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Interviewee: Bobbi Carmitchell

Interviewer: Mary Merriman

Videographer: Michelle Probolus

Date: June 26, 2013

Place: Bobbi Carmitchell's Home

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Abstract:

Bobbi Carmitchell was born in Willow Street, Pennsylvania. She spent most of her professional career as a full-time musician, but currently has added contracting work in stained glass and woodworking art. Bobbi describes her journey in the musical world – from the Wood and Wind trio, to playing with her sister, and then onto to a solo career – and how that journey has shaped her identity as a lesbian. She details how her early years with Wind and Wood, and the influence of women musicians enabled by Olivia Records, helped her to come out. She expresses amazement at how coming out today has become a non-issue for so many women. She describes several stories over the years that demonstrate her difficulty in balancing a life as an out lesbian with the desire to appeal to a broader audience, including how she is currently choosing to frame a novel she hopes to finish soon. Bobbi emphasizes that her parents were fully supportive of her, and yet relates stories of their difficulties with her sexuality. She details her involvement with the Central Pennsylvania Women's Music Festival and Women's Circle which highlight tensions within the LGBT community. A strong feminist identity and involvement in women's issues has powerfully shaped who Bobbi is.

MM: LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender] oral history project for Central Pennsylvania and we're interviewing Bobbi Carmitchell. And I'm going to let Bobbi ... ask you to talk about some of your background. Where were you born, give them your name.

BC: OK.

MM: That sort of thing.

BC: I was born about six miles from here in Willow Street, Pennsylvania ... small town south of Lancaster. You're yanking on my microphone.

MM: I'm sorry [laughs].

BC: Getting off to a great start. She's pushing me out of the frame already. 'Cause it's all about Mary [reaches over and warps arm around MM's back, both smile and hug]. I'm 55 years old. I ... I'm the youngest of two girls in my family. Parents were...but they're both gone now. But my...both my parents have been always very supportive of me whether at the time I was an out lesbian or I just had crushes on all my schoolteachers. It didn't ... it was never an issue at that point, being younger. And I have been, with the exception of a couple of years in like late teens, always living around this area. I...how much do you want me to go into?

MM: Eh, just keep going a little bit.

BC: Let's see. I live now in Washington Borough, which is a very small, rural community outside of Millersville, a medium size rural community. So, being ... I've been here for about 22 years in this place and I make my living doing variety of things. But at most of the majority of my life I was a full-time musician. And now, I'm just kind of a full-time artist. So, there's a wider umbrella. Which thank God we, we have because it's raining here during the interview

MM: [laughs].

BC: I ... my older sister's also ... she's a year and half older than I am. Her name is Ann. Schoolteacher just retired. She's straight, but is the best ally anyone, anyone could possibly ask for, and plays with me – performs with me for the last 25 years.

MM: OK. Did you also ... you went to school in this area?

BC: Went [MM crosstalk inaudible] to school in Lampeter-Strasburg. Small ... again another small, small farm school ... about 150 graduating class. General education. Did not go to college. Started with music right out of high school, and continued to do that up until about the last four years full time. And now it's just still playing and will never stop.

MM: OK.

BC: Yep.

MM: How about church background? Any ...

BC: Interesting. My parents, my parents both were ... both were very steeped in their individual churches. My mom's family was a Pres--was raised Presbyterian in Lancaster. So, her father was a church organist. She, at the time of her death was the oldest member of the church for 86 years. So, that's where there was ... there was a Wisner pew. That was like my mother's maiden name. So, there was a pew there with ... yeah that's where you always sat. Same with my dad. Raised in Lancaster. There was a Carmitchell pew. Raised Methodist.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: So, depending on who won the flip of the coin or who was in the better ... who didn't act out that much for that weekend ... that, that depending on what church, what church we went to. So, like we're going to be Methodist this week. And, then we go to the Methodist church. Nope, now we are going to be Presbyterians, and we go to the Presbyterian church. But, most of the time – I would say the majority of the time – we were at the Presbyterian church.

And, that was always a very interesting time period as a young lesbian in the 70's, cause for me I really started to identify myself as being a lesbian in high school. I just wasn't able to word it as easily. But ... and I think the Presbyterian church now is doing a whole lot more than the

Methodist church as far as inclusivity of, of out lesbians. They just recently passed something. I think that they're allowing...lesbian and gays to be pastors?

MM: Yes.

BC: I do believe. I think they changed the big, huge policy right before my mom died. But, I will tell you something that really ... that was a huge thing that happened with my mother, church-wise. Probably when I was in my early forties – I'm 53 now – so, my early forties, maybe mid-forties. Ten, fifteen years ago. The minister that they had at our ... at my mom's church – great guy – and he just ... his daughter was pregnant for the first time, and in his sermons he would say "Okay, I'm going to be a granddad soon, so get ready. I'm going to be telling, you know, incorporating stories about my daughter's pregnancy. It's my first, you know, time being a granddad. So, really excited". So he kind of just kept you going all the way through. Then, the, the daughter had the baby. Everybody's happy. The whole congregation's extremely happy. And, he invites everybody one of the Sundays to the christening of the baby.

So, we're sitting in the front...in our, in our front pew in the balcony, and out comes the, the daughter with the baby. And, out comes her partner.

MM: [laughs].

BC: And, you could have heard a pin drop. And, my mom had a really hard time with that. And, for the first time in my life with, with her as an adult, I, I'm like, why are you having a hard time with that. And it really set this big dividing place between the congregation. The ... some of the congregation felt that the minister led the congregation on. That he should have said "oh by the way, my daughter's a lesbian." But in his mind, it was his daughter. There wasn't another identity that went with it. It was his granddaughter. His daughter. So, it really, it, it set, it set a bit of a precedent for that particular church, and, and a lot of people left. And, to have my mom ... when I questioned her, it was an interesting turning point for us where I had to kind of ... she said, you know I, I don't go to church to have the problems of the world rubbed in my face. I go there to escape it. I'm like, [waves hand] "hello."

MM: Very interesting.

BC: You know, that's, that's like, that, that you're talking about me. She's like, no it's different. And I'm like, nah. It's pretty much the same. So, but I find that, that now the church is – that was like I said 15 years ago – and I think they have made a lot of, a lot of leaps in that, in that category. But ...

MM: Yeah.

BC: And he stayed. The minister stayed on for years, and he was very well respected and, and loved, but it was a huge, it was a huge issue for a while. And, especially with my mom and I. I, I didn't see that one coming.

MM: Did it change your relationship at all with your mom?

BC: Not necessarily from my mom's standpoint. It made me a little gun-shy about talking about some things, but I, and my sister and I still talk about it. And, if I ... if my mom were still here, should would I, I think she would think I overreacted. But, that's a pretty strong thing for me to have heard from my mom, who was my biggest fan.

MM: Yeah.

BC: You know, it's like you want your mom to be your biggest fan. And, you want them to just love you unconditionally, and my mother...I can't, with that one issue – besides that one issue, that one thing – I can't think of a better mother to have because she came to every job she could possibly come to. She played at every benefit she could possibly attend with me. She was a piano player.

MM: Uh-huh.

BC: And, she supported everything that I did. It was just...it, I found it that's ... it threw me off that, that was the one thing that she was ... I thought the most supportive of her. And, she still was up till the time that she died. She was really proud of me, but I think for some reason she associated her...that time in her church as not wanting things to change in her life and...so, yes and no for a while. It took...it kind of was a little stingy for me, but I think I was able to work past it.

MM: Okay.

BC: Yeah.

MM: But, it opens kind of an interesting areas ... looking at the area of change. You lived in Lancaster County all your life, and certainly you see lesbian and gay people and the whole issue kind of evolve here.

BC: Yeah.

MM: Can you talk about that a little bit?

BC: Yeah. I think for me as a, as a performer, I was...I've been a musician here in Lancaster since 1980. And, I think that's probably...I think my...it, it feels to me that my identity in this community – in the Tri-City community – but especially in Lancaster is “Oh. There's the lesbian singer. She's really nice”. And, there's a, there's a parameter that I feel that out of ... it's a, it's a fine line to balance. I want to be able to work in my hometown. I want to be able to play music and have people come and support me. I also understand my leash that I'm on – so to speak metaphorically – of how far I can go over a line that would make some bar owners, who are in a straight bar, feel uncomfortable. And at the same time, I want to be able to have the women who come in to support me – lesbians, straight women allies – to be able to come in and support me, and have them feel that they're comfortable and they're appreciated. That their money's good there, at the bar. Or, their money's good there at the restaurant. Or, wherever it is. And, it's

always ... I always find that to be a very fine line, and a very fine balancing act. And sometimes, I feel that ... I've seen it change a lot over the last ... I've been playing now for 30 ... I still play Lancaster Dispensing Company. I've been playing that since 1980. So that is, what is that? 11 years that I've been playing there. Just tell me that because I don't want to be that old [laughs].

MM: [laughs]

BC: It's like decades. And, and to be able to see ... and it's an interesting perspective when you are ... when you're on, on the stage. If you're lucky, you're a little raised above people. So, you can ... you, you don't feel like you're quite ganged up on as much. But, you can see a...you have the total view of everything that's going on. What you see is--and it's changing, but it's still not. We're still not over the hump of-- and it's mostly straight women-- when there are...in, when there's a bar that I'm playing-- whether I played with Wind and Wood, or whether I play with my sister, or whether I play on my own-- where there's most, you know, the majority of the people who are there are lesbians...they have their own way of trying to figure out how to be, in a straight, in a straight bar. Whether they just want to be, you know, right out there ... whether they want to just ... however they decide they want to do it. But, that impacts on everybody around them. And, so you see people start to figure out by kind of going oh [turns head and surreptitiously looks around], you know, they're looking around, you know they're having a drink, they're having a sandwich, they take a bite of the sandwich [pretends to bite a sandwich] they're like, "oh, they're all, they're all women at that table." And, then ...

MM: [laughs] Yes.

BC: they all start to figure it out. And you ...and it gives you...it gives me a chance to be able to see how the straight world reacts to mer-- ... the merging of the lesbian world. Sometimes it's good. Sometimes it's not. There's always alcohol involved. That plays a part in it. Because in my workplace, I'm the only person working. I don't have coworkers who have a certain standard of ...a certain professional standard to adhere to. I'm the only person who's working in a room full of 150 people. So therefore, I have to kind of go, OK. So, the table over there that, that now figured out that these are all dykes over here, and there ... what are they going to do about it. Are they starting to...you know, I've had guys put condoms on the my guitar when I've taken a break because they've figured out I'm a lesbian and they think it's really funny. And, at what point do I decide that I'm just going to be...I'm going to laugh it off or I'm just going to say hey, is this a teachable moment? Is this a trainable moment? No, they're drunk. They're you know, they're not going to get it. Do you learn by example, blah blah blah. All that stuff you kind of can figure out. So, I think it's always been ... it's a constant ... if I'm a teacher that's one thing. If I work at a deli, if I clean streets, if I am a nurse, all those professions have their own parameters. But, being in the public and performing for people who are off work, is a...it's not a challenge, it's what I've grown up doing. But, it's always a, a study of human nature. And, there are times that I'm in a...I, I go into going you know...you, you're walking into this environment. These are the parameters within, in that environment. So, why do you think you want to go in there and start to get a little snooty because they're straight people who are going, "Oh my God, there are lesbians over here." Or, "There are gay men over here." So, it's always kind of a ... it's always an interesting challenge for me to figure out how to work through that. I think starting with Wind and Wood the way that I did, which was a band in 1980 I met. I, I was living in

Virginia for two years, maybe three years up on Skyline Drive, which was a really beautiful secluded place. And, I totally fell into playing music for a living by accident. I went down there. Met some friends. Didn't even know where I was going. I, I mean literally I had like my whole profession just ... it ... I, I was up ... I was going to Florida – sidebar – going to Florida. Stayed in a hotel in Washington, DC. Got a late start – 17. I was checking out of the hotel and somebody opens the door. And, this brochure blows off the rack on the wall. And, it goes phooo [arm imitates a piece of paper floating in the air], right in front of me, and I'm like "Where is that?" And, it was Skyline Drive. And, so I diverted. Never made it to Florida. Drove to Skyline Drive which is about an hour from DC.

