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Interviewee: Lynn Daniels and Mary Margaret Hart

Interviewer: Barry Loveland and Bill Burton

Date: April 25, 2017

Place: Bellefonte, Pennsylvania

Transcriber: Liam Fuller, Mak Jones

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Abstract:

Mary Margaret Hart and Lynn Daniels are a married lesbian couple living in Central Pennsylvania. Lynn was born in New Haven, Connecticut in 1931, while Mary was born in 1949 in Cleveland, Ohio. Throughout the interview, Mary and Lynn discuss their childhoods, how they met, and the difficulties of raising a family together in Central Pennsylvania during the 1980s. Mary, a therapist, had previously been married and had two children with her first husband, John, before meeting Lynn while completing graduate school. The couple discusses raising their daughters, Rachel and Sheila, at a time and place without other lesbian parents as role models. The two stayed active in the gay community, and they recount the differences they've observed growing up two decades apart, as well as what they've observed of their daughter Sheila's experience, who is also gay. The couple married in 2014 after being together for 35 years.

BL: Okay, welcome, thank you for [laughs] [coughs] my name is Barry Loveland and I'm here with Bill Burton and we're—on behalf of the LGBT Center of Central Pennsylvania History Project and today is April 25th, 2017 and we're here to conduct an oral history interview with Lynn Daniels and Mary Hart. This interview is taking place at their house in Bellefonte and Lynn and Mary, do I have permission to record the interview?

MMH: Yes.

LD: Yes.

BL: Okay, great. Alright, well, I already explained a little bit the History Project to you and basically what we want to do is find out about your life story and we're going to talk about a number of topics through the interview, and we'll try to touch on all of those. [Coughs] So, Lynn, we'll start with you.

LD: Okay.

BL: And what I'd like to know is—tell me about where you were born and when you were born and—and then a little bit about your childhood growing up.

LD: Okay, born October 13, '31 in New Haven, Connecticut, lived right through my childhood through high school, first two years of college at home in East Haven Connecticut. My mother and father and two older sisters, myself, the things I—I remember a lot because I think as I

come—become older I have been going back and reviewing a little bit my childhood, but I remember growing up being a tomboy and there was a wonderful article in the New York Time by a woman about being a tomboy or her daughter being a tomboy and I just loved it and—but I remember that. But I also remember saying to the kids—cause it—the—it wasn't a bad thing to be a tomboy and it just was, and I said, "No, I'm a tomgirl." And when—and I don't know why I said that, but now I know why I said that: because that's the way I felt and there was room for that. I remember my mother trying to dress me up a little bit more and not being so messy being outside and it, was hard to keep me inside, and they kind of allowed me to, for a while, and I—am I giving you the information you want?

BL: Mhm.

BB: What do you mean allowed you to?

LD: Well, there were conversations. My mother didn't want me wearing jeans all the time, you know, and she really was hoping for, not a girly girl, there—there wasn't that kind of thing there, but I just didn't fit the norms for them.

BB: Yeah.

LD: And—but my dad, who was an athlete in his younger days, never discouraged me from my interest in sports. Though, there weren't many opportunities then. Babe Didrikson was my heroine [laughs]. There's a lot but I'm trying to get to—oh, when I—I skipped sixth grade and I went into seventh grade, which was in the high school. And apparently—I realize this now—because I was coming in late—I think it was in November or December, one of the students, Maureen, was kind of assigned to me to make sure I made the transition more comfortably, because that was a hard move, and of course I had developed a crush on her, a tremendous one, [laughs] and the first one in my life and... And I—I also wanted to be like the other kids, so I had a boyfriend who went to the prom and the senior dance and the whole number.

MMH: You always said you were really shy.

LD: I was shy, I was. I consider reserved a better word [laughs]. Oh, well, I still am. And I lived on Long Island Sound and there was a day camp that... The first two weeks in May or so, Arnold College of Health and Physical Education of New Haven would have a camp for their new students and I remember looking out in the water, Long Island Sound, and seeing this canoe with about ten people in it, women and [phone goes off] and the woman who was my P.E. teacher at the time, she was from our own, so, that's how I ended up going there and I was able to live at home, first two years, and then live at school and... My awareness of homosexuality as a word, my mother volunteered in the library and she always took me and so there was nothing there to—there was nothing there, okay, right.

BL: This would've been in the late '40s, I guess, right?

LD: Yeah, mid '40s...

BL: Mid '40s, yeah...

LD: So...

BL: Yeah, there really wasn't anything happening...

LD: Right and—and...

BB: What do you mean nothing then, in this...?

BL: No—no books...

LD: No—no...

BB: Books on it?

LD: Oh no, no, and of course I may not have been look—looking in the right place...

BB: Where you intentionally looking for it?

LD: Some time—at some time, yes. The timing of this is a little vague in my own mind, but I can remember this, my dad had a grocery store—a market and when he—when people called in their orders and he answered the phone—for instance, they said, “quart of milk” and he'd say, “regular or homo?”—okay, homogenized [laughs] alright, this meant nothing to me until my friends—my girlfriends laughed, you know, she said something that made me aware and I think that was the first time where I heard the word or thought of the word homosexuality and I don't know how to know what I did with that information or but, well, I think back on it and it's pretty funny. [Laughs]

BB: Regular or homo [laughs]

LD: [laughs] okay and college was—I met a lot of nice people and very nice women—students and all—I started college in 1948 and there was a ratio of about 500 men to about 50 women. I would say 75-80% of those men were service—retrained from the service...

BL: Yeah...

LD: So they were older, most of them, and I went out with some of them and what my—the friends I made there were wonderful. I had a good time and I fell for a returning Navy WAVE who was [laughs] seven years older than I was and that seemed—seven years seemed tremendous to have and then here I am, difference, but she—she really was not gay, she was—I would probably—she was bisexual. She was married, in the process of divorcing an alcoholic husband, so that was a lot of fun, but...

BL: So, you had a relationship with her?

LD: Yes, and... Yes. I'm vague about this because what—it wasn't really a relationship, it was always hidden, sneaky. She was never entirely comfortable with it and it wasn't deep or intense, only intense in the terms of my feelings, rather than anything happening much.

BB: When were you aware that—going back—when were you aware that you—that you were gay or lesbian, or did you just—did you just feel like you were?

LD: I don't know, that's a good, good, good question. I certainly knew I was different from the get-go, let's say seven, eight, nine. I certainly knew I was different and I didn't of course have the ability to say that. All adolescents think they're different and they're—but I—I couldn't measure that with the rest of the world. What I knew, I had to protect myself from other people knowing. I knew that.

BB: Did you know it was that you were homosexual or a lesbian or did you put that label on you or did you not wear the label at the time?

LD: I did—I didn't, no—I. Of course the word lesbian was like, I mean, where we were it just wasn't used, gay wasn't used. I'm going way back to when it was sissy, you know, boys were sissies, they were gay.

BB: Men were labelled but women really weren't, right?

LD: Well, I—I don't remember, I don't know.

BL: Tomboys, I guess.

LD: Yeah, tomboys, but not all lesbians were tomboys.

MMH: But, you know, you said there was a bias against women who were in Phys. Ed., there was always this sense of--

LD: Oh yes, yeah, oh, I remember when I—when I became a Physical Education teacher I—I knew all my actions, I had to be careful of—careful because... Oh, I had to be above reproach in terms of being with my students and that was—I should say this, this is interesting, I think, my friend Laurie-Anne in high school, when, I—I couldn't know if I told you this Mary. When I went over her house to stay overnight, I think it was her birthday or something and while we were in bed together, I put my arms around her, and she just took my hands and put them aside, okay. And there was one other incident. I was sitting on the front steps of my house, Laurie had come down, and I was sitting behind her and she was on a lower step, and I put my hands like this. And she just, again, she gently just pushed my hands away and I thought—I have thought to myself, how lucky I was that she treated me that way. She never—she was my best friend but she never got upset about this and she found me a date for the prom [laughs]. Right, and we're both Roman Catholic and I said, "She's been talking to the priest." [Laughs] You know, but, I

mentioned that because I'm just certainly luckier than a lot of people would've been at that time, you know, I could—it could've been like a mean girl.

