

Interview with Rachel Richardson and Betty Edmundson

GALA Interviews

Narrators: Rachel Richardson [RR] and Betty Edmundson [BE]

Interviewer: Katrina Maksimuk [I]

Videographer: Sara Goener

Location: Los Osos, California

Length: Approximately 03:16:46

Interview begins at 00:03:05

Transcript prepared by: Steven Ruszczycky, Michael Morris, Kailyn Pope

[00:03:05] I: So why don't you start by telling the story of how and why you moved to San Luis Obispo?

[00:03:12] BE: Well we had a motorhome, and we liked--. We had formed a group of women, who had motorhomes and like to travel in them. So it was called the LOLOWs for--depending on who we were talking to--it was little old lesbians on wheels or little old ladies on wheels. So one of the little old ladies lived up here. And so she still lives up here just a few blocks up the hill from us. And so we visited her up here. And it was such a gorgeous place, you know, and we just wanted to get out of the city, and to be someplace like this. So that's why we moved here. And we've never been sorry. It is a gorgeous place.

[00:04:07] I: did you want to maybe give us some background where you moved from and what year you moved here or maybe other cities you've lived in? Just to kind of get a little bit of background. Where you were born maybe?

[00:04:16] RR: Well Betty was born in Los Angeles. Queen of Angels Hospital. I was born in Dallas, Texas, but my family came here when I was quite young and lived in Los Angeles.

[00:04:16] BE: Actually they lived near Bunker Hill. That, you see the picture that we have of Bunker Hill over there--

[00:04:34] RR: The Angles Flight.

[00:04:36] BE: The Angles Flag that she used to live near

[00:04:38] RR: Yeah when we first came to California. And, um... Actually, I sort of consider myself Californian. Really, because I went to school all through school here pretty much from about the 7th grade on. And... Los Angeles was home to me for years. I mean, I traveled in my job in aerospace and so I always see, you know, flying into Los Angeles Airport International was always like, I'm getting home. But Betty retired in eighty one and we were living in Seal Beach at the time. And she started being more aware of the humidity in the area and started talking about moving, and I wasn't buying that, I just wasn't that interested in moving because to me, the basin, the L.A. Basin was my home. And she kept working on me, and she's pretty persuasive [laughs], actually. So I said, OK, we'll give it a try. What we'll do is we'll go up and we'll rent a place in this area and keep the house in SEAL Beach. And rent a place up here, which we did. And of course, actually within a couple of months, we knew we wanted to be here. But before we started looking for a place, we took a trip. We went back as far as Biloxi, Mississippi, and traveled with some friends. And came back and then got serious about looking for a place to live here. And it really became a matter of eliminating what areas we did not want to be in for whatever reasons. Cambria is beautiful, but too isolated. Morro Bay was too foggy. I mean, we just sort of went through all the stuff. San Luis Obispo was too hot and we sort of ended up here and sort of--

[00:06:23] BE: We got this. We actually bought this house because we had been looking at a much smaller house over on--. Not on the hillside here. And we kept looking at it. And then we said, I said, there's not enough room for a Christmas tree in that living room. And so. So we came over here, and we saw this house and we just loved it. You know? So this was it. So we had to buy this house. And we've never been sorry. I like the fact that its light--

[00:06:57] RR: Well, the thing that we lucked out about too was at the time that we came in eight three. In 1983 they had just gone through another round of a sewer in Los Osos. And we didn't really know what that was all about. But we knew that it didn't didn't go. And the way we lucked out was by buying this house. This area was developed by a developer who had foresight and he built in community septics. So there's about one hundred and fifty homes in this area. And he's got collection septics around the area, spread out around the area. But in essence, the sewer lines are in from each house. Everything goes into a central line that ends up in the septic tanks. So eventually when they do get one, it will be a minor hookup because--

[00:07:50] BE: It won't cost as much as if we lived in other parts of Los Osos like that.

[00:07:56] RR: Right.

[00:07:57] BE: And we love the way that this house has the little forest behind it, and we aren't right on top of our neighbors. You know, the way he laid this out, he moved that house way over the other side of the lot. They are large lots. And then he moved this house on, as far as possible on this lot, which gives you a huge backyard with no houses around. And it's just a well thought out area. Really nice. And I love having the little forest behind us. Dolphin Forest.

[00:08:33] I: So can you let me know maybe about, you talked about the lesbian, old lesbains on wheels? What's it called?

[00:08:39] RR: Little old ladies--

[00:08:42] Little old lesbians on wheels. Can you give me a little bit--because I think it's a really interesting--kind of back story? Maybe a little of background on that--

[00:08:50] RR: Sure. Sure.

[00:08:51] BE: Oh my. It's still going.

[00:08:53] RR: Yeah. well what happened... There was another group. There was a camping group that was already going. It was very organized. It was teachers, and they have to have everything just exactly this way, that way. Including initiations and all kinds of things. Well, we

went to one camping outing with them and said, well, this is not for us. And then on a New Year's Eve, there were eight of us at one time at somebody's house. And we started talking about the camping group. The fact that it just wasn't working for us. So we said, well, why don't we start our own? And so people started doing just funny kind of stuff. Let's come up with a name for it. And all this kind of stuff. And they came up with the LOLOWs, and as Betty said, it depends on who you're talking to. I mean, you can't, you know, going into a campground, the ranger says, "LOLOWs, what does that mean?" You say little old ladies on wheels. Anybody outside asks you what it is, it's little old lesbians on wheels. You know, that kind of thing. Our very first camping trip was down close to the Mexican border, and we had three rigs that went. And the last I heard, there's something like 200 rigs that are a part of that group. It has been going since 1980, about 1980 I think.

[00:10:07] BE: Yeah. Right.

[00:10:09] RR: So it's been going all that time and I mean it's gone, and gone and gone, and we don't camp with them anymore. We sort of stopped when we moved up here actually because of their trips are--the trips for us are so far they would be like way, way down and back and all of that.

[00:10:24] BE: But it was, it was a good way to get out of town and have a relaxing, fun weekend, you know, and everybody would--what we didn't like about the RV knots was the fact that they had to plan everything out. You had to decide what you were going to bring--

[00:10:43] RR: No, you were assigned--

[00:10:44] BE: --you were assigned what you would bring and all this stuff. And so we just said, well, you bring whatever you have in the house, whatever you want to make and just bring the food, that's all. And just whatever you want. So ours was a much looser and more fun organization, I think. So that's you know.

[00:11:05] RR: I think the fact that it's continued to go it means at a time that it works.

[00:11:10] BE: It really works. Anyhow, we had a lot of fun, and we had two kitty cats that-- Stanley and Elsa--they were Siamese cats. One--Stanley was a brown cat, you know, Brown Point

Point and Elsa was a Blue Point. And they were, you know--we--the first and the very first time we brought them home and were going to leave them in the vet's while we went on a trip. We were going to go down to Palm Springs. And so we went to Palm Springs and there was no place to stay there. And so then we went on across to San Diego, there was no place to stay there. So finally, we came clear back to Los Angeles and there was no place to stay. You know, there were--there was a golf tournament in Palm Springs or some darn thing, anyhow. There wasn't room for us anywhere. So we said, that's enough. You know, we are going to have a place for these kitty cats to go with us. And so and we had the motor we got the motorhome. So the cats could go with us and we would be able to go and stay overnight and have a place to stay. So that really worked. And they loved going out in the motorhome. And it was their home away from home.

And we got little harnesses for each cat and a little leash so that we could take them out of the motorhome and they could walk around in the bushes. In fact, I'm going to write a book about this called "Down the Road and Into the Bushes Travels with Stanley and Elsa," and really I'm going to do it. And we have pictures of them and all kinds of stuff. And we went clear across country. We went to--we went north as far as Washington, and then we went all the way across to the Mississippi River and Louisiana in the motor home with the cats. So, we did travel a lot with Stanley and Elsa and we had a lot of fun. Anyhow, that was the story of the LOLOWs.

[00:13:31] RR: I thought it was the Stanley and Elsa Story. [Laughs]

[00:13:35] I: I try to take my cat on a leash once. It did not work out.

[00:13:38] RR and BE: Oh no.

[00:13:42] BE: You should've seen him when we first put them on the leashes, they would creep along the floor--

[00:13:45] RR: --on their bellies.

[0013:46] BE: --on their bellies, it was so cute! Anyhow.

[00:13:50] I: So bringing it back a little bit to San Luis Obispo, one of the people that was in the LOLOWs is now living in Los Osos. So maybe you can give me some background about how you knew her, maybe. Did you know anyone else or maybe kind of give some information about that?

[00:14:05] RR: No, no. We didn't know anybody else. And it was very interesting because we rented a house up here and within about a month and a half, we gave a party for all the people we'd met. And we had about 40 women come to the house for dinner that night. And so that's how many people we hadn't met that quickly. More people here than we even knew--

[00:14:30] RR and BE: --than we even knew in L.A.

[00:14:31] RR: So it was interesting, very interesting, very interesting to find--

[00:14:36] BE: Because so many people come from L.A., here, and from San Francisco, here, that we've got a very large group here. So it works.

[00:14:47] I: And so how soon after that was that you said, after after the 40 people you met--

[00:14:55] RR: It was in about a month and a half. It was like a really, you know, we met somebody, they introduced us to somebody, and pretty soon we had all of these people that we knew.

[00:15:00] I: Can you maybe describe the community at the time you moved here? Like in that month and a half maybe describe what the makeup was like as far as ages, diversity, relationship status, stuff like that. Careers, maybe, types of people.

[00:15:15] RR: Sure. Actually, the people that we met, I would say it was about 75 percent were retired, but about 25 percent were still working, and various jobs. Most people had come from out of the county. They had retired here. Men and women, actually, we met some really wonderful people very quickly, and--

[00:15:43] BE: In fact, it was very interesting that one of the guys we had worked with. We used to work at Rand Corporation and System Development Corporation [SDC], it became, and that's where we met, and one of the guys who lives just on the hill above us, EdPercy, he had work there. So we were very surprised to find some of the people we worked with moved here. And let's see, a lot of people from aerospace, I think, weren't there?

[00:16:14] RR: That came here?

[00:16:15] BE: That came here.

[00:16:15] RR: Not a lot. Quite a few--Lillian, Ed and Lillian are here. Bev is here, Rosie is here. The [] are up in Cambria. So, yeah, they're spread around. It's a beautiful place. It's halfway between San Francisco and LA, so people come here.

[00:16:31] I: And what were the ages like, were most people in long term relationships that you met? Oh, yeah.

[00:16:41]: [Interview interrupted]

[00:17:22] BE: Now, where were we?

[00:17:23] I: I was asking about like the type--people were coming here and they were retired. Were most people in couples, because you guys came here as a couple. So I'm just kind of interested--

[00:17:31] RR: Like mostly couples, mostly couples. In fact, I don't think--initially, I don't think we met single people. They were all couples. And for the most part, long term couples, even the people who were still working were like, they had been together ten, fifteen years, minimum. So, yeah, it's a community of fairly stable--at least the way we were introduced to it was a stable, long-term-couples kind of situation, which was what we were used to.

[00:17:59] BE: We met the guys who lived on the hill up above us. Bill and Will. And see how they ended up--Will just died recently, just this last week, and they had been together for 58 years when he died at that time. So, I mean, at this time, and their fiftieth wedding anniversary, we

were--we took a photo. We don't have the whole community there. And we were at the Madonna Inn and we took photographs of everybody, and they have a big album with all the photographs in. It was really a neat celebration. So, those are the kinds of people that were here, you know.

[00:18:48] I: Out those people, not like an exact number, maybe you can describe how many of those people have moved or passed on.

[00:18:58] RR: In recent years a lot of a lot of people have moved to Palm Springs. Which is sort of surprising.

[00:19:02] BE: Guys are all going to Palm Springs.

[00:19:03] RR: It's not all guys, women, too, have gone down.

[00:19:07] BE: Marge and Shir went down.

[00:19:15] RR: So people are moving to Palm Springs, which is good. Fine. I'm glad people want to go there, I don't.

[00:19:17] BE: It's a place we don't want to live, you know, it's too hot. Well, these guys kind of people can afford to have a place in Palm Springs and another place over in Laguna. So you can spend the summer in Laguna and go back to Palm Springs in the wintertime. And that's a very different situation because we could never afford to do that. So we'll take this. We'll take Los Osos.

[00:19:45] I: So now we're going to get into, how long have you guys been together? How long have you guys been together?

[00:19:58] BE: Thirty-four years since 1971.

[00:20:00] I: Can you restate that in a statement? Maybe like we met--Do you remember if it was fall or spring?

[00:20:07] RR: No. We know we met years earlier, years before, Betty was married when we first met, so.

[00:20:14] BE: I've been married twice. You know, my first husband died in World War II, and my second husband, I was married for 10 year, and I have a son. See, his pictures, and that's my

great grandson over there, anyhow. So. We met at war and it was around--I started working at SDC in 1955. What time--when did you come, in the fifties?

[00:20:42] RR: In the 50s.

[00:20:44] BE: Anyhow, she was like, about, 18-years-old at the time. Sixteen years difference in our ages. And so she--and she was very shy, you know. And so she'd walk around at work with her head down and peeking out and see who was looking at her. And, you know, it was you can't believe that that was the same person.

[00:21:05] RR: This is your perception, right?

[00:21:06] BE: My perception as she is today. Anyhow. And you know, so, I was married and I just kind of ignored her. [RR bursts out in laughter] And, you know, was one of the people I worked with. You know, nothing happened or anything like that. And then, I began to change somehow.

[00:21:34] RR: This is an interesting experience.

[00:21:37] BE: God, this is really bad. I was married to Ed, who was a mathematician and very precise, very--everything had to be perfect in the house. The books in the bookcase had to be aligned and absolute perfection. And I had this baby, you know, my son, Steven. He was only about--he was--we were living in the Palisades in L.A. and he was only about seven or eight or so. And he was getting more and more upset with the way he was being forced to live. I guess he was older, a little older than that. I think he was about 12 or so.

[00:22:21] RR: Well, not when you got married.

[00:22:23] BE: No, not when we got married, but we were married for 10 years. He was just about three years old when we got married. So this is how he was being raised. And one day he started to run away, up the coast highway. He was just going to leave. And so I decided at that time that I had enough. And so Ed and I separated and eventually divorced, and I moved in with Pat McLane, one of the women that I worked with and who was a lesbian. And so this was my

introduction to the gay life. And I wasn't you know, she was--Pat is a very, very interesting person. She still lives there. She's up in Paso Robles now, but she and Steven got along so beautifully, you know, and Pat introduced Steven to books and--

[00:23:26] RR: and chess

[00:23:29] BE: Well, I don't remember the chess part.

[00:23:31] RR: She taught him to play chess.

[00:23:33] BE: Well, she probably did and I don't know, but I can't remember that.

Anyhow--

[00:23:37] RR: [laughing] We've been together too long.

[00:23:40] BR: --And he just loved Pat and she had a beautiful big old cat. Oh, do you remember when? Any anyhow. All that stuff. It doesn't have to be told. But after--I lived on Sunset Boulevard in an apartment there and--Who was that guy that lived there who's a movie star now?

[00:24:18] RR: I don't know. I didn't live there.

[00:24:20] I: Oh, OK, I'm going to pause for a second--

[Break in interview to adjust microphones]

[00:24:47] I: So kind of rewind and start with the living in Hollywood part.

[00:24:57] BE: Well, it was on Sunset Boulevard, and there were all kinds of interesting people living around us and then I wasn't comfortable living with a lesbian having a young son to raise, and I just couldn't relax with that. And no matter how well they got along and how wonderfully good it was for Steve to be able to be with her.

[Interruption to adjust lighting.

[00:25:46] BE: Well, anyhow, so then Pat moved or down to the beach and she was where you know Sunset Boulevard. Well, you probably don't know, but there was--from the Palisades area there was a bridge across to the beach and so Pat McLane moved down along that beach somewhere. She lived in the lower story of a house that was built right on the beach. So Steven and

I would be able to go down there and see her and be with her and everything and then--and see, I forget now. Where am I?

[00:26:35] I: Where were you guys living at the time, though, because you guys moved out Pacific Palisades.

[00:26:40] BE and RR: We weren't together. We weren't together.

