

LGBT History Project of the LGBT Center of Central PA

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Title: LGBT Oral History: Edmund “Ed” Good and Thurman Grossnickle, Part 1

Date: March 28, 2013

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Interviewees: Ed Good and Thurman Grossnickle Tape 2

Interviewer(s): John Folby and Lonna Malmsheimer

Date of Interview: March 28, 2013

Location of Interview: LGBT Center of Central PA

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Abstract:

For the very first interview of the history project, Edmund Good and Thurman Grossnickle describe their coming out stories.

Thurman is a retired Scientist Administrator and has spent many years in academia and in health professions, as well as in LGBT organizations. He considers himself Brethren, although he no longer attends church, though a large part of his coming out process involved the organization, Dignity, which was primarily run by the late Father Saude (ph.). Upon discovering his sexuality, Thurman spent a considerable amount of his time dedicated to the LGBT community of Harrisburg, operating the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, attending and hosting Dignity events, and serving as editor of the Dignity newsletter. Thurman discusses his involvement, his experiences living in Central PA, and his decision to never divorce his wife.

Edmund is a retired apartment manager, though he is still involved in the Brethren Housing organization, which finds places for mothers going from welfare to work. Edmund explains that though he was always kind of aware of his sexuality, he hadn't really come out before attending college. At Penn State, he was involved in several LGBT outlets, including the student organization HOPS (Homosexuals of Penn State), which was supported and funded by Penn State. Edmund, too, alludes to the friendly climate, which he's experienced during his life as a gay man in Central PA.

JF: They're prepared questions—the steering committee for the project developed the questions. And... they're pretty basic: the first part are biographical information, and then the rest, we'll talk about jobs and different things.

LM: Wanna lock the front door, if we didn't?

JF: Yeah, excuse me. We don't want people walking in on us.

LM: We don't want interruption.

JF: Excuse me.

LM: By the way, you can interrupt things whenever you want and it doesn't matter because anybody that wants to use this will figure it out.

JF: Yeah, okay....

TG: Well, I can throw my hand up like this.

JF: People cannot walk in on this.

LM: Did ya that often? Yeah, exactly... You know.

TG: Sure.

JF: Do you two wanna flip a coin and decide who speaks first?

TG: It doesn't matter.

LM: [laughing]

JF: Cause we'll—

EG: Well, see Thurman's actually the one that's done—that's got the most... I mean, he's volunteered. I mean, other than The Switchboard, I really haven't volunteered—I mean he's—he's the one that—

LM: Has the history?

EG: Yes!

JF: Okay.... Got it.... Alright!

LM: Alright!

JF: Okay! It's Thursday, March 28th, 2013. We're at the LGBT Center on Third Street in Harrisburg. And the interview is with Thurman Grossnickle and Ed Good of Harrisburg. And start with some biographical information, and so, let's start with Thurman and ask you the questions first.

LM: Don't look at me, *always* look at him. [TG and EG both nod]

JF: Okay... alright. Please state your name.

TG: Thurman Grossnickle.

JF: And what is your birth date and where were you born?

TG: July 20, 1924. Three miles North of Boonsboro, Maryland, in the country.

JF: And what are your parents' names?

TG: Harry E. Grossnickle and Lela V. Grossnickle—that's L-E-L-A.

JF: Okay, and do you have any siblings?

TG: No.

JF: Alrightie. How long have you been living in Harrisburg [Pennsylvania], or Harrisburg area?

TG: I moved to the Harrisburg area in 1980.

JF: Okay... And you moved here from where?

TG: I actually moved from Hershey, Pennsylvania.

JF: And, where were you before that? For...

TG: Oh, many places [laughing].

JF: [laughing]

TG: Before Hershey... well, I lived in different places... around Hershey. And before that, I was in Virginia—Shenandoah Valley.

JF: Oh. And where did you go to school?

TG: High school, you mean?

JF: Yeah, high school, college, and graduate school, I would imagine.

TG: Well, I went to high school in Boonsboro, Maryland.

JF: Mhm.

TG: And then I went for two years to Bridgewater College in Bridgewater, Virginia. The next four years, I was home on the farm with the farm deferment during World War II. Then I went to Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, where I graduated in 1950. From there, I went to Harvard University. Spent a year and a half and got a Master's Degree there. Was offered a fellowship by a new faculty member at the Wayne University, as it was then, it's now Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, and got my PhD there in 1954.

JF: And, are you currently the member of a church?

TG: Well, do you want me to go on with my education?

JF: Oh, I'm sorry!

TG: [laughing]

JF: Yes, please. I'm sorry; I jumped the gun there.

LM: He's not finished!

TG: I spent two years post-doctoral work at the University of Rochester, in Rochester, New York. And *then*, I began... actually working, shall you—shall I say [laughing]. Now: your question?

JF: Thank you. [laughing] Sorry for interrupting you!

TG: That's alright!

JF: Are you currently the member of a church?

TG: Yes.

JF: And if yes... what religious denomination is it?

TG: Church of the Brethren.

JF: Okay... Are you, or were you, ever married?

TG: Oh, yes.

JF: Do you have any children?

TG: I have four children; all adopted.

JF: And their names?

TG: [pause] You want just first name?

JF: However you'd like to share them.

