

Interview with Carroll Leslie and Barbara Strauss
GALA Interviews

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[00:00:08] CL: [Pause], my name is Carroll Leslie and I was born sixty-three years ago in Toronto, Canada. And, um, I always told my mother that it was strictly an accident of birth because I really belonged in California with the climate. So, eventually over a child custody dispute I was sent to California to live with my aunt and uncle and I'm forever grateful for that. And I have lived in Southern California most of my life. I went to high school there and, um, and then I went to Citrus Junior College. I graduated from high school when I was sixteen. Everybody thought, I thought that I'd go to UCLA [University of California Los Angeles] on a scholarship and everything. And I got on the campus realized that there were thirty-thousand other people there and I was so overwhelmed that I had to, I called my aunt and uncle and said, "Can I come back?" [laughs]. So, I went to a junior college for two years and then I tried L.A. State [Los Angeles State University], it was too big, and then I went to Cal Poly Pomona [California Polytechnic University Pomona]. So, that's my educational background. We've lived in Laguna Beach, in Southern California, I loved it there, very active in the gay and lesbian

community. And we moved here [Los Osos] sixteen years ago and love it here now, and wouldn't live anywhere else. It's your turn, Barb.

[00:01:20] BS: It's my turn. I'm Barbara Strauss, I'm sixty-one (years old). I, um, was born and raised in California. I am glad to be a native and don't want to live anywhere else, if possible [smiles, makes eye contact with smiling Carroll]. I don't have all that educational background, I have a lot of life experience. And because of my questing for information for my mind to grow on, I've read thousands and thousands of books and have had the wonderful tutelage of terrific people in my life who have offered up, not just who they were, but what they knew, and sharing that has just enriched my life wonderfully [Carroll nodding approvingly]. So, I went a whole different route than Carroll, and went to seminary [laughs], and became a minister, and that has influenced my life greatly. But the thing that we share in common is that we have always worked to help other people. So, I think that is the common link between the two of us [Carroll nods in agreement]; that Carroll did it through health food, right, which she would eventually get in to [Carroll affirms "right"]. And I've done it through trying to sponsor other people's path on a spiritual line so that they could discover who they were. So, I think that's what the bond is more than anything else.

[00:02:41] CL: I always tease Barbara that she, for a number of years, before she went to seminary, she worked at the John Tracy Clinic which is for the hearing impaired. And, um, I always tease her and said she got her graduate studies there because there were so many Ph.Ds that recognized how smart she was and took her under their wing--"Oh, you must read this and talk to me about it and, oh, you must read that and talk to me about it"--and, so, she kind of did her graduate studies, that was--

[00:03:04] BS: I think I really got a classical British tutelage from these folks, to make book lists for me and then demand they have reviews, and I had to know all the right things. So, it was... [pauses] yes, it was a wonderful opportunity for me and, again, to see other people caring and helping and being in an environment which was enriching everybody's experience because it was demanded [using her hands to denote quotations around demanded] by the clinic that we all have our lunch together, the whole staff. So, we all knew each other intimately and, um, learned a great deal from each other's expertise.

[00:03:44] I: So, when... it sounds like you guys met down in Laguna, Right?

[00:03:46] CL: No, actually not. I had a health foods store and it seems that wherever I am and whoever I am involved in, I seem to love controversy [laughs]. I got very involved with health freedoms and some illnesses that the government prescribes how they must be treated. I lectured around the area and spoke at the National Health Federation about our experiences with alternative health, and this was pre-AIDS, so, um, so I had this health foods store, and I had taken a class with Barbara and in the health foods store was this huge area for a luncheon crowd, and we had a salad bar and all that. So, we put the tables aside and Barbara would come up once a month and do a lecture. And, how we met is, um, I had just come back from England when I went with a friend to study metaphysics and spiritual things, and, um, this retired lawyer friend said, "you've got to come hear this woman speak." And I said I can't stay awake, I have jet lag and blah blah blah. And said, "No, no, you really must, you really must." And so I went and it was Barbara lecturing and immediately I thought to myself I went all that way [to England] and yet what she taught was so practical and pragmatic and that's what I needed to do. And ever after, this retired lawyer, who's name was Robert Lewis, took credit for bringing us together. And it gave him great... he would even tear up when he would reminisce. I'd say, you know you

really brought us together, Bob, “I did, didn’t I?” [Gesturing to her eyes to wipe away tears]. He was such a sweet man. [Barbara laughing]. Anyway, it was really cute.

[00:05:20] BS: And he was a gay man.

[00:05:22] CL: Yeah, but had never—to the best of my knowledge—had ever expressed it and had lived alone his whole life. But, he was certainly moved by the fact that he had gotten us together.

[00:05:32] BS: He was quite an advocate of spiritual growth. So I was lecturing and up they trooped after the lecture and were very enthusiastic and, um, although I can be very outgoing, after I traveled a number of hours and spoken for a number of hours and done channeling for some time, late in the evening I am kind of fading. So, as they advanced, I retreated; they were a little too enthusiastic for me. And I’ve always found Carroll enthusiastic, over lots of things [both women laugh]. So, the meeting was really the starting of a tremendous friendship that we had for a year and a half, and then we got involved. And I called my very best friend during this time, who had also been a spiritual mentor, and I said to her: I’ve just met a woman who I think is going to be a dear friend of mine. And she said, “Where did you guys meet?” Oh, she came for a reading to my house. And she said, “You’ve never so much as had lunch with a client in your life. This has got to be the most momentous thing you’ve ever called me about.” And I said, well it’s just so strange that feeling I have that we’re going to be really good friends [Carroll looking lovingly at Barbara]. I could just feel we we’re going to be really good friends.

[00:06:48] CL: And so for a year and a half we talked a lot on the phone and I attended classes and she’d come up and lectured at the store. And then we decided that we were very much in love and needed to make a relationship together, and I got her... she was living in

Orange County [California] at the time... I got her to do this monumental move up to the San Gabriel Valley where it gets very, very hot, and she hates the heat. So, in order to entice her up, I had to put central air-conditioning in the house. So, we did that, of course.

[00:07:21] BS: It wasn't enough that it had a swimming pool because the way you can stay in a swimming pool is not twenty-four hours a day [both women laughing loudly, leaning forward]. I have to breathe.

[00:07:28] CL: So, that's how we got together. I was thirty-five and Barbara was thirty-three, so we were fully-formed, independent individuals at that point.

[00:07:42] BS: And each one of us very involved in our own careers, bringing what we had already established....

[00:07:46] CL: Me, passionate about trying to get everybody to take 5000 milligrams of Vitamin C each day [laughs] and her getting people to open their lotus-like consciousness to an awareness beyond themselves. And, so we had great fun going back and forth between our different specialties [both nod in agreement]. Like that.

[00:08:09] I: Do either of you remember the moment that it hit you that you guys just weren't friends?

[00:08:12] CL: Well, actually, well, you might get a different story--

[00:08:14] BS: I am trying to remember [laughs]

[00:08:16] CL: what it was is I had been used to, Barbara used to do not just one on one clients but she would do circles in the house, and go from one to the other, just like mini-readings, to give people an idea what it was like, and she'd be very tired after it, and I would often drive her. And I found it fascinating. I think we as human beings are so interconnected, and I have learned things about myself from other peoples' little mini-readings, and so I got as much

out of it as helping her. And, I was giving a lecture over in [pause] in Glendale on health freedoms or something, and, um, Barbara said she'd come along with me. And for some reason or other the lecture was cancelled [looks inquisitively at Barbara, whispers], remember we went there? [looks back towards camera]. And so we went up in the hills of Glendale--

[00:09:07] BS: I do remember that.

[00:09:09] CL: And, I don't know, the moon was right, the stars were bright, and we kissed. And that was all she wrote--

[00:09:15] BS: That's true.

[00:09:17] CL: And so, as I said, I had had been in another relationship for about thirteen years prior to that--

[00:09:26] BS: With a woman.

[00:09:28] CL: With a woman. I started early [laughs], when I was twenty. And, um, so I'd been single and been good friends for that amount of time and, I don't know, it was [], whatever, the stars and the moon or whatever, but we really recognized that we were deeply in love and wanted to make a life together. So, we did. And, my relationship with my ex had been very, very closeted because she was twenty-years older, comes from a different mind-set, and she had two children, so, we raised those together. So, coming out...it was like coming out even though I'd already been in a committed relationship. It was like coming out again. And for Barbara, she had been a religious celibate, so for her it was coming out. So, we always teased that even though we were thirty-five and thirty-three, we came out together in 1979, kind of a thing [both laugh]. Being the busy bodies that we are and the overly helpful and co-dependent people, we decided our relationship was solid and we both loved Laguna Beach, and we both decided that we had to live in Laguna Beach. So, we moved out of the San Gabriel Valley, where

it's very hot, and moved down to Laguna Beach. Within a few months I was figuring out what to do and Barbara said, "why don't we start a bookstore, you know, for the gay and lesbian community," etcetera, etcetera. And there began our next adventure together. We opened the bookstore called A Different Drummer. And, I think you'll find it interesting, that there is an organization in Laguna Beach called Laguna Outreach. Laguna Beach is famous for being very gay friendly. Probably one-third of the population, you feel, is gay. And so it is a very gay friendly town, it's at the beach, they have art festivals. It just suits a gay mentality. Anyway, we went to this very large organization, about three-hundred people belonged, called Laguna Outreach, and Barbara and I went for the first time, [] and we said to the group, you know, you have to introduce yourself, I am Carroll, this is Barbara, and we're going to open a gay and lesbian and feminist bookstore right here in Laguna Beach, just as a matter of announcement. Well, there was such a round of applause, we knew that the timing was right because everybody just clapped and cheered. And so it was an idea that time had come, and that began our very out interaction with the gay and lesbian community which we were an integral part.

[00:11:57] BS: And I think I had had a lot of gay and lesbian friends, both at the church and in my private life, as friends, and many of them had already said, "yeah, you'd find yourself a woman," and I said, well, I gave up men, I became a religious celibate, I don't think I need a segway into have another relationship of any kind, I am not looking, and they all said, "yeah, yeah, you just haven't met the right person." And I said, yes, it is because you're all gay and trying to make me gay, too, so, forget it. And, they teased me. And then when I introduced Carroll, before we were ever involved, and said this is my dear friend Carroll. And I want you to meet so and so. And they all said, "She's the one! that's the one you're going to be with" [pointing at Carroll]. And I said, she, right now, is dating a man, after having dated a woman, I

have no place, I have no idea where to Segway next, you know, who knows? I said, but, uh, as I told you, I am not looking. And, they teased me. It was just awful when she [Carroll] wasn't around. "Uh, she's after you, you're after her, it's just going to happen" [her friends teased]. And when it did, of course, they all thought it was just a great joke. So, I didn't find it difficult coming out. Ever. Coming out as a lesbian, I have no family, so I didn't have to announce it, Carroll [chuckles] had to go through that. But not me. So, I had to come out to myself. And then I had to come out at church. I had to come out in my community. But I never had the shame-guilt, whatever the stuff that people all have, especially in our age group, especially that many years ago. It was just not like that for me. It was very different.