[00:26:41] I: No, I know that. But you stayed in the house.

[00:26:42] BE: We stayed in the house that we were living in. Let's see. I've kind of forgotten exactly how we got down there. We didn't we didn't live on the beach or--

[00:26:59] RR: Well, Pat lived on the beach. You didn't.

[00:27:01] BE: Pat lived on the beach, but I think I lived on well--

[00:27:06] RR: it didn't matter. She and she moved--

[00:27:07] BE: I lived in Santa Monica somewhere.

[00:27:08] RR: Right. You decided not to be living together for a while.

[00:27:11] BE: We decided not to be living together for a while. And then--That's just the way it worked out. And so then I went to work at the Rand and met Rachel.

[00:27:27] RR: No, no, no, no. You'd already met her there.

[00:27:32] BE: I was already working. I was already working there. That's right. Yeah

[00:27:40] I: So were you guys []

[00:27:42] BE: Yeah, we knew each other. We weren't we weren't particularly friends, but we knew each other at work and, let's see, then we started a group of people that used to leave on Friday night and go out somewhere for drinks.

[00:28:03] RR: I wasn't a part of that.

[00:28:05] BE: Well, weren't you part of the group?

[00:28:06] RR: No.

[00:28:08] BE: Oh, I forgot.

[00:28:09] RR: [] was your drinking bunch where you tried to drink your boss on the table--and usually did!

[00:28:15] BE: We had a boss who--

[00:28:19] RR: --drank him under the table, take him home and dump him on his lawn.

[00:28:20] BE: Right.

[00:28:21] RR: That's what they did.

[00:28:21] BE: We did it. We did. Every Friday night. We had fun. Anyhow, that was the most wonderful place to work you could ever imagine. The first day that I went into work there, we went into the cartography department and they were having a tableaux. That means that everybody got up on the tables and stood on the table.

[00:28:27] RR: In costume.

[00:28:28] BE: In costume. And what were they doing that day?

[00:28:50] RR: I don't know, they were playing bongo drums. They were doing Indian something or other, I don't know.

[00:28:53] BE: I mean, we had more fun there and-- We all had to have secret clearances, of course. And so the first six months you worked there, you really couldn't do any work because you didn't have a clearance yet. So you would find all kinds of other things to do and go out and stay away from them from the office for a while. And then you'd wander back in. And we never had any definite hours that we had to be there. All we had to do was be productive. And there aren't too many places where you can work where that's the rule. And so it was a wonderful place to work. We all enjoyed it, and I worked there for nine years, I think it was, from 1955 to 1962, and by that time, Rachel had grown up a little bit, was a little bit older and--

[00:29:55] RR: It had nothing to do with you leaving. [Both laugh]

[00:29:57] BE: No.

[00:29:59] RR: You went back to school.

[00:29:59] BE: I decided I had--I wanted to get my master's in social work. And I went back--I had graduated from UCLA. I went back and took two years to get my Master's degree. And by this time, Steve was--

[00:30:19] RR: Eighteen.

[00:30:22] BE: He was about fifteen or sixteen. No, he wasn't quite eighteen because he left home at eighteen. So he was still with me and we were living in Santa Monica and... Let's see. So I got my master's degree. and then I went to work at County Hospital. And I was working in Los Angeles in the psychiatric unit, and I was in the admittance area. So that was one of the most interesting jobs I ever had in my life. People would come in, you know, and who were obviously schizophrenic or crazy in one way or another or very depressed, and we would have to--a guy that I had worked with in a little local clinic was there with me, and we were we were trying to get our our licenses as licensed clinical social workers. That took about two years of working under a licensed clinical social worker. So, Maria and I, we we formed a group out of a lot of these people who were habitual people who came into the hospital all the time, you know, they'd come in one month and then there'd be another month go by and then they'd be in there again and they'd be in and out of the hospital, and so we would we formed a group just to keep them stabilized and to keep them coming and have someplace to go to have a therapist who could be sure that they were all right and keep them on their meds and everything so that they would be OK. By the time that a couple of years had gone by, I was in love with my supervisor there. That was not too good an idea, but actually, there were an awful lot of other women there who were in the same position as I was.

[00:32:26] RR: In love with your supervisor?

[00:32: 28]: No, not no, not. Well, I don't know. I really don't know. But there were a lot of lesbians who were there, too.

[00:32:35] RR: And I know that, for sure?

[00:32:37] BE: Yeah, I do. I do know it for sure. And in fact, the head supervisor that worked there asked me if I would like to move down to the beach someplace and []. I don't know what it was that was going to have going on anyhow. Some kind of a business down there, but, well, anyhow, so. Where did I go from to work from there? Oh, I moved to, from there I went to St. John's Hospital where I worked in organizing a day treatment program and...

[00:33:25] RR: Marnie Rocklin [sp?] was there.

[00:33:37] BE: Oh, yeah. Marty Rocklin. I don't--you don't probably know who Marty Rockin was. He was a--

[00:33:35] RR: Psychologist.

[00:33:37] BE: a clinical--He was a psychologist. And he--a PhD psychologist and Charles Myers, who, you know, has the Big Sky Cafe, was his partner.

[00:33:49] RR: Not at that time.

[00:33:53] BE: No, Marty. Well, Marty, Marty was working at St. John's when I was there. So I got to know him at that time, and let's see, what next?

[00:34:06] RR: I don't know.

[00:34:08] I: When did you come out, because you were saying that you were living with that woman--

[00:34:12] BE: with Pat.

[00:34:13] I: you know, you are, were you?

[00:34:15] BE: I was not.

[00:34:15] RR: She hasn't yet. [BE laughs]

[00:34:17] BE: I'm coming out now! [Everyone laughs]

[00:34:27] RR: Nobody knows!

[00:34:28] I: When were you out to yourself?

[00:34:30] Oh, I was out to myself this whole time after I met Pat. You know. So. I was out as far as I was concerned, and I knew that Marty knew, I mean, Murray, the guy that I worked with. He knew about me. And I don't know anyone else who did. Unless maybe my supervisor did. I know that one of the other supervisors who was a lesbian picked up on it, you know, picked up on the fact that I was gay. And so then what did I do after I worked at St. John's? Where did I go? Can't remember.

[00:35:21] RR: retail.

[00:35:22] BE: Oh, then, oh, then I went back to County Hospital and worked.

[00:35:26] RR: Oh, right. Training the street--

[00:35:29] BE: We had a doctor Ridowksi [sp?] that wanted to start a program that would train African-Americans and Hispanics to be stationed at the outpatient clinics, mental health, outpatient clinics, and so I was called in to work with them and to train them so that they could do this and also do outreach to the local clinics so that they would be stationed out there. And so then I was the supervisor of this group, and so that's what I did for quite a long--I was there for about a year or two

[00:36:17] RR: Oh, longer than that I think, because you went from there to Long Beach.

[00:36:18] BE: Yeah. And then after I'd been there for--I'd gotten my clinical license and all that stuff then I was asked to come down to Long Beach Family Service and become their executive director. So I went along. I went and started working down in Long Beach and from there, let's see, by that time we got together.

[00:36:47] RR: Well we got together while you were still at General.

[00:36:52] BE: Yeah, right. I was still at General Hospital.

[00:36:53] I: So why don't you tell me about how that all came about? Had it been a while since you guys had seen each other? Was it...

[00:37:03] RR: No, actually, we stayed--we sort of stayed in touch because we had friends, Pat and Bev, Pat McClain was Betty's former and have got together and they lived in a house on the canals down in Venice, and while Betty was in the School of Social Work at UCLA, on weekends, she had bought an abbot but on weekends, she would come down to the canals and take this abbot out in the ocean to sail and relax, and so we sort of were hanging out there quite a bit. The two of us, we were just always running into each other there and sort of got to know each other a little bit better that way because we had worked in and around each other. But we really didn't know each other, and... Then in 1970--1971 I resigned.

[00:37:58] BE: Well, you were with somebody else.

[00:38:01] RR: Yeah. I was living with somebody else. And in 1971, I resigned from System Development Corporation. There had been a--it was sort of like a Friday night massacre, and people were being fired all around me. They were being fired. They weren't being laid off. They were being fired. People above me. People on either side of me and people below me. It was just with no rhyme or reason. And I went home that weekend. And I said I don't want to work for this company anymore. That's sort of where I was because it had always been a great place to work. And the way they had done this--it didn't make sense because they got rid of some really good people. And so I wrote a resignation letter and they said I can no longer work for a company that treats people like this. So, I resigned and I left and I didn't know what I was going to do and it didn't matter, actually, what I did was I went home. I lived in [] canyon. And I spent about a month on my patio watching cloud formations. And it was good because it was just sort of like, OK, you know, this is OK. Get yourself together and figure out what you're going to do from here. And then about that time, the person I was living with went to Hawai'i and I didn't want to go, so I didn't go. And Betty had just broken up with the person she was with and ended up at Pat and Bev's house. And I was sort of hanging out and I was hanging out at Pat and Bev's house. And so we sort of talked more and got to

know each other a little better and things went along. And actually, I had decided before my partner went to Hawai'i that we were pretty much done.

[Interview interrupted]

[00:39:50] I: So I repeat that you had decided before--

[00:39:54] RR: I put that I had pretty much decided that before she left that we were done.

And so when she came back, I just said, you know what? This isn't working, and I need to be out of this, and I need to be doing something else. And so, essentially, I walked away from the house; we had bought a house together, and I just said, take it, it's yours. I signed a "quit claim" deed, walked out. I felt I was getting away pretty cheap, actually, based on all the stuff that had gone on and sometime shortly after that, Betty and I started going on a little bit, and then next thing you bought a house?

[00:40:35] BE: Yeah.

[00:40:36] RR: Betty bought a house in West L.A. and we sort of ended up together. And so from that point on. But it was interesting because it was a real easy adapt--We adapted really easily to each other because I think I'd been studying her for a long time, and she said it was like she knew--

[00:40:57] BE: well, you know, the woman I'd been with was so opposite to everything I believed in and everything that I thought, you know. And politically, and all she was concerned about was money, money, money. You know.

[00:41:14] RR: She's a millionaire now.

[00:41:17] BE: That was what was important in her life. So, and we fought all the time because, you know, she would say, well, don't get me anything for Christmas, or don't get me this or that because it would cost too much. No, everything was about money.

[00:41:36] RR: So I don't want to have to buy you something.

[00:41:37] BE: So I don't want to have to buy you anything. So, let's not give each other any gifts for Christmas. It was crazy. Absolutely crazy. And then when I ran into Rachel here, we think alike, you know, we are so much alike. You know, all of our beliefs are the same. So we got along so easily. Carol and I fought like cat and dog, me over everything. But Rachel and I didn't--

[00:42:07] RR: Well--

[00:42:08] BE: Except for that first day--

[00:42:09] RR: Well it wasn't the first day. But, you know, I think that for two people, for two people to get along in a relationship and for it to be good long term, you have to be friends. OK. The person I had lived with before, we were not friends. We had a lot of interests in common. You know, we liked going to football games together. We liked going to plays, concerts, all that kind of stuff. But in terms of friendship, we weren't really friends. And so afterwards, we didn't remain friends. If you're in a relationship with somebody where you are a friend, you will be a friend later. I mean, you will. I mean, you'll go through a period of healing and getting past the hurt and all of that. But then you could be friends again. And I think that if there's any one thing that makes the relationship work, it's having common values. The values are so important. Values and ethics because you can't live in the same house and have your life intertwined with somebody who is so ethically different than you are or believes things that are so different than you because you're going to feel like it's wrong. I mean, you know, if they're taking money out of a till or what or whatever it is, if it's not something that fits your values, it won't work.

[00:43:19] BE: No, it absolutely did not. It did not work with Carol.

[00:43:23] RR: And with my former partner, who--it was again, it was money. I mean, her primary thing was money. And I could care less about money. I mean, money always comes when I need it. You know, so I don't worry about it. I don't feel like I have to hoard it or or or figure out how I'm going to beat somebody else out of it or any of that kind of stuff. And so the values, the

basic values and what you believe about life, and how you treat people and how you want to be treated are really critical.

[00:43:55] BE: I agree.

[00:43:56] I: What about that first night? You guys had a fight?

[00:43:58] RR: No, no, no.

[00:44:01] BE: This is after we had just moved into the new house.

[00:44:05] RR: Yeah. We were together.

[00:44:06] BE: And then and Rachel, as I said, she had just--she has a temper. A real temper.

[00:44:16] RR: Yeah.

[00:44:17] BE: And so she had not really learned to live with her temper.

[00:44:18] RR: Well I'd been working on trying to. [Laughs]

[00:44:20] BE: Right, and I had gone through years of therapy where I was training myself to be able to speak up for myself and get angry, you know, and be able to express it. So, the day that we got angry, I forget what we were fighting about, I can't--

[00:44:35] RR: It wasn't important. It never is.

[00:44:37] BE: It wasn't ever important. But she stormed out of the house.

[00:44:42] RR: I just said, I'm not going to do this.

[00:44:44] BE: Not going to do this--And so then I got furious, and I didn't know what to do with my anger. So I grabbed a coat hanger and I went in the bathroom when I just pounded against the wall and--

[00:44:56] RR: the door--it was the back of the door.

[00:44:57] BE: Back of the door, and it scarred the door.

[00:45:06] RR: It hurt the door a lot. Big lines on the door. But actually I left them there to remind me. It was a good reminder.

[00:45:10] BE: A good reminder for both of us. And so that's how we communicated in at first.

[00:45:18] RR: Well, yeah, we worked it out. We figured out how to do it. And sort of out of that, too, came some house rules that have stood the time, which is you never go to you never go to bed angry. You work it out no matter how long it takes. If you have to be up all night, and we've done that: be up all night long before you go to bed, you have to have talked it out and worked it out. And that's another good rule. I think it works for us. Are you out of tape?

[00:45:44] I: No, but for the next question I want to move the camera angle. Yeah, because there's a shadow. Do you want this? Oh, you don't want the shadow out of there, OK. I'll be OK.

[Interview interrupted to adjust camera equipment]

[00:46:59] I: So maybe what it was like socially and then, you know--

[00:47:09] RR: The world stuff being together in 71, you mean?

[00:47:12] BE: Well--

[00:47:16] RR: There were some interesting things that happened when we were first together, actually, because you had started shortly after we were together. You started the job in Long Beach.

[00:47:25] BE: Yeah.

[00:47:26] RR: And Betty had a secretary who was really nosy and she would call the house. Betty, you know, Betty had a standing appointment to go get her hair done once a week, and the secretary knew that, but she would always call. She would call the house. I'd answer the phone if I was still there. No, she's not here. She'll be in the office at such and such a time. So she starts talking to your bookkeeper and saying, you know what? Betty lives with a woman, I think. So there was that kind of stuff. I don't think you ever paid much attention to it.

[00:48:02] BE: No, I didn't. Well, you know, even even before that, we'll have to tell you about one of our friends who lives up here now, who at the time lived in Topanga Canyon with her lesbian lover. She--they had a little sports car, you know, so it had no top on it or anything. They would drive up-- they had "top secret" clearances-- they would drive up in front of the security police--

[00:48:31] RR: Well, in front of the building. And the guys are right there.

[00:48:34] BE: The police were right there. And then kiss each other goodbye, and then she would walk in and sign her security clearance to come in.

[00:48:45] RR: Yeah. That was Rosie.

[00:48:47] BE: You know, she is a real character, and she lives here and with us in Los Osos at the present time. But that's how crazy some of our friends were. We have a lot of crazy friends up here. In the olden days ...

[00:49:06] RR: Back to the work question. It was interesting in aerospace because while everybody had clearance, and while the head of security, particularly at the System Development Corporation, was particularly interested in males who were gay, there were all these women who were sort of connecting and making, you know, doing this networking. And I don't know whether we were just flying under the radar or or what it was, but he didn't seem to pay any attention. Well, they didn't know what the women were doing. We'd go out and drink and stuff, but they didn't get as concerned about that. I mean, his thing was the men. He was always "the men." I think at that time they didn't think about women being gay. You know, I think it was more--they were looking for the gay males. And I remember when Duke left, when he, you know, he quit. Neil Billington said to him, I thought, you and Rachel were going to get married. And Duke said, well, it didn't work out. You know, we're good friends. Well, he was gay. Duke was gay. He and I hung out together for years.

