

**Interview With Sari Dworkin**

**CCQAP**

**Narrator:** Sari Dworkin [SD]

**Interviewers:** Mary Waters [MW], David Weisman [DW]

**Interview Date:** June 26, 2021

**Location:** The GALA Pride and Diversity Center

**Length:** Approximately 1 hour, 3 minutes. Interview starts at 0:00:11.0.

**Transcript prepared by:** Steven Ruszczycky

0:00:11.0 Mary Waters [MW]: It is 12:15PM in San Luis Obispo, California on Saturday, June 26th. This is the Central Coast Queer Archive Project interview with Sari Dworkin. I guess I'll start off with asking you, where were you born and raised, and is there anything that you'd like to share about your background?

Sari Dworkin [SD]: I was born in the Bronx in New York City, and I came from a Jewish family in a Jewish neighborhood near the Yankee Stadium, and I grew up in an apartment. And so I'm really used to apartment living, it was very hard for me to be a home owner because any time anything breaks, I always go around yelling, "Where's the super?" 'cause I don't wanna fix it, 'cause I don't know how to fix it. Nor do I wanna pay anybody. And also growing up in the Bronx, I thought that Jews were a majority. So it was really a shock me when I left New York, which I never thought I would, to find out that Jews were a minority, and I didn't really find that out until I became a Vista volunteer and went to The Santee Sioux Indian reservation in Niobrara, Nebraska. So growing up in the Bronx, number one, I was Jewish, and that was a very important part of my aspect of my personality and my identity, but we weren't really religious. When I was a kid, my father wanted us to be Orthodox.

0:02:11.1 [SD]: He came from Russia, he was born in Russia, so I'm first generation American on my father's side, and second generation on my mother's side, and I did hear a lot about anti-Semitism from both my mother and father. My father's family left to escape pogroms, real Fiddler on the Roof story, and our apartment building had many, many survivors of the Holocaust, so I grew up learning about the Holocaust and seeing the tattooed numbers. I really feel like I knew about the Holocaust at a very young age, that may or may not be totally true, but it feels like that,

and I feel like I have this existential dread all the time about something like that happening here and happening again, so I think that was a really important part of my identity. Now, I didn't grow up--I recognized that I felt different and that I didn't have that hormone push and that attraction towards guys in puberty, but I didn't really accept the fact that I might be lesbian. I didn't really accept my attraction to girls other than, that's who I wanted to be around all the time. So it wasn't until I was probably getting involved with the anti-war movement and with the women's liberation movement, and with making abortion legal, and I became part of a women's collective that I was able to sort of act out my attraction to women, but still not accept any kind of identity other than being a feminist, and I didn't even know about bisexuality at that time, and also...

**0:04:43.9 S1:** My mother stereotypically was a Phys-Ed teacher and a tom boy, and I was stereotypically a femme, and she wanted to disavow me because I wasn't an athlete, and she was a gym teacher in my junior high school, but I heard positive things about lesbians because she always had lesbians after her, throughout her time in her master's degree program, going for her master's in physical education, but that's really my Jewish identity was my key identity growing up in New York.

0:05:37.00 [MW]: So you mentioned that you had something of a journey to understanding your own sexual identity. Would you describe that?

0:05:47.00 [SD]: Yeah. Okay, so I left New York--New York was in the midst of a budget crisis when I got my Master's degree, and I got my Master's degree, it was in counseling and with a specialty in school counseling, and so I couldn't get a job. They were firing counselors who had 12 years experience and I had just got my degree. So I thought, well, let me see if I could make one of

my dreams come true, and one of my dreams was to join the Peace Corps. So I put in an application for the Peace Corps, and I got a call from Washington DC, and they asked me-- They said to me, we'd love to make use of your Master's degree and we don't. And most of the people in the Peace Corps have Bachelor degrees and we don't really use people's specialties. So would you mind if we switched you over to Vista, which was the Domestic Peace Corps at the time, and I said, Well, as long as you get me to a different culture, 'cause that's what I'm looking for. And so I got a call--I waited for a while, and I got a call and I was asked, how would I feel about going to the Santee Sioux Indian reservation in Niobrara, Nebraska, to help them develop an alcoholism treatment facility. Santee Sioux? Niobrara, Nebraska? Sounded very different from The Bronx and New York, so I accepted that, and I trained in Kansas City, Missouri, and it was really very funny. There was one other New York Jew there, Michelle. We found out we were both going to the same project. We ended up being on the same Indian reservation, and we ended up being roommates.

