I thought cute. In fact, two of them were at the airport where I was taking lessons and I didn't know gay from nothing, I mean, I was seventeen. What do I know? All I knew was that I want to do everything that this woman did. And I thought she was just wonderful. And if she was an instructor, I want to be an instructor. If she smoked cigarettes I wanted to smoke cigarettes; if she drank her coffee black, I was going to drink my coffee and I didn't drink coffee at all. But I learned how. I want to do everything that Claire did. So little by little, I found out through the gossip that went around the airport that Claire was queer, and she and Ellen were queer.

[00:09:08] RL: Well, I was horrified. I was horrified, horrified, horrified. And again, I cried all night. Second time in my life, I cried all night. And that was when I was told that. And because I didn't want anything to be wrong with this wonderful woman that I was madly in love with and didn't want it. And. Then I got to thinking, what in the world are you crying about girl? What is the problem? Why do you care? So, I think I got to the library and start looking things up because I didn't know what homosexuality was in, it had never been discussed in my realm. I didn't know anything about it. So, I forget what books I found, but I'm sure they misled me, I mean I'm sure I didn't buy anything with. [Technical error, interview skips]

[00:10:58] RL: This could go on for much too long.

[00:11:01] I: So plenty of tape, yeah, plenty or tape. Can you start back again because we lost a little bit of the sound and start with wondering why you're crying. Oh no, your books. The books. You went to the library? Did you get that? Right. Okay. Ok, start with the books? That's the split second we cut off, OK.

[00:11:18] RL: So all I know is I went to the library. I don't remember what books or what book I read, but I'm sure it wasn't very informative. So, I didn't learn a lot. All I knew was for sure was that I was for the first time, to the best of my ability to determine, I must be in love. Whatever love was, I thought I must have it, I must be there. And I wasn't really upset about it. When I stopped crying, I realized this is not a bad thing. How can this be bad? She is too wonderful. Why should I be mad about this? And then the greatest thing happened. And that was because Ellen and Claire were living at the airport together and they broke up. And Ellen went away, and I thought, oh, boy, that's good. Ellen went to Florida or some such place. And so Claire was alone. Of course, Claire is like ten years older than I. I didn't care about that part. But she did. [laughter] She did. And she you know, she could see that I was getting a little too interested in her. I was there all the time following her around, you know. And. And being in the way, I'm sure. And asking too many questions and just wanting to be wherever she was.

[00:13:05] RL: And I'm sure it was starting to be evident because she was in "The 99s," which was an organization of women pilots, and I could not become a member of "The 99s" until I had my license, my private license. So, I was building up time, building up time so I could get my license. And then I convinced her that it would--that I would like to be a member and I needed a sponsor. And finally, I got her to sponsor me in The 99s so I could go to meetings once a month with her or she was there at least, you know. And I made all these other women who were pilots. Oh my God. Oh my God. You know. And then, a few of them start being interested in me. I mean a roomful of women pilots. Well, for the Washington chapter, which I joined, I think we had at least twenty-five members, some of whom were definitely gay.

[00:14:08] RL: Especially this one woman who was an engineer and big shot in the FAA [Federal Aviation Authority]. And she really had a thing for me. And Claire said, “watch that one, you know.” I said, “why?” And anyway, Katie turned out to be. Turned out to be very interested in me. And later on after... Well, I did manage to finally have a relationship with Claire. It wasn't very satisfying because she didn't... She wasn't in love with me. There's no doubt about that. She, she really wasn't. She finally agreed, I think, to bring me out only because I was so insistent. We were on a flight. And unfortunately, I think she--well she was drunk--she drank too much and. And the coming out was, was not a very nice experience from that point of view because she didn't love me, you know. I was madly in love and she just kind of stumbled into it because she was plastered and it was easy for her. And we had a kind of a weird relationship for a while. We never lived together, of course, because she didn't care that much. But I was still. Very, very much. I mean, she could do no wrong no matter how drunk she got. Whatever. I put up with it...

[00:16:04] I: Hold on for just a second. Our bulb burned out. Oh, everything's burning out like all the fires.

[00:16:11] RL: What do you suppose that means?

[00:16:13] I: I don't know. I think I think you may be too hot for the camera or something.