[00:50:20] BE: And this guy still calls us, he lives down in Hemet now.

[00:50:22] RR: But this guy was head of security. I mean, it was sort of like it never occurred to him that Duke was gay because he and I were running around together all the time. And I don't--I think they just weren't as focused on women at that time. Unlike the females in the military where I mean from the get go they were trying to get him out and that kind of stuff. But it was just a strange kind of thing. But there were so many of us. And the other thing is, I think for me, I decided early on and I know that they were after a lot of the guys and they got some of the guys out. OK. I decided early on that if they came after me for being gay, I would fight them because I never considered myself any more of a security risk than anybody else, because truth be known anybody can be blackmailed. If somebody held a gun to Betty's head and said, you have to do this or I'm going to blow our brains out, you can bet your sweet life I'm going to do it. And I think anybody else would do that with a partner or whatever. So, from that standpoint, it's a level playing field. And just because you're gay doesn't make it any more of a risk, as far as I'm concerned, never has been, never would be. In fact, in that kind of a situation, if somebody said to me, I'm gonna report you, I'd say, let me dial a number for you, you know? Because that just doesn't play for me. It never did. So, I mean, it was sort of a non-issue for me. If it had become an issue, then I would have fought it. And I knew that from the early days they just never came up.

[00:51:58] I: And for you, Betty, was it the same being at your workplaces because you worked a variety of jobs?

[00:52:02] BE: Yeah, well, I was not out, you know. Yeah. So I--I could not be out. Well, you know, I don't know, I suppose after we had been at Family Service of Long Beach for a long period of time, then it might have been more possible. But it really wasn't possible in the beginning for me there. I had a different kind of job. And the bookkeeper there, you know who, well, it turns out, was gay and outed--or I don't know whether to say she outed other people, but she certainly made them aware of her gayness. Anyhow. It was a really good job. I love my job there and, I think, you know, I brought in a lot of money--when when I first went there, they had a budget of like one

\$169,000 a year or something, and they were \$25,000 in debt. Well, I knew how to write grants, and so I started writing grants because I'd written them when I was in my former job. And so, you know, it was a time when you can make yet all kinds of money out in grants. So we started a drug control program, and we had offices out in the various parks and neighborhoods and small little two or three people who were working in this park or that park and drug people, who were using drugs, could come to them and get help, and that was a big money raiser for us. We had all kinds of federal and state grants and OK. Anyhow, we ended up--we had over a million dollars in support, federal support for the agency. And well, you know, we had United Way support, a certain amount in city support--the city of Long Beach supported us, the city of Paramount, was it Paramount? We had a new office in Paramount. Then we had a second office in Long Beach that we started, the other side of Long Beach near--anyhow. So, you know, it worked really well. And it was very good for the agency. It was very good for me. We had all kinds of--we had a volunteer program. The volunteers would come in and they were, you know, well-known people in the community, and they would come in and volunteer their services there so that we could have people come into the agency without having to pay anything. They serve as volunteers to greet them and get their physical data, the physical data about them and get them entered into our programs. So, here I have all these wealthy volunteers to work with. And, you know, it just worked out fine. It was beautiful, anyhow. So we started a child abuse prevention program at Cedar House as one of the programs that we started. It was a great job. It was just a great job. And turns out that my my male counterpart, the social worker who is in charge of the Long Beach office was gay and other people in the agency were gay. And, you know, so they're everywhere you look.

[00:56:18] RR: They?

[00:56:20] BE: They are everywhere. We are everywhere.

[00:56:21] RR: There you go.

[00:56:22] BE: And so I worked there until I retired. When did I retire?

[00:56:28] RR: About 1980. 80 or 81.

[00:56:32] BE: Was it that early? No.

[Interview interrupted to adjust camera.]

[00:57:19] I: All right. So finish with the retiring story. That's where you're at.

[00:57:22] BE: Yeah. Well, before I do that, I want to tell you how I got interested in photography.

[00:57:31] RR: [Laughs] Well, why don't you stay on track and finish the story and then go to photography when you retire.

[00:57:36] BE: All right. We'll actually add that is when I got into photography. So I retired in--

[00:57:46] RR: 80 or 81--

[00:57:51] BE: --81, and I didn't know what to do with myself. So, I had been interested in photography ever since, Marty Gilbert, who is a guy who worked with us at SDC, had given me a-- I was a programmer then, by that time, at SDC, and my program was on hold, and so I couldn't leave the building--I just could not take the time to do anything like go out and look for a camera or buy, but I needed a camera because I was going to go to Italy and see my husband's grave, Ross's grave. And so Marty Gilbert went out and got me a camera and fortunately got me a good enough one that I can take pictures in Italy and pictures inside buildings. Italy is such a gorgeous, beautiful place with so many things to take pictures of. It's unbelievable. And so after I retired, then I decided I'm going to go study photography. So I went to--is it Golden West or Golden State?

[00:58:57] RR: Golden West.

[00:58:58] BE: GoldenWest College down in Huntington Beach, and I studied photography, black and white, first year, and then color, and I love taking pictures in black and white, but I was addicted to color the minute I started taking pictures in color. So, I became a color photographer.

That's how come I ended up with a book published that shows how beautiful this area is, and I have all kinds of pictures I can show you of nudes in black and white.

[00:59:40] RR: Of what?

[00:59:41] BE: Nudes. Women that I--

[00:59:42] RR: Women?

[00:59:43] BE: Women. Yeah. Well, no, not just women. Men and women. Nude men and women that I shot--

[00:59:50] RR: Together?

[00:59:51] BE: No, not together, anyhow. [RR Laughs]

[00:59:56] I: Can you scoot forward like one inch this way? Great. Perfect. Better as long as it's []. We'll switch it up at different angles.

[01:00:13] BE: I'll show you some of the pictures. [RR: No (laughs)] Well, anyhow, I have tons of pictures I had--well you were here, weren't you? When I showed all the pictures out in the--So, you've already seen them. Well, OK.

[01:00:31] I: Not the nudes. I didn't know there were nudes--

[01:00:33] BE: There were nudes in there, in the greenhouse? I'll have to show you before you leave, anyhow.

[01:00:43] RR: They're too young. [BE and RR laugh]

[01:00:46] BE: So that's what I retired to, was a life of photography. And then, of course, we started--we always had been traveling in our motorhome. And then, the minute I saw this area is so gorgeous and everything, and I--

END OF VIDEO 1

Interview resumes at: 00:03:45.

BEGIN VIDEO 2

[00:03:45] I: Remember, we're talking about support, about spirituality and stuff like that. And then talking about that awesome 40 group of people that you'd met here and who's around and stuff like that. I was wondering if maybe you could talk about the support you have with your friends. I know you've made a lot, because I know you've dealt with a lot of loss and grief and maybe talk about those people that have made an impact on your life and and those people that are still with you now that continue to make an impact on your life.

[00:04:18] BE: Well. We had two friends, you know, we had three friends, three close friends die in one week. This year--

[00:04:30] RR: last year.

[00:04:32] BE: --last year, Nan and Barb were two women who lived over on--they live right across from Ray and Jamie. And so they were good friends of theirs and they had been together for--I don't know how many years, long time and it was interesting what happened. It was Barb who died first and Nan died within a day of her. And it was just a crushing kind of thing to have happen. But beautiful the way, you know, it's like one of them couldn't allow the other one to go off without going, too, you know, it was just one of those things that happened. Then we had the death of Pat Durham, who is Rosemary Hathaway's partner, and that occurred the same week. And so it's been kind of a rough time. We have what we call a support group, and that is just a group of friends who live here in Los Osos, and we try to take care of each other. We meet occasionally. Not that often. You know, about every three months or so we'll have a picnic lunch, or do something that you get together just to be sure that we can take care of each other.

And now, you know, we just had another death with Will. We're getting to be an age where we need support, you know? Where we have to be there to help people. And with Ray and Jamie,

you know, actually they need to have a supportive person move into their house with them. They shouldn't ever be alone without having help. And so we're trying to work on that now. We have volunteers who are going over and spending time with them. But it's not enough. They need someone there night and day. So that's our latest project.

[00:06:50] I: And can you maybe, one of the couples that you describe, can you maybe, I don't know, maybe give maybe how long they've been together or what your friendship, maybe like did you usually have dinners or go fishing or something?

[00:07:07] BE: Well, we would go over to Nan and Barb's and we would have dinner over there. I mean, picnics out in the backyard. Don't you remember that?

[00:07:17] RR: No, that's ok. [laughs]

[00:07:21] BE: Unbelievable. How long were they together?

[00:07:23] RR: Over 40 years, I would say.

[00:07:23] BE: Yeah. Yeah. They met--Nan used to have a donut shop down on the Embarcadero and so Barb would go into the donut shop and get large quantities of donuts and things. And anyhow, that's how they got together and you know, they had been together forever. You know, as far as we knew when we moved up here, they were a couple. And one of the ones in our group.

[00:07:53] I: What were they like?

[00:07:54] RR: Oh, they were wonderful. Nan was the older one, but she was--

[00:08:05] BE: They were teachers?

[00:08:05] RR: No, no. Nan was--. She was very quiet. But she had real impish eyes and she didn't miss a thing. I mean, she just was--. She saw, heard everything and she was the kind of person--She didn't say much. But when she did, it was like, wow, you know? And she had a funny sense of humor. And Barb was just an incredibly--. She just loved people and she loved helping people. And she had been a kindergarten teacher.

And then what was interesting. They had a double memorial service for the two of them. And Barb was a native of San Luis Obispo County. Born and raised in Paso and taught here. So, at her service, different people spoke. And this woman stood up and she said, and I don't remember the year, but she said, I'm from the class of so-and-so from Paso Robles High School and we've all come here because we're all from that class. And about ten people stood up, and of course, they were like in their, what, 70s, I guess, because I think Barb was a little bit younger than Nan. And so they had known them through the years, knew that they were lesbians, and didn't care. Loved them. And that's what everybody that spoke talked about, what wonderful people they were, how much they loved them, how much they were respected by everyone.

So Barb was a teacher. Nan was a--. She was a business person. She had her own business. She was a small business owner. And then when she sort of burned out with a small business, and people do burn out the small business, gosh, it's hard work. Can't get away from it. She went to work for the postal system. She worked in Morro Bay at the post office and finished her working years there. And they had lived in Morro Bay at a home that was right across the street from, what is it, Atascadero State Beach. So they had an ocean view and stuff there, but they bought property here in Los Osos. They bought an acre. It was over an acre, I guess. And they built there. They built their house there. And that's where they lived for 25, 30 years. And everybody knew them, loved them. Wonderful people.

[00:10:46] BE: They had dogs, great big dogs.

[00:10:49] RR: Yeah.

[00:10:53] I: Did you want to talk a little bit about the other people that have passed on? And let me know if it's too painful or anything.

[00:11:00] RR: No, it's not that. It's just...If I choke up, it's okay. Wil Wurster, our most recent loss. My first memory of Wil, we hadn't been here very long and somebody had set up a whale watching trip for us to go out with Captain Rita out of Burgess Landing in Morro Bay. And

so, we got down to the place to meet people, and I looked and there's these two guys coming and they got up and got close enough to us and somebody we were with introduced them and Wil was this little guy with the most beautiful blue eyes that were just twinkling, twinkling. And he had a white mustache. And he just was--. And he's wearing his little Johnny cap. And he was just the cutest thing in the world. I mean, I just fell in love with him right then and there.

[00:11:53] BE: Yeah, he was cute.

[00:11:56] RR: And Bill, equally nice, but Wil just really caught your attention because of this little impish smile. And those two guys. If you think about people and you try to find one word that's going to describe them...With those two guys, the word would be sweet. Just sweet.

[00:12:18] BE: They were absolutely sweet guys.

[00:12:22] RR: Sweet human beings. Yeah, sweet, wonderful human beings.

[00:12:26] BE: And...

[00:12:29] RR: Pat, you can talk about Pat.

[00:12:31] BE: Pat Durham was--. I didn't know Pat all that well. I know that she was very supportive of Rosemary Hathaway and the writing group and all of that stuff. But I actually did not know her very well. And I was shocked. You know, she had had ongoing stomach problems for years and nobody seems to know what it was. You know, they couldn't figure out what it was. So she started she found this faith healer down in Santa Maria or someplace south of here.

And she started going to this faith healer. And she gained all her weight back. She had been losing weight, and she was so thin, you know. And so she gained weight back and she was doing very well. And that lasted for quite a few years.

[00:13:34] RR: Not years, but maybe like a year, maybe.

[00:13:38] BE: Quite a long time. And then she got ill again, went into the hospital, and by morning was dead. It was unbelievable. You know, it happened so fast. And I don't know, it was some kind of a real serious stomach problem. I don't know exactly what. But anyhow, it's been very

hard for Hathway. And I think that's part of why we haven't had men having the group lately. All that stuff was going on.

[00:14:14] RR: Well, Pat, I mean, I had a real definite sense of Pat and I talked about this when we had sort of a memorial gathering down at Avila on the beach with the bonfire and stuff. Pat was somebody who was quiet, sort of always on the periphery. And my sense was always: I knew she was there, and there was a strength that was there. It was sort of like you knew she was there. You knew if you needed her, she would be right there.

And she indeed was that kind of person. Because in terms of our support group, if anybody needed help, she just quietly went and took care of it and did it. And...She helped a lot of people because she would hike with Audrey...

[00:15:02] BE: Yeah, right. Anybody who had any kind of need. You know, Audrey is someone who has dementia. And so she would show up over at Audrey's and they'd go for a hike together, you know, just doing any little thing that she could to help.

[00:15:21] RR: Just quietly doing it.

[00:15:25] I: And you're talking about the support group. I think a lot of people--. Because you have a background in housing and stuff like that. But I think the general population isn't aware of...Well, especially being young. I'm not aware of different things I might face as I get older, but I think that...Being gay, there are specific things that you have to worry about that the general public isn't aware of. Do you guys have concerns you have or might want to talk about things that people aren't protected or...Any concerns?

[00:16:00] RR: A good many years ago, we were at a party. And Clifford Chapman and I ended up sitting next to each other and we sort of got into this conversation about taking care of our own. That was sort of the gist of it. And I was talking to him about, you know, I feel like we need to set up support groups to help each other. And then he said, you're right. And then somebody was

threatened by the fact that we were talking seriously about something and came over and said, “This is a party, you’re not supposed to be doing that!” And so we sort of left it. We dropped it.

And actually, Clifford went away and started his support group in the South County before we did. Now, his is a different kind. They meet almost weekly or every other week. I think they meet at least every other week, maybe more frequently. And they are indeed more of a emotional check-in. What’s going on? What do you need? Is there anything that we can do to help? You know, those kinds of things. For example, he told me that one of the things he had had his group do was everybody wrote their own obituary. He told everybody to write your own obituary because then nobody has to worry about it. And you know it's gonna be what you want it to be.

I asked Mary [], they have about...I think she said 18 people, it's been it's been a steady group that stays together. It's a mix of of gay and straight. But that's Clifford's social group. He has a real mix. And when he has a party, it's a mix. Then...I can't remember what actually triggered it here, but the people--. Well, we started ending up with people alone because of losing partners. And so it became pretty apparent that we needed to do something because...

[00:17:55] BE: People should not be living alone.

[00:17:58] RR: Oh, are you going to invite them in?

[00:18:00] BE: No.

[00:18:01] RR: Oh, okay. [Laughter] I was getting worried there for a minute.

[00:18:03] BE: [Laughter] No.

[00:18:05] RR: Okay, okay. are you gonna go live with them?

[00:18:06] BE: No.

[00:18:07] RR: Okay.

[00:18:08] BE: [Laughter] They shouldn't be alone.

[00:18:10] RR: Anyway. So, my having been a hospice volunteer, I go to the practical. What kinds of needs do people have? How can we help take care of those? And we sort of looked at it from a standpoint of transportation. Like people sick.

[00:18:27] BE: Oh yeah, there's a book.

[00:18:32] RR: What? Oh, the book, the book, yeah.

[00:18:34] BE: Show 'em the book!

