

## **Interview with Cam Mitchell and Darlene Reynolds**

### **GALA Interviews**

**Narrators:** Cam Mitchell [CM] and Darlene Reynolds [DR]

**Interviewer:** Katrina Maksimuk [I] Rachel Richardson [I2]

**Videographer:** Sara Goener [I3]

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**Location:** Los Osos, CA

**Length:** Approximately 1 hour, 45 minutes (File 1: 55 minutes. File 2: 50 minutes).

Interview begins at 00:00:00.

**Transcript prepared by:** Michael Morris and Steven Ruszczycky

[00:00:00] I: Are there any areas that you don't want to talk about? Do you want to talk about your kids? No, yes, maybe.

[00:00:06] CM: Well, it's okay to say that we have kids. Let's just--

[00:00:10] I: Yeah. Yeah. If there's ever something you don't feel comfortable talking about then just say, "it's OK."

[00:00:15] DR: Yeah the one thing I hope will come out is the fact that Cam was the first avowed lesbian to get custody of her kids.

[00:00:23] CM: Well, avowed, I think it was. I'm the first. I've been told I was the first lesbian that got my kids in a contested case.

[00:00:35] DR: In the country. And the other thing I wanted to make sure is that Cam and I were really some of the foremothers for getting the rape crisis center started. We got that started. The battered women's project got started.

[00:00:56] CM: We're going to argue [laughs]

[00:00:58] I: Don't worry. It happens, trust us.

[00:01:00] CM: Well I don't want to sound like we started it. I mean--

[00:01:03] DR: I didn't see it say that. I said we were among the foremothers.

[00:01:07] I: Cool. Yeah. So sometimes I know a little bit about people before I come into the interview, and sometimes I don't. And this time I don't, so they'll kind of help me out and kind of bring stuff out because Rachel [Richardson] probably knows a little bit of dirt on you two. So you know, feel free to elaborate and all that good stuff. One of the things that's a challenge that we found out in the interview process is that sometimes I'll ask a question. But if the statement or the question isn't kind of restated in a way, then it's really off when we're editing because I don't want to hear my fabulous voice in there at all. So you know, what I'm saying? So if I say like what year did you move to San Luis Obispo? And your answer is 1980--

[00:01:50] DR: We moved to San.... OK.

[00:01:52] I: Correct. So sometimes I'll even have you repeat what you just said. In the statement of restating the question. And feel free to babble as much as you want and all that stuff. Unless you guys are uncomfortable, it would look a lot better if you guys sat closer together because the camera--

[00:02:11] DR: Oooo, we have to? [Jokingly and everyone laughs. Cam and Darlene make seating adjustments]

[00:02:19] I: Are you guys comfortable?

[00:02:21] DR: Yeah we're fine.

[00:02:33] I: And, just let me know if you need to take a break or any water or anything like that. It's totally casual. We're just going to kind of get to know you.

[00:02:41] CM: [Joking] Totally casual with lights glaring at you. I'll confess anything. [Everyone laughs]

[00:02:50] I: OK. So the first thing I kind of like to start out with is just an introduction of your names. And you can either say your name, and your favorite hobby, or maybe the year you were born. Or something about yourself that's just like maybe a quick statement or a lengthy, breadth-y statement. Whatever you want. Just kind of introduce yourselves and we'll start from there.

[00:03:17] DR: Oh. All right. I'm Darlene Reynolds, known as Dar-- [Technical error]

[00:04:41] I: OK, so we'll do that all over again one more time.

[00:04:45] DR: I'm Darlene Reynolds. Known as Dar and... [Laughs] I'm blank. I was born and raised in Riverside, came to San Jose State College for my education to become a drama teacher. Never taught. Ended up as a social worker working with developmentally disabled for thirty years. And, met Cam in San Jose. I was married, had three kids. Who are you?

[00:05:23] CM: Oh, I'm Cam Mitchell. Oh, I'm supposed to do the same thing, I guess. Born in San Diego. 1938. No. And we ended up meeting in San Jose. I was going to college there. And I had three children and I became an occupational therapist and. I don't know what.

[00:05:51] DR: We were neighbors.

[00:05:53] CM: Yes we were neighbors [both laugh].

[00:05:55] DR: In the seventies.

[00:05:58] I: Oh, this is going to be a good story. [everyone laughs]

[00:06:03] I: [To interview staff] Oh geez, doesn't your roommate have a crush on your neighbor, right now?

[00:06:06] Interview staff member: Yeah. [Everyone laughs] She lives like four houses down. She told her the other day--she's straight and she goes-- "I run by her house all the time and I always look to see if I can see her."

[00:06:18] CM: [Points at Darlene] Yeah, she was straight too. [laughs]

[00:06:24] I: So, we have some kind of general questions and feel free to kind of elaborate on them. But one of the... So you met up in San Jose, so let's kind of start there. How did you guys meet?

[00:06:39] DR: We were neighbors and we took. We babysat each other's kids. And...

[00:06:46] CM: We rode motorcycles. Our husbands. And we started motorcycling with our husbands and ended up. They weren't available all the time. So we started motorcycling with each other.

[00:06:58] DR: Together. And one day we went motorcycling at Santa Teresa Park and "bumped helmets" [Raises eyebrows]. And the rest was history. [laughs]

[00:07:11] I: So how long had you guys been married for and how many kids did you each have?

[00:07:19] CM: I had been married for. I don't know how many years I have been married at that time. By the time I fell in love, I had been married about ten years and I had three kids and Darlene also had three children. And you been married? Yeah.

[00:07:35] DR: By the time of the divorce ten years.

[00:07:43] CM: And hers was a very easy divorce and mine was a very difficult one.

[00:07:46] I: So how old were you guys at the time? Were you in your thirties or twenties?

[00:07:51] DR: Late, late twenties, or early thirties. Yeah I was twenty nine. Late going to college because I interspersed classes with having kids and being married and

having to put my husband through. So it took a little while, but... I didn't think this was gonna be this hard. [Both laugh]

[00:08:17] I: It'll get easier.

[00:08:18] DR: Yeah, I'm sure

[00:08:20] I: I'm just curious about that because some people describe their first relationship with a woman like they always knew. And some people, it hits upside the head like they had no clue what was coming. And I'm just kind of curious, because when you're when you're in your late twenties and early thirties, you're in a very different developmental stage and you have a very well-developed sense of self. Much more so than someone in high school or, you know, in college. And so can you maybe describe? Was it like it hit you by surprise or did you even know? You know?

[00:08:49] DR: You start.

[00:08:50] CM: I think I'm the one that can describe that. I'll start back further. My mother was bisexual and I grew up with living in the household both with men and women. Over the years, I can't say I saw nothing wrong with it because when I finally discovered, figured out my mother was gay. She--it was very upsetting to me. And of course, I ran the other way and got married. I also have a great aunt who was a lesbian and who was Tyrone Power's mother's lover. So it runs in the family, I guess. And so I had already. My first memory of being attracted to a girl was in my violin class, very young, and then in a ballet class. And then I had a brief attraction to another woman, but hadn't acted particularly much on anything. And finally, [Gestures to Darlene and laughs] drinking a little bit with this one here over a period of time as a neighbor. She was going through some issues. And I ask her if I could, if she'd ever consider another relationship. And I remember when she said quite intoxicated, she said, "Oh, I don't think I can handle it." And she kind of staggered out of the

house. And then she started tempting me [laughs]. I probably would have stayed back, but she, I guess she thought it over and decided she'd give it a try. And then I just didn't let go.

[00:10:37] DR: You have to realize this was the seventies: free love, and everybody trying everything. And I was just really curious. But looking back, I think about one time when I had a second cousin who was a lesbian and I didn't know it. I was so dumb in high school. But we went on a long camping trip climbing San Jacinto Mountain with five of us girls and my cousin and her "friend." And we got ready to set it up to go to bed. And Fran and her friend were zipping up their sleeping bags together. And I said, "why are you doing that?" [Smiles] And they said, "Oh, it keeps the body heat in, it's much, much warmer and it's really cold at night here." [Darlene speaking again] "Oh, hey, Nayna let's see if our sleeping bags will zip together!" So Nayna and I [laughs] zipped our sleeping bags. Years later, found out that both Nayna and I had gone-- [Cam mumbles something to Darlene and both laugh] Yeah we both, of the five gals, we both turned out to be lesbians. And looking back, I dated a lot of guys. I really thought I was firmly heterosexual. And I was just curious, but looking back, all my best friends were female. There was just communion there that just wasn't there with men, I'm sorry [laughs] So, yeah. And I was just in awe of Cam, her talent, her artistic sensibility, her, her bravery, her... What a good mother she was. She was just an inspiration. I just fell in love with the woman.

[00:12:40] CM: Oh, thank you. Yeah. I remember the line, the famous line we all hear is for a long time you said, "I'm not a lesbian. I just happen to be in love with a woman." And that takes a long time to kind of wear down.

[00:12:55] I: And so from there. How did that process develop into a relationship? Because it seems like there was probably a lot of transitions and maybe a little bit of chaos and stuff that happened in between.

[00:13:09] CM: Well, there was a lot of chaos. [Brief pause] I had decided, I had told Darlene when we were just friends, that I realistically by then had realized that I was going to graduate from college because I started late. I had three children and, uh, but I decided I'd have to graduate so that I could support the children. Then I was going to leave my husband because we had nothing in common. And he was a nice enough guy and everything. But I just--

[00:13:43] DR: We thought.

