

Interview With Douglas Heumann

CCQAP

Narrator: Douglas Heumann [DH]

Interviewers: Elias Simons [ES], David Weisman [DW]

Interview Date: June 26, 2021

Location: The GALA Pride and Diversity Center, San Luis Obispo

Length: Approximately 1 hour, 47 minutes. Interview starts at 0:00:12.6.

Transcript prepared by: Elias Simons, Steven Ruszczycky

0:00:12.6 David Weisman: So good morning, and it is now today, June 26th, and we have the good fortune to be here on behalf of the Central Coast Queer Archive Project with Doug Heumann here at the PRIDE [GALA Pride and Diversity] Center of San Luis Obispo, California and have a chance to do a bit of an oral history interview with Doug this morning for our project, and thank you Doug, for you taking the time to be here with us all today, and I will now turn the actual interview over to Elias Simons, and we'll let him go forth with our conversation today, thanks very much.

0:00:54.2 Elias Simons: OK, where were you born and raised? Would you care to share anything about your family background?

0:01:00.5 Doug Heumann: How long you got? I was born and raised in Belleville, Illinois. It's about 20 miles from St. Louis across the river. It's kind of the big town to all the farming towns, and its... Was about the size of San Luis Obispo, say forty, fifty thousand, but we had eight Catholic Churches, and every other church in the middle of that, it was very German. My family was very religious, very Catholic. It was white. I went to school probably with maybe two black people in my whole life, and they came from Scott Air Force Base, which is probably about 20 miles from where we lived, and they were children of officers, and so it was very white, and then just down the hill is East St. Louis, which was... Had been quite a prosperous place until white flight and probably 50s, 40s, 50s, and so by the time I was growing up, it was mostly black and it was very poor and still very poor, and so that's kind of the area I came from hot and humid.

0:02:25.8 Elias Simons: At what point in your life did you become cognizant of personal issues

regarding gender orientation and identity. Can you describe your own path to self-acceptance, and if so, how might your navigation of that path been a reflection of or product of the times socially, culturally and perhaps affected by region or geography?

0:02:47.9 DW: It's, it is I get a [unintelligible] slouch down just a little more... Doug a little bit, a little bit, so you can take those in, we can go back.

0:02:56.5 DH: Start with the first one please, I just... 'cause you're gonna cut this, I don't have to. Okay, I don't have to be perfect every time.

0:03:04.4 ES: Okay.

0:03:03.5 DH: So the first part, please.

0:03:04.4 ES: Sorry, at what point in your life did you become cognizant of personal issues regarding gender orientation and identity.

0:03:11.8 DH: So are we talking gender identity or just identity.

0:03:15.3 ES: Gender, orientation and identity.

0:03:18.3 DH: Okay so sexual orientation identity?

0:03:20.1 ES: Yes.

0:03:21.0 DH: Okay. Well, you know, it would really be easier to talk about... The beginning would be my gender identity, so at about three or four... I remember what home we lived in on Reese Avenue, I remember where I was in my bedroom, I remember what piece of furniture was in front of me, and I was sitting on a rug on a hardwood floor, and I remember thinking that my name did not fit, I hated my name. I couldn't say that I knew I was a boy because I knew I wasn't a boy. And that was very disturbing. That was... That's been an issue. That was an issue going forward, I had no words for it, had nothing... When I was 13 or somewhere in that area, when I started puberty and starting feeling being, you know, being attracted to other people, it was always to girls, and that was definitely not acceptable in my society at the time I was being brought up in the area, in the area which is very conservative and in my religion. And so I did have a good relationship with my mother, and I shared with her that I wasn't feeling attracted to boys, and she said, "Oh, that's not a problem, you don't have to be attracted to all boys, you just have to settle on one..."

0:04:47.2 DH: Right, so she kind of, she reacted very cool and calm. What I didn't know is she then went off to our Catholic gynecologist and shared with him and what his response to her was she tells me later is that he said, "Well, everybody goes through that, all the girls, he had, I was in high school with his daughter, a freshman, and he said that everybody goes through this... Don't worry about it. Throughout my high school, I was lucky and unlucky. Okay, and the fact that I went to Catholic school from kindergarten through high school, I was in an all-girl Catholic high school, 'cause that's how they had it set up in our town, we had a boy's high school and a girls high school, and so on the one hand, I didn't have to compete with boys, on the other hand, I wasn't allowed to interact with boys as much, and so there's some good and bad points to that, and as I was, I got attracted to, really attracted to and fell in love, kind of puppy love sort of thing in my junior year of

high school, and that was really all-consuming for me and so she left when we were both 18, I started Belleville Area College its junior college and she...

0:06:15.2 DH: Her dad got transferred to Kansas for his job. And so she went with them and that was really hard, and about that time, same time, I went to a movie and it was in 1970, so now you know how really old I am, and it was a story... It was the Christine Jorgensen story and Christine Jorgensen was in 1952, transitioned from male to female. And at that time, we called them transsexuals, and she did this over in Europe, she had been an army sergeant in the US Army, and she came back and she was quite a bit of a celebrity, she acted, she sang, she didn't hide it, and so she was a big sensation and she did use that till her death, and so anyway, I saw this movie and it was like a gut punch. It was like, Oh, that's who I am. I'm just the opposite, right? I didn't know exactly what to do with that, and I'm gonna keep going on. And you can cut me off whenever you want. So at that point, I am 18, I know I can't tell my parents, I don't know who to tell.

0:07:34.2 DH: So I run off to my Catholic gynecologist and I tell him, because I don't know where to go with this, and I am just... I don't know what to do. So I go to him and I tell him about it, and he tells me, Well, I've got this buddy that I was in the Army with who's a psychiatrist in St. Louis, three or four sessions with him and you're gonna be fine.

0:07:57.1 DH: Well, I knew three or four sessions, I was not gonna be fine, but I had to go somewhere, so I set up appointment with the psychiatrist in St. Louis, and fortunately for me, he was open, he had heard of transsexual-ism, he had never worked with anyone, he knew a little bit about John Hopkins, which I had been a little bit aware of, but you've gotta understand, 1970, there is next... There's no Internet, there's really... I feel like back then, I didn't feel like it, but I feel like it

was back in the horse and buggy days. How do you find out about this thing? And so he saw me a couple of times, and I don't know if you're from back there, you know that Missouri is very much more conservative than even Illinois, and we're just across the river, so I don't know if the laws were different. I don't know if he was afraid of his license, but he told me that in order to continue to work with me, that I would have to have my parents permission. So in hindsight, why didn't I wait till I was 21? I didn't have the money I was going to like... What would be Cuesta College here, and I was working at would be like Target or an even lower scale Target, that's the kind of work I was doing.

0:09:16.3 DH: So I had next to no money, I didn't have insurance on my own, my parents had the healthcare insurance, so I believed him, and I told my parents... Well, I was, I told my mother because I was afraid my dad would... I didn't know what my dad was going to do. So the day that we went to visit the psychiatrist, it was myself and the psychiatrist on one side of the desk and them on the other... And again, this man supported me, he believed me, my parents were... It was just... It was when, I don't know if you believe in metaphysics, but it's when I learned that energy can be very, very dense, and that whole idea of you could cut it with a knife. That's real. And that point in my life was probably the worst day of my life, right. So we leave and we're on... We're supposed to take a trip to see my dad's sister who lived in Decatur, Illinois, which is probably about three hours away, and so in the car, it was... I can't believe this man would support you, he's Jewish, we're Catholic. We both believe in not mutilating the body its against God. Its, we will...

0:10:39.1 DH: You're not gonna be part of the family. Well, you have to understand that I'm an only child, and you also have to understand that I started drinking alcoholically at 14, so my maturity is about a 14-year-old. And you also need to understand that although I look a little heavy

now, I was very thin, and I would look like probably a 13 or 14-year-old boy back then. So back then, we had what we called the Harry Benjamin standards. Harry Benjamin was a doctor who was in New York, who worked with mostly transsexual women from, in probably the 40s, 50s, 60s, and he created a standards of care, and he was supportive and understood that this wasn't a mental health issue, this is a physical issue. And because you had to come to some kind of congruence, you're not gonna change your gender identity, but you can change the body somewhat. And so he came up with standards of care at that point, standards of care were that you left your family, you left anybody you knew you left your town, you went basically stealth, and you had no support and you were supposed to live for two years without hormone replacement therapy. So I was looking like a 13 or 14-year-old boy, I was supposed to move...