TG: Alright... [laughing]

JF: First name's... fine.

TG: Well... [pause] Nathan is the oldest, Silvia... isn't that awful.... [laughing] my memory's slow, Karl with a "k", and Janet.

JF: OK...And do you have any grandchildren?

TG: Yes, two.

JF: Right.

TG: Oh, no, excuse me! I'm sorry. Four... Four, yes.

JF: Four grandchildren, alright. And you're currently retired, is that correct?

TG: Oh, yes.

JF: Yes, okay. And what was your occupation?

TG: Scientist Administrator. For the most part, I was a faculty member in the college—in a college for a time. So, I was an associate professor my last—I started assistant professor, became an associate professor. That was for four years and then I became a Scientist Administrator.

JF: And how long were you working as a scientist?

TG: Well, I'll give you the dates: from 1961 until 1990.

JF: Okay... And you first started working as an assistant professor—is that correct?

TG: That's right.

JF: Did you ever serve in the military?

TG: No.

JF: Okay... Do you, or did you, have memberships in any community organizations, fraternal societies, or professional organizations?

TG: Oh my... [laughing]

JF: —that you'd like to talk about.

TG: [laughing] Well, I have been a member of the American Chemical Society for many years. I think I'm still a member, actually. And... [clears throat] that's a professional society... Organizations? I don't... I don't have notes with me.

JF: Okay.

TG: Too many to remember!

[TG and IM laughing]

JF: Alright!

TG: The gay, les—well, a pertinent one is The Gay and Lesbian Switchboard that I as a member of for a number of years.

JF: Oh.

TG: And a member of Dignity for a number of years.

JF: Great.

TG: I don't know whether they have such a thing as membership anymore, we—as you know, we just go to Dignity potlucks.

JF: Potlucks, yes.

EG: You were on the newsletter, I believe. The—

TG: Well, that's part of Dignity.

EG: Yeah...

JF: Yeah... Alright... We'll let you take a breath now. I'll ask Ed the biographical part of this...

TG: Okay.

JF: Can I have your name please?

EG: Oh, Ed—Edmund Good.

JF: Alright. And what's your date of birth and place?

EG: April 15th, 1947 in Harrisburg.

JF: And your parents' names?

EG: Josephine Mills Good and Edmund Good II.

JF: And, do you have any siblings?

EG: One sister.

JF: One sister—and what is her name?

EG: Louise.

JF: Thank you. What were your parents' occupations?

EG: My father was an architect and I guess my mother was a housewife.

JF: And how long have you been living in this area?

EG: All my life, but I have—all that I—I guess going to college and high school, I mean. I went Fairbury (ph.) Academy in Maine.

JF: Okay...

TG: Didn't you go to Penn State?

EG: Yes.

JF: So...

TG: Did you mention it?

EG: Oh, no. I mentioned that I went to college but I didn't say—mention it by name.

JF: [laughing] That answers the next question: where did you go to school?

EG: Yep.

JF: Okay. And how many years of schooling did you have?

EG: A B.S. (Bachelor of Science) in Vocational Education.

JF: And are you the member of a church, currently?

EG: ... Same as Thurman. Of the... First Church of the Brethren.

TG: Not first...

JF: And are you, or were you, every married?

EG: No.

JF: And are you currently working or retired?

EG: Retired.

JF: Retired. And what was your occupation?

EG: Apartment Manager.

JF: And how long did you do that? How many years?

EG: All my life.

TG: [laughing] That's not...

JF: [laughing] And when and where did you first start working?

TG: [laughing]

EG: You know, I guess—you know, working for my father, which also had, you know, the business running after I graduated from college.

JF: Okay. Did you, or have you ever, served in the military?

EG: No.

JF: And do you have any memberships in community organizations or fraternal societies?

EG: Brethren Housing for 10 years, which I got a—you know, like a note of \$10,000, which they—the Brethren Housing finds housing for women and children, going from welfare to work.

JF: And you're still involved with that?

EG: Yes.

JF: Okay. Alright, we'll switch back to Thurman.

TG: Okay.

JF: Alright. When—how do you identify sexually? Lesbian, gay—

TG: Gay!

JF: —bisexual—

TG: No, gay.

JF: Gay, alright. When did you first realize that you're gay?

TG: I had the stirrings when I was 56... What year was that? Well, 1980 I guess I realized it for the first time. It was several years before that I wondered and went probing, talking with people and examining, questioning, so on and so forth.

JF: And once you had started questioning and realizing that you were gay, what was life like for you then as a gay individual?

TG: Well, for the first time I felt I was at home with myself so to speak, but at the same time being married, I was concerned about my wife. And that brought some agony, in a way.

JF: And what kinds of things did you do to interact with the gay community, if you were able to?

TG: Well, first of all, I guess that one would say I came out actually in Washington, D. C. I somehow didn't feel it was safe to come out around Harrisburg... at first. And I was going to Washington D. C. on business with the National Institute of Health because I was working at the Hershey Medical Center at the time. And it required going to Washington occasionally, every—once every two weeks or so. And so, for the first time in my life, I began to seek out the gay community, as it were. I went to my first bar in my life—it was a gay bar—and then I found out—I was able to found out by going to different places—gay places, that there was a metropolitan community church... I met people there, became a good friend of a person who went there. So, I spent a fair amount of time with him and with the group that was meeting at the time... a gay men's group in Washington.