MM: Yeah.

BC: Met some friends are like [imitates others talking], "You should come live here." I'm like [in high pitched tone], "OK." You know, you're 17. Drove up and packed my stuff. My parents were like "have fun". And, I ended up playing down there for three years, and kind of ... kind of, you now, getting my chops. And, then I move back home when I'm 21 and I meet Anne Billmyer and Deenie Hamacher, two women who'd been playing at college in Millersville. They were, were ... they were playing in Harrisburg. [Note: they become *Wind and Wood*, with Bobbi Carmitchell]

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: I get back from this trip across the country with a friend of mine. You know if you're lucky, you all get a chance to do that with your best friend, like you're 21. You're stupid. You're not prepared, and you load your car and you drive across the country. And you know, if you manage to escape death, you come back and you have all these great stories. So, I had just gotten back into town, and my friends are like, let's go hear these guys play. So, I went up and I'm like, oh my God. An out lesbian. And, Anne Billmyer was the first out lesbian I'd ever met.

MM: Hmm.

BC: And, she was out there. She didn't ... she didn't change her pronouns of the songs. She you know, she stayed with singing a love song for a woman. She didn't sing it about a man. And, everybody's kind of going, what? And, it was an absolutely amazing experience to have met them, exactly when I met them. So ...

MM: And, about what year was that in?

BC: 1980.

MM: 80. OK.

BC: So, I get up and I recognized Anne from a baseball game somewhere 'cause, you know, stereotypically we all played some sport. And, starting playing with them immediately, like the next week. And so for me as a young lesbian, who kind of came to terms with my sexuality,

literally on top of a mountain in the middle of nowhere with one of my best friends who recognizes that I was a lesbian ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: and was trying to help me out by getting me the “Rubyfruit Jungle” book ...

MM: Yeah.

BC: by Rita Mae Brown. I’m like [in a high-pitched voice] “Oh!” [MM laughs]

MM: “Oh, I get it.”

BC: [continuing in high-pitched voice] “OK! Thanks a lot,” you know. So I come back, you know, to the big city of Lancaster – of Willow Street – going, [in a softer voice and nodding], “Right. I’m a dyke. Oh, this makes sense.” You know, what do I do with it?

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: So, then I meet Anne and Deenie, and I’m you know, still trying to figure out my sexuality and my identity, and it was the perfect storm of culture, the timing, the women’s movement had picked up all this steam in the 70’s. We’re in another decade. Most of the places that we played were in Harrisburg for a while. Harrisburg was a lot more progressive back then. Steve Reed was just coming into being a mayor. That was ... that made a big difference. I cannot imagine us playing at the Midtown Tavern if Linda Thompson were the mayor.

MM: Hmm.

BC: She would squelch it as quickly as she possibly could, and that’s just across the board. I think the way it is. So all these factors combine to make this perfect pot of acceptance, and Deenie the flute player I played with was a straight woman. So, we had one big out lesbian [raises right hand with one finger pointing up]. And, we had one big out straight woman [raises both hands with palms open]. And, we had me [pushes hands forward] just kind of starting at the floor playing bass [stares down and plays the air bass] going, “I think I’m a lesbian. I think I’m a lesbian,” you know. So all of my friends, we’re all in our 20’s, and everyone...we are all, we all just grew up together.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And all of that, that first five year period of sitting there. We played five nights a week cause we were in our 20’s you know, you had the energy to do that.

MM: Yes [laughs].

BC: And, we’d play everywhere. And you would sit and you, you’d look out and there’s [points at locations in front of her] straight women with their boyfriends, and there’s no other table so

the two gay guys are sitting with them that they've never met. Lesbians are over here sitting with, you know, it was ... it was like this total [raises hands until they appear to be holding a globe]... it was like a UN [United Nations] of, of culture ...

MM: Hmm.

BC: of who was sitting with who. It didn't matter. It was like they were there for the music, and that was the common denominator. And so everybody ... [covers mouth] excuse me ... just grew up with each other in total acceptance. And,...I think to have that be my first five years as being a professional musician [MM crosstalk inaudible], it was just the best thing in the world.

MM: It was good.

BC: Yeah.

MM: Was Midtown a gay bar at that time?

BC: No. No, the only gay bar that were ... [pfft, ppp, poo] [ph]

MM: Harrisburg.

BC: Midtown Tavern was on Second Street, owned by these two very scary Greek people, Angie ... little, little woman. Very scary. They always sent me in to get money. I never came out with it cause I was always afraid of her. But, the Hideout? I think in the early, mid-80's... Rosie O'Donnell was a friend of ours. She was a friend of one of Anne's girlfriends at the time. Went to high ... went to college with Rosie. And, she was just still doing the bars.

MM: Hmm.

BC: And, so she's like you know, I want to pick some place in Harrisburg where, where, where playing at this gay bar right ne—it was right next to the police station?

MM: OK.

BC: That, and it was a hi ... it really was a hideout. A Hideaway or the Hideout or something. It was right ...

MM: I think it was the Hideaway, but I'm not sure.

BC: Yeah, I forget [MM crosstalk inaudible]. Some, you know dinky little bar [MM crosstalk inaudible].

MM: ... in Harrisburg.

BC: Yeah. OK. And so we...Rosie did a, she did an opening with – for us, and – and we played with her somewhere. And she was, was not out at all at the time ...

MM: Huh.

BC: Even though everyone's like [scrunches face], well, you're not out ...but you know you are ... but.

MM: Hmm.

BC: Anyway. So, so that's kind of ... I don't think ... there was one bar in, in York called Jenny's that we played that was kind of on the west side of York. The D-Gem was in Harrisburg on Front Street up almost towards Fort Hunter.

MM: Hmm.

BC: And, that was a wild bar. Crazy, wild bar. Dottie owned the bar. And, then there was a place right on S-- ...maybe on Second Street? It was a really small men's bar, and we played there a couple times. I mean there was no ... no place to setup. So we, we stood on the counter up on the bar and [leans back] leaned up against ... it's like you couldn't lean forward or else your ... your center of balance would be off 'cause your holding an instrument.

MM: Yeah.

BC: And of course, the breasts don't help. So, you're like whoa [leans forward] [MM laughs]. So, you almost like pin your shirts back against the wall. And, it was really ... it was an amazing time period in that first five-year period. We met Maureen Reagan, who was doing an arthritis telethon, and we never hid any of that ever, you know, who we were. And, she invited us down to play for her dad in 84, I think?

MM: Huh.

BC: And, we did. We went down and played...which is a huge, you know...not necessarily that he was President Reagan and he was the big freaking Republican, but it was a Susan B. Anthony celebration. So, we're like, let's do this. So, that was, that was, that was good stuff, you know. To have the small town band go down, and...and so, I think that's what...I think having the Wind and Wood experience. I got to tell you know, we...we busted through a lot of barriers. We would load our g--we'd bring our gear down, and we would set up, and there'd be guys at these divey little bars that we would play. We played a place called the Treverton Shaft up in the coal mining region. And we would tell little ... we'd be like, well this could be the night that we get beat up.

MM: Yeah [laughs].

BC: One of these nights we're going to get beat up. We carry our gear in and all of these guys are like, [in a deep voice] "You guys carrying your gear in for your husbands," and we're like "A", we're lesbians, "B", her husband never comes to hear us play. Oh! That's like you put it

... they asked a question and you just put it right at 'em. And, that was ... gutsy? You're in your 20's.

MM: Yeah.

BC: You know, you're a little more brazen.

MM: Yeah.

BC: You're like, you're going to ask, I'll tell you. You know, by the end of the night, they're swinging their beer mugs, buying us drinks and carrying, carrying the gear out for us cause they loved us, you know.

MM: Huh. That's cool.

BC: So, we...I think because we didn't necessarily politicize it, we just were who we were by example maybe, helped a little bit. And, we were really good. That did not ... it didn't hurt either. And, Anne was ... was the best there was at including everybody. Making every ... not, not making anybody feel left out. And, I think that that's...that had a lot to do with our success. The combination was just there.

MM: It's, it's quite a training ground.

BC: Mm-hm.

MM: People ... everybody comes to a position, I think of, of deciding how they're going to be out.

BC: Mm-hm.

MM: Did they stay pretty consistent then for you to just ... you learn from that to say, just put it out there and?

BC: Yeah. I remember some of the early pride festivals. Ski Roundtop I think was the first one? Is that ... does that ring a bell?

MM: Yeah I remember that one.

BC: And, I don't know how they got it at Ski Roundtop. I don't know if they knew somebody there. I knew we did some stuff at, at Marsha Davis's. Hi Marsha [waves hand]. She'd be a good person to interview if you don't...if you haven't interviewed her.

MM: I'll write her name.

BC: You know, you have these...every community has these kind of power lesbians. Either in a, either they're in a couple, or their profession, they're most of the time in business for themselves.

So, the rules are different. In the 80's – and that there's still a little bit of it now – but in the 80's and the early 90's, the guilt by association ran rampant. Schoolteachers, nurses – they would never come hear me – very few would come hear me play in an out situation. They were very, very careful where they went to come and hear me play. If I did a private function, everybody was there.

And you know, and that was another thing is to try to figure out how to safely be able to play music so everybody can come hear you. But, I think when you have somebody who is in a position where they either have land and they have money to be able to finance. I think they tend to be able to...I think that was kind of the impetus for the pride festival at...at, at, at Ski Roundtop. I'm not sure who even financed it because back then...

MM: I can't remember either.

BC: Yeah. [In high-pitched voice] You know, we're not as young as we used to be, Mary

MM: [laughs]

BC: [Still in high-pitched voice] My God, I got to take my pill [BC laughs].

MM: We want to take a break for a minute? How are you doing?

BC: I'm fine.

MM: You're OK. All right. All right. So, what we are talking about was just how you learn to be comfortable with who you are ...

BC: Mm-hm.

MM: or how you are going to put that out, or how are you going to move it around. As you mentioned, depending on the profession – and you said that earlier too – depending on the profession, you may have to operate differently than [BC crosstalk inaudible].