0:12:01.2 DH: I was supposed to try to live and take care of myself, and I wasn't even gonna have a diploma, high school diploma with the right name. So I couldn't even fathom it. I had... I did not, I was not mature enough, I didn't have the fortitude. I understand now more and more why people do sex work and turn to drugs and sell drugs on the street. I totally understand how that could have happened, so I just drank, and I stuffed it. And over years, even after I got sober, I was able to convince myself, denial is a beautiful thing, and I was able to convince myself that other lesbians felt the way I do, and I have learned and I have met some lesbians who have felt the same way about their body and probably... They talk to me and they say, Well, if I was younger, I would probably transition. But, you know, I just... Denial kept me alive.

0:13:09.5 DW: Thank you, thank you for sharing that Doug, even though you said we could cut you off at any time, I think this is an important part, especially dating it to 1970, because that's before the AMA has even changed its designation of what homosexuality is, and I think the

literature and the autobiographies often point to the 60s and 70s as in the late 60s as being a time when everyone believed that the psychologists could fix you, and if you spent a 100 dollars a week until they were enough to own a yacht. Somehow things could be better, so I wanna thank you. I think that is an important part of the history to share. I appreciate that.

0:13:47.7 DH: Thank you.

0:13:50.1 ES: Can you describe your own path to self-acceptance, and if so, how might your navigation of that path been a reflection of or a product of the times?

0:13:57.6 DW: Well, I think we kind of... I think we really just kind of covered that although you're still in Illinois where we leave this story, is it going to take a turn out... Are you gonna leave? When are you gonna leave? Is the story gonna take a turn where you go... Where you go next, some people, in other words, in the 70s, it's like, Well, just go to San Francisco and you'll find your own kind and it'll be great and so for some people that work and for some people that didn't, so maybe how does geography fit into the rest of the story?

0:14:29.2 DH: Well, I can only say that from that point on, I finished junior college, I went off to the University of Illinois at Champaign, I was still struggling with so many things and I dropped out, I worked... I'm struggling here 'cause... I stayed... I stayed in the area, and I ended up going to the University of Missouri in Columbia, which is... It's probably the best place you could be in Missouri, and I went there to get a degree, I had worked for the post office in St. Louis for a number of years to make the money to go back to school, and I ended up getting my degree in Civil Engineering. And I, at that point, I was set up that I wanted to come out to California. I thought of

HEUMANN Transcript

LA as the Mecca. And I had gotten really invested in the Lesbian community in Columbia, Missouri, and I worked for the Women's Center there and got sober there, so that kind of set me up then to move to LA with my dreams, and that got dashed pretty quickly that everything was roses out here, but it got me to... Got me away from the Midwest, and it was an improvement by large...

0:16:08.2 DH: And I lived in LA for until... I moved out here in 83. And got sober in 81, and I left LA. I worked for Lockheed for five years, and I worked for the City of Los Angeles for five years as an engineer, and I came up here. We were trying to get away from... I say we... My partner, lesbian partner, we moved up here in 91 and I took a job with Caltrans here in San Luis.

0:16:36.8 DW: I have a quick question. So we're still in the early 70s period when this is happening, Doug, would that be...

0:16:42.7 DH: Which part?

0:16:43.9 DW: Just before you get to LA where our story ended.

0:16:47.8 DH: Its 70s and 80s.

0:16:47.5 DW: Okay, I was wondering, when you were still in Missouri.

0:16:50.8 DH: Yes.

0:16:51.9 DW: As they say.

0:16:51.9 DH: Yes.

0:16:53.8 DW: How cognizant were you then... This is the same period that we're having the first prides that suddenly in a national cultural sense, how much of that was filtering through to you in Missouri, given, as you said earlier, without the internet and all, how aware were you of what was happening in the broader movement.

0:17:08.6 DH: Well, the women's movement was really taking off, and women's music from Olivia records got into that. We were having women's concerts like out here, Robin Tyler. I wish I could remember her name. I can't remember her name. Anyway, she is a, was a mover and a shaker in LA and she was putting on different women's festivals. And we had the the Michigan Womyn's festival, and so we were having little festivals in Missouri as well, and we were doing things like "Take Back the Word Cunt," things like that. So the Women's Center was at... Was a little womb actually on campus for the lesbian community, and there was one little bar it was just like on and on, so not a whole lot was going on politically, a little bit, but not much, we were just becoming aware, and I definitely was not hearing anything about transgender or transsexuals. And I just, I was able to put that away for a period of time when I was about 20... See, maybe about 19, around 1980, 1979, I read a book. It was written in probably 68 or 69, it was called "Emergence," and it was by an FTM, and I read it and all the emotions came back up, but I was able to say, That's not who I am, I'd never do that.

0:18:53.1 DH: I wouldn't do that, I'm not that blah, blah, blah. And so I just drank, and that's how I was able to whenever that would re-enter my sphere, I would drink it down. And so I don't know

where you wanna go with that.

0:19:10.7 DW: No, no I think that's, quite answers that question, and maybe we can then resume.

The next questions were about your career in engineering, so you had taken us there, so I can jump back on to-

0:19:22.7 DH: Yeah, sure so I-

0:19:24.8 DW: Your career as an engineer.

0:19:24.5 DH: Yeah so I... Actually I'd entered the university of Missouri to be a landscape architect. They had lied to me when I was in St. Louis, that they were gonna have a landscape architect degree, turns out I would have had to go to Manhattan, Kansas. Well, it was already bad enough to be in Missouri so I wasn't going to Manhattan, Kansas. And so I took a break, I was working at Square D as an engineer, and then I... Well, you know, a type of an engineer, an engineering assistant, and then I got into the civil engineering classes and took that part-time, and then I went full-time and worked part-time and graduated in 1983. That's right, yes. When I came out here, I got a professor that I knew at Columbia, told me about a professor and her husband who had moved out here and worked for Rockwell, and so she got me some interviews with Rockwell and with Lockheed, and even allowing me to stay at her home, one night as I was coming up from, I was living in San Diego, 'cause I had made a connection with a lesbian in... At the University of Missouri who was living in San Diego, so I moved there and lived there for three or four months looking for a job, and finally got it with Lockheed, so I worked there, like I said, in stress analysis, and that's our thing in Burbank, and little time in Palmdale as well, and then I went...

0:21:00.5 DH: I decided that what I really wanted was I had always wanted to do structures, and so this wasn't really what I wanted, but it got me to California, right? And so I ended up looking for a job and got it with the city of Los Angeles doing building and safety and that sort of thing. And then just the idea of wanting to move out of LA and looked around and almost got a job with a Kansas City company who was working in Paso Robles and that didn't fly because it was at the time in 83 when things were, for construction, were really going down. So anyway, so got the job up here in 91.

0:21:47.2 ES: As somebody working in a government and bureaucratic setting at the time. Was there any intersection of gender and identity issues in your work?

0:21:58.7 DH: There was always... I'll talk about... One of my jobs when I came out of the University of Illinois, when I took an early out, and I had been taking drafting classes in high school and stuff like that, and my whole two years in junior college was pre-engineering, so I had done all that. So I took a job with a cable company, cable company in a little town in Illinois, and I took that job and I was working for them full-time, and I found out that this gentleman who came in after me, who was in his second year at the same Bellevue Area College that I had graduated from. And he happened to have a family, so they were paying him more and he was working part-time. I was pissed. And this is the kind of thing that happened all the time, and so in my exit interview, I told them, "I don't believe any woman should work for you," and they had an HR, a woman who was in HR. And that was an interesting little family affair there, and so that's the kind of thing that you encountered, but... So working for the government, working for Lockheed, which is basically, it's a company that has all these military contracts, so it's basically they have to go by to federal laws,

right.

0:23:29.5 DH: And within working for the state of... That at least there was equal pay for equal work. Does not mean that you weren't also discriminated against because you were female and didn't always get the upward movement. But by the time I got to Caltrans, but I would have to say even for the City of Los Angeles, I was treated fairly, I believe. I believe I was treated for the engineer that I was, and so even when I transitioned at Caltrans here in San Luis Obispo, I went and I told my boss... We went to HR together. We set up a date when we were gonna announce it. I set it up so that there would be... I would announce it to all the supervisors and give them a chance to answer some questions, ask some questions, but I had a therapist there so that I wasn't answering all these other questions that didn't need to be answered by me. I had set up so that I was sending an email to all the 250 employees that had computers in our district, which goes from Santa Barbara up to Santa Cruz, and then I set off for two days, 'cause I was a liaison for federal funding to all the Santa Barbara Public Works Departments like Lompoc and all that, Buellton, Santa Barbara. And so I took off for two days to tell them what was happening. So I was supported in all of that, I know that there were a lot of things said behind my back, I know there were a lot of things said behind my back as a lesbian, I think it got worse.