0:08:14.2 [SD]: It was also the very first time both of us really experienced anti-Semitism, and the fact that we were a minority. I remember one of the other vista volunteers, there were a group of three reservations in that area of Nebraska that six of us were assigned to, and one of the guys was a guitar player, and we were going to a pawn broker, where he was going to buy a guitar. And he said, I hope I can Jew him down. And I said, "Excuse me?" I had never heard that before. And so that was my first experience. And he didn't even-- Well, he didn't know Michelle and I were Jewish, but he didn't even recognize that as anti-Semitic, so it was actually my first experience with anti-Semitism--I'm getting to my sexual identity long way around--after the Indian reservation, I moved to Omaha, Nebraska, and I got a job working with the Nebraska Psychiatric Institute and as an educational therapist, and I also met a guy and I got heterosexually married. He turned out to be gay. I went into a doctoral program in counseling Psych at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln,

where there was a very active lesbian community called The L-L-L: The Lincoln Legion of Lesbians, to oppose the KKK. My husband didn't really come out as gay, he identified as bisexual, but I came out as lesbian, and we got divorced, and it was also the time of the AIDS crisis, and I realized that he was having unprotected sex, and I got really scared and I wouldn't have any sex with him, without his using a condom, and he refused to do that, but that's when I really started--really started looking at myself and the fact that I had always been much more attracted to women. But I also realized--it was very hard to look at bisexuality in those years. In fact, I'm not even sure how easy it still is, but it was very hard to look at bisexuality in those years. There was the myth that bi-sexuality didn't really exist, that people who identified as bisexual, which was actually true in my husband's case, were on their way to a gay identity, and that if somebody was bisexual and in a same-sex relationship, eventually they were gonna betray that same sex partner for the other sex partner. So, it was really, really difficult, and there didn't seem to be any place for a bisexual person in Lincoln, Nebraska, and I was really--Because I was in school in Lincoln, Nebraska, and I was getting a divorce from my husband, I was leaving Omaha. I didn't know what kind of gay community there was in Omaha at that time, if there was any. So, I really came out as lesbian at that time. It wasn't until later that I accepted a bisexual identity.

0:12:21.5 [SD]: Do You want me to go into that at this point? Okay, okay, so here I was in this doctoral program at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. And I chose that program. First of all, 'cause I had already been living in Nebraska for 10 years, which was amazing. I mean, I always thought I was gonna go back to New York.

0:12:47.7 [MW]: What year was this?

0:12:50.3 [SD]: So this was in the 80s, so I divorced my husband in '83, that's when the divorce became final, and I just always assumed-- I never made it back to New York, but I always assumed I was gonna go back to New York, and if anyone had ever said to me, I was gonna live in Nebraska of all places--for 10 years--I would have said, "You are crazy!" The weather was horrible, I mean not that New York is great, but Nebraska, it's way cold. It's way hot and humid in the summer, it's way rural, but it had a great lesbian community, great lesbian professors in the English department, lesbian separatists, which I didn't really identify with, but they were friends of mine, so it was a great place to come out as a lesbian, but while I was there, I also got involved because of my doctoral program with the American Psychological Association and The American Counseling Association, and when I get involved, I get involved, so I got involved with division 44, which was-- Well, first I got involved with the Association of Lesbian and Gay-- Well, it was the Association of Gay Psychologist, and later on it became the Association of Lesbian and Gay Psychologists. And I got involved with the American Counseling Association, the Association for... I can't remember their title at that time. I think it was for gay issues in counseling, and then I got on leadership committees, and then I got involved with-- When the division was formed in the American Psychological Association for the psychological study of gay issues, later on gay and lesbian issues, I got involved with that. And then I started pushing bisexuality.

0:15:24.2 [SD]: I remember one day at the executive committee meeting, because I was on the executive committee, I got elected as a council rep to the governing body of the American Psychological Association. And I got friendly with Ron Fox, and he was an out bisexual psychologist, and I said, maybe it's time for us to start pushing for inclusion of bisexuality with Division 44. And so at an executive committee meeting with butterflies in my stomach, I brought it up, at the executive community meeting. And got some push back, but it was interesting, it wasn't

the pushback I expected, like, bisexuality doesn't exist and what was amiss, but one guy on the executive committee was afraid that everybody would now have to start examining their own identity, that maybe they were really bisexual! That was the fear. And I thought that was very interesting.