[00:13:44] CM: Yeah. I wanted something else. Well, I guess that brought the worst out in him. And, uh, so I had planned to leave. So we, and we had no. [Darlene and I] assumed that we couldn't live together as long as we had the kids at that time, that that wasn't an option. And so... He discovered that we were lovers clandestinely, and made a lot of threats. And I decided that I better get a divorce. And he at that point... I went to three lawyers. I hired lawyers one after another. And the first one I gave him all the money I had at the time was five hundred dollars. This was--keep in mind, this was a lot of money at the time. It was like 1968 [corrects herself] 69. And after waiting and waiting and having and being abused, physically abused by my husband and stuff, I went back to him frantically and said, "when you're gonna get him out of the house, you know, I can't..." And I had been told I couldn't leave the house because that would be abandoning the children. And I was walking on eggshells. So, I finally went back to him and I said, "I need you to do this." And he said, "Your case is just petty, so I've got bigger fish to fry." So don't bother me, essentially. So I went to another attorney and he was like a corporate attorney: didn't do it. And finally ended up with this woman, Joan Bradford, and--quite, quite an amazing woman, and I went to her and--Oh, actually, I had contacted the Lesbian Mothers Union at the time and up in Oakland, and they gave me her name and she sat down with me. And oh, these two male attorneys had told me, don't rock the boat, don't leave the house, pretend that, you know, deny everything.

We're gonna go into court. You're gonna deny you're a lesbian couple. And sat down with her and she said, what would you like to do? And I said, I'd like to go to court and, you know, be honest. And she's well, I wouldn't tell you to do that, but that's what I'd like you to do. So we did. And in a way, blew my husband's case out of the water because they were all prepared with the evidence that I was a lesbian. And we walked in and says--

[00:16:25] DR: She's a lesbian.

[00:16:26] CM: Yeah. My attorney says we want to enter this into evidence. So we had, we went to court, I believe, about eight times. We lost all the equity in our home with lawyers fees. My ex-husband decided that he would, because I was getting assistance, financial assistance from some agencies, some support from lesbian agencies, from some civil rights agencies. *Playboy* magazine apparently, to my knowledge. It has--

[00:17:03] DR: They provided an Amicus brief.

[00:17:05] CM: No, that was ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union].

[00:17:07] DR: Oh, I'm sorry.

[00:17:08] CM: Amicus brief. And *Playboy* apparently supported radical causes like mine so [laughs]. So my ex-husband did exactly the opposite. He went far to the right and got venture analyst Christian organizations to back him financially. So there was this big struggle. And ultimately I won custody of the children, but the conditions were that we could only see them when... we could only see each other when the children weren't with us, but we had custody of the children. And, it was very difficult. We finally just gave up and moved in together. And we waited long enough until my husband had not paid child support for a long time. There's this hilarious thing called The Doctrine of Unclean Hands.

[00:18:07] DR: which we found quite interesting. [laughs]

[00:18:10] CM: But what it means is that a party in a lawsuit can't really bring a complaint if they themselves aren't--



[00:18:20] DR: Following the requirements of the court order.

[00:18:23] CR: So we always thought that was kind of funny. So we moved in together. And then had just this outrageously, [laughs] chaotically combined family, just like any other typical step family. Your kids and my kids, and they get more attention and that's how things went.

[00:18:46] DR: And we survived it. And now we have grandkids. [laughs]

[00:18:50] CM: Lots of grandkids.

[00:18:52] I: How old were your children at the time that this was all going on?

[00:18:56] DR: Three was the youngest. Oldest was thirteen when it started.

[00:19:06] CM: A beautiful example, as I said, Darlene's... She and her husband settled this thing for, I think, thirty-two dollars or something. They went and--

[00:19:16] DR: Do your own divorce.

[00:19:19] CM: Yeah the solution. And her kids were much better adjusted. My ex-husband. Well, my husband sometimes told my kids all kinds of awful stuff. And all of his beliefs and what we were doing in bed and drugs. So my kids were much more poorly adjusted to the situation. They loved me, and they defended me, but obviously, it was very, very painful. And it, to this day, it still tends to be. We're close now, but that's, we've gone through some real struggles.

[00:19:59] DR: And my ex-husband continues to be supportive of us.

[00:20:04] CM: And my ex-husband tells my grandchildren they shouldn't be around me because they might get AIDS. [shrugs and then laughs it off]

[00:20:15] I: So what was the process of. It seems like your family had, well your mom had already done some coming out by living with women and stuff like that. But how was coming out to your family, and it sounds like you were kind of in school then and you were working then. Or wait was that vice versa?

[00:20:33] DR: We're both working part time and going to school part time. My kids just knew about it because of a very public, nasty divorce. My mother. Well, I don't know if my father ever found out. My mother found out because she listened to late night radio. She lives in Southern California and the case was so publicized and they talked about an occupational therapist with three kids and San Jose.

[00:21:06] CM: San Luis Obispo.

[00:21:07] DR: Excuse me. No, it was San Jose.

[00:21:09] CM: No it was San Luis Obispo and what's ironic about is it only takes a--

[00:21:13] DR: Okay. We're gonna have this argument now because I can remember standing talking with my mother--

[00:21:16] CM: Well you were still in San Jose. I was here.

[00:21:19] DR: Okay. Okay. You were here. I was still up there. My mother heard and put it together, called me. I think she'd been drinking and threatened that she was gonna kill herself. And I said, "Well, you know, I can't take responsibility for your actions. I'm really sorry you found out this way. That was not my intention to hurt." And when I hung up, I called hotline and they said they couldn't do anything unless she called them. So I called the police and told them the situation. They went out. She denied that she had a gun. But then my sister, I called my sister and she went over and calmed things down. It's... They're tolerant but not happy with me and the situation.

[00:22:16] I: [To interview team] Can you continue to ask questions? I'm going to use the restroom really quick?

[00:22:21] I: Yeah, let's just take a breather for a second for continuity. [brief pause] How long did the whole court issues go on?

[00:22:36] DR: Years, three years, wasn't it?

[00:22:39] CM: It was longer than that.

[00:22:41] DR: When it was final? Yeah.

[00:22:46] CM: Yeah, like I said, that the amount of money that oh, and it's interesting because Joan Bradford, my attorney. Because of my case, was one of the top ten women in the United States--

[00:23:00] DR: She was named in *Ms. Magazine* the top ten women of the year.

[00:23:05] CM: It was an interesting thing.

[00:23:06] DR: Yeah. And she didn't hound us for the money. She figured she got a lot of free publicity.

[00:23:14] CM: I think she got most of it. I mean, I paid her what I could. And I don't even know what the total cost was. I think it was... Yeah I don't know.

[00:23:26] I2: Did you guys class adopt each other's children?

[00:23:27] Both: No.

[00:23:29] CM: That wasn't even an option. [brief pause] Yeah I think that's probably what I resent most about my ex-husband. Is the way he brewed up....

[00:23:49] I2: Well and it continued with the grandkids. But what goes around comes around.

[00:23:54] CM: Yeah, yeah. I mean, luckily my son tells my ex-husband--

[00:23:57] DR: "Shove it." [Both laugh]

[00:23:58] CM: Yeah. When he--when he does that yeah.

[00:24:04] I2: I just think it's so mad all they do in the name of religion.

[00:24:08] CM: Oh, yeah. Oh, absolutely.

[00:24:11] DR: Have you read Jimmy Carter's book? I just just started leafing through it. Amazing man.

[00:24:21] CM: And somebody said he was against gays. I said, you know I read that portion. It's against his religion and so that he is not going to give it up. But, um, but he's absolutely for equal rights. Equal.

[00:24:34] DR: Yeah. And that's all we're asking. I don't--

[00:24:37] I2: He's also the only president in my lifetime that's ever gone on and done anything worthwhile after he left the office.

[00:24:44] DR: Afterwards yeah. Probably more afterwards than he was able to do during.

[00:24:53] CM: Yeah, you wonder what the Kennedys and the Roosevelts would have done if they had survived. [long pause]

[00:25:11] I2: That's a powerful story. You know, and I think that that's going to have a long lasting impact on gays and lesbians. Just the whole aspect of standing up for yourself in a time when you when it was really scary. And it took a lot of courage to do it.

[00:25:30] DR: Yeah, it was scary.

[00:25:31] CM: Well, I always love that quote that I got someplace. The best thing about telling the truth is you don't have to remember what you've said. And that's kind of what I was afraid of, like. [Darlene laughs] I mean, dealing with lawyers anyway. I mean, it's like they just kind of like, well, just don't say it, or deny it, or lie. You know--

[00:25:54] I2: Well that's what they're used to doing.

[00:25:56] DR: They're just doing their job. But it makes it difficult.

[00:26:03] I: So let's see, you're talking about coming out right? Is that where we left off?

[00:26:06] DR: [To Cam] Do you want to talk about the prune orchard or leave that out?

[00:26:08] CM: No.

[00:26:09] DR: No. OK. [ ] No, not now. Nothing. Nothing.

[00:26:17] CM: That's in another film.

[00:26:19] I: You were talking San Luis Obispo versus San Jose. Can you maybe describe your relationship to San Luis Obispo and when you moved to this area?

[00:26:26] CA: Oh yeah.