0:25:22.0 DH: I know it did get worse. But as far as how has treated, I was treated as a professional, that's all I could ask. They didn't have to talk to me afterwards, as long as they talked to me about the work. They treated me professionally at work, that's all I could ask and I did have a lot of supporters, but I also had detractors, but it wasn't really about me, right?

0:25:46.2 ES: Did issues like the Briggs Initiative arise during that time?

0:25:49.7 DH: Briggs was before I got out here. But the other one, 60, no in 64, was when I was in LA and I was quite active in a group called Southern California Women for Understanding. At the time that I came out here in 83, it was the largest lesbian organization in the United States, and it was... I got involved with the steering committees. We didn't have a board we had steering committees and I got quite involved with that and helped put on a number of events and things like that, and then I got involved with helping with that Briggs initiative, and if I could ever think of Robin's [Tyler] last name, I will think of it. And she was quite a mover and a shaker in that one too. So, yeah. So that... It didn't personally affect me. I wasn't a teacher, I wasn't out here at that time, but then "No on 64" definitely was something I was involved with.

0:26:48.0 ES: What issues regarding your identity were being neglected at the regulatory level at the time.

0:26:57.5 DW: Well, I guess in the way you've kind of spoken about that already, so I think I would go to the third paragraph.

0:27:06.5 ES: Third paragraph, under career and work?

0:27:08.9 DW: Correct.

0:27:10.7 ES: Okay, can you discuss your subsequent involvement in the broader state political issues dedicated to bringing equity to the transgender community?

0:27:19.5 DH: Yes. Let me see, where do I begin? Alright, as a member of the... Okay, I graduated from Santa Barbara College of Law in 2000. I took the Bar in 2001, February as soon as I could, I became a member. Within a couple of years, I went on the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee for the State Bar, that was at a time when the state bar is structured differently now, and they also had at one point gotten rid of all the different... Like the women's group and the Latino and that, but at that time, there was still a committee, Advisory Committee to the bar, and I was on that for several years. I got to know a gentleman who was one of the founders of the Transgender Law Center, so the Transgender Law Center came out of the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and a cis-gendered gay male and a trans-man started the Transgender Law Center as a project. And then Chris Daly, who was the cisgender gay man stayed, and he became the executive director, after the trans man left. I don't know where he's at. And so I got connected with Chris through being on that committee, he wasn't a part of that community, but...

0:28:58.7 DH: And I really admired him a lot, had him come here and speak to us and ACLU here, and then through that I got involved with Transgender Law Center, I was never an employee of them, but I was on... They had a leadership council, I believe it was in 20... I'm trying to remember, 2008, 2007, somewhere in there, they got an employment grant through the state, and we did a survey about employment for the state of California. We had 650 people take that survey. It was written and on, in computers, believe it or not, we had computers and we had it in Spanish as well, and we got a lot of good information out of that, and I served for three years on that. It kind of fell apart because the grant fell apart, and I stayed connected a little bit with them, every year they have... Had had, until recently a leadership summit, and I was always involved in that. From there, I was as a member of the professional engineers in California government. I stayed kind of working with things, and I was contacted in 2005 or 2006 regarding an effort to take the transgender

exclusions out of all the health care policies that CalPERS has...

0:30:33.1 DH: CalPERS serve about 1.5 million people, not just retirees and members, but also their families, and all of them [Health Care Insurance Policies] had transgender exclusions even though... But for the fact that we had in 2008 and then a 2011 Gender Recognition Act that made that illegal to do... And so just because you have a law, we all know there's a lot of speeding, but we all speed. Right, so just because there's a law, somebody has to help enforce it, so from... I was contacting, got in touch with SEIU Local 1000 were probably the driving force. I joined, I got... Fortunately, there was a man, a cisgender gay man who was quite high up in the engineering instructors, but he was also a big part of the... PECG up in Sacramento, he helped me to get the, support I needed from PECG [Professionals Engineers in California Government Union]. And we met with the board of CalPERS board to try to convince them that they needed to make those changes with... I believe it was the day before they had just met with folks from Transgender Law Center, Equality California, and I knew those people, so they said, Well, these people came and talked to us, and I'm like, duh!

0:32:03.3 DH: So that was the connection. So we all started working together. We also started working with the city and county of San Francisco. By that time, they had started, I believe it was 2001, started offering transgender healthcare services. I won't get in to, there's a lot of weeds to get into as far as money and all that stuff, but we were able to use their data because they had proven that you didn't have to... 'cause that was the whole thing. "Well, if we remove that, then everybody's gonna, you know, come up here and get surgeries and everybody's gonna do this and it's gonna cost so much money, and you're such a little small amount of people, but you're gonna cost us so much money." Well, we've proven over and over again. And it's not just me. So we used UC [OATA].

The UC group had also... I'm trying to think of the woman's name [Shane Snowden, LGBTI Resource Director]. Anyway, she was in the president's office of the UC, and she got that changed for UC for the faculty, so later the kids got on it, etcetera. So anyway, we were using her data, we were pulling everybody... There was a man named Andre Wilson, who is now working for Jamison Green and Associates, and he's a trans man, he was always working out of the University of Michigan, and he's the number cruncher on insurance.

0:33:32.9 DH: He's the guy. So we pulled him in, and so there was just a lot of work, and finally, from 2006 to 2013, finally, we were able to change so that all of the insurance policies for CalPERS, you know, whatever they were, Kaiser or you name it, they were all covered transgender services. Since that time, I have been called into work on... There is a group called MCSIG, which is Municipalities, Colleges, Schools Insurance Group. It's a group, it's kind of like CalPERS, CalPERS can negotiate with all these different insurance companies because they cover so many people, so Cuesta College was one of these districts, there was 40 districts from Alameda down to San Luis along the coast, all these school districts that were covered under MCSIG, and they negotiate with the different insurance companies and they still had transgender exclusions. This just happened within in the last two years, and we were able to... So, because... At CRLA, that's California Rural Legal Assistance. They had been called in as well. So I also have this ongoing relationship with ACLU in Southern California. The woman who runs all of that, Amanda Goad, LGBTQ, Gender, and Reproductive Justice Project Director, and it's just... I can't say enough about the service we get. I got connected with her having to do with things that were going on in our school system, I also reach out to NCLR [National Center for Lesbian Rights] a lot.

0:35:18.9 DH: I have a gentleman there who deals with children and schools, and I'm on the

Common Ground, San Luis Obispo Unified School District, there were two instances, gay instances, discrimination on campus, SLO campus, SLO High, and from that we pushed... We GALA, Trans Central Coast other groups pushed that district to look at things, and to their credit, the superintendent, Eric Prater, has stepped up and four years ago or five years ago, he started Common Ground Task Force, which is bringing community in to advise him. And so there's Jewish people, Black people, I represent and other people represent the LGBT contingent as a result of some other things that have gone on with some of the boards, the board over here at SLO Coastal, and now the Cuesta College board, there's some instance of a homophobic transphobic, etcetera, etcetera, misogynistic, president of the board, they were able to kick him off as his presidency, but because he's an elected official, they seemed to believe they couldn't do anything, so he's still on the board, but we outreach to the board and to Jill Stearns [Cuesta President] and a result of that is a... Cuesta now has a board task force, and I'm on that as an advisory member to try to do, to rise the level of their understanding of the importance of facilitating LGBT, not just the students, but also their staff, etcetera.

0:37:05.4 DH: And so I'll be addressing that board next month for half an hour just to give them some flavor of what I suggest as an all-day training for their board and staff, so... I know I talk a lot so cut me off anytime you want.

0:37:21.7 DW: No, no, no. We don't... Elias, what I'm going to suggest suggest is that the next question is kind of is relevant here is the one about making a decision to pursue a legal career, 'cause we left when you were a engineer, in my brain, which is not that good at all. I see those two things. Law and engineering. Isn't that like that whole thing they talk about? One is a left brain thing and one's the right brain thing, and given what you've just said about your political thing, was

it the ability to make a change through law and politics, what was your motivation for-

0:37:56.1 DH: Thank you.

0:37:56.1 DW: For legal.

0:37:58.1 DH: So I will say that back when I was 16, I remember thinking that that might be a career, that I might wanna be an attorney, and my mother said to me, and this was straight face and she meant it, "you're too honest for that." That tells you what they thought of attorneys. And to be honest with you, I think... I know that I didn't have... And I told you I started drinking alcoholically at 14. I was functioning obviously, I mean, but not very well all the time. But I didn't have what it took in my mind until I could be who was. I had you're only... I happened to be in a 12-step program, you're only as sick as your secrets. I had to face my demons, I had to come into my own to believe I could be up there up, be an attorney. I really didn't have the inner trust in myself... What it would take to be a good attorney. I think that's what probably did it for me... I'm gonna give you a back story that's gonna help lead into this, and you can cut out... You're gonna cut out whatever you're going to cut out. In 1994, I read a book called Stone Butch Blues, and we had a lesbian book club with a bunch of friends, and so we'd read a book and go to places and blah, blah, blah. And I had heard about this book from a friend, I had been back in Missouri and had gone to visit some folks that I had gone to school with and people I had lived with and stuff like that, and one of my friends had suggested that maybe I want to read this book.