[00:13:41] CL: And I think what else in our background which helped is that our age, we'd done a lot of work on ourselves, thinking about who we were, how we fit into the larger community. But, also, both Barbara and I were raised in a really liberal religious environment, so we didn't have the hell, fear, and damnation that some people have to, you know, let go of in order to be fully who they are. And, I think that helped, us coming out. The other thing is that we don't ever seem to do anything halfway.

[00:14:13] BS: [Laughs] I was just going to say that. And once you're gay, you come out immediately, you start and join in with new things, and you start helping other gay people, and you start helping the whole project of being gay, because that's how we proceed in life, both of us. So, it wouldn't dawn on us, as a collective two-sy [sic], to hide. That wouldn't be who we are. So, right away, we jumped in. We joined the Southern California Women for Understanding, first, when we were up in West Covina. That was a good Segway because that was for all professional women. Many of those were around our same age. So, that was a gentle way of coming into the community. Then through them, we met other areas of the community.

[00:14:57] CL: We were both passionate about books, because we're both readers, and we thought the natural thing to do to express our newfound selves, and our new accepted selves, would be to open this gay and lesbian and feminist bookstore. Which we did. And this was during the 80s, and so it was just this great expansion of thought in the gay and lesbian community.

[00:15:25] BS: People read their history then. They wanted to know about their long-ago roots, both ancient and current day, and so they had passion for every lecturer that we brought in was just greatly received. All the authors that came through, massive crowds would come out to hear. And because there were so many gay people in the town, really didn't have a big problem with our store. Although there were other people in other neighborhoods, in other communities in Southern California who did.[But] we didn't.

[00:15:53] CL: The worst thing that happened, I think we had... we had two things that happened, and that they were very minimal. That is we had on the side of our bookstore, [it] was on a corner, so we had a lot of windows there, and we were about eight blocks from Main Beach. We were a little bit out of downtown, which suited us. At Christmas we had, "Have the Gayest Christmas Ever" and somebody came along and you know scratched the window trying to get it off. And then people always said "you know, you're so public. You're out there on Pacific Coast Highway, oh my, oh my." And some lady from Nebraska dropped us a postcard saying how could we possibly be gay and be proud kind of a thing. And those were the two worst things that ever happened.

[00:16:40] BS: No, no. Our van was egged—

[00:16:43] CL: Oh, that's right.

[00:16:45] BS: Yeah, that belonged to the store.

[00:16:48] CL: Oh, and one time we were driving in our convertible and we were cruising down Pacific Coast Highway and some young people from Laguna Beach High (School), they drove passed us and called us “faggots.” We could see... we found it very amusing and laughed because--

[00:17:04] BS: [laughing]: We wanted to straighten out the language--

[00:17:06] CL: We’re dykes not faggots (mockingly, Carol cups her mouth as to yell).

[Both women laugh]. We just attributed it to their total ignorance in life and went on.

[00:17:19] BS: Ah, well then there was the Jack-in-the-Box incident. So, we have had a few... yeah, yeah [both women nod in agreement]

[00:17:27] CL: But, you know, we haven’t...nobody put us in jeopardy. Or we didn’t feel in jeopardy.

[00:17:31] BS: Well, I have to correct that one, too {Barbara puts her hand on Carol’s forearm.}We did feel in jeopardy once and that was from the police.

[00:17:36] CL: Oh, yeah, that was... uh, probably a lot of gay and lesbian people who’ve been out have had some interaction. We, all through the 80s we had this wonderful gay and lesbian and feminist bookstore, we’re out, we brought Malcolm Boyd, we had all kinds of people speaking, we had Armistead Maupin, and it was very rich to our gay and lesbian culture.

(00:17:56) BS: Now, meanwhile, back at the ranch, I had my own career going. So, I dabbled at the bookstore and helped out and did things like that. But I am a trans-medium by trade, and that is how I supported myself for years, by giving psychic readings. I had an office and a foundation that I belonged to, that I went to. So, I was out of Laguna working and the coming back, home, and I had an office in the home. I had a huge practice. So that kept me really busy. But

meanwhile we were stirring the pot for the gay and lesbian cause and doing all these things as well. We were busy folks during those times.

[00:18:33] CL: One year we had fun because in Laguna Beach they have a parade every year called "Celebrating Our Forefathers." It kind of irritated us because we knew where there were forefathers there would be foremothers because how else did all this get here? We decided... I had this dune buggy with a little flatbed and I painted it bright purple. We decided... we made a top for the dune buggy, it just had a little cover over the two seats. We had on the top "Celebrating Our Foremothers." We put it in (the parade). We talked one of our friends, Bridgette, who worked for us, into dressing up as Sacagawea. She carried a sign that said "I led Lewis and Clark West." And another friend we talked into dressing up as Abigail Adams and she carried a thing, "Remember the Ladies," which is what Abigail Adams wrote to her husband, John. It was a great success. Young people won't remember who Gale Storm was but she was a famous actress and she had a series on television called "My Little Margie." She was sitting in the stands judging the parade. She was the Grand Marshal. And she was also judging. She was just sitting there, and all these things coming by, and then when we came by she stood up (Carol clapping) and "yayed and cheered" and everything. So we had great fun. So we were very inspired.

[00:20:00] BS: And we won a prize.

[00:20:02] CL: [] We did

[00:20:03] BS: For the float. And then the next year we entered our float and Carroll and I were on the front and the girls were in the back, holding signs and stuff and getting all dressed up. And so Laguna outreach- the co-sexual group- said, "Well we want to do something, but we don't have a truck and we can't all get on to your dune buggy. What are we going to do?" And

Carroll said, “Well, why don’t you be a marching unit behind us? And then if anything happens you can jump in the truck and off it can go.” And they all said “Yeah”--

[00:20:30] CL: They were a little bit intimidated because until we’d come to town they’d had a lot of meetings and things, but there was no real public display of things.

[00:20:38] BS: No that was their first public marching/outing because they hadn’t thought of it actually like we had. So they carried their signs, each person in the marching unit behind us carried a sign of a famous gay person of history. Like Amelia Earhart, and uhh--

[00:20:57] CL: Walt Whitman.

[00:20:58] BS: Writers and all sorts of people. And as we went down the street people would yell, “I didn’t know he was gay!” And, “I didn’t know he was gay!” Nobody said, “Go home gays” or anything like that. With the town being so artistic and friendly it wouldn’t have made a lot of sense if that had. But we got a lot of, “Hello there!” kind of hoots and hollers and people enjoyed that segment, and they did it thereafter.

[00:21:22] CL: They did it every year thereafter. They were a regular contingence in the parade thereafter because they were so encouraged by the response. We didn’t hear many of the comments but we had two or three people in the audience listening to what people said and there were a lot of things like Barb said, “Well I didn’t know [] was. Well I didn’t know Michelangelo was. Oh I didn’t know Walt Whitman...” And so it really it raised some awareness, and so it was great fun. That was one of the best--

[00:21:47] BS: But that wasn’t where we ran into, we started off with we were going to talk about the police. That’s not where we ran into the police problem. That was, that was when we were the grand marshals for the first gay, lesbian [looks at Carroll for clarification]

[00:22:00] CL: Orange County Gay Pride.

[00:22:02] BS: Thank you. Which they couldn't find any city that would let us march, who would give us a permit to march.

[00:22:10] CL: And we wanted a bigger venue than Laguna Beach. Anaheim or--

[00:22:13] BS: Yeah so this was the larger community now, the whole of orange county. So we were the grand marshals so they said well we can't find a city so what do we do? And somebody said, "Well there's that huge mile round park." So we had our booths inside the park and then we made the parade around the perimeter and so we had our dune buggy and led off the parade. And of course there was the man with a bullhorn, you know all of the gay people out there know, those people who have the big signs "you're going to die because you're gay and you're infecting--"

[00:22:44] CL: "Go to hell"

[00:22:45] BS: And at that time the aids epidemic was raging and [mimicking those protesting the gay pride event] "you're infecting people, you know, you're just killers, [Barbara briefly pauses] and evil and will die because Jesus wants you to." Um, with big signs and a bullhorn yelling at us while we zipped around the outside of the park and we'd gone around what twice? [Looks to Carroll]

[00:23:07] CL: Yeah they figured, you know we should go around twice because we wanted to make a big deal out of it. I mean we had bands and it was great.

[00:23:12] BS: Oh it was a huge parade behind us of all these different contingencies. And they came from L.A. to support us, they came from the bay area to support us--

[00:23:19] CL: They wanted, actually the community wanted to rent us this big limo because we were the grand marshals and we said, "No! We're so used to putting our little dune buggy in the Orange County. [Correcting herself] I mean in Long Beach, and in San Diego, and

in Laguna Beach parades--we're just gonna do our little dune buggy because that's who we are" basically. And so it was fine.

[00:23:37] BS: So by the third time we got around some folks had gotten into a skirmish. Right in front of the guy who was yelling with the bullhorn and the big sign and who is looking for a fight. And he had a few cronies and so a scuffle ensued.

[00:23:56] CL: A minor scuffle

[00:23:58] BS: Involving what six or seven people?

[00:24:00] CL: Yeah.

[00:24:01] BS: By the time we got all the way looped around again they had shut down the park. They had called the riot squad and the police are on the way. It was--

[00:24:13] CL: I've never been so frightened [Barbara chuckles] and it's not by the religious right or anything like that, but I was by the police over reacting with the hoods and the thing and--

[00:24:22] BS: They arrived in a bus, I mean it was almost like [snaps] that. It was like they had been waiting down the street. [Laughs]

[00:24:26] CL: Yeah well I think they were ready for something.

[00:24:08] BS: Yeah and--

[00:24:30] CL: And they would have been terribly disappointed if they hadn't been able to mobilize themselves and to get involved.

[00:24:37] BS: Oh absolutely I think they would've been disappointed.

[00:24:39] CL: Total overreaction.

[00:24:41] BS: So they ringed us and made us all--forced us--all to get in the middle and sit down in the middle of the fair where we had all our booths and food concessions and all that

in the middle of the park. And everybody had to huddle together and then they surrounded us in their riot gear with their guns drawn, their rifles drawn pointed at us-- I can't do the stomp that they did but, [mimics the police stomping and grunting]-- pointing their guns. I mean they grunted and showed their guns at us to make everybody absolutely still, till we were all like wooden Indians. And then they halted and they made quite a little--

[00:25:20] CL: And you know gay and lesbian people are--

[00:25:22] BS: Hundreds of people are--

[00:25:24] CL: Yeah thousands

[00:25:25] BS: Yeah in this surrounded thing. Anyway they finally decided, the great negotiations went on as to what to do with us now because we had a riot we had a riot. We kept asking each other, "where was the riot? "Well I didn't see the riot I missed it and I want to know where it is!" And some of the guys wanted to join in but there didn't seem to be a riot to get in on. And they had arrested three men. One on the other side and two of our guys who had come down from the bay area. And they were the only rioters they could find. You know because they were the only people rioting.