0:16:43.2 [SD]: But anyway, we did get bisexuality accepted, and in the American Counseling Association, another psychologist and I, Fernando Gutierrez, we wrote the very first article about counseling issues, about how do you counsel gay and lesbian people, and that was published in the Journal of Counseling and Development. And then we came out with really one of the very first books that dealt with counseling issues, counseling gay men and lesbians, Journey to the End of the Rainbow. Now, this didn't include bisexuality, that came later. This book came out in 2012. So this was much later. And this one we did, this was really a casebook, and we did include bisexual and transgender. I was also, when I was president of Division 44, and I think that was in 2001 to 2002. I was the first person to bring transgender issues and transsexual issues to the forefront. I got Jameson Green to do a training for the executive committee, so I've got a number of "firsts" on some of these issues, but that was when--one of the reasons--

0:18:38.2 [SD]: I started reading more about bisexuality and started really examining myself. I mean all of my relationships were with women and, right now, I often call myself a bisexual lesbian. I've been in a 29-year relationship with a woman that I love her very, very much, and people always identify us as lesbians because we're in a relationship together, but if, God forbid, anything happened to her... I don't know. You know, I can't rule out that I might not have a relationship with a man or with someone who's transsexual, transgender, non-binary, and I have been attracted to men in my life, and I don't wanna deny that aspect of my identity. So that's really

why I chose bisexuality as an identity. Identity, it's just so complicated. Even my Jewish identity is complicated because I don't believe in a supernatural God, so I often identify as an atheist Jew or Jewish atheist, and people always, often don't understand that, except for reform Jews, because whenever I say to my Jewish friends at Congregation Beth David, well, I really identify as an atheist Jew 'cause I don't believe in a supernatural being. I often get, "Well, I don't believe in this old man in the sky either!" So people often get defensive that I think they believe in this, so it's all so complicated.

0:20:31.4 [MW]: Are there any particular ways that you wanna describe that your background interacts with your sexuality?

0:20:42.5 [SD]: I'm sorry?

0:20:42.2 [MW]: Any ways that your background interacts with your sexuality or like affects your understanding of it?

0:21:00.1 [SD]: My understanding impacts my...

0:21:00.0 [MW]: Sorry. Are there any ways that you wanna describe how your background as a Jewish woman influences your understanding of your own sexuality?

0:21:10.3 [SD]: Okay, sure. Well, okay, I think I said that when I was really young, my family tried to be Orthodox 'cause my father came from a very Orthodox family, and my mother was Orthodox as a child, but my mother had a really hard time with orthodoxy, and my father who thought he was



gonna be a rabbi became-- he needed to make money, especially during the Depression, he was supporting his family, and he owned a retail store, and if you know anything about owning a store, it's a seven-day 24-hour job, so that ended observing Shabbat pretty much. And then my mother got really tired of separate dishes and separate silverware for milk and meat, and she started mixing everything up and realized my father didn't say anything, and then she brought bacon into the house and my father loved it. So that was the end of anything Orthodox. So that we became Conservative, and then when I was living in Fresno-- So I went from Nebraska, my first academic job was at Cal State Fresno, and I went there in 1985. And that's actually where I met my wife, Kathryn. She was teaching there. She went there the same year. We didn't meet-- I mean, we met immediately, but we didn't start dating at that time. We were both in other relationships actually, so we met later as a couple, but that's where we met, and in Fresno, I started out at a small Conservative synagogue, and one day I was in services and the rabbi gave a sermon and he gave that horrible Leviticus that "thou shall not..." I don't know, "sleep with a man"--the same sex one, "lie with..." I don't even remember the whole quote, but, you know, "lie with a man as with a woman." Right. Right. And I was just dumbfounded because conservatives are more liberal, they had already ordained women, and I was horrified and I was really upset, and I was with Kathryn at that time, and I went home and I started crying and I couldn't... I just couldn't leave it. And she, who is not Jewish, she said, "Go talk to him." So I did, and I went to his office and I said, I'm really upset about that sermon, I happen to be a lesbian and do you really believe that? How could you preach that? And I started crying in his office. And he said, "Oh, I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to upset you." But he didn't say anything about his not really believing that it. It didn't console me at all, so that was my last time in that Schul, and I immediately joined the Reform Temple, and the Reform Temple is very open to gay and lesbian issues, and not only is it open to gay and lesbian issues, but social justice is a really, really big part. "Justice, justice, you shall pursue." "Tikkun Olam." Our main purpose here is to