0:40:06.2 DH: So I read the book... Well, I read the first two chapters, and it was so painful. I went into a fetal position in the second bedroom and I didn't cry, it was way beyond crying because I had

to face it again. And this time, I was 13 years sober. I knew, and I know, and people may or may not believe this, but for an alcoholic, its to die if I started to drink again, 'cause I was gonna... I was gonna die somewhere, I was either gonna kill myself, which was a constant thing when I was a kid wanting to kill myself, so sports and alcohol kept me from doing that. I could keep myself so busy, I played one year, I played on three softball teams. I mean I could just... I knew I had to face it, and I didn't know exactly what it meant. And so this person, you know, what they exactly they went through was much harsher than in my life, but that person was telling me my life and how I felt inside, it was just like somebody Killing Me Softly or something like that, that song that you probably guys never heard of but anyway...

0:41:40.4 DH: So I had to look at it, and here I am in a relationship with a woman for... We met in 86. We moved in together in 87. We didn't marry because we couldn't marry, you know, we had a life together and... You know, what did this mean? I felt so bizarre. It's like, I was no longer a Catholic. I've tried it twice or three times, I've looked all over it, all these different religions. I have tried metaphysics, which did help. I am this, I don't fit in my family, I don't belong in the mid-west, I am this lesbian, I'm this butch lesbian, I am this, I don't know. And I'm an alcoholic, do I also have- how bizarre do I have to be? And that's how I felt. And I'm, so I got to the point where I started, I opened my PO Box here in town, so I would have a place so I could receive things so that my wife wouldn't know about it and my post-person wouldn't know about it in Atascadero. Right. And I started writing anonymously... And I wrote anonymously for the news and reviews, that's another story, and they wouldn't accept it and I'll tell you about that later, but anyway, because they didn't know who I was.

0:43:17.2 DH: So I went to a... I went to an FTM, Under Construction, it was called Under

Construction. It's a group in LA, that's the closest thing I could find. And I went to it and the first time it was like a Hitchcock movie, it was raining, it was Whittier, I had never been to Whittier... I've been in LA for years, and it's like, it's just horrible. We go in, there's nobody like us. So I say that, in that most everybody had girlfriends who were straight, even if they hadn't transitioned, and my wife is a lesbian, and it was just, You're gonna... It was that old shit, you're gonna lose all your LGBT friends, you're gonna lose your relationship, it was just so... And it was my wife's birthday. It was January 22, 1995. How do I remember that? Oh, it was terrible. So that was really nice. My wife was not up for this anyway, we weren't married, but you know what I mean? And so we went to another one, and it was interesting, I ran into... It was in another spot. It was much more upbeat, it was the doctor, an endocrinologist, who worked with the Trans community, Dr. Love.

0:44:49.4 DH: Dr. Laub, I'm sorry. Dr. Laub is up in San Francisco, Palo Alto, gender clinic. Anyway, we went to that and a couple of young guys came in right before... Right as it started and they sat in a little corner, and when we took a break and we went over to get some snacks... This guy comes up to me and say, "you don't know who I am do you." And it hit me, I had met him several years before that he was going by Alex then, he was an angry lesbian, 'cause we had gone to women- women AA meetings together in Santa Barbara when I was there on a construction project for four months, and I was just like I stayed away from him, he was so angry, he wore black everything, and he was this angry guy... Here's this bright, happy young man, and it was Alex, and it was like, how cool is that. So I made this connection and there was the first FTM International conference was held in San Francisco. And it was... I went with Alex, and my wife was like, "Go do this," 'cause she was like, just get it out of your system. And I know that's what...

0:46:06.8 DH: We know, we know that's what it was. Because she said a lot of things to me that

my parents had said to me. She was as harsh then, 'cause she was afraid. When you ask somebody to stay with you, you're asking them to transition themselves in a lot of ways, and so I went to this and I didn't know what to expect. I thought, am I gonna find somebody with three horns... I didn't know what to expect, I knew who I was, not that I liked it, but... How far do I have to go? They had one of the... One of the groups, one of the panels was called Noho, so people who were living as men using male names, but not having any surgery, any hormones, and I went to that one. See if I could do that. It didn't look like a good idea, but... And I met the gentleman who wrote Stone Butch Blues and I told him that I blamed him. For me... He didn't take it too, well. I was like, I'm just kidding. Anyway, whatever.

0:47:14.7 DH: And so I interact, and ended up there were like 350 people, and I found, I met... I didn't meet Jamison Greene, but I met Jamison Greene, he was the President of FTM International. He was the trans-man who was the proponent and the writer of the proclamation that the City and County of San Francisco when the Trans Non-Discrimination Act. It's not an act but whatever. Anyway, I'm kind of nervous... I don't know why, because this is so emotional for me. And I got to meet people who were normal, they were just people trying to live their lives and be authentic. I know that gets overused, but their authentic selves. That is just like, was so important. And the most bizarre person I met that day, that weekend was somebody from St. Louis and this person would go to work one day with heels and dressed totally female, long hair, the whole make up, the whole thing, and in a couple of days, they would go to the work with, in male clothing with a fake mustache and beard and stuff like that... And I'm like, at that time, that was pretty bizarre, now it's like there's non-binary is understood, but that was, non-binary really wasn't talked about in 1995.

0:48:48.4 DH: So here I am at this thing, and I was like, Oh, so I tried on some names while I was

there and stuff like that. So I made... So people were like, "Where are you from?" Right, so I'm from the Central Coast, it turns out that there's this gentleman who's from Germany, who also spends half his time in Germany and half his time at Nacimiento Ranch, which his family owns, and he's... At the same timeframe I am, he hasn't started hormones either, so we, Alex, and we connect another Alex in my life, and he calls me and he asks for DJ, and my wife hangs up on him, and then she tells me... Somebody called, Oh boy did I get in trouble. So what came of all of that is that I... The work I had been doing... Yes, but all of that came after all this political stuff came afterwards, and I just... I went to law school because I wanted to protect myself and others, and so I went in there with the idea, Well, I'll do civil rights. Right. Well, where do I wanna be? I'm- got a great career at Cal Trans. I've got a lot of years into it, I've been an engineer for years at this point. I couldn't really afford to go. It would have been nice to go to had I been younger. Let me go to Berkeley. Please. Go to Davis. But no, so this worked because I was working in Santa Barbara, I was like I said, a liaison, and so I was down there a lot, so I went down three nights a week for three and a half years and I... Well, I'm more than that in the summers, and I got my law degree. What this did was this gave me strength, it gave me purpose, it gave us separation, my wife and I, so that I could- I was focused on that, she knew I wasn't transitioning and it gave her time to come around... It was close to the... She was, We were gonna separate. This was probably in 98. We had a friend who was going to Northridge and she was getting her psych degree to go on to get her social work degree, and she had a class, this is a woman I had sponsored in LA an AA, and we kept contact and she told me about this transgender, MTF, which is kind of archaic language, but I can tell you a story some other time about why it still works for some people to be able to use that for cis gender, non-LGBT people who don't really understand.

0:51:55.4 DH: Like they might look at me and if I tell them I'm transgender, they think I'm

transitioning the other way, which is why I often use... And this has happened in Santa Barbara hospitals. So anyway, I got her to have time, so Renee came up, she spent a day, a weekend with us, she talked to me, she talked to Eveline, and she talked to both of us, and at the end of that, we called some friends 'cause Renee said, "Why don't you find out what your friends are gonna react, how they're gonna react?" So we called up to a couple, a lesbian couple they we were close to, and we say, "We wanna come over and talk to you tonight." And we went over there and we told them, and it wasn't like you thought... Like they didn't kick me out. They didn't kick us out. They didn't understand it, but... Shit, I don't always understand it. I mean, how does this happen? I don't know I mean, you know, and I fought it long and hard, I fought the good fight. I can't fight it anymore. I had to decide, I knew I was transgender. How far did I have to go to feel comfortable and not want to drink because to drink was to die, so...