[00:26:28] DR: Cam [gestures to cam]

[00:26:30] CM: Well, we were living in San Jose and of course, there wasn't a whole lot holding us after we graduated from college. I put in applications in several states and one of the job offers I got was working in San Luis Obispo and I've always loved coming here. So I moved here to start working and Darlene stayed in San Jose for a while. And I used to get through working on Friday nights, and if my ex-husband came and got the kids for any reason or they went and stayed with friends, one of us would run either from San Jose to San Luis Obispo. Which was a longer, it seemed like a longer trip than... And end up there Friday night and tried to spend the weekend as much as possible. But it got kind of grueling and...

[00:27:24] DR: There were nightly phone calls. [Cam laughs] The phone bills were very, very high.

[00:27:28] CM: Finally, Darlene moved down here to San Luis and we still tried to obey the court order. [both laugh] So we lived in houses next door to each other.

[00:27:40] DR: That was very interesting. We were both renting over and in Los Osos, we came to Los Osos first, Baywood.

[00:27:48] CM: And not only was it really expensive, but it was very inconvenient. And eventually we just. When my ex-husband had been delinquent long enough, we just said, oh, that's great. Yes. And moved to Morro Bay and got a big house that moved in together. And then Darlene, who was trained as a drama, planning to be a drama teacher, ended up

getting a job as a social worker here and stuck her job out a lot longer than I did. I tend to drift from job to job, so I've had several different positions.

[00:28:25] I: And what year was that about that you guys both moved down here?

[00:28:28] DR: Seventy two.

[00:28:29] CM: Yeah 1972.

[00:28:31] DR: Yeah we moved here in 1972. And it was about six months before I could find a job, but it was it it became my life's avocation, vocation, the thrill of my life. I met a lot of wonderful people doing what I did. And it was hard to leave. When I retired, it was. The bureaucracy wasn't hard to leave, but the clients and the coworkers and we were out in this community. From the very beginning.

[00:29:08] CM: Yeah we were out in our jobs and I worked the last six years, I worked with children, emotionally disturbed children. And I even had opportunities where I was able to use the fact that I was gay with kids. I had kids that either were dealing with their own issues around being gay. I dealt with two kids that I worked with that had mothers who were lesbians. And they didn't, they weren't dealing at all well with it, but they really liked me. And eventually I just I suckered them in and got them really attached to me. And then I just said, "Hey, you know what? I'm one." And it really swung them around. These kids really had an-- I wasn't their mom. I wasn't somebody they had to hate. You know, we kids have to hate their moms, whether they're gay or straight. So that was really fulfilling that--a lot of times you can use your--your lifestyle--

[00:30:12] DR: As a role model.

[00:30:16] I: So, maybe can you talk about, well, why did you move down here? Was it just because she was down here or were you in love with the area as well?

[00:30:24] DR: I had only come through it. Just driving between here in Southern California. Or between San Jose and Southern California. And coming down on weekends to

be with Cam. I, yeah this really appealed to my need to have some space and not so much population. Cities really drove me nuts and...

[00:30:48] CM: And you were farther away from my ex-husband [laughs].

[00:30:50] DR: That, too. [laughs]

[00:30:52] I: Was he still up in San Jose?

[00:30:55] DR: Yeah, yeah, he still is.

[00:30:56] I: By the way, I went to North High School in Riverside and Highland Elementary.

[00:31:01] DR: Oh, I'm Ramona. [laughs and waves]

[00:31:05] I: Yeah. So I've been in bigger crowded areas.

[00:31:09] DR: Yeah. It's kind of like in Riverside. It was orange groves and then it was just nothing but people. Orange groves cut down, moved to San Jose to go to college and get married and raise my kids, and all the prune orchards and fruit trees got cut down and nothing but houses. And so coming here, it's happening here, but it's happening slower.

[00:31:36] I: So let's see. Oh, you know, what we haven't asked it's just kind of a basic question, although it's kind of. I guess people could add it up, but, how many years have you both been together?

[00:31:49] DR: Cam and I have been together... [technical error]

[00:31:51] I: Sorry we just [ ] the cameras somehow.

[00:31:54] DR: Cam and I have been together for thirty-five years going on thirty six in May.

[00:32:01] CM: Yeah.

[00:32:02] I: Have you ever done anything special for any of your anniversaries?

[00:32:07] Yeah. Cam doesn't like what I do for our anniversaries. I plan trips that she's not told where we're going or what we're going to be doing or anything. I just say get

in the car or the RV and we're going. And we did it once at a bed and breakfast outside of Mexican Hat [Utah]. But she had a good time. The other one that I did was Hawaii. And she said, "I don't want to go to Hawaii. I never wanted to go to Hawaii". I said, well, then I'm taking my mom. I'm going to Hawaii. And she said, "oh, well, OK." And she had a good time. And what Cam did for me. But she told me-- was the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite, which is Yosemite--is one of our favorite places. So that was amazing, amazing twenty fifth.

[00:32:59] CM: Oh that was nice.

[00:33:01] I: Can you maybe share some of the things you both have in common? It sounds like nature may be one of them.

[00:33:05] DR: Yeah. Pets. Animals. Oh, I'm sorry. Yeah. Some of our favorite things are our animals. We're getting old and so are they. We've lost a lot of them over the years.

[00:33:19] CM: Grandkids.

[00:33:20] DR: Grandkids. Very.

[00:33:23] CM: We have a lot not in common. [both laugh] Definitely not. She loves to read. She chain reads like people chain smoke. She has another book already lying alongside.

[00:33:37] DR: I actually got five now. [both laugh]

[00:33:40] CM: And I. I'm into constant little silly projects that she says I never finish. And that may be true of the latest [laughs]. And I love-- I have an RV and it's sometimes a bone of contention, I like to travel more than Darlene, but we do it. And I'm trying to get up the nerve to just do it on my own more often. We like kayaking and--

[00:34:12] DR: I love gardening, pulling weeds. I injured my back about six months ago. So that hasn't been as frequent as I'd like and I'd like to get back to that. And I love to crochet. I like to make baby blankets for my friends who are having their babies.



[00:34:36] CM: It's a funny thing that reminds me of a funny experience we had. A couple of lesbian friends of ours. We were over at their house one time and I smoked a pipe at the time, it was funny. And Darlene was crocheting something at the time and I don't know what--

[00:34:57] DR: I was making a quilt on the sewing machine.

[00:35:01] CM: We saw these parents twice in a row and she was--she was quilting or doing whatever she was doing some little domestic thing. And I was--I was out helping my friend. Something was wrong with her car. And I was smoking a pipe. That was kind of "in" at the time.

[00:35:22] DR: Seventies again.

[00:35:23] CA: So the next time we saw them. Well, let's see. So her parents said something about--The next time they came, they said, we've invited Cam and Dar over for dinner. And they said, "Oh, the one that sews the quilt, and the one that smokes the pipe." Okay. So would we. Oh, don't we? I can't remember what we did, but it ends up that the next time we saw them I was cooking dinner and you were doing something butchy.

[00:35:55] DR: "Butchy" [laughs]

[00:35:56] CM: But it was. And they got all confused, and they didn't know what to do. You know, it's like so we were always the one that sews and the one that smokes the pipe. And then we had another experience with the pipe thing. We had some straight women friends, good friends from our feminist group, and we went out one night to a local bar in Morro Bay where people danced. And it was so funny because we're sitting there and I said, look what's happening. First of all, my straight friend says, "Why aren't you smoking your pipe?" This is before smoking was banned in bars. And I said, oh, I don't feel really comfortable smoking in public. People tend to get that. She says, "Oh, I want to smoke your pipe. Go get your pipe." So I went out and got in the car, brought in, my straight friend starts

smoking the pipe and we're sitting there visiting and having a drink. And I finally said, look at this. All the gay women were sitting around having a drink and visiting and all the straight women were up dancing together in the bar--

[00:37:08] DR: With each other! And smoking a pipe. [both laugh] It was a good time. Good fun.

[00:37:17] I: We can recruit right?

[00:37:18] DR: Yes. No, they all stayed straight...

[00:37:22] CM: I think.

[00:37:24] DR: That's true, we've lost....

[00:37:25] CM: Well Carroll didn't.

[00:37:26] DR: Yeah, that's right. Oh, dear.

[00:37:29] CM: So the personalities, it sounds like in different ways one of you is sometimes more adventurous than the other in different ways. Like, you like to travel a lot, but you like to go big ol' trips. Can you maybe describe your personalities?

[00:37:44] CM: You're a homebody.

[00:37:46] DR: Yeah it's--it's funny because Cam and I have similarities, but we also have differences and they've changed over the years. I've noticed that one of the things that I think Cam appreciated and was attracted to in me was my fearlessness, that I was ready to take on any challenge. Go public, whatever it took. And she didn't like to be in the public so much, but it was my drama background, I think. And I always had this righteous indignation of unfairness even in high school, and some things happened. I don't know if it's hormones or just living life too long or what, but I've really just retreated into fearfulness. That's--I really have to gear up and gird my loins to go RVing with Cam. It scares the hell out of me and I don't really want to go. And it's a--it's a gift I give to her by going at all. Cam wasn't a public person, was more stand back and yet now I think she's more upfront. Well, and she is

more adventurous in all areas. She's braver than me these days. I don't know. Do you want to... [gestures towards Cam]

[00:39:16] CM: Oh I don't know. [laughs] I said this morning, I said, I think I realize something. I'm more nervous about the inner me and my emotions. And you're more nervous about things outside of yourself that you can't control. That's why the travel gets scarier. I had always thought she was fearless until we went to Hawaii. We had a really good time in Hawaii. And I was pretty nervous about flying on a jet because I hadn't done it, but we did it. And she's like real glib about it. And we get ready to come back and it's the first time I saw it about her, first time I saw that she could be really phobic about something. And she said... I was so unaware of travel experiences like that. That I--we get to the airport and we had this long wait. And finally they come in and announce that we're, they're going to have to--

[00:40:20] DR: They've overbooked. They've double booked.