mend, repair the world, and so that has become my home, and I was out and open, and Kathryn often came with me to services at Temple Beth-El... In Temple Beth Israel in Fresno, and here in San Luis Obispo. We are both family members of Congregation Beth David and St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Both are very accepting of gays and lesbians, and I'm chair of the Social Action Committee, and last night, the services last night this young woman, I think she's 15 or 16, Aubrey, she's terrific, she gave the sermon and she related yesterday's Torah portion to Gay Pride Month, and she had everybody turn to their neighbors and talk to them about their pronouns, and I thought it was terrific.

0:26:39.4 [SD]: I couldn't even include Judaism as part of my identity, if Judaism didn't accept LGBTQ+ as part of affirming.

0:26:58.3 [MW]: Speaking of Fresno, right? You were telling me a story about the booth in the free speech area. Would you mind telling that story?

0:27:10.5 [SD]: So I got to Fresno in 1985, and at that time, there wasn't any gay and lesbian group. Now, I had heard that earlier, maybe in the 70s, that they had had an active gay population there. I don't know if you know about Lillian Faderman, but she is a world-renowned lesbian historian. She's written up in the New York Times. She's known all over the world as she wrote *Surpassing the Love of Men*, and just all her-- well, she taught at Fresno State. She was on sabbatical the year I got there, but I knew her, and it was in 1987 that a couple of gay students came to me and they said they wanted to start a gay student club, and I was out. My mother always used to say to me, Why do you have to always be out and open about everything, because she had that Jewish belief that you never want to draw attention to yourself because it's dangerous.

0:28:40.2 [SD]: But that's who I am. I'm not a private person. And you know, you can ask me anything. And it's rare that I'll say, I don't wanna talk about that. My wife is not happy about that, but she has to deal with it. So, I had already-- I had written articles, my publications were already out and open, I should tell you if I forget, about going up for tenure with my articles 'cause that became an issue at Fresno State. So yes, I said, Of course, I'll be the faculty advisor, so we have to get a certain number, I don't remember how many, but to become an a recognized student club, a certain number of students had to sign on that they would be members. So we went around getting student signatures, which was not that easy. Some of the gay and lesbian students were afraid of being open, and then I was telling you that I went to some of my leftists-- 'cause I was also a member of the Latin American Support Committee, and I had gone to Nicaragua to deliver medical supplies to groups fighting against the Contras. So I went to them, I thought, sure, they're gonna sign on. Yeah, I knew they weren't gay or lesbian, but these are leftists! Come on, they're gonna sign on. Well, at least one said she thought long and hard about it, and it really hurt her, to recognize in herself that she didn't want anyone to assume she was lesbian, so she decided not to sign on. People have to make their own choices, and at least she recognized that this was not so good that she couldn't say it, but we got people and we became a recognized student group.

0:31:00.2 [SD]: Now in person, because here we are in California and it never rains in California. Right. But all the student groups-- we have this corridor that was called the free speech area, and all the student groups built booths, and during the lunch hour, everybody staffed their booths and they had brochures out on the booths, and the student questions and tried to get students to join the groups. So we decided we had to have a group. And of course people, gay people in the community were thrilled that we were gonna start a group, and I don't remember his name, but there was a gay

architect and he designed a gorgeous booth for us, and we spent days putting this booth together and painting it lavender and pink, and it was gorgeous, and we put it up, and it was there for a day. And it was burned down. So that was really horrible.