JF: So, other than the activities in Washington, D. C. and connections in Washington, D. C., were there things available to you in Harrisburg? You just didn't—

TG: Well, by that time I had learned about Dignity.

JF: Okay.

TG: And, so I finally decided that I wanted to associate more than I was getting to Washington. So, I called The Switchboard, which I had learned there was available in different cities and so on—there was one in Harrisburg, and asked about Dignity. Was told about when it met and so on and so forth, and started going there.

JF: And how many years were you part of Dignity?

TG: There's where I'm not quite sure. And I'm not sure I could find a record even, but I would—if I had to guess, I would say it was probably 1979.

JF: And other than interacting with people through Dignity, were there other in Harrisburg, such as bars, or?

TG: No. Well...

JF: —places where you could meet other gay people?

TG: No, I was not a bar person [laughing].

JF: Okay.

TG: Like I said, I went to my first bar in Washington, so I had never been in a bar before... of any kind. I got on The Switchboard, so I met people that way, but other than that—let's see, was I involved with other gay organizations? Not really, I think.

JF: Okay. And other than your trips to Washington, D. C., for working and to interact with other gay people, were there other cities you would go to, or other towns? Would you go to the shore? Baltimore? New York?

TG: No... No. I wouldn't—I didn't...

JF: Okay. What impact would coming out gay have on your work-life?

TG: None whatsoever.

JF: Okay. And what impact did coming out gay have on your family life?

TG: Well, of course that... [laughing] that created quite a bit of problems. At first I was able to keep the fact that I was attending Dignity from my wife. Prior to that, I would say for maybe two or three years, I went into a state of depression whereby I would go home from work and go into a... a—what's the word I want? An isolation mode. I didn't speak while I ate dinner and after dinner I went to bed. And the next morning, I got up and went to work. Fortunately, there was a switch that went on and off, so that didn't affect my work one bit. But when I came home, I immediately became isolated and the family did not know what was going on. This went on for a couple years.

JF: So your children were still at home?

TG: Oh yes, and it was awfully hard on them, but I couldn't do anything about it.

JF: And what impact did coming out gay have on the children when they learned?

TG: Well... the two boys still are a bit... distant; I seldom see them. I saw them at their mother's funeral... the last time, and we're just not in conversation.

[yelling in the background]

TG: And... Whereas the two daughters are—well, I discovered the youngest daughter—well, she discovered when she was 20 that she's lesbian. Now, the children are all adopted; I think I might have mentioned that.

JF: Yes, you did!

TG: So, anyway... But the two daughters are very close.

JF: And you daughter who's a lesbian, is she more understanding than your other daughter?

TG: I don't think so.

JF: Okay.

TG: I don't feel so, anyway...

JF: What impact did coming out gay have on your social life?

TG: Well... it didn't affect anything at church, except I kept it a secret for a while. But... otherwise, I began associating with gay groups [laughing] that I never associated with before. That's the major thing... that was different.

JF: So, do you think your affiliation with Dignity and The Gay Switchboard was probably a good connection with your social life?

TG: Oh, absolutely... Oh, absolutely.

JF: And...

LM: You should ask him to say more about that...

JF: About Dignity?

LM: Well, and...

JF: And about The Switchboard.

TG: Well, it helped me to understand, first of all, that I wasn't absolutely way out—way off center, so to speak. There were other people who were quite sane and lived regular lives, as it were. It was very affirming for me—no question about that. And I drew a lot of strength from learning to know people... who were—had their feet firmly planted on the ground, so to speak, and were good people.

JF: It sounds then like it was a good way for you to start working through the feelings of isolation.

TG: Oh, absolutely... Oh, absolutely. Oh, yes...

JF: What impact did coming out gay have on your civil or political life?

TG: Well, I guess I got more interested in gay matters politically, although there wasn't too much going on at that time. But certainly I—and I was cautious, I still... I don't know whether—I don't think—I can't remember that I ever came out officially at work... at Hershey Medical Center. I think a lot of people *knew* and nobody—I never felt that I was looked down upon, so to speak, or... or... treated differently because of that fact.

JF: And what kind of impact, if any, did coming out gay have on your spiritual life?

TG: Well, I felt more whole in every way. I felt that... this was not a choice, obviously, and I must've been made that way by my creator. And so, I would embrace it.

JF: And at the time you came out, were you affiliated with a different religion or a different church?

TG: No-no. Been Church of the Brethren since infancy, almost [laughing].

JF: Infancy? Okay. And what *changes* have you witnessed by participating, in respect, with the gay community?

TG: What changes in me, or what changes in the community?

JF: Both.

TG: Both?

JF: What have... Once you came out and began to interact with Dignity or the Gay Switchboard. And... you had previously mentioned that you preferred to interact with gay people in Washington, D. C. because this was not an ideal—

TG: Mhm. Mhm.

JF: —venue to come out in.

TG: Right.

JF: And, so what kind of things—changes have you seen?

