

Interview With Tony Saponate and William “Bart” Bartosh

CCQAP

Narrator: Tony Saponate [TS] and William “Bart” Bartosh [WB]

Interviewers: Dylan Michael Canterbury Baker [DB], David Weisman [DW]

Interview Date: October 16, 2021

Location: The ranch of Tony Saponate and Bart Bartosh, San Ardo, CA

Length: Approximately 39 minutes. Interview starts at 0:00:10.1.

Transcript prepared by: Steven Rusczycky

0:00:10.1 Dylan Michael Canterbury Baker [DB]: And we are here today on behalf of the Central Coast Queer Archive Project interviewing Bart and Tony. Today is October 16th, 2021. I just want us to first off by saying thank you so much for allowing us to interview you and being in your all beautiful home.

0:00:29.2 Tony Saponate [TS]: Thank you, we enjoy your company.

0:00:34.4 DB: Y'all alluded to this in your individual interviews, but can you give us a little more of the story of how you all met and how that came to be and how you all became such a wonderful couple?

0:00:44.6 TS: Do you want to start?

0:00:47.6 William "Bart" Bartosh [WB]: I went dancing, and I went dancing, I think I mentioned earlier, with a small group from Stanford, and it was not a particularly friendly place except for Tony, so that is how--

0:00:56.7 TS: I got the same vibe from the place. Yeah, I was ready for a relationship. I'm tired of the one night-- you know, trying to find somebody and ended up going home alone.

0:01:09.6 WB: Right, so he came home with me instead... And he never left.

0:01:14.9 DB: No, I love it. And how long did you all date before you knew each other was the right person for you?

0:01:21.9 WB: That's really hard to say. We knew pretty early because I know, I told him, I remember I told you that I'd like to make it a solid commitment, relationship.

0:01:34.5 TS: Yeah, you said that you were looking for a relationship and that you were ready to share your life, and it's the first time I really heard that solidly from somebody.

0:01:48.6 DB: You also alluded that you were involved in real estate, that's part of how you got involved in the ranch here, but can you talk a wee bit, about its role in ya'll's life?

0:02:01.7 WB: Right. Well, it played a big role, I would say. Tony is... You can tell them more about that. He does a lot of the physical work, or has done a lot of the physical work or maintenance of our income properties. At one time, we actually were running four different income properties, and before that when we first met, I think I mentioned earlier that we had a two flat on 19th Street in San Francisco, the highest point on 19th Street, just a great house. And we sold that for a major gain and bought a seven unit apartment house on Bernal Heights, which we knew had tremendous potential, and I guess the term would be flipped. We flipped that, sold it for a big capital gain, not too long, maybe six months after we bought it. And we lived there as well and refurbish the place and it looked great, and we could see where at first it had good bones as the realtor would say. There wasn't any damage from rot, anything like that. We just fluffed it, we've had a paint job on the outside--

0:03:05.6 TS: We got one of those wood sanders and sanded the floor...

0:03:05.3 WB: He did it in two of the apartments, we sanded the hardwood floors and lay down some new carpet in the hallway and did the wood floors there and the place just shined.

0:03:15.8 TS: We put in a garage door opener and all kinds of things, yeah.

0:03:23.1 WB: It was just easy to sell it. And we put that money into a... Especially into the apartment house on Central Avenue, and we actually lived there for a good long time. This faced onto Buena Vista Park, and it was a lovely income property and easy to manage, fairly easy to manage because there wasn't much land just the building. It went from Buena Vista Street on the west side, facing the park, over to Central Avenue on the west side, and from the view upstairs in the apartment we mostly lived in, we could see across the park to the Golden Gate-- no the Bay Bridge, and from the north, there was one north-facing window, we could see the Golden Gate Bridge... So it was one of those two-bridge views, which I thought it was a highly fun thing in San Francisco. You could see both bridges. Before that, I'd lived in a really extraordinary place, this was before I met Tony. With my ex, I suggested we buy it, it was a small ranch, 40 acres in the Woodside area down the peninsula, and right on the top of the skyline, Skyline Boulevard, you could see the ocean and the bay, and I thought of it because from that location, from that house, we could see all the bay area bridges from the Dumbarton bridge in the south, the Hayward bridge, the Bay bridge, the Golden Gate bridge, you'd have to have binoculars or a telescope to see it, even the Richmond/San Rafael Bridge way in the North End so it was tremendous-- we could see the Sierras across the East Bay mountains, East Bay hills, through Niles Canyon, you can see Rubicon Peak, near lake Tahoe, but it was also a really nasty wind place. Still, my ex liked it, and we built a pretty nice house up there and sold it to the Park District, the Park District was collecting all that land, and they wanted to tear it down, but you know it's still standing. They ended up leasing it out. Anyway,