BL: Yes, right, she could've turned on you, and she didn't.

BB: Yeah.

LD: Yeah, but, anyways, I'm jumping around, don't mean to.

BL: Well, so, you went to college to study Phys. Ed. or yeah...

LD: Yeah, the Health, P.E., and...

BL: That was probably, well, I'm not sure, and I would think it was probably unusual at the time to—for Phys. Ed. teachers, women Phys. Ed. teachers, I mean, how did—how did—there's—okay...

LD: No—no, there were schools—there were schools, especially, well, I was only familiar with the East, there was one, Sargent's in Boston. I'm sure it doesn't exist now. And Arnold, where I went, devoted just to Physical Education. Health is another situation, recreation.

BL: Okay...

LD: And for someone who was so sports-minded, and I like the idea of teaching and I like children. Like my sisters have a lot of kids, and when I was about twelve or thirteen, each sister had a child and so I—I've been with little children all my life and big children. And I taught kindergarten through 12. I taught them all, so...

BL: Did you get a sense that there were other lesbian women in the program that you were there?

LD: Yes, [laughs] yes, and—but I—I'd never been among lesbian. And I can remember being in the like the living room, a common room, and there were a couple of student rooms that just lead right off and I remember one of the—it was a senior, I can remember her name, she—she came bursting out of the room. She turned around and she yelled at someone in the room, it was two lesbians having a discussion, an argument, and I wasn't used to seeing that kind of behavior, at all,. And from what I remember and what I know now, I think a lot of them, many of them were bisexual. And I went out with a couple of guys, and I suppose I could labelled that too, but I wasn't [laughs]. I had a good time in college pretty much, lot of good things happened. Ask me a question.

BL: So how many—how many years were you there to...?

LD: Four, four years and then I taught for seven years at a private school outside of Waterbury, Connecticut for seven years. I took a year off, I wasn't sure I wanted to keep going with

teaching, and then [phone goes off] and then taught at the Baird School in Orange, New Jersey, another private school. They merged with the boy's school at Morristown, and I taught my last few years at Morristown Baird School. These were boarding schools and that is another—I can remember teaching at Saint Margaret's in Waterbury. An old school friend lived in Waterbury with her husband and her son and so they'd invite me over now and then. And the husband said, you know, eyes, "what goes on up there, you know, lesbians?" You know—you know, he didn't say that but that's what he was asking...

BL: Yeah...

LD: He wanted to know what the action was at the girl's school. It made me nervous [laughs]. There may have been, I didn't know about it, but—but there was a feeling of... Well, as I was anticipating this interview, I began to get to get very anxious. I could feel myself getting anxious, and I said, "What am I—why am I being anxious?" and I think it pulls up old feelings.

BB: Yes.

LD: And—and I said but these are my friends, and I don't have to be. And that level of anxiety probably was present...

BL: At that time?

LD: Almost as far as I can remember from the time I went to high school and then realized that this was not an acceptable way to live to most people...

BL: So, what—what was teaching like for you? Did you—did you enjoy it and?

LD: Yeah, I did—I did—I did. I started—I started teaching lower grades, even starting from nursery school and kindergarten that was—that was fun and... Yeah, I liked it a lot. I liked the kids a lot.

MMH: And she was a very popular teacher. They've had her back to the school, last school she was at, multiple times. They named a track field after her.

BB: Really?

BL: Wow.

LD: [Laughs]

MMH: Yeah, yeah, she was a very, she's very, very popular, very popular, and a lot—some of her students still stay in touch.

LD: Yeah, I'm lucky that way.

MMH: Yeah.

LD: It's because my friend Claire, who's the WAVES eventually married Sal and they, oh, it's god—godparent to her first son Peter, so... I kept in touch with her many, we kept in touch with each other many years. So that slipped away. So, I—when I think of this, I think how lucky I was that the people I ended up choosing to fall for were very nice people. So, I've lucked out that way but, I can...

BL: Did you—did you have any relationships with anyone while you were teaching?

LD: Oh, while I was teaching, okay, let's see, March, September, yes [laughs].

BL: And how did you meet her?

LD: Oh, she came as a Physical Education teacher to fill a spot. She was fresh out of college and this is strange, I can't remember her first name, so, apologies. I can remember her last name and I remember, my first time, I—I do not hire—I did not hire, the head of school hired. So, when I first met her and the first time, we were just talking in the teacher's room. She was talking to me and—and she started talking about how she lived in the South. She wanted to get up in the North and live something—a different kind of life. And what I was—what I was misinterpreting was that she was talking about some kind of interest in drugs. And I was a drug educator too, so that could've been on top of my mind. It was just the way she was talking...

BB: Yeah...

LD: But then I realized she was interested in some kind of sexual arrangement. This is all very vague, but I caught on, okay. And so that advanced and that was a very nice relationship for a year, hidden. Who knows if it was hidden—hidden? And then she left after a year, I can't remember which—after one year or two years... But she just left. And she didn't tell me she was going to be leaving and taking another job in Michigan. And that was harsh.

BB: That is hard, yeah.

LD: Yeah, that was harsh. [Pauses] Let's see, who else, Darcy—Darcy was a friend of a friend, you know, that kind of thing. She was much younger than me, and this is where it started maybe [laughs]. But that was—the—the thing with Miss Tierney was hidden, and it was scary. We—it was a boarding school. We lived on campus, and that constant hiding was scary, so...

BB: When you said 'hidden,' I mean you lived on campus, you had campus housing...

LD: We lived in campus, right, and we lived—several of the faculty lived in—this was kind of like an old house and it had rooms and an old house right on campus and I could walk downstairs and walk into the school. It was very nice, I mean its convenience and...

BB: You had your own house—did...

LD: Own room...

BB: Own room in a—so it was...

LD: Own room in a house that...

BL: Faculty housing?

LD: Yeah and you know still were students on one floor of faculty housing, something like that.

BL: So you actually—you had to meet secretly?

LD: Sure...

BB: That was difficult, my god...

LD: Yes...

BB: That sounds difficult...

LD: Yeah, it was and we do some things, you know, just go out together as teachers and people wouldn't know, but this, living in a different world. When I'm telling you something you also know, I'm sure. But thinking of Darcy, that was a friend of a friend, and she eventually got a job in Long Island, and I remember driving from the Baird School where I had been, driving out to Long Island on the weekends and traffic, you cannot believe and I can't believe I did that—putting my life on the line, going from Orange, New Jersey to the middle of Long Island and coming back, but I did that... And that just kind of petered away.

BL: And this was in the 1950's, I guess, right?

LD: Oh, let me see if I can place it.

BL: Late 50's maybe?

LD: '52...

MMH: Yeah, it was the mid 70's when you came here...

LD: Yeah, so then I am thinking late 50's, that's good—good.

BL: So, you said you took a year off from teaching.

LD: I did, I just wouldn't... I think what happened was I live close to home and what was happening was I would be on duty on weekends at the school, that was just a—that's a normal thing in private schools. And when I was free, an old boyfriend was working close and he would give me a ride home and that—that was good. Home was good, but I was... I didn't have a life outside of that. There's nothing I could do, there was... And I, I'm not the kind of person who would necessarily search out because I had a built-in reserve because I was gay and brought up

Roman Catholic and so forth. I never came out to my parents or my family. Mary, poor Mary. I just—I just assumed that they're good people and they would treat Mary or anyone else kindly and would be nice, and they were, and they are, but Mary had to go through...