[00:16:22] RL: Maybe that's, maybe that's what Claire felt.

[00:16:26] I: [Technical Error]

[00:17:35] I: OK. So you're talking about how you never really lived together. It was kind of weird relationship. How long were you guys seeing each other?

[00:17:43] RL: Well, we didn't. Well, I couldn't. Why not? I. Well, I liked seeing her, but not you know, we just kind of became friends as such... and I always saw her in The 99s for years because she was a member. That's what it was. But. But Katie and I, Katie

wanted me to stay at her house as it was, and I did because I wasn't living anywhere in particular, I'd been with...living at my mother's house and I was kind of betwixt and between. I did stay at Katie's house for a while and she was very good to me. I will say that. And she was rather well to do, Katie was, she was a big shot at the FAA or CAA [Civil Aviation Authority]. It was at that time. And she had been the first woman graduate of the engineering college in Raleigh, North Carolina. Quite an outstanding woman in her field. Know why I wasn't in love with Katie? I don't know what it was, but she just didn't attract me that way. Anyway, she was very interested in me. I could have I could have had a big life if I had just gone with her, but I didn't anyway.

[00:19:13] RL: So while I was at Katie's house, so she had a party and....When did I get together with Lou? I'm skipping or something because I lived with Lou first. She was the first woman I lived with. And she was a 99. Gone. I've forgotten something out of sequence here. I live with Lou. She the first woman I ever lived with.

[00:19:49] I: How did you meet Lou?

[00:19:51] RL: She was a 99 But the...And but the woman I had the longest relationship with. And that was a seven-year thing was not a pilot. And I met her at Katie's at a party. And her name was Nancy. Huh. I can't quite remember how it happened. I remember leaving somebody for--for Nancy, who was I with? Well.

[00:20:31] I: So how did you meet Nancy if she wasn't a 99?

[00:20:34]: RL Well, she came to the party at Katie's. Katie had a party. A gay party, with a lot of gay people. And Nancy was there. And Nancy... And I went crazy over Nancy. Well, I'd already started living with Lou, though. That's right. I was living with Lou and I was at Katie's party. OK. That's the sequence: I was living with Lou. So, I met Lou in The 99s and we were sharing an apartment. In Alexandria. That's right. Lou was a nice lady. Yeah, Lou was very nice, and I left Lou to go with Nancy. I would have left anybody to go

with Nancy, I was madly in love with Nancy, but I met Nancy at this party at Katie's...mmm darnit... I'm beginning to sound like a terrible flirt and I guess I was, I was...I really did get around in those days.... I was... Anyway.

[00:21:55] I: So you were a flirt. And can you describe Nancy for me, what maybe what she looked like?

[00:22:00] RL: Oh, she was she was blonde. She was attractive in a very sophisticated way. She. She was very intelligent. She had read so much, she had. She was very poetic. She also could be very funny. She was just like nobody I've ever met before, and she knew something about any subject you could mention she knew about it. I just, uh, I just found her fascinating.

[00:22:57] RL: Anyway, at the time I met her, I was working at the Pentagon and living with Lou. And I got a job at the Pentagon because I'd been introduced to a program that they were having for the Army Aviation Division. This was just after the Air Force and the Army had.... Well, the Army had started buying airplanes after the Air Force and the Army split. The army, became capable of having airplanes and they didn't have anybody left in the army who knew an awful lot about airplanes and they wanted to have an army aircraft division. So they hired some people from the outside who knew something about airplanes, and that's how they hired me. I was, believe it or not, they hired me to be chief of Army aircraft requirements. That meant that I had something to do with the kind of airplanes that they bought.

[00:24:18] RL: And how many. Can you imagine that? I was only like nineteen years old, twenty. I was twenty. But this time I think surely I must have been twenty, maybe, twenty one anyway. And I had a secretary, I had a couple of other clerks working with me. And I had an office in the Pentagon. And it was ridiculous. It was ridiculous. But there I was. All because, well, it was because of a woman in The 99s who found out about this opening

and she was, I think she had kind of a lobbying job. That's right. I think she did. That was her job. She was one of these K Street operators in the old days. And she knew about this position. Whatever she told me about it and she referred.... She recommended me to this major over at the Pentagon. I got the job and that's how it happened. Anyway.