it was... I knew it would be a good buy. I didn't have any money, so I couldn't buy it. My ex bought it, and that made a big difference down here, because the other part of our ranch was something my ex gave to me just recently, as kind of a divorce settlement. As I said, I knew that he was a good guy, and we have stayed in touch and close. We go visit him every year. He lives in Texas now, and so that's how that worked out. It worked out very well, and we knew enough in real estate, like I said, to flip that property, we sold-- bought and sold ones in San Juan Baptista and up at the Russian River. Kind of a typical-- And there's a lot of realtors, gay realtors in San Francisco, that is pretty common.

0:06:01.5 DB: Okay, another thing that I believe you all mentioned or alluded to was after you all got together--together, real estate, you all started doing a great deal of traveling, in particular, Argentina, Italy, I believe you said the PRC [People's Republic of China] as well?

0:06:18.7 WB: Yes, correct. I didn't wanna leave out, but just on the real estate that we were... In 1988, just before I had met Tony, I bought the place in Santa Barbara, which we still have, it's really an income property and a second home, and we have my sister living in our condominium in San Francisco, so that's today's extent of real estate. Real estate is wonderful, but a lot of work. If you're doing it it is both of those things. Anyway, yeah, we did a lot of travel once we got established here at the ranch, and after mom and dad had passed away and we-- well, mom had to live in a nursing home, but we were then able to get away, and so traveled to... I think South America is our best trip. It was just phenomenal. We love Europe, all the many places, including Tony's family, which I hope he'll talk about in a minute. We went to China and all those trips-- People finally are pretty much the same, the world over, you hear all over and over again. But they actually really are. And that was good to know. You might want to mention--

0:07:37.3 TS: Yeah, when I was in Italy, it was quite a blessing 'cause my father had passed away, and when we went to look back at the history of what he had, which we were told when we were growing up, it was all ended up in this box, it was up in the closet up on the top level. And we'd take it down and we look at all these cards. They were like memorial cards as pictures of relatives, there's pictures of buildings in Italy, and so we look there and it says Marlia, which is a little town outside of Lucca, and we find out that my grandmother's pictures there and my grandfather and these relatives... We didn't know, and there were some young, two young boys, also, that were in these pictures, so we decided we would take a trip to Italy and we had these pictures with us, and we went over to Marlia and there was a little church there. We ended up at the church 'cause there was no room anywhere to stay because they're having a festival, it was a summer festival going on there, and the interesting thing is we were able to talk to the priest and ask if there were any Saponates around here--

0:09:04.7 WB: We parked in the church parking lot overnight.

0:09:06.4 TS: Yeah, we had to park overnight. The lady came in during the night to feed the pigeons, so wondering what this car is doing, she goes and looks in while we're laying down, I think we scared her half to death. But anyway, he did not know any Saponates, that went to church, but he knew some that lived a few blocks away from the church. And so we decided to walk up there on that day, and we went to the front yard, and there was this guy working, a young guy that was working out there, and an older guy, and so we began talking to the guy who was working in the yard, and he brought over actually the first cousin of my dad, and I didn't know that too... After we showed them the pictures, and they didn't really recognize my grandfather, but they recognized

those two young boys I was telling you about, and I'm glad I brought them because I almost didn't. I said to myself how does this fit into everything because there was nothing about them, but they looked at those boys and they were like, yeah, we know that picture where they got an interpreter across the street, and they said, Come back the next day. The 30 family members came back, and this one guy comes up to me and he's like in the 60s--

0:10:33.1 WB: Older than that I think, more like late 70s.