[00:40:22] CM: And so that some people need to stay back. They would pay people to stay. And I'm going, oh, wow, let's do that! And somebody said, "What? Hold out for free tickets? Because you can go somewhere else?" And I'm going, "that's cool!" I'm all excited. And Darlene's going, "Don't you dare! Don't you dare!"

[00:40:39] DR: "Shut up!" [laughs]

[00:40:40] CM: She's terrified and, I'm looking at her like. And she's scared to death that we're going to be left in. Like she's got it scheduled, and she can't change it. And was the first time I saw it. And I went, ooo wow. [pumps fist and laughs]

[00:40:55] DR: And it's gotten worse. Well, the RV bit probably was because I got dragged twenty-five feet by the tow car.

[00:41:04] CM: I saved you.

[00:41:05] DR: Yes, you did. You saved my life so...

[00:41:09] I: You got dragged by the tow?

[00:41:11] DR: Yeah, the tow car behind the RV. It's the first time we'd really towed any distance. And you have to go through a series of things you have to do to hook up and to unhook. Well, during the unhook I forgot to set the brake and the little tow car started rolling down the hill and stupid me--

[00:41:29] CM: She's dragging along on the ground--

[00:41:31] DR: I'm running after it to stop it, open the door, put my foot on the brake, but missed the brake and my foot fell under the brake. Caught me, and so I'm laying on, getting drug [both laugh] twenty-five feet, lost some skin... But what I don't, I still can't figure out how it happened. But Cam, standing there ten feet away, managed to run somehow, climbed over my skidding body, got in and pulled the emergency brake and stopped the car. I mean, she did. She saved my life. I saw my life really ending right there. And I'll go back because it was one of the most beautiful places that I've ever been. [laughs] But she. Yeah. She's my hero. [Leans on Cam]

[00:42:26] CM: Aw that was funny.

[00:42:29] I: That's some James Bond right there. [Everyone laughs] I love the whole time you're talking about your life flashing in front of you she's like chuckling the whole time. [Everyone laughs] You're like I was going to die and my life flashed before my eyes--

[00:42:42] DR: And she saved me! [everyone laughs]

[00:42:46] I2: Where was that?

[00:42:48] Both: The valley of fire.

[00:42:50] CM: Just gorgeous. If you ever get the chance, go there.

[00:42:53] DR: It's amazing, amazing place you have here. [everyone laughs and mumbles]

[00:43:00] I: So where have you been traveling to when you motorhome? What places have you been that you really like?

[00:43:06] CM: We usually go to... We really like the desert. And we're going there again with friends in March to see the wildflowers. But we're still planning a trip to British Columbia. I'd like to go to Alaska, but... [Darlene raises eyebrows and everyone laughs]

[00:43:30] DR: You see the look? Maybe on one of those big ships. [laughs]

[00:43:34] CM: You can go on a cruise and I'll meet you up there. [both laugh]

[00:43:38] I: It's gorgeous. I did the Alaskan highway when I was a teenager with my dad and we took a motorhome up. And see, here's the compromise. And then you take from like [ ] or Anchorage. You can take a cruise back down to Washington where you can drive the motor home right up on the ship, and the rest of the way back. Look at that compromise--

[00:43:59] CM: And I understand the highways better than the ones even...

[00:44:02] I: And going to Alaska is better, in my opinion, than even driving cross country. I did that one year all around. It's beautiful and it's not cold--

[00:44:11] I3: Did you see *Grizzly Man*? That just came out.

[00:44:13] CM: No, I didn't. I hesitated to because I know he got killed by...

[00:44:20] I3: But I just saw it last night.

[00:44:22] CM: No I don't think. No, the real man got killed.

[00:44:25] I: Oh in real life?

[00:44:26] I3: You don't see it, you just hear about it, but that's not the focus of the movie.

[00:44:30] CM: Oh that's good to know.

[00:44:33] I: So what, when you moved to San Luis Obispo, it sounds like you--kind of rewinding to the beginning--it sounds like you were involved in a lot of different organizations. Like maybe can you talk about, I don't know if the feminist group was here, or maybe talk about--I know there's probably a lot to cover so you can choose which one you want to go first--but maybe you can even do it chronologically. The different groups you

were involved in community-wise and how you've played a part in this community, because you moved her in seventy two right? And you've seen it change a lot.

[00:45:00] DR: Probably talk about when you first came down here.

[00:45:03] CM: Yeah. When I was here by myself with the kids, I really felt pretty isolated. I didn't know there were any lesbians in the community. We hear that now and it's always kind of funny. Well, you don't think there are? There was a group that existed then of women. It was called. Wasn't it Women's Political Caucus? What was it called?

[00:45:34] DR: I thought it was Miss Independent Feminists.

[00:45:36] CM: No, no. It was. Anyway it was something about women's caucus. I can't remember, it had some name. But anyway, it was a consciousness raising group of women. And I joined it just to be around some women. And because I was working at the time at the men's prison. So I was surrounded all day by men screaming out. To find community. And I had been in the group for a few months that had delightful people, but nobody talked about lesbians or anything. I finally just decided this wasn't comfortable. And when people were talking about of course relationships and boyfriends and all this, and I finally was talking about mine. And after that, another woman would admit that she was a lesbian, and another one would admit she is a lesbian. And that was kind of funny. So that group grew. We stayed in that group. [To Darlene] You joined when you moved up. That group included some really interesting people, some fairly famous people over the years. Margi Adams and Susan Kohner. Um. And in fact, we, our group encouraged Margi Adams to go from composing music and playing piano to take it down to LA, and check it out. We were convinced she was good enough. And then. Of course, it would seem like a natural transition to get involved at the beginning of the well--

[00:47:09] DR: There were three rapes. There were three rapes on Cal Poly campus--

[00:47:13] CM: Well and I had a real personal. I'm not going to talk about except to say that within my family, there was a very personal issue that drove me to feel that. Our local community needed supportive people to investigate sexual abuse. At the time, we had a chief of police in San Luis Obispo. His name was Rogers. And we went to him as a just kind of loosely put together people. And we said we think it's really important to have a female, to--I don't want to say interrogate, but to--

[00:48:00] DR: Be present--

[00:48:01] CM: Well, to help question the female victims of domestic violence. And he. We presented a letter to him. And he sent us a letter back. And you may still have that saying, we don't find it necessary to have someone from a [ ]. We offered to volunteer time to help, to be supportive. His line was, we don't need any help from a group such as yours. If we need any help, we'll get a female officer to come in from another agency or something.

[00:48:33] DR: No, "We have some dispatchers who can serve that role." [cringes]

[00:48:36] CM: Not somebody that was qualified. So, of course, that began the uproar. And of course, it was. This county is about seven years, I think seven or eight years behind the mainstream metropolises, you know the metropolitan cities but um. So we were kind of. So we joined a group that decided to form Rape Crisis Center. And then I worked at mental health and domestic violence itself became really important to me, because I saw many people. Women come into mental health terribly upset, and frightened, and emotionally distressed, but abused. And so we were renting a house. It was like a duplex, it--and so I rented the other side of the house. And for the first few months, that was where we took women that were abused, in there. And there was another woman in North County that had been terribly abused and was taking people in too. And we got together with her and it grew out of that. And became formalized and we have a group together that did some grant writing and stuff like that. And then it was. You know, it was kind of drifted away. [laughs]

[00:50:08] DR: Well, it was taken over by agencies and people who really had the skills and abilities to run it the way it needed to be run. We didn't have the resources.

[00:50:20] I2: Was that the forerunner of the women's shelter?

[00:50:22] DR: It was the women's shelter, and then we moved it into San Luis and then they started a North County one and yeah.

[00:50:28] CM: We had it for the year, we had it for nearly a year. About nine months, I think. Nine or ten months there in Morro Bay. And we had about thirty or--

[00:50:38] DR: There were about thirty women and children that we served. And the police, we went to the police department and let them know what we were doing, and they were so responsive. And I mean, they were. We had a husband show up one time, and the police were there within two minutes. They were just amazing.

[00:50:57] I: At that duplex you mean?

[00:50:58] DR: Yeah. Yeah.

[00:50:59] I: At some point, if it's possible, because we're going to try to intermingle stories with images so that it's not just, you know.

[00:51:07] DR: Right.

[00:51:08] I: The whole time. It'd be kind of really interesting to get--if you still know-- the addresses of the houses where you live next to each other, but not with each other. Because that would be kind of a funny clip for people. Because I think I want to use this as an educational tool as well to kind of educate the community, so not just LGBT people, but straight people. And I think like seeing, like, places that seem familiar kind of have that interconnection. And that's why I think it'd be interesting to kind of show that and maybe show the duplex and somebody could be like, "Oh, my gosh, my friend used to rent there! That's so cool! I had no idea. [Darlene and Cam nodding] Did you know this used to be



somewhere where they started a shelter for domestically abused women!” So I think that that’s kind of a really important component of that.

[00:51:49] DR: Sure.

[00:51:50] CM: Do you just want us to take photographs of it and send them to you or something?

[00:51:52] I: Yeah. Or we can even go out there. Either take video, we can either take video or you can take go out if you go out there, if you know where it is and take a picture.