MMH: But that's a history, yeah...

LD: Yeah, she has better description about that because she didn't know that all of my family would be nice.

MMH: Well, yeah, but it was pretty tense for a while....

LD: Yeah, it sure was...

MMH: But, you know, you should talk a little bit about your decision to come back here 'cause that was sparked by wanting to be less narrow...

LD: Oh, okay, right, so, the decision to stop teaching after seven years. I guess it's just the preamble to what I did later, is that I—I knew it wasn't good for me socially or just as a person, and I didn't want to get away from my family. I just needed to have room and—so, after clerking in a bookstore, for a year, I got a call, isn't that nice, would you like to teach at the Baird School in New Jersey and I said yes and that worked out quite well.

BL: How many years were you at the Baird School?

LD: I was, let's see, they were the Baird School for about seven or eight years when I were there and then they merged and they closed down the Baird School. The students who continued went into the merged school, Morristown Baird School. And I was there. I had a good time. It was the time when Title IX came in, the early 70's...

BB: What's Title IX?

LD: Title IX with women. Well, not just women in sports, but it made all the school have to have equal opportunities for everybody, male, female, so...

MMH: Women in yeah, it was a...

BL: Equal programs...

BB: Yeah, yeah...

MMH: It was a huge deal...

LD: It was a huge deal and I—and it would've been a time for me to maybe go someplace else when they made that merger, but it was also—would be fun to see what happened and... So, you moving to a girl's to a boy's school—a boy's school that's known for sports, a girl's school that's known for its academics, so you can see what happened there. The faculty, the students,

the foreheadmaster, who had to go through those first few years, but it was fun. I mean, I liked teaching the boys and starting new programs and a lot of my time was in Health Education and it was just—it wasn't Physical Education—Health Education. So—so that was pretty cool. And then, I found out about a program at Penn State, a Sports Psychology, which was the best program in the United States. And one of my former students ended up going to it, and her mentor was coming to speak in Morristown. So, I went to Harrisburg, and I decided it was time. So, after about three years or four years at Morristown there I came to Penn State University. And again, I still was closeted, you know, at Morristown, Baird, I mean, just was and I just thought it was time. I was...

BL: What year do you remember, that you came to Penn State?

LD: Well, 1976...

BL: 1976?

LD: Yeah, it was when I was 45. So, you have to help me out here, what...

BB: Did you come here as a student or did you come here as...?

LD: I came here as a student...

MMH: Grad student.

LD: Grad students worked college, see, you get a M.S. I enjoyed that very much, I liked school very much. I always liked school, but this was wonderful because I didn't feel the pressure that my student friends were under. They were getting a master's degree so they could teach, so they could get more money, and I—I just did not have that pressure...

BB: Yeah, yeah...

LD: I don't know why, but I didn't...

MMH: And she became a dancing queen [laughs]...

BB: That was the era, '76...

LD: Yeah, and so I, you know, and it was hard to meet people and...

BL: Were—were—were you aware of HOPS?

LD: Yes, I was aware of HOPS...

BL: Okay...

LD: And I was just thinking—there was also a minister, Metropolitan...

BL: Community Church...

LD: Right, on campus at times and I remember our friend, Dotes and Margie had a commitment ceremony in the chapel...

MMH: Eisenhower Chapel...

LD: Eisenhower Chapel. This had to be early...

MMH: Yeah, it was before we were living together, I think...

LD: Oh, yeah, that was a remarkable occurrence [laughs]...

BL: Definitely...

LD: Yeah...

BL: And did you go to any of the HOPS functions, or...?

LD: I don't remember there being functions that I would go to. That—I once came the summer before the fall semester, and the Women's Resource Center, which was a wonderful organization. It's terrific, but it met at that time in a little second floor room, and I went to meeting that was a...

MMH: A lesbian support group...

LD: Lesbian support group, thanks. And there were about eight or ten people there, and I found out later on because of my difference in age, they thought I was a spy [laughs]. But, I don't know, oh boy, I didn't know all the power I had, oh boy, oh boy... But that was my first venture, just to try to do something right...

BL: Was—was the lesbian support group sponsored by the Women's Center?

MMH: Yes...

LD: The Women's Resource Center supported it.

BL: Oh okay, that's great...

LD: That was...

MMH: It was all volunteer then, it was not a shelter, and they were doing some domestic violence stuff, but this is early feminist stuff. It was all volunteer...

LD: This is early on, yeah...

BL: All volunteer, yeah...

MMH: And there were a lot of lesbians...

LD: Yeah, there were...

MMH: Working there...

BL: And where was the center located, do you recall?

MMH: In town, in State College...

LD: In town, in State College...

BL: Yep...

LD: Still is—still is there. Then you ask what it—some of the influences, but the whole feminist movement was a driving force to inspiring. Let's see, more about it. It's hard for me to figure out how I made connections. I did make connections, that's where Donna was. She was a visiting teacher from Michigan State and she'd be... I—I was very interested in her, but we were just friends, and that was nice, that was really cool, but she was in the...

MMH: And she's still a good friend...

LD: Yeah, and there really was—there were a few bars. I bought a house, and I rented out rooms and I can't remember how I worded the ad but I ended up with women always. And I made clear that lesbians were welcome. They didn't have to worry about people being mean to them and, sorry I lost my train of thought.

MMH: Making connections with people...

LD: Making connections...

BB: You bought a house and rented it...

LD: Oh, yeah...

BL: Did you go to the bars?

LD: Oh, I—I had no idea, but found out later, that people noticed me. Of course I stood out because of my age, but I was clearly gay, alright. So, as I said, I found out later that people noticed me, and some of those people, and many of them in the Phys. Ed. department, but not all, kind of made friends with me or just were nice people. What can I say... and then, oh, I can remember, one of them, Dotes, became a friend. I was not sexually attracted to her, but just a good person and she knew the bars, okay, and so she would get me to go out, which is a good thing and I met people there.

BL: So, which bars did you go to?

LD: Well, when I first came, there was a bar called the My Oh My [laughs].

BB: I've heard of this...

BL: Yes, we've heard of this...

LD: And—and I...

MMH: It's behind the whatever...

LD: Well, yeah...

BB: Half straight and half gay...

LD: Yes, that was—that was interesting. I mean what did I know? I mean, imagine that...

MMH: It was like...

LD: The straight bar in front and then a room in back where it was acceptable and welcome to have lesbians, and I don't know if the men were there or not. I just don't remember, but this was just on the edge of when the My Oh My went away...

MMH: Collapsed...

LD: Okay, there was another one, The Scorpion that was a good one...

MMH: Yeah, that was the dancing bar, The My Oh My really wasn't...

LD: Yeah, and—and—and Dotes was a dancing fool, so—and I loved that, and so we had a lot of fun...

MMH: Yes...

LD: But, that's not everyone's cup of tea...

BL: And this was—and this was the disco era, I assume...

LD: Yes, it was...

MMH: Oh, yes...

BB: Was this the beginning, Stayin' Alive...

LD: It's hard work, was it—was that good? [laughs]

BL: Yes, we all had fun then...

LD: Yeah, that was good...

BB: We all thought we could dance like that didn't we? [laughs]

MMH: She could, she could...

LD: [laughs] Oh, what fun, but I met people there and somewhere, I couldn't put the date on this, Mary, maybe you can. We decided no... No, I developed a kind of a circle of friends that—most of them were connected to the University, and some of them were professors or teachers and some of them weren't. We found there was no way to meet people, really. There were—it was hard work. And so three or four of us got together and said let's do something about it and that was the TLC that developed, The *Lesbian Connection*...