0:32:03.9 [SD]: And then once we were a recognized group, there were protests, and there was a group that tried to start a Straight Alliance, and they didn't want us to have a group, and then the KKK got involved, and when we had a regional gay and lesbian student conference on campus, we were at a workshop and the police came into it and they said, we better be careful and make sure if we go off campus for lunch, we should do-- none of us should go alone because the KKK were circling the campus in full regalia and they had anti-fag signs on their truck. Now luckily, nothing happened. But that was very intimidating. It was very intimidating, it was hard for students to wanna join our group because it was dangerous, and this was also during the AIDS crisis, so we had some die-ins on campus and "Silence = Death." It was a pretty active group. We started the first gay film festival. We were in the Industrial Arts Building, which was all the way in the back of the campus. We'd have 21 people show up. The Fresno gay, lesbian--I don't know what they call it now, it's probably broadened their name, but it's now one of the five biggest film festivals in the country.

0:33:50.9 [SD]: And then I think I told you about our first Gay Pride March. Do you want me to talk a little bit about that?

0:33:58.1 [MW]: Yeah.

0:34:00.0 [SD]: Okay, okay. So I believe it was in '92, but I may have that wrong. I'm terrible with

dates. So, I was at home, I was probably grading papers or something, and I get a call and it's telling me that it's this committee and they're organizing the first Gay Pride march in Fresno, and they'd like me to be a Grand Marshal. Would I do it? Of course! How exciting! Yay! Yes, yes! So, my partner then, she was not my wife at that time, she was teaching and she came home and I said, "Kathryn, guess what! ? I'm going to be the Marshal for the Gay Pride Parade" And she goes "over my dead body," 'cause she was really scared, but I did it, of course, and KKK was there, but it was really-- It was so great. They didn't cause any problems. There were only three of them actually, and they were in full regalia and people from San Francisco came down and one of them pulled one of their hats off, and I was in a convertible with a drag queen, and Kathryn was marching with PFLAG and she was way behind me when she saw the KKK, she hadn't heard any shots or didn't see any chaos, so she figured I was okay, and the dykes on bikes came down from San Francisco and they led the parade. It was terrific. It was terrific.

0:35:44.8 [MW]: Yeah, that sounds amazing.

0:35:49.2 [SD]: Yeah, yeah, and you know, if the oral history project ever does anything in Fresno, Peter Robertson, he works for the administration on the Bulldog Pride Fund, and he's done spectacular work, but he has all the newspapers, all the pictures, he's a wealth of information.

0:36:13.3 [MW]: What was that story you were saying about when you were up for tenure?

0:36:18.5 [SD]: When I was up for tenure, thank you. So I was going up for tenure, the first thing I did was I called Lillian Faderman up and I said, you know, I wanna put all my gay and lesbian publications and all of my committee work--it's all on the gay and lesbian committees of the

American Psychological Association and the American Counseling Association. How do you think that's gonna go? And she said, she said, "Do it." She said, "I'm on one of the upper branches of the committee that it's gonna go through." So she said, "Put it in, I think it's gonna be fine." So she was a full professor, she had been there for many years, and of course all her stuff is on lesbian history and gay history too, though at that time it was mostly lesbian history.

0:37:24.1 [SD]: So, I did. And so the chair of my department came to talk to me, 'cause you look through my file, and at that time we were sharing offices and I was sharing an office with a Japanese-American professor. So, he said, "You know, I looked through your file and do you really wanna have all of this in your file?" and he said, "Now I'm not worried about our department, but I am wary about the other committees." And I said, "Did you ask--" And I mentioned my roommate's name, if she was gonna take out all the Japanese-American work in the internment camps out of her file when she went up for tenure? So that stumped him, and he said, "Oh, okay, I hope you know what you are doing." Well, I got tenure and I also was promoted, that came later, but I was promoted to full professor. So, yay.

0:38:32.9 [MW]: Well, we've heard a few stories about going through the tenure process and in college and stuff. Your academic work, as you've described, is in psychology of LGBTQ people. Would you mind kind of summarizing what you've written so far?

0:39:00.3 [SD]: So, I've written-- So, I've edited two books that I've already showed. It's mainly been on counseling issues. I didn't do the actual empirical research. My writing was mostly theoretical, and I did articles on the intersection of identities, so on being Jewish, on being atheist, on being bisexual. I wrote about issues of elderly LGBT people, how do you deal with issues of

growing older? I have written, I believe it is in the case book, about being bisexual and dealing with polyamory, and I actually--I had... Not only did I teach, but I had a limited private practice while I was teaching in Fresno, and I mostly worked with lesbian and gay clients there, and when I came to San Luis Obispo--actually, even before I moved here full-time, I knew I was gonna move here 'cause we did not wanna retire in Fresno, but before I moved there full-time, my wife retired before I did, and so I commuted back and forth for six years, and I did volunteer counseling at the Community Counseling Center, and I worked a great deal with non-binary and transsexual clients and bisexual clients, and many of them were older.