[00:25:37] RL: So I'm living with Lou. Then I meet Nancy. And so I used to have, I used to go off on two hour lunches. Honest to God. I didn't get fired. But it was really hard to get fired in the civil service, I'm sure I would have been, probably the Pentagon...Go there. Meet Nancy. Have lunch with her and whatever else. Come trotting back to our lunches.

[00:26:24] I: Sounds like a good job.

[00:26:28] RL: It was a phenomenal job.

[00:26:28] I: Did you.... were you out at work or did people know?

[00:26:32] RL: Oh, honey, not. I couldn't be. Not. Not if anybody knew. I mean, I couldn't be open about being out... Now, if anyone knew, they didn't say anything to me. And if I they had or if I had, I would have been subject to being fired because there was a... Oh, it was a big stigma at that time. You couldn't, you couldn't have a job and be gay. No way. Homosexual. I mean, I think they just they just decided we were gay.

[00:27:19] RL: That was the term they use now then. That was sort of us. It was very. We used that term. We didn't think anybody else knew it. That was a little secret term that we used among ourselves so that no one else would know what we're talking about. No. It was a. It was not it was not done. And I I don't know, I haven't seen the movie yet about, about the Army hearings, but those were the days when they were after the communists and homosexuals. You know. The Army McCarthy hearings were going on. That was about 1954 or that was happening and I was working. By that time I was what? Later on, I was working for the Army. There was a dreadful time, dreadful, and we just had to hide in the closet. We had to hide. Where we worked and who we were, who we saw and if we went out. God forbid

we were seen in any... well, there were no real gay clubs. There might have been one in Washington, but I don't remember where it was. And if I, and I don't know. I don't think I went to it in any event. No, it wasn't done. My dear.

[00:29:00] I: What about your family? Did they know what was going on at all or can you describe maybe.

[00:29:09] RL: I think. Later. Yeah, I think it became rather obvious to my family over time. Because of the people I brought home, my God, especially Katie. She was very obvious and I remember mother saying to me, she says, don't get indebted to that woman. And I says, "What do you mean, mother?" Never mind. Just don't get debted to her. That's all she ever said about Katie. But Katie was very obvious looking, you know. She was the most. Wealthy and most. She was the best catch I ever had. But I didn't take it anyway. No. Over time, they got used to the fact. Mother finally used to call me her "bachelor daughter." And she realized that I was not about to get married. And she really, she had seven daughters. I was the oldest. So she had other daughters to focus on for grandchildren and so on. So it didn't at last it did not really matter that much to her. And she never nagged me about it. My father and I never really clicked. Anyway, so if he thought anything, he never said he never said anything to me. He never said anything any one way or the other anyway. So, I don't know what you thought.

[00:30:56] I: Now on here says that you did air races, love sports cars and speed. Can you maybe talk about your various addictions of speed?

[00:31:06] RL: No, she didn't mean that.

[00:31:07] I: No, not speed. But like you like fast things, not not that kind of speed on that kind of speed.

[00:31:14] I: Although did you see the New Times yet? Oh, it's horrible. The front page says how to make meth and it teaches you all the ingredients to make meth in the New Times. Isn't that horrible?

[00:31:24] RL: That is pretty bad.

[00:31:26] I: Yeah, but anyways, can you maybe talk about some of the things that you are addicted...with rushes. I'm kind of an adrenaline junkie myself. So...

[00:31:35] RL: What you what I like to do about flying and all?

[00:31:40] I: You talk about flying. Have you ever done. Do you like fast cars and stuff like that or ever have any fun other jumping out of planes?

[00:31:49] RL: Well, I have. I have jumped because I felt like, you know, I need to do that at least once. So I just feel like what it was like. Yes. But I didn't become a parachute jumper as such. I've done it once. That was all I wanted to do. Just see what it was like. And I had a Mercedes sports car. I had a triumph when I... I had a 1954 triumph that I loved.

[00:32:24] I: Did you ever ride any girls on the back of that triumph?

[00:32:30] RL: It was a car, honey.

[00:32:31] I: Oh, Triumph. Not a motorcycle Triumph.

[00:32:34] RL: No, I didn't have a motorcycle.

[00:32:35] I: Good thing you didn't ride any on the back of the car?