[00:52:00] DR: I’m trying to remember Henrietta. It was 312 Henrietta and the one next to it.

[00:52:05] CM: I don’t know. They’re kind of less identifiable because they added houses on top.

[00:52:11] I: Yeah but it’s kind of interesting footage to see. And also if you can sort of think, we have a scanner that we brought too. If you have old photographs or anything, we can just do some scanning today and that way we can kind of mix it up.

[00:52:28] DR: Yeah snappy.

[00:52:30] CM: Yeah. I’m trying to remember if we have some pictures.

[00:52:32] DR: I don’t think so.

[00:52:33] I: Did you guys ever, when you guys were younger did you fall into the smoking pipe and knitting kind of roles. Were you guys, did you consider yourselves butch or fem?

[00:52:44] DR: No! And that’s what’s so funny, I guess. I guess people looking at us just by virtue of what clothes we wore, or what we chose. Yeah, I wore my hair longer. Cam’s hair is always short, but I don’t think we played roles. I really don’t.

[00:53:03] CM: I think that’s something that’s more external than internal--

[00:53:07] DR: Yeah, I think that that’s laid upon us, not something we feel.

[00:53:13] CM: I think that my friend's parents were great in that they showed us how people tried to identify. I mean, people really want to pigeonhole people and... But even within our social groups, there's a couple of women that have said something like, um, well. Oh, a friend of mine recently. It surprised me. She said something about, well, we were talking about Ellen DeGeneres and she said something about, "Well, I don't know why she has to dress so masculine." You know, it's like, I can't believe you said that. She's dressing in what she feels comfortable. And it was a funny thing coming out of this woman who considers herself quite a feminist, and a lesbian. Never been married, never had serious relationships with men, and yet still said that. And I thought "okay" [Raises eyebrows to show confusion]. I think that's funny.

[00:54:15] I3: I think it's really funny that you brought that up because my aunt was using that as an argument against me. How feminine Ellen DeGeneres dresses, [Cam and Darlene laugh] but she was like, "Not all lesbians have to dress like you. I mean look at Ellen DeGeneres, she doesn't dress like you." And [ ] I was like what?

[00:54:31] CM: This mother of this couple that identified us, she said to her daughter one time, "Why can't you dress more like your aunt with tailored suits and stuff? And do you have to lope so? [Darlene laughs]

[00:54:42] DR: Yeah why do you have to lope? [Both laugh]

[00:54:45] I3: What is even lope?

[00:54:46] CM: Lope. It's like walk in a certain way with too large a stride. And--

[00:54:50] DR: Yeah. Too assertive. I hope you will.

[00:54:52] CM: Lope. [laughs]

[00:54:54] I: I'm going to use that now.

[00:54:56] I3: You will too. She likes using obscure words.

[00:55:00] I: You know, my family's really supportive. Her family gives her a lot of grief, although, I mean--

[00:55:03] I2: That was the cool aunt that was telling that--

[00:55:06] I: Yeah her family gives her a lot of crap. But my family doesn't care. My grandma as a matter of fact, whenever I wear a tie or something like that. Or a hat, you know something that's more tomboy. She goes, you just look so handsome today! [Darlene and Cam laugh] She's nearly 80.

[00:55:23] DR: There you go! She's a married girl.

[00:55:24 ] I: She's so great. Yeah, she's awesome.

[End Video File 1]

[Begin Video File 2]

[00:00:01] I: I would say this late 70s or early 80s, maybe you know them? Jerry Trager and George Trager? A long shot, a lot of Rankers, and Wrights, and Tragers are from this area, you probably know one of them.

[00:00:16] DA: Probably just I'm bad with names.

[00:00:18] I: I have like five hundred second cousins here, I was interested in this girl with the last name of Miller. And I was like, wait, we use sit down to do a genealogy [everyone laughs].

[00:00:27] CM: Oh, but is it incest if its [ ]?

[00:00:32] DA: Ummm, nah [laughs].

[00:00:35] I: I'd rather prefer not to go through that ethically... So on the longevity of the relationship. What sort of things... Because 37 years right?

[00:00:47] DA: Coming on thirty-six.

[00:00:49] I: Thirty-six years is a long time. And for the people who are young. Another reason why I want this tool is that it's like Sarah and I, you know, we have tortilla flats on Wednesday nights filled with drama and then that's it. So we have an environment around drinking and drunkness. And then other places it's really hard to meet people because there's not a lot of activities for people, you know, kind of coming out through either late high school, early college, late college, and beginning of career. And so it's hard for them to see because it's like, if you guys were walking down the street, and not necessarily hands, someone may not even identify you guys. They just thought you guys may be two really good friends. And so I think it's really important for younger people growing up to understand what makes the relationship work that long, for better or worse.

[00:01:41] DA: Yeah, I think Cam's and my relationship worked for a number of reasons. We did the bar scene in the 70s, but not real, not a whole lot. We sought out small, intimate groups of friends, and they sustained us and we sustained them. Cam had a phrase that I just love, and I still think about it because we've had our differences. We've had times when we really didn't think it was going to make it through. And she said the reason we did is because we mixed up our albums, our vinyl record albums, our books--

[00:02:22] CM: Our checking accounts--

[00:02:24] DA: Our checking accounts, our tchotchkes. And, you know, the old saying, never go to sleep when you're mad. Always make up before you go to sleep. You know a lot of married couples do that. Well this, what it was, was by the time you sort out all of your things as opposed to her things [gestures to Cam], you've gotten over your mad, and you'd come down a little and you were able to sit down and talk about it. I think that really does have a lot to do with us hanging in there.

[00:02:56] CM: I think... One of the things I think is, I watch younger people breaking up so easily, and even my peers. And it dismays me sometimes, and that doesn't mean that... Like I said, life's a bouquet of roses with us. But that... You're going to have to replay the same issues over and over in your life if you don't learn to give and take things. And to me, it's early on, and I think one of the things I've noticed in in same sex relationships is that they're much more intense. They're more intense than straight relationships I think a lot of times. And when you put two women together, they can get absolutely frantic sometimes. And, uh. I think that early on, because we'd have these passionate blow ups with each other. And we made an agreement that we would meet 24 hours later at a-- Do we still have a spot?

[00:04:15] DA: I thought it was Montaña de Oro [state park]. Have you changed it?  
[laughs].

[00:04:17] CM: Well no, I'm so old that I've forgotten it but...

[00:04:22] I3: Been awhile since you guys have fought?

[00:04:23] DA: No, no. Don't I wish! [laughs]

[00:04:28] CM: No, but we just agreed absolutely that we would not break up until we met 24 hours later at a designated spot, and at least talked it over. Whatever it was. Because we were both very dramatic. It's like, "That's it. I've had it!" And you know ultimatums were always flying [laughs]. It was good for makeup time. But, uh, I guess. But then eventually the other thing that we agreed on is that we weren't going to give each other ultimatums and that Darlene's really stuck to that good. I have a tendency to have abandonment issues. And so that was very powerful with me. Like "I'm leaving you" kind of thing, or "I can't think it any longer I'm leaving". And I would just

[ ] around like a puppy groveling, "Please don't leave me" kind of a thing, practically. And it's been much better. Yeah. We just go to opposite corners sometimes and say I'm going to go to take a walk or go to the library. And that's usually all it takes... Yeah, I guess. Don't you think? [Darlene nods]

[00:05:48] I: And who has inspired you? Has it been family, community, a role model, music, art, nature, religion?

[00:05:59] CM: A lot of those.

[00:06:04] I: Are you guys practicing in any church?

[00:06:08] DA: No, but Mark Richardson's letters to the editor recently have... I want to go listen to him. And that's a pretty conservative Methodist church in Los Osos, but I like his message. Actually... Cam and I haven't talked about it, really. I think this is the schism between my sister and I. Is I said to her a couple of years ago, I can't believe in a personal God. It just doesn't make sense to me that he's going to drop whatever he's doing and come rescue me just because I send something up there. I don't know. I guess, you know, I'm agnostic. I'm not an atheist because every time I go that route in my brain and try to think of,

OK, you know, look at all this. Look at all that out there, there's gotta... No, that's coming from my human perspective. That all of that has to be created by something. So I don't know. My brain just shuts down when I go that route, so I don't worry about it. I just go. My religion is out in pulling the weeds, or watching my grandkids, or petting my dog. And I don't know. I think Cam has a little more focused religious system, but she'll have to answer that, I don't know.

[00:07:49] CM: Yeah, I am an evangelical agnostic. [Darlene laughs] There used to be an organization named that. And I saw it, and I just loved the idea. I said I wanted to go knock on people's doors and told them I came to put their light out instead of bringing them the light [both laugh]. I think I'm very... I have very deep spiritual feelings, but they don't have to have a real clear definition. And you ask what I am that inspires me. Of course, it's nature and beauty. I was an art major turned occupational therapist. Art has always been very important to me. And music, I love music. I'm actually in the process of finding out how to record episodes of music that I really love for... [laughs] I'm planning ahead if I am ever disabled to the point where I have to lie in a bed and can't do much. I want my music, not elevator music, to be pumped at me in a hospital bed. That's the one plan I have. I want to hear my music. But I love music and just beautiful things.

[00:09:15] I: What sort of art did you do? You said when you met her you were fascinated by her because she was an artist. What? What sort of mediums were you doing?