[00:26:01] CL: This was the first time we had experienced this kind of over reaction on the part of the police and we were not frightened of the right-wing agitators or anything like that but we were frightened of them and it was a little dicey.

[00:26:15] BS: People really felt safe that it was in a park and many people who were not basically out a lot or maybe who would've attended a parade had it been in a downtown area, but feeling they were in a, you know you had to get a ticket and you had to come in they felt really safe. And when that happened they felt, it was awful for some people, just terrible.

[00:26:35] CL: Long beach was very--

[00:26:37] BS: Fortunately we keep our sense of humor about things and--

[00:26:40] CL: Right and fortunately gay and lesbian people are cut above and are very much pacifists [Barbara laughs] and so nothing, none of us got hurt.

[00:26:47] BS: Nobody did anything, it's just we were all just disgusted actually and they finally went away. They hooty hooted off on sometime. I'll demonstrate for the rest of you in the room this wonderful grunting surge thing they did, it was amazing. And of course the whole thing was that we had our families there. We had our children, we had our nieces and nephews, and we had educational booths, and hotdog booths and gumbo booths and all. The kind of stuff that all Americans participate in when they're gonna have a parade, a little celebration. That's what it looked like and I think a lot of the police were amazed that no one did anything.

[00:27:27] CL: And I think one of the funniest experiences I had, although Barb wasn't in the dune buggy this particular time was in the Long Beach Gay Pride. And it's a huge contingency and Long Beach has always. They try and thwart the gay pride by saying well, "There's going to be no parades in Long Beach in June." Well that didn't deter the gay and lesbian community because we would have it in May. The last weekend in May. We don't care when we have it, we're just going to have a festival and want to be in your face. Because we want people to know we're here and we're proud and all that. So we're driving the dune buggy and hundreds and hundreds and thousands of people are watching and there was this contingency of the right wing and they were all dressed in ghostbuster outfits to protect themselves from us. [Barbara and Carroll laugh] It was just a riot. We just loved it. I didn't have my camera to take a picture of them, but it was a whole contingency, maybe eight or ten of them with the packs on and the white stuff. It was just a riot, it was so silly.

[00:28:24] BS: We couldn't begin to tell you how many times people tried to save us from the horrors of going to hell on account of being lesbians. It's countless. Countless numbers. And so we came up with so many good things to respond to with this that you know. I've already been saved and Jesus wants me, you know from that to buzz off buster. And it was an amazing time, and it was a great time because of the opposition, it meant solidarity. And we all pulled together: all the gay men, all the lesbian women, and all the feminists worked together to support each other in getting our rights. And it was a great time.

[00:29:04] CL: So our overreaction--I mean our real interaction--with the gay and lesbian movement was all during the eighties and that was when the AIDS crisis was coming up. And we did hundreds--Barbara and I did--we were their token lesbian couple when we would go to human sexuality classes in Orange County. We went all over Orange County--

[00:29:27] BS: To the junior colleges--

(00:29:29) CL: Junior colleges et cetera. And we would try and have this good friend of ours who's now passed on from []. He did all the scheduling, he was on disability from AIDS and he did all the scheduling, so he performed a wonderful service--

[00:29:43] BS: Now this all went on through p-flag by P-Flag.

[00:29:46] CL: Yeah it all was sponsored by P-Flag. And we'd be a lesbian couple, we'd try and get a gay couple, and a single one of each one so kids could see who we were and talk to us and ask questions of a real life lesbian or gay person kind of a thing. And it was very worthwhile I think. Because when we got ready to leave Orange county we were at a shopping mall and some man stopped us and said, "Umm excuse me, you don't remember me but," he said, "ten years ago you participated in a P-Flag panel." And he said, "It just did more for me, I was able to come out and I started reading books." And he said, "That just changed my life."

And you know those are the kinds of experiences that aww geez, we're glad we did it. [Barbara and Carroll smile and nod]

[00:30:35] BS: And Werner who was the head of the gay and lesbian center in Orange County would act as moderator many times for us and he was a great presence.

[00:30:44] CL: Yeah he was. We did a panel once with him and it was in a bible belt area of Orange County. And he said I think you guys would be interested, [speaking] to the class. Yes he said you know there's a book out about what Jesus had to say about homosexuality. [Sits up and speaks as the class] "Oh yeah? Oh what?" Werner says, "Yes all the pages are blank." And I loved it [slaps knee] because [mimicking the class] "What?" They were slow to get it but they finally got it. It was great, he had a wonderful sense of humor. We lost three wonderful friends in 89--I mean in 90-- which was the year we moved here. One was Werner, one was Rick, and one was Kurt Lindville--he and I were the co-chair of this Laguna outreach group. So that was a tough year for us because they were a real asset to our community and to our lives. So that was a tough one, but that was the, that was a tough year. Anyway...

[00:31:47] BS: They probably have another question

[00:31:48] CL: Oh yes, okay.

[00:31:50] I: Well I kind of want to dive deeper into some of the things you've said that are interesting. Well everything is interesting but in particular you talked about how the eighties, kind of that time in Laguna was feminists kind of coming together with the gay community, and then also the AIDS crisis was happening. And being really involved and all those sorts of dimensions happening, what did you see, what sort of community was being created at that time in Laguna beach out of curiosity?

[00:32:17] CL: I would say it really really. You know how when you have a crisis in your life and your friends gather? Well AIDS was a terrible crisis in our gay and lesbian community and we gathered together, we hugged each other more, a lot of us gave care to the guys that had AIDS and it really united the community because we had a common threat.

[00:32:50] BS: And it forced us also to reach out to the larger community to give them some education and helped them to understand what was going on because we needed resources to assist everyone larger than what we could produce on our own. So it caused us to become even more aware of the public face of gays, lesbians, and feminists and what we look like and what we were doing to give shape to some sort of public recognition to the whole thing. And that caused rather than, it sounds like everybody could get really snarly and angry, well there were some really snarly angry people who did a lot of acting out and caused a lot of trouble and did a lot of turmoil which was probably good.

[00:33:35] CL: Some of us laid on the pavement and drew white lines around ourselves.

[00:33:39] BS: Blew whistles and drove the cops crazy, did all kinds of things. But there was the core of us who really remained focused on what needed to be done. Raising hell was only part of it, ya know that there was work to be done. And I think that that outside force caused that coalition to become ever ever stronger stronger. And when we first went into Laguna Beach we were told that the gay men have their stuff and the women have their stuff you know, don't try to go there. That Laguna Outreach is just an anomaly of some sort. And yet we found that wasn't true, that the two communities were always interacting and there were a few little people that had that concept, but it didn't stay that way.

[00:34:24] CL: And don't forget although we are gay and lesbian people and we are proud of it, we are still a microcosm of our larger culture that is very patriarchal in how it is set

up. And whether the gay men want it this way or not, the women in some cases really deferred to the leadership of the men. and I think what happened with AIDS is that women really had to come up and take charge in some ways because there was a vacancy here because that person died or that kind of thing. And so women came more into the fore and there was really more of a coalescing of the men and women. I'm glad I came out with Barbara in the seventies and didn't come out when we could've come out like say in the sixties because there was a real separation and there was a suspicion amongst each community against the other and people were very much into role models. In fact we were told by one older lesbian friend of ours that if a lesbian would go into a lesbian bar that you had to declare you were a butch or fem. And I'm so glad because we don't identify ourselves as butch or fem we are just basically human beings having that in common with all other human beings no matter what kind of plumbing a person has.

[00:35:37] BS: Well and spiritual androgyny has always been my choice and always been how I see people anyway. People are souls, they have bodies and plumbing and get over it and move on. So that's always been our choice to be who we are, whatever that is. And I think...

[pauses] We put on a rap one time. We sponsored a rap for women to come to bring their stories and everybody share. And so we said let's go back, we'd like the older women to come--we were saying that because we were younger--but [Carroll and Barbara laugh] for the older women to come and share their stories. So we had women come who had come out in the twenties, who'd come out in the thirties, who came out in the forties--that's when we were born--who came out in the fifties, the sixties, the seventies. And we compared our experiences and it was just wonderful.

[00:36:54] CL: Very enriching.

[00:36:55] BS: It was amazing and lovely and it was like reading a book, like reading history, listening to their stories about the different unique things. The signals, even in the

twenties how you signaled to another woman that you might be interested was with hand gestures and eye movement. So subtle things and then how it advanced and how so many university women who were of course freer because they felt more secure within themselves and their education. How they reached out to other people. [Noise from outside] Oh I thought your camera was doing that [Laughs]. And so each era had interesting things about it and made it distinctly different because we came out in the late seventies.

[00:37:43] CL: And we had friends who were lesbian separatists feminists kind of a thing and they were just adamant. And when we all took up calling ourselves gay instead of just lesbian and gay men or that kind of []. And so I remember one time she says, “Don’t ever call me gay, I’m a lesbian and I’m not gay.” And I said, “Yeah, but we’re trying to coalesce and have this union of ourselves and have one word for us.” [Mimicking the woman] “Well I’m sorry I can’t participate.” So, but I understand where she came from because she probably was twenty years older than us. And her time of coming out was so different than when we actually did.

[00:38:24] BS: And she found her only support through women.

[00:38:26] CL: Right.

[00:38:27] BS: Her only support there was no identification, no male influence anywhere around her so that was where she felt safe.

[00:38:35] I: Yeah thanks, you answered it totally perfectly. Because that’s what I was getting at is that there was this weird dynamic of lesbians wanting that independence yet so to speak being like the lesbian Rosie the Riveters of the eighties is kind of some stories I’ve heard is stepping into places of leadership of stuff like that.

[00:38:52] CL: Right and it had to happen because of, it just had to happen because the women had been repressed by society and so this was a great coming out and coming of age for us.

[00:39:05] BS: Well it was quite stylish among the sisterhood of the feminists to choose a woman life as a love interest, as a partner because it was so politically correct. And that when on for a few years which was appalling because these people were not called to that lifestyle choice. They did it as a political move and of course it was temporary and they went back where they needed to be on either side of the fence and that was fine. But they caused havoc for a while and that caused some people to react into more militant stance you know against this that or the other thing because they wanted to be so much in sisterhood that they wanted to make that choice even if it was the wrong choice. It was kind of silly.

[00:39:57] I: So how long did you own the bookstore for? And also kind of backtracking had either of you owned a business before you decided to own this?

[00:40:05] CL: Yes, Barbara was an independent practice with her metaphysics, same people as psychic, so that was her own business. And I had a health foods store with a little restaurant in there. I started that in 1970 so I had that until, actually it was the late sixties. And when we moved to Laguna, so the bookstore was called "A Different Drummer" and we named it because Thoreau's marching to the tune of a different drummer and we thought what a great name for a bookstore and it clicked and it was great. And we had that for about ten years and we sold it only when we moved here. And so we moved here in 1990 and the store existed until probably four years ago. And it was great we sold it to a P-flag mom and her daughter and her daughter was in the service so she had independent income. One has to practically dig deep into their pockets to support one of our bookstores or an independent bookstore. So she ran it for

years and she sold it to a gay man who moved it. And it doesn't exist anymore, but it's not a testimony to, maybe it's a testimony to the fact I don't think people are reading as much as they used to. But also during the nineties when she had it and then he had it almost half of the independent bookstore closed. And when we were at our heyday of feminists in the eighties there was probably ten gay, lesbian, feminist bookstores in Southern California. And now there are none.