[00:18:36] RR: Anyway, we looked at it from the standpoint of practical stuff like transportation to medical stuff or whatever, just needing transportation. Broke it down by area, like people who are willing to transport only in Los Osos for whatever reasons or different places, to Morro Bay to San Luis, South County, North County, that kind of stuff. And had people actually fill out forms of what they were willing to do. So we have transportation and we have things like cooking for somebody, light housekeeping, laundry, whatever, those kinds of things, running errands for people.

[00:19:11] BE: Gardening.

[00:19:12] RR: Grocery shopping, pharmacy, post office pickup, all that stuff.

[00:19:18] BE: Take them to the hospital or to the doctor's.

[00:19:21] RR: I don't take anybody to the hospital. That's what 9-1-1's for.

[00:19:24] BE: Okay. You're right, you're right. That's true.

[00:19:28] RR: But anyway, so we actually, you know, we ended up with about 18 households within our little group here. And it works very well. And we've used it a lot. And it...You know, I mean. It works when people use it correctly. By calling.

[00:19:46] I: Out of curiosity on the obituaries, because that was something that surprised me when they put Barb and Nan in there and they actually put in the Tribune that it was her life partner, right? Isn't that what they said?

[00:19:59] RR: Yes.

[00:20:01] I: Just out of curiosity...How would you want that to be presented if you guys--?

[00:20:06] RR: That's exactly what I would say.

[00:20:07] BE: That's what I would say, too.

[00:20:09] RR: Yeah. And actually, our families are very aware. I mean, how can you not be after 34 years, almost 35 years? It's never been discussed in this sense with Betty...It's never been discussed in the sense of gay, lesbian, that kind of thing. However, we had not been together very long, maybe three, four years, when Betty's son and daughter-in-law were at the house. I'd had too much to drink that night. And so she starts. And like, "After telling me what's going on, how can I defend you to so-and-so if you don't tell me what's going on?" And Betty said, "Ida, you don't you don't need to defend me." And she just kept on and on. Obviously she was headed in a direction of, "You gotta tell me." And Steve had been sitting over in the corner reading a book. And he finally said, "Ida, shut up. My mother doesn't need to be defended." I mean, you know, that was the way it was handled. So in terms of your immediate family, I mean, it's fairly obvious. We've been together for so long.

[00:21:14] BE: And my family just love Rachel.

[00:21:17] RR: Well, your sister does. That part of the family does. [Laughter] Your daughter-in-law doesn't, and I don't love her either!

[00:21:22] BE: Well, Ida doesn't really count.

[00:21:25] RR: She doesn't [Laughter]. She's married to your son!

[00:21:28] BE: She may be married to my son, but she doesn't really count. Anyhow, my--.

[00:21:34] RR: Your sister and niece.

[00:21:37] BE: My niece, Kathy. They just love Rachel, you know? When they call, they want to talk to Rachel instead of me. You know, that's how much they care about Rachel.

And, you know, actually, we met--. My sister lives at Mendocino and Kathy is her daughter

and lives up there, too. So they came down to--. We called--. This one was so concerned that I wasn't going to have a chance--. They go down to Mexico every year.

[00:22:13] RR: December to March.

[00:22:15] BE: December through March, they're down in Mexico.

[00:22:18] RR: They get out the rain down there.

[00:22:20] BE: And so...Rachel was so concerned that I wasn't gonna be able to see my sister this year that we had to go up to San Francisco, and she brought Mary down to San Francisco so that we could meet and be together. And, you know, that was something really neat that I would never have thought about doing. You know, so we wouldn't meet this year, you know, but that was not to be allowed [Laughter].

[00:22:49] I: So on the family thing. Some people have children and some people don't. And you happen to have a child. Kind of was wondering a lot of times in the queer community, like how your family becomes who you make it, kind of people. But I just wanted to ask who's in your in your biological family kind of people, who's in your life and how have they been supportive through the years? I know a lot has changed.

[00:23:21] BE: They've always been supportive of me, you know. You know, it's happened just as it happened, you know. And Steve has been, you know, helped and aided in his growing up process by knowing these people. And I just think it's been wonderful. It's been wonderful for us, for Steven and me, that we've met all these people who are so great.

You know, we had an 80th birthday party for me. Four years ago. We all met and Steve and everyone was down here. When Pat and Steve met, you know--. They were there together. They just had a ball. They just grab hold of each other and hugged each other. And they were so pleased to be together again, to see each other. And Pat was a very important person in his life. And, you know--.

[00:24:39] RR: Actually, that was a very interesting situation. We held it at Windows on the Water and I can't remember how many people--. We were limited by the size of the room. So it

became tough because we eliminated everybody that was outside the county in terms of coming, except for Betty's family. And my sister wanted to come, so she sort of said, "We get to come, too, don't we?" Yeah. Okay. So all of our gay friends are there. You know, gay, lesbians are there. So I start to introduce Betty's family and I say, "Okay, this is Betty's sister and her husband. This is Betty's son and his wife. This is Betty's niece and her husband. This is Betty's grandson." Carrie didn't come. "And this is Betty's..."

[00:25:34] BE: Great grandson.

[00:25:35] RR: Granddaughter and great grandson who's... Well, I called him Steven.

[00:25:43] BE: Yeah, 'cause his name used to be--. That's what he was.

[00:25:45] RR: But he changed his name. He decided he was going to be Mitchell. So I said, "And this is Steven." And he's whatever he was at that time. He would have been...

[00:25:53] BE: About fifteen or sixteen. Not quite that old.

[00:25:57] RR: But anyway, the thing was...Everybody, they brought the house down with applause because...Here was, you know, her family and they were there, and I mean, and they knew that this crowd was gay and it was okay. So that was interesting. That was a very interesting reaction from our community to a family being there.

[00:26:24] BE: And then they had--. For entertainment, they had this little group of elderly women. What was it? What did they call themselves? Oh, anyhow. And they sang and danced for us. And it was...And the crowd just went wild with applause for them. They were so cute.

[00:26:48] RR: In terms of my family. Oh, somewhere in my twenties, probably mid twenties, I sort of got things sorted out and said, "Oh, yeah, okay, I'm on this side of the street, not on that side of the street." Talked to my mom. And my mom did this thing of "What did I do wrong? You need to see a psychiatrist." You need to do this and this and whatever. I said, "Mom, stop. I am what I am. If you aren't happy with this woman, too bad. Because if it isn't this woman,

it's gonna be some other woman and it can't be fixed, okay? That's just the way it is.” So she sort of...I mean, I think I'm sure she struggled with it, but eventually she came around and was okay.

And the only other person I talked to in my immediate family was my sister, my younger sister. My sister is younger, she's seven years younger. But we're very close. And I talked to her about it. That was fine. I never talked to my two brothers particularly. I mean, we just never-- I didn't feel need to. I wasn't as close to them. I loved them, but I'm not as close to them as I am to my sister. And at this point, I'm sure everybody knows. I mean, there's no question about it. My nephew was here when we were talking, in fact, we were talking yesterday as we were driving up to Ragged Point. We were talking about different things. And then it became very obvious. And he's talking about, “Yeah, that's fine. I know I have some gay friends, blah blah blah.” But I mean, so, you know, it's out there and you either accept it or not. I mean, it's going to be. So there's no point in being concerned about it at this point, so.

[00:28:29] I: And can I ask what--. And restate it in the form of a sentence. It's easy to just answer it quick. Maybe you can describe your favorite thing about each other.

[00:28:44] RR: [Laughter].

[00:28:46] BE: I love the way she can control her temper.

[00:28:49] RR: [Laughter] I thought it might be something interesting like that.

[00:28:57] BE: No, I love her honesty. That is one thing. And her giving. You know, she cares for everybody and takes care of them. Everybody in the community looks to Rachel. [To the interview crew] Would one of you go and see on top of the TV in the kitchen there? There's a purple book. And I want to show you what she has produced so that people will know how to help each other.

[Interviewer hands her a purple book] This is the book. It's a mutual support group. And here are all the names that--. We're divided into teams. Each team has a leader. There's one, two, three, four, five, six people in each group.

[00:29:47] RR: Six households

[00:29:48] BE: Six households. And here are their telephone numbers.

[00:29:51] RR: That's for the telephone tree. That's for passing information.

[00:29:54] BE: That's for passing information. Then...Here's a map where everybody lives and all their locations are marked on the map. And here's the roster of people. Their names and their telephone numbers and their addresses.

[00:30:15] RR: And the cross street.

[00:30:16] BE: And the cross street where they live. And here is what they're willing to do. Who's willing to provide transportation and what times. Here's Marie Morris's. She can do it Monday through Friday, variable times. Eva von Frank says she can only do it in daytime. And what everybody can do. [Flipping through the book] You know, in transporting people and where they will go and shopping and errands. Who will do the shopping? Who will go to the pharmacy? Who will go to the cleaners? Who will go to the post office? Who will take you to the doctor?

One thing that Rachel believes in firmly is that you don't go to the doctor alone. Never you go to the doctor's alone because you can't remember what the doctor says. You have to be able to talk to him. So you need to--. And here who'll take pets to the vet. And around the house. Who'll do meal preparation, who'll water house plants and who'll take out the trash and who will do the laundry, and around the yard. Who'll sweep the sidewalks and who'll pick up mail, who'll do watering. And, you know, it just goes on and on. Who will take care of animals, who will feed and water the animals, and who will walk them and who will take them to the vet.

And if you're homebound or anything, people who are homebound will be visited in certain times. And this whole thing is Rachel's doing, you know. And then we will have a mutual support group meeting. Our last meeting was at Tideland Park and Morro Bay and a potluck picnic lunch meeting. And it's all to keep--. To help each other. And that's what I love about Rachel, is that she cares about people. [Looks at Rachel] Okay?

[00:32:27] RR: I don't know. It's okay with you, it's okay with me.

[00:32:31] BE: Okay.

[00:32:32] RR: Whatever you say. Oh, you want me to tell you what I like about you?

[00:32:39] BE: Yeah.

[00:32:40] RR: Okay. [Leans in close to BE] No [Laughter]. I think the thing I love about Betty is her...Her joy of life. She wants to do it all. You know, I mean Betty is a very talented person. She can write. She's a photographer. She's a painter. She's a poet. I mean, she's sort like a Renaissance woman. And her frustration comes that she can't do it all. You know, and I think from my standpoint, her real strength and talent is in photography. She has an eye. She sees things almost in an abstract art way because she does shadows and light and she gets some incredible photography that way. She's incredibly loyal, very loyal to friends. I mean, people that most people would have dumped years ago, Betty just hangs in there. And once she's your friend, she's your friend forever. She may get disgusted about you or she may get all of these things, but push comes to shove. She's your friend.

She is a...How can I say this? [Laughter] She has this...It's a passion for social justice. I mean, I don't know any other way to say it. And I think this whole thing with Montgomery has been quite an experience for me. I mean, as I didn't do the Selma march, but when we went back in October for the dedication to the Civil Rights Memorial Center. Her depth of feeling and how she saw things, and could actually see the differences like she was explaining. Like looking down and seeing blacks and whites at the same tables and all those things. Her depth of passion causes her to act. Not just think about it, not just feel it, but go do something about it. I just I have to admire that because there is no way in hell I would have gone to Montgomery in 1965.

[00:35:24] BE: I got a tape if anyone wants to look at it, they can. And it was a very dangerous thing to do. I had no idea. I had forgotten about that, how dangerous it was, you know, that people were killed and all kinds of things went back there.

[00:35:42] RR: For the Selma march, there were people with guns on the tops of all the buildings.

[00:35:47] BE: Federal agents out there.

[00:35:49] RR: Well, you hope they were all federal agents.

[00:35:51] BE: Yeah. And you couldn't stop at any store or anything to get a drink of water. I was dying of thirst. And finally, I found a hose next to somebody's house and I was able to get a drink of water that way. But, it was a very unusual day.

[00:36:09] RR: My feelings about the south are so strong that one of the things Betty wanted to do was to sort of retrace this step. You know, the walk from Selma to Montgomery. So Betty says, well, let's take the old Selma Road. So we did. We go on this road, Selma Road. And we're driving and driving and driving. And I'm getting more and more uncomfortable because we're getting into nothing but woods around and all this kind of stuff. And we've been going for a long time. We haven't met anybody. We don't see anybody behind us. Nothing's going on. And I'm saying to Betty, "I don't like this." Because here's what happens to me. I get in the south. I get into an area like that with woods and those kinds of things. And I start hearing this song, "Strange Fruit," okay. And then I just want to get the hell out of there. And I said to Betty, "This isn't working. I've got to get out of here." So we turn around. We went back in the first place we came to, I told the guy where we want to go. And he sent us out to like an interstate highway, and we went to Selma, and that was fine. But it's just a I've never liked to be in the south when we went on this trip and we were in Biloxi and...Oh, man, it's a strange place. It's a very strange place.

I'm very uncomfortable there. And I know the stuff that went on during the Civil Rights Movement. I know all the people. I know the people that we know about that were killed. And I think there are a whole bunch more that we don't know about that were killed during that whole movement.

[00:37:42] BE: The outside...The civil rights building has a lobby and it is full of black and white pictures.

[00:37:52] RR: Huge blow-ups.

[00:37:53] BE: Huge blow-ups of people who were martyrs.

[00:37:57] RR: The dogs, the--. Well, the attacks, the fire hoses, the people, everything. It's a very moving experience for anybody to go there. And in the front of the building, they have this beautiful fountain that was designed by Maya Lin. The same woman that did the Vietnam Memorial.

[00:38:14] BE: She did the designing of the whole building.

[00:38:18] RR: Oh, I didn't know about that. But anyway, this fountain, its water's running over this thing and they have the names of the 14 people that they called the martyrs, ending with Martin Luther King. Unbelievable place. And Betty talks about the advances that have been made, and actually the day we were there you could see advances, I mean, in this crowd of people who are waiting to get into the building. I mean, I look and I see very prosperous looking African-American families. I mean, men in suits and ties and wives in dresses and heels and little kids. And there was this one little boy who was probably 5-ish. And he said, "Dad, I'm getting tired. How long is it going to be?" And he said, "It won't be long. We're going to get inside and then we're going to see grandma's name on the wall." You know? So it's a teaching tool, too, because families are bringing their kids and letting them see--.

[00:39:19] BE: And on the wall, they have...It's a...

[00:39:24] RR: It's a virtual wall.

[00:39:25] BE: Virtual wall.

[00:39:26] RR: It's computerized.

[00:39:28] BE: It's computerized, and so this black wall is up there and the names...I think it's a different color.

[00:39:35] RR: Well, you go, you type. You go to a console and you type in a name. Like, I went and I typed in Betty Edmundson's name. Now, there are names that are sitting there all the time. Like Morris Dees, who is the executive director who started that whole thing. But then, Betty's name popped up real big, huge letters, and it rolls down the wall.

[00:39:52] BE: It rolls down the wall. And it is so moving, you know, to know your name is on the wall of tolerance.

[00:40:02] RR: And the idea of the virtual thing is so they can continue adding names.
[Hugs Betty from the side] Well, it's important that your name is there.

[00:40:17] I: So I have another question. Is there...What funny quirks--. Is there any funny quirks you guys have about each other?

[00:40:30] RR: Quirks?

[00:40:31] BE: Quirks?

[00:40:32] RR: What are you trying to say, Katrina? [Laughter]

[00:40:37] BE: [Laughter] Are we crazy or something?

[00:40:40] I: []

[00:40:45] RR: Quirks.

[00:40:47] BE: I don't know.

[00:40:48] RR: [Shrugs] I don't either! Quirks.

[00:40:52] BE: We are what we are, as you said.

[00:40:56] RR: Give me an example.

[00:40:58] I: Is there something very random that Betty does that you find absolutely adorable?

[00:41:04] BE: I don't think she finds anything I do adorable [Laughter]. Frustrating, mainly.

[00:41:11] RR: No, that's not true. One of the things that I love about Betty is she always is bringing in fresh flowers and putting them in the bathroom, in the kitchen. And I love that. I mean, anytime I walk in and I see a new rose or a new whatever, it just sort of like, yeah, you know.

[00:41:29] BE: Yeah. Well, I love to garden and I love having the flowers in the house. A lot of people garden, but they never bring the flowers in. I mean, why not, you know?

[00:41:39] RR: Because it hurts them when you cut them off.