[00:09:25] CM: Sculpture mostly. I really love doing sculpture. And now. It just. That was part of the problem with my marriage was that I had an art scholarship, and my husband told me that I'd have to teach because that was the only way he'd help support me in going to college because fine arts wouldn't pay. So it just. And then eventually he told me I couldn't. I couldn't renew the scholarship anymore unless I started back to school. And he just said, I

don't want to talk about it anymore. So that kind of did it for me. Stayed quite a while longer, but it kind of settled it for me that I didn't have the support and I could've used that.

[00:10:11] DA: The first time I walked into Cam's house there, [as] a neighbor. And her living room was painted this... What color was it?

[00:10:23] CM: It's called sultana red.

[00:10:25] DA: Sultana red. And I'd never. I mean my life experience were walls, you know, this color [points around the room]. And I walked in there and I thought, oh boy, oh boy. Oh, and the fireplace. The brick was painted white brick, but everything else was dark red. It was like walking into this cave. But it was a real nurturing, warm kind of cave. It was amazing. And they walked into the kitchen and there were these bright blue cabinets! And I'm going. I'm scratching my head and saying, boy, this woman is really far out. And then one night I strolled over to borrow something, and here she was in the light of the moon digging in her garden with a spoon. And there was a poem... Who was it?

[00:11:23] CM: I wasn't digging with a spoon, it was a trowel [laughs].

[00:11:25] DA: Well, but I had just read the poem and it was digging by the light of the moon. And maybe that's when I fell in love with her. I don't know. But yeah, that doing the unusual thing, not what was set with the expectation of society that you did this. You finished school. You maybe went to college as a backup position, but you got married, you had your kids and you had your neat little house that was painted. I don't know, a novel whole white. And just amazing. Just she intrigued me.

[00:12:05] CM: And interestingly, because we've been together so long, and they always say this about relationships, the things that used to intrigue her are the things that bug her the most about me now. Right? [laughs]

[00:12:19] DA: Go look at the color of the bedroom wall. Sultana red.

[00:12:23] CM: No, it's not.



[00:12:25] DA: Well, it's dark red. [laughs]

[00:12:27] CM: Yours is darker than mine.

[00:12:29] I: I was going to ask. I was going to ask who is winning because I'm seeing Navajo white. [laughs]

[00:12:34] DA: Yeah. We just haven't got around our painting yet.

[00:12:36] CM: Darlene's bedroom is the color of your shirt there.

[00:12:38] DA: Your shirt yeah. [points to interviewer]

[00:12:42] I: So you might be winning after all? [everyone laughs] Do you guys still continue to do arts, or go see theater and stuff like that since you're a theater major?

[00:12:53] DA: Not as much as I'd like, probably, but yea. I still go see a few plays, a few more than Cam does. I like musicals and she doesn't. So I have to drag her to... I went to Chorus Line without her. We're going to the Roy Orbison show next week together. I talked her into it because I love his voice so...

[00:13:19] I: Were you in theater? Were you an actor?--

[00:13:22] Actually, I was more. I was more into the technology of theater. I loved makeup, I loved costuming, lighting, set building. Those were the kind... But I also enjoyed directing. That was my little control [ ]. And I did. I was good in college, but I wasn't. There was no way I would break into commercial theater. I have a friend who. I saw her. She had so much more talent than anybody in our school, and she didn't make it. I thought if she can't make it, no place for me. But no. And that really was just a phase. It just was. I enjoyed it. There was camaraderie. I still have annual reunions with five of the people that I-- actually they were from Girl Scouts and brownies, a lot of them--so we get together still, these five women. And so there. But it was more the support and the just wonderful human beings more than theater or Girl Scouts or anything.

[00:14:38] CM: And she's real competitive.

[00:14:40] DA: I am very competitive. I won't play games with Cam anymore because I hate not winning, and so she has to go elsewhere for her games.

[00:14:55] I3: I know this is a really mean question directed to someone who loves music so much. You know, it's like, what kind of music do you like? I hate that question, but like, what comes to mind for you right now?

[00:15:07] CM: Oh, yeah? What kind of music? Well, I love classical music and all sorts. I like folk music. I like bluegrass. I love ethnic music... I can say I don't care at all for rap, which isn't music, really. And I taught my kids... [Darlene laughs] It isn't!

[00:15:29] DR: It's not music! [laughs]

[00:15:31] CM: If you listen, no music to it, it's a beat with talking, but there's no melody to it at all. And I used to work with kids for the last six years of my career. And it was really cute because I'd tell the kids that... I'd be turning the band radio on or something. And they were allowed to listen to it as long as they behaved themselves. If they got out of control then they got classical music, so that's my punishment for them. But it was so cute because I'd tell them this really isn't music, you guys. And they thought I was being critical and, you know, criticizing. And I said no, I'm not. It's not music. And what was funny--and they'd argue with me a little bit later-- I'd hear a kid saying something about rap music. And then another kid would say, it's not music--

[00:16:16] DA: You brainwashed them. [laughs]

[00:16:18] CM: It was so cool! But it isn't! And if you--everybody thinks it's music--but if you listen there is no melody, there's no music, there's no instruments playing. There may be a drum.

[00:16:27] I3: It's the difference between analog and digital--

[00:16:30] DR: [laughs] There ya go! It's still music it just digital.

[00:16:31] I3: It's still music, it's just digital.

[00:16:34] CM: It's not music. Yeah it's not...

[00:16:38] DR: I don't care what it is. I don't like it. [laughs] Cam turned me on to classical music. I especially like Chopin and Mozart. I love folk music of any kind--[Darlene and Cam speak over one another]-- I was getting there! Oh she's so jealous of K.D. Lang, she just can't stand it. But yes I love K.D. Lang. Joan Baez, Cam turned me on to Joan Baez.

[00:17:10] CM: I shared it with her. [laughs]

[00:17:14] DR: Yeah, that's about it.

[00:17:17] I: If you guys have a song that reminds you of each other, do you guys have one?

[00:17:20] CM: Yeah. "Bridge Over Troubled Water." [Darlene agrees] Simon and Garfunkel. That was... When I was going through my divorce, it was horrible. I mean, it was. It was like being in a war. I was drug out in the street nude one time and locked out of my house. There was all kinds of awful abuse, and threats of being killed. My husband had taken out my two children years before, had taken them and run, when I said I, at that time I said, I want a divorce. And he took them and ran. And I didn't know for several months where my kids were. I didn't know if they were dead or alive. So during this, the final divorce action, she was just an unbelievable support system for me. I couldn't have gotten through it. And she... whenever we go through something now, it's kind of... I feel like she's not standing up for me or... And then I think back to what she gave me at that time. And I think, I don't need that kind of support anymore. I don't have the occasion to need it like I did. And she was just there constantly for me... Supporting me.

[00:18:43] DR: Outside the courtroom doors.

[00:18:45] CM: Yeah, yeah, yeah...

[00:18:51] I: Do you guys have any of the clippings from the stories from before?

Have you saved any of that?

[00:18:56] DR: I don't think we did. I don't have anything.

[00:19:00] CM: I don't think so.

[00:19:01] I: Did it happen in San Jose county? Right?

[00:19:03] DR: Yes, Santa Clara County.

[00:19:06] CM: Yeah. I. It was really a hard case. I... The judge... You have what they call preemptions, where you can ask not to have a particular judge because of bias or something. But I guess you only get one choice to knock a judge off. So the first judge was, I guess, pretty bigoted. So, my attorney chose to request another judge and we got--. I got a judge that is the only judge in the state of California at the time, in the history of the state of California, had received what they called a public censor. We had no choice, and we had to have this guy. This guy had actually--. In a incest case amongst a couple of Hispanic youths. He said in court--and I remember the quote--that the Nazis were right, and they should have all been killed. He said it on the bench. And I got him. And interestingly, he was the most intrigued and the most incensed in my case--. And all kinds of smutty stuff was brought up in my case. I mean, they just, you know, you can't believe some of the accusations that were thrown at me. But interestingly, Darlene and I had been practicing some nude sunbathing using her back deck. And I'm very sorry for it now. Do not-

[00:20:46] Both: Don't nude sunbathe.

[00:20:47] CM: I've gotten skin cancer from it. So don't do that, it's a bad deal. But anyway... And then went to the free beach, and that was a big thing in the sixties and seventies. Thousands of people were there. So the judge was more incensed by that. And he actually came out to her house to view the deck that we sunbathed on. And so he was really a weird guy. And he obviously would not have decided for me, except that there was a

tremendous amount of pressure put on him at the time. He was up for reelection, and both the conservative and the liberal sides were both encouraging him. And so that he--. Usually you have to have a decision within like ten days or seven days, I can't remember. Two weeks? He waited, I think it was four months to give his decision. Until after he was reelected.

[00:21:56] DR: Two days after an election.

[00:21:58] CM: Yeah. Because he was so scared of what it was gonna do either way he decided so...

[00:22:02] DR: Well... And the Department of Social Services wasn't it? And private psychologists all interviewed the kids, interviewed Cam, assessed the situation. All of them without fail, said that Cam should have custody.

[00:22:22] CM: Except for the psychiatrist that my ex-husband hired.

[00:22:25] DR: Oh yes.