[00:32:40] RL: No, it was. It's just it's an old sports car, a convertible. I think it was a 1953. I think it was. Yeah.

[00:32:52] I: And then in here, it says that my little notes say that there was an Army investigation, was that while you were at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., or was that somewhere else?

[00:33:04] RL; Oh, that. See, that was. That was an awful time when I was trying to remember when that actually happened to me...[Off Camera voice: "In the 60s Rosie."] Oh, it

was in the 60s. Where was I working on that? Okay. Trying to remember. What the heck was I doing?

[00:33:41] Off Camera Voice: []

[00:33:42] RL: I'm trying to...Exactly where I was. I don't think it was when I was with the army, though, that doesn't sound right.

[00:33:55] I: How did you find out you were being investigated?

[00:33:59] RL: Oh, they just call you in. They just call you and say. Your clearance has been suspended. You know. And. You'll be meeting with a security officer. And these are the charges, you're not allowed to write it down or anything, but you're given so much time to respond to it. So I... And you can respond to it in writing, but you're not allowed to write down what the charges are when they're telling them to. They tell you what you're being accused of and all that sort of thing. And, and then you're supposed to bring back a written response. But you have to remember all this stuff that they said you did. They don't tell you who said it. They tell you what the accusation is.

[00:35:16] I: Do you remember when they called you in and wrote all that stuff down?

[00:35:20] RL: I have a package about this in my desk drawer. I've still got it in the safe in there because what I what I figured I better do is get an attorney. So, I decide to fight it. I decide the hell with this I'm not going to put up with this. Because without a security clearance, my career was dead in the water. You couldn't work anywhere in the government without a clearance. I don't care if, if she had the most meaningless little peon a job, you had to have a clearance. So, if I lost that, then I couldn't work. So, I was going to fight those bastards and I got an attorney with the ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union]. And then I proceeded to do what he said to do. And I wrote it all up. And we-- And that kind of took them back. I don't think they expected me to fight it. You know. But it took a year. Took a whole year of my life to. To go through this and it was very, very painful, it was very, very

agonizing. And when it was over I was so worn out that I just I quit on my own terms as what I did. I resigned because I couldn't go through anymore. But I didn't quit on their terms, I just, I quit because first of all, I through my friends that Rachel knows some friends that I had made back here arranged for me to have a chance at a job with. Was it SBC, or TRW, I think TRW?

[00:37:29] I2: But Rosie, in term so of the investigation, it's important what they were doing to you, tapping your phone checking your mail, following you...

[00:37:35] I: Can you describe some of that, maybe some of the things that that they did. Cause I don't even know. Like in these days, if someone told me my work, I was being investigated, it just wouldn't happen. So that's a time period. I don't even understand what they even did or why or how they'd even approach you. And...

[00:37:56] RL: Well, it was very illegal. Talk about what's going on now. You know. There's no way that that was legal, but they did it. They wouldn't admit it, of course, but they couldn't have known what they claim to have known about me without tapping my phone, without reading my mail. And I saw them in the in my rearview mirror following me. I also saw them parked out in front of my house wherever I went. There was a car behind me. And even when I went to Europe that year with a friend of mine, we had a tail. I think they had a lot of fun just following me around.

[00:38:42] I2: The theory was that if you were gay or lesbian you were subject to blackmail?

[00:38:49] RL: That was what was there. That was their excuse that I could be blackmailed. Bullshit. You know, I would ask if anybody tried to blackmail me, I would've said, so what? Who are you going to tell my mother? What is... Who you going to tell? There is no way that would be a blackmail situation for me. There wasn't anyone they could tell that. I knew that it wouldn't make any difference.

[00:39:20] I2: Well, other than your boss. Or you could have lost your job, or the theory being that if you didn't want to lose your job, you would do whatever they would ask, which would be to give them classified information. That was their so-called theory of why it wasn't a good thing. How old were you? What year was that investigation?

[00:39:39] RL: Well, it was in the 60s then. OK.

[00:39:43] I2: It was probably the mid 60s, Rosie as I recall...

[00:39:48] RL: I was about 40, about 40.

[00:39:55] I2: The reason this is so important, I think, for the kids to understand is that in that day and age, I don't know anybody that would have stood up.