TG: I think I've seen more acceptance among gay people. Less need to *act* as if they are *different*, doing unusual things just to make themselves feel... at whole, as if—you know, "We've got something special going, so we'll act that way—you know, as different from other people!" I've seen more maturity, I think—

JF: Okay.

TG: —in the gay community.

JF: And how much were you aware of gay/lesbian/bisexual civil right efforts in *this* region? Such as the passage of Municipal Ordinances in Harrisburg, Lancaster, York, Susquehanna Township?

TG: Oh, I was pretty much up on that. First of all, I worked The Switchboard and I felt I needed to be informed and... so... and I learned to know—what his name who wants to be mayor?

EG: Reid?

JF: Dan.

TG: Dan Miller.

JF: Dan Miller?

TG: Oh, yes. Very early when he was *demonstrating*, so to speak [laughing]. He was fired from his job. As a matter of fact, I knew the person... who's son—the father of the person who fired him, at the Hershey Medical Center... of course it was never discussed, of course, with that man.

JF: And how much were you aware of LGBT civil rights efforts in other places? And did you have—did any of these have an effect on your interest in becoming an advocate with the community?

TG: Well, I think I was pretty much aware. I subscribed to gay and lesbian magazines and newspapers and so on and so forth. So, I kept abreast of that and what I've learned from the local Dignity chapter. So I think I was aware of what was going on elsewhere.

JF: Years ago, Dignity use to rent busses to go to New York for Gay Pride [Festival]. Did you ever—

TG: No, I never went—

JF: —went on those trips?

TG: —on one of those.

JF: Have you ever attended a Gay Pride [Festival]?

TG: Only locally.

JF: Local?

TG: Mhm.

JF: And that's fairly recent in Harrisburg history, isn't it?

TG: Yes... Yes...

JF: The Gay Pride in the open.

TG: Right.

JF: In this region.

TG: Yes, but I knew people from—well, I knew Barbara Giddings, who was very active in Philadelphia early on... and Frank Hammony (ph.). I—I met him once, as well, and I knew these people that were early pioneers, if you will.

JF: And it sounds like then that you knew the local pioneers: Jerry Brennan (ph.)?

TG: Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. Yes, yes.

JF: What challenges do we still have in things that need to be done with respect to LGBT civil rights in this region, do you think?

TG: In this region... [pause]

JF: In the country as a whole, too, if you can think of things.

TG: Well... [laughing] You—first of all, the two things before the Supreme Court are very eminent [laughing].

JF: [laughing] As we sit here, yes.

TG: Yes—yes, yes. Definitely... Well, it was interesting that Harrisburg was very early on a city that accepted gay—gay people rights. Civil rights... I remember on The Switchboard getting a call from someone in New York City who was moving to Harrisburg and they asked about the climate here and I said, "We had a civil rights law before you did!" which was true. So... I keep myself aware of what's going on that way.

LM: Why was that, you think?

TG: Beg your pardon?

LM: Why was that, do you think, that Harrisburg was so advanced?

TG: [audible inhale and exhale] I can't answer that—I've always wondered... Maybe it's because a person's office decided to take action—

EG: Oh, really?

TG: —and tried to justify it... Oh, gosh...

JF: And it's possible, I think Jerry Brennan was involved with state government, because this is the state capital.

TG: Yes.

JF: And state legislature at the time, I think—correct me if I'm wrong—

TG: I'm not sure...

JF: —but I think the mid-70's or late-70's, was an acting legislation to protect sexual minorities in state government.

TG: You probably know more about that than I do.

JF: No, I don't know, but Jerry worked for state governments, so—

TG: Yes, that's true.

JF: —I know that he was connected.

TG: Yes, that's true. Mhm.

JF: And if you've heard of that on the Gay Switchboard or... people commenting...

TG: Well, if I did, I've forgotten. If I had to point again, it'd be to Dan Miller, who really appeared on TV and so and so forth, you know.

JF: Dan was kind of the frontline spokesperson.

TG: Absolutely, yeah, I think he pushed adequately, too.

JF: Okay... What have been—

LM: Oh, just a minute! We're getting... announcements from the bus at this point.
[laughing]

[repeating beeping noise]

LM: They'll be gone in a minute.

[beep]

TG: That's an interesting [_____???)

EG: Yeah...

LM: So, getting a...

EG: It's... It's—It's so low.

LM: Is it that thing? Yeah...

EG: But it's so low, I don't...

LM: Well...

TG: Well, she knows what she wants.

LM: Oh, where is it coming from?

EG: The bus.

LM: Oh, okay. We can just wait till they go.

TG: Sure.

LM: I didn't think I had heard it before.

TG: No...

EG: No.

TG: No. Uh-uh.

EG: No.

LM: Good.

LM: [laughing]

TG: Taking a long time...

EG: But I—I called—

LM: Ha...

EG: —Mayor Reid... That's, you know...

LM: Okay...

TG: Caution about Mayor Reid because it's all projection and we don't know for sure.

JF: So—

LM: What was that?

TG: Mayor Reid; he was reputed to be gay, but we don't know that for a fact. He's trying to be...

EG: No. No, no, I'm saying *he passed it*, he—he's the one that—

TG: Oh, well he signed it.

EG: Yeah.

TG: I was—oh, oh okay—I was—

EG: That's the reason. That—I wasn't talking about that at all.