0:53:02.5 DH: Finally, Eveline came around and finally, she said, because she had been married in the past, she had two children, and she had told, had come out to them before she ever met me and all that. And so what are they gonna think? What's her family gonna think up in Canada? What about her work? What about our work? What about her friends? She was just worried and she was a lesbian at that point, she thought herself as a lesbian, she was no longer heterosexual, she wasn't bi in her mind, she was a lesbian and what did that make her, Right? And so this bought time and she finally decided, Well, you know what, when did I ever worry... If you ever met my wife, she's a... She's five foot, but she is a force to be reckoned with. When did she ever worry about what anybody else thought about her. And so she said, "You need to... You need to transition, you need to make those name changes before you... Before you get your law degree, so that we don't have to go through all this after that." So in 1999 is when I did that, and so I practiced the law weekends and nights, and worked at Caltrans until I retired in 2012, and then I just did the law, and all of that time

I was doing... Well, I guess I should back up that while I was still in my former self, I was President of GALA, that was the Gay and Lesbian Alliance of the Central Coast.

0:54:46.9 DW: Doug, one second, I think why don't we use this then within our interview as the transition to the next section, which is life on the Central Coast, and that would be like a great point, and I know to go to the... Let's get you up to the Central Coast, and I think Elias has that as the next question.

0:55:01.4 DH: Okay. And you're right, we are on the Central Coast.

0:55:04.7 ES: Yeah, so I believe we discussed a little bit previously some of your experiences living in St. Louis and then Los Angeles. So what exactly were the factors and motivations in making your choice to come here and live on the Central Coast?

0:55:24.4 DH: For us, it was to get out of the city. I was brought up more rurally, it's just... A lot of the reasons I had moved there and my wife had moved there separately was concerts, all these things we wanna do, and the traffic was just, it was something we weren't doing them anymore, you know, it just wasn't the same, so we just thought... We started, I wanted to go to San Diego 'cause that was still a big small town, because I had lived down there in the 80s and loved it momentarily, but then we visited, that's like my favorite place to be, and I had a friend who had a home in North County. And so we would go down there and visit, but every time we'd go down there, it would be like another hill that was being framed for 160 homes, that's my wife's story. So that wasn't feeling comfortable for her, she's getting out of LA, so we kind of started going up the coast in Santa Barbara seemed, we stopped in there. We stopped at Santa Ynez area and looked there. And we just

kind of kept coming up. And at one point, when I was in San Diego, living in the summer looking for work, I took a friend who was in the Coastguard, and she and her family lived in San Francisco, but she was stationed down and had been in San Diego, so she was gonna come up to go out of San Francisco.

0:57:02.5 DH: So I was driving her up and we stopped here, and I... This was before I'd even totally- had I graduated? No. It was so weird. Oh, I was out here to do... Oh, okay, this is on spring break in my senior year. So anyway, it doesn't matter. We stopped here and I got interviewed. I stopped at a place here and she had family home in Morro Bay too, we stopped here and I went to a... Where you get jobs, an employment thing, 'cause I had looked... 'cause I've been looking and yeah, I've been getting the paper, ok... So there was a job I could have gotten on at your favorite place, the nuclear power plant, and they would have let me come out here and finish my degree out here instead of finishing in Missouri. I knew if I came out here, there was no way I was finishing. It was just so beautiful out here, I'd be at the beach every day. So that didn't happen... So anyway, where was I with that? Anyway, so you asked me something?

0:58:10.1 DW: We are getting you up to the Central Coast.

0:58:12.6 S2: Yeah, got me to the Central Coast. OK, so I had been in around here and had known it was a beautiful place, so anyway, we found... We decided, oh, so Caltrans, so I was looking, the place that was from Kansas City, that had, were working out here in Paso that didn't work out, 'cause it was construction management and I had everything they wanted, but they were cutting back and so they sent two green guys from Kansas City to work up here, and I couldn't get that job, I really couldn't find a good job, and I got a job with Caltrans, which was a big drop in pay, my wife

took a big drop in pay to come up here, she was a legal secretary and a paralegal, and she got a job with the Public Defender's office, which here is not a county office anyway, but it was worth it, and we looked all over and ended up here, so here we are, and started looking into what was the... Oh, and we got connected because of my connection with Southern California Women for Understanding, one of the chairs in San Gabriel had moved up here and she was a department head at Atascadero Hospital. She was a psychologist, and so anyway, so we hooked up with her and she got us...

0:59:24.4 DH: That's right, right away we got involved with... They had a country western dance and they were doing it out at Cuesta, near Cuesta at the... They served the mentally challenged... I can't remember anyway-

0:59:44.7 ES: Achievement House?

0:59:45.5 DH: Thank you, Achievement House. That's exactly, right. So they had a place out there, and so one of our guys, David Perez, worked for them at the time, and so we rented that out, and so we got involved, and that's how we met all these people right away. We started going to lesbian potlucks, we started hiking, we started doing all this stuff and we got connected right away, and then I started finding out about GALA and BAPA [Business and Professionals Association], and so we joined both of those, and within a year or so, I was going to the board meetings, which were at Dana Belmonte and David's condo here in San Luis, and so I started attending and then of course... I was a live body, right? I was breathing, so I got on the board, and so I kinda got involved with that, and then Dana was one of the main speakers for us at the Vet's Hall when the ordinance came up for the gay ordinance to non-discrimination for jobs and homes, and we had been discriminated--

Eveline and I had been discriminated when we were looking at a home in Templeton, we had a realtor who told us she was new as a realtor, and she told us that these people had said something about... They had run the price up because we were lesbians, and we ended up in the place where we're at, and we're glad we did, and her boss, who I know, who know who that was her broker, said it really wouldn't be much good to turn them into the state at that point, it's kind of like their word against ours kind of thing. So that was something we talked about at this hearing anyway, so... I don't know wherever you wanna go from there.

1:01:48.4 DW: Actually, I think that's, you pretty much discussed the bottom of that page, Elias, if you'd read that, just I think... I think maybe ask for a little bit of a broader picture of the bottom there.

1:02:00.6 ES: Yeah, I believe you mentioned potlucks that people would have... So going off of that, what was the state of... The social life for LGBTQ people on the Central Coast.

1:02:14.4 DH: So it was... There at that- The time that we came up here, there was no bar, so there was no place to go, there was no center, right, so we had- you went to people's homes and you got involved with... There's different groups. BAPA was kind of the one way that men and women engaged more frequently, so what... From my past, when I lived in St. Louis, in the bigger cities and in LA, you had men's bars, you had women's bars and back... It wasn't so bad in LA as it was in St. Louis, I think it's the timing. And we are like, if you think of anything, we're like 20 years behind back in St. Louis, but if you went into a... You didn't walk into a gay men's bar unless you were accompanied by a gay man or you had friends and you were meeting them there, the same thing, and it was very frowned on to do that, so I think that separated us a lot, what brought us together of

course, in LA wasn't the bars, but was AIDS. AIDS. The Women's Center that we were really working on in the 80s when I moved there, went defunct because the money wasn't there, because the women were spending the money on taking care of AIDS patients and reaching out and that was a big money thing.

1:03:49.3 DH: And so that was where the community was focused. Then when we got here without the bars and stuff, we had this thing called the Business and Professionals Association [BAPA], and that was run by a lot of Mike Hughes and a lot of the gay men were involved, but that was that brought the women and the men together, and once a month you'd have somebody like... Oh man, Morris Kite, Gay Liberation Founder, would come up or different people, we also would invite all the members of a, for a panel that was running for the city government for the council, we'd have them. Always have a really nice meal and it was just... It was a little more upscale and drinks and stuff like that, and it was usually over at the Monday Club, it's really nice. That seemed to lessen. I became GALA president in 96, I think. I was co-president at that time, the by-laws were such that you had to have one lesbian and one gay male, they were co-presidents. Vince Kirkoff, had a lot of things going on with business and personal, and he really had to drop off at some point, so I kinda carried on from that and so from that...

1:05:22.1 DH: About the time I was rolling off of GALA, BAPA approached us and really wanted us to kinda take them on, and so they joined us, but BAPA really disintegrated, there wasn't enough energy to keep that going, and that's kind of a sad thing, but I was glad because there had been a push and pull, there were some... And you know, this whole idea of GALA, when I was president, so GALA is all lesbians well, it wasn't... I can name you some of the gentlemen that were on the board, and then when it was all gay men, no it's not... But what it was, was there was a lot of...

There was no acceptance of transgender, so I knew I was gonna be transitioning, eventually I knew who I was, I told some of my core board members as I was leaving, but one of the things that I think... And one of the questions I think I saw in there is what some of the things I'm proudest of is that we started a center, and we started the first Pride, now there had been a center, I was told by David Perez and Dana, they started something like in 89, but it was real brief and it didn't last.