[00:41:40] BE: Oh, no.

[00:41:43] I: Flowers have feelings, too!

[00:41:44] RR: That's right.

[00:41:46] I: So, does Rach do anything kind of like her little...some little thing she does?

[00:41:53] BE: She yells at me all the time. [Laughter] She really does. She gets so frustrated with me, you know, she will just yell. She'll say, "You did what!?" That's the funniest thing that you do.

[00:42:12] RR: Good. I had no idea where you were going [Laughter].

[00:42:19] BE: Oh, and the other thing is that I can't hear too well anymore.

[00:42:23] RR: Which is part of the reason I yell! [Laughter]

[00:42:29] BE: And so, you know--. She'll say something and she'll always talk to me from the other room, you know. And if you're a person who has trouble hearing, you certainly don't want to be talked to from the other room. So she's in the kitchen and she starts mumbling or something. And I say, "what?!" And then she's got to, you know...And I say, "I can't hear you!" And I particularly can't hear when the refrigerator's running or something like that, you know. Anyhow, that's what she does. She yells a lot.

[00:43:03] RR: Yeah, that's true. I do yell a lot. I ain't getting no ulcer, though, I'll tell you that right now.

[00:43:08] BE: No, no. You won't have an ulcer.

[00:43:12] RR: You may [Laughter].

[00:43:14] BE: No, I ignore it.

[00:43:16] RR: That's good.

[00:43:17] I: So did you want to ask something?

[00:43:18] I: Yeah, I have a--. I don't know how to phrase this, but, looking back--. Okay, I'll start over here. The youth project and the history project. The history project has sort of born out of the youth in the community wanting to learn where they come from and where they're going. At the same time, the elders in our community wanted to tell their story and have the story to tell. So what would you say... Looking at, say, Sarah and Katrina and their age? Comparing yourself to when you were their age, what's different and what advice do you have for a youth in our community?

[00:44:04] I: And form it in a restating of the question.

[00:44:07] BE: Well, it's--.

[00:44:09] RR: Reform the question.

[00:44:10] BE: Huh?

[00:44:11] RR: Reform the question.

[00:44:12] BE: What advice do we have for young people today? Be yourselves. I think because we live in California, we can be out. And as young people, you might as well be. What's to prevent it? You know, you're not--. I hope you won't ever have to experience anything like the beating of people and stuff like that because they're gay. Be who you want to be. That would be my advice. I don't think you have to hide where we're living now. But there are still many places where you do have to hide.

[00:44:59] RR: Right. That was gonna be my caution. I mean, I think that we lull ourselves into thinking--.

[00:45:05] BE: Because it's okay here.

[00:45:07] RR: Well, I think we lull ourselves into thinking that there's been great strides in the way the rest of the world accepts the gay and lesbian. And I think it's not as great... I don't think we've made as great progress as we would like to think we have, particularly in the bread basket. If you're on the coast, if you're on the East Coast or the West Coast, I think you're okay, for the most part. But if you go into the south, and if you go into the middle of the country, I don't think the acceptance is there. Because, for one thing, the religious right right now is totally nuts and those areas are full of those folks and they control the way people are thinking.

So, you know, I think you're right. You be yourself as best you can, but being yourself doesn't necessarily mean..It doesn't necessarily mean that you're wearing a sign that says "I'm gay" or "I'm a lesbian." I mean, I've never done that.

[00:46:12] BE: I think the more you do that, the worse off you are.

[00:46:15] RR: But, I mean, you can be yourselves without transmitting that message necessarily.

[00:46:21] BE: [Motions to forehead] Without having "lesbian" written across your...

[00:46:24] RR: I mean, I've always said that if somebody asked me if I was a lesbian, my answer would totally depend on who they were and why I thought they were asking me that. Okay?

[00:46:33] BE: Your answer would be: "Why do you ask? What makes you think I am?"

[00:46:36] RR: Well, no. I mean, I just, you know, I think--. First of all, you have to look at who's asking you. If it's somebody that you don't even know and you take a look at them and you're not even sure you ever want to know them, I mean, why would you tell them anything? I don't...

[00:46:53] BE: It was interesting because Rachel was at a meeting where there was some people from out of the area. Didn't you come out?

[00:47:08] RR: Oh, it was the--. Yes, it was--. Well, that's because it was Davey. I can't say no to Davey. Oh, she's talking about the...What was it called? Raising the awareness of the social

services providers. And David asked me if I would be on the panel. And I was. But, the first thing, I mean, as I looked out at the people there, I said, "Oh, my God. I know some of these people." And I know them in different arenas. And so one of the things I said was, this is the first time I've ever done this, you know? But it's okay, I mean, I felt okay with it. But I wouldn't have done that in Cheyenne, Wyoming, or... You know, it'd be a totally different thing. I don't think I would have done it, even feeling like the audience would be okay with it. I'd still have to leave the building, you know. And who knows what would go on? So I guess I'm still a little pragmatically paranoid in certain parts of our society.

[00:48:12] I: And another part of the history project for me personally, I mean, is that sometimes... Sometimes it's hard for me to see long term. Since I came out, I don't know why, but it just kind of feels like that, as far as long lasting relationships. I mean, everyone young has short relationships at some point that don't last. But like for me, it's really valuable for me to have that hope and stuff like that. So maybe if you could describe what has contributed to the longevity of your relationship or if you have advice for people young. I think there's a lot of recklessness that comes out of young gay and lesbian youth because they can't see things long term, you know what I mean?

[00:48:58] RR: Yeah, I understand.

[00:48:59] I: I don't know if you have any sort of advice that you could give you about that, because I think that that definitely is a part of our community.

[00:49:09] BE: Well, at one time, Rachel left and went up to Seattle to be with her sister because she was concerned about my relationship with the bookkeeper from family service. [Looks to Rachel] Right?

[00:49:28] RR: I wouldn't say I was concerned.

[00:49:32] BE: Well, I thought you were very concerned. Anyhow. But that's the closest we've ever come to being apart, you know. And she stayed for a while and I called and asked her, please come back. And then we went to a therapist for quite a while after that.

[00:49:57] RR: Three weeks.

[00:49:58] BE: Three weeks.

[00:49:59] RR: Three weeks, I was gone. I went on vacation, took a short vacation.

[00:50:03] BE: You took a short vacation from me.

[00:50:06] RR: Well, yeah. That's really not the question she asked. But, you know, she was talking about what--. I think, like I said before, in terms of longevity of relationships, I think it's the friendship. And I think...I think there's a whole different kind of way of looking at things. Vis a vis the conversation that was going on yesterday or Friday in the office there, about sex and different levels and all that kind of stuff.

[00:50:36] BE: What was that?

[00:50:37] RR: [Laughter] It was weird, but anyway. I think that, you know, people...I think when you find the right person, you'll know it. And I think that you always have to know that there is that right person out there for you. And I think that you will know it because you will be in sync. You'll be in sync in terms of being friends. You'll be in sync with how you want to live your life, what kinds of things you want to put back into the community, all those things. And if those things aren't there, you might as well quit whistling Dixie and move on, because the worst thing that can happen is being in a relationship with--. There's the old thing about--.

Okay, here's another important thing I'd forgotten about. Close relationships and distant relationships, okay? If you get two people together who want a close relationship, you're fine. If you get two people together who want distant relationships, you're fine. But if you get one of each, it doesn't work, because neither person is happy.

[00:51:40] BE: No.

[00:51:41] RR: And we've seen that happen over and over and over with people. They just--. You know, they get together and they have totally different needs and wants, and they keep fighting and trying to make it work, and it just will never work. Same as if you had different values. It doesn't work. Sooner or later, somebody says, "I can't do this anymore," because it's not working. And so, I think... Betty's right. Be true to yourself. Don't settle for less.

[00:52:12] BE: Yeah.

[00:52:13] RR: Never settle for less, just to have somebody to have a warm body in bed. I mean, you can get a teddy bear or a dog or something, you know. But not a person, because if you start down that road of having to have a warm body in the bed and you're not paying attention to all the other things, you're gonna have a whole long string of bodies in the bed and no lasting relationships. And that's wasted time and energy.

[00:52:37] BE: It is.

[00:52:39] RR: And bad for your self-esteem. And I'll get off my soapbox.

[00:52:47] I: What is your song?

[00:52:50] I: Oh, I was gonna ask before song. Do you guys dance?

[00:52:53] RR: We used to. Yes, we do.

[00:52:55] BE: Yes, we do.

[00:52:56] RR: We do, sort of. It's a Carpenters song. [Looks at Betty] Do you remember what it is?

[00:53:03] BE: [Singing] We've only just begun...

[00:53:05] RR: There you go! [Laughter] There you go. The Carpenters did it for you, is that right? If I hadn't said that, you wouldn't have known.

[00:53:12] BE: I did know.

[00:53:13] RR: You did know, okay.

[00:53:16] I: Cool, are we good to wrap it up?

[00:53:19] I: Do you guys have a particular story from sort of a comic side--? Some experience you've had together?

[00:53:32] I: Any funny outfits either of you have had to wear, or gotten to wear?

[00:53:34] BE: Oh, we used to have the greatest parties, Halloween parties. Oh, we should show them the book. We have a book of pictures of all of our friends who would come to the Halloween parties. And we always had a Halloween party for years we had it. [Points across the room] And I think pictures of both of these guys are in that book.

[00:53:57] RR: No.

[00:53:58] BE: No? No, that's right, they're not.

[00:54:01] RR: They were at Charlie's.

[00:54:02] BE: You'd been at Charles's Halloween party. But you did not come here when we had the Halloween--?

[00:54:09] RR: That's because I didn't mix office and--.

[00:54:12] BE: Too long ago.

[00:54:14] RR: They weren't invited.

[00:54:16] BE: Well, you weren't invited! Well, it was... I can remember several people coming to this Halloween party who weren't invited, remember?

[00:54:27] RR: [Laughter] That's a whole different thing.

[00:54:29] BE: Well, anyhow.

[00:54:30] I: Any favorite outfits either of you guys have worn?

[00:54:34] BE: I'm going to go get the book.

[00:54:35] I: Well, talk about it, and then what we'll do is we'll videotape the book, and while you're talking about it we'll show it.

[00:54:41] RR: What are you talking about? You talking about costumes?

[00:54:43] BE: Costumes.

[00:54:44] I: What was your favorite one? Did you guys--?

[00:54:47] BE: I like my clown outfit.

[00:54:49] RR: I liked you best as Colonel Sanders.

[00:54:51] BE: Oh, you did? Colonel Sanders!

[00:54:54] RR: She's a great Colonel Sanders. We rented a suit for her, a white suit. She had on a beard. It was great. And, of course, I was a chicken. [Laughter] I think that was the favorite.

[00:55:10] BE: And then we rented tuxedos--.

[00:55:15] RR: Not tuxedos.

[00:55:17] BE: You know, we borrowed clothes from Bill and Wil.

[00:55:21] RR: We borrowed suits and we were Dole and--.

[00:55:25] BE: And Clinton. So it was Bill and Bob. So that was one of our favorite outfits.

[00:55:32] RR: I didn't care about them.

[00:55:33] BE: It was a cute outfit.

[00:55:34] RR: I liked the Colonel Sanders.

[00:55:36] BE: I think the Colonel Sanders was the best one. What was your favorite?

[00:55:40] RR: I think that one.

[00:55:42] BE: No, I'm talking about what you wore.

[00:55:45] RR: Oh, I make a good gorilla.

[00:55:47] BE: Oh, yes. We still have the gorilla suit. Would you like to see the gorilla suit?

[Laughter] We had the gorilla suit for anybody who needed a costume that didn't have one, you know, so they wouldn't have to go out and buy a costume. They could always borrow the gorilla suit.

[00:56:06] RR: No, this is a funny story. Halloween was coming up. And so I got this idea and I went down to a--. There used to be a shop in Pismo that had costumes. So I go in and I see this gorilla suit sitting there. And it was for sale. It was eighty five bucks. And I said, "Whoa, I

think I'm gonna buy that." So I come home with this gorilla suit. And Betty said, "Did you buy that or did you rent it?" I said, "I bought it." "What, you pay for it?" "Eighty five dollars." "Eighty five dollars?! What are you going to do with that thing?" I said, "Don't worry about it."

[00:56:39] BE: We used it at the store, too, remember?

[00:56:42] RR: Used it all kinds of places. Terry borrowed it once to go next door to scare the hell out of his neighbor, which he did.

[00:56:52] BE: We marched in parades with it.

[00:56:54] RR: Yes, that's true.

[00:56:55] BE: We'll have to show you those pictures of us in the olden days. And we worked at Morro Bay Cameras, you know, and I would be in a gorilla suit or clown suit or something, and she'd be in something else. And we were the Christmas elves one time.

[00:57:13] RR: Oh, that was a parade.

[00:57:14] BE: That was a parade. We always appeared in the parades, the Christmas parades.

[00:57:20] RR: Merchants, yeah.

[00:57:21] BE: As members of the Merchants Association. So, you know, we had lots of places to use the gorilla suit. And lots of people who borrowed it.

[00:57:31] RR: But one of the funniest stories about the gorilla suit is one night our friend Rosie was here. She stayed overnight. She was in the front bedroom and she got cold in the middle of the night, and she got up looking for something to put on. She put on the gorilla suit. And so she comes out in the morning. And it was really weird because I was standing in the kitchen and I said to Betty--. I had my back to the door there, and I said, "You know what? I'll bet Rosie got cold last night." And I actually said, you know, "I wonder if she found the gorilla suit to put on." And she actually appeared and she had it on! [Laughter] It was weird.

[00:58:08] BE: We had a lot of fun, you know, and we really kind of miss having those parties nowadays. I mean, remember when Marilyn was lying on the beach?

[00:58:25] RR: Oh, yeah. Miami.

[00:58:27] BE: Marilyn Moore, who is our realtor friend who lives on the next street up. She came in and she was dressed--.

[00:58:35] RR: She had on a bathing suit, put out her mat.

[00:58:39] BE: She rolled out her mat and she laid down on it and was having a sun bath.

[00:58:46] RR: And she had a seniors magazine.

[00:58:47] BE: Seniors magazine. I don't know. It was just so funny. It'd crack you up. And it was interesting because everybody would come in. You know, at first we wouldn't talk to each other. We'd be looking at the costumes and getting the most we could out of the costumes. And then after a while, people would start talking. And one time--. Who was it that was the wallflower? Was that Sandy?

[00:59:15] RR: That was Sandy.

[00:59:16] BE: Anyhow, Marilyn's friend Sandy came in, she stood around the corner, she stood up against the wall, and she just stood there.

[00:59:23] RR: It was a big flower. She made this big flower.

[00:59:27] BE: She had a big flower in it, and she was a wallflower [Laughter]. We had so much fun in those days.

[00:59:34] RR: We don't have fun anymore?

[00:59:35] BE: We do, but don't have parties like that anymore.

[00:59:38] RR: Why not?

[00:59:39] BE: I don't know!

[00:59:42] I: Who's the partier out of you two?

[00:59:44] RR: Betty's a party animal from way back.

[00:59:46] BE: I did love those Halloween parties, you know. They were a lot of fun.

[00:59:51] RR: Oh, you loved your Friday afternoons drinking your boss under the table and then hauling him home and throwing him on the lawn.

[00:59:57] BE: Oh, that was fun, too.

[00:59:58] RR: Yeah, you're a party animal. Just a party animal.

[01:00:01] BE: I used to be able to drink more than I can now. [Laughter] I can't drink more than like a half a glass of wine now or something like that. But in the olden days, I would start at--. Well, you don't know.

[01:00:17] RR: Wilshire Boulevard, start at one end and go to the other.

[01:00:20] BE: I would start in--.

[01:00:24] RR: At the beach, then you go all the way--.

[01:00:25] BE: At the beach in Santa Monica, then you would stop in this bar. Then you would stop in every bar all the way to the pier. And I could drink most people under the [Laughter] I could keep up with most everybody in our drinking group in those days. But that, I remember. We had a lot of fun in those days.

[01:00:55] I: Any last burning things? How long do we have? We have one minute on it? Anything else?

[01:01:05] ?: Were there particular places, when you lived in L.A. [Los Angeles], to go out publicly or were there particular spots?