BC: Absolutely. In 1995, my father passed away in this...1994, 95, in that time period. The second...like the, a month or so after he had passed away, I had jobs lined up. And, I was doing...I was full time music at that point. Up till about five years I was full time...five years ago I had been full time music since 80. So, my sister came with me to a place in Lancaster to play out of support for me. We were not playing as a do, as a duo at that point. And, we were playing downtown. And, it was a really good crowd, and everybody's you know, having a good time. Straight people intermixed with lesbians who were kind of hidden at that point. And, somebody had asked me to play a song called "Birth Control of Beer." [Note: the song is "On Birth Control and Beer"]

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: It is a [swings arm back and forth] beer mug swinging song by a group called Two Nice Girls. They are very political...a very political queer band out of Austin, Texas at the time. And, it is a very funny song. And it, it takes...it takes [laughs] the sexual orientation and flips it on its ear. It talks about a woman who is a lesbian, who family was proud of her. But, then she met a man, and her man ... her family's like OK, we're all right with this. And, so the whole song is this like great way of getting people to understand what it's like on the other side of the coin. Very funny chorus. Everybody swings their beer mug by the end of the song. So we you know, somebody asks us to play the song and my sister's like, [in a slight, high-pitched tone] it's a little racy. You know, it's not like your basic you know, straight bar song. They're like "No, no. Play it, play it, play it." So, we play the song. Everybody's swinging their beer mugs. Great night. You know, people standing up. Buying, buying alcohol. Doing what our job is as singers, which is to make people drink and have them stay there. And, they had a blast. The next day, my sister gets a phone call from her superintendent at her school district. From the bar owner, who I have still to this day never met.

MM: Hmm.

BC: I usually deal with the bar managers. You know, here are your dates. Can you play this? Here's your money. Great night. Thanks a lot. You brought a good crowd in. I like your people. I always love that. I'm like the lesbian Moses

MM: [laughs]

BC: You know, like OK. It's all right. So, everybody got along. Here's your money. Thanks a lot. One person who was there was a little offended by that song. A little uncomfortable. You know, the kind of like straight woman who looks like she has spit up in her mouth.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Like, you know they don't [makes sour face] [MM laughs] ... yeah, she was never going to have a good time. She calls the bar guy. All he would had to have done is call me and say, can you not do that song. Hey by the way, here's my name ... which, which we cannot, we can't use his name. Here's my ... you know, here's ... we had somebody, can you not do that. I'm like, sure. No problem. You still want me to do the jobs? Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just you know, just watch that one song. That's fine.

But, what he does is he gets his facts wrong. He hears that my sister said something about being a schoolteacher. In the lyric of the song, my family they were proud of me and proud of what I am. He jumps to every wrong conclusion in the book. Calls my sister's school superintendent and says, do you have someone, a teacher named Bobbi Carmitchell there. They say yes. Shock of shocks. All of a sudden I'm a schoolteacher. And so this guy basically called my sister's boss to say, I think you need to know that you have an out lesbian working there who stood up at a bar ...at my bar last night and sang this song. And, I'm going to decide what you want to do about it.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Conversation's over. Superintendent calls the principal. Principal comes to see my sister. Knocks on the door. Now, keep in mind our father had just died in a really very short amount of time...three weeks died. And, at that point you want to...you know, he never made it out of the hospital. So, you...you find yourself wanting to pin somebody against the wall. Not metaphor...not intentionally, but metaphorically for...you know, cause there's a lot of stuff going on. And again, another perfect storm scenario where the super, or the principal goes to Anne [Anne Carmitchell] and said, "you got to know that first of all, I'm not going to do anything about it. I don't care if you are. I know you're not cause I've met your husband. But, here's what happened and we're not going to do anything about it". And Anne's like, "I want to know who this was".

MM: Hmm.

BC: "Well, it doesn't matter." "What do you mean it doesn't matter? You know I'm not a lesbian. If I was a lesbian...if I were a lesbian, you couldn't do anything about it. However, how am I...how do I know that this will not at some point creep up into...if there's a department head position available."

MM: Sure.

BC: "Oh, you know. Her sister's that big old dyke down in Lancaster that sings all those beer swinging lesbian songs. Hmm. That's not good..." for you know...there's a lot of speculation that goes along with that accusation. "I want to know who the person is." So, he tells the...he tells my sister the name. She of course, picks up the phone and calls me, and we're like ... I said, "You know what, there was a friend of mine who was an attorney there that night. Let me give him a call and see what kind of action we can take against this guy." So, Jeff gets on the phone. He's like "There was, there was never any conversation like that." I'm like, "You're right. So, what can we do?" So, these guys took on this case for free, and we sued this man for ... and it's a very trick thing of what to sue ... you, you're, we were not suing him saying being a lesbian is a bad thing. We were suing for his intent of what he was trying to do with that information.

MM: Yeah.

BC: And, what followed was months and months and months of harassment from this guy of what he was threatening to do, and the attorney said "If you guys decide you want to go ahead and have a trial, I [pointing to herself] need to contact everybody that I've been with because it's gonna to come up. And, you have to decide whether you want to pursue it or not." Now, back in 94, the list wasn't quite as long as it is now. So, I could have pretty much count on the two hands, that I was able to be able to go back and go [right hand checks of a list in left hand], right, right, oh right, right, right. So like, I was ready to do it, and we were ready to actually go to trial.

MM: Hmm.

BC: And, they...he blinked, basically, because he did not want the bad press.

MM: Yeah.

BC: That's a lot of effort for one stupid song.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And in, in, in one you know, arguably really good song it's like, what do you want to do. What's the, what's the mission of the performer?

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: It's to get people to support the music, buy drinks, come back, have a good time. And all ... I met all that criteria. But again, it's that ... boy, all it takes is one phone call.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, this was the 90's. This was the mid-90's, not that long ago you guys ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: In Lancaster. And, for me to be able to ... I, you know, my s—you know, we got, we got 10,000 dollars. That's a victory...

MM: Yeah.

BC: Even if it was 50 bucks.

MM: Yeah.

BC: I would have bought a, you know, a fishing, a nice fishing rod or something. But, but it's the principle of it. But, the problem that also...the backlash for me was that I didn't work in Lancaster for a long time after that. I...

MM: Really?

BC: Dis--Dispensing Company kept me, kept me going there all the time. But, I was traveling around the country a lot touring with other musicians, touring on my own. And, I didn't realize how much that lawsuit, even though we could not ... there's a gag order. We, that was ... we're, we're not allowed to discuss the guy's name, even though I would [in an emphatic, low tone] so love to say his name. But you know, we have to stick to what it is. But, the same way for my sister who you, you don't know what kind of backlash would have happened if a department head position would have come up.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: It's a small town, you guys. Word gets around that...and I didn't...I, it was probably well into 2000 that I felt like things kind of changed a little bit, and I was able to play in town a little bit more.

MM: Oh, OK. So, that's what it was.

BC: Yeah.

MM: OK.

BC: So, I think that there is a...you know again, it, it depends on your profession. It's, this is the only thing I can talk about is you know. And, I think it gets better. I think there – in the tri-city area – there are bars that...it's like any business. The life expectancy of the bars change. The, the venues change. Who's running acoustic music, all that changes. [Covers mouth, but no audible noise] Excuse me. You're going to love all those belches, aren't you Michelle?

MM: [laughs]

BC: So, that's...I find it really a fascinating study...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: to see how, you know...to, to see what people tolerate...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: and what they don't tolerate.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And how ...

MM: And where they draw their lines.

BC: And where they draw their lines.

MM: And who they draw them on.

BC: Yeah. And, now I play at Chestnut Hill Café the last Sunday of each month ... run by two great women. The mayor supports them, was like right there in the front lines when they cut the ribbon a couple years ago...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: maybe five years ago. And again, it's almost like a...it almost feels like I'm back in the 80's where there's a...it's a totally mixed crowd. I get 60, 70 people in there in that really small café. There's you know, the, the married couples over there who just came from church and there sitting with a couple of my lesbians friends who don't have a chair, and everybody shares. There's somebody's baby over there and somebody's, you know, ss-straight guys. There's gay

guys. And, that's a really great safe zone for a lot of people. And you...you know, you just want ... you obviously want more of those. But, there are...there're pockets of it out and about.

MM: It's interesting that you talked about the, the, the issue at the bar in the mid-90's, which in Lancaster was a lot of politics.

BC: Mm-hm.

MM: That 90 to 95 period, I guess ...

BC: Yep.

MM: it was.

BC: Yep.

MM: And so, so do you think Lancaster itself, in, in talking about some of the political changes that have gone on here, did it start out as being more open it sounds like, or, more I don't know, supportive or less?

BC: Lancaster...again it's in pockets. But, I don't think Lancaster...I think Lancaster now is a whole lot better than it was. I don't really...when Wind and Wood played at Dispensing Company in the 80's, it was a safe place for a lot of people to come. I don't know if we would have played in other places in, in Lancaster at that point if it would have been different...if it would have been the same. It's kind of like you get your home bar and your kind of hometown bar, and you know, you, you're kind of safe in that little spot. I think Harrisburg had that advantage of being a state...of being the state capital.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: A lot of influx of, of totally different people ...

MM: Yes, that's true.

BC: and different demographics. It, it entirely different. Lancaster, when you see someone who's familiar – where you think they're kind of familiar – the question that we tend to ask people is “where did you go to school?” The assumption is you went to school somewhere around here.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: You know, I don't see that being asked in Harrisburg. And, I certainly don't see it when I'm out in different parts of the country cause I think ... so Lancaster's a little bit more [moves hands towards each other] ...you know, the assumption is everybody knows everybody from somewhere...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: because you all grew up here. Cause there's no outsiders. Good God. You know, and I think that, that's like steeped in traditions. We have always done it. And, and that's changing a little bit.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: But, I don't think we're ... I mean to have a pride festival in Lancaster is monumental ... monumental. But boy, the hoops that everybody had to jump through to get that.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, I think that that's a really...I think that's a huge thing, and that's something that I, I try to support ... and here's a, and here's a kind of a sticking point that I have. I have ... if I could kind of do this.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: I think musicians on the whole get way more phone calls and way more assumptions that we will donate our time if it's a worthy cause. That's across the board. It doesn't matter if you're ... oh, I mean I don't know. I can't speak for the gay...for the straight population. But that's...you know, it's like you're a feminist. Hey. Play for this fledging...

MM: Hmm.

BC: non-profit because you believe in it. So therefore, this...these are your beliefs, so therefore you need to donate your time. OK. Yes, I'll do that. OK. Well, here's this and here's this, and it's for spaying and neutering your dogs. It's for a, ab-abortion rights. It's for preserving nature conservancy. Right. Got that. It's for gay and lesbian. Right. Got that, you know. And after a while, you, you...if you find yourself using all your weekends to donate your time, when it's your job that you're – this is my money –

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: You have to be a little more s-specific about what you decide you want to put your name to.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: That being said, when I ran into a bit of a snag with a couple of these youngsters who were doing the pride festival a couple of years ago ...

MM: Hmm.

BC: Because...in Lancaster. I can't even begin to tell you how many pride festivals I have done, and pride festival benefits for absolutely nothing.

MM: Hmm.

BC: I think after a while...and I think it's a way that the community views musicians? Well c'mon you know, we-we're doing a fund raiser and we need money. And, OK well then I'll be there and I'll help raise the money for the festival. And you raise thousands of dollars, and then what happens, they, they pool all the...they ask all the local performers. There's the stigma of being called a [makes quote signs with hands] local performer, first of all. They pool the local performers to do the benefits. Raise the money, and then hire people from outside the area to come in for the pride festivals, and put the local performers who raised the money on the little teeny, you know, flexible stage off to the side that you have to watch where you're standing so that you don't get the microphone hit you in the mouth cause your standing on the wrong platform.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: That's OK for a couple of times.

MM: Hmm.