[00:41:52] I: Not one?

[00:41:53 CL: Not even a one. So that's a very sad thing because I think what's happened amongst younger people is that they think that just because there's a smattering of gay/lesbian books in Borders and Barnes & Noble that they don't need these separate individual stores that specialize in our interest. But believe me we filled up a store of one thousand square feet of our literature [gestures to self]. So you know there's a lot of literature dealing with the gay and lesbian movement and the history--

[00:42:28] BS: Well and the process of people buying books was much more than going in and having a cup of coffee, latte, mocha, joca. It was much more specific interests they were interested in. So they could come in and say, "I'm a tattooing dyke that wants to perpetuate my species by la la la la la. And I need to know the history of how I got these tattoos and why they're there and blah blah." And then we have moms who are raising kids alone or raising them with other lesbians. We had dads who are raising them with other men and we could meet those needs and talk about books that were particularly important and key and get through the shaft and help them find the books they really wanted. And we acted as a tremendous resource as far as []. We helped teachers and counselors who wanted to assist the community--

[00:43:29] CL: We helped put on and sponsor a lesbian parenting conference. And over a thousand women attended, it was at UCI [University of California, Irvine].

[00:43:38] BS: It was the first one ever.

[00:43:39] CL: It was the first one ever and it was wonderful because people were hungry to see because they wanted to--

[00:43:47] BS: People would come into our store and cry and say, "I feel safe here, I feel safe here, oh I can be safe, I can be myself here." And it was an amazing time.

[00:43:56] CL: My favorite story about this lesbian mother conference is that a good friend of ours--a gay man, his name is Lee--his mother went to the conference and she stood up in front of all these thousand people. And they had separate little study groups and then they would coalesce into the large group. And she stood up and introduced herself and said, "I have a gay son, his name is Lee Armintrout and he would make a wonderful sperm donor and I want to tell you what a wonderful person..." [Barbara and Carroll laugh]. I mean it was so cute because she loved her son and he is a wonderful person and wanted to parent so it was good she did this commercial for lee at this big lesbian mother conference and it was just great I loved it.

[Chuckles] I loved it.

[00:44:46] BS: So I think people were so thrilled when Barnes & Noble and Borders put in gay and lesbian books in their bookstore. And I'm not being mean or anything, they were honestly thrilled that "I can get my coffee, I can sit like everybody else, and I can read my books. And I'm going to make them keep those books in their on gay issues and I'm going to force myself on them and their consciousness and wake them up because I'm going to buy books there and shock them all when I'm buying these gay books and that I'm gay." And for the first year that may have been true. These people do not care if you're gay or lesbian, they want your

money and they would sell you a bomb building book like that [snaps] or anything else that you want because they're after money.

[00:45:34] CL: Well and I don't think that the gay and lesbian community wants to know the history as much as... we were all hungry, "oh so and so was and oh my goodness." And the growth of the gay and lesbian community and--

[00:45:45] BS: We took pride in those people who down through history who had gone to jail, who had been lynched, who had been beaten because they had a love that dare not call its name. And that was important to us.

[00:46:02] CL: Well we used to, Barbara and I, in addition to doing these panels we would, whenever we got invited, I would give a talk on loving ourselves through our literature. And it wasn't just lesbian, although it was a focus, it was gay and lesbian. And Barbara would talk about gay and lesbian being involved in spirituality. And there's, thank goodness there's people like yourselves who are young and are interested in these things and are doing this wonderful filming project so you have a sense of history. And it's great, but I think we're a microcosm of the larger picture because people aren't reading nearly as much as they used to read. And we're so busy handling the daily day projects that we aren't reflective as much as we used to be.

[00:46:49] BS: Well I would've loved to have had something like this by the great authors that we read you know []. How wonderful that would've been to see her face and have her speak her own voice to us and tell us about her life. She wrote it but how expressive it could've been. Those kinds of stories are wonderful and it's too bad people don't have the opportunity or take the opportunity [Video jumps forward to Barbara speaking]. No I was just talking about *Women of the Left Bank*, a book that I really enjoy, and [looks at Carroll] we sold tons of, helped

put it out of print probably. Who were part of the ex-patriot movement that moved to Paris from the 1920's-1940's that made what it was. You'd recognize Gertrude Stein and those kinds of people from the group. And this chronicles their relationships which was interesting, their salon life and their literature they produced. And it was books like that that enriched my spiritual life because amongst them were a small group of women who studied with GI Gurdjieff who is one of the best spiritual teachers I have ever read. And through them I learned about him, and through him a learned about them, and it was a wonderful meeting for me. And I taught a group in Laguna Beach of twenty-five lesbians and we studied it for probably ten, twelve weeks or something like that. We met--

[00:48:22] CL: Because Gurdjieff had a school in Paris and he had a group of women around him that were basically lesbian. And he called them the rope, and they were the core of his teaching during that period of time.

[00:48:36] BS: That one period of time, he had a much larger--

[00:48:38] CL: Yeah, well umm--

[00:48:40] BS: Katherine Mansfield

[00:48:41] CL: Katherine Mansfield was a student. Kathryn Hulme whose most famous for writing a book called *The Nun's Story* and then made this movie out of it that young people wouldn't know because it was in black and white I think. But anyways it was a great. But it would've been wonderful for us as younger people to know that say Janet Flanner who was one of the most famous writers for the New Yorker for many many years was a lesbian. That Natalie Murray was her partner in life and she was a bigwig at NBC. You know these people who were productive and led wonderfully full lives--

[00:49:13] BS: Some day, one day when were truly accepted and not this surface acceptance that people think we're so accepted and people still say crappy stuff behind our back. Someday when we're truly accepted that'll come out in literature class. They will say so and so who wrote such and such was partners with and nobody will be shocked and nobody will think it's a great big deal. They'll say, "Oh well she was a lesbian, okay." And, "That's fine let's judge her on her literature." That will happen someday. It's not there and it is not time to sit back on or morals and say we're all accepted. Look how long we have been without slavery in this country, look how long black people have been able to vote, and you still hear white people talk nasty about black people behind their backs because they think you're white and you won't care and I do. So I hear it and--

[00:50:09] CL: And look how long the movement was before women got the right to vote. I mean they started on this in 1849 and we didn't vote till 1920. So very few of those women who were involved in the original suffrage ever saw the results of their work. And so that's why, that's what keeps us going [nudges Barbara].

[00:50:29] BS: That's it. Spreading the word.

[00:50:31] CL: That's it. I remember when we--this is kind of a cute story--my first partner in life, because she was twenty years older than I was, was incredibly disliked by my family of birth. They of course blamed her for me being a lesbian, and so they disliked her immeasurably. So that when I split up it was a good thing, and then when I got Barbara it was also a good thing. Because she was more my own age and then fifteen, sixteen years had passed and it was more acceptance for our lifestyle. So my aunt and uncle--I had an aunt and uncle who I was very close to and they partly raised me--and we were living in Laguna Beach and we were very out. And every once in a while my uncle would read an article in the paper, in the L.A.

Times about something we were involved in, he said, “So when we move to San Luis Obispo County...” My uncle not only said this, but wrote me a letter saying, “It was easy for you to be out in Laguna Beach, there’s a lot of gay and lesbian people there, but I know San Luis Obispo I’ve done business up there...” He says, “It’s not like Laguna Beach you must be careful to keep a low profile.”

[00:51:43] BS: And we put a lot of stock in uncle’s wisdom. He was famously successful and he had our best interest at heart and so we really put a lot of stock in what he had to say. So I said to Carroll, “Let’s just take it easy. Let’s go one step at a time here when we move to this strange rural area which we’re not used to--

[00:52:03] CL: And then Barbara would say, “Just because you can do something doesn’t mean to say you have to do it. And so we were kind of quiet, and we got used to the area, and I went to work at the county.

[00:52:14] BS: That took a few months.

[00:52:16] CL: Oh before that we met a group of people who are involved with BAPA-- which is a business and professional gay and lesbian group--and we got connected with them and anyway the gay and lesbian community decided they should bring the AIDS quilt to San Luis Obispo. And it was a wonderful idea, so how are we going to raise money to do this? And so well we could have an auction. And so somebody said, “who could be in charge of it”. “Well Carroll your not working right now, you could do this.” And so the joke was when anybody would call our house--Barbara had some clients at that point--When anybody would call our house they’d get Barbara. [Mimicking the caller] “Where’s Carroll?” [Mimicking Barbara] “She’s out begging, she’s out on a begging trip.” So we begged a lot and raised enough money to bring the quilt here. We raised 10,000 dollars we had it at The Grange in Morro Bay we held the

auction there because we could rent it for fifty dollars. We kept everything low, you know a low overhead and we raised every penny to bring the AIDS quilt there the first time. So that was our entree of being quiet. [Laughs].

[00:53:38] BS: No no, the entree of being quiet was when Carroll hopped in the car with the other BAPA members and drove themselves down to Santa Maria to be on TV to confront George Hobbes over the controversy over about gay and lesbian people trying to make a Mexican mess like the Mexicans have made or whatever horrible statement he said--

(00:54:02) CL: He said, the year before that he'd said Santa Maria had a Mexican problem, a Latino problem. And now it's having a gay and lesbian problem.

[00:54:10] BS: They're all moving here from L.A. and trying to mess up the whole place. And so they went down to confront him and of course Carroll appeared on TV and that's when uncle said when he saw her on his channel three in Ventura, "what happened to--

[00:54:26] Carroll and Barbara: "So much for keeping a low profile!" [both smile]

[00:54:29] BS: Then a few months later we appeared in the newspaper with our Christmas tree and they said, "Lesbians celebrate Christmas in Los Osos." So that was the next step in keeping quiet, and then you brought the quilt.

[00:54:44] CL: Yeah but we did, I did a good thing on George Hobbes. He was the mayor of Santa Maria at this time. And so we had this big controversy at the city council chambers and yack yack yacking. And we gave him what for and told him how we think, we're here and all that kind of stuff. And so later he caught us, we all left about the same time he walked out and he said something to us. And I said, "You know George here's the thing about it, I happen to believe in reincarnation, so in your next lifetime I hope you come back as a Latino

lesbian. And that would do you justice.” And he said [Carroll mumbles gibberish and Carroll and Barbara laugh]. But I thought you know, guy needs to get a grip.