MMH: The Lesbian Connection...

BL: Okay...

MMH: And that was after you and I were together....

LD: This—right...

MMH: So, it wasn't the first year or two you were here but it was pretty soon after...

LD: Say like...

MMH: '80?

LD: Oh, I was going to say '79...

BB: What year was it? What was it a newsletter or what was it?

MMH: '79-'80, oh no, it was a, how would you describe it? It wasn't really an organization, it...

LD: Well, no, it was described—I remember—this is a loosely organized something...

MMH: Network...

LD: Network where you can safely meet lesbians...

MMH: Yeah, and it was—it was amazing that—that there was—not like there was a real need for people who weren't into the bars particularly where it could be, you know, university people, but also other...

BL: Community people...

MMH: The community people and it was a real need in the community and, you know, we weren't twenty and so, it really...

BB: Twenty years old?

MMH: Twenty years old, yeah,

LD: Everyone was 20 [laughs]

MMH: Everyone was 20 and so, the way it ended up evolving was that it was a phone list which had first names and phone numbers and no description on top of it...

LD: Yeah, everything was...

MMH: So, that if, you know, somebody found a phone list somewhere, they wouldn't know what it was and we had meetings a lot and it met once a month, it moved from home to home, somebody volunteered to facilitate a meeting. It was specifically designed to be not, you know, political or activist—this is a social group where you're not committed to anything. There are no officers, what we did was each month we planned things that people wanted to do that month, you know, and so, there'd be events, things, potlucks, and we had a volleyball...

LD: Yeah...

MMH: Team once...

LD: They—they—for—at one time, I think, there were over a hundred—hundred names and they drew in townspeople too...

MMH: A lot...

LD: And from outside of State College...

MMH: Yeah...

LD: Which was really nice and sometimes within the group they formed subgroups who would do things go bicycling or, you know what I mean, they'd find each other's...

MMH: Yeah, yeah, so, you know, we'd make—some people would go camping, that was the idea, that it was a place where people could meet, you could plan to—but if people didn't want to do it, there was no commitment to anything...

LD: Right...

MMH: So, we didn't have to keep anything...

LD: No dues [laughs]

MMH: Do anything, going, there was no—somebody's responsible for something. It was, if there's no interest, nothing gets planned. But for years, we really—there were things every month and the meeting themselves were, well, we often had 20-30 people at a meeting, so they

became social events. It was a—it was a won... It was something I haven't heard of anywhere else, you know, I talk to friends who lived in cities or other areas...

LD: I don't think cities have things. Well, no that's a generalization...

MMH: And, well, they can—partly because you can subgroup more easily in cities I think...

LD: You can find each other...

BB: Yep...

MMH: This—this group was so diverse. There were maybe a few older undergraduates, but most of it were grad students, women in their late 20's, early 30's, on through...

LD: Through late...

MMH: And, so, it was a wide age range, there were people who were university, but the people who had nothing to do with the university, all levels of education, backgrounds. It was a wonderful—and it still is, but it's not the same now, there isn't the same need...

LD: You're right, it isn't the same...

BL: So, it still exists...

BB: So, you mean, they meet—these 20 or 30 women would meet once a month and then they would plan...

MMH: Whatever happened in the next month, but only a month ahead, what do people want to do this month?

BB: You mean, so, did—did they say, we're going to have...

MMH: Somebody wanted to have a potluck. 'I'm going to have a potluck this month,' and it would get on the calendar...

LD: Anybody who wants to come...

MMH: And some, you know, some people would say, you know, "We want to hiking," you know so anybody...

BB: We want to camping or get on the bike, so, where would this calendar be published like how would you know?

MMH: You know...

LD: I don't really know how that happened...

MMH: Well, I—we spread it around, but I don't re—the calendar got writ—I don't know—I don't remember that right now...

LD: We had a telephone tree...

MMH: Yeah, there was a telephone tree, and so...

LD: Was it—it's very interesting...

MMH: Next to the box we were talking about there was a library that was in the box. There was, you know, basically a notebook that we kept track of what we were doing...

LD: Yeah, that notebook would be good to have, wherever that is...

MMH: Yeah, who knows what happened to that...

BB: So, is this still going on today?

MMH: TLC still exists but it exists as an email list, you know, a listserv and it's got quite a few people on it...

LD: A different form, it must have, Jen said there must—they're over a hundred...

MMH: Names still on it but, you know, so if something's going on on campus it might be gay-related that somebody, you know, sends it over to the thing that goes out, but the group has aged, so a lot of the people, well this is a high turnover area, so, people come and gone and joined—but I'd say most of the people who come to things that we do are anywhere from 40 to Lynn and other people in their 80's, you know, so, we've aged. We don't do nearly as much and we don't meet as often, but there's certain things that happen, Lynn and I always have a couple of events at the house. It's a good place for that...

LD: We—we had I think 2010 or 2009, we've had reunions...

MMH: Yes...

LD: Which would—the first one was the best. We had people come from all over the U.S. who were in TLC...

MMH: There's a farmhouse out on Route 322...

LD: Yeah...

BL: I think Sammy was telling me about the farmhouse...

MMH: The farmhouse...

LD: Yeah, right, right...

BB: Yeah...

MMH: When we were altogether, oh, we had some fun, yeah, we had some good parties...

LD: Yeah, it was—enjoying the farmhouse gang and the TLC kinda joined forces so it was overlapping...

MMH: There was always—there were always lesbians renting the farmhouse, and so we had a Spring Fling out there. We had—we had some pretty wild New Year's Eve Parties...

LD: And there was, oh yeah...

MMH: But we had—we had a couple—we've had a couple of reunions that were just fun. We had music, we had people coming back who hadn't been back to State College in a long time. We had a hundred or more people there, the first time, if—more than that...

LD: Yeah, oh yeah, easily, easily...

MMH: So, you know, it was a wonderful thing and it lasted for quite a long time and... But it was designed to meet a need, and as the need for that kind of organization changed, the organization changed. But it was always this—just this network that I haven't... You know, people who've been here through that time and go other places say, "Boy, why can't we do this some other place?"

BB: No, that—that's—that's—well, think of it, was the 70's and 80's, basically, and 90's...

MMH: Into the 90's, yeah...

LD: Yeah...

BB: So it's kind of—it's basically pre-internet...

MMH: Pre-internet, yeah, pre-internet, pre, you know, really active movement in gay rights...

LD: Oh yes, yes, good point...

BL: Yeah...

LD: Well then, for the TLC there was a telephone line that the men had a telephone...

MMH: There was a hotline...

BL: A switchboard, yeah...

LD: A hotline, had a hotline, so that people who came to State College that could find out...

MMH: Oh, could call the hotline and say, “What’s going on?” and they would get—then there was contact people on TLC, so they, you know, somebody called the hotline who wanted—was looking, the hotline would call us. We’d call them back. There was paranoia in the group at the beginning. There was a lot of variability, and we did it on purpose so that we went to the least—we were going to protect the most scary...

LD: Right, right, yeah, most vulnerable, yeah...

BL: Yes...

MMH: So, there was a lot of people—not a lot, as over the years, you know, more people who were more and more open, but there were always teachers and other people who, you know...

LD: Just couldn’t afford it or...

MMH: Just couldn’t take chances...

LD: Couldn’t let their own families know...

BL: Yeah...

MMH: Yes, and so, we were always careful that way...

LD: Careful...

BL: Protectful, yeah...

MMH: And, so it was—it was a—it was wonderful. You met people that you wouldn’t sort of normally run into and you work and stuff like that, but it was not drinking related, you know. It was—it was a nice group and it still is...