0:10:33.1 TS: Late 70s you think? And he shows me the same picture that I had, and my father had never been back to Italy, and my grandfather was passed away and my grandmother had passed away very young and all, and so there was this big celebration and everybody... They just were yelling with excitement and enjoyment.

0:11:00.0 WB: Literally applauded when they saw the picture.

0:11:02.2 TS: I guess because we weren't some unknowns, but we had connection and... So he had a brother, and we were able to visit. They had us over for dinner at the various families', and one of the families had us to dinner... We went up to this place called Metraia--

0:11:26.9 WB: Where the family ranch was.

0:11:28.1 TS: Right above Lucca in Marlia-- so, the town is Maria that he came from. But Lucca, most people know because that's where the Walled City and Puccini got his start. Anyway, but this nice town called Metraia, it was a wayside, hostel place from the 1700s there is a rock-built, and

they were living in that named for three families, and they actually had goats, they had pigs, they had olive trees, and they also, interesting enough, they did mushroom picking, and dried mushrooms, and they pointed down the bottom of the hill, and they said that building down there is like a two-bedroom structure building--

0:12:23.1 WB: Two room-- It's real small...

0:12:24.8 TS: That's right, two room. Thanks for the correction. It's kind of like an Adobe structure, and that's where my father and his brother--my grandfather, I'm sorry, and his brother-- were raised.

0:12:46.5 WB: His brother, Tony's great uncle Guido, was still alive, and never could leave his room upstairs because he had emphysema, he had been a smoker, but he was still there, and he recognized the photos too.

0:13:00.0 TS: They stuck him in a window near the kitchen because everybody had to go through the kitchen to eat and they all pat them on his head and he could look out the window and also be in the kitchen area. The whole thing was a blessing, and even at the end of meeting everyone two of them come up to us and come out to us that they're gay. And when we came out, we came out right away. We felt, Well, we don't know, these people might as well just say it as it is, and some were a little taken aback and some were quite accepting. So that was a blessing. And the other trips, the trips were nice, got to see a lot of public buildings and also to Morocco and Austria and the various European countries. It's a lot of work though. We have a lot of pictures but it's a lot of work.

0:14:02.7 WB: Great stuff.

0:14:03.4 DB: I wanted to ask, before we get into y'all's involvement in the Episcopal church, could you provide us with a brief history of LGBTQ people in the Episcopal Church?

0:14:15.3 WB: Yes, it was an emerging situation as I kind of mentioned it in the one-on-one interview, and I don't want to fail to mention that our relationship was really solidified by the debate about same-gender blessings in the church, something the Episcopal Church and proposed during one General Convention. That's our tri-- in every third year meeting across the country, and then the next, it wasn't passed them, but it was passed the next time, and the first time... I think that was back in 2003, because we went to 2003, '06, '09-- four general conventions. So 2003, we got a lot of support in that general convention for blessings, and that was-- was that the year? Or was that the year for Gene Robinson.

0:15:07.3 TS: Gene Robinson came fairly late.

0:15:12.7 WB: 2006, at least 2006. Gene Robinson was the first openly gay Bishop in the Episcopal Church and which--

0:15:21.8 TS: It made headlines in the papers.

0:15:21.8 WB: It was all over the news, and he was, we elect our Bishops--

0:15:26.6 TS: In any church.

0:15:29.3 WB: In any church, well, in any established church, any serious church. It was a big issue in the church and the news, but the big thing about Gene Robinson is that this was a real person we were dealing with, and so it's kind of easier to say, No, we don't wanna offend anybody. Most of the priests and bishops were ready to have gays and lesbians and they loved having them come to the congregation. I remember the bishop of South Carolina, who positively wouldn't vote for it, but he said, But in South Carolina, my diocese is the church of choice for gay and lesbian folks. He knew it, but he just didn't want to talk about it!

0:16:15.1 TS: We felt we were in a kind of awkward situation because we were doing our work and we're doing it in a way that was gradual, but it was getting people to come on board, and when Gene Robinson came in, he came like a flash out of nowhere, and it's like... Oh god, what's this gonna do to us?