[00:55:28] BS: So uh, Uncle threw his hands up and said alright girls--

[00:55:34] CL: You’re on your own--

[00:55:35] BS: Whatever, [Laughter] you’re into it now. And uh, so when we took over the bookstore I think people thought we were going to have a lesbian, gay, feminist bookstore, but this little community, even the larger San Luis Obispo county couldn’t support that kind of an effort. It’s a good thing we didn’t try (nudges Carroll) since the exterior supports for those kind of things just aren’t there anymore. So we have a general bookstore and we have a nice emphasis in our [] and we certainly try and be supportive and have books and supplies for people, but it's nothing like Different Drummer where it’s a whole different kind of thing--

[00:56:02] CL: Well and you know, Different Drummer existed at a time when it was uh, the timing was right. And also we were the only gay, lesbian, feminist bookstore in all of orange county which is a huge population. I mean it’s huger now which is why we’re here. But uh--

[00:56:27] BS: But people would come on vacation, uhh, because we were on all sorts of directories and things--

[00:56:33] CL: Right

[00:56:34] BS: People would come to Laguna because everyone knew that it was an accepting place to be gay--

[00:56:37] CL: Gay friendly place

[00:56:38] BS: Yeah, they would come there to party, and they’d come to the beach, and so they’d come to the bookstore and that helped our revenues and to keep the place open.

[00:56:44] CL: Right, right. But here, you know people would come visit from orange county or something, “Well where is the gay bar, well where is this?” I said you know this whole county doesn’t even have the population of the city of Anaheim. So how can we support a gay bar and a gay this and that? And I said we can’t even support a gay and lesbian bookstore because there is so few of us, and were so spread out. So I tried to do an analogy like that so they’ll get it in their heads.

[00:57:14] BS: And we did have a gay bar here for a while.

[00:57:15] CL: Right

[00:57:16] BS: And we all tried to support it, but there was just not enough of us to-- unless we all wanted to sign up for alcoholics anonymous afterwards or something--we just couldn’t buy enough liquor to keep the thing going. So uh people would come and then they would say, “ Well we heard there was a bar here.” And yeah there was a bar here five years ago, you know it closed, we couldn’t keep it going and things like that. And they’d say, “Well where is one now?” And I’d say well drive 250 miles and you will find one, we don’t have one here. And they can’t believe it they honestly, it’s so, it’s so ingrained in their mind that they should have amenities like that, (sighs and looks at Carroll) yeah they can’t get it.

[00:57:55] I: Out of curiosity, what made you move though from there? To make such a transition is huge.

[00:58:02] CL: Well let’s see...

[00:58:05] BS: I think the exact moment was when I called Carroll on the phone and I said--we had been vacationing in Morro Bay and looked over here and explored--

[00:58:13] CL: And one of our favorite cities to visit is San Francisco. And ya know as we got older we thought, aww we don’t want to drive there in one day, we need to stop in Morro

Bay and spend the night. And that'll be a halfway point and run up there. And there's all kinds of things to do in San Francisco, so that was our favorite big city to visit. And so that's how we discovered Morro Bay and Los Osos.

[00:58:34] BS: And fell in love with the area. So I called her and said, Carroll, umm, I've had it. It just took me 45 minutes to drive to the Market from one end of Laguna to the other. Which is only like 6 miles long. And it took me 45 minutes to drive back Carroll. I have to get out of here. And Carroll said, I'm with you, I'm looking out the window--and we were right on highway one, you know, PCH-- and she said I've been out here now, bumper to bumper for several hours! I'm sick of looking at them and I'm breathing in all their smoggy stuff. And it was just too many people. It was too much.

[00:59:09] CL: So we have wonderful memories of the activities that we had. And our life, and our friends, the network of friends we had amongst the gay and lesbian community. We were very active with P-flag and sponsored a lot of things like that and uh some friends of ours gave us a party before we moved here. It was in 1990 in February I think it was. And they had it at their house because they had the biggest house, it was like about a 110 people there. Just to say goodbye to us, and it was hard for us to leave them because that was our network of support. [To Barbara] You grew up there, I grew up there and we missed, and we still miss aspects of our lives and the association we had. But we do not miss the crowds, the traffic jams, and all that.

[00:59:56] BS: The Circus.

[00:59:57] CL: And you know our friends tell us that, you know Laguna beach has changed also. There is a gentrification that has occurred, the community is not as coalesced as it was once, and it's changed and you wouldn't like it anymore.

[01:00:12] BS: But I think we, I think we lived through the political peak of the story of Laguna Beach and of the movement, so we got the best of it really. And we still have friends that we write and talk to and you know, who came through that whole thing with us. And when we see young people we want to share all that with them. But it's hard so I'm glad you're making this tape because it was a time in history in our movement. It was a time in our lives that was great. And you know, everybody thinks their time is now, and that's good, that's a good thing to know. But you can never get back your thirties. You know when we lived our life those thirty years, that the peak of your physical self, at the peak of your mental self, and to be involved in such great building of energy--

[01:01:07] CL: And we kept it up here well into our fifties. [Barbara laughs] We're not quite as, we don't quite have the energy that we used to and--

[01:01:13] BS: Well we were involved here. We got the chapter started, and the P-Flag here, and we got people interested, and got interest groups going, and got a lecture bureau going on and stuff--

[01:01:25] CL: And we got a great resource because of all the connections we had in Southern California. So we brought up Malcom Boyd, and we brought Phyllis Andell from San Francisco, we brought Mitch Grobeson who was a cop in L.A. who had a terrible time because he was gay.

[01:01:42] BS: Big political celebrity kind of thing--

[01:01:45] CL: Mitch was a cop who other cops wouldn't come to his aid because he was gay and he had to take extra lessons and things so he could survive on the street. Uh we had Peter Nardi who was the head of GLAAD [Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation]. And

so we had, we brought all those connections up with us and it was very rich for a long while. We had some great dinner speaker meetings and um--

[01:02:07] BS: Continued it into the nineties.

[01:02:07] CL: Yeah continued you're right

[01:02:12] I: Did you do that via GALA [Gay and Lesbian Alliance of San Luis Obispo] or Cal Poly mostly out of curiosity?

[01:02:15] CL: Well we did it through GALA and BAPA mostly which is the Business and Professional Association that Ray and Jamie helped start. So we did it under that auspice, we were active with GALA too, and that's how we met the Davids and anyway.

[01:02:36] BS: And got connected up with the larger community.

[01:02:39] I: And so you talked about what was happening when you arrived in San Luis Obispo, was there even a gay bar when you came or what was happening politically even?

[01:02:48] CL: There was no gay bar, there was umm, when you've been active in the gay and lesbian community a long time, you, you're drawn to various controversies. And there was a piece of legislation that was coming, I don't remember all the facts, some of my grey cells are missing, but anyway. The city council of San Luis Obispo was having a hearing. We wanted equal rights in housing and--

[01:03:18] BS: Benefits.

[01:03:19] CL: Benefits, employee, places of employment, and so we got on the bandwagon on that one and they had a hearing and there was, they anticipated so many people coming that they had the hearing at the Vet's Hall which is very large, it's there close to Cal Poly. And it's a huge hall, they had I don't know at last count 1500 people showed up. And people were turned away and that kind of thing and we had little signs supporting--

[01:03:53] BS: Busses

[01:03:54] CL: And they bussed people in from fundamentalist churches in Orange County, the opposition did. They saw this as a big threat, this move to have equal rights in San Luis Obispo County. Or actually it was just San Luis Obispo City. And so I think 68 people spoke in favor of this legislation--

[01:04:16] BS: I had worked that day and I said, Carroll I can't march on here, I've got to fall back I got to rest. [Carroll and Barbara talk over each other briefly]. So then at midnight I woke up and I'm thinking, where the hell is she? At one o'clock I thought something has happened I better call the hospitals, the sheriff department, and get somebody looking for her (gestures towards Carroll). I never heard of a meeting going until one o'clock in the morning you know this is nuts. Meanwhile you know because I had no idea, I mean I knew our contingency of about thirty-five gay people who were going to march down there and try and testify, but we had no idea that they were going to bring these people in from Orange county on busses and that evangelical preachers were going to start screaming and yelling and all that kind of stuff went on. We had no idea that was going to happen. So when she marched in about one thirty I said, ya know I was just sitting here thinking who do I call? How can I find you? What do I do? This Podunk area here doesn't have any real way for me to focus on finding you. Carroll said well I would've called but all the telephones were jammed--other people calling home telling their spouses and stuff I can't make it I've got to stay here and testify--So--[Carroll interrupts]

[01:05:24] CL: This was before everybody had cell phones I guess.

[01:05:26] BS: This is quite a to-do that went on over that

[01:05:28] CL: Yeah it was very rancorous, and unpleasant, and people remember--

[01:05:34] BS: People you wouldn't have believed spoke in such demeaning terms, it was incredible--

[01:05:41] CL: And yet there were people from the heterosexual community who just spoke eloquently in our favor. And we had great support, and overwhelming--

[01:05:50] BS: Of course P-Flag was there full force--

[01:05:52] CL: You know the number of people that spoke--60 in favor and 30 and against--so you know, it was clear that uhh, you mentioned the busses coming in and stuff, but they decided to vote against us. And that's when I went up and talked to, what is her name? She was the supervisor-- Peg Panard. And I said, Oh Peg I am so embarrassed that you could possibly--[Mimics Peg mumbling]-- I said there's nothing you can say, all people want is equal rights. And later she wrote a letter of apology to our group, but you know she should've voted--if she'd been convicted she should've voted her conviction then--instead of being swung by a militant minority. And they were clearly a militant minority. I went into the bathroom to use the bathroom and there was this black woman there--I had a button on, obviously I was a lesbian-- and she said I'm going to pray for you. I said no, please don't pray for me. I said I'm responsible for my salvation, you pay attention to your salvation, and we'll all get along much better. So you know, I've learned not to get into extended conversations I thought that was enough. Because we weren't going to agree on anything anyway but...

[01:07:09] I: What year was that in?

[01:07:11] CL: Gosh, I don't remember, ninety one maybe? Maybe ninety-two. Did we already have the store at that point? Because we had the store in ninety-two. No we didn't quite have the store so it was probably just before we took over the store.

[01:07:32] I: And you talked about some of the people that were like P-Flags, straight people speaking eloquently supporting. I think that's one of the things that's really interesting in San Luis Obispo is not only the integration, the easier integration of lesbians and gay men, but also the straight community at large kind of is forced to, essentially forced to interact with other people--

[01:07:53] BS: Well a lot of groundwork has gone into that. GALA did a lot of publicity and they went around to all the schools, you know P-Flag has gone around to all the schools, it's not like these people haven't had a lot of education offered up by the gay/lesbian community. They didn't get this way all by themselves. I do think the community in general is more liberal, more open, and more understanding in the San Luis Obispo area. I just think it has a natural tendency to be that way, but people did have to be educated, and all that work went on before you got here, some of it was going on when we arrived here. The AIDS support network was well established when we got here and they had a nice community of people who were working with them. And they had reached out to the straight community too and had gotten some support from government and gotten some support from individuals before we ever arrived. That was in place. And then I think really, really by that time I think all of us in the community had gotten a little more savvy about reaching out to the general public and saying straight people: we need straight people, you need us, we're neighbors. I think a little bit smarter there, rather than trying to be isolated and doing everything ourselves. So that helped.

[01:09:08] I: And when you did panels, just out of curiosity, what were some of the typical questions that were asked of you, or maybe a funny one that you remember, or a really impacting one?