TG: Alright, I misread you.

JF: So that was under Mayor Reid's administration—

EG: Yep. Yes.

TG: Yes.

JF: —that Gay Rights were—

EG: Yes.

JF: —moved forward.

EG: Yeah.

JF: Okay... Thurman, what have been the *most* important events of your life?

TG: Okay... [laughing] [pause] The most important events of my life... [deep breathing] I guess to start, I'd say being raised on a farm with loving parents... I hated the farm. My dad—about being an only child, my dad wanted me to take over, but I was

not at all equipped. I didn't have muscle, and so and so forth, even before tractors and other machinery came in. And I just didn't care for it at all. He was grossly disappointed when I said I couldn't continue. But my parents were very loving and I had good teachers at school. So, my childhood, I would say... Other events... I guess I'd have to consider my marriage as a significant event. Also, my getting PhD in postdoctoral work in outstanding universities. And I enjoyed my work with the national institutes of health and also at Hershey Medical Center; my—my working career. I've enjoyed retirement—I don't know that I've done anything significant [laughing]. As I've indicated, for some years, I was engaged with a gay/lesbian and that group—that movement type... fairly heavily. And I really enjoyed that, so, that was a highlight of my life, too.

JF: You mentioned your parents, could we flip back there for a moment?

TG: Sure.

JF: Were they alive when you came out?

TG: No.

JF: They weren't. OK...

TG: No, they died fairly young, in their young 70's—early 70's.

JF: Had they been alive, do you think you would've—

TG: Well, I've...

JF: —shared that with them?

TG: I've pondered that, but I don't really know what—how that would have worked out...

JF: Okay.

[knocking]

JF: What have been the greatest changes you've seen or experience in this area?

TG: In Harrisburg?

JF: It could be socially, politically, culturally... spiritually...

TG: [Pause] I'm not sure I'm in touch that much with Harrisburg, per se, to really be very definitive on that... About the only thing I know in Harrisburg is the gay community and also some people in the theater world. I'm very much interested in theater and volunteered for 17 years at—in the office at Theater Harrisburg, so I do know

a lot of people in that area... And as far as changes, I think that just in general, non-gays have become more accepting, as it were. It's true around the United States, as we've recently learned.

JF: And in addition to changes, what do you consider to be major turning points of your life?

TG: Well, a major turning point was realizing I was gay! [laughing]

JF: [laughing]

TG: That was—that was a *very* major one, believe me! I never divorced my wife... and I supported—continued supporting *her*. She chose to—well, *we* chose for her to remain a *housewife*. She had training and had been teaching in elementary school across the years before we were married. And a couple years *after* we were married, well, I was still getting my education. And I told her that if she ever met someone, certainly we'd have an easy divorce, but otherwise, we'd stay married; there seemed to be no reason to cut those ties. We always remained as *friends*... and I continued to supply her with half of my income as I had when we were living together. So...

JF: You mentioned being involved in Theater Harrisburg in a volunteer with them. Do you have any *books* or *music* or *special objects* that you associate with being gay?

TG: [Pause] My, my... Well, I have a lot of books... I don't know that I can pinpoint any *one* of them... One of the first books that was most helpful... was a book by Virginia Malincod, "Is a Homosexual My Neighbor?" That was written in the... late—early... *late* 70's, I think... when I discovered it... Another—I should mention another very important place for me, and that was Kirkridge, which is a... a center in... What's the name of that place? It's in Pennsylvania... near...

EG: [mumbles inaudibly]

TG: No... Oh, dear... It's—it's about the last stop on Interstate 81 going East [I-81 E]... I can't... this is why my memory bothers me.

JF: Is it the name of a *town*, or is it the name of a—

TG: It's the name of a town... There's a city or a town in Northeast Pennsylvania on 81.

LM: Bethlehem or Scranton?

TG: No, no, it's far East. It's most the way to Delaware... New Jersey, I mean...

JF: Oh!

TG: Anyway, Kirkridge is a religious center—a private, Christian religious center. And they have all kinds of programs, some on the weekend and some through the week... And early on, John McNeal—I don't know whether you've heard the name or not.

JF: Yes.

TG: As a matter of fact, I brought him one weekend here. I don't know whether you attended or not—

JF: No.

TG: —for a weekend that Dignity sponsored. He's Catholic, but... not typically Catholic. But a wonderful man, he's written wonderful books. And Kirkridge had him there for... I don't know how many years. And we went every time he was there. Prior to that, they—Virginia Mollenkott led a yearly gay/lesbian and et cetera workshop over weekend. And we've attended—we have attended several of those. So, Kirkridge became very important in our life and that was—that was a... very supportive group.

JF: Is Kirkridge still in existence?

TG: Oh, yes!

JF: And people still?

TG: Oh, yes. Yes. But John retired; he now lives in Florida with his mate of many years. Very outstanding man... I think that he was Jesuit.

JF: How did you find out about Kirkridge?

TG: Oh, dear. How did I find out? I can't—I don't think I can remember... how I found out...

JF: Was Jerry Brennan part of it?

TG: Oh, no, no, no. It wasn't through the—

JF: Wasn't through Dignity—

TG: No.

JF: —or The Switchboard?

TG: No, I don't think so.