END OF VIDEO 2

Interview resumes at: 00:00:27.

BEGIN VIDEO 3

[00:00:27] I: Alright, so go ahead and continue, sorry.

[00:00:29] BE: Where was I? Oh, what I'm gonna do in retirement. We really like this area up here, but of course, Rachel said there's no place to go see concerts and things like that. Plays, and all the kinds of stuff we like to do. Of course, every time we went to do anything like that, you had to drive through downtown L.A., anyhow. So after we moved up here, of course, there's the PAC [Cal Poly Performing Arts Center]. They built the PAC. So, we have everything here that we need here. We have many more friends than we had down in the Los Angeles area, gay friends. A beautiful place to live, it's very photographic. It's just a wonderful place to be. I can't imagine any place better. We call it paradise. It truly is a paradise for us. Agreed?

[00:01:32] RR: Uh-huh.

[00:01:34] I: Did they answer your question that you had had about that, or did you have one more?

[00:01:37] I: There were a couple of things still. I know you guys owned the camera store.

[00:01:44] BE: Oh, yes.

[00:01:45] I: And you were obviously out. People knew that you were a couple in Morro Bay. And just wondering what that experience was like, living on the Central Coast, owning a business...

[00:01:58] I: So maybe start by talking about why you decided to own that business, and then talk about all that stuff. Do you want a pillow behind your back or anything?

[00:02:07] RR: I'm okay.

[00:02:11] I: Just so you're more comfy! Here we go [Places a pillow behind Rachel]. Is that good? Better?

[00:02:17] BE: Oh, yeah.

[00:02:18] RR: [Laughter] Did you say “oh, yeah?” Oh, okay!

[00:02:22] BE: I meant it looks good.

[00:02:24] RR: She doesn’t know where she ends and where I begin, you know. [Laughter]

It’s good.

[00:02:34] I: Do you guys want water, too?

[00:02:35] RR: No, we’re fine.

[00:02:36] I: Okay, cool.

[00:02:39] RR: Betty can go for days without [Laughter]. She doesn’t believe in water.

[00:02:43] BE: I do!

[00:02:44] RR: She thinks she’ll rust.

[00:02:50] BE: Actually, the reason we got involved in the camera store business was that we knew the guy over there who had the camera store. And, you know, since I took a lot of pictures and everything...He wanted to sell it, and so we decided we’d buy it. How did we work that out? There was some...

[00:03:20] RR: Okay. You want my version or your version?

[00:03:22] BE: Your version.

[00:03:23] RR: My version is, you said to me, “I want to buy a camera store.” And I said, “I don’t want to buy a camera store.” And you said, “Oh, okay.” And a week goes by and Marilyn Moore, who’s a realtor, appears at our front door and says, “Here’s the contract Betty wanted for the camera store.” And I said, “For the what?!”

[00:03:44] BE: I didn’t do--.

[00:03:45] RR: Yes you did.

[00:03:46] BE: I’m going to ask Marilyn about that.

[00:03:48] RR: Yes, she will tell you that’s exactly what you did. So, Betty says--. I said, “So you’re serious about this?” Betty says, “Yes.”. I said, “Okay, here are the problems if you buy

the store. One, you can't travel. Two, you'll have trouble staffing it. And three, you'll get tired of it." "I don't care, I want to do it." "Okay, you want to do it? We'll do it." So we did. And, you know, it was an excellent experience. Betty's idea was that she would do it so that she could get her processing free [Laughter] and buy her film free.

[00:04:20] BE: I was just interested in cameras and photography. That's all you have to know.

[00:04:27] RR: Right, okay.

[00:04:29] BE: It was fun.

[00:04:32] RR: It was fun. I have to admit, it was fun.

[00:04:34] BE: We were in the community in a very different way because we were...What would you call it? Business owners.

[00:04:46] RR: You see people differently.

[00:04:48] BE: You see everyone differently, they see you differently. Rachel joined the Chamber of Commerce. You know, you'd have to go in the other room to look and see all the special plaques and things that she got while she was on the Chamber of Commerce. It was just a different world, a very interesting one. You know, we met all kinds of interesting artists and people. People like Phyllis Fox, and who was the one that lived up in Cabrillo Estates? The artist who took pictures--?

[00:05:27] RR: I don't know.

[00:05:28] BE: Oh, anyhow. All kinds of artists and people that were very interesting to us. I loved it. As far as...It was a hard job, and you had to spend a lot of time at it. In terms of--. We tried to provide good service to the community, you know, to the people. Other stores did not, or were--. Because we were a small store, and we could not compete with, like, Thrifty, you know. You could buy a camera at Thrifty drugstore for half of what you'd have to pay for one at our store, and you could get your film processed there cheaper.

So you had--. The way you had to handle the customers was to provide better service to them, and it made a big difference in how they perceived you. Our store did quite well for a while. Then, suddenly, we got a guy who came in one day. He said, "I'm going to start a camera--."

[00:06:50] RR: Processing.

[00:06:51] BE: "-- a film processing store in the same block where you are." He said, "I'm going to run you out of business. I thought I would let you know." He actually came into the store and said that to me.

[00:07:02] RR: Well.

[00:07:03] BE: He did.

[00:07:03] RR: He did. And he did. And it wasn't just him, it wasn't like it was just one more. Because when we bought the store, we were already competing for processing with what was Thrifty at that time, with what was Williams at that time. And there was another... There was a Bay Pharmacy or something. All these people were doing processing, and processing was the backbone of the business. And then a One Hour came in, which was just one more competitor, and then this guy came in.

[00:07:38] BE: Yeah.

[00:07:39] RR: And so at that point, you know, the pie wasn't big enough for that many slices to make it work for everybody. And it was also, by that time, getting a little bit tough because I was working six days a week, every day, and if we wanted to take off and go someplace, we would set it up two weeks ahead of time and then on the day before we were supposed to take off, the person who was supposed to do the job that day would say, "You know, that's not going to work, because I have to go so-and-so." So, you know, those kinds of things--. It got real tiresome towards the end.

[00:08:12] BE: And we had problems with the staff, you know, always being available and stuff like that.

[00:08:18] RR: Which is one of the things I mentioned would be a problem at the
[Laughter].

[00:08:21] BE: Well, you know, we met one of our former staff members the other day, we went up to Ragged Point. And he's gotten himself straightened out, he was a druggie and was a real pain in the neck to us for a long time there. But he's gotten himself straightened out, seems to be acting as a docent or a volunteer--.

[00:08:54] RR: Well he's a volunteer, docent at the elephant seal space.

[00:08:56] BE: At the elephant seal place. Anyhow, so that was interesting to meet him again after so long. But, anyhow, so we decided to get out of the camera business and we tried to sell off as much of our inventory as we could. And then we put our inventory in other stores, you know, to sell it off in other stores. And we got out of the camera business because we just couldn't do it anymore. It did not make any sense. And so then, I really retired. What have I done since then?

[00:09:36] RR: Oh, you did a book and you did a few other things [Laughter].

[00:09:38] I: Hold on, we're going to switch camera angles and talk more about that, right?
We'll have them move back to originally where they were at, the original...

[00:09:47] I: ...The whole Mother Tongue thing, and the group that meets.

[00:09:54] BE: Well, I--.

[00:09:55] I: Well hold on, don't talk about it yet, because we want to get it all on film.

[00:09:59] I: What do you do during those meetings?

[00:10:02] RR: I don't go to those meetings.

[00:10:04] BE: She's not a part of it.

[00:10:05] I: I actually have some random questions. Is that blocked? How's that light?
Okay? Looks good! Yay, no more--.

[00:10:16] RR: No more moving?

[00:10:17] I: Do you see it right there?

[00:10:18] RR: Yeah.

[00:10:19] I: Yeah, that was the pattern on your face occasionally.

[00:10:20] RR: Well, that's okay. Okay.

[00:10:23] I: We talked about the light in the house, and there it is.

[00:10:25] BE: Right.

[00:10:27] I: Exactly. I guess we'll go from there, yeah? Into post-retirement? Let me grab my list here.

[00:10:36] BE: Well, Rachel is not retired yet, you know that.

[00:10:39] I: Yes, I do know this [Laughter].

[00:10:46] RR: Semi-retired [Laughter].

[00:10:51] I: Some of the Mother Tongue stuff sounds fun to hear about, because Rachel's reactions are going to be great [Laughter].

[00:11:01] I: Okay, so why--?

[00:11:02] I: Then also, working into that's going to be a big one.

[00:11:07] I: Yes. So why don't you describe, from the start, first of all what it is, when it started, why...Is it recording? Okay, all that stuff. So just kind of start from the intro.

[00:11:19] BE: Well, I had never heard of this group before, Mother Tongue, until we went to a meeting. It was in the chapel behind Coalesce. And this was Rosemary Hathaway was the leader, and she was from San Francisco. They had started it up there. And so when she moved down here to Los Osos, she was carrying it on, you know. And it was a group of women who wrote and performed in front of an audience. And it just seemed so interesting to me that--. But I'm not a performer, you know. I can't perform in front of an audience. But I can do the writing, you know, and I like to write. And so that's how I got involved in Mother Tongue. I just thought it was an interesting group.

Rachel was not as interested. She didn't want to do it. Rachel is an excellent writer, a much better writer than I am. And unfortunately, she doesn't write. And it doesn't help how good a writer you are if you don't write.

[00:12:45] RR: Really?

[00:12:46] BE: Yes. And so anyhow. So I joined Mother Tongue. And it's been going on now for about how many years?

[00:12:58] RR: Quite a while. And you've done some really interesting topics. They've covered topics like aging.

[00:13:05] BE: The aging script was a really good one. I think the aging script was what they were doing when I--.

[00:13:09] RR: Well, spirituality was excellent. And then there was the erotic sex, as I recall.

[00:13:15] BE: Yeah, but the spirituality script, we argued about for over a year before we finished that script. We could not agree on anything. And you know, Rosemary believed in the goddess--.

[00:13:32] RR: Carmen was Catholic.

[00:13:33] BE: Carmen is Catholic. And we just clashed on the whole thing. You know, we could not agree on this question of spirituality. And it was a very important topic for us. And so eventually, we did get a script.

[00:13:51] RR: And it was a good one.

[00:13:52] BE: A very good script. And, you know, it's been a lot of fun, you know. We meet in people's houses and it starts out it's sort of like a support group. You know, people say, "Well, what's been going on in your life? What's been going, you know, what's happened to you since we met last month?" And so it starts out like a support group, and just develops from there into the topic that we're interested in and with people talking about their own experiences in life or

something that they feel is important about that topic. And unfortunately, the group has gotten kind of tired lately. And I think that we're at--. Our next meeting will be whether to continue the group or not. And so it may not last after this time period. I think that, you know, Pat Durham died not too long ago and Pat was Rosemary's partner. And I think that has had something to do with the fact that we haven't met as often. And it's just sort of...I don't know whether we can continue doing it or not.

[00:15:16] RR: I think it would be good if you could continue it.

[00:15:20] BE: Only do it not as frequently, or--?

[00:15:22] RR: No, no. Continue it until Rosemary's able to come back to it. I think she's got so many things going on in her life right now with her family, in addition to Pat's death that she's trying to deal with. But if there is some way that you could sort of continue going forward until she's ready to come back, I think it would be a good thing to do.

[00:15:44] BE: Yeah, right now, we're sort of in...We don't know what's going to happen with her.

[00:15:47] I: Can you maybe tell me a particular story that stands out in your mind as really fun, funny, shocking?

[00:15:55] RR: About the group?

[00:15:56] I: About the group or something you've experienced from it.

[00:16:00] BE: Hm...Shocking, funny...

[00:16:07] RR: Well, I think--. If you want to talk about shocking, I think the spirituality script, the intensity of feelings and the dogma and all of that, to the point where I think the group almost ended right then.

[00:16:20] BE: Almost split up.

[00:16:21] RR: Right then. There was no understanding and appreciation of the diversity and that that's a good thing. It was more like, "You have to see it my way." And at the point where

the Catholicism thing was sort of taking over, Rosemary Hathaway just sort of stood up and said, “If you write that, then I’m going to have to write about the goddess, because that’s just not acceptable.” You know, kind of thing. So I think that that was pretty shocking for people. And actually, once they were able to do some accepting and getting around it, I think it's one of the strongest scripts you ever came up with because the diversity shows. It was a very good script. I think it was almost as good as the aging script. But the people doing it--.

[00:17:15] BE: I wrote something for that--.

[00:17:17] RR: Oh, and I know you--. But I think that the people doing it couldn't understand because they were...

[00:17:22] I: I need to move your mic down real quick, and then my next question for you is... What about now? Can you say something real quick?

[00:17:34] RR: Sure. Howdy Doody.

[00:17:35] I: Better?

[00:17:36] I: Yeah, we’re still peaking a little.

[00:17:38] I: I’ll drop it.

[00:17:39] I: I don’t know why we started peaking, though.

[00:17:40] I: That’s okay, we can just drop it.

[00:17:49] RR: Probably because I got more intense.

[00:17:52] I: Getting excited talking about the religious stuff?

[00:17:55] RR: [Laughter] Could be.

[00:18:02] I: Your heart is racing.

[00:18:04] RR: [Laughter] Could be.

[00:18:06] I: Actually, I’m worried about that rubbing on stuff, Sarah. I’m going to move it back, so hopefully it’ll be okay. Right, it’s okay? So say something, say “Howdy Doody.”

[00:18:11] RR: Howdy Doody.

[00:18:14] I: Too high?

[00:18:15] I: It's just peaking. I hope it's not going to cancel out.

[00:18:18] I: Can you drop the volume down on it instead?

[00:18:23] I: You can, you have to drop it through that little thing.

[00:18:26] RR: Oh, okay, do it here? [Video cuts out then back in]

[00:18:30] I: ...All lesbian women, some, none, out women, and then also, the second part to that question to describe is: What sort of religious--? Like, kind of just talk about the diversity of the community. I think a lot of people don't know that, you know, lesbians are Catholic and--.

[00:18:48] BE: Yeah, right.

[00:18:50] I: I think people aren't just aware of that.

[00:18:52] BE: First of all, they weren't all gay. You know, the picture that's on that wall there is by Josephine Crawford. She's not gay.

[00:19:05] RR: Oh, you've had many people come in not--.

[00:19:06] BE: Many people who are not gay.

[00:19:07] RR: Coming in and out.

[00:19:08] BE: Coming in and out of the group. So it is not a gay group, particularly. It's a women's group. And mostly to talk about women's issues, you know. And when you talk about spirituality, you have Catholics there who--. Carmen, you know. Carmen lives on the street up above us. And her main occupation is trying to get the Catholic Church to have gays in it. You know, who are out, outwardly gay. And so that's her issue with spirituality. And others have other issues. It's just a very interesting question to talk about. And, well, anyhow. You want to hear what I wrote about it?

[00:20:07] I: Definitely.

[00:20:08] BE: Okay, I have it right here I think. I think it's in this...

[00:20:12] RR: Folder? In your folder?

[00:20:15] I: ...Your housing--. I mean, the stuff that...The involvement in the community.

[00:20:19] RR: Right. Okay. Yeah, I can do that.

[00:20:21] I: I don't know how you want--.

[00:20:22] RR: I can do that. Yeah, yeah.

[00:20:27] I: Well, first I want to ask...You're talking about spirituality, right? Okay.

[00:20:32] RR: Betty, it's okay. Just set that aside.

[00:20:34] I: We'll make sure it's not in the camera view. Is it bugging you, huh?

[00:20:39] BE: It's bugging me that I can't find it.

[00:20:40] I: I knew it was [Laughter], you're like me.

[00:20:43] RR: It's okay.

[00:20:44] I: I'm sure it's there. We'll look for it afterwards. We'll get some footage of the yard and you can find it and then we'll do some reading.

[00:20:51] RR: Come on back over. Come on back over. You probably sent it to somebody.

[00:20:55] I: Alright, so, I just wanted to ask, kind of talking about spirituality and stuff like that. A lot of people have religion or family or friends or cute kitty cats and a motorhome that they find support with. Where did you find support in the past, and where do you continue to find support...Like, in other words, are either of you spiritual or religious? Have you gone through that journey?