[01:09:19] CL: You know when I got the email that you were coming today, and we brought some pictures that we wanted to scan and things, I thought about pulling the file out because I kept a small file of comments that people made about us. What are some of the funny questions? Umm, Is there a lot of role play? You know that would be a typical question, is there a lot of role playing? And our answer would be basically, we're basically human beings and um I don't cook Barbara does the cooking, I take out the trash, and it's only because I'm not a very good cook and so--

[01:10:00] BS: I hate the trash

[01:10:02] CL: (Laughs). Right and so taking care of the garden and you know, but it's a matter of interest as opposed to roles.

[01:10:12] BS: And there were--at that time in Orange County when we were doing some of this--there were bars that, women's bars who tended to be along those lines who were still doing heavy role playing. And then there were other bars who were very androgynous, and then when the disco music came in then you found more bars that were men and women both. And I think, I think the empowerment of women broke down some of the need to do that role playing because you could be a strong woman, you didn't have to make the effective being male to be strong, and I think feminism really helped us establish that in our community. And I think it helped men understand that we wanted to be empowered, that we were willing to accept our role, and willing to accept responsibility, and didn't need to be protected or done for. That we wanted to do, and so I think all that worked together to make it all mesh.

[01:11:17] CL: Mhmm, yeah

[01:11:18] I: Do you remember some of the funny comments right now? Or are they in that file?

[01:11:23] CL: Well I shared the one that Werner said about the book that Jesus wrote about homosexuality and thought that was a fun thing.

[01:11:29] BS: No I think there were a lot of not funny questions. I think there were a lot of people who said, "Do you love her the way that I love my husband? Do you love her the way that I love my boyfriend? Do you love her the way that I love my girlfriend?" You know, heterosexual people asking questions. And young people questioning their own sexual orientation and saying, "Well where would I go? Where would I find somebody to talk this over with. You're here, but where would I go?" A lot of the classes we spoke in were sex education classes in junior colleges. So they did have--and we were invited by the professor--so we, they did have some outreach. They did have some knowledge that they could talk to somebody and he had people also that they could talk to. And that helped.

[01:12:17] CL: The umm, Barb will probably slug me for telling this story, but there was one group in a human sexuality class and this smartass young guy said, "Boy I sure wouldn't want to have something shoved up my ass blah blah blah". And so the gay guy said back to the group, "Well it seems to me that this is not a total purview of the gay community, it seems to me there are a lot of heterosexual men who do this too".

[01:12:45] BS: Who enjoy anal sex.

[01:12:46] CL: Who enjoy anal sex. And the women, we didn't solicit them, they said, "Yes!" And so it was kind of an interesting thing because ya know, anyway...

[01:12:58] BS: It brought out a whole other discussion that was interesting about the two groups enjoying ya know, oral sex, anal sex, and different sorts of sexual habits that are shared by both communities. That they try and point the finger and say that's only going on over there, or that's only going on over here, where sex is sex and everybody is doing different things that

they like, whatever that is. So it was interesting what it brought out. Especially women waving their hand going--.

[01:13:25] CL: [Mimicking the straight women] "Oh yeah!" It was the straight women. We didn't need to give any testimony, they did! [Carroll and Barb talk over each other briefly]. I wish I could remember more anecdotal things, but...

[01:13:36] BS: Well there were so many.

[01:13:38] CL: It was a long time ago.

[01:13:40] I: I've probably done, or been on, or organized about thirty at least of them or so, maybe more. Thirty to fifty, so.

[01:13:48] CL: Maybe the questions have changed over the years, I don't know.

[01:13:50] I: Yeah it would be interesting to see.

[01:13:53] BS: Of course there's a lot more education and people have better questions to ask. They've read more--

[01:13:59] CL: More openness

[01:14:01] I: Many times the teachers will ask the students to prepare the questions ahead of time, so that there isn't any blurting.

[01:14:05] CL: Ohhh.

[01:14:06] I: And they're really organized, like we're not here to say what's right or wrong, we're just here to share our stories.

[01:14:11] BS: Oh they always, professors always took care of that. At least they would say ya know, "These people aren't here for you to pick at. You know, this is a discussion." Yeah it was pretty good. Ya know I think only once or twice were people really rude, off the wall,

crazy kind of comments. And that's a percentage that happens no matter what you're discussing-

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[01:14:34] CL: And you know, they're basically smart-alecy straight men who would ask some insulting thing, and you know we've all heard these questions before and so we always--

[01:14:47] BS: We had some ammunition. [Carroll and Barbara speak over each other] And one of the things that none of us would answer was specific questions: "What do you do in bed"? And that was never required of us, and that's not why we went there, we went to help people understand their own sexuality, not ours.

[01:15:10] CL: And you know, you basically know the professors of human sexuality are into the anatomy of things anyway. And so there is a clear understanding, and we didn't need to-

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[01:15:21] BS: But, well I do remember in orange county at Orange Coast College I was talking to this woman who had asked a question and I was explaining something and I said, well that probably sounds strange. And she said, "Oh, you think you people are strange? Last week we had in the hermaphrodites, and the week before that we had the Satanists", I don't know what all, they believed in sacrificial something or others. I mean she named off all these groups and the rest of us are all--

[01:15:53] CL: Sadomasochism

[01:15:54] BS: Transgender

[01:15:55] CL: So we were normal.

[01:15:57] BS: Yeah they were telling us all the people that they had seen on these panels, and we're all looking at each other going, "Hey, we're sounding pretty good!" You know

we all looked fairly normal, and all had jobs, and all were doing regular things in life. And some of the groups they had in were--

[01:16:14] CL: Were out there.

[01:16:16] BS: Were really something. Oh it looks like the time is almost over.

[01:16:19] I: How many years have you both been together?

[01:16:21] CL: We've been together twenty-seven years. So.

[01:16:27] BS: Carroll keeps track of a lot of dates, I trust her accounting.

[01:16:32] I: And what do you attribute to the longevity of your relationship?

[01:16:36] CL: Ohh lets see...

[01:16:37] BS: Pacifism. (Carroll laughs) No guns, not hitting, no knives. You know nothing like that and I think that helps.

[01:16:46] CL: Well we're like a lot of couples. We are very different in how we do things, but our philosophy of life, the things we value, our ethics, they're all the same. Our spiritual quest, the importance of being involved and giving back to life and not just to the gay and lesbian community. For a number of years, I was on the CSA-9 which is kind of like a city council, only Los Osos isn't a city. And it was like an advisory group and we were appointed by the supervisor and it was a precursor to this elected group CSD. And so I was on that for four and a half years where we planned things and so we very much feel as if we need to participate in the community. And so we have different styles because we're different people, we were raised by different kinds of people--

[01:17:52] BS: Although we find many similarities in our background that we didn't know until we got to discovering each other, umm the same values, many many similar values. And similar kind of reserved upbringing that we had and um--

[01:18:11] CL: We enjoy the same kinds of things, just being together and talking in our little cocoon we call our car, and interacting, and we enjoy different cultures. For example, for the third time we invited the line dance team from Cal Poly to come for Chinese New Year to bless the store and to bless the community. And this last week ago, Saturday we had them again, it was our third time and we must've had 110-120 people turn out and it's very colorful, it's very fun, it's very noisy, and it's something that we value from another culture that we wanted to share with Los Osos. And I think Barbara, you know, we feel the same way about things like that, dipping into different cultures--

[01:19:00] BS: And I think Carroll likes to do the group and I like to do individuals. I become very intense with people when I'm with them and they are my total focus and bombs could go off and I wouldn't notice. I'm that focused when I'm in a session with someone, and I like doing my ones on ones. I like teaching, I do classes, spirituality classes, but when I'm with one person we have a very deep rapport and we get right down to the nitty-gritty of what's going on in their life and I try to help them with every resource I can possibly find within myself. And I like group experience, but Carroll loves the groups, that's her forte, and I like to make those deep kind of strong attachments with people. So I think it compliments each other.

[01:19:53] CL: We both have a very positive outlook on life. We both take each day at a time. We're not pollyannas; we don't think life is great, people are terrific, and business is wonderful. So we're not falsely positive, but we're very basically positive thinkers. We try to you know, get up each day and do what we can each day to make our lives better and whoever else we come in contact with.

[01:20:00] BS: And I think we're fair fighters. When we have an argument, we try to resolve it rather than just escalate it too. And if we need to go back at it again we try to come at it

from a different point of view, see where the other guy's coming from, um we're great negotiators with each other. And I think that helps the longevity of the relationship, is that we try to understand what's going on with the other person and how we can cope and deal with those things--

[01:20:43] CL: And the other thing is, is that I think sometimes we're short with one another, and then if we take a look at it we realize something else is going in our life and we just have access to each other so we get dumped on, you know kind of a thing. So that helps too.

[01:20:58] BS: Mhmm. Yeah.

[01:21:00] I: Who's the feisty one?

[01:21:01] BS: Both of us.

[01:21:02] CS: Mhmm.

[01:21:03] I: Neither of you is more feisty or more...?

[01:21:07] BS: Depends on the day, depends on the issue, (laughs) depends on what's happening. No I think we both have our--

[01:21:13] CL: We're both quick thinkers, so we're, we have a tendency to respond quickly. And sometimes that's good, and sometimes it's not so good (laughs).

[01:21:23] BS: Yeah we're both very spontaneous and have good access to a lot of language (both laugh). And that, that's good, and not so good sometimes. So we. One time we were at a women's wrap--in Laguna we belonged to a lesbian wrap that had twenty couples, and it was really interesting times and we shared lots of things-- and one time Carroll and I were saying we had been up the night before fighting over the meaning of a word and we had gotten out the great big dictionary to look up what this word actually meant. And we had--this was like at three o'clock in the morning and we're looking up the word-- and one of the gals who attended

them with her partner and she turned to her partner and said, “Now see I want that kind of relationship! I want to know those kind of things, that’s what I want us to do!” And the other one is going, “Are you nuts? I’m not getting up in the middle of the night to look up the meaning of a word!” So it’s our relationship. It’s gonna be different for everybody. Everybody is going to find areas in which they can meet and areas in which--you know there are some things I say to Carroll, “that’s nice, have a good time.” You know--

[01:22:30] CL: Well because I’m much more physically active. I’m interested in walking, going to the gym, and Barbara is much more sedentary about her, and she’s much more introspective.

[01:22:43] BS: I have a meditation every afternoon and I have a spiritual routine that I do that feeds me in the areas that I need energy from. And Carroll goes in the morning and works out at the gym and marches along--

[01:22:55] CL: I do Pilates and yoga and walk a lot so--

[01:22:58] BS: So it’s a very different way to regenerate energy--

[01:23:01] CL: She does it quietly and if I don’t move my body I’m not a very pleasant person. So I need to move my energy.

[01:23:10] BS: And if I don’t have quiet time, and reflective time, I’m not pleasant either. [both laugh] So we give it to each other, you know you go your way and I do my thing. And I think that’s something that people, young people have to negotiate with each other. How are we going to do this? How are we going to work that out. We knew this when we came together, but we were in our thirties. We accepted absolutely about each other.

[01:23:37] I: Definitely. Yeah when you’re young it’s sometimes hard because you don’t really know what you want. So you try on different hats and stuff like that.