0:16:34.0 WB: This is a couple of fun stories, tie into the church and our lives here, because mom and dad lived at this house for me at first, and then at a place they bought in Paso Robles, not too long there after we moved down. And that was in the 90s, and they were coming with us. I dragged them with me to the Episcopal Church, and we were coming on to our anniversary in 20--, well, no because dad died in 1998, probably 1997 or so. And the blessings issue was already being talked about in the church, and I asked our priest, well she was actually a deacon, but they could do the services, and so she did the services at our little mission church. When we first went there that were just three older women, very nice older women... And I want to make sure this is the right place because I didn't get such a good vibe from the church in Paso Robles, which is actually slightly closer, or the one in King City and Jolon, which were... They were even more cautious and didn't

want to talk about it, but these three old ladies were positively accepting, one was just the absolute spirit of love in San Ardo, the little village where the church is located.

0:17:55.5 WB: They were basically it. They were the church, one of them had a daughter who came sometimes and she brought her boyfriend, and that was fine by everybody. So one day we had this deacon lady didn't do the service, and she had someone stand in who was a priest, from down in Nipomo, and she came and did the service for us, and she asked--which our regular deacon never asked--are there any weddings or anniversaries? And I didn't know what... I didn't know what they were gonna do, but our friend Beverly, the daughter of one of the old ladies, said, "Well, my partner, her friend and I had been together for 19 years" at that point, or something like that, and she said, we should come have a blessing. So she gave them a blessing even though they weren't married. She wasn't worried about that. She knew-- she knew everything, she never asked that kind of question, like she never asked for birthdays because she knew everybody's birthday already, but when the next weekend came, it was our anniversary of the day we met, June 24th. And I had sent her an email the night before church saying that other couple, they're not married and they got a blessing, Tony and aren't married, but we'd like a blessing too. And why not? And then I just didn't think anything of it. We got to the church, I had... My parents are coming with us to church, I had never actually formally come out to my dad, even though I knew that my mom knew because my sister told me that they talked about it all the time, and dad must have known, but I just... I was worried about what he was going to think, as much as I loved him, I wasn't sure, and we get to the church and I haven't thought beforehand about it, what to say or anything about that. Sure enough, when it comes to that point in the service when our deacon, our regular deacon, who knew us really well, I would never have asked the question 'cause she knew everybody's birthdays. That Sunday, she said, Are there any birthdays or anniversaries? She started looking right at me, and I freeze like

a deer caught in headlights. I don't know what to do. But Tony...

0:20:10.0 TS: Well, I actually was sitting with his dad there at the time, and so I was just like, Well, since it is our anniversary... Can you do anything for that?

0:20:21.3 WB: That's our eighth anniversary. I think it was 1996.

0:20:26.3 TS: She said, Well, come on up. And so we did, and Bart kind of stood off to the side. And she said, can't you guys get a little closer?

0:20:37.5 WB: I never forget that line! That was the line that I really wanted to get it. I love that line.

0:20:42.0 TS: So, I put my arm around him.

0:20:46.3 WB: Kind of like this.

0:20:49.1 TS: And she gave us a blessing, and everybody clapped, and--

0:20:55.2 WB: Dad is applauding, everyone is applauding. And it was just wonderful. So of course, I jumped out and that enabled dad to ask a lot of questions, and I said, AIDS, yes, that's a real disease, you got to try to avoid it, but he was the one who... Back when I was growing up, my brother and I, my brother is five years older, He told us all about the birds and the bees way early on. When I was five years old, he was telling me all this stuff. Why are you telling me this? What

you thought it should-- And his big thing was to avoid disease, so I was able to talk to him on a very adult basis because-- it's easy got to avoid it. You got to as much as you can, be careful.

0:21:37.9 TS: He didn't have any problem with it, he just wanted to make sure that we were taking care of ourselves and that we aren't getting into trouble.

0:21:46.5 WB: As you all know, HIV/AIDS was important to bring so many people out of the closet because they were dying and people didn't really know that it wasn't just a gay disease, but it was a disease that hit a lot of gay people. And people were dying. So other people started caring, at least the ones who are good people, they really started caring. Episcopal Church really is a bunch of great people. So they were very caring, even in the early stages of HIV/AIDS.