0:39:04.1 [SD]: I didn't want to work with minors, so they were 18 and older, and many were coming at that time--I haven't really kept up, so I'm hoping it's not still true, but it may still be true that psychologists were gatekeepers for having surgery and so many clients came to me, for letters to approve surgeries. I was pretty much one of the few in San Luis that was doing that. I know there are more people doing that now. Thank goodness. So yes, that was the kind of work and it was really very rewarding work to do.

0:41:56.7 [MW]: So what issues do LGBTQ people face as they age, and would you say that the Central Coast and maybe San Luis in particular, are those good places for aging LGBTQ people?

0:42:07.3 [SD]: Well, you know, it's a hard question to answer. First of all, it depends. I think it depends what generation you're in, so I think the people who are in my generation. So, I'm 71. So people who are in my generation who probably came out when it was much harder to come out, may have a harder time, and people who are our age cohort are not that used to interacting with gay, lesbian, and especially transgender people, so it makes it harder to come out, so if you have to go

into a retirement home, it's not that easy to be out and open.

0:43:08.3 [SD]: Kathryn and I, we live in The Villages now, and it's--We're in independent living. We're out in the open. I don't know if Kathryn would be out and open, but... That's me, that's who I am. And we haven't had any problems, but a woman who-- She became our greeter and she was very friendly with us when we first moved in, and she has since passed away, unfortunately, but she let us know that not everybody was so thrilled that--not so much that we had moved in, but that we were so out and open. I mean, before COVID-19, I think it was at the New Year's party, I danced the slow dance with Kathryn and we didn't get any grimaces from people, but there may be some people who were not so happy, but people who have to deal with caregivers. These are people they depend on. And if those caregivers are not open, it could be very hard to be open, and then to have to deny this huge part of your identity could make things very difficult. So I think issues of identity, depending on what generation you, or your cohort is, as you move into aging is gonna make a difference how you deal with those aging issues.

0:45:08.0 [MW]: That makes sense. Let me see. So moving into more, when you're living on the Central Coast here, in 2013, the Freedom From Religion Foundation filed a lawsuit against the city of Pismo Beach in which you were a plaintiff, would you mind describing the context for the suit and its development?

0:45:36.7 [SD]: Yeah, yeah, so I was called by the Freedom From Religion Foundation lawyer, and the Pismo Beach City Council began all of their city council meetings with a Christian prayer that ended with Jesus Christ. And The Freedom From Religion Foundation believes in separation of church and state. And it's not only atheists that find Christian prayers in public spaces appalling, but



Jews do too. In fact, a Jewish woman was also asked to be part, and if she hadn't been going through health issues at the time, they needed somebody who lived in Pismo beach and I lived in Pismo Beach, she would have been part of the suit as well, but she had health issues. So I was asked if I would take this to court, which I was perfectly willing to do, but lo and behold the lawyer wrote a letter to the City Council and they stopped it, they stopped having any prayers at all. I'm not even sure they have a moment of silence. Now, FFRF, Freedom From Religion Foundation, they've gone to many city councils and it's been handled in different ways, so some city councils have broadened their prayer, so they bring in atheist, they bring in Native American-- Each time, they just have somebody different give the invocation. Some have started with moments of silence and some have just done away with them all together, but I am a member of FFRF, you--well, maybe you wouldn't be--amazed at how much Christianity enters the public space and enters the school system. And even here in San Luis Obispo, there's a lot of problems. So that was actually easy. We didn't expect it to be, but at first though, at first, they didn't even answer, and then when it started to come to money, then they said, "Okay, we'll stop."

0:48:27.5 [MW]: Alright, do you spend any time in LGBTQ social spaces in San Luis Obispo County now?