[01:23:43] CL: Right you don't know who you are.

[01:23:45] BS: Yeah, you yourself don't know what you need, and you're busy trying to find out. The other person is wondering what you're doing while you're busy trying to find out because they're busy trying to find out.

[01:23:55] I: Let's see. So where did you or do you still continue to get support in your life? You talk a lot about spirituality and stuff like that. And the community at large...

[01:24:10] BS: Well we have friends, we have long term friends that are both gay and straight. Husband and wife teams that we have known a long long time. And gay men and gay women that we keep in touch with. We of course have new friends that we've made here that are important to us. I think, I would say probably that we each dip into the well of ourselves to come up with what's really meaningful, and then we discuss the rest of it.

[01:24:43] CL: Several years ago, because we recognized there was a need for maybe a focus on older lesbians. So about ten years ago?

[01:24:55] BS: Yeah

[01:24:56] CL: Eight or nine years ago we started a lesbian support group for lesbians fifty or there above because we certainly didn't want to keep someone away who maybe had a partner that was older than them and fifty and things like that. So it's fairly fluid, but so we range in age from probably forty five to eighty five which is quite a broad spectrum. And we have some interesting discussions and we look forward to meeting and every year at Christmas we have a little Christmas party and sing some carols and that kind of thing. When we had the bookstore in Laguna we formed a Different Drummer chorus. And so every year Laguna outreach would do this Christmas program--

[01:25:39] BS: Which involved a talent show.

[01:25:42] CL: Yeah so we--

[01:25:44] BS: There was a lot more heart and spirit then there was talent, but it was interesting.

[01:25:48] CL: So there was a group that rewrote the words to “Deck the Halls,” it was called “Dyke the Halls.” And so we had the words run off, and so every year we would do, we called ourselves “the bookstore chorus.” We weren’t very good singers, [Laughs] but people enjoyed it and we wrote some other words. We wrote to adapt to our own group of people so it was great fun. And we have very fond memories of the guys doing the dance from *The Nutcracker*, “Sugar Plum Fairies.” Three guys dressed in their tutus with their mustaches and stuff--

[01:26:22] BS: And they would tutu all over the room throwing kisses, candy kisses.

[01:26:26] CL: Yeah it was great.

[01:26:30] BS: But our Amelias, when we have our pizza party for Christmas, we all sing Christmas carols and it feels very much like family. It just feels like we’ve all known each other all these years and we all come from similar something or other. And even though there is a great disparity of age we’re all over the youth part. We’re all mature. And all of us have experienced a similar culture and society and I think that helps a great deal too. And--

[01:27:04] CL: We don’t mean to minimize some of the travail that we’ve gone through in order to be accepted. I remember my youngest sister married to a cop. And I sent her something on gay rights or something and she wrote back and said well we love you and Barbara, and she would send us anniversary cards, but we don’t... What did she say? It came from her husband. “We don’t agree with gay rights.” And so I wrote her a letter back.

[01:27:39] BS: Wanted to know which ones she wanted to take away.

[01:27:42] CL: And citing the constitution and blah blah blah, and I never heard anything back from her. Except she said to my other sister, “Well I said something to Carroll, boy she sure is smart and knows a lot of stuff.” [both laugh] It was cute.

[01:27:57] BS: Oh overwhelmed the hell out of her. Well once I was washing dishes with Carroll’s stepfather and he was complaining about homos. And I’m washing dishes, Carroll hadn’t come out yet, he hadn’t gotten it yet. So I’m washing dishes with him and I had just helped him make dinner because he did a lot of the cooking. And I’m the cook, so I’m in there and he and I are having a very nice time, and a very nice chat when he brings up those darn homos. And I said to him I’m sorry that you feel that way because I just moved my apartment and I had a lot of help from my two girlfriends who are together and they’re gay. And then they brought a friend of theirs and he was gay, and I don’t know how I would’ve gotten all my furniture moved if they didn’t help me. And he said, “Well, well I think some of them could be good sometimes.” You know that was his response and--

[01:28:49] CL: That was my mother’s third husband and he was a bit of a redneck, and I was glad to see him go.

[01:28:53] BS: But, but you did finally come out to him and he did, he did accept the fact that this was the situation. And he loved Carroll so much that he wouldn’t have made a big fuss with us anyway. So there are those moments when you know, I wanted to say, “Hey buddy, what are you doing? What are you talking about?” And you know, challenge him, but I thought no, that’s Carroll’s business. That’s not mine. I’m in his house, how can I handle this best? So we’ve had our challenges you know--

[01:29:25] CL: And I think the friendships that we’ve built have been separate from any kind of stereotyping sexuality kind of thing. I remember, my best friend is a straight woman in

southern California, her name is Betty. And Betty, Frank, and I were great pals and then when Barbara came into my life and we became a couple then the four of us, we celebrated our birthdays together and things like that. And it was funny because when I decided to come out to her, when we had the Different Drummer bookshop, and that's kind of obvious it was a gay, lesbian, feminist bookstore here. And she said two things to me. One she said, "Just don't tell my kids." Which they're fine with it but you know that's her concept because they were crazy about me and I was crazy about them. And then the other thing she said was, Barbara said to her, "I bet Frank tried to tell you Carroll was gay many years ago didn't he?" "Oh yes!" Betty says, "He told me that you and dot were a couple and said oh Frank, don't be silly." So it's cute, people see what they want to see you know, and she loved me as a human being and that was all there was to it kind of a thing. So it was kind of fun.

[01:30:40] BS: Frank and I would smoke together and-- which I gave up years ago--and he and I would smoke together and by what he said to me, I knew he knew what our relationship was. It was so clear.

[01:30:54] CL: Well Frank and Barbara were Pisces together so we would always have that within. No. It was opposite. Frank and I were cancers and you and Betty were Pisces. Oh well.

[01:31:03] BS: So anyway, we would sit in the back of the truck and smoke cigarettes and talk about life. And the two lesbians that lived next to them when the children were little that Betty didn't know were lesbians either. And so I knew that Frank was telling me he's fine and it's okay and so I felt free to talk to him however I wanted to. And he certainly accepted it. And it was the three of us looking at Betty going, "Anytime now Betty." (Carroll laughs). So when she finally did get it, she had a lot of easing into it. And now we're very close with all of them

including her daughter and granddaughter who come up and we have girls weekend together.

And they come up during the summer and we enjoy that a lot. So you know we have family. We have Carroll's birth family, we have extended family through our associations. And so it's, whatever happens in the larger community, we are who we are so they can like it or lump it, but here we are.

[01:32:13] I: So do you guys have a favorite song or type of music or something like that you guys listen to? Just out of curiosity.

[01:32:22] CL: We're the rock and roll generation so, so we both prefer rock and roll and--

[01:32:28] BS: Oldies but goodies, and we love, we absolutely love Christmas music and Irish music because both of us have Irish heritage. And Carroll is the music person, she loves all kinds of music. And um, I like quiet. [Both laugh] So when I'm not listening to the oldies but goodies station, I like quiet and--

[01:32:53] CL: One of our lesbian couple friends picked a song for us that we really like. What was that song?

[01:32:59] BS: I have no idea.

[01:33:01] CL: Oh dear.

[01:33:03] BS: Was it supposed to exemplify our relationship or something?

[01:33:05] CL: Yeah. Was it a Suzanne Somers song? I don't know. Anyway, never mind.

[01:33:10] BS: One of the highlights of our life was going to discos and dancing together in a nightclub atmosphere. Which, I don't think we'd ever thought of doing until we got into the larger lesbian/gay community. It didn't dawn on us that we would go to a club and dance

together and see all kinds of other people dancing together. Now I don't think that's very unusual for your age group. You see, young people see this go on a lot I understand.

[01:33:41] CL: And I think probably my biggest--you didn't ask the question but--the biggest problem I think in the gay and lesbian community is the internalized homophobia. And I think it hit me because I was already a lesbian, not out, but I went to England with a friend and in England the women all dance together. And I felt very strange about it because they were straight and you know what I mean? It was kind of awkward. And then I was talking to a gay friend of ours and when I got hold of this internalized homophobia. And he said that the first weekend he and his lover went up to, I think they were escaping to lake arrowhead for a weekend, and they were embracing and kissing. And he looked over in the mirror at themselves embracing, could see themselves embracing. And he got physically sick. And so that was a moment that crystalized for me that that was a real serious problem in our community. And that really we needed to work on that. So we talked about that a lot in wrap sessions and had speakers come in and you know that kind of thing. Because I think that, that's very debilitating.

[01:34:03] BS: Well and I think as a woman of size, I have always been large. I have had so much more prejudice against me because of my fatness than I ever had on account of being a lesbian. That it paled in significance. So my homophobia was fleeting because I had already overcome the fact that people had a lot to say about my size. And I've been much much bigger in my life than I am now. And I'm smaller now than I was in junior high so you can tell I was a big person. And I had a lot of prejudice and a lot of mean heinous things were said to me. And people wouldn't believe this in this day and age, but when I was younger, maybe ten years younger than you girls doing who are doing this interview. People would yell across the street "Hey fatty!" Not just at me, but at other people who were large. People don't do that anymore.

That's nice, like they don't stone people in the streets. That's good. Pillories are out, great. So we've all grown a little bit in that area, but people are still very fataphobia and I've had much more prejudice against me than I ever had as a gay person. I've had prejudice against me because I don't believe what the mainstream America people believe. Because I teach reincarnation and I teach Buddhism and I teach esoteric studies. That a lot of people think are crazy or from not a good place. So I've always been on the outside looking in and this was just one more layer. And once you get enough of those layers going you have to handle them all at wholesale level. Do you know? You just sort of deal all with them. You either take them all on and feel really sorry for yourself or you go too bad folks and proceed and that's what metaphysics helped me to decide. I need to just go forth here and be myself. And that's why I'm good at empowering other people to do the same thing. Because it's a very freeing experience and homophobia is awful. The other thing we worry about in our group and have always concerned ourselves with is the alcoholism that rages in the homosexual community. And so when people ask us to invest in bars, we say no. We believe in right livelihood and we can't do that, because it's already lethal. I know it's a good gathering place, but it's better to do it at a center, it's better to do it at a group, it's better to do it at a club than it is to encourage more alcoholism.

[01:37:41] I: Yeah.

[01:37:43] BS: That's always been one of the drawbacks that people meet each other in bars, and then they stay in those bars, and go back to them.

[01:37:51] I: I wrote a grant at Cal Poly to fund some sort of a conference, like leadership training conference for the youth there. Because there is, well thank goodness there is that pride center there because then the students have somewhere to go besides the bars to meet each other. Because not everyone, not everyone drinks period. And not everyone should ever start drinking.