BC: But, what happened at Lancaster pride was I, I paid my dues.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: I don't, I don't feel like I need to have a, a badge for that, or...but I, I did the first two for nothing. The se-- ... the third one, we had somebody who paid us cause we thought, OK we thought that it was part of the committee when in fact it wasn't. It was an individual. So, we came back the next year and they're like we're not paying the performers, and I'm like, you guys, even if it's just an honorarium, the performers are who people are coming to see.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And yes, it's great that everybody volunteers and everybody volunteers and you have somebody who's picking up the trash and they're a volunteer. You have a volunteer who's, you know, emceeing. Or, you have a volunteers whatever. But, the people who are coming to the festival, generally speaking, are going to come to see the performers. Whether there, the ... you know and, and the, the gay and lesbian issue. It's like, well the drag queens don't ... they don't get paid for it. Like OK, that's fine. But, now you're talking two different cultures. Now you're taking men's culture [gestures with right hand], women's culture [gestures with left hand]. Whether they're gays or lesbians, or straight people, it's two entirely different cultures.

MM: And paid or not paid.

BC: Absolutely. Yep. So, I don't even ... I forget who this guy was and he, he just was ... could not possibly understand why I would not donate my time. And I'm like, why don't you come and talk to me and let me just kind of give you a little bit of background.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: You know, I was doing benefits probably before you were in the womb. So, don't sit here and talk to me about the fact that I'm not supporting my community. [makes "pit" sound while snapping fingers] You little pissant [MM laughs]. And, and eventually ... and it wasn't, I wasn't trying to make it a big political deal. I was just like, you know what. This is what I'm going to sit out, you guys. I wish you luck.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Go ahead and do it, and somehow this ... something got started and I'm like, whoa. I didn't say that. I'm just saying I'm not going to support it because you know, we're, we're trying ... at, at some point you have to just go here's my line [smiles while drawing an imaginary line] and I need to make a statement for myself.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: They finally ... they are now paying us fifty dollars.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Not for the band. But, fifty dollars per...I mean not for individual, fifty dollars for the band.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And it's like...and if I didn't. Here comes my cat into the frame [MM laughs as cat enters the picture]. And if I did not accept that, then I would have ... then that would have been really bad press for me, and that would not have been a way to get ... it's like yes. OK. That's what, that's what we've been talking about. Thank you very much. That's a big, huge start and I know it costs a lot of money to put a festival on, because I do it. So, don't tell me I don't know what I'm doing.

MM: Yeah.

BC: So yes, I will do that for fifty bucks, and that's why I was there this year.

MM: Hmm.

BC: And ...

MM: It raises though a dynamic, I think in community ... in the LGBT community. Always, small communities ...

BC: Mm-hm.

MM: especially around like Lancaster as you say. We've got kind of an idea of who we are ...

BC: Right.

MM: and we see ourselves as located by what schools and all that kind of thing. But, there is a point where there is tension in the communities.

BC: Mm-hm.

MM: Do you see that?

BC: Yeah. And before ...

MM: And we see this on the other side too.

BC: Yes. Yeah. Before ... and you know, any special interest group – I don't care which it, what it is – any special interest, you know, grassroots organization. We all get exhausted, you guys.

MM: Hmm.

BC: You know, you have these ... you have these core groups of people who are out there and they believe what it is. If it's you're saving the whales or you're saving anything, there're people who are just there in the front line, and after a while they're just like, check please. You know, I need to get out of here and take a break.

MM: Hmm.

BC: And then, you hope that more people come in [cat enters frame]. He just wants to be in the shot.

MM: Uh-huh [both laugh].

BC: We ss (ph) ... oh! [Points to shirt] Oh. We started the, the, the shirt I have on, actually. What I was noticing was going in Lanc—in Harrisburg at the pride festival, probably in the early 2000's. There's so many good women musicians around here.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: We were getting put on, on the baby stages. And again, it is who is on the board. Who gets on the board for that particular year. Whose vision it is of what the festival is. And if you're lucky, you get a nice cross section. You get some of the earth-crunchy lesbians who want to see the guitar players and the songwriters. And, you get the ... the boys who love the drag shows. And, drag shows bring in a shitload of money.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: I will not doubt...I don't doubt that because we lesbians, we tend to be a little, little tighter with our...with our wallets. But so, how to you come in and meet in the middle?

MM: Yeah.

BC: And, what was happening was each year, we would get...I would play somewhere at the festival, and I would get a teeny little stage. And, it's not...it, it is not about ego for me. It's about five or six of the other women musicians who are so good. Who should be playing on the stage and don't even get the call.

MM: Hmm.

BC: And it's like, OK. So, what I do about that as an individual?

MM: Hmm.

BC: And so, I got together with a couple of my buds, and it's like you know what, let's do a women's music fest. A very dangerous line to ... to set up in ... we did it in Harrisburg in 2005. My friend Anne – which Anne died in 85 – and when she committed suicide in 85, the whole ... there was thousands of people that were just walking around going, what the hell ... what just happened here. I realize that that was 20 years had gone by, and so I wanted to do something to honor her. So, I called Steve Reed, and I called the guys from the Forum who are, are ... they're still buddies of ours from playing there years ago. And, they gave me the Forum, you guys. They just gave me the building.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: The Harrisburg Symphony was supposed to rehearse that night. They had a performance on Sunday. They were supposed to rehearse on Saturday, and, and Fuller, the guy who works there he's like, they're never ... they're never here. So, he just crosses them off. And he's like, yeah. "We'll do this for you cause you're doing it for Anne because she needs to be honored." Because 20 years later, there are women musicians and there are lesbians playing and be ... it's because of her.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: It made ... she made a huge difference. So, we pull everybody in. People come ... I think it's like 800 people came in from all over the country. Lots of women who hadn't been in the area for a while came to support it. That kind of resurged a lot of people in Harrisburg going, oh my God, you know. Where's ... where are the women musicians around here? We don't see them at the riverfront parks. We don't see them at Kipona. We don't see them anywhere. So, I'm like well, what do I about it? So, I got money from the city, from Parks and Rec to do one ... they wanted a, they wanted me to do a reunion concert that we did to kind of pull together every year. And I'm like, it's 1500 bucks. I'm like, all right. That's a good chunk of money. But, how about we think a little ... a little bigger. And, why don't we ... why don't I just break it up and stretch it out to nine hours – don't know what I was thinking – and do eight groups ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And bring some of these women musicians in who are 15 minutes away from Harrisburg, who live right here ...

MM: Hmm.

BC: And give them a some exposure? And s-so basically, split up the pie. Not just kind of say, yeah. It was a great band, and you know, we each made a couple hundred bucks, and it was great. You know, it's not about the money. It's not about the individual money. It's about kind of the bigger picture.

MM: Hmm.

BC: So, we did the Central Pennsylvania Women's Music Festival, and we did it at Reservoir Park for the first four years. [Camera zooms in to focus on BC] Because we went through the Parks and Rec, it was...we had a couple of guidelines we had to follow. We couldn't...we could not charge money. We're like, that's fine. You know, they gave us the sound. They gave us the lights. And so, we had...it was an eight hour festival. We brought in women vendors, and the biggest consider--the biggest question of, of anybody who did interviews...and we, you know I went...I sat at channel 27. I sat...and 33 was when I, I kind of spazzed out when I was doing an interview with the WITF guys cause it was like the fourth interview, and I'm like [puts hand on bowed head]. And, and what people wanted us to say was, it was a lesbian festival. [Camera starts to zoom out]

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: It's like, it is a women's music festival [MM laughs]. And they're like, why don't you have men there. What do you have against men? I'm like, oh my God. It's like they bait you because that's their job.

MM: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

BC: And they want one little line to say, producer of festival hates men.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Wow, let's go see this festival. And I never, I never gave them that. And it's like, you have blues festivals.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: So, are you going to go to a blues festival promoter and say, [in a higher tone] "What do you have against classical?"

MM: [Laughs] Yeah. That's true.

BC: You know, so it was ... and yet it was this stigma, a still. And, we intentionally brought in straight women. We had the Sweet Adeline's come in. They had a freaking riot hanging out with the big, old lesbians in the backstage.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: They didn't think they were going to have as much fun. It's like, yep. First of all, I always do great food.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: I always feed the performers and the staff well. So, it's like we had this great mix of, of musicians, and we did it for eight hours, and we did four of those in a row. And still, in that particular time period – which was, wasn't that long ago – it was still hard to get people to show up at that festival ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Because they're like, ooh, guilt by association. I went to a Women's Music Festival. I could have called it the Central Pennsylvania Music Festival and secretly...it, you know in my, in my head went, I'm going to stack it with women musicians, and I'm not going to identify it as that.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Never once...there's no lesbian [points to her shirt] anywhere. There's no word "lesbian" anywhere in here.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And yet ... and that's Harrisburg. That's supposed to be the better of the three. And York ... don't even get me started on York. I mean that's, that's a scary place.

MM: Hmm.

BC: [softly] Sorry, York.

MM: Sometimes.

BC: Yeah. So you can ... it's a, it's a continual process to reinvent how to promote music and how to play music in this area and not scare people away.

MM: Hmm.

BC: I don't know. I don't ... I ... I'm still working at it.

MM: OK.

BC: Yep.

MM: [Looking at MP] How's your battery doing?

MP: OK.

MM: You're OK. All right. [Looking back at BC] Areas you'd like to talk about in particular? Kind of talked a little bit about growing up and professional career. A little bit about Wind and Wood.

BC: Mm-hm.Hmm-hmm.

MM: Sounds like that was a big influence.

BC: Oh yeah, definitely. I think the other thing that was really – in that time period in the 80's – you had women like Lorraine Kajawa. Did you think about interviewing her?

MM: Mm-uh [shakes head no].

BC: Do you know ... do you remember Lorraine? She lives in P-town [Provincetown, Massachusetts] now. I'll give you her contact information. But you know, you had ... in, in the time period of that ... of the [cat interrupts interview].

MM: Hi.

BC: I guess we are not asking him enough specific questions.

MM: Are we doing things right here [pets cat]?

BC: S-so, [MM crosstalk inaudible] I have Bee, and I have Flat, and I have Minor there, my three cats [MM laughs]. And Bee just passed away. So, now I just have a Flat Minor [MM purrs] which is what [MM crosstalk inaudible] you get when you drop something [MM crosstalk inaudible]. This is Minor, yeah.

MM: Well, Minor is going to go to sleep here [laughs].

BC: Yeah.

MM: Like the head pets.

BC: He loves it [MM laughs]. But, he will use his claws. So, be careful.

MM: I was going to say ...

BC: Yep.

MM: does he bite at all or ...

BC: Oh yeah, he will a little bit [MM crosstalk inaudible]. It's just kind of like love you, hate you. Where were we?

MM: We were talking about influences and [laughs] ...

BC: I'll tell you what I, what I see that's really a cool thing is that ... [reaches toward cat] Minor? Seriously, hey. OK. All right [pets cat]. Should we take a commercial break...

NM: [laughs] OK.