BB: Yeah, kind of like a *Lavender Letter*, it’s really unique that—that—that, you know, exists here and *The Letter* existed in Harrisburg, right, Harrisburg...

BL: Yes, it’s—it’s follows similarly...

LD: It’s the timing...

BL: Harrisburg...

LD: Even, yes...

BB: That same connection for women—women—it’s the women who did it...

BL: Yeah...

BB: Men didn’t do that, so to speak...

BL: Yeah...

MMH: Not the same way...

BB: And I find that very interesting and really...

LD: Well, it's that...

MMH: I found it pretty predictable actually [laughs]...

BB: You did?

MMH: Yeah, yeah...

BB: Women are smart ones...

MMH: Well, I think that women are looking for something different I think in—in, you know...

LD: Yeah, well I don't know that...

BB: Well there's fewer bars and—for women and different—fewer, I would conclude that—that's why—in the ways to connect...

LD: That's true...

MMH: And, yeah, yeah, and, well, you know, a lot of women just weren't into the bar scene either...

BL: Yeah...

BB: Right...

MMH: So, anyway...

LD: Yeah, good times, better than, where are we now...

MMH: Well, yeah, yeah...

LD: I'm not married, my story is not...

MMH: If we—when Lynn moved here, she moved here the same year I did. We met some time that following year, so maybe this would be a good time to start my story of how I got here because after that it's kind of all inter-linked...

BL: Yeah, sure...

LD: I met—I sort of met Mary in a class of Psychology of Women...

MMH: Yeah, you know, that's when you met me, yeah, Psychology of Women [laughs]

LD: Was that full of lesbians?

MMH: Oh, I'd say it was at least 2/3 lesbian.

LD: Yeah, so...

BB: Oh my god...

LD: But...

MMH: Oh, it was, yeah, and it was 1977 or something like that...

LD: Yeah...

MMH: When that class was held and so that's when we met...

BL: Well, do you want to go back then to the beginning Mary, with your story?

MMH: Yeah, if that makes sense, I think...

LD: Sure, go...

BL: And tell, yeah, tell—tell us where and when you were born?

MMH: Okay, I was born 1949 and actually in Cleveland, Ohio, but we only lived there for two years. I don't remember Cleveland. We moved to New Jersey when I was two. My younger sister was one. We were just a year apart. My dad got a job at Johnson & Johnson, where he worked his whole life. My parents are Mid-Westerners to the core, were Mid-Westerners to the core. My mom grew up in Green Bay, Wisconsin. My dad grew up in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, way up there near Lake Superior. So, in some ways, they adapted to the East Coast, and in other ways they didn't. Very Catholic family, but not in a—there's nasty Catholic and then there's Catholic that... But, still that made a huge difference in the way I grew up, 'cause they, you know, they were very Catholic, and we were raised that way. They, let's see I don't... I was not an athlete [laughs]. I was the exact opposite. I had—I had been born cross-eyed and, you know, had to have surgery to correct that when I was pretty young and so, I don't have good depth perception. I'm a little uncoordinated. I don't, yeah, so, it's affected my vision. So, I use that as an excuse, but I'm, you know, and there was even less opportunity for that when I was growing up than when Lynn was. You know, when she talks about her childhood and the encouragement for all the kids in the neighborhood to be so... They had leagues and stuff for everybody...

LD: We didn't have leagues at all...

MMH: Well, you had the guy that was doing some of that stuff, the swimming?

LD: No, it wasn't. Well, it was just like the Red Cross and then there were races and that...

MMH: Okay, but, you know, it was, I mean, I grew up in the 50's and the early 60's and went to Catholic elementary school at the worst time to go to Catholic elementary school, so all the horror stories you hear about Catholic elementary schools were true. Yeah, it was, you know, all Catholic parents were expected to send their kids. There were 60 kids in my first-grade class, with one nun, Attila the Nun.

BL: Wow [laughs]...

MMH: But, school, academics was really valued in my family. My—my dad was all but dissertation and he was the only one in his family that, about seven, that went to college. So, I mean, he really jumped on from, you know, most—most of the time, you go a little bit of the time, he went from, everybody else had a high school education and he went all—almost to his PhD. He quit during the war. My mom had a couple of years of college. Again, first in their families to go to school. So, it was very important to them, my sister and I were very en—encouraged academically, but, you know, so that—that was where I was, I was good at school, I was good at school. Like—like Lynn described I—I—I certainly had no—there was... Awareness of sexuality was not something that was encouraged in Catholic school and families...

BB: Yeah...

MMH: You know, just didn't happen, except in very hostile ways, you know. You got the message it was very bad. The kids were getting beaten up all the time in school for wearing sleeveless shirts or...

LD: She means literally...

MMH: Literally beaten up...

LD: Beaten...

MMH: And, so, I—I really retreated, I lived in my head, basically and, you know, I went through school that way. And I had no awareness all the way through college, into college, that it was even possible for a woman to be gay. That just, you know... We heard—we heard faggot, we heard queer, but those were male words. I don't remember hearing anything about anything that would've referred to women being gay, you know, the emphasis for girls was always about making sure you didn't get pregnant, you know, and all of that. In—in high school—my high school experience was better, I did go to a small Catholic high school. It was a parish high school, Ballasta, then, the last that really they had in New Jersey, at that point, 'cause they were all moving to these big regional schools. And I had a really good experience in high school with, you know, the teachers and stuff and was active, but always felt really different. I wasn't feeling what other kids, my friends and stuff seemed to be feeling. I started dating the guy I eventually married in high school, but I—I think for most of our relationship, it was really, you know, more he—he was the

active pursuer kind of thing, and I sort of went along with it. I actually, the year after high school, I actually was in the convent for a year. This—this was a Catholic family, you know, and that...

BL: Yeah, yeah...

BB: Yeah...

MMH: And that was an interesting experience I tell...

BB: Yeah...

MMH: Probably tell fewer people that I was in the convent for a year than I tell that I'm gay, because, but, you know, but it was a—it was a really interesting experience for me and I...

BB: Did you consider being a nun?

MMH: Oh yeah, I mean, I was—I was there. I was en route for that, but after about a year it, you know, I was—I was never—I never fit in. I was always a little... I was always pushing back. I had a reputation for not being bad, but being like sort of alw... I was—I was just always pushing back—I never was—I was never very submissive and I had a little trouble with obedience... So, it was kind of a struggle, and then about a year into it, sort of, I—it was like a decision-making point or something and I said, you know, "not only isn't this right for me, but I don't even think I believe in God," you know...

BB: Yeah...

MMH: [laughs] It was like, really, I don't think I believe in God...

LD: Good thing you found that out...

MMH: And so that would've been, I graduated from high school in '67, so that was then and a lot of things were—were changing in the world at that point...

BB: Yeah...

MMH: They really were. I left. I worked for a semester, 'cause I left in the middle of the semester and went back to—and then went to school in New Jersey, college. I had planned in high school to be a Math major. I was gonna go into Math and Computer. I actually had a scholarship to University of Dayton, which was a premier program in that. But the—the order that I had, you know, gone to that was a group that worked with—they didn't—they weren't a teaching order or whatever. They worked with delinquent girls and because—and we took some classes that year, we weren't full-time students, but they had some people from one of the colleges, came in and took... But because they were grooming me to be a math teacher in the school, they didn't put me in the intro math classes and stuff. So, they put me in Psych classes, which, usually the second year people took. And I went, "Oh, well I like this stuff." So, when I

went back to school, I sort of shifted directions. I thought, at first, I was going into Special Ed. I took my first education class and said, “No, I’m not going into Special Ed.” So, I went into Psychology. College was hard for me. I did not have the typical college experience. I was behind. I—that first year after high school, I’d only had the equivalent of a semester’s worth of courses, and then I missed the first semester of that next year. So, I was a full year behind, and I was determined to make it up. So, I took three years’ worth of courses in two years and so, I was taking crazy heavy loads...