0:22:21.6 TS: I know you want to be brief, because I heard you say the word "brief," but I wanted to include one part, is that we had a lot of work with the church doing a "welcoming parishes" agenda group--cause. We had to go in our diocese of El Camino Reale to all the parishes and to ask them what the level of support was when somebody gay came to the door, what were you going to do? And so we had to educate how to receive people, and we had a little rainbow plaque that we would put out that if they were willing to, they could put it in the vestibule or as somewhere nearby, it wouldn't be big and flashy, but...

0:23:08.4 WB: The church entry door.

0:23:08.4 TS: A little plaque to say that You know, Integrity organization is here, we welcome you.

0:23:14.9 WB: This parish welcomes you, and with the rainbow. It was, of course, our touchstone to be sure of our own parish there in San Ardo. We talked in the three old ladies, and they said, Well, of course we're going to be a welcoming parish, and especially Leona, who was kind of the most fun of the three, and she goes on to tell us about the night that she was in King City at the bar called Puzzi's Stampeded, a real shit-kicking country and western type bar, and that she'd like to drink a little bit, but anyway, she's in the bar and she's sitting at the bar, and another woman comes in and sits next to her, and they start to talking, the next thing you know is the other one's hand is on her knee and Leona was so cool, she said, Well, thanks, but no thanks. If you're gonna be straight at, that's your choice, but that was... She was really cool about it.

[Bart: We also held large Integrity (the Episcopal LGBTQ support group) Retreats here at the ranch – at the biggest one we had 35 attending with 33 staying overnight!]

0:24:09.2 TS: We were received by them very easily. We helped get them out of their debt with spaghetti dinners, and we are also keeping that church going after... What has it been? 25-- close to 30 years, which is a small mission church in a town with a population of 250, San Ardo.

0:24:33.2 WB: 450, but close enough.

0:24:36.2 TS: Yeah.

0:24:34.5 DB: So you were all were talking about your wonderful activism in the Episcopal church. Do you all ever get involved in LGBTQ activism in Monterey County, SLO County, that kind of area--Paso Robles?

0:24:53.0 WB: Right, Paso Robles is the main location. Things like the Proposition 8, I don't know if you remember that debacle, but there was a--

0:25:03.1 TS: "No on 8."

0:25:04.5 WB: Yeah, we were with the "No on 8" campaign, and we got several of our friends from the church to join us in demonstrating, including Mark and Mike, I believe in Atascadero, and most our activism was through the Episcopal Church because we were out here, but the church was a great way to go about it. So we did do some direct civic activism, I think once or twice we went down, issues came up-- we really valued the GALA Center in San Luis Obispo. As you guys know, it takes an hour and 20 minutes or so to get there. But we'd go if something were happening at the court house, and certainly with the Pride parade, the events there, there were simple--

0:25:54.3 TS: Mardi Gras.

0:25:56.2 WB: Mardi Gras, yes.

0:25:57.4 TS: We all dressed up as Carmen Miranda, that was on the street car, and we all had to get our clothes at Victoria Secret, or whatever, and ended up at the straightest gay bar.

0:26:13.8 WB: Bull's Tavern. I don't know if it's still there.

0:26:10.7 TS: Because the party got rained out and the parade did, and so we ended up heading on over to...

0:26:21.0 WB: And so 21 of us all dressed up as Carmen Miranda, to go in to this, well, it was kind of this shit-kickers' bar too...

0:26:30.2 TS: It wasn't like that was our focus, it was... We were going down the businesses, and even with the Christian Science church--

0:26:39.3 WB: Well no, it wasn't a Christian Science Church it was a Christian bookstore. They were welcoming. The little old lady was happy to see us, but the guys in Bull's Tavern were the big surprise to me because they wanted to see a parade. They wanted to see some fun, have some fun that's what they were there for... Even though they're all straight guys, I'm dressed up as Carmen Miranda and I was starting to flirt with him, and they loved it! They wanted more flirting!

0:27:03.0 TS: We kept throwing out these beads and these other things that we... And they were having some fun...