BC: and throw the cat outside [MM laughs]? He'll be back anyway. But, we'll be back after a word from our sponsor. [Visible break in tape implying it was turned off and on] I think, I think what saves me from ... not. When I started travelling in the middle – after Anne died and, and the band stopped playing – and I went ... I became a solo artist. And, I started then doing women's music festivals around the country. And, I didn't look back. And, I then probably toured up to till about the ... my dad died in the mid-90's, so I toured up till, you know, 90's. Even into 2000, I had a three month tour with Lucy Blue Trembley. I don't know if you know her. And, I think travelling and using this as my base has really kept me a little more sane than if I were to be here and never seeing what the real world is like. Not the real world. This is the real world that we live in. This our ... it's our reality, but I think you know, to be able to get into a plane and, and fly to Eugene, Oregon and do their pride festival, and then be able to come back here and go, OK you know, here's what we can learn.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Going to LA and singing with the women's chorus, and going oh my God you know, can we pull something like, like that off in Lancaster. Well, no because the demographics are totally different.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: You know, look what you have in Los Angeles and any urban area versus a rural area. And, I think my identity with...in my community of friends and my mom's friends...my mom just was our biggest, my biggest fan...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: and my sister's biggest fan. Whether I was a musician or anything, she was like, it, it wouldn't have mattered what I was doing. That's like I said earlier. But because that's what I did and still do, and my mom would play with me quite often, her community was so involved in what I do. I still get ...[MP says something inaudible] OK. I still have her friends coming to

hear me play at Chestnut Hill, and boy, is that exceptionally great. So, my identity in this small town is that I'm the singer.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: I you know, I have this place, but it's a little more private, and I think the meh (ph) ... I think whenever I you know, I do ... I do contract work. I do stained glass windows. All that. But, it's, it's like, my, that's my main identity.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, I'm fine with that.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: I, I like that that's something that people know who I am and know what I do.

MM: Hmm.

BC: I will tell you that when I get up to Seattle [Washington], when I walk down the street, or I get to Bellingham [Washington] –

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: 90 miles north – and I walk down the street and I'm like, oh my God, there's a whole lot of me here. There's a whole lot...it's not, I'm not the only...I, you know, I feel like I don't stand out as much as I used to in the 80's and the 90's in Lancaster ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: 'Cause I think there's more of us and I think it's becoming a little bit more...the visibility's helping. Whether that's something that I've had a chance to a part of, I'm not sure. But, it's sher—it's certainly is nice going to a bigger area to kind of go, wow, look at all of me over there [looking from side to side]. I'm over there. I'm over there. I'm over there, you know.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, I choose to live here because this is where I'm from, and I, and I love the affordability of it. And, I love the access to being able to, to take out...to take off and go to bigger areas and still...I mean, this is in my blood. This is what I write about.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: I don't write about being a lesbian. I write about dirt ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: and birds and farmers.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: It's, it just so happens I'm a lesbian. So, I don't necessarily write political music. And maybe, that's part of what saves me from being...still being able to work here in this area.

MM: Mm-hm. [Looking at MP] Let me ask you, you're saying it's saying five minutes on the battery?

MP: Now it's four. Three.

MM: OK. Because there's another battery in here. [MS inaudible]

MP: Yeah, we can put in another battery.

MM: Do you just want to switch it?

MP: Should we let it run down?

MM: No, I'd let it, let it stop it there [BC speaks gibberish at a slow speed, presumably imitating a rundown battery] [all laugh]. I'd just put it on standby and whip it out.

[End of Part 1, Beginning of Part 2].

MM: All right.

BC: Hi. We're back [MM and MP laugh]. Thanks for joining us. Thanks for sticking around [MM laughs]. Hope you're enjoying the program [laughs].

MM: So, we were just spending a little bit of time talking about coming out experiences.

BC: Mm-hm.

MM: Pick it up.

BC: My father was an alcoholic, and he...before I chose to come out to him – come out to him – he was trying to always figure out what my life choices were. So, he would tend to go to the bars where I was playing the week before I would play there – or sometimes the night before that I would play there – and try to figure out...talk to bar owners, talk to, talk to people there and try to figure it out himself. And then, I get to the bar the next night and the bartender would find it funny that my dad was there the night before. And you know, it's like, that's your work...and it's so diffi—it's so totally different than most people's jobs because that kind of behavior would not be tolerated in a normal workplace. But, because again it's, it's a bar, there's a lot more lenience. I think for some people, they think that the rules are different. So, as a, as a young – I was in my

20's at that point – young lesbian kind of going, oh my God you know, that everybody knows that I'm a lesbian except my father, and he, and I haven't decided to tell him. So, I thought it was time for me to tell him. When he called me one evening and said that a bartender had decided to ... thought that ... assumed that I had already come out to my dad, and he was there at a place in, in Lancaster that I used to play. And, the bartender said "Oh! You're, you're Bobbi Carmitchell's dad. Oh my God! She is such a role model for other lesbians, and we just love, you know, we love her." And he's like, "What?" And so, I didn't have to come out to my dad. I came out...I was outed by a friendly bartender who called me and felt horrible, but I'm like, eh, you know. It was going to happen anyway. My mom, I had talked to her about it after my, after my dad, and she...they both knew. So, it wasn't a big issue for them. And, it was pretty seamless. I think the...I think what was happening in my life with my dad at that time kind of took center stage.

The behavior of him ... and you know, he again... he was so proud of me. It was just a different relationship with my mom than it was with my dad. I mean if he were still here, he would ... he'd be my biggest fan as well. But, I think it was trying to figure it out ... he was trying to digest it, and maybe had I gotten to him a little sooner ... but you know, we all ... our timing is the way it is. And things happen the way that they do. So, that was kind of ... but he's still ... he would come to all of my events.

MM: Hmm.

BC: I, I have a video of a concert I did at the Forum – a breast cancer benefit – and I had all these great women musicians come in and I said something about, I think my dad's out there and I just heard him go [in a deep voice] "Yo," you know [MM laughs]. So, it's like you know he, he was ... he'd be in the front row if he were still here.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: So, he never backed down of his, his pride for me. So, that was pretty cool.

MM: Just, just talking a little bit more about coming out. You had mentioned a little while – as we began this actually – that coming out through high school, that you had an awareness?

BC: Oh! Fourth grade. Penny Nisley.

MM: Oh!

BC: Bus patrolman [MM laughs].

MM: OK.

BC: Actually, I'm going to go back [MM laughs]. First grade. Oh. And, oh this is really freaky. First grade. Her, her name was Miss Kegerice.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: I intentionally acted out so she would pick me up and put me in between the refrigerator and the wall [MM laughs] and make me stand there and calm down. I'm like [in a soft voice], hoooh, [ph] Miss Kegerice is paying attention to me.

MM: Hmm.

BC: Yeah. Miss Kegerice and ... and I had no doubt that, you know, I...I just you know, you stood...you don't know [MM crosstalk inaudible], you don't know how to identify. It's the 60's and the early 70's.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: You know, I think I was a little ahead [brief, unidentified background noise] – you were a little ahead of me, but it's that time period. Now, now that what I find interesting is a friend of mine's daughter, who is 19 ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: who is a lesbian. Daughter's a lesbian. Mother's a lesbian. We're having a conversation the other day, and she said you know, my daughter doesn't feel like she has to come out because then it becomes an issue ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Because it shouldn't make any difference. And I'm like, whoa, you talk about flipping something on its, on its ear. It's two genera-- ... well, one generation later ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Going, oh yeah. To her, it's not even an issue.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: It, it's, it's non ... it's, it's becoming non-political. I mean, everything that's going on with the Supreme Court obviously, and I think that's mostly our generation of lesbians and gay, and gay men going, this is what we want. But you know, the, the ...

MM: The next generation coming up.

BC: I love ... I would have never looked at that from that perspective of going, it's a non-issue.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Me being a lesbian is a non-issue to I am.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: It's so ingrained in their identity. I think we're all kind of going, yea but, we, we still know that it's still out there, and it still needs to be worked on ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Because let's just flip through television – which is why, one of the reasons I don't have a television. It's connected to the outside world. But you know, let's see what positive role models there are on television for out lesbians.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Let's keep looking. Let's keep looking. Let's keep looking, you know.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Movies. Let's keep looking. Well, one or two every once in a while crosses over your cable and that's great, but ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: You know, from that perspective, we are so in the baby, infant steps.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: But, it's a whole lot better than it was before.

MM: So, it's been a big change?

BC: I think so. Yeah. I think so. I think that it's also ... [phew] and it's so funny for myself to be sitting here and saying that I've been, you know – I have now 30 years of this under my belt – to, to think there are young lesbians who are looking at maybe something that I've had a chance to do, to go well you know if she did it, you know it's not that hard. Or, I remember this, or you know, to be a part of that.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: If I could influence anybody – have influenced or continue too. I have guitar students who are fabulous guitar students. They're, they're just like young women, and they are light years ahead of where I was as a...first of all, just as a woman guitar player because there're so many more of us out there now.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: You know, I had Joni Mitchell and I had Judy Collins.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: That was it. You know, now they're, they're everywhere, and they weren't even lesbians for God's sakes. You know, then here comes Olivia Records. Have anybody talked about Olivia Records and all of that and?

MM: Mm-uh [shakes head no]. Haven't.

BC: Olivia Records, you know in the 70's, you have these women who are ... again it's all, it's, they're all ... you know, riding the same wave of feminism and lesbianism, and you know, women's rights whether they're straight or, or lesbian. And, you have these women who are meeting each other and they're going, oh my God, let's do women-identified music.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, at that point it was political.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, they wanted to record it, and none of ... and the men owned all the equipment.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: They had all the balls...they had, well balls literally [MM laughs]. They had everything and they're like, why would we want to rent and give you space to do this. So, a handful of women: Judy Dlugacz, Teresa Trull...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Meg Christian, Holly Near ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Who was still not sure whether she's lesbian or not, and that's fine [MM smirks]. You know all ... Margie Adams [likely, Margie Adam].

MM: Chris Williamson.

BC: Chris Williamson. They're like, well guess what. We're just going to figure it out. So, they rent – they buy used equipment – pieces of, pieces of crap, and they figure out how to do it. Karen Kane.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And they're like, we're just going make our own record label. We will just make our own sandlot, and they start putting out music, Lesbian Concentrate. You know, pivotal records. Changer and the Changed

MM: Changer and the Changed.

BC: Chris Williamson.

MM: Yep.

BC: First women's record to sell a million copies, and how long did that take? But, it got done.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And then ... so they, they did. They just started this women's music, and it, and it was political because it had to be back then ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: 'Cause nobody was doing it. And now ... you know, so you as a, as a women artist – as a woman musician – Olivia is the crown jewel ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: As bugs fly in my ear [MM laughs]. And I of course, don't care cause I'm an earth-crunchy lesbian. And, tha-that was like the top, that's the top of the line if you're lucky to be able to get associated with them.

MM: Mm-hm. Were you involved in any of the, any of, any of the work Cris and, and Holly and all of them ... we used to go to basements in Washington, DC ...

BC: Yes.

MM: and sit and listen to them ...

BC: Yeah, nice.

MM: When they were recording.

BC: And how ... what was the time period of that?

MM: It was mid-70's.

BC: Mid 70's. Yeah. It's, it's, I mean it's ... you listen to these recordings and they're so primitive.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, but it's like ... they were analog recorded ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: they're ... it was ... you knew that you were part of something that was going to sss... hopefully set the world on its ear.

MM: Mm-hm. And they did ...

BC: Yeah.

MM: in many ways.