JF: Okay.

TG: I'm not sure how I found out.

JF: Now—

TG: Maybe through a book or something... Maybe through... I'm not sure how I found out about... Virginia Mollenkott's book... Anyway, it's—

JF: But those are books that are important to you-

TG: Father Saude may have introduced me to her book.

JF: Oh.

TG: I think perhaps he did. I think he, Father, introduced me to the book and then from there on I can make connections.

JF: And Father Saude was the minister or the spiritual...

TG: Oh, yeah...

JF: leader of Dignity for...

TG: Oh, for years.

JF: 20 years.

TG: Oh, yes.

EG: It wouldn't have existed without him.

JF: Well, yeah...

TG: I think, yeah.

EG: Harrisburg, anyway.

TG: Yes, yes...

JF: Okay, is there—are there any questions you think we've missed? Is there anything you'd like to add... to the interview?

TG: Been helpful if I had seen some of these questions beforehand [laughing].

LM: Yeah, that would be a problem... I wonder if I could follow up a little bit.

TG: Sure!

LM: You were talking about this one activity where Dignity brought someone to Harrisburg—

TG: Mhm.

LM: —that was very important to you.

TG: Mhm.

LM: Were there other activities that Dignity engaged in and sponsored that were important to you?

TG: Oh, yes! Actually, I was responsible—I don't remember what role I was playing—I was a... I was news editor for the Dignity newsletter for a number of years. What other positions did I have? I can't even remember. I think I was treasurer for a number of years. I was on the board, as it were, and so, I was able to... suggest that we *do things* as an organization. And I was responsible for bringing—having Father Saude—

EG: No, dialogue.

TG: McNeill!

EG: Dialogue...

TG: Oh, that's right—dialogue. I mean—thank you... Well, I'll mention two things. Father Saude in his later years, he always held an open house at his home on New Years Day for many years. And people would gather and some days we never saw him on New Years Day. But he, at one point... he lay on the floor of his home for three days before someone discovered he had passed out... And fortunately he survived, but he wasn't able to do things. He had to move out of his home and into a... an apartment. And so, he was no longer able to host New Years Day, but I continued it at our home for two or three years... asking him to be there and inviting people to our home to continue the tradition, as it were... And... What?

EG: Dignity.

TG: Oh, yes!

EG: I mean, the dialogue!

TG: The dialogue, right! There seems to be a need... for people to have time—well, let me go back. I'm sorry. I have this so unstructured.

LG: It's OK!

TG: Most of the monthly meetings of Dignity... began... with a meal, a carry-in meal, and then we would have a mass; that Father Saude would preside over. And then we would have some speaker or activity afterwards... a—I wouldn't say *intellectual*, but at least a—a growth type program. But that was once a month and people would like to get together more often, we discovered. So, we set up what we call Dialogue, whereby people would come to our house to talk to each other. We didn't have any agenda, they just showed up and we just talked among ourselves. This went on—I don't have a record of how long, but it went on for a while. I'd say a couple years, probably.

EG: Yeah, about five years.

TG: Was it that long? I didn't remember. And... Well, there might be as many as 15 there at a time, something of that order... and so, we continued that.

JF: It sounds like that was the beginning of like moving potluck dinners out of The Friends Meeting House and into people's homes and making it more personal.

TG: Could be, I don't know. I don't remember that aspect—does it say? My memory's not as good as I wish it was.

JF: 'Cause early on, I think Dignity use to meet at The Friends Meeting House.

TG: Oh, yes. Oh, that's where I went for a while!

JF: And The Friends Meeting House was sort of like Switzerland...

TG: Mhm.

JF: And we felt comfortable—

TG: Mhm.

JF: —being there.

TG: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

JF: And potlucks...

TG: I remember the first time I went there, I... [laughing] First of all, I wasn't out to my wife at that point and... I decided I wanted to go. I called up to find out where it was and when and... I needed to take something 'cause it's a potluck, so I stopped off and got some potato chips or something minimal. I mean, it wasn't very much [laughing]. I remember walking in and fortunately it was a chair—an empty seat right beside Father Saude. It was almost as it was God-given, so to speak, that I could talk with him. And then I barely started and I looked up and I saw *somebody I knew*...

[all laughing]

TG: And I thought, “Oh, dear...” He hadn’t seen me. I thought, we may as well get this over with. I got up and went around and... [laughing] and he looked up and we said to each other, “What are you doing here?”

JF: Was it someone you knew from work? Or a neighbor?

TG: Yeah, I’d rather not mention names.

JF: Oh, alright. No, you don’t have to.