And those people that are drinking, most of them are dealing with these, the Cass model of coming out I'm sure. Like they're dealing with all these sorts of things and alcohol is there to get you over that uncomfortableness of, "I feel weird hitting on someone or not as secure." And so like these patterns are created so young in our community that's so hazardous to everyone. And so its--

[01:38:34] CL: Well I think alcohol--

[01:38:36] BS: And people make unwise decisions while under the influence of alcohol. Both straights and gay people, but young people in general. So I think that's always been one of our things that we could agree on totally that has been a downfall of our community too. You know, we really need to help each other not go there. Go to each other instead of the bottle. And the people, there are many many many alcoholics who are over fifty in our community here. And now can I blame the gay bar and say they never would've gone there? I don't know, they might've found hooch all on their own without any gay bar being available, but is that where it started? I don't know, but there's a lot.

[01:39:23] CL: Yeah.

[01:39:25] I: Yeah I had to do a lot of research on lesbians actually are statistically skyrocket more than heterosexual women compared to heterosexual or bi men. Even though it's higher in both groups the discrepancy between the two and in each gender category is very alarming for lesbian women. Because the alcoholism continues for life versus for most straight women--

[01:39:47] BS: Oh yeah and I'm not terribly surprised in that those women who made the first inroads into being feminists way back at the turn of the century and so forth, they wanted their rights. Part of their rights was to smoke a cigarette and have a glass of wine in public when

they wanted to. That was part of the empowerment package, but we're way past that now we don't need to go back to that. You know? That doesn't mean anything anymore. But a lot of that is ingrained in the older women's minds: "I'm my own boss, I can smoke and drink as much as I want."

[01:40:22] I: So am I forgetting anything I need to ask in particular. Have we covered everything pretty much? Oh I have a couple questions. If you guys could describe each other in one word what would it be?

[Brief pause while Carroll and Barbara think]

[01:40:39] CL: Hmm one word?

[01:40:42] BS: Can you describe anybody with one word?

[01:40:44] I: Or maybe a couple. If you could describe them in a couple sentences.

[01:40:47] BS: We have too many words for this.

[01:40:48] CL: I know. (Smiling)

[01:40:50] I: But make sure you state it in the form of, "Barbara is..."

[01:40:57] CL: Gee wiz, that's a toughie huh?

[01:41:02] BS: I don't know, I think we're both kaleidoscopes of a lot of things. And the older we get, the more our lives are enriched by our past. And thank god some of it's been shared. Do you know um...

[01:41:17] CL: I guess if I had to describe Barbara I would say--I couldn't do it in one word--I would say she's very bright, introspective, and has a wonderful sense of humor. And I think that's another bond that we share, a similar sense of humor that we still make each other laugh when we make some kind of observation about something. And that's very nice.

[01:41:42] BS: So now you put me on the spot and I gotta come up with these words, geez. [Carroll laughs] Well I think Carroll is brilliant, I think she is a very caring person, she's very spontaneous. [Laughs] I'm a plotter and planner more, so sometimes her spontaneity, shocks me. And I think one of the things you didn't mention that I think that we both are is curious. Extremely intellectually curious, extremely curious about life in general, and we find tons of things interesting, tons. I could not make you a list. There are so many things that we find, we love to go to international fairs, we love to see people, we could sit and watch people forever. In bus stations and parking lots and you know wherever large groups are. And we love to play guess who they are. We were shopping in south coast plaza and a lady was sitting next to us, and I said to Carroll, "That lady has been a model." And Carroll said, "Alright now we just sat down, how in the hell did you make that up?" And I said, "I'm telling you she has been a model." She was quite elderly, I don't know, eighty?

[01:43:02] CL: Probably eighty.

[01:43:03] BS: And I said I could tell by the way she lays her hands, and I can tell by the way she's done her makeup, she's been a model. And Carroll goes, "Well how in the heck are we ever going to find out?" And I say, "Because I'm going to ask her." [Both smile] And it was in a food court thing, you know people are eating different stuff. And I just reached over and I said, "Were you a model long?" And she said, "Why yes my dear I was." And I said, "Oh what kind of modeling did you do?" So anyways we started this whole dialogue with her and she was just a peach, just a really interesting person who had so much to say. And she was there all by herself, and she just loved joining us in our you know fast food here while we were shopping. And she had the best time telling us about herself, but we enjoyed her immensely you know. So

that's the kind of things we do that maybe other people don't do. We're not afraid of people. We're not afraid, we find them fascinating. Don't you think?

[01:43:57] CL: Mhmm, absolutely.

[01:43:59] I: And if you had one--well because this project is also learning history but also trying to bridge some of the gap between the youth and our history--what, is there some sort of advice you have to give?

[01:44:15] BS: I think not to be afraid of older people, and I give the same advice to older people. Don't be afraid of younger people. We have in our life right now were very close with some folks that are in their early thirties who are making families and have young children. We enjoy being--

[01:44:34] CL: Part of that

[01:44:35] BS: Part of that whole thing and enjoy the little ones, you know as much as we enjoy them. And they look at us as mentors and people who have something to offer them. And we look at them, they can bring the modern society, they tell us about computers, they help us with things that are not of our era. And we bring things to them that are you know, not of their era.

[01:44:55] CL: And they understand things like modems and ipods and things like that.

[Laughs]

[01:45:01] BS: We ask them numerous questions about technology, and it's always fascinating-- not that we always understand it--and we have a nice dialogue because we give them power, they know stuff. And they give us power, we know stuff. So we share that, and I think bridging that gap is important. Don't you think?

[01:45:20] CL: Yeah.

[01:45:22] BS: We like our young friends, they, it's interesting to watch how they are developing and how they are coping with modern society in a different way than we cope with modern society. You know we have our mechanisms. See here's a technology problem.

[Tech problem and video jumps to Carroll mid-sentence]

[01:45:37] CL: Of the fifties wasn't good and I think people got more in touch with who they were and reached out to one another. And now I see a withdrawing, the ownership of cats and dogs, I love cats and dogs, but the ownership of cats and dogs has grown tremendously. My theory is that people aren't reaching out and getting that close nice feeling from one another and they're looking to these wonderful animals to do it. And yet there's wonderful people they could be reaching out and hugging and talking to and getting their needs met. So I think--I had a graphic example of someone in our community who was part of our singing group, I had great hopes of reviving this singing group, we used to get together and sing--

[01:46:27] BS: It was a women's singing group, but, lesbian basically--

[01:46:28] CL: A women's singing group, we'd sing songs like "Bread and Roses" and "Consciousness Raising" old labor songs and stuff. And when you sing it raises the energy and this one gal played the guitar and she had to go home early one day, and I said, "How come, why do you have to go so early?" (Speaking as the other lady) "Well I have to get on the chat line I have to--" I said, "You know, I don't have enough time to call the people I love and to talk to them and write notes and things like that. I don't get it, what's the deal?" She says, "You don't understand, these people are strangers." And that was her attraction.

[01:47:04] BS: They don't know me.

[01:47:05] CL: They were strangers, they don't know me. That was her attraction, getting on the internet and connecting with people. And I thought you know, that's quite a--and I'm not

just saying it as a criticism of her--but I think there are other people, she's a microcosm of a larger [], who feel that same way and I think there's a people, we've regressed into something that we don't really want to know one another and that to me is very scary. Because, anyway, don't know how I got off on that.

[01:47:36] BS: People get off on being anonymous, and anonymous is not warm and fuzzy. You know, anonymous can't be cared for much, and can't do a lot of caring when anonymous. You need to let people know who you are in order to get your needs met and in order to do anything for them. So anonymous is, I once thought anonymous was probably pretty good because I like my alone time, but I really realized people have taken it to quite a degree when they have more of an affair with their computer than they do with other people. So I worry about that.

[01:48:10] I: Yeah it's antisocial social behavior.

[01:48:13] CL & BS: Yeah.

[01:48:14] I: Where you're interacting with people, but you're not interacting with people.

[01:48:18] BS: But on the other hand, people love to celebrate things now. People make high drama over almost nothing. I mean there are huge, huge expenses for weddings, huge expenses for birthday parties, people put on big drama celebrations. Where all the group who come together barely know each other have a hell of a good time. But they don't sit down and talk to each other even as we've talked with you. They don't make that kind of connection, but they can all drink and run around at the party and have a good time. This seems a strange society to me, that they can celebrate so well. I mean look how many award shows there are, I mean that's indicative of this celebration deal, carried away.

[01:49:03] I: And dinners with friends is going kind of down the drain somewhat.

[01:49:23] CL: Yeah or evenings of you know, even if we didn't call ourselves a support group, we would get together with another couple and we would just sit and talk. And we would talk about what was going on in each other's lives, but how the national policy affected us and you know that kind of thing.

[01:49:23] BS: About the books we've read, other people we've talked to. And we would be able to problem solve with them with these people because we trusted them. How many people do people trust with their problems? You don't want to weigh them down so you don't tell them the problems, then how can you get feedback? So that whole problem-solving thing is when you trust someone, they know your life, and you let them, and you're glad to know their life, and glad to give them input. And I think building those kinds of relationships is very difficult today. That's what I hear from young people and that's what we experience with older people too. Just changed. We're glad you gave us this opportunity.

[01:49:59] I: Do you think it's like that? Do you think we're cynical?

[01:50:04] I2: I think it's really hard to meet friends that you feel really care about you.

[01:50:09] BS: And that want your secrets and that want to keep them secret for you, and will want to will cherish you--

[01:50:09] I: And will protect you I think is the biggest thing right? Don't you feel like the biggest betrayal is not being protected by friends?

[01:50:20] CL: Yeah and that you're safe.

[01:50:24] BS: Practice makes perfect.

[01:50:26] I: I've been lucky, she's one of my best friends here, we met in a photoshop class. She was just a wee little one and I walked by and I was like [coughs word] "lesbian." And

she came up to me and was like “My boyfriend and I go to youth group sometimes at the catholic church.” And I was like, “What?”

[01:50:44] I2: No I ran the youth group.

[01:50:45] I: She ran the youth group at the catholic church at the time!

[01:50:46] I2: I did for a while even after I came out. They were cool with it.

[01:50:49] I: Yeah I know you did, but it was really funny--

[01:50:53] BS: But see how the culture has changed? When we wanted to make contact with another lesbian we would say to them, have you read a book by... And then we would name a lesbian author. And they would say yes I also read... And then they would say a lesbian author back. And we would go okay, and then we would all get this eye contact and go, “Ahh let's sit down and talk.” You know?

[01:51:15] I: That was your signals?

[01:51:16] CL & BS: Yeah!

[01:51:18] I: See for me I think I did and art piece that was queer right?

[01:51:21] I2: No not in that class.

[01:51:22] I: But you came up to me and you said, you were all happy and you were like, “Umm yeah so there’s some gay people that come to my church.” You were like letting me know you were okay with it, I forget exactly what you said. Yeah you brought up gay and lesbian to me and I thought it was really sweet.

[01:51:39] I2: I don’t remember your piece though.

[01:51:41] I: Oh they were all queer, but you probably just didn’t notice. [Everyone laughs]

[01:51:46] BS: Well we're glad that we did this, and we hope it adds to the total good of the community, and give people something to think about. I think that people are so busy acquiring that they don't have much time to think.

[01:52:04] I: Yep we've got a lot of stuff to put together but it's really exciting to get it all--

[01:52:08] BS: Now will we ever see this tape?

[01:52:10] I2: Yes.

[01:52:11] I: No never (sarcastically)