BC: Yeah. You know and now, here's Olivia Records who now does not ... you know ... what in ... you can, you know we can talk for hours just on the subject of what is women's music.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Spelled womyn with a "y," wimmin with an "i," women with an "e" ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: women whatever. It's like, how do you identify what is women's music? Is it women-identified music? It is it, is it women ... I remember I went to a women's open mic ... a women's music open mic at the D-Gem years ago with a friend, a girlfriend of mine. And we're like, OK. Let's go support this. And it was late 80's. Anne had just died, so you know, we're trying to get out there and support stuff and ... and we go there and the woman who's hosting it says, OK thanks for being here, part of our first women's music night at D-Gem. And, it's a freakin lesbian bar. You know, it wasn't ... it was a straight bar. And the first song, that, that this woman sang was, "I Don't Know How to Love Him" by *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, I'm kicking Mary [BC's girlfriend, not MM] under the table going, [in a soft voice] "what are we doing here?" [MM laughs]. Is this women's music? Oh, well it's a woman playing.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And for her, that's her ... and she was a lesbian. And it's like, I couldn't [holds hands on top of head] wrap my head around it. I'm like, have I just landed on some strange little planet?

MM: Hmm.

BC: But, it's women voicing their opinions, and is that women's music? Yes.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Is it women's music to have a band called Tribe 8 at the Michigan women's music festival to all have dildos on? Yes, because they're expressing it.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: They cut their dildos off. They throw it out in the stage ... throw it out at the audience, and yes, that's women's music because it's self-expression. Somewhere between is where most of us are...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Hopefully.

MM: Hmm.

BC: So, but it is. It's so ... it's, it's like you have the Olivia women. They, they ride this huge wave. They do Carnegie Hall. They do, you know, it's like top of the line. Teresa Trull is still about the best women's – actually hands down men or women producer of anybody that I've ever had a chance to, to hear. Ferron. You know, these really critical women, and, and I've had a chance to rub elbows pretty much with all of them in the early 90's. And I am telling you it was a pretty amazing experience.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, choosing to stay here and not relocate, and not...not you know, stay in that wave that I was in for a while...and that was good, but I would have sacrificed a lot. So, I'm, I'm, I love where I am...not saying that I was at their [raises arms up], at their level but, I was hanging out with them, you know. I was, I was opening. I was doing dual sets with them and it was, it was a great experience. But, I wouldn't trade this for anything.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: But, now Olivia Records is Olivia Cruises.

MM: Yep.

BC: So, now all these women who don't necessarily need to be in a women's, women's label. You have Melissa Etheridge, big huge first person that come in and just go mainstream.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: She bypassed Olivia because Olivia served its purpose.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: It got people starting to think about it and talk about it, and acclimate and kind of slowly move in and merge in, you know, in the on-ramp to, to where mainstream is. And now, they're doing cruises that are, that are out of this world.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, a lot of the artists that were playing in Carnegie Hall, and some of the smaller festivals and bigger festivals, are now on the boats.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: It's like the Lesboat, you know, and they're just floating ...

MM: Yea.

BC: All over the place and playing [MM laughs]. So it, it's all ... everything just continues to change ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: In a good way. Yeah.

MM: Been a lot of things in the last 30 years.

BC: And, it's not that long ago.

MM: No it isn't.

BC: It's, it's like wow. You know, we did these HAWN [Harrisburg Area Women's Newspaper] benefits. You remember HAWN?

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: HAWN was Harrisburg Area Women's Newspaper, and we would do the benefit concerts. Oh that's right, cause we're musicians and we're supposed to. But, that was the kind of stuff you wanted to put your name on to.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: You know, these public ... these newspapers they were just ... Holly Van Ness.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Carolyn Coopo (?). Laurie Williams, who passed away.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: These were like dedicated women, and they, they, you know was, you'd get these publications. They'd get them mailed to your house, or you know, your ss-subscription was what? Five bucks a year? And, it would have everything that was women-identified on it. Whether it was lesbian or not, it was just, it was feminist news.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, then Lorraine Kajawa sh-shoots off and she does that ... the Le--... the ...

MM: The Lavender Letter.

BC: Oh my God. The Lavender Letter. Right. And that's ...

MM: Is she still around?

BC: She's now in P-town.

MM: Oh. OK.

BC: Yeah. But she would be a good person.

MM: Because I was trying to find her too.

BC: Yeah. You guys will have to do a road trip [MM laughs] and see if you can get some kind of expense account. Talk to Amy about it.

MM: OK.

BC: Amy [talks directly to camera]. Give him a budget [MM laughs]. You know, give him some travel time and we'll all go up and we'll rent a sail boat. We'll go sailing [MM laughs]. There it is. That's it [laughs].

MM: I was wondering where Lorraine was [BC crosstalk inaudible]. We want copies of the ... we want copies ... we're going to be looking for artifacts and things like that.

BC: I've got a ton of them.

MM: Cause I ...

BC: I have some old HAWN newspapers.

MM: Oh, that would be great.

BC: Oh yeah.

MM: By that stuff, Amy is going to eat it up, or Lonna [Lonna Malmshemer]. One of them.

BC: Yeah.

MM: I know I just gave them my Olivia records ...

BC: Hmm. Nice. [MM crosstalk inaudible]

MM: to put them in the collection they had to be into.

BC: Yeah.

MM: How about Women's Circle? Let's talk about that.

BC: Women's Circle got started by Amy and I, Chris Fenwick and Amy Shestack. The four of us were in a...I think it's the early stages. Actually it, it was the early stages of the Gay and Lesbian Center that was going on in Harrisburg that you guys are now a part of. Way back in the day. There was a feasibility study. They got some money together just to see where the gays and lesbians were ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: in the area. And so, they did a survey. And, I remember we're all sitting around the Pink Lizard ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Which is now something else. It's a bingo...was it a bingo hall [MM laughs] or something.

MM: I don't know.

BC: Lesbian bingo or something [MM crosstalk inaudible]. We're all sitting around looking at the survey. May I use this as a prop [looks at some sheets of paper]? And we're like, mm-hm. And where is this? Doesn't apply to us. Next question, blah blah blah. Doesn't apply to us. It was mostly men. Male questions. So evidently, the, the...again you have this...you have one common denominator is that they're both homosexuals. Oh, you're men and you're women, but that really makes a huge difference. And again, it's a cult--it's a totally cultural difference. It doesn't mean that, that we can't all get along, and we c-can't all comingle and co-celebrate. But, huge fundamental difference between how men and how women choose to celebrate ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: and choose to be. So, we're looking at this and we're going [phew] w-w-where are the lesbian questions?

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Where, where child care questions? And it was like a feas—what do you want to, what do you want to see in a Center. And, there was nothing about ... and I don't have any babies, I don't have any kids that I know of. It's like, I don't you know, it's ... I'm not really into the baby thing. But, a lot of my friends are, and it's like ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Where are the questions that pertain to health care and, and, you know, fundamental questions like that. So, the four of us are like, we need to kind of reinvent this, this wheel. So, I went back ... came back here to the house and drafted another survey. And, and sent it out to my mailing list that I had. Maybe 400 names. Made my little copies. You know, put it out on my email, on my email list. And, I had an, an actual physical mailing list back then where I'd send postcards out. I think I had like 800 names or something. And, and, it was way before email. And, I would... I sent you know, here's what's going on. Here's this questionnaire and can you guys fill this out...

MM: Hmm.

BC: to the women's community. We got 350-some back ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: within a couple months.

MM: Wow.

BC: That's like, whoa! OK. We have ...

MM: Impressive.

BC: We have something. Yeah. So it's like, the women's community just needed to be able to check a box [makes a check mark with right hand] ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: you know. And so ... boy we just, we, we put everything out and we collated it the best we could. And we were like, OK. Number, number 10 [laughs]. The question in number 10 is here. This is a number here and so we put all of the data together. And, we decided that a women's center ... I mean ever since Anne died, I think that ... I remember writing an article for HAWN ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: saying that that was going to be one of the things that I really wanted to work on, was to have a place for women to go – young women to go – to realize that they're not alone.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Whether it's their sexuality, whether it's their you know, their politics or whatever. So, the idea was to think about doing a women's center. And as you guys know, that's a huge project.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And the feasibility, it's like it's not, it's not that there haven't been ideas to do that, and, and people coming up with it. But, how do you make it sustainable over the years ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: even if you decide to back out of it. I just realized I mowed my grass in my sneakers and now I can smell ... it smells really stinky [MM laughs]. So, my shoes are stinky of grass. [Looks into camera] There you go. Just like being here [MM laughs]. I'd take 'em off, but it would make it worse. It would escape. Anyway, so I apologize for that. So, we decided to not do ... obviously not do a women's center, but I don't know, we decided to call it Women's Circle.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And to be able ... so we formed this group to be able to figure out, based on the results of the survey, what was ri --, what was rising to the top at, as what, what were the big issues.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: A lot of the ... most of the things that we had were, "Where do you meet other women?" A lot of women were in recovery. A lot of women ... back then smoking was still allowed in bars. A lot of women didn't smoke. Don't want to go to smoky bars. Don't want to meet women through church. Don't want to meet through, women through bookstore. You know, where do you meet them? So, we decided to kind of gear it towards some of the top four or five of the, of what we got back. And, that was ... it was, it was social issues. You know, how do you kind of ... where do you hang out in a safe place? First of all, where do you find a safe place? The idea ... and I, and I would, I still get calls from people saying, hey you know my partner's turning 40 – 50, 30 – I, I want, I want to rent out a place so we can have a party. And, I want you to play. Where can we find a place that we're all safe and comfortable doing that?

MM: Hmm.

BC: You know, good luck trying to find that.

MM: Yeah.

BC: So they, you know they hopefully think that I would be able to help them out with that. And, and in some cases I do. There are some places that are ... have, have kind of come up that you can use. But, but where do women meet other women not ... and we weren't setting up a dating site. It was just where do you get together and talk, talk about issues with like-minded women.

MM: What year was this?

BC: This was ... oh my God, this is the 2000's.

MM: Oh. OK.

BC: Yeah. Yeah, this was 2002.

MM: OK.

BC: Yeah, I'd just come back from touring, and I was done. I had been on the road after 9/11. I booked this tour with Lucy Blue. We had three months. Our first job was Greenwich Village two weeks after the towers went down.

MM: Hmm.

BC: And, we had the tour booked, and you can't not do the tour.

MM: Hmm.

BC: So for three months, I was, I was gone from here and ... and every ... I think we hit every state but two or three.

MM: Hmm.

BC: You know, all over ...

MM: Hmm

BC: the con (ph) ... we were in Canada. We were flying with people. They were taking the strings of our guitars because they thought they were possible weapons.

MM: Hmm.

BC: So, I was pretty much done with the road at that point. So, we came back – I came back – and we set up this, this organization. And they we're like, OK. How do we do this? We had, I don't know how many hundreds of people we had on our ... in our membership. It was like 10 bucks to join. So, it gave us a little seed money. We started to try to do monthly programs. But,

we couldn't find a place to do it. So it's like, let's just focus on doing one weekend a year, and do it well. So, I found a camp that I went to as a kid: Camp Shand in Harrisburg ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: err... in Lancaster ...

MM: Yes.