0:48:38.1 [SD]: You know, we haven't. I went to a couple of senior advocacy things prior to the pandemic, and before my hip started hurting, I did go on a few hikes, but we haven't done very much. I wanted to go to--I wish... Maybe I'll put a plug in. I wish the Sidecar, were not doing it on Thursday night when the farmers market is here since it is so crowded, so we haven't done a lot, but I'm hoping-- My wife is a little-- She's more of a home buddy than I am, so I take care of the social events. We have our small group of friends and we do more of that. Now, we always go to Pride

when it's back on the plaza, we'll be out and about and that. And you know, we love to-- I love to do tables, so if there's tabling around, but we're not much for big crowds, so...

**0:49:43.0 S2:** Alright--

0:49:49.4 David Weisman [DW]: Sorry, did I miss-- was there a question about what actually got Sari from Fresno to San Luis Obispo?

0:49:54.6 [MW]: What made you come to the decision to come to San Luis Obispo County?

0:49:56.5 [SD]: Okay, so as I said, Kathryn and I, were nearing retirement, and we knew we didn't wanna in retire and Fresno because number one, the weather, number two, it's so conservative, and I used to call it the Lincoln, Nebraska of California. Now, I had the myths, when I first was offered the job at Cal State Fresno. I heard California. I heard California, I thought San Francisco, I totally ignored Ronald Regan, and I thought I was coming to liberal, but not Fresno State, though campus was liberal. Kathryn got-- She retired early, she got the very last golden handshake that the system offered. It wasn't as great as some of the others, but she decided to retire in 2004. I was too young. And so she had been coming here, so Kathryn is a musicologist, and she used to play the viola da gamba, which is the ancestor of the violin, it's a renaissance instrument, and they used to hold workshops here in San Luis at Cal Poly every summer, and she loved it here. And so one weekend, she said, Why don't you come over to San Luis when she was at her workshop, and another friend was gonna join us here, and I said, Well, we're here, why don't we call up a real estate agent, and we happened to see a house that we loved in Pismo Beach. And this is my very first time seeing San Luis, we drove through. I knew Kathryn liked, I had a good impression of it. We bought a house.

We saw the house once, and we moved here. And that's what brought us here. I knew they had a gay community. I knew they had the community counseling center, which helped me bridge my way into the therapy community. I was also president of the Central Coast Psychological Association at one point, and I became active in that here, and I did a couple of workshops on gay and lesbian issues in therapy here. So that's what brought me here.

0:52:47.5 [MW]: Alright, what do you consider to be your most significant achievement over the course of your career?

0:52:55.6 [SD]: So I think I'm gonna say two, and I think the first one was just publishing the first article talking about counseling issues with gay and lesbian persons, and then coming out with the very first book that dealt with gay and lesbian issues in counseling. I think that really opened up the field and lots of books came after that, and I think the second one was bringing bisexuality to the American Psychological Association, to Division 44.

0:53:40.9 [SD]: So I think those were two significant--the two things I'm most proud of in my life.

0:53:49.7 [MW]: Do you have any advice for maybe young academics you might come across this later?

0:54:01.3 [SD]: Sure, so first of all, I wanna say, and this is an issue I came across within our really dysfunctional health insurance field, so I'm hoping it's not still the same, but if you want to go into-- If you want to have a specialty in counseling with LGBTQ+, you need training, and one course isn't enough, you can't just check off a box, and that's why I mentioned insurance companies, because

insurance companies just ask you to check off what you feel you have a specialty in. And so when I came here and I tried to get that listed as my specialty, the first thing I was told was, we have enough people, we have enough psychologists and marriage and family therapists who deal with the LGBT community in San Luis Obispo. And then I sent them my vita and I said, I bet you don't have-- I bet the people who have checked that box don't have the kind of training that I do, because I really think it's a mistake, and I'm thrilled that Dr. Bettergarcia has developed a really good training in that. People need training, and yes, we do need people who specialize, and I don't care what their own identity is, and again, just because I identify as bisexual, lesbian or whatever, does not make me an expert into the lives. So even getting training doesn't make me an expert. I have to really hear the story my clients are telling me, and I have to really be open to their stories. So that would be my advice. And if you're going to work with this community, make sure you get to know people and get to know their life stories, not just in a clinical setting, but also in just everyday life.

0:56:47.3 [MW]: Well great.