[00:21:24] RR: Yes. I'm spiritual. I don't know what Betty is. But we have both experienced what we would consider a...What would you call it? Not a conversion. It's a touching of something that lets you know that there's something bigger than yourself, okay? For me, it came in 1969. I had been arrested the third time for drunk driving, and that night--. I mean, I had been bailed out and I was going to have to go to court. I'm working under a top secret clearance. And that night I'm sitting and I'm thinking, "Okay. This could mean my job, this could mean all kinds of things. It

could mean I need to do some jail time. It could mean all kinds of things, but it's okay because I'm okay.”

And that was the feeling that came to me was just sort of like a real--. I mean, I'm sitting and I'm sort of thinking about all of this. And there was just this feeling of warmth that just came over me. And at that moment, I knew I was gonna be okay. Backing up from that, I have always known I would be okay no matter what happened. I mean, from the time I was very small, I just always knew I would be alright no matter what happened in my life. And that's been true. It's always been true. So I think of that as spiritual rather than religious. I was raised in the church when I was in high school. I found that my philosophy of life and the church I was in didn't match. It was a Protestant church, but it just wasn't where I was, and it didn't make any sense to me. So I sort of left the church, but continued my own journey in terms of a spiritual search for something that didn't make sense for me.

And actually, I've ended up with sort of some kind of blend of eastern, western belief system. I suppose in my most simplest form, my philosophy of life is that you're born, you come into this life with a job to do and you don't leave until it's done. And that's what explains to me why a baby can be born and died two hours later. Whatever that job was, it got done in two hours or it may take somebody a hundred years to get it done. But whatever it is, that's what it is, and when it's done, they'll leave. Not sooner, not later, but when it's done. That works for me. It always has worked for me.

The other part of it is that I sort of somehow feel like not only will I be okay no matter what happens, but I know, and I know this from experience, that when I need something, whether it's a lesson--. And I'm talking about life lessons, because for me, life is a journey of lessons. Life is a journey of people, really, and their teachers. And you teach and you learn. And that's what it's about. And when you need to find another phase or go a little bit farther on that thing, the tool or the person or the whatever will appear, the situation. It comes. It comes at the point where you're

ready for it, when you can understand it and incorporate it into your life. And that's been my life always. That's the way it's worked. You want to talk about your--?

[00:24:57] BE: Well, I grew up going to St. Paul's Presbyterian Church in my neighborhood. And I don't remember where I met Ross, whether I--. He was a member of our church. And in fact, he was an elder in the church. He was a couple of years older than I was. And so I met Ross and we started going together and everything. And so I was very--. It was a sort of a thing where you went there because everybody else went there and you met all your friends there and it was a neighborhood church. And so then, I really didn't know what I believed. And after Ross's death, I was so depressed for so many...for such a long time. And then when I was married to Ed, we moved back to Washington, D.C., outside of Washington, in Arlington, Virginia. And while I was there, the strangest thing happened that I've ever experienced. And, you know, I was very unhappy there. So I remember saying and praying to God, saying, "Oh, dear God," you know, "help me, please help me." And would you believe it? I saw a bright light in the room. And this bright light--. And a feeling of warmth, you know, occurred. And that light just stayed there for about a half an hour and it gradually vanished. And it was like God was speaking to me, was answering me. He would help me. So then--.

[00:27:00] I: Hold on just a sec, he's just coming in. Hi, how are you? Yeah, we're still taping.

[00:27:06] BE: Anyhow, so that happened. Then I said, "Well, I've got to go to church." You know, and see. What does God want me to do? So I started going to church and it was nothing. You know, there was nothing there that was like this event. And so I didn't know what to do. Anyhow, we did not stay back there for very long. And that was fortunate because I couldn't stand it back there. It was hot, it was humid. It was...

[00:27:45] RR: Cold and snowy, and--.

[00:27:46] BE: It was cold and snowy, it was...Racial inequities and stuff like that. It was just not a place that I wanted to--. It was so hot in the summertime, I couldn't stand it. And I would complain about it. And everybody got angry at Californians who would complain about something like that because they didn't know how awful it was. Anyhow, so we did not stay back there. We came back to California and things went on from there.

[00:28:21] I: And then, to transition--.

[00:28:23] I: Well, I have another one. Real quick question. When you mentioned racial inequity.

[00:28:31] RR: Racial inequities?

[00:28:32] BE: Yeah.

[00:28:33] I: And it's coming up, Martin Luther King Day, and you had some involvement in some activities around that.

[00:28:39] BE: Yeah, and the Selma march.

[00:28:41] I: Yeah. So, we want to get the... []

[00:28:58] I: We have thirty minutes left on the tapes.

[00:29:02] RR: Would Rite Aid have those, Davey?

[00:29:04] BE: Oh, that won't take long.

[00:29:06] I: ...Within that topic, revisiting that topic, and I should have just started from the beginning where I was comfortable.

[00:29:12] RR: Is the glass in the way, Sarah?

[00:29:20] I: If you guys could scoot over back to where you were.

[00:29:22] RR: I don't know where we were. [Video cuts to Rachel and Betty back in their original positions. Betty yawns] You tired? You've been talking a lot.

[00:29:33] BE: I have been talking a lot.

[00:29:34] RR: That's good.

[00:29:41] I: We'll leave off where Dave was asking about volunteerism. So maybe you guys can each share in San Luis Obispo--. From San Luis Obispo time forward. Did he want to share any of the past?

[00:29:59] RR: I think the county's what you're trying to get.

[00:30:01] I: Yes, from your entry into the county.

[00:30:04] I: Different volunteer organizations that you were involved in and maybe describe what that organization is for people who don't know, what they do for the community, and then describe your role in it. Maybe how long you did it and anything interesting about the organization or people you've met there. And then if you can, in any way, if it's applicable, tie in how maybe that's played a dynamic within that organization. If it has.

[00:30:37] BE: Go ahead.

[00:30:38] RR: Well, okay. Let me think what you've done. You volunteered for the counseling center. Have you done anything else there? You helped with the Mondale Ferraro campaign. We did the walk to--. We walked the precincts.

[00:30:53] BE: Right, we did that. What else did we do?

[00:30:59] RR: [Phone rings] Mike!

[00:31:04] BE: Mike?

[00:31:05] RR: Pick that up, it's probably your dad. [Video cuts to after the phone call] You want to talk first?

[00:31:17] BE: Well, I volunteered at the family service center. What did they call it?

[00:31:27] RR: Well, it's got a different name now. It's now called the Community Counseling Center.

[00:31:30] BE: Community Counseling Center, it's called now. But it was similar to a family service agency. A group of volunteer counselors who took clients in and tried to help them as much as they could in about three sessions, free. And so I was on the board of that committee, that

Community Counseling Center, and I helped supervise some of the counselors. And I was more concerned with what they were doing, with how they were going to keep it going, you know. The money aspects of it, I suppose, because that had been so important in my job. And so, I tried to counsel them to make the best use of the money that they were getting and then something happened that--.

When I was down in Los Angeles and we had the drug counseling little stations, you know, various places, I had worked with a woman named Maria Jacobs, who's a Spanish speaking woman. She's Mexican-American, and she came up and, you know, she and I have remained good friends. And she came up to visit us, and she saw what I was doing there. And she said, "You've got to get out of this." She said, "You have done nothing but worry about money problems for the agency and other agencies and you've just got to stop this." She said, "You need to go walk on the beach instead of doing this kind of stuff." So I took her seriously because I was getting too involved in the agency. I was very involved and beginning to get stressed by what they were doing with...how they were handling the money. So I resigned from that. And that was the end of my volunteer experience with that. You said I volunteered to--.

[00:33:43] RR: We worked together in the Mondale Ferraro campaign. When we first were here.

[00:33:48] BE: But you're the one that has done all the volunteering. I haven't volunteered in any other way.

[00:33:57] I: Why don't you talk about the Martin Luther King--? Because Martin Luther King...Can you talk about that a little bit?

[00:34:04] BE: Well, when I was at UCLA in graduate school getting my master's, it was in 1965 and the Selma march was already starting. The students were so upset about this happening that one of the professors in the school of social work and two other students, three other students I guess it was. It was three--. Anyhow, I forget whether we ended up with two, three or four students,

but we decided that we would go back. The school was going to send the other students plus the professor back to Montgomery, Alabama in order to help with this problem. And so I decided I want to go. And if I had to pay my own way, I would. So I joined the others and we flew in this old, rickety plane back to Montgomery, Alabama. And I realize now, since we went back to Montgomery this year for the reunion of sorts or whatever you want to call it, how far it was from Selma to Montgomery. It's forty three miles. There's no way I could have walked all that. So I was--. We flew in and as I recall it, we landed, you know, we got from the airport, I think we got on a bus. We went to this big field of people. You know, thousands and thousands of people were on this field. And we started marching and we marched into Montgomery over this bridge and into the town of Montgomery from Selma, Alabama.

But I know I did not walk forty three miles. You know, there was no way. I think that I was probably on the fifth day of the march and I marched into Montgomery. That was the end of the march. And then we all gathered together, you know, thousands of us on the street and in front of the state capital, and Martin Luther King spoke. And you know that was the Selma march. And I was--. I think it was the most important thing I did in my life. I think, for me, it was that important.

Going back there, you know, it was really interesting because I had not really remembered that, you know, how beautiful a place--.

[00:37:07] RR: You mean we went back for the dedication.

[00:37:11] BE: For the dedication of this big building. It's a beautiful building that they have built. And there were about a thousand people standing in front of the building. And I was amazed to find how far it was from Salem to Montgomery. I mean Selma to Montgomery. I know darn well I didn't march that far. But it was a very interesting time in my life. And I think it was very important.

[00:37:45] I: Can you give a little background on what the march was about and why?

[00:37:49] BE: Well, because the people, the blacks in--.

[00:37:53] RR: Civil rights.

[00:37:55] BE: It was a civil rights march. When I went back to Montgomery, blacks could not go into a restaurant and eat at the same table with whites. They could not sit down and eat a meal. When we went back to Montgomery this time, we were in this beautiful big hotel and I looked down from the-- It had an atrium type lobby. So you could be up on the seventh floor where we were staying and you could look down and see the tables and everything that they had and blacks and whites were eating together. That is what it meant to me.

The other reason it was important to me was because my Uncle Harry had-- Well, anyhow. I'll tell you about that later. He had married-- He'd gone down to Arkansas. And he had married a Southern white woman who had what they called a "companion" was a black woman, a slave, in other words. An unpaid person who took care of her. Her name was Susie. I can't remember what her last name was. My uncle Harry and aunt Bertie lived across the street from me where I grew up. And, you know, every once in a while we would be sent over to Susie's house. Susie had a little house in back of them. And every once in a while, we'd be sent over there for Susie to take care of us, you know, or for my aunt to take care of us. And when my aunt would go to the store, Susie would walk behind her, carry the groceries. But she never walked up alongside my aunt. She was not equal to my aunt. So it was partly for Susie that I also felt that it was important. And I think it has made a great change in our country. Absolutely a tremendous change. So that's what the march is all about.

[00:40:06] I: And then do we go to Rachel, the organizations that you've done? That's an amazing story, by the way, Betty.

[00:40:13] RR: Yeah, it is. It truly is. Well, when I was in aerospace, there was never time to volunteer to do any of those kinds of things. In fact, my normal work week in aerospace was at minimum 60 hours a week. And I traveled a lot. So, we came up here and I guess the first thing I got involved in most of the Mondale Ferraro campaign. I'm a registered Republican. And I called

Democratic headquarters and I said, "I'd like to volunteer for you folks. I'm a Republican, but I want to volunteer for a Mondale Ferraro." They said, "Come on down." So I did go down and we did several things.

Betty and I worked together. We went out to a market, set up a table at a farmer's market to register people. And we registered about three different women, but it was--. "I said we're not gonna do this anymore." Because these women would come, they would have these raggedy little kids with them. I mean, they obviously were not in a very high economic class. And they're registering Republicans and I'm looking at them like, "This doesn't make any sense." And three in a row and I said, "Betty, we're not gonna register any more people, I'm not going to do this. This is crazy." So we folded up the table and I took it back to Democratic headquarters and I said, "No, can't do this anymore because they're registering for the wrong party. They don't understand what's going on." And then the next thing that happened was--. And that was the only political campaign I've been involved in.

And then the next thing that happened was...A friend of mine, a very dear friend of mine, had gone on a trip to Greece. And while she was there, she died. And to make a long story short, there was not a service or anything. And so I was sort of left with like, you know, it was just this big hole. And I started getting depressed and I didn't really realize what was going on. Until I picked up the paper one day and it said, "Hospice training class starting," and I thought, "Okay, I need to check this out." And I did. I went through the training and I became a volunteer with hospice. And I worked with them for about seven, eight years, something like that. And during that time, the AIDS Support Network was not an incorporated organization at that time. In fact, people were sort of taking care of people in their homes and all of that because it was the early eighties and there were lots of cases and lots of bad things happening.

And there was a tri-county AIDS task force. And the person who was head of the volunteers asked for volunteers to be a part of this task force, and so I volunteered. Anyway, I ended up going

to those meetings, and got sort of involved in understanding some of the things that went on before and during this whole period of time in terms of care in the county and the lack of doctors that would deal with it and all of those kinds of things. And somebody said to me, you know, "Why don't you go volunteer for the AIDS support people?" And I said, "No," you know, "I will work as a hospice volunteer with AIDS. But I don't feel the need to go be a part of that organization."

Then a few--. Maybe a year or two later, Marsha Bollinger came in as the county AIDS program director. She sent on a mass mailing to everybody who had ever been involved with AIDS, as far as I know, and asked for people to help set up an HIV consortium. So I called her and I said, "Yes, I'd be interested in doing that." So I did get involved with that. And I think of the people still left around that were a part of that, myself and David Perez, and I don't think there's anybody else because everybody else has moved on to other things or whatever. Moved on, or at least they're not a part of the consortium anymore. So we went through that whole process of setting up the policies, the guidelines, and all those kinds of things. And I met Jamie Ford there. And Jamie was the--. I guess he was the one paid employee at that point of ASN [AIDS Support Network], and he asked me if I would come and volunteer with him. "Sure." So I did. I started volunteering with him in the office and one thing led to another, and eventually I went on staff with the AIDS Support Network.

I went on staff, actually, at the point where HOPWA money became available, for Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS, and they needed somebody to be the housing services coordinator. I first said I'll do it as a volunteer. No, they didn't want that. They wanted somebody on staff because they had to actually pay for the position. Also, you don't have much control over volunteers. So, I went on staff half time. We sort of compromised and I went on half time. And then in that process, the whole housing thing became very important to me. And not only just housing for it for HIV, but housing in general, and of course, things have gotten worse since the beginning. The San Luis Obispo Supportive Housing Consortium was an informal group that was meeting. It became more formalized, and I don't even remember how long that's been going. I've chaired that

group--. I've chaired every year except one, I think, since it started. Primarily because I end up speaking before the board of Supes and city councils and things like that.

And then out of that group, the idea for the Housing Trust Fund came about. And it took time to get that up and running, but it is now up and running and we've actually helped fund two projects since we started. We have an executive director on board and I'm on that board of directors. So housing is sort of what I do, whether it's volunteer or a job or whatever. Housing is, I think, the major issue in this county, so it's an important thing and I probably will continue to be involved in it.

[00:47:30] I: I remember one time, a long time ago in conversation, you were talking about wearing different hats, so to speak. And I think you had said that you've never really outed yourself in the housing arena because you want that to be the focus. Can you maybe talk--?

[00:47:46] RR: Yes, yeah, real easily. There are lots of things I feel strongly about. California Equality is something I'm very concerned about. And if I were in a different position, I would be active there. But because I appear before elected officials all the time on behalf of housing, I don't want to be in a situation where I appear before a board of Supes and somebody immediately clicks into, "Oh, this is a lesbian, and therefore..." You know, I just don't want that bias to be there. So I have stayed strictly in the housing arena and never stepped out of that. I've gone to meetings and stuff, but I've never spoken on behalf of the gay, lesbian community. And I won't as long as I'm doing housing. Once I'm out of ASN and not doing housing, then that's a whole different ball game and I would get much more active in a lot of other things. But for now, I don't want to cloud the issue for anybody who's making a decision about funding housing.

[00:48:53] I: So--. What does that say?