BL: And what college was this? College?

MMH: Oh, it was Trenton State College in New Jersey. It’s not called that anymore. It’s down near Trenton, obviously. They’ve expanded. The years I were there was the first years it wasn’t a teacher’s college. It—it had expanded to become a liberal arts college. I felt like I got a really good education. There were a lot of really good women faculty, PhD’s, psychology people, whose husbands worked at Princeton, and the Philadelphia schools, and Rutgers. And the women ended teaching at Trenton State. They were great. They were really, they were good teachers...

BB: Yeah...

MMH: I felt like I got a good education, but I—that was pretty much all I was doing, I had a couple of good friends but that... And I started dating John again. As soon as I left, you know, he sort of came back in the picture. He was actually going to school in Ohio and, so it was—it was—those were tough years for me, being just kind of isolated, sort of out of it. And again, I went along with John’s agenda on a lot of stuff and I think back on that. I—I think—I thought—I felt like there was something wrong with me that I wasn’t feeling what everybody else was and, you know, and so, that I just sort of fell into that pattern of what was expected. It was interesting though. It was in college, I think it was my senior year, they had some kind of an—a faculty—oh I remember it was Psi Chi was the Psychology Honors Society or whatever...

LD: Oh yeah...

MMH: And so, I was put up for induction into the Honors Society and they had this faculty party for the students and stuff. And there was a faculty member there. Of course, this was—I graduated from college in ’71, so this is the beginning of all the feminist stuff. I was into it. I was right there. There was—so there was like, there was one of the faculty members, a woman, was teaching a class on gender, you know. ‘Sex Roles’ it was called then. You know, and I thought the class was great. I liked her a lot. And when we were at this party I was there with a couple of my friends and I had been talking to this woman, this faculty member for a while, you know. I was uncomfortable in a lot of social situations so I was just having this great conversation with her, and when I came back over to talk to some of my friends they warned me that I shouldn’t go spend time by myself with this woman, and I was *pissed*. It was like, “What the hell are you talking about? She’s the only interesting faculty member here [gobbles].” Got real defensive about it.

BB: Yeah.

MMH: But I thought about that afterwards and thought, “Hm. That’s interesting.” But that was really, you know, where I was. And then--

BB: Was that because she’s a lesbian?

MMH: Yeah.

BL: Oh.

MMH: Yeah. They were warning me off. And, you know, and it was funny because, you know, it was early enough in the Women’s Movement that there really wasn’t some of the early lesbian stuff that started coming out wasn’t really there yet.

BB: Mmhm.

MMH: But it came— it was right—we were right on the cusp. And I think if I had been at a larger—if I had been in a city or I had been in somewhere besides, you know, sort of this little college in New Jersey, I think I might have been introduced to that in college. But—but I graduated and got married. I mean literally two weeks later. John and I—I had not wanted to get married. My plan—John had already moved to Pittsburgh. He was a student at the University of Pittsburgh. I was going to be going to Duquesne. They have a really—a very different psychology program. I was going into clinical psych. I had already been accepted. I did not want to get married. I just wanted to move—we were—John and I were going live together, and my parents just came unglued.

BL: Very Catholic [laughter].

MMH: Oh, this was. My mom was telling me my dad was going to have a heart attack and stuff and I said, “Fine. I’ll get married but I’m not-” I was taking 21 courses [credits] a semester.

BB: Yeah.

MMH: I said, “I’m not doing any—you plan it, I’ll show up!” [laughter]

LD: She doesn’t remember.

MMH: And I don’t remember my wedding.

BB: You don’t?

MMH: I have fragments of little pieces, but I couldn’t even tell you where the reception. I mean, I know where the reception was. I do not remember being there.

BB: You have no photographs? [laughs]

MMH: There are some photographs, yeah. But, so I know but I look at them and it's like...

BL: You have no recollection.

MMH: I don't remember it [laughs]. Which I think is... interesting.

BB: Yeah it is.

MMH: So I moved to Pittsburgh and became pretty depressed. You know, there—I—I was in a program in clinical—in psych, where there were prob—it was probably 75% males, 25% female. There was only one woman on the faculty. I remember standing in line to register for courses—we used to have to do that, because it wasn't online—next to another first year student who was coming from New York City—I loved her—Mona, New York City Jew. And she was reading *The Second Sex* and had just finished it, Simone de Beauvier's book.

BB: Yeah.

MMH: She said, "Oh, I think you'd like this" [laughter]. So I became one angry feminist. I was. I was challenging the faculty all the time. They thought... I mean, it was bad. They- they essentially decided I didn't have the temperament to be a clinical psychologist [laughs].

LD: She's really nice.

MMH: But I was pissed. And I—you don't think I really understood all of why I was pissed. We had a bunch of friends that John had already made when he was there. You know, they were, a lot of them were, you know, sort of the hippie stuff. A bunch of them lived in a commune in Shadyside. They had a farm outside the town. You know, we—where were—it was a great group of people in lots of ways, but everybody was stoned. Especially my ex-husband, who, you know. And I felt really—marijuana didn't do things for me. I was paranoid as hell the first couple times I tried it [phone rings]. So I always felt like an outsider ...

LD: Excuse me.

MMH: Not really fitting in.

LD: Mary—sorry.

MMH: Can you get by? And, you know, and I just didn't understand why. I actually met a couple of gay women through a good friend of ours who was actually sharing a house with John and I. I—but you sort of didn't put—I was reading *Rubyfruit Jungle*. Jill- Jill... What was her name?

BL: What, the author?

MMH: The book author. *Lesbian Nation*. She was the more radical.

LD: Jill...

MMH: Jill... I can't remember her name.

LD: I can't remember either.

BL: Of the *Rubyfruit Jungle*?

MMH: No. *Rubyfruit Jungle* was-

BL: You want the author of that?

MMH: No, I don't care about that. But *Lesbian Nation* was a little more feminist separatist, lesbian separatist stuff. So I was sort of becoming aware of that. I ended up in a consciousness raising group that was a really good group. All straight women, but a good group. So it was really—it was like my whole world was exploding, and I was seeing things in ways I had just never had before. I--

BL: Jill Johnston?

MMH: Yeah. Jill Johnston, yeah. And... but John and I—you know, I—was just not—I considered him my—a good friend, you know, my best friend, kind of thing, but I knew there was something wrong. I was just not where I should be here. And then—so I did a two year Master's there.

LD: Your consciousness raising group.

MMH: Yeah, I had that consciousness raising group then, but then I—after the Master's degree I had planned to go on for the PhD, but, you know, something, you know. They weren't happy with me. I wasn't real happy with them, and so I took the year off and John and I had our first child, Rachel. And I was at home. So I was at home. He finished his PhD. He started working there. And then, while I got pregnant—see Rachel and Sheila are two years apart. So, I got pregnant with Sheila, and I was just pregnant with Sheila when a good friend of mine who I'd known in grad school, she was actually the wife of one of the students, decided that she wanted to start another consciousness raising group. She didn't know anybody else who had been in one. She didn't know anybody else who had actually been in one before, so she asked me if I would join. So I knew her. I knew one of the other women who was also the wife of a student that I had known. But, so I said sure, and it turns out that one of the women that she asked to join the group was actually Cindy's sister's friend from college. She didn't nearly know her very well, but she was living at Pittsburgh, Janet Jones, who turned out to be gay. And so I'm going to this group. I, you know, I had just found out I was pregnant with Sheila and I'm—we're meeting once a week, and it's an *awful* group. Awful group. All they do it sit around and bitch about their husbands, and I'm like [snores] "Why am I here?" Janet was open that she was gay so this was going on for maybe six months—five or six months, and one day Janet stands up at the meeting and says,

“This is ridiculous. You know, women, there is an alternative.” And she walked out [laughter]. And I’m like seven months pregnant—seven or eight months pregnant. I’d just—I’ve applied to graduate school, and I know I’m coming up to grad school here the following fall. Janet walks out and it occurs to me why I’ve been going to this group for five months.