TG: Yep. Yep, yep... So, anyway... But after that- well then I told my wife, because I had been depressed, she recognized that it would be nice to have something help me. And so I went back and I said I found an organization—a spiritual organization that seems to be very helpful. And they have monthly potlucks and I’d like to take something. She was delighted that I’d found something that would help me to come out of my depression... and so she prepare- prepared dishes for me to take for a while. And it was only after I met him [Edmund] in 1980, that—and I brought him back and we went to the shore together—him with the full family. And I was going up to... Penn State... I had gone occasionally for my work at Hershey Medical Center—occasionally to Penn State, ‘cause it’s part of Penn State... on business. But usually that was a day-trip, up and back. But, once I met *him*, I decided I wanted to stay over Friday night and stay in *his* room. And... that was new to my wife and... she couldn’t understand it. And after a while after she’d met him and so on and so forth, one time when I was leaving for the weekend to go there, she said, “Is *he* gay?” And I said, “I never ask him...” [laughing] But she became very... confused and... wondering and so on, and... eventually I had to come out to her. I went—I had—by that time, I had this—I had engaged a... a counselor. I was seeing a counselor. Maybe once a week or something to deal with my own *adjustment* to life. And... so, I asked him if it would be alright if I could bring her. I knew that I had to come out to her, but I didn’t think that I could do it at home... I’d do it in the counselors office... The night before I set up to write what I would say. Now, when I write something, I go through it maybe five of six times and scratch and rearrange... but this time, I think I may have just change a word. It just seemed to flow out... Another sign that this was the right thing, so to speak. And... so we went and... I said I had something I needed to say and... well, I ask her if she would go with me, well—oh, sure, of course she would. She’s trying to figure me out... So I came out to her there and then the counselor there said is this a surprise to her, and she said, “No.” So... Anyway, that’s how we resolved that aspect... Where was I going with this? I’m not sure... but anyway...

JF: Well, we were talking about if there was any of—Dignity and events that—

TG: Oh, yes. Yes, yes, yes... Well, I got *way* off the topic.

LM: No, no, no, no...

JF: No, it's not.

LM: It's not way off.

JF: No.

TG: [laughing]

JF: Because Dignity—Father Saude, especially, I think helped relieve a lot of people 's anxieties.

TG: Oh my goodness. I don't know what I would've done without that man. Absolutely... He was a tremendous influence in my life.

JF: To *a lot* of people in the community, I've heard...

TG: Yep.

JF: That they—

TG: Yes... Oh, yes...

LM: Is he still alive?

TG: Oh, no, no, no...

JF: No.

TG: No, he died a number of years ago... I don't remember the year.

JF: It's been a while.

TG: Oh, yes... Yes.

JF: But he was *the person* who helped Dignity and all the members. It was a *considerable* membership at one point, as I recall.

TG: Oh, yes... Oh, yes...

JF: There were a lot of people.

TG: Seems to be—I don't know why 80 comes to my mind, but it was large. And... Father Saude had a problem with his eyes, so he didn't have a Parish. He was kind of a—well, he filled in, so to speak. And... he wasn't... But... well, that's enough said, I think.

JF: Okay... Do you have any photographs or artifacts? Or any gay literature you would consider sharing... with the history project? Either to loan, or if we have an exhibition in this space sometime?

TG: I'd have to think...

JF: But think about that...

TG: Alright.

JF: Because maybe some of your books and—

TG: I'll be happy to.

JF: —even maybe a list of books that you think were crucial in your coming out process.

TG: Oh, I could easily do that.

LM: Well, you did the newsletter?

JF: Yeah! The Dignity—do you still have copies of the Dignity newsletter?

TG: [laughing] I don't think so!

JF: Okay.

EG: He should 'cause just this year he showed me—it was a pile like [showing size with hands].

JF: So, you've been editing... *Downsizing*.

TG: Yes. [laughing] Trying to get rid of accumulation. I don't know whether I can uncover anything or not, but I could look.

JF: Well, if you do, that would be great.

TG: Alright, sure.

JF: That would help to enhance the project.

TG: Sure.

JF: Certainly.

TG: I would certainly be happy to do that.

JF: And just two more questions. What was your first contact with Central Pennsylvania LGBT Center? How did you become affiliated or connected with The Center?

TG: Well, as I said, I learned from Washington connections that Dignity was in existence. So, Dignity was my first touch. As far as The Center itself, here, you mean?

JF: [gestures yes]

TG: Well, I keep on touch with LGBT things going on... I am a person whose—I don't know where the office—well, it's here now, but it use to be at St. Stephens.

JF: Yes.

TG: It was an office there... and I use to go to talk to the person in charge... just to keep in touch with what was going on. So... So... I don't know if that answers your question, or not.

JF: Yes, it does!

TG: Okay.

JF: I just wondered how you became affiliated with it and involved with it... And do you have any recommendations for other people in the community who would be good for us to interview? Share history? Their stories?

TG: I don't know, of course, outside who you've contacted...

JF: It's really unfortunate Jerry Brennan and Father Saude aren't with us anymore.

TG: Mhm. Mhm... Oh, yeah. They've long passed away, of course. Well, let—I can give you a call, I guess.

JF: Sure. Think about it and just—if you could refer the project to a friend or colleague....

TG: Sure.

JF: Or something...

TG: Sure.

JF: That would be great!

TG: I'm not much in touch with people anymore, except through Dignity. That's about it.

JF: Mhm.

TG: And you have all those people already.

JF: [laughing] The dwindling dinner party.

TG: [laughing] Yes, yes.

JF: That's a—thank you!

TG: Well, certainly.

JF: And Ed.

EG: [nods]

JF: Ed, would you like some water? Are you alright?

TG: I'm fine.

LM: In fact, let me check on the tape here.

JF: Okay.

LM: We can go for about another ten minutes... and then I'll want to change tapes.