0:27:10.2 WB: It was great, that was great. Remember that the most important activism you can do is being yourself if your gay... Real people, like with our Bishop Robinson make the difference.

0:27:26.4 David Weisman [DW]: The only reason I would mention when you mentioned Paso Robles and this activism talking about in these events, they are decades ago...

0:27:34.3 WB: Yes.

0:27:34.3 DW: But you may have seen the newspaper just this week.

0:27:40.0 WB: I'm on the GALA email list, and I heard that there was...

0:27:42.7 DW: So there's an incident where students at the public high school took down a Gay Pride flag, dragged into the bathroom and defecated on it, so now here we are decades after the incident you speak of where you went into this Tavern and there wasn't a problem. Is there any way you maybe can relate these past decades and the rise and fall of what you've experienced, not out here in the country, but when you've gone into town and what you've seen and felt as an attitude in this rural area towards the LGBTQ community?

0:28:14.1 WB: Well, primarily is this a live-and-let-live area. It is only in the towns and the cities that actually... That you have a tighter community, and when you have a tighter community, they tend to impose standards on each other, so my sense of the country side is fine. In Paso Robles, it took something like the wine folks to come along and the wine folks made a big difference culturally in Paso Robles, because they were kind of inherently more accepting. They were tipplers and drinkers, and fundamentalists many times wouldn't like that. So that helped. And in fact, there's a gay couple who run one of the wineries. I think it's called... And not Adelaide, but that Western Hills and Santa Rita Hills the one with that ranch over there.

0:29:11.2 TS: It's not York winery.

0:29:11.5 WB: Not York but in that same area. A gay couple own the property and run that winery, and so they were having events, gay wine bar events.

0:29:23.2 TS: That's right.

0:29:23.6 WB: Which was lovely. Very nice. And I don't know if you've been to any of those, David, but there... Sometimes the other winery folks do that too.

0:29:33.1 TS: They had a place around the plaza in Paso Robles, and they would have a Friday nights for gay people to come. Yeah.

0:29:42.8 DB: So considering y'all are both from very large US cities, how has life been on the ranch? Y'all have been here for almost, what, two decades?

0:29:52.8 TS: 32 years almost. When you mean the contrast? How-- what's... It's like night and day. It's... Growing up in the city... I don't know, it feels very... It can feel very anonymous. But you know, growing up, growing up here too, is a very quiet, you can be very quite and meditate depends how much work you do, how much physical work you do, you have to organize your life, you have to realize, you know that you have got to go into town, but you don't want to go into town very often because you don't want to waste resources. And so I cut his hair, and I change the oil. I fixed the roof, you know, you end up doing... Now it's a metal roof, thank God. But yeah, you gotta do a lot of things yourself. In the city, it was... I don't know, it's different. I was in the corporate world, and then I did some work at the hardware store, which was for three years, which was interesting, and that helped me to learn some more of the things that... I had to learn a lot of the things on my own when I was fixing heaters and plastering and painting, and any kind of fixed or related thing. I was pushed up against the wall and "fix it, or else!" With the pressure of having tenants or kids

around you and, you know, it's tough everywhere. What can I say? It's tough everywhere, but I try to make it--to make it happy and put a lot of love into it.

0:32:01.5 WB: I think that we are in good touch with all of our neighbors here in the valley. I love that there are relatively few of them, as you could see. The folks at the very north end of this telephone exchange or landline is still very important to us out here. People don't realize how important that can be if you come in the city, and in the city, you've got great cell service and whatnot, but out here in the cell service, even if you have any... It isn't very good. We don't really have any... It does work now, it just recently started working for our internet. We're glad to have that, but-- because you want all the communication you can get. But our neighbors are great, so from the Barkers in the very last house, and the Pearsons near them, coming down the valley, the Emorys who were a homestead Family, the Montgomerys, another homestead family south of us. And then all the way down to the Lombardo ranches. He's got about 20000 acres, most of the Valley actually from Hare Canyon Road up to Big Sandy Road. So, there's very large holdings out here. There aren't many neighbors, but the ones there are, are great.