1:06:44.3 DH: So in 1996, I guess it was October, I think we got the rent, rented a house on Chorro. It was a duplex. We rented it, I think in August, and so we had this little tiny little center, but it really attracted people, it was really great, but six months into that, so we were renting from an ally, and six months into that though, I don't know if you know the congestion that's over there and the lack of parking. It was near Pacific and Chorro. And so neighbors were complaining and it really wasn't zoned to have us there, so they gave us some time to look and we found a place behind what was Life Steps, which was on upper Higuera, which is, I believe is somebody's law office now. So they had an old garage in the back, and we rented that, and that's where we just kept on going, and it was a hole in the wall, but it was our hole in the wall... And it was also... We had our first Pride Week, that in 97 and our first Pride Festival. So in the week, we had somebody that held a panel about employment law, we had a religious one, we had meet the board and just stuff like that, and Utopia Bakery was owned by a gay man, Steven Delugue, and he and his partner have since owned Marshalls and since retired and all that stuff but he brought over a gigantic cake, I mean it was just...

1:08:30.1 DH: It was outpouring of the community was just great. Just a little hole in the wall, but people wanted to be there and wanted to come, and we had a family picnic at Biddle Park. That's the first time we did that. And that was for everybody. That was like the Sunday, the first Sunday,

and then Monday was a panel. We had something going every night, and we had a religious panel, I think Caro did that one, Caro Hall, and then Friday night was a break. Saturday was... It was so funny, I got called, when things started going out about what was gonna go on for Pride Week, and this woman calls me and says, her name was Gina Whitaker, and she said, "I really think you should have some films." And I said, "Gina, I would love to." And I thought about it, I said, "but I just don't, we don't have the energy." We just had... Our volunteers were doing everything, it was just so great. So she took, I said, "So if you want it to happen," so I assume this woman is a lesbian, right? I mean, who was gonna call me and say, "Well, I think you should have some gay films." Right, so I said, "Gina, if you want it to happen, we'll support you, we'll pay for the tickets- the making of the tickets and whatever you have to do, we'll try to come up with money to get the film, but... You're gonna have to do it."

1:09:46.5 DH: She did it. Well, Gina Whitaker is an ally. She's this awesome ally, who has also served on our board before, she's a UU person, and she's just incredible. So she took it on, she knew Jim Dee [The Palm Theatre], she set it up. Jim donated the projector person, projectionist, I guess you call it, and he... I don't know if he got the movie too, he just went out of his way, so we had a couple of movies that day and then that afternoon, then that night, we had a big blowout at Breezes, which we now had a bar and it was not out in the sticks, which is where when I went to University of Missouri, it was not in town. It was out in the sticks, so nobody would get you... Right, and so it was right there in Madonna Plaza. Not Madonna what is that? The one at Los Osos and Madonna Plaza. So anyway. And then the next day we had the festival, and that was in- The discussion was, should we have it at Biddle Park. No. Should we have it at Mitchell so it's not so obvious, and I said, "No, if we're gonna be... If we're doing this, and a big reason to be proud is to be out and be educating people," so I said "it should be in the Mission Plaza." And we didn't get any push back

from the city, the one thing they said is that "You should go around to your neighbors, and your neighbor is the church," and I have... I consider myself a recovering Catholic and I had no idea how they were gonna react, and I just walked in with the thing, I said, "We'd like you to sign off on us having this pride festival." No problem. And there was even a mass, and there was even... The pastor did say something. It was really nice. And so a lot of fear around that... Somebody said, "Let's have a parade." I'm like, "Are you kidding?" I'm worried enough that we're all gonna be concentrated in one spot, we're gonna have people straggling, about 10 people and we'll straggle along and people pick them off with their cars... I've had guns pulled on me in East Saint Louis, I don't know what to expect here. But it was like, come on. So it went off really well. We were, there was a lot of pushback and a lot of talk in the media about how we shouldn't be doing this.

1:12:12.4 DH: And we're against religion, etcetera. So we had it set up that, I believe it was Robin Murphy, set it up so that there would be one affirming pastor available every hour for the media and for what we figured was gonna be a ton of protesters. There were two protesters to the credit of the other religions, they just said they didn't wanna give us that media or whatever, so good. I mean, that was great. And we had the one guy that always walks in the downtown at the Thursday night farmers market, the guy with the, he has real dyed black hair and he... I think he's got his little chair now, but he always walked with his sign and everything, he walked through, people engaged with him. Or didn't. And he didn't make a big fuss. We had security, we had hired security, we had two retired policemen who trained, other security volunteers, we had said volunteer security, we had the cops walking through, very aware that it could be really a problem and it wasn't... So many things didn't happen that could have happened, and so many things did happen, that was just surprised me that it just really came off really well, so that's my legacy. I went off and went to law school.

1:13:52.7 DW: Well if I might just- I think that pretty much does cover that large paragraph about that. But in general, there was also that incident at the City Council involving the ordinance, and so I'm wondering how the good response you got from pride in person with the community squares with the greater sense of San Luis as a... Let's face it, a majority Conservative City at the time, now, you might get a friendly hello for a Pride parade, but a less friendly hello when it came down to business behind the scenes, did you sense any of that.

1:14:27.0 DH: Well, when you think about it, we're probably... I'm trying to remember the exact year, was it 92 or 93 when that ordinance was proposed. A couple things going on. It was only voted down by one vote, the city did open up knowing that it was gonna be big, it did open it up for the second hearing in the vets Hall, but there- A lot of people that were against it were shipped in, they were not of our community. Where they came from, I don't know, but they didn't look familiar to any of us, and they were showing their religious signs against us, but again, there was only voted us down by one. One thing about... So that's one thing that's legal, right? When you get into, we're just out there and we're not hurting anybody, we're... We are- So they're not giving us rights, so it's not as serious to them, this Pride Festival and we're gonna go away. I mean, we might've been there a week, right, or we were there for a festival one day, but they didn't wanna give us rights. And I do think that in three or four years things had changed somewhat, but...

1:15:53.0 DH: I don't know, I think you're seeing so much nowadays... We don't even have to talk about back in the 90s, right? It's so sad nowadays. Tommy Gong, the whole, the tenor of the board of supervisors. Its almost scarier now than it was back then, and we've got those... From the California State, we have all the coverage and we don't need the city to say it now, at the time we did, and so I don't know what to tell you between the two, but I think that it's one thing for them to

let us have our little fun in the plaza and go away for a year than to give us our rights and recognize us as true human beings that have their equal rights and the humanity that they have.

1:16:49.3 ES: Going off of that, mentioning how the GALA Pride and Diversity Center sign was recently vandalized, presumably in an act of prejudice.

1:17:00.3 DH: One would presume.

1:17:01.8 ES: Yeah.

1:17:13.2 DH: Yeah, it took a little effort. And they left the attorney sign up. You know, I guess they were a little worried about the attorney getting on them.

1:17:09.1 ES: So could you give us any of your recollections of living in SLO during the AIDS epidemic and the formation of the Access Support Network?

1:17:26.6 DH: Access Support Network was pre-me, and I experienced more about the AIDS... When I lived in LA it was just so much more in your face. There's so many more people. I worked with a metaphysical group that was run by a lesbian and an empowerment group that we went out and we helped AIDS patients and stuff like that. My wife and I had sponsees who had AIDS, gentleman who passed away from AIDS. So I was more affected there, I've been interacted with Edi when she was Executive Director of Aids Support Network, that's what it was at the... Until a couple of years ago when they took on Monterey, and then David Kilburn always worked for them and did... David and his partner, David Perez, and a couple of us other folks were very connected up

in Atascadero. Couples that got together to try to make changes and GALA for sure. Just supportive of them, but I've kind of been on the periphery of the AIDS, of the AIDS Support Network.

1:18:48.1 ES: So what was the origin story for Trans Central Coast.

1:18:53.2 DH: Trans Central Coast, I don't know if you remember I mentioned that I had gotten a PO box here in San Luis. I could get things that I didn't want seen at home or my post office and having to do with trans. And I honestly cannot remember how I connected with this person. His name was Chaz Kussoy. He was an engineering student at Cal Poly, he was from San Francisco, he and his partner were living here while he was getting his Civil Engineering degree, and I wrote to him... It was some kind of communication. I don't know how it happened, I honestly don't know where I read it, but I wrote to him and so he was trying to encourage me to come out, and what it ended up doing is we ended up... People meeting, who were MTF and FTM, and we would meet at people's homes, Santa Maria and in San Luis, and we also met at the Blue Moon Cafe, which was a cafe that was owned by a trans woman and her wife, the trans-woman hadn't transitioned yet, and they would close it, it was in Orcutt, and they would close at night and then we'd go in when it was dark, and we would...