JF: Okay. So, it's almost two o'clock. So, I should tell you when it's ten after. [pause] Okay, Ed, we'll pick up with you now. When did you first realize that you were gay?

EG: I think I've been aware... but I think the *main*—you know, I think all my life, but I think particularly I came to a head I guess—you know, Penn State's where I really came alive. I was very *lucky* and I met Johann Farbe, who was doing a Human Sexuality... Well, actually, she taught the Psychology of Human Sexuality, but she—you know, a lower level course and a 400-level... course. And for Penn State, it was really... it was really—I think one of the most interesting things—I mean, I guess, you know, the course itself, but the fact that she was actually like 20 years *ahead*—ahead of her time... and talks so matter-of-fact about the topics that so many people had difficulty with. In fact, the administration—she wanted to go and have it added as a permanent course and Penn State felt very uncomfortable and would not... you know, add it as... as... as a permanent course. But... that was where... one thing that Penn State had was a... a... a one—one-term course of coming out, generalized like eight people meeting, I felt was very helpful... for talking at each of the—the people that tell their own story... And I found that was very helpful for me... in coming out.

LM: What year are we talking about here? Just range—

EG: 1975.

JF: So, that was sort of the beginning of realizing you were not alone?

EG: Yes.

JF: Okay. And... what was life like for you as a gay individual then? What kinds of things did you... or *people* did you interact with... in the gay community?

EG: Well, Penn State was a great... place I find to go and... ya know, come out in the sense of figuring out which—how I wanted to... You know, of having—it's so big that you can easily get lost and yet, you can have your own group of friends... and you know, experiment with... the fact of coming out or not coming out, as the case might be.

JF: So, you could remain sort of anonymous and...

EG: Well, you could have—

JF: But still have—

EG: I mean, you could have different... different groups of friends and they don't... know about each other, so to speak. I mean, they had, you know, like coffee houses where you could meet and you have your gay friends, and then you go back to your dorm and then be heterosexual, so to speak [laughing].

JF: In other than the course and the coffee houses, were there any other outlets? Gay outlets in the area that were available to LGBT individuals that you can think of?

EG: I think that was the main... I found, you know, on campus, there was a... a lot of... you know, like courses that a... health education I took... 46 like, was a course that, you know, talking about human sexuality... so most people that went to Penn State had *some* familiar... more familiarity than the average person.

JF: Do you think that that was kind of surprising, considering Central Pennsylvania is so conservative? That the curriculum included compliancy—

EG: Well, this was an option. I think it was a one-credit course that people could take. But it... because it *did* cover homosexuality among, you know, the other options, and... I think for most students, I mean, it... it definitely... got the conversation out in the open.

JF: Help students realize there were other kinds of preferences?

EG: Yes. And the collegian, of course... covered the college newspaper.

JF: Oh, it was part of the newspaper?

EG: No... I mean that the collegian, whenever... HOPS was the Homosexuals of Penn State—at that time, had an activity, they would cover the fact that it's you know, that it's happening. So, the average student would know if they had an interest, that this was where the coffee house was. And they, I think they three or four times a year, would have... gay films and what have you of so many... you know... the topic was—was covered, I mean, you know... it was accepted group at Penn State.

JF: So, how—was HOPS originated *by* student *for* students? How did—

EG: Yes.

JF: How did that—

EG: And then they... they actually had an office and, you know, in the hub, which was the main... I mean, it was all, you know, the camera club, and what have you, and Homosexuals of Penn State was one of those groups that... you know, shared the space.

JF: And do you know if that group was created by people who were *from* Pennsylvania, or...

EG: Oh, yes.

JF: Maybe... Gay of lesbian people that came form larger cities or larger areas?

EG: Yes, there was a corner group of supporters that... you know, got the... the group going, I mean, I forget their... the... and it was only a few years before I got there that they had... went through the process of getting the group official... you know, represented by Penn State to be funded.

JF: Oh... So, the school recognized it?

EG: Yes.

JF: And supported it?

EG: Yes.

JF: And the group then... They'd have regular meetings, or?

EG: Yes

JF: They'd have... Okay... And about how large was the membership? Do you remember?

EG: 15-20, generally speaking...

JF: But at the time, maybe considering proportion to the size of the... student population...

EG: Yes, it was a small... small connection.

JF: Small group, okay... Were there, do you recall, any gay bars in Penn State at the time?

EG: Oh, yes.

JF: That you went to, or—

EG: The... the Mile Mile was the... [laughing]

LM: I went to Penn State.

EG: Yeah.

TG: [laughing]

JF: And other than the bars and the coffee houses and... your organization, was there anything else that you can think of? Other outlets?

EG: That—that... that was the... That was the major... one.

JF: The major place... Did you socialize in the bars?

EG: Occasionally, but I was—I mean, but I don't drink... so...

JF: Right.

EG: And... cigarette smoke... was not... [laughing]

JF: Did you travel to other cities to be able to interact with gay people?

EG: Once in a great while. So, not too often...

JF: And where would you go?

EG: I—I went to New York once, but only once...

JF: And what about Baltimore? Washington?

EG: No.

JF: No?

LM: Okay. Now, I have to change tapes.

JF: Okay.

LM: That's a good place to change tapes.