BC: Lancaster County. It's through the Y, the YMCA, and I was really honest. I'm like, look we're ... I want to do this. I want to do this retreat. It's a three day. And, it's going to be women only. And, they're like, "Great!" It's in September. The camp ... you know, the kids are done. The, the summer camp is over. So, it was this ... you know, the first year was ... what, what, what we did was again, we, we, we looked at the results from the survey. And we're like, OK. A lot of people, believe or not, don't know how to do this, this, this. And so, we, we picked a theme for each year. Peace and Healing. It was right after the 9/11. We did Warrior Women one year. And it was ... we changed the names of the cabins to ... and Amy was really good at that. Changed the name of the cabins to different, you know, strong women: Artemis, blah, blah, blah. And each ... what we did was we had ... we made the camp. The, the camp paid for itself by ... they didn't charge us a flat fee. They didn't say it's going to charge you 2000 dollar or a 1000 dollars to rent the camp.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: They're like, for every person who comes in, you pay us 15 bucks. So, we were able to then keep our costs down, and for 85 bucks for the weekend, you got ... you're in Friday at noon and you stayed Sunday 'til noon, or Sunday for breakfast. And, that was all your meals. We brought a cook in. A friend of ours was a cook. We bought all the food, and we did programs and workshops for that – mostly Saturday and into Sunday –

MM: Hmm.

BC: based on the theme that, that we were doing for that particular year.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Warrior Women was conflict mediation for one. How to change your oil.

MM: Hmm.

BC: Archery. I did a woodworking course for a, a lot of women. Believe it or not, there are some dykes that do not know how to use power tools.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Scary to know that. And so, it was this ... you know, we had drumming. We had music in a very safe place ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: at, at the Camp Shand ...

MM: Hmm.

BC: and it was perfect. And, it was going along, and that we had a couple of people who thought we would – we should – do a 501(c3) [a tax exempt non-profit organization]. That got a little complicated because, as you guys know ... I mean, you have to do minutes, you have to ...

MM: Yeah.

BC: have your ... you have to be really, keep really tight records. We ended up backing off of that and just making it this great little weekend ...

MM: Hmm.

BC: once a year. What happened as a result was a, the transgendered issue came up for us.

MM: Hmm.

BC: There was a transgendered person who was in the m-middle of transgendering from male to female who was seeing a woman who comes who... used to come to our events. And, she – they wanted to come. And it made us all just go, oh, OK. Wait a minute. This is different. This is ... we need to identify what it means to be a woman.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And boy, did it, it, it slammed on everybody's brakes.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And for me – I guess I was the president or something because nobody else wanted to do it – it, it, it gave me a really ... it presented a huge challenge because I knew, I knew all the story. Here's what happened. I knew that a lot ... I knew a lot of the women who were coming ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: to this particular year were, were very skitterish about the fact they were going to be there at all.

MM: Hmm.

BC: One woman in particular, she ... for years, she kept saying she was going to come and she never made it because she didn't have enough nerve. And she's like, I'm coming. I'm going to, I'm going to – she's married – and I'm going to try this and I want to see what happens. And I'm like, that's great, you know. And, I'll put you in this cabin and it'll be a great cabin. So, in comes the transgendered issue of, of staying overnight in a cabin ...

MM: Hmm.

BC: as a man ...

MM: Hmm.

BC: with all the plumbing, and how do I ... in, in order for me not to infringe on that man's rights, I can't tell the other people who are their cabin mates who this person is.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, I had a big problem with that.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: I personally did because I, I, I guess there was a part of me that was like, this is a well-oiled machine now and we have this ... and, and I wanted to ... so I decided, what we decided to do is we put it out to the whole ... to everybody who was, who were the members.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: We did two or three meetings. We brought transgender people in and sat down. And, and it's like, where do you ... how do you learn from ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: from this trans issue. There was a, there was a big dividing space in between. If you're ... you get into the question of what's ... are you post-operative. Are you pre-op? And, I can't imagine what it must feel like to be in the wrong body.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: I, I don't have a frame of reference for that.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, I want to say that I would be the most compassionate person to try to understand how that would feel. That being said, if I wanted to ... I would, I, I offered to donate my time to be able to setup a mini retreat just for that specific thing, but not have it be a part of this right away until the members all had a chance [MM crosstalk inaudible] to acclimate. And, that was turned

down, and that's fine. So, at our, at our big meeting to decide what to have the board decide, we had to come up with what – who – how do you identify as being a woman.

MM: Hmm.

BC: And, who do we let in to the Women's Circle based on that. And the deciding vote was, if you identify as being a woman, then we as the Women's Circle board would welcome you in to the retreat.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, that's a very big net.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: To have a man come in ... a, a man, physical man ... to question his identity ...

MM: Hmm.

BC: in that particular setting, I had to vote against that.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: That was just ... that was my ... because I, I wanted it to be a safe place for a lot of ... and I knew that we would lose these marginalized women who are just ready to just dip their toe right in it, and go right into that and say, OK, this, this is ... and not to say that it wouldn't at some point down the road work out. But, there was a part of me that goes, if the transgender community gets into this, this will be the focus ... the focus will shift.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, I wasn't personally ready for that to happen. So, I got voted out. I got ... and that was the decision that the Women's Circle, as the voting board to say whoever identifies as a woman. I said, a lumberjack can come right up to [laughs] ... I went to the far extreme.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Some lumberjack can walk up to the counter, to come up to the registration, clearly looking like a man and say, "I think I'm a girl. Are you going to let me in?" And, they would say yes. I'm like, OK. That's fine. But I, that's ... I'm not going to be a part of that. So, I resigned as that. And, that was the issue that set me kind of just ... kind of going you know, I wish you guys the best. But, here's what you got to do, and here's what I have to do. And, it's no longer going.

MM: I was going to say ...

BC: And, that's very sad. That's very sad because it did become ... a lot of people didn't go as a result of it, and it's a, it's a, it's a missed opportunity for education.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: But, it was force-fed. To me, it felt like it was force-fed for a lot of people.

MM: Hmm.

BC: That they weren't ... they just wanted to be able to maybe invite them in for a, a workshop ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: which would have been a suggestion that I had brought up.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: But, it was ... and, and you know, get more power to them to say, look, it's all or nothing. We're, we are either in or we're not. We don't want to come in as a, as a you know, a workshop experience. And, that's the way it happened. So, I think it made it another two, two years, maybe three years. And now, it's no longer.

MM: Hmm.

BC: But, Amy and I got honored from FAB [Fall Achievement Benefit] actually. We got ... they asked us to accept awards for FAB one year – the Fall Achievements Benefit – with the work that we did with the Women's Circle.

MM: Hmm.

BC: And you know I, I pat myself on the back for that ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: and Amy too. And, it was good work, and it's, it's a shame it got politicized and it got bigger than it should have.

MM: Hmm.

BC: And, I'm not sure [MM crosstalk inaudible] how it would happen, that you know people say, eh you know, can you do it again. And I'm like, you know what, I'm, I'm kind of here right now.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: It's a different spot for me.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Doesn't say I don't have you know, more fight in me and I'm just kind of sitting here and I had a lot going on the last year with my mom and you know, I'll see where I want to put my energy at this point.

MM: We'll segue in today.

BC: Yeah.

MM: It's an important day in terms of the Supreme Court decision in both Perry [*Hollingsworth v. Perry*] as well as Windsor [*United States v. Windsor*]. Where do you see this community going now that we've kind of opened this whole door on gay marriage? Talk about one of those things ...

BC: Mm-hm.

MM: we're still working on a couple of political action to get non-discrimination in employment in Pennsylvania ...

BC: Hmm.

MM: while parts of the country now are out there on marriage ...

BC: Yeah. Yep.

MM: and talk about different, different kinds of activities and agendas and stuff.

BC: Yeah. You're exactly right. I mean, you got to love Pennsylvania. You know, we have like all the ... what's it, the most roads in the, in the state ... of, of all states? We have the most highways, and but yet, we just have a lot of one-way streets [MM laughs], don't we?

MM: That's a good analogy.

BC: You know, I mean, it's, it's like people drive through us.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: But you know, we can't get past ourselves sometimes. I don't know. I don't ... I've had a chance to be in a lot of different parts of the country. I think I've played in every state but three.

MM: Hmm.

BC: Those 'codas. I'm still working on those. And, I think you know, you, you, you learn a lot of seeing how festivals work and performance spaces work and to be able to see who's doing what political work in that area. And, I come back to Lancaster and I think [laughs and holds hand to head], we still have so much to do.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, and, and Pennsylvania and Lancaster you know, two entirely different things obviously cause you know, you go Philly [lifts right arm] and Pittsburgh [lifts left arm] and Harrisburg [brings arms part of the way together], but you got good old Lancaster, and I don't know. I, I, I, I think that if any of the cities in this area are to do anything, I think Lancaster seems to be the one that's the primed the most to be able to, to step out in the front. I think the way that ... it seems that ... I think Linda Thompson has so damaged Harrisburg. I think Steve Reed was so ... was such an amazing supporter of arts in general, and if you, you, you look at how society views its artists, whether it's United States or whether you go back in time, or just go to a different con-country. Now presently, I think that if we support our artists and, and value them ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: that's a, that's the [raises right hand over her head] barometer for me.

MM: Hmm.

BC: And, I think Lancaster seems to be really on the ball with that these days. I don't know ...

MM: [BC crosstalk inaudible] has done very well with arts.

BC: Yeah. I don't know ... and, and arts. It covers a huge net. I had a ... about a year, a year ago, two years ago, the tourist bureau of Lancaster contacted me and they said you know, there's this guy who is like the Tom Brokaw of France who is the ... he retired from being the nightly news guy, and he's travelling ... he's taking two years and he's travelling through United States. And, he wants to spend, I like three ... two weeks or three weeks in each state. And, he wants to get to know the artists of the state ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: which is brilliant. You got to love France for that. And, can you ... can they come and talk to you?

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: I'm like, sure. That would be really fun. And I look at ... you know, you got to ... you know, France has its own you know, good points and bad points. But it's like, it makes you think who in this country would go to another country, try to learn about what makes it tick, and, and how the wheels work based on their artists.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: It's like ... obviously it's like, well here's Gettysburg and here's this and here's Hershey. But, let's not interview the, the CEO [Chief Executive Officer] of Hershey, by the way who's like kicking jobs out to Mexico. Let's interview ... find me some artists to talk to around here.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, I love that concept. And I think, and I think when the society takes care of its artists, and pays ... at least just pays attention and acknowledges it. And that's why, that's why I think Lancaster has a shot at being a little bit ... I, I think Harrisburg is going to start licking its wounds after a while with who ... depending on Linda Thompson. Did I see Dan Miller is thinking of putting his name in?

MM: He has the write in ... [BC crosstalk inaudible]. No. He got the write-in vote from the Republicans.

BC: OK.

MM: So [laughs], he's considering whether or not he's going to do it.

BC: Shoo (ph). Yeah.

MM: So.

BC: Yeah. Yeah. I'll take it any way we can get it.

MM: Mm-hm. What else do we need to cover here?

BC: [Looks into camera] Anybody have any good recipes?

MM: Recipes for?

BC: I hope so [both laugh].

MM: I want to just put us in, in context here around the room. This is a workshop?

BC: This is a workshop. This is ...

MM: A get away place?