[00:40:03] I: Yeah. How many... Did you know other people that had stood up for it or what made you decide to stand up? Because a lot of people you said just walked away, right?

[00:40:12] RL: I don't know anyone else who was subject to this in my, in my circle. I don't know of anyone else personally. Who went through.... Now, my friend Nancy, earlier on. That's why we left California the first time and came out here was during the McCarthy scare because she had been called in and Nancy worked for Public Housing Administration. She didn't have anything to do with the security clearance, but they had called her in and said, well, we understand that town... That women dressed as men have been coming to your apartment for parties. In other words, have been wearing slacks. They... They gave her a hell of a hard time. And that was some... That was much earlier. You see, that was in the late 50s. I'd say we're in fifty-one about. It was just before we came to California. They scared that poor woman to death. She was so upset that we sold the house that we had out on Franklin Manor on the bay in Maryland and she quit her job and off we came to California. That's why we did that. She was scared. She didn't want to put up with it, which she wouldn't fight

it because she just said was a horrible thing and she wasn't going to fight it. And she didn't work there anymore. She wouldn't work for the government for years. And so I... I didn't come. I came with her so.

[00:41:58] I: Did they threaten her safety or just her like reputation? Her job?

[00:42:03] RL: Her job. they said those stupid things to her? Well, if it walks like a duck and talks and talks like a duck, then it must be a duck or some stupid thing they said to her like that. You know, awful things.

[00:42:22] I: So I have a question. When did you move to San Luis Obispo County? You said the 60s.

[00:42:31] RL: Well, when I came here to San Luis, I didn't come here until I retired. And I retired when, when I hit 70. And that was that was only about. Well....

[00:42:55] I: In the late 80s.

[00:42:55] R: That was like.... Well, I'm seventy-nine, so I'm talking about nineteen years ago, I came here. When I retired.

[00:43:10] I: And why? What made you want to move to this area?

[00:43:13] RL: Well, because I knew Rachel barely. Were you already here? And we'd all work together before, you know. You know, I had a core of people I knew at least to start with. And I did not want to live in Los Angeles when I retired in that area. No way. I was living in Manhattan Beach at the time.

[00:43:50] I: So you lived in Washington, D.C., and also Los Angeles, where else have you lived?

[00:43:57] RL: In Sunnyvale.

[00:44:04] I: Where was your, where's your favorite place and why? To live....

[00:44:10] RL: I think I like Cambria a lot. I loved up there. I also liked Manhattan Beach. I like any place where I'm where I'm.... Where I have someone that I care about with me. Really. That's kind of what it boils down to and I haven't been with anyone now for a very long time. I can be happy anywhere if I have someone to love and someone loves me. I really believe that. But it hasn't worked out that way. No.

[00:44:59] I: You've got your great group of friends here, though. I've been single while myself, but her and her girlfriend are like some of my best friends. So for me it's like keeps me picky to pick the right one too, because then I don't settle.

[00:45:12] RL: No, it's not good to settle.

[00:45:19] I: So do you know a lot of people in the community and you guys have dinner parties?

[00:45:29] RL: I belong to [The Gay and Lesbian Alliance of San Luis Obispo] and we have a support group, but we don't...I don't engage in too many things lately. I've kind of been isolating myself. I have sent a deposit to this, to something that's sort of starting out in Palm Springs, it's going to be a condo situation. For seniors. And hopefully I'll, it'll be ready in about two years, so I'm planning to go out. Maybe that'll be a good place for me.

[00:46:22] I: Have you, do know anyone else down in Palm Springs already?

[00:46:26] RL: I'll probably stumble across from people like I have known in the past. I don't know of anyone specifically.

[00:46:37] I: You talk about living up in Cambria and as far as I know, it's a huge artists community. Can you maybe describe different art that you're interested in or have collected or anything like that or enjoy looking at?

[00:46:52] RL: Well. Outside of the paintings have acquired over the years--I enjoy that. And some of the artists that I know. Dabbled in a couple of things.

[00:47:30] I: OK. Change tape. By the way, your cat has a circle on the side of his belly.

[End Video File 1]

[Begin Video File 2]

[00:00:00] I: ...The cat in the tape and you can introduce your kitty.

[00:00:03] RL: By all means, Winnie. Come on over here honey, come on and see mommy.