BL: Janet?

MMH: Yeah. I mean it just—it was so weird! It was like this lightbulb went out, and I’ve always said that I think it was no coincidence that I met Janet- that the lightbulb went off when I was pregnant because I had lived in my head all of my life, pretty much, and you can’t live in your head when you’re pregnant. You just can’t. You live, you’re in your body. You live in your body, and it was, I think it was never—so, Janet walks out and I go, “Oh shit.”

LD: Okay.

MMH: And it was very clear to me. It was like I never questioned it after that. It was like, “Oh! That’s what it ... ” and I could look back then and say, “Oh. That friend.” You know? That I felt so ... and I was careful with friends. You know, I had a sense—I don’t know if I had a sense I was feeling something I shouldn’t feel, but I was, I was also so reserved with people, you know? I kept myself sort of closed off and... I showed up on her doorstep next week. You know, picture this eight months pregnant. So that was actually my first relationship. And obviously it wasn’t going anywhere. I did tell John, even before I showed up on Janet’s doorstep and it made sense to him. At that point it just made sense to him, “Oh, okay.” But, I’ve now got a two-year old and a brand new infant, and I’m moving to State College for grad—for my PhD. You know, it was like, “What the fuck?” You know? [Laughter] I didn’t know what to do with this, really, when I came up here. And the first year was really hard. Sheila didn’t sleep, you know, so I didn’t sleep. I was nursing her, you know, I was—for whatever reason my advisor decided because I already had my Master’s, I ought to be able to take an extra course my first semester. What was this man thinking?

LD: This man was?

MMH: Graham Spanier. We all know who Graham Spanier is.

LD: [Laughs]

BB: So where was John?

MMH: Huh?

BB: He stayed in Pittsburgh? You weren’t divorced?

MMH: No, no. John and I moved to State College. We were still married, and his thing was, you know, we could figure this out. We didn’t have to get divorced, that, you know, I could—yeah. It didn’t make a whole lot of sense to me and... But I did start meeting some people. Hopps—you

know, part of the problem was I didn't fit very well. I mean, I had two small children. At that point, when people went out they went out, they left to go out at 10 o'clock at night.

LD: [Laughs]

MMH: You know? I wasn't doing that. So, you know, I... it was awkward. I met some people sort of through Hopps, I met some people at that course, I met Lynn there. And Lynn and I, you know, we—when we met, Lynn asked me to a party at her house once, you know, so I did that. We'd occasionally have, you know, coffee or tea after a class.

LD: After class, yeah.

MMH: But, you know, we didn't really start seeing each other-

LD: I—I was interested in Mary but there was a lot of baggage there, do you know what I mean?

BB: [Laughs].

LD: So I wasn't in the fast lane here, so.

MMH: And I ... you know, and I didn't have time that first year. I didn't have emotional space or physical energy to think of anything. The second year, however, Sheila started sleeping, and things started easing up. That's when things became—it became more of a front and center issue, something that I needed to deal with. John and I struggled with that. It was like—I started actually going out with Lynn.

LD: She doesn't remember this but I took her to the movies and we saw the movie *Rocky*.

MMH: [Laughs] Yeah.

LD: [Laughs] It was, you know, it was supposed to be a fine, fine, fine, fine movie and I have no interest in boxing but that's all there was, so poor Mary.

MMH: Yeah, we saw a movie on campus, yeah. So it was like, I knew this was who I was, I just didn't know what that was going to mean, you know? And it didn't, of course, this was a very different experience than Lynn did because it was much more awareness. The Women's Movement stuff, the lesbians in the Women's Movement were not accepted then. You remember the whole Lavender Menace thing with what's her face? But-

BL: [??] Maybe Gloria Steinem.

MMH: What was her name? No, not Gloria. The woman that wrote *Feminist Mystique* [Betty Friedan]

BL: Oh...

MMH: Yeah. So there was a real split in the Women's Movement, you know, about how to deal- and you know, there were, like at the women's resource center they're doing all this domestic violence stuff and rape stuff and the—it was a lot of the women that were running these shelters and doing the work were lesbian, but the, you know, as the ... For instance as the Women's Center became more established and started to take some organizational form, it wasn't just volunteer, all of a sudden they're not so comfortable with the women. You know, there was always this, you know, tension. But for me it was more a struggle of, okay, what does this mean for me if I've got these two children and a family? You know, at that point I was pretty committed to—but when Lynn and I started going out, John's sort of intellectual thing that we could... You know, it was finally—you know his idea is that I would go and have sex with people but my emotional thing would... And I'm not bisexual.

BB: Yeah.

MMH: But my emotional thing would be at home and I--

BL: Typical male. That's a typical male.

MMH: Yeah, that's what I mean. Men can do that. You know, it didn't work. I don't function that way and so it became pretty clear right away that he was not dealing with this at all well, and I was becoming really depressed.

LD: Yeah.

MMH: And it was—and I finally decided, you know, this was not- this was not only not good for me, but the kids had this massively depressed mother. And so we decided to split. And Lynn and I had actually been going out when John and I made this decision. I—I stopped seeing you for a couple of months while we figured out what was going on. I actually moved to a house just down the street from John and we had a shared custody arrangement. The kids were three and five. The kids never had... I mean they seemed to figure out—I mean they—when they were meeting other women that I knew, they never had any trouble telling who was a couple and who wasn't. It was like, you know, they just knew. It made sense to them. And especially Sheila, the younger one, who was... Well, Sheila's gay but, you know, she was a little Amazon, you know, and she was, you know, she had, she had this figured out. Then I—when I—when John and I—when I moved out, one of the first things I did with Lynn was she took me to the Women's Music Festival in Michigan. Oh my God, talk about culture shock. Do you know about the Women's Music Festival?

BB: No, no I don't.

MMH: No? It was like, "Oh my God!"

LD: It's wonderful.

MMH: It was like hundreds of women, you know, camping out in the woods, with all this wonderful music, and half of the women are half or not at all dressed except for their boots, you know. It was like, “Oh my God.” But it was like ... [laughs]. So the next year we went, we took the kids.

LD: Took the kids [simultaneously].

MMH: The kids actually went twice. They had a wonderful time. And, you know, it—but I was—I was still working on my PhD.

LD: Yeah, I—I had after I graduated ...

MMH: With your master’s.

LD: With my master’s. I had been accepted into the doctoral program, but I realized that I really didn’t want to—I didn’t want to work that hard [laughs].

BB: Yeah.

LD: And ...

MMH: And go into debt that much.

LD: And then I figured out that if I did end up teaching at some college some place, I would be retirement age before I paid off my debt, you know? Because there were no programs for returning students then, you know the whole thing. So I had to decide what I was going to do with my life, and I was becoming more and more attached to Mary and Sheila and Rachel, so practical things had to come into play. I started—I made furniture. The table here, for instance. But I was in the business for about five years.

MMH: [speaking over her] Yeah. The—the cherry cabinet and...

BB: Wow. I’m impressed.

MMH: Most of this is Lynn’s.

LD: So I did that and...

BB: It’s great.