[00:48:55] I: Abalone Alliance.

[00:48:57] RR: Oh, my [Laughter]. Right, that was actually we first came here, I thought I'd forgotten about it. I had read about the Abalone Alliance when I was still in L.A. and they were

building Diablo, the nuclear plant up here. And I remember talking about it to a couple of people down there, and I said, you know, I'm glad there are people who are willing to do that kind of thing to get out there and protest and those kinds of things. So I came up and, actually, that was the first thing I got involved in, I guess, even before the Mondale Ferraro thing, because they were in the middle of protesting the reactor that was being built backwards. You know, I mean, from the--.

[00:49:39] BE: They made a mistake.

[00:49:41] RR: Yeah, they were reading the blueprint backwards. They were building it backwards. And because of all the people being involved, and there were lots of lots of people, engineers, I mean, all kinds of people. They realized, I mean, the people who were protesting this thing realized--. And actually, it's probably one of the safer plants in the country because of it, because there were all of these people who saw the mistake and said, "You need to fix this." And once PG&E [Pacific Gas & Electric Company] realized it was a mistake, yeah, okay, they fixed it. But I was not willing to get my head bashed by a sheriff's deputy or go to jail. So I ended up working with the legal team for Abalone Alliance. And that was interesting. We would go to visit people in jail and help them any way we could.

We had a lot of people coming in from other areas. So sometimes it involves things like going and moving their car or getting their car to the jail so they could go home or all those kinds of things. It was an interesting experience. When Judge Chotiner came up from Southern California to do the hearings here, things got a lot more fair, let's say, because I don't think it was anybody locally that would have listened to it in the same way he did. He accepted some of the pleas of, you know, there being a higher law than the legal thing. So that helped with people getting their sentences cut shorter, being able to just be the time they served and not have to do more or pay a lot of money. Those kinds of things.

[00:51:24] I: How many people were arrested, out of curiosity?

[00:51:26] RR: Oh, my gosh. From the beginning or just while I was involved? While I was involved, there were probably thousands, okay? I mean, if you went from the very beginning, there were probably hundreds of thousands. Because they actually--. There were times when they couldn't put them all in--. I mean, they were overcrowding, like in the women's thing. They would have, like, ten, fifteen women in a cell when we went to visit them. So... A lot. A lot over the years. It was a long, long, drawn out thing, but because of it, I think we have a safer plant. I mean, I'm not happy with it. And I think the storage out there is a real problem. You know, my question has always been from the very beginning with nuclear power: what do you do about the waste? And they didn't have an answer then. They don't have an answer now, and it's a dangerous situation.

I haven't been involved in that for a long time. Mothers for Peace are still going in there. They're sort of trying to keep things on pace. It's just a big mistake we made, in terms of not thinking about the waste.

[00:52:34] I: And I know you're also involved with NOW [National Organization for Women], right?

[00:52:37] RR: No, no.

[00:52:40] I: Oh, you guys never were? Was there any other sort of things I needed to touch on? Let's see. Abalone Alliance, got that, got that, yeah, okay. Cool, so what--. Kind of talking about political stuff. What was happening politically in San Luis Obispo when you arrived?

[00:53:07] RR: When we arrived.

[00:53:08] I: It sounds like the power plants was a really big focus.

[00:53:10] RR: That was a big thing.

[00:53:11] I: I know you talked about sewer. If you could go through some of the major political events and, if you can, remember as many events that were in the LGBT community as well to maybe kind of highlight some of the major stuff that's happened. And I think for people who might be seeing this as an educational tool, it's really important to know not to dwell on negative

things. But I think it's really important to know maybe some of the things that you're aware of that have happened here that may have even been swept under the rug or never talked about. Like including the fact that doctors wouldn't treat people that were HIV positive, things like that.

[00:53:53] BE: Yeah, there are doctors still who--.

[00:53:57] RR: I don't know about that. Well, of course, the Abalone Alliance thing that was going, that was the big thing that was going when we first came. But also, living in Los Osos, the sewer had just--. You know, they had just once again voted down the idea of putting in a sewer system. We didn't realize that this was something that had been going on before. And of course, it's gone on now. And we're, like, at 30 years and they still are up and are up in the air. They don't know what they're doing. So that was a big thing. And then as a result of the sewer, actually, the CSD [Community Services District] was voted in. It was created. And I voted for that, actually, I voted to have a CSD thinking that people locally would be more aware, would understand the problems better, and would be able to go to the board of supervisors and explain them better. And that's turned into a fiasco because it's turned into a situation where it's--.

Los Osos is divided. I mean, so it's sort of like a microcosm of the country. It's like there's 50 percent there and 50 percent here and there's no way they're ever going to meet in the middle. It's just... And there's a lot of animosity. And right now, they keep going with the lawsuits. It's craziness. There's more and more money being spent. Nothing happening. And there's no winning at this point. I mean, there is no winner. Everybody's a loser right now because if they start actually levying the fines, people are gonna be paying them who wanted to sewer. [Side conversation occurs off camera; video cuts to after conversation]

[00:55:54] I: On LGBT issues, what have been some some things that you've seen happen in the past or any significant things that have set out to you that people have had to deal with, community members here.?

[00:56:11] RR: Actually, I'm not aware of any negative things that have happened here.

There's been some positive things that have happened here. I mean, maybe other people in different parts of--. In my life, I touch several circles of gays and lesbians, okay? First of all, because of living in Los Osos, and most of our neighbors being older, I circulate in an older community. Because of working at ASN, there's a younger community. And there are all these circles, actually, of people. When we first came here, we got involved with a group of women who had rap sessions down in Nipomo. And those were huge, huge gatherings of women. They came from Santa Barbara County and from this county. And so we met tons of people, women. We met tons of women that way.

In terms of positive things, we were in the business in Morro Bay when Ray Hatler came up from Los Angeles and he and Jamie started BAPA [Business and Professional Association], which became an organization that was sort of--. Not opposed, but it was--. Let's say a different function than GALA [Gay and Lesbian Alliance]. And then eventually, BAPA went away over time, because GALA was sort of doing some of the same kinds of things and people were, I don't know, they didn't like the idea of two organizations, that kind of thing. But I think by BAPA starting, I think GALA got a wider section of people belonging to GALA than they would have had before, because my impression was - and I could be totally wrong - was that GALA was mostly younger people. BAPA picked up some of the older population.

[00:57:55] BE: And business people.

[00:57:57] RR: And then it sort of blended--. Oh, I'm sorry, Business and Professional Association. Only, it was it was intended to be gay. Gay businesses and professionals. And there are other people who could speak to that more accurately than I can. But that was just my impression that BAPA brought sort of a blending of ages together in a different way than GALA had before. The negative stuff, yes. There was one--. I remember one city council meeting in San Luis Obispo, where--. Dave Romero was the mayor, and it had to do with AIDS. Public treatment and all these

kinds of things. And I remember there was a lesbian who stood up to speak and actually she was somebody from Southern California. I didn't know her personally, but I knew--. Her parents had owned a swim school down there, so I knew who she was by name, didn't know her personally. She stood up to speak and she was fairly masculine looking. She had on, you know, like a--. Not denims, but she had on, like, blue work pants and a blue shirt. It probably had to do something with the job she was doing at the time. But she walks to the microphone and Romero said, "Yes, sir. What do you want to say?" And she said, "I'm not a sir." And he said, "Excuse me, sir?" I mean, it was very deliberate, very deliberate. But she handled it well. And she just said, "My name is," and said her name, which was obviously a feminine name. He didn't apologize.

But everybody in the audience was like, "That man is crazy." I mean, that's the way people sort of reacted, like the man is crazy. And actually, I think he's still with us. But anyway, that's the one public thing that I can remember where--. I mean, from my standpoint, just sitting in the audience and watching this, it was like a deliberate attempt to humiliate someone to make them feel bad. But she wasn't buying it. So that was interesting.

[01:00:11] I: On a totally random tangent side note. On the butch thing, do either of you consider yourselves butch or femme or any of that? Was that dynamic ever part of your--?

[01:00:22] RR: I've always considered myself androgynous [Betty laughs]. I mean, you know, I do everything. I cook, whatever.

[01:00:33] BE: I do the gardening. Does that make a difference [Laughter]? She's an excellent cook. Oh, boy. She's very good. I can bake pies, the best pies you ever tasted. But other than that, I don't do any cooking or anything.

[01:00:48] RR: That's because you don't want to.

[01:00:50] BE: I don't want to.

[01:00:53] I: So you guys never had the roles that people typically--?

[01:00:55] BE: No, there are no rules.

[01:00:56] RR: Well, I mean, yeah, I know some people do that kind of stuff, but that's never been a part of my life. I am who I am and I do what I do. And if I fix the plumbing, I fix the plumbing. If I cook, I cook. You know, it doesn't matter what it is.

[01:01:13] I: Alright, let's change tapes.

END OF VIDEO 3

BEGIN VIDEO 4

[00:00:00] I: ...Her being butch, when she was raided, how she was treated by the police--.

[00:00:04] RR: What time period? Sixties, earlier?

[00:00:11] I: I think sixties.

[00:00:12] RR: I mean, Phyllis, you know, Phyllis, they talked about in San Francisco like in the forties or fifties.

[00:00:18] I: You know what? I'll have to look in this book. I believe that the woman now is in her 70s. I don't know what--.

[00:00:29] BE: Well, you know, I grew up as a tomboy. You know, I really wanted to be a boy.

[00:00:34] RR: Really?

[00:00:35] BE: Yeah.

[00:00:36] RR: You never told me that.

[00:00:37] BE: Well, you didn't ever ask me. [Laughter] Anyhow, my cousin lived on the same block with me. We were the closest of pals. And--.

[00:00:56] RR: Glenn, you're talking about?

[00:00:57] BE: No, Paul.

[00:00:58] RR: Oh, Paul.

[00:00:59] BE: Paul. We always played together and did everything together. And I can remember, we climbed a great big, huge date palm tree. And I was gonna be ahead of him. And I was not going to let him get ahead of me, and I gave him a push and he fell out of the palm tree. And shortly after that, the family moved to Glendale. And I always felt that I was responsible for them moving. [Laughter] But we had more fun, you know, 'cause I had cousins who lived on the same street with me. And I had a younger sister. I had two teenage older boys. You know, there were ten years older.

[00:01:37] RR: Brothers, stepbrothers.

[00:01:39] BE: Stepbrothers. And then there was my sister and me, Paul and Jim. I forget who the next one was. Stanley. Anyhow, there were several other kids. And there's one picture of me. It shows me in the--. We're straddling a broomstick for some reason. And I'm in the front, and then Paul's behind me, and the next one and then the next one, you know. So I considered myself the leader of the gang. You know, I was a boy, you know, and I wasn't going to let anybody put me down. And so my mother had boxing gloves, which she had because of my older stepbrothers. So they could go out in the yard--. If they got in a conflict, they could go out in the yard and battle it out. So Paul and I put on the boxing gloves and I creamed him. You know, I really was able to hit him. A couple of years later, Paul came over. He came out from Glendale and they visited us, and we put on the boxing gloves and it was a very different story [Laughter]. I was no longer the boy who could beat him up. He beat me up. That's what my childhood was like. We had more fun.

[00:03:09] I: So did you guys ever experience-- Because you guys were both in L.A., kind of where there was a social scene and you go out at night. Was there any experiences you had with the cops coming in?

[00:03:23] BE: No. Oh, there was one bar that, oh, what's his name took me to.

[00:03:31] RR: Jim?

[00:03:33] BE: Yeah. Over in Glendale, on our way to Glendale. And that was a bar that you did not want to be seen in.

[00:03:45] RR: Well, did the police come?

[00:03:46] BE: No. But it--.

[00:03:48] RR: Silver Lake District.

[00:03:49] BE: Silver Lake District, and you just didn't want to go there too often. And I did not feel as safe in that place.

[00:03:58] RR: Yeah, I had a male friend. There was a bar in North Hollywood. I think it was in North Hollywood. It was called the Pink Glove. And it was my first experience with a bar, with a gay bar. And it was a great place because it was men and women. And I loved it because of the mix. In fact, that really spoiled me for four other bars, because I don't like women's bars and I don't necessarily like men-only bars either, although I'd been in a couple of those with friends. But it was a really nice atmosphere. And yes, the police would regularly harass that place. And of course, my friend and I both had secret-- Well, he had a secret, I had a top secret clearance at that time. And they always seemed to know when they were coming. So he and I would go out the back door along with other people who didn't want to get caught in a place like that. And we'd get to our cars and take off, but never actually caught in one.

We have a person in our support group, actually. We're talking one day about working under clearances and that kind of thing. And he worked-- I can't remember the company's name, but he was actually booted for being gay. I don't know if he got caught in a bar or what happened, but he said, "Yeah, well, they caught me."

[00:05:22] BE: Yeah, and they fired him. So that did happen.

[00:05:25] RR: Oh, absolutely. I know that it happened to a lot of guys. A lot of guys. I never knew of a woman getting fired that way, although Stevie could have. I mean she should have, but she didn't. There was this woman. She was too much, God. She was going through orientation, smoking a cigar [Laughter], and telling her boss, Dr. Sackman, that he was a pathological liar! I think she left by mutual agreement.

[00:05:57] BE: We had all these psychologists at SDC. Tons of psychologists, and some of them were the weirdest people you have ever met. And what was the name of the--?

[00:06:11] RR: Oh, Drs. Rohm?

[00:06:12] BE: Drs. Rohm. Yeah, Dr. Rohm and his wife.

[00:06:15] RR: Sidney and B. Rohm.

[00:06:17] BE: They were weirdos and we remember the woman that crawled under her desk and wouldn't come out?

[00:06:25] RR: There were so many of them, Betty. You don't need to let the public know about aerospace and how crazy it was [Laughter].

[00:06:34] I: And by the way, the book I'm reading, I think it mentions the Pink Glove in there.

[00:06:36] RR: Really?

[00:06:39] I: So it might even mention the other place you were talking about.

[00:06:40] RR: North Hollywood. Interesting.

[00:06:41] I: Yeah, it's a really good book. So far, it's depressing. It's kind of like--. I just saw Brokeback Mountain and I started reading that and now--.

[00:06:48] RR: Oh, overload.

[00:06:51] I: Out of curiosity, do you have any family members that are out?

[00:06:55] RR: I don't have any family members that are gay, as far as I know.

[00:06:59] BE: I don't either. [Phone rings]

[00:07:02] RR: Mikey's not here to answer that. Why don't you just stop it? [Video cuts to montage of art in the home] Yeah, this is going much longer than I thought I would. Okay, okay, okay, bye. [Video cuts to Rachel and Betty on the couch]

[00:08:06] BE: [Reading from a paper]...Spirituality. Fire from the splitting of an atom. Heat from the burning of the sun. Light like the moon that shines above us. Death from the shooting of a gun. All that life gives us is forgotten till we accept that we are one. One in our passion and forgiveness, one in our reaching out for love. Sent from the heavens to uplift us, sent from the heavens up above. Like shadows on the grass, we are transfigured to patterns of ethereal delight. When we feel divine intention, deep in the blackness of the night.

[00:08:40] I: Great, cool. And Sarah, do you want me to shine a light on--? [audio interruption] No, this will be good. This will give Sarah a lot of material to work with.

[00:09:00] RR: How many hours do you have?

[00:09:07] I: Three hours, right?

[00:09:09] BE: Yeah, I think so.

[00:09:10] I: Plus what we're doing now. Right, is this the new tape on the next hour? That's good!

[00:12:50] RR: [On the phone] Zero two. What? Two two, no six. Two two zero two. Okay, I'll call you as soon as they're wrapped up. Yeah, this is going much longer than I thought it would.

END OF INTERVIEW

Meta Data

Summary: Katrina Maksimuk interviews Los Osos couple Rachel Richardson and Betty Edmundson about their involvement in the community upon moving to San Luis Obispo County from Southern California. Richardson and Edmundson tell stories of loss, family, volunteerism, as well as their civil rights activism both prior to and after moving to San Luis Obispo County. The two discuss their marriage, business experience, community outreach, artistic endeavors, and advice for a younger generation of LGBT people in the County.

Keyword List: San Luis Obispo, Los Osos, gay, lesbian, activism, volunteering, community outreach