1:20:24.0 DH: That's how we met, and we would start to meet there, and it wasn't called Tranz Central Coast, it was just people trying to connect, and I don't know if I remember mentioning that I have all these Alexs in my life who were transitioning and... So this gentleman that I went to the FTM International Conference with, he lived in Santa Barbara, and when I was down there, I had also met another person who had yet to transition, and we connected and that person wanted to go to law school and wanted to transition and we all started connecting and because of the... At the

time, Santa Barbara was not... Their community was fractured, their... Hence, there were two prides, et cetera. I don't know if that's still the case. I haven't been that with him, but with the trans community it was also- There was friction. So they started coming up and we started meeting at the GALA center, so the center that was out in... Out by the, where Breezes used to be on Los Osos Valley Road when we were there in Suite B, we started meeting there, and at that point, we were meeting... Meeting like once a month, and then we were approached by Dr. Denise Taylor. Dr. Taylor is a physician, she was working at CMC, California Men's Colony, and she, they were asking would one of the doctors work with HIV and AIDS, which of course ended up working with transgender women, and she volunteered for that. There isn't anything this woman doesn't do and doesn't do well, and so she came to us to get some information, she had heard about Trans Central- or this group, and this is all real fuzzy to me 'cause I was not the original... It was Chuck Kussoy and a woman who lived down in Santa Maria who transitioned and had a wife, and they were kind of the starters and somehow they got connected to Denise, and then it was a couple, she came and talked to us and we talked to her and never- Nothing really came of it, and then it was about 2007, I think, that she came back and Kari Graton who was an engineer, not an engineer, but somebody who worked for public works over here at the county, and myself, and then another person, Ly-Lan Lofgren, who is a therapist, and the four of us- Well Ly-Lan wasn't ready to step in, but the three of us said, "Okay, we need to make this more professional, we need to get information out to people." And so we then formed Tranz Central Coast, and we started with showing "My Life In Pink," somebody else can say that in French, and it was, I believe it was a Belgium film actually about this young trans boy, and we showed it over at the Ludwick Center, first thing we'd ever done, we put it in, like, the newspaper and stuff like that, we had 75 people show up, and then the three of us answered questions afterwards, I just stood up front and from there, we went on from there, we've done...

1:24:08.9 DH: I don't know. Lots of trainings. Ly-Lan and I have done trainings to different groups, and before there was RISE, there was called something else, we've done things to students, we've done to teachers, we did Pacheco School when they were realizing that there were some trans children and we talked to the teachers and administration. This was when Rick Mayfield, who is now working for SLO Coastal was principal there. We've just done a lot of different things, and we brought... Well we brought all sorts of things, and we also can worked with Your True Gender, which was a... I don't remember what- It was in 2015, and most of our board worked on that to bring the three-day conference that was at Cal Poly. Was a real well received... It just kept on going and we felt... Tranz Central Coast was doing basically all the LGBT training for years. And we didn't feel a part of GALA very much because of the... Just the name cried out "Gay and Lesbian Alliance," right? They didn't even talk about bisexuals, right? And so over time, several of us tried to kinda move the mark on GALA and it really wasn't working. My wife served on the board a couple of times, one of our other trans members served on the board at the time, a couple of times, and it just wasn't working for us, so we just kept being Tranz Central Coast.

1:25:53.9 DH: At some point, Kim Hildreth was the President of GALA, he approached us about being kind of working more with them, which we did, but I don't think... We were running our own fundraiser, we were running our own show, and even though we weren't 501, we looked into that, we did some work with Janice Wolf to facilitate whether... How far did TCC wanna go? Did we wanna become a 501? Not really. I wanted to really be a part of GALA, but we really weren't seeing a place for us, so I saw... I was approached, I guess when... Yes, I was approached by Matias Bernal who was, I think he was only GALA president for a year, not even a year, I think six months. And he saw a vision of bringing more people together, not only... We always talk about intersectionality,

not just the race, being a Latinx man himself, but also bringing more trans people and stuff like that, and then when the board stepped up and hired Michelle, I was- We went back and forth and negotiated about whether Tranz Central Coast really wanted to trust GALA. It just felt more open and amenable, and at that point, I was willing to come back on to the board, and I did come back on the board, and it's just been wonderful ever since. It's been a lot, a lot of work, because the by-laws were from 2011, the by-laws still were very not open to...

1:27:43.3 DH: Well, they weren't geared towards, our new board having votes on Zoom and our electronic votes, there was none of that, just there wasn't an acknowledgement of the other things that make us a whole community, and so the name was a big fight, and changing the bylaws was a lot of work and a lot of fight, and I think we're- We are a much more professional organization than we ever were, and I no longer see myself as a member of Tranz Central Coast once I was not chair. I was chair for years, but when I rolled off of that, I was not in a steering committee, our education committee has recently... The TCC education committee has recently voted to be the education committee of the GALA Pride and Diversity Center, if you can imagine GALA not having an education committee, I believe we had one back in the 90s, but I don't... But I don't know when they stopped having one... I have no idea. So now it is all of us, all of us being close. Its still Tranz Central Coast is still a committee, they still have their own fundraisers, they still have their own money that we keep separate, but we keep the books with it, we work in concert with them more... So yeah.

1:29:13.3 ES: Can you tell us a little bit more about some of the current educational and outreach projects that Tranz Central Coast is working on?

1:29:21.4 DW: And, and if I could add also what's been the response from the San Luis community at large? In back- Feedback on that as well.

1:29:28.0 DH: On which part?

1:29:29.1 DW: The outreach an educational work you do.

1:29:33.3 DH: Well, the education, we could never... When we were Tranz Central Coast doing the education, we were pulling in, we had a lesbian, we had trans people on the Education Committee, professionals, we had allies, and we could never have... There was never enough time to do things, we would get reached out, we've done CASA trainings. Just trying to think of the different. There's a group that works with adults... Not Compass Pathpoint, I can't remember anyway. It's now located out where SESLOC used to be. Anyway we're always constantly getting contacted to do things, we were contacted a long time ago to do something for some of the county domestic group... I just can't remember. Anyway, so we're always being approached and done a lot for Lucia Mar, for SLO Coastal and stuff like that. Its where we're at right now is because of Covid GALA Pride and Diversity Center has a grant to do four community trainings, and we really felt like that was not a thing to do on Zoom, so fortunately, the Community Foundation, SLO County Community Foundation had granted us. That grant has allowed us to keep pushing it out. Right now, Kristin Kent of Central Coast Coalition for Inclusive Schools [CCAIS] is stepped up on her break from working for Santa Maria High School District, She's gonna be helping put those together, so we'll start rolling those out, I think those will be very important because we found that one That first one we did the for the community over at Ludwick Center, 75 people. Nobody had ever heard of us. This is back in the 90s, right? Yeah, no, 2007, I'm wrong. 2007, 2008 time frame. Yeah, so...

Always need it, education, education, education.

1:31:46.7 DW: Speaking of outreach to families and all, was there any involvement that you had with any of the PFLAG and its start here on the Central Coast.

1:31:55.0 DH: I had nothing to do with PFLAG, I would go occasionally. It was great that PFLAG really took up trans before a lot of the other groups and had a lot of good information and was a good place for parents to go at the time. But I have not really had a whole lot to do with PFLAG, and PFLAG unfortunately closed five years ago, maybe, this SLO chapter did, and they donated all their money to the LGBTQ fund over at the Growing Together Fund over at the SLO County Community Foundation. It had like \$2,000 in their coffers and they gave it to us. At what point... Well, that in 2000, I got contacted by Janice Wolf, and she was over at the Community Foundation, she was the program director, etcetera, etcetera. And so I was involved with being part of starting that Growing Together Initiative Advisory Committee, and so I served on that for about 18 years, I just ran off of that about two years ago, and I was only chair for one year, but I was always on the committee. And we're- Us trying to advise the large board and to make a difference. So we had GSA grants every year. If you had a GSA [Gay Straight Alliance], you had to write some little bitty thing and you got 500 dollars, we also have Community Action grants that you can apply for any time during a year, and then there's the major grants, and we've gone from \$3,000 to now we have \$5,000. You can get a year or you can have multiple year grants now, so it's really evolved. Lot of work on that.

1:33:47.6 DW: Besides Dr. Denise Taylor, who you've spoken of as like the- Are there any other people who rise to that level of advocacy, allyship who you think you might pull out as, I don't use

the gendered terms, heroes or heroines of essential cost in terms of the issues we've been discussing. Significant other names of.

1:34:09.8 DH: Are we talking about trans.

1:34:10.8 DW: Yeah specifically- Yeah, could be.

1:34:12.6 S1: Specifically trans? Because, well, I'm gonna answer it differently.