[00:22:26] CM: He hired a psychiatrist when I was naive enough to think, oh, well, I'll just go talk to him and he'll see I'm okay. It was really strange. This was a very weird man, and his office smelled of urine. I remember when I went in. And he came in and he testified that I was a paranoid neurotic suffering from lesbianism. And I said I wasn't suffering, but the paranoia was based on the fact that I thought I was being followed. And there was a woman detective. One day she had hair rollers on and she was sitting in the car almost right across the street from our house. And the kids would say, my kids would say, "Mom, that lady's there again!" [both laugh] So that was that was kind of an irony. It was kind of a fun thing. This strange little psychiatrist, and then I guess it didn't have much effect but...

[00:23:27] I: Can you maybe talk a little bit more about the repercussions that you were having? Maybe. I don't know if it's from the right side. If that's what was happening, but you talked about death threats and...

[00:23:37] CM: Oh, no, from my ex-husband.

[00:23:39] I: Oh from your ex-husband. He was the one causing emotional trauma?

[00:23:41] CM: He said, "You know I can shoot anytime." And I said, "Well, you do know that I'm as good, or better a shot than you are." [laughs] It was awful. Both of us I think--. He'd pull out my distributor cap out of my car. So then I'd just unhook a battery cable off his. [laughs] Looking back, I can laugh at it, but...

[00:24:11] DR: It was very painful at the time. And--

[00:24:14] CM: The kids were in the middle of it, and they should never have been.

[00:24:17] DR: Yeah. That's--. That was the hard part.

[00:24:22] CM: I finally begged my parents to take my kids down to southern California. I thought that I'd be able to get it settled and smoothed out so the kids wouldn't be involved in it. But my ex-husband even used their visit down there to the parents, as a tool, so...[brief silence]

[00:24:44] I3: Yeah divorces get messy.

[00:24:47] DR: This one was among the messiest...

[00:24:50] I: So in San Luis Obispo have you seen anything happen politically here with the gay community, gay and lesbian community, or have you seen it kind of transform? Because you said when you moved here, you were wondering if there were any other lesbians here. Like how did you get to know a group of friends, and did you get involved with anything politically going on? Is there any situation that you saw that stood out to you that happened here?

[00:25:19] DR: I was a member of BAPA [Business and Professional Association] before they came in with GALA [Gay and Lesbian Alliance] while Cam was away. Because she'd only come home on the weekends and... She worked up north for a period of time.

Where was I going with that? But oh. That I wasn't really--. I wasn't looking for a specific gay, lesbian community because my support group had all always been just the people I worked with, or friends that we had made who happened to be lesbian or gay. But joining a group really wasn't something we did other than to work toward a specific cause like the battered women's shelter, or the rape crisis center or working against Diablo--

[00:26:16] CM: Well, in the early 70s. So we were the contact, the initial contact people that hotline called.

[00:26:26] DR: That's right.

[00:26:27] CM: Our county hotline called when there was an issue around gay and lesbian--. And interestingly, we'd get calls--. We'd get the calls from teenage gay kids who were like--. Like I remember a really sad one of a young man who had been kicked out of his home, and then his parents told his pastor, his pastor discommunicated him from the--. Uncommunicated him--

[00:26:55] DR: Whatever, kicked him out--

[00:26:56] CM: Of the church, and then called his boss and got him fired all in one day. And this--. You wonder why people want to commit suicide. I mean, you know. It was absolutely tragic. And we'd get calls like that. We got all the calls for lesbians coming into the community. And hotline was really good. We'd just, you know, and they just transfer a call over, or give us a phone number and we'd call. And that's kind of real early on. We also used to have social gatherings in Morro Bay. And that was an interesting thing because you mentioned earlier about drinking. I think drinking was a lot more prevalent. It was--. When we got together, that's pretty much the majority of gay people met in bars and things like that. Well, this group we'd get together--it was just a social group--but what we found was that we might have a potluck, we might not, but there was a lot of drinking. People would bring drinks. There was a lot of drinking. And then there was often some pretty out of control

behavior. And I really began to feel pretty responsible. And so we--. At least we decided that when we invited people, and we'd have maybe a dozen people come for kind of a party or something. And we began emphasizing the potluck part of it, and deemphasizing the drinking. [phone rings]

[Break and the video cuts forward]

[00:29:06] DR: I don't see why not. You want to tell that story?

[00:29:08] CM: Yeah, we--. I was gonna say that we... One of the things we did early on, fairly early on was that we'd go out and speak to community groups; either at Cal Poly, or Cuesta, some high school classes early on. And we were at Cuesta class one time and... Usually students were either quite supportive, or else they were kind of neutral, or they didn't say anything. But there was this kind of loud mouth guy... I'll say he was a redneck. [laughs] Anyway, he... He kept asking us questions, and finally he said something about, "Well, do you really think you were a fit mother?" To Darlene. You know you don't say that to Darlene. I don't dare say that to Darlene. And here's Darlene acting Miss prim and proper, and he says that to her, and she had been biting your tongue. And finally she said, "I've wanted to say this to you all evening. Fuck you!" Real loud. [Darlene laughs] And everybody in the room, just like [leans back]. And some people are going, yeah, yeah [puts thumb up]--

[00:30:27] DR: Evidently the class didn't much like this guy either. [laughs]

[00:30:30] CM: But the funny thing that came of that was that we went out to--

[00:30:34] DR: Afterwords--

[00:30:35] CM: We're sitting having coffee in the cafeteria afterwards visiting with some people. The teacher included. And this guy walked up to our table and just said--. He said, "I just wanted to thank you for kind of like pulling me up." And he said, "I realized I was really inappropriate." And I thank you for coming or something. And we're going,



“Whoa”. I didn’t know that when you yelled profanities to people that that happens.

[everyone laughs]

[00:31:03] DR: I’ll do it more often. [laughs]

[00:31:06] CM: But I mean, she said that I’m going like, I don’t know her, you know.

[laughs] We’re supposed to be so appropriate.

[00:31:13] DR: Well it was--. Yeah, he really had said some really off the wall stuff

[00:31:17] CM: But I think he realized, “Oh, her feelings can be hurt like anybody else’s, and maybe I did make an assumption that had nothing to do with her motherhood” or... Yeah. It’s funny because in my divorce case, of course, fitness motherhood was supposedly the big issue. It’s like--.. A friend of ours came. I had several people that testified for me about being a good mom. I was a messy mom, but I was busy playing with my kids, or doing things with them.

[00:31:57] DR: Art projects, sports, camping...

[00:32:01] CM: Mechanical stuff with kids or--

[00:32:03] DR: Well tell them about the neighbors.

[00:32:05] CM: Oh, yeah, that was really funny. It was a tight little neighborhood of all families, and kind of like a little cul de sac. And once during the divorce, my husband ran around the neighborhood--these were all friends of ours. We were all social with all the couples--ran around the neighborhood, telling all the neighborhood about his horrible wife, and all the horrible things I was doing. And he thought that it would like draw everybody to his side, obviously. And he would--. [laughs] The funniest thing that happened was that all of a sudden, several of the women in the neighborhood started asking me to babysit for them more. And some of the women were saying, “Anytime that you aren’t comfortable at home, you can come over and stay overnight with me.” These were all straight women [ ], and it

was like--. It got kind of uncomfortable actually. [both laugh] Obviously they didn't think I was too bad a mom because all of a sudden I was like, let's swap babysitting, and--[laughs].

[00:33:18] DR: Yeah. I think back to what we contributed to the community, and we were just two of many lesbians and gay men who who worked in a variety of social causes. Diablo. We went to jail...

[00:33:41] CM: For Diablo. [laughs]

[00:33:42] DR: Yeah, for Diablo, in protest of Diablo--

[00:33:45] I: Can you maybe explain? So that it's kind of in context for people that had no idea what was going on in Diablo. Maybe like the year, what was happening, and what you played in it. Kind of like tell the story, so to speak.

[00:33:55] DR: I can get you the scrapbook. [laughs] I do have a scrapbook about that. But--

[00:34:05] CM: Diablo Canyon Nuclear Plant has always been contested in this county. But I had a board and care home at the time. This was after we were together and everything for years. I had a board and care home for handicapped children, and they were severely handicapped children. And I felt that they needed a voice because they were defenseless, literally. And that if the nuclear plant wasn't built properly or if it had had leakage or anything, that they would be endangered just like the rest of us, but couldn't speak for themselves. So Darlene as I said, worked for the developmentally disabled also, and felt the same way. So we joined a lot of other people in our community and from out of the community that blockaded our nuclear plant and tried to stop the further construction. And so we went to jail a couple times. [laughs] I always said I had to do a couple of these things in my lifetime. And then Darlene became one of the, what was called the representatives in the trial. There were 15 people chosen for the--what did we have? Fifteen hundred or something

at least people that blockaded--. And she was one of the representatives that went through the whole trial.

[00:35:29] DR: It was actually a motion. It wasn't even--. We didn't even get to the trial. It was just to show enough evidence that for the defense of necessity that we had enough expert witnesses who could come and testify that this really should never have been built there. And it certainly shouldn't be turned on. And it took a long time. I think almost a year for a decision to be made. But the decision was made that we had a good, good argument and it should go forward to trial. And they dismissed all charges for all fifteen-hundred.

[00:36:04] CM: And the county just dropped the charges.

[00:36:06] DR: They just dropped it all. Do you want me to tell you part of the reason I think they dropped it? It was the fact that the D.A. who was working on our case was arrested and charged with receiving--

[00:36:20] CM: Pornographic.