0:56:49.1 [DW]: I have a question, then I think Dylan might have a question. Mine goes back a little bit when you were in Fresno, and you speak a lot about Fresno, did you-- You mentioned when you came to the Central Coast on occasion. Did you venture to some of the larger gay meccas in LA or San Francisco, and then you have to go back home to Fresno. How do that either contrast or work with your view of the California you imagined?

0:57:16.6 [SD]: Oh, absolutely, I think one of the first years I was in Fresno I went to the gay parade in San Francisco and... Wow! Wow wow wow wow wow! And Castro Street and breakfast, and it was absolutely amazing. And it was one of the-- It was one of the reasons I always swore I

was gonna go back to New York because I always saw myself as a big city person, big cities are where things happen. However, my wife is not a big city person, and so yes, it was very hard to go back to Fresno because Fresno is so conservative, and yet it's sometimes important to do the work that needs to be done in a place like Fresno. It's hard, but it's important. But I always need my fix to go to the parade in San Diego, a parade in San Francisco or the film festival in San Francisco. And not just for the gay, lesbian, but also for Jewish events and Jewish film festivals, and to go to a real delicatessen and you eat a real bagel. Yes, yes. It's hard to come back, but San Luis in terms of like the festival Mosaic and some of the cultural events give me at least a taste of what I need.

0:59:12.2 [DW]: The taste may not involve beef on rye. And I think Dylan had a question at some point.

0:59:19.6 Dylan MC Baker [DM]: Oh yeah, I was just wondering, 'cause like you, the mentality of all of California: Amazing progressive place, and when my family moved to California, a huge KKK and Neo-Nazi problem outside Sacramento. When you were saying that that was all connecting in my brain, and also "God Hates Fags" signs and that kind of stuff.

0:59:42.4 [SD]: I know. A lot of us think all of California is progressive, but it's not true at all.

0:59:51.8 [DB]: My name for the Valley area is New Dixie.

0:59:52.0 [SD]: Right. Right. Yeah, yeah.

0:59:57.2 [DW]: And my final thought: Have you been back to New York in all this time?

1:00:00.0 [SD]: Yes, yes. My mother lived in New York until, I think about 2000-- let's see, when did she move to Fresno, she probably... She moved to Fresno and about 2000, we brought her out there. Yes, we used to go back to visit my mother, and we used to always go to a Broadway show. I miss Broadway, and we always did my pilgrimage to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and we went to some of the bars in the village and yes, I made a pilgrimage to New York at least once a year. Yes. I don't know. I don't think I could afford to live the way I'd like to live in New York, but every so often I have pangs of New Yorkism. Right. I'm sure I'm gonna die here. Not so bad. I mean, I have wonderful friends here. Not so bad, I get my taste of Judaism, my taste of gay lesbian, not bad. I love SLO actually, yeah.

1:01:21.9 [MW]: I was curious. The congregation that you attend now. Where is that?

1:01:28.8 [SD]: So it's congregation Beth-David. It's on Los Osos Valley Road. It was one of the first green congregations in North America. So very environmentally correct and very, very liberal, and as I said, I'm chair of the Social Action Committee, and we do a lot of work with immigrants, and we do some work with LGBT issues, like last night, the sermon, and we were part of-- You know, I think GALA did that faith, multi-faith. So we were part of that. And there was something else I was gonna say. Oh, I'm also part of Bend the Arc SLO, which is-- Bend the Arc is a national Jewish Social Action Group, and they have a very active local group, and they do a lot of work with Keshet, Keshet is Hebrew for Rainbow, which is gay and lesbian, bisexual, etcetera, transgender, for Jewish people. Yeah. Anybody else?

1:02:55.1 [DW]: Do you have a question? A parting thoughts?

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1:02:58.6 [SD]: Any parting thoughts? I think I'm getting a little bit tired. No, this has been a lot of fun to do. I hope you got all that you were looking for. Yeah, yeah, I'm very happy to do this. I'm very happy to be here in SLO. I'm thrilled to be in a 29-year relationship. We celebrated our anniversary. Of course, we got married twice, we were married in 2004 when Gavin Newsom allowed same-sex couples to get married in San Francisco, we were horrified and upset though we knew it would happen when that got annulled, and then we got married here by the Unitarian minister in City Hall in 2008. So that was thrilling too. Yeah, thank you very much.

1:03:58.7 [DW]: Thank you. Thank you very much for joining us today.