[00:00:08] I: Oh, baby, you okay? I'm just bringing you to mom.

[00:00:12] RL: Come on, here baby. Come here.

[00:00:26] I: Willy, you want to say meow? Say hi, Winnie. Winnie baby you want to be in, you get your picture taken. Come on. Come on, sweetheart.

[00:00:43] I: You want to introduce her?

[00:00:45] RL: This is Winnie. This is my baby. No, no. Don't go away, honey. Come here. Look up. Look up and show people. Oh, now, now, now.

[00:00:59] I: She's shy...she's camera shy.

[00:01:00] RL: I doubt that very much. Honey, honey bun. Usually you're not a bit shy.... well...

[00:01:11] I: Would you want to see how you met Winnie?

[00:01:15] RL: Well, I was so I was just walking in Cambria through an alley up there, and this one came up to me, introduced herself. And insisted on. Well, she just came to me. That's all. And she limped up to me and she didn't have her leg off. But she had it all-- been she had--someone put a Band-Aid on her foot. She was carrying it all broken up in front of her. Obviously, it was--it was damaged. And I took it, took her to the vet up there. And he was familiar with her case. And he said, no, she's got to have that leg off. And I told her owner that and he gave me their phone number and I called them and they said, well, the man answered, says, "oh, I don't want that cat. I've already spent too much money on that cat" and I could hear his wife in the background crying. I said, well, look, I'll bring her back to you. "I don't want that cat." And words to that effect--that I said, well, in that case, I'm going

to keep her. “Well, that’s fine with me you know.” So I did. I kept her. And that’s kind of how it happened. And then I--But I didn’t want to have her leg cut off and those and unless it was really necessary. So, I took her to another vet and he confirmed the fact that it was damaged beyond repair. So, it did need to come up, come off. And then the third time, I was told that I went ahead with it. So, I don’t know how it happened. I think she might have... She was running around the alley up there. She probably got hit by a car. I don’t know. She had no business running around. She was just a baby.

[00:03:21] I: She’s such a sweetie. I think she’s into the extra attention.

[00:03:26] RL: She’s a dear she really is.

[00:03:28] I: So maybe, you got here in the 80s to San Luis Obispo? What was it like when you came here and have you dated here in San Luis Obispo or been out all around San Luis Obispo? Maybe how you’ve seen it change because there’s been a lot of different things that have happened here politically, group-wise and stuff.

[00:03:54] RL: I couldn’t say, I haven’t noticed that so much. It’s just...I haven’t watched that happen. I don’t know what’s happened politically.

[00:04:19] I: How do you how do you feel that the gay community, or the San Luis Obispo feels about the gay community? Do you think that they’re welcoming or nowadays?

[00:04:33] RL: Oh, I think that we were accepted here as well as anywhere else. I don’t think it’s any worse than anywhere else. Far as I can tell.

[00:04:56] I: Now, I have another question after you were talking about getting your pilot’s license, training license. Did you become a trainer?

[00:05:06] RL: Yes. I went ahead and got my instructors rating as soon as I could so that I could afford to fly. You see, I otherwise it was too expensive. So that was ideas is to get my license so that I could be paid to do what I loved. And. Also, so that I could be as good as Claire. So, I did, I got my instructor’s rating by the time I was twenty-one.

[00:05:39] I: Could you maybe tell me what planes that you've flown?

[00:05:42] RL: Well, I could, but I don't know if it would mean anything to anybody.

[00:05:45] I: I'm just curious.

[00:05:47] RL: Well, we learned to fly. I learned to fly in just that little two-place, Piper Cub type airplanes, you know. Where you took one student with you at a time. And later on, I, well, forget the commercial license that I needed in order to get....in order to get an instructor's permit you need to get first a commercial license, which means that you can fly for hire, and to get to commercial license, I bought into a bigger airplane with a couple of men. And we bought, I... A training airplane that had been used during, during the war, and it was an open cockpit, low wing. More powerful airplane called a P.T, a primary trainer, open cockpit airplane. And I loved that thing. The PT-19, when you wore helmet and goggles and the whole thing, so it was pretty exotic. I love that. And again, it was a two placer. Front and back. And I used that to get my commercial. And then with the commercial, you could then get your instructor's permit. You needed the commercial so you could fly for hire and then the instructors permit after that, where you learned a little bit more about how to teach and also about some of the rules and regulations about how to go about training someone. And it took me, I guess, from start to finish, maybe two years of very intense, intense work and quite a bit of money out of my \$1260 a year salary. By that time maybe I was making \$1400 a year.