BC: Actually, you know what? When I resigned from the Women's Circle, I realized, I, I've done a lot things – events here in this area. I've ... fortunate that I have landlords who just wave as, as they drive past and say, everything's great. Thank you very much. I've been able to

think about using this space as a mini-retreat place. I used to do ... back in the mid 90's, I would do twilight concerts every summer.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: I'd do once a month, and I'd you know, charge 15 bucks or something, and I get 30 women and they'd come here. I'd make a big ... not here, but I'd make a big pot of ratatouille cause you know God forbid, we don't eat meat. I still do, but. We'd do a little pot of food and then walk up ... I have a big fire circle. There's a path that I carved out. So, we'd do a little women's night. And, I love that concept of it. I, I got away from doing that cause I was travelling a lot. And then in 2009, I got injured at work. I had a 1000 pounds of drywall fall over on me, and pinned me against the wall and blew my knees out. So, I had about 10 months to sit and ice my knees, and receive all of my friends who I'd been always taking care of.

MM: Hmm.

BC: They were coming to me and I'm like, this is really difficult [both laugh]. But, what I ended up doing was realizing some of the things that I was missing from the Women's Circle was having a space for creativity ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: and for women to explore their creativity that most of them thought they didn't have.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Like we all have some form or fashion of it.

MM: Hmm.

BC: So, I studied ... I knew how to tear things apart. I was good at that, but I didn't know how to build. So, I studied for about a, a year, design. And, I know it's not [lifts arms pointing to room], it's not a big deal but, I put this whole thing together ...

MM: Hmm.

BC: with a lot of ex-girlfriends which is a very [MM laughs] ... I recommend that highly [both laugh]. Getting your ex-girlfriends together with hammers and really big nails [MM laughs]. And, and building walls as opposed to tearing them down. So, what this has ... what this place has been able to achieve in a very short time ... I'm it's a ... I'm in my second year here. I have classes here and I can sit maybe, four women, five women around this table and just provide them with a little primer. I do glass workshops and some, some building workshops. Some you know, here's how you cut wood. Here's how so you don't cut your finger. But, to be able to sit here and, and have women come in ... my ... one of my first tee—one of my first students came in and she had bought a class for her friend and for herself. But she clearly said, I'm, I'm doing this for my friend. I, I'm not creative. I'm like, that's fine. That's great.

MM: Hmm.

BC: And so, in the, the front which you guys can't see in the home audience [MM laughs], I had ... I have all these sheets of glass ... I had sheets of glass all over the place from my bins of glass leaning up against where the light could get to 'em [both looking off to side out of the camera's view].

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: So, there's probably 15 sheets of glass all over the place, and I just ... I set it up and I just ... next thing I know, there's my friend who's not creative picking up a piece a glass and, and turning it [moves arms to simulate turning an object]. And, the pattern of the glass she's like, ooh yes. There's a [draws with index finger] ... that's a mountain, and there's a this, and there's this. Like Rorschach, you know?

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: It's like, I see a sun. I see this. And she's like, this is the one I want to use. I'm like, OK. Now I don't want to be stereotypical, but most men would be like, thought you said you weren't creative [MM laughs] you goofy little thing, you know. But it's like, you don't do that. You just ... so, it's like to be able to see women go, "Oh my God. I built this."

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, it could be a small little lotus. It could be a, you know, a bigger piece. It could just be cutting the first piece of glass and not slicing your finger off.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: But, it's a very small scale, but it's a manageable scale for me, and, and when I am able to make a little bit of money ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: cause it's not about the money. When you're an artist, it is so not about the money. You just ... you maintain, you know.

MM: Yes.

BC: And, and to have that here in a place that a lot of my friends helped me build ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: and a lot of my friends gave me these. There's [points to place off to the camera's right] ... the two windows here came from a ... when my mom was young as a little kid, she lived at Landisville Camp Meeting grounds ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: and these windows came out of the building that she grew up in. When we had driven her over there to check out what the place looked like, there were these two gay guys – got to love it – who bought the building. Was like an old Victorian house.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, they were replacing all the windows, and they were throwing these out.

MM: Hmm.

BC: I'm like, what are you guys doing with the windows. You can have 'em. So, I knew at some point I'd use it. So ...

MM: Hmm.

BC: my mom lived long enough to see that her windows from the 1920's are here in this spot [MM laughs]. So, that's cool stuff.

MM: Pretty neat. Mm-hm.

BC: So, that's kind of what this has afforded me.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: I do a lot ... I'm writing a book and so I'm ... I come out here and I write a lot and I ... this table has never [laughs] looked this nice [MM laughs]. My friends are going to be like, what's the tablecloth doing? This is where I hammer and drill and break glass and renovate. I renovate old glass windows. Some of the old leaded windows, and that's ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: it [sic] gives me a space to be able to work on bigger installations. So ...

MM: What's your book about?

BC: [Hesitates] The book ...

MM: Is it a secret?

BC: No [MM laughs]. The book is a women's ... it's kind of a women's study story. It has grown. It's, it's ... I renovated an old daw (ph) ... and old boat that was in my family. It was an old rowboat that we used to go down in the summer and take this boat out to the sailboat, and every year you'd slap a coat of blue paint on this little dingy little rowboat. My uncle and aunt died in the 80's, and my mom and I drove down, and we, we took this boat that nobody wanted cause it was busted, and so we stuck it on top of the car and drove it home. Years later, I decided to tear the whole thing apart and rebuild it, and learn how to fiberglass and everything. And, this is beautiful mahogany rowboat. I find a dog tag under the one of the seats from 1944 that nobody knows who this guy is. And, I spend the next couple of years thinking who would have put it underneath here. And I'm like, Sandra Bullock would be the perfect character for this [MM laughs]. In 1945 ...

MM: I think I saw this on Facebook.

BC: she ... right. She was like, I'm going to have [MM crosstalk inaudible] ... she's going to be the person who is going to do it. So, she ends ... so I end up having her do it [MM laughs] and then I keep going back in time, and so what ends up happening is this, this story is from 1904 to 2004.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, it traces the two groups of nine-year old girls.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: There's a four ... there's four nine-year old girls in 195—1914? And, there are four nine-year old girls in 1966. And, both sets of girls take swim lessons. In the early 1900's ... in 1904, women were ... it was illegal to swim. Illegal. You would be arrested if you swam as a woman. In 1904, there was a, a steamer ship that, that was ferrying 1200 women and children from a congregation in New York City up the East River to go to a picnic grounds and have a day picnic. The boat catches on fire. One thing leads to another. The, the, the captain finally runs it aground 30 yards off the shore of Brother Island in the East River, and everybody jumps overboard, and they all ... 1100 women and children drown because they can't swim.

MM: Hmm.

BC: And at that point, the outrage ... social outrage was like, OK guess what. Now, we learn how to swim. So, it was this huge dividing thing between the old guard and the new guard. And so, I, I knew that from another story of Gertrude Ederle, who was the first woman to swim the English Channel. She was my hero growing up, and I was a long distance swimmer as a kid. So, I've incorporated this book to be a, a women's study. It's more of a women's study book than I thought it was going to be.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: But, it's how these different women impact each other's lives as kids ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: and then continue through their lives. And, the research that I found ... it's just been ... every time I think about an idea, it's kind of like you guys ... the book has already ... the story is already written. I'm just ...

MM: You're discovering it.

BC: I'm finding it.

MM: Hmm.

BC: Like I ... my mom was a huge incentive for me to work on this book during the last six months of her life. Because I move from all these different time periods, I would take my laptop in when she was really, really, sick, and I'd be like ... flip it open. I'm like, where do you want to go now.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, it would help her memory as well, and she'd be like, [closes eyes] 1925. She's walking up the steps of the brownstone. She's getting ready to audition for the band [opens eyes]. And I'm like, great. And so, I'd go back to that time period and we, you know, we'd work on it.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And, all these things that I found like there were these women's bands in the 20's that I never knew existed.

MM: Hmm.

BC: They were called the Parisian Redheads.

MM: Hmm.

BC: They were a band out of Paris, Indiana, and they were fabulous women musicians. I would have never stumbled upon this had I not ten years ago rebuilt this goofy little rowboat.

MM: Hmm.

BC: So, it's, it's a women's study book. And it, it, it traces these ... the lives of these women. Some actually did live and some did not. And, they intermingle and how they impact their lives and ... and it does kind of end up to be kind of a ... it's a fine ... and it's interesting ... an interesting question cause my lesbian friends say put lesbian characters in it because we need good lesbian ... you know, I was just saying it earlier. It's like, give ... show me some good

visibility of lesbian characters on TV, and, and in literature. And yet, here I am ... I'm working on this book that I will get finished and I will publish it.

MM: Hmm.

BC: I mean, I have no doubt that I will. It, it's already done. I just need to find it and figure out how to do it.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: But you know, do you hint at these women having an affair? And if you do, then is it automatically become ... it's like the women's music festival. Do you label it as a lesbian festival and would you label that as a lesbian book? If there's even a hint of a, of a scene where this one woman walks up to her friend who's painting a painting of what she sees. She puts her hand on her shoulder and she just gives her a kiss on her head. That's a sweet moment ...

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: in the 30's of these two women having this weekend.

MM: Hmm.

BC: And, they won't see each other again.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Does that make that a lesbian novel?

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Probably us in the room would say no. But, maybe the grocery ... the checkout woman who I, I go see every day who asks me how my book is coming. If she were to read it, she'd be like, well you didn't tell me there's going to be lesbians in it.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: So, what's it ... it becomes, it's a, it's a question that I still don't have the answer for.

MM: And, and it's different perspectives.

BC: Hmm [nods head].

MM: As you said, who's looking at it.

BC: Yeah.

MM: That's, that's kind of where we started this too

BC: Yeah. Yeah. Exactly.

MM: Isn't that funny.

BC: Yeah.

MM: It goes around. Are there, are there other areas ... anything else you would like to cover in this?

BC: My God.

MM: We covered a lot.

BC: We have so uncovered everything [MM laughs].

MM: Betcha not everything.

BC: Well, not everything [both laugh]. I don't think so. I, I mean, I, I'm, I think that the ... you know, it becomes ... it's still this big question of – and I don't know if it's getting better or more, or more polarizing – of how to make a gay and lesbian entity work ... [loud background noise] as a truck drives past. It's my landlord [waves hand]. Looking good [MM laughs]. And I don't, and I, I, I hope that it's a fabulous success, you know. And, I think if we learn ... I think this whole oral history project is ... it's long overdue.

MM: Hmm.

BC: Actually, you know what. When you say stuff like that ... no, I'm going to take that back. It's like it's happening exactly when it's supposed to be happening.

MM: Yeah. Probably.

BC: Timing is everything and when you think, I should have done this sooner, it's like you weren't ready to do it sooner.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: You know, you were ... it's, it's happening exactly when it's supposed to happen.

MM: Hmm.

BC: So.

MM: It's just important to gather the stories [BC crosstalk.]

BC: That's exactly it cause that's how we learn. And, hopefully you get these ... some of these youngsters who don't think that they need to learn anything.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: And you know, cause we were all kind of like that when we were younger.

MM: Mm-hm. Yep. That's true.

BC: But hopefully we can get them to go, "oh my God, I didn't know that."

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: Blah, blah, blah and blah. "I always thought that it was like this." And again, it's anything. It's any, it's any politically polarizing group. Isn't it when you think about it? You know, we just happen to be in this one.

MM: Mm-hm.

BC: The coolest one [both laugh].

MM: [Looks into camera] Any other areas that you have? No? You think we covered it. All right. Well, thank you very much.

BC: Oh my God. Thank you [MM and BC hug].

MM: Yay.

BC: Yay. It's so good to reconnect with you [MM crosstalk inaudible]. Yay [pshew].