0:33:08.8 WB: Whenever a California history--especially a Monterey County history, just part of the county--question comes up, they always call me, and I'm delighted with that. I'm kind of the history lady of Indian Valley.

0:33:24.8 TS: So we're doing-- I have to mention that we're trying to help our tenant rancher, and he's got a family with two kids, and he's still into ranching, that's all he knows, and she's going be a teacher, probably get a credential and be ready in spring, and we want to help bring them to a point of more comfortable security in their life. They had to deal with a lot, they had premature babies.

And so they're actually doing work out here today, he's putting in water lines and a tank.

0:33:58.3 WB: As you guys heard.

0:34:00.1 TS: Yes, and so we're trying to do our part to keep the kind of life that was going on out here before, and the families that were here before, and to be able to hold their hands through all this, 'cause it's been quite rough with the drought.

0:34:20.1 WB: Our tenant rancher actually comes from a homestead or family a little farther to the north yet, and he really has wanted to live in this area and be able to work here and live here. A good guy. So that fit very well.

0:34:34.1 DW: Is the irony then not lost that who could have predicted history a century later would bring two gay homesteaders to an original gay homestead ranch? Do you reflect on that? Is it just mere coincidence or is more divine inspiration.

0:34:50.9 TS: Sometimes I wonder if it is us. The two in the past is us rebirthed or something. I don't know.

0:34:58.0 WB: There was an age difference between those two and those two Georges and there's about the same age difference between me and Tony. I rather-- that some mystical thing have it or not, I don't... I just don't worry... That's the kind of thing I don't worry about. It's like the question of whether there is a heaven or not. I just don't worry about it. I just have faith. I just trust. And so too it is with those questions, but yeah, I think our tenant rancher has been extremely supportive of us

as a couple, and again, very typical of the area, I think, and so he was delighted to hear that you guys are coming today. I think I mentioned earlier that he... I told him that that it was the GALA center folks, and he already knew about you. He heard about the controversy, by the way, that you mentioned at Paso, and we had too because we're on the GALA center email list. And I hope that-- it sounds to me like the GALA center had a very good-- very measured response to that, we'll see how it turns out. I guess I don't think the issue is quite settled yet, but our tenant rancher was very supportive and said to me, he said-- Well, I guess I told him I used to-- and he said, congratulations. When I said I used to do the oral history interviews with old-timers from this area, now I am the old-timer getting an oral history interview.

0:36:23.7 DB: To finish off, I wanted to ask you all, what advice do you have for young LGBTQ+ people?

0:36:31.8 TS: Well, I think we all come from different lives, and I don't think we should consider ourselves in one specific way of living. I think the more we find out more about ourselves, we find out that our lives are very unique and everybody... If you're gonna consider yourself unique, everybody else is unique too... And as far as gay people are concerned, I like to make the argument that gay people are just as valuable as any straight person. I had to be a father in my family to my brothers and sisters, and I had to be there where there was no support, and it made sense for me. It's not going to make sense for everybody's situation, but my situation... It made sense for me. I couldn't even fathom thinking of raising a family after all that I've had to do, although we had thought about it at one time, and it just... For my situation, I needed that, I needed that support, whether it just happened to be a male for me, and it worked, and it came naturally to me, and I just think we all are legitimate, unique individuals, and we ought to be able to express who we are and

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not feel that-- and not feel ashamed of who we are, and to be real with each other, not to push it in people's face, but to be a listener, a good listener, and to be real.

0:38:28.0 WB: I don't think I can say too much more. As you know I said earlier, from Shakespeare: "To thine own self be true." And I think that's really good advice. That's all I have to say about it.

[Bart: But I would add that people are the best things in life (and can be the worst) so pay attention to your friends and make more.]

0:38:40.3 DB: Bart, Tony, thank you so much for allowing us to interview you. It is so appreciated.

0:38:49.4 TS: Thank you.

0:38:49.6 WB: It's great to have you all here.

0:38:50.6 TS: I really enjoyed this.

0:38:53.2 WB: As they said in the Beverly Hill Billies: "Ya'll come back now, you hear?"

0:39:00.2 TS: Mr. Optimism!