[00:08:12] RL: But at that point I was living still at home. I was giving my mother some money because she needed it. My, my parents were not doing well financially. My, my father had been out of work during the depression. And we had done. We had come back to the East Coast. With all our possessions and a great big rig of that he had bought... Talk about...Well, anyway, everything was piled into this car and things, it was awful... Anyway,

and so my mother had always had to work as well as taking care of the house. And she was a quite remarkable person, having all these children and working and the whole thing. And so I gave her money as well as I did as well as I could about helping them with the finances, and I hated to leave her, to leave the house after I got a job, but I wanted to live in an apartment of my own, or at least with my friends. And eventually I did that.

[00:09:48] I: What town was that that you moved out of?

[00:09:52] RL: Oh, OK. Mother and the family were living in Alexandria, Virginia, and my father was working downtown Washington. I was working. And I was working...when I first got a job, I was working in Washington. And...

[00:10:17] I: Was that where your first apartment was, was in Washington?

[00:10:20] RL: Yes. As a matter of fact, it was some of the girls I met at the FBI. There were three of us, we lived together there. They were not gay at all. I didn't know I was then. Turns out old. J. Edgar was, but we didn't talk about that... J Edgar....

[00:10:48] I: So I have another question, when you, when you were dating Nancy, Katie, or maybe in between those times? How did you go... How did you meet other women? Were there parties or since you said you didn't go to bars...how did you meet other women...socialize? The 99s only?

[00:11:06] RL: Well, Katie was a 99 and that's how I came to be at her parties. And Nancy had a large group of friends, and I don't know where she met them all. But she got around and she had a lot of parties. I don't know one group or another group.

[00:11:28] I: What were the parties liked? Did people listen to music or dance or?

[00:11:34] RL: Drank. Mostly we drank a lot of drinking going on those days. No drugs, but drinking. And smoking. Smoking and drinking. Kind of like that.

[00:11:51] I: Rosemary, what kind of music were you listening to that point?

[00:11:59] RL: Popular. Always the old times swing era. Just whatever was popular back in the 40s, late 40s, early 50s. I mean, no square stuff, I'm sure now.

[00:12:27] I: And the march on Washington. Can you maybe talk about the march on Washington? What it was for, like give some background and...

[00:12:39] RL: What year was what? What were doing then? Was this the one.... Was this for the gay rights, gay rights march? What was that?

[00:12:56] I: It was five years after that. The quilt was, oh, I think we were showing the quilt again. But I think also it has to do with gay rights. And so we all marched.

[00:13:23] I: What year was that? I think it was nineteen ninety-two. We had a large banner.

[00:13:30] RL: I think I ran into some...I've got a whole drawer full of pictures I was looking at last night.

[00:13:39] I: Yeah. Do you mind if we look at some pictures?

[00:13:42] RL: Well, I don't know if I could come up with the ones we're talking about right now.

[00:13:46] I: Just any of them is even fine. Yeah. That'd be cool.

[00:21:25] RL: Through some of my memoirs and come up with maybe some pictures for you, if that would be helpful, I'm sure I have some stuff. I know I have, I have a record of that. A transcript of what occurred during the investigation that might be of interest.

[00:21:46] I: Very much so. Very much. That would just be. I just can't even imagine anything like that. Like to see that would just be like, whoa! Because it's so close to happening again. I think it's so important that people realize how much it affects the lives that the government gets into your personal life and your personal business and your ability to be able to pursue happiness through careers and family. It's just scary. And let's see, do you have any advice for youth today, for the troublemakers out there?

[00:22:22] RL: Well, you don't know, really. You don't appreciate, well you do... how much better it is, in spite of the fact that it's pretty miserable in many ways. It's so much better than it ever was before. But don't let them get you. Don't. You've got to fight for what rights are left to us. We've got to fight it. Got to fight it. So, I went to that.... That's why I went.

[00:23:21] I: Great. Yeah. Awesome.

[End Video File 2]

[End of Interview]