1:34:17.7 DW: Okay.

1:34:18.6 DH: So for the LGB, I would say it would be David Perez and Dana Belmonte, 'cause they nursed. They started AIDS Support Network, they were, started GALA before it was called GALA. They kept GALA going they were the force behind having it incorporated in 1994, the gentleman who's on the wall here, Ray Hatler, he and his partner, Jamie, were, they always brought Lambda Legal to their home, they always had fundraisers for our community, they did many, many things for us. Ray was an Attorney in LA and then came up here and Ray and Jamie were very much a part of a lot of things that happened here. I would say that then... Now, David Perez is now with David Kilburn. David Kilburn has been a rock solid person here, he's been involved with, he's worked for AIDS Support Network for years, and then he's been an executive director, and then he became, he brought on Monterey when it became Asset Support Network. Ly-lan Lofgren has been always someone I can turn to, so when we were Tranz Central Coast and not really affiliated much with GALA, when something would come in, the triage would be, if it was about physical, medical health issues, the questions went to Denise, if there were mental health...

1:36:00.2 DH: They went to Ly-Lan and if they were legal, they went to me, and I first encountered Ly-Lan when she was the... Her client was a five-year-old child and the mother and they were having problems with the school, and that's when I first met her, and that's when we made the connection. She started working, she worked with us for at least 10 years or more, doing a lot of work, and Kari Graton was a real force. She has since moved with her wife up to Oregon and Washington. And she was a force to be reckoned with. I'm sure there's people I'm missing, that's what's the sad part of it, 'cause I can't think of everybody that... Well, Carroll and Barbara, they did a lot of work in our community. Having that bookstore [Volumes of Pleasure] was a real connection, and then Barbara was the spiritual guru and... Never met Barbara, I don't think. Did you?

1:37:00.6 DW: Only through the video interview.

1:37:01.1 DH: Yeah. OK.

1:37:02.8 DW: What do you speak to Carroll Leslie? Well, I guess then maybe before we get to the concluding question, your thoughts and reflections, Steven had asked a question about, when you said LA was the draw as a younger person, what was it about Las Angeles that made it the draw for you want to come out of Missouri?

1:37:25.1 DH: OK, it was the weather. The chance to- The mountains, the chance to hike and camp and backpack. The ocean, I love water. I just saw it as a vibrant community, I knew there were a lot of LGBT community type of things. Bars wasn't necessarily the attraction, but where those too, being a recovering alcoholic. And I just, just felt like the right place to be. And I just thought it was

gonna be this lesbian mecca, which in a lot of ways it was, but I thought it was gonna be... I didn't think there was anybody gonna have any problem with LGBT or LGB, I should say, and I found out that they did.

1:38:28.8 ES: I think that San Francisco is probably a little too foggy and cold.

1:38:33.0 DH: Yeah it was a little too foggy and cold for me. I did interview up there, though.

1:38:39.7 DW: Maybe you could head to the bottom of the-

1:38:42.6 ES: So, do you have any- Do you have any parting thoughts or additional reflections before we end the interview, or even just what you believe that the greatest challenges are to the LGBT plus community going forward?

1:39:07.9 DH: You may wanna cut this but I... And I'm sure every generation feels this way, but I feel pretty sad of where we're at, and I usually am a pretty hopeful person, and that's the only way I can keep going is that I guess... Let me start with this. The fact that there is so much division right now and so much pushback, and we just recently got another thing of hate mail... Mailed to the center. That has to say something, and what it kinda- I kinda look to it as, we must be doing something right, otherwise, why would they bother? If they thought we were under their foot, under their shoe and that we had no power, why would they- They wouldn't even bother, they'd just be, you know, "Oh well, that's them." They wouldn't bother to hate us, they wouldn't bother to go do all the things they're doing, but it is, you know, feels somewhat like we were really gaining some momentum with- Probably through Obama, and then with the Trump administration. And, you

know, it didn't start with Trump, I mean, for all- As horrible as it was, it didn't start with Trump. Those people have been out there. They've been hiding. And I would- I'm glad I'm as old as I am, that if it gets any worse, I don't wanna be around for 50 years, I just really can't envision it, but it's just so challenging right now and it's just so disheartening to feel like...

1:41:03.6 DH: And I just... WPATH is the World... Professional Association of Transgender Health. It took over where Harry Benjamin standards stopped. And it is the- It is a world... It is an international group. It is for physicians, it is for mental health, and it is for law. Although the- Fewer legal... And they just had a book club sort of Zoom with Jamison Green, who's written "Becoming a Visible Man," and he rewrote it again, and it came out again a second edition. And the sad part is that there are still people who will not accept our existence, who will deny our existence, and Catholic Bishops won't even talk to us. It's like we don't exist, and that's not the only religion, but it covers a lot of people. The Catholic religion is quite all over the world, and. So they don't even accept that trans people exist. That's a sadness, and won't even grant us- And the fact that Dan Dow would not just put it on his- n-Not his personal Facebook. That's one thing, but put it on his business Facebook that he met with this Family Research Council guy, Tony Perkins. And they are LGBT, anti-LGBT and he went on there and he's touting that he went on there, and was interviewed by this guy. The old James Dobson guy, so it's like, it's just, I don't know, I hate to be on a downer. I wanna, you know, I would like to leave with more of an update up, uplifting.

1:43:00.6 DW: In that case, let's say this tape is in the archive for young people, maybe Elias's age or younger, and they come across this, what would be your thoughts looking back and reflecting, you know what, what would you tell a young person now, as a message?

1:43:15.7 DH: Oh, you know what, you've lifted this up and you're like, "Oh my God, you're kidding," that was the way it was like back then? Because when we think about it, look at what has changed for LGB people from when I was growing up, when the Mafia ran the bars, maybe they still do, I don't know what they did. You know, that's what Stonewall. But I realized I was sitting in a bar in East St. Louis, when I was, what? 19, 20, whatever, with a fake ID. And I was gonna go, I saw this woman come in and sat at the bar, and I say, "Oh, I'm gonna go up and ask her to dance." And they're like, "Have a seat." And I said, "Why?" And they said, Do you know who she is? And I'm like, "Of course I don't know who she is." That's why I gotta go over. And they said, "Well, she's the sister of the mob boss that is keeping this open." And I'm like, "Oh!" I sat up... So, you know, hopefully... So, so much as three... You had to have three pieces of clothing that matched your birth sex, and all these different things and the police raids... I'm not saying police are wonderful right now, but we really have a good working relationship with the police, at least in San Luis Obispo. There are some things, some hiccups have happened. But I feel like we're on the right path there. The fact that the city police chief will meet- The last one did, and now this one is gonna meet- Just met with us. The fact that we can have an ongoing conversation... So much is different, so maybe this... Maybe there's a trans- Right now you've opened this box and there's a trans chief there, you know, that would be cool. So yeah, it's gonna get better and it will get better, and I just sometimes... You know what, I've been back on this board for what, three years, we're now, we now say, "We're gonna be giving to the Chumash," we have a little statement before every board meeting honoring that we're on their land, we're gonna now be gifting some money to them in honor of that, we're reaching out, we're having the queer profs who are Latinx, they're gonna be working with us to do some surveys and just rethinking some things in which way the board's gonna go. We have more varied people on the board, whether it's sexually, orientation and gender identity, white, brown, etcetera, and so yeah, we've changed a lot and we've really made a difference in this

community, and we continue to...

1:46:03.6 DH: And I guess when you look at it, as a result of that sign being broken, it cost us almost 700. So when I let the police chief know, and I let the captain know in an email... No, it wasn't the chief, I'm sorry, the captain and our liaison. Can you imagine having a liaison, an LGBT liaison with the police... Does that happen everywhere? It didn't happen way ago... And our insurance agent, I sent that out and I said, This is what happened. And then I said to our insurance agent who... I first met him back in 97 when we first engaged him, and he's still around. And I said, "Should we turn it in?" He said, "No, it really wouldn't be worth it, 'cause you have a 2500 dollar deductible and stuff like that." And he said, "But I'll kick in 250." It went from there, we have collected 8,000 dollars, not by putting it out there and asking for it, because the community of all shades, of all people and allies particularly have given us money so that we can be stronger. So not only the sign, more security, more things that we can do to outreach and so we shall overcome... I'm sure. This too shall pass and be a better place, so... Yeah.

1:47:32.8 DW: Thank you very much-

1:47:33.9 ES: Thank you.

1:47:34.9 DW: -For taking the time to be with us this morning.

1:47:36.1 DH: Thanks for listening, and I know I talk a lot.

1:47:38.3 DW: And what we need now is 20 seconds of silence, so I can get the tone of the room in

case we need to fill in some sound.