[00:36:21] DR: Pornographic--. Child pornographic materials through the mail. So I think that had a big part of why they didn't really want to proceed with that. But I think, you know, so many of the people of our generation... Yeah, I think we did fight for the gay rights issues, but I think we were also very much involved in anti-war demonstrations, and just political, just social issues. And I think we--. A lot of us worked very hard and long, and that's one thing in my own children that I'm kind of amazed. And I guess maybe it skips a generation or something, and I have more hope for my grandchildren. But my children are in their 40s now, and I see them so busy just trying to make a living and raise their kids and just do the day to day stuff that they're not political. They just don't want to even read the paper to see what's going on, and I think that's so sad because--

[00:37:30] CM: And none of them are gay.

[00:37:32] DR: Yeah. Yeah. Of the six kids none. What did we do wrong?! [Groans]  
Well, we still got the grandkids, well work-- [laughs].

[00:37:46] I: Could you talk about how many grandkids you have?

[00:37:48] DR: Eleven between us? Yeah

[00:37:51] I: Could you restate that in a statement?

[00:37:53] DR: and I have 11 grandchildren between us. I have five, three boys and two girls. And you have... [looks to Cam]

[00:38:03] CM: Let's see... I'm trying to count all of them. [Both laugh] Yeah. My grandchildren range from three to twenty one now I think. So it's quite a range.

[00:38:20] DR: And it's been a delight seeing them...

[00:38:23] CM: Yeah it is. Great kids. We're very close to all of them. [brief silence]

[00:38:42] DR: We talked earlier about who were our support, how did we find support in the community? And I think one of the things that was--. And I hope that Vivian and LeAnn, I hope you will talk to them, interview them. Because they ran the Nipomo wrap for lesbians for--. God, it must've been 20 or 25 years. It was--. We went there one Friday a month for a--. And we drove from Paso Robles even to go down there. Cam and I tried to do a North County wrap.

[00:39:22] CM: We did one.

[00:39:23] DR: And we did one for a couple of years, but not, nothing with the tenaciousness that Vivian and LeAnne did in Nipomo. And that's where we met many of our friends that we still have today. That group and um...

[00:39:39] CM: They've been together I think a month longer than we have.

[00:39:43] DR: Yeah. Yeah. They're April, we're May the same year. And we met them in a restroom down at UCLA at a women's... conference?

[00:39:56] CM: It was a lesbian conference. Yeah first lesbian conference.

[00:39:57] DR: Lesbian conference down at UCLA, and um...

[00:40:01] CM: You met them in a bathroom. That sounds questionable. [laughs]

[00:40:06] DR: No no! [laughs] We were just washing our hands!

[00:40:08] CM: Sitting in a stall, starting chatting with somebody in the next stall.

[00:40:15] DR: And another thing, as we get older and we find that our bodies are not immortal and--

[00:40:23] CM: They're not? [laughs]

[00:40:24] DR: And they're not impervious to damage, that there are some wonderful people in at least the Los Osos community who have started up a mutual support group. Where those who maybe need a little help, ill or becoming disabled, there are other men and women in the community who are filling in and helping do everything from coming over and doing a little yard work, to going grocery shopping, to taking them to doctor's appointments. It's just incredible. I think there are what? 15 households I think on the list. And so, life is full of choices I feel. And getting out there and helping others and seeing what your community means is really important.

[00:41:27] I: Definitely. [to interview staff] Did you guys have more questions that you want to do.

[00:41:32] Interview staff member: I think passing on some advice.

[00:41:36] I: Okay yeah. Kind of like continuing on what you were saying, getting out and helping community. If you have some sort of advice for the youth kind of growing up. If you had something, a message you'd like to share with them, something you've either learned, or advice, or...

[00:41:56] DR: If I have any advice to give, it's don't be--. Don't isolate yourself. Don't be alone if you're feeling depressed. Get out there. Get help. Because there is help out there.

[00:42:12] CM: I guess mine would be, you're not better than or worse than anybody else. You're just... a kid going through the same kind of stuff everybody else is going through, and don't let people lay trips on you just--. And that's easy to say... I had a neat experience when I worked at mental health. I was able to--. This was when there weren't teenagers that came out at all, you know. And if they did, you treated them.

[00:42:44] DR: Yeah they were "sick".

[00:42:46] CM: I worked with a group of youths. And there was one girl, she was about... Maybe she was fourteen, thirteen to fourteen, and she was very clearly attracted to other girls, she was just blatant about. Very comfortable with being quite butch-y. But. And she was in a treatment program with kids that came in with different kinds of issues. So I watched her for a while, and I was just intrigued by this because I thought, wow, this kid is just, I've never seen a kid this comfortable with it. So I went to the head of youth services and, who I knew well, and I said, "What are you doing about this kid? I'm so impressed. I mean, what kind of treatment is she here for? Are you, are they trying to cure her?" You know? And she goes, "Well she's not gay." [Darlene laughs] And I said, "Oh, well, what makes you think..." She says, "She confides in me with everything." She says, "She's told me everything. She even showed me a gun that she had. So she would tell me everything." And I said, "Well, I'm really intrigued because this kid clearly to me is acting like a little comfortable lesbian. And the other girls are quite comfortable with her attentions. She's not, you know, kissing them. But, you know, you can tell." And so this woman just like pooh-poohed me like well I'm the administrator and you're an OT [occupational therapist] what do you know? And a week later, the woman comes to me and she said, "How did you know?" She said, "She just left me a love letter." And it was. She was in love with the administrator, so. [everyone laughs] So interestingly, I got to see this kid outside of...

[00:44:50] DR: The therapeutic--

[00:44:51]CM: The therapeutic thing. And of course, we don't mingle, but I saw her probably a year later at a gay and lesbian dance they were holding in Morro Bay. And obviously very comfortable with their sexuality, flirting with all the girls, dancing with everybody, picking tricks up, the whole thing. And it just tickled me because for whatever reason, they weren't able to therapize this child out of being naturally gay. And I, that's what I would hope for. I would hope the parents would just say, my kid is my kid, and I'll support them. You know? And let him go the way they're going. As long as they're not hurting other people. If they're not using drugs, and you know, getting into crime and things like that, why worry so much about it?

[00:45:44] DR: We still have a long way to go. But I was so heartened reading *The Tribune* last week when they were talking about the gay and lesbian--. No, it was the was the gay straight alliance at Paso Robles High School! We lived in Paso Robles, and it's one of the very conservative communities. And for those brave young people. And they are making a difference. I'm...

[00:46:13] CM: Yeah. Yeah, I think it's great.

[00:46:18] I: I've had the lucky opportunity of meeting some of the people that are from there, and from Morro Bay's GSA [gay & straight alliance] and stuff like that. And they're just so inspirational. And there's even--. There's some that are gay and out, and there's some that are just straight allies, and they're--

[00:46:32] DR: Yeah! They're their friends!

[00:46:34] CM: Yeah, well, and I really appreciate the administrators who stick their neck out and take the chance of saying, yeah, let's do it. They're realizing that the tremendous emotional pressures that come to bear on kids--

[00:46:47] DR: Teenagers have enough problems without having that...

[00:46:51] CM: Yeah I really appreciate that.

[00:46:53] I: Yeah. It's sad though, because there's a lot of teachers--. I went to something recently that was like administrators that are gay, and lesbian, and bisexual are, they're afraid to be that leader in their school. So most of the people that have to step forward in the high school--

[00:47:08] Cam and Darlene: Are straight.

[00:47:09] I: Are straight people, not just straight, straight married. You know?

[00:47:13] DR: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. With four or five kids.

[00:47:18] I: Yeah so the woman that actually has been leading the GSA up in Paso is now hired as the women's center director at Cal Poly, so. And she's a very young, very energetic woman. So it's really exciting to see where she's going to take that. Because that was Maya's old position, if you remember Maya.

[00:47:35] DR: I don't think we ever met.

[00:47:37] I: Yeah. So she's taken that over. And it's really exciting to see where she'll take that because she's a huge ally. She's really awesome.

[00:47:43] CM: That controversy probably will never end about how much, how closeted to be, who to come out to, all that kind of stuff. But I really I guess because I was kind of forced out of the closet in some ways because of my case, my custody case. Although--. But ever since I've told people, I said my philosophy is come out of the closet and lock the door behind you. Because the straight community will keep pushing you back into that open closet. They will. All forces will... It's like in relationships, in a married relationship, in a heterosexual relationship, most people push to keep the relationship together. The outside pressures are, oh, you don't want to get divorced, go to counseling, do this, and then do that. If you're in a gay relationship, it's like, hey, you didn't really care about each other anyway. Come on we'll... Let's go out to a bar and have a good time. So



there's a lot of that kind of stuff. And so within the gay community, we need to form the same kind of support. Instead of just saying, oh, well, go ahead and break up--

[00:48:58] DR: Didn't work out.

[00:48:59] CM: It is. It's just as important to work on relationships, whether it--. Whether you get married, whether you have domestic partnerships... whatever relationship you want to settle for. I really feel like you don't solve problems by just walking away over and over and... And I think that's what older relationships--. People who have been in longer relationships can kind of impart. You know, try to work it out. I'm not saying that it'll, eventually you won't leave. But don't run at the first spat. You'll be a better person for it if you can work things out.

[00:49:51] I: You guys have some more questions or are we good? Because I dominate it here [laughs]. Sometimes I feel like--

[00:49:59] I3: I think, yeah I asked... I would love to see your dog now.

[00:50:04] DR: Alright. [laughs]

[00:50:05] I: Is there anything else that you want to share before we wrap this up?

[00:50:09] No, I think we covered the territory.

[00:50:11] I: Okay cool. Awesome.

[End of Interview]