LD: Then—then let’s see. I cut off my finger.

MMH: [Laughs] Yeah. She worked at a local woodworkers place, you know, furniture making place for a year under a special program in the Carter administration was trying to encourage women to go into non-traditional fields.

LD: Yes. So that was a good deal.

MMH: And then she was working on her own, so at her house- we weren't living together, so at her house she- her dining room had her table saw and everything else, and she was making furniture for people. And ...

LD: That was fun, actually.

MMH: Yeah. So, one day I get this phone call. Oh God. I'd just come back from the grocery store with the kids. You know, I'm still in grad school and stuff, so I'm unpacking the kids and the groceries and the phone rings and it's Lynn. And I can't reproduce the voice. I used to use it as an example with clients of how emotions get detached when you have a trauma. You just cut them off. Because it was this like absolutely flat voice that said, "Mary, I had an accident with the table saw. I've called the ambulance. They'll be here in a minute. I'm going to the hospital." Click.

[All laugh].

MMH: I threw the kids back in the car, and we actually met the ambulance. So Lynn had put her left hand through the table saw and taken off two fingers.

LD: The table saw did it [laughter].

BB: The table saw did it.

MMH: Jumped up and bit your fingers.

BB: You got to watch those, they can be nasty.

LD: Yeah.

MMH: And so she very calmly picked up her fingers, wrapped her hand up in a...

LD: Towel.

MMH: Kitchen towel.

LD: Yeah.

MMH: Called 911 and went and sat on the front stoop and waited for them

LD: One of the ambulance people was a lesbian friend and I thought, "Oh, thank you that helps, too." [Laughter]

MMH: So, you know, it was like... [Laughs] It was interesting. So she was doing that and then you couldn't. I mean-

LD: I couldn't make a living.

MMH: And she didn't have any health insurance.

LD: I didn't have any health insurance. So, I decided State College Area School District bus drivers had an ad and that was for me. I tried that out, and the hours were good-

MMH: They give insurance.

LD: Wonderful insurance. The hours were good. You'd have a morning and an afternoon, and then you'd have the time in between where I could make furniture still. So I was doing both those things.

MMH: Yeah.

LD: Mary is struggling, and I'm just thinking of finances at this time.

MMH: Oh, okay, yeah. I was teaching--

LD: That was tough--

MMH: You know, once I had gotten to finish my comps and stuff and was working on my dissertation, you know, I've got two little kids, and I was teaching continuing ed. classes for Penn State. Most of them ended up being somewhere—Aloona, or somewhere else. And you never knew if you were going to have a class because they would cancel. If it didn't fill, they'd cancel it, and you just didn't have a job. And so every single semester it was like, "Am I going to have enough to pay the mortgage?" You know, I had student loans and stuff, too, but it was a tough time. But I was almost obsessively committed to make—I was not... Lynn and I were not going... I was not going to commit to a relationship until I knew I could support myself. And so it really got a little crazy. I mean, Lynn would watch the kids sometimes when I was working and stuff. I insisted on paying her, because I would have had to pay someone else and-

LD: Mary had not been on her own ever.

MMH: No.

LD: Ever. You know, and—

MMH: And I think that--

LD: I stepped back and I said, "This is a good thing for her to be on her own."

MMH: Yeah, it was really important. I mean, I, you know, I went from college to marriage. Now, looking back on it, I think I really underestimated how much. But, you know, there's something about the traditional structure for women, you know. That they can be running the house, they can be managing the stuff, they can actually be making a fair amount of the money, and still you don't have, you know, you're seen as dependent. And you are. You know, when I finished my PhD and got a job at Penn State, I applied for a credit card and I couldn't get one.

BB: Oh, yeah.

MMH: I could not fucking get a credit card.

LD: I couldn't buy my house--

MMH: Without her parents signing.

LD: Well, someone cosigning and I said, "You mean my 70 year old parents can be a cosigner?" And they said, "Yes."

MMH: Yeah, so I mean there was a lot--

LD: I didn't ask my parents. I had a friend do it, but...

MMH: But still. You know, she had been teaching for, you know ...

BB: Yeah.

BL: That's ridiculous.

BB: Yeah it is.

LD: It is crazy, isn't it?

MMH: Yeah. And so I managed to talk some company into giving me a credit card with a \$500 credit limit, you know, which I paid off every month, but you know, I didn't have any credit. All of the credit had been John's. You know, it was like ridiculous. And so it- it really affects you. I mean, I could—I have a younger brother who's six years younger than I am. So it was my sister and I, who were like Irish twins, we were just a year apart. And then my brother came along, and he was the son. My mom was kind of a tomboy, too. They loved sports and stuff. My dad was pretty disengaged in a lot of ways, but they had the boy. They had the boy. And the boy turned out to be not what they'd expected. My brother is gay. And ...

[All laugh].

BB: It runs in the family, it's like ...

LD: It had to happen.

MMH: It had to happen, you know, and he was not what they wanted and stuff, and he was—he's an artist, really.

BB: They couldn't trade him in, huh? That's right.

[All laugh]

MMH: So, you know, even in first grade he would get his little arithmetic tests, and he'd be drawing little pictures on it, and when it was time to hand in there was no answers on the arithmetic problems, it was like little pictures. They, my parents, were tearing their hair out. And I remember at some point I was in high school, you know, this—both my sister and I were these like high achievers and, you know, my brother was driving them nuts, and my dad was going on about how upset he was about my brother and I remember saying to him, “Well, gee, Dad. Laurie and I are really good at--” and he says, “Yeah, but you're girls. You won't have to support yourself.” And he didn't mean it in a—I mean, he valued what we did. He always encouraged, but you won't have to support yourself. And so, that's how we grew up, you know, it was like, what you did was sort of extra. It wasn't that he didn't expect us to work or have a good—a job or something, it was more that it didn't count the same way. And once I was on my own, once John and I split that sort of hit me full force. I have these two children. I can't—you know, I thought I could count on John, but I didn't really, I think even then I knew I couldn't really. You know, I—I'm it. You know? The buck stops here, and I have to be able to do this. And I think that really affected the way I reacted to the relationship. I mean, at some point we'd been together for over a year, and you asked—this is a joke, kind of. Lynn asked if she could leave some things—because most of the time that the kids were with me she was at our house, you know, and she asked if she could leave some things at the house. And I stopped and said, “Yeah, you can keep a toothbrush here if you hide it.” So it doesn't look like you're living here. And it wasn't that I was worried about other people. It was ...

LD: It was her experience with co-habitation.

MMH: I'm on my own.

LD: Yeah.

MMH: I'm on my own. And so when I finished the degree and I got a job at Penn State—a temporary position came up at the Altoona campus teaching, and I knew, “Okay. I'm good now.” That's when Lynn and I moved in together. You know?

[All laugh]

LD: We moved in October thirty—Halloween.

MMH: Halloween.

LD: 1981.

MMH: Yeah.

LD: I was 50 years old that October.

BB: And that was this house? Or somewhere else?

LD: No.

MMH: No. We were in town. This little—it was a little house that... When John and I split, we bought—together we bought another house. It was actually just down the street, and we had a shared custody thing. So it was this little tiny house. It was like a living room and kitchen, and then two really small bedrooms and a one sort of medium sized bedroom and all slab, so there was no basement, there was no attic. You know, the furnace was in the hallway outside the—it was this little tiny house. And I actually rented one of the bedrooms out to a grad student because I needed the money for a couple of years.

LD: Right. Fortunately, he was a nice guy.

MMH: The first one was funny. I put up a thing in my department plug board saying I had a room. And then I went over to Hopps and put up a thing there. And this new incoming grad student named Fred Blow. What a name for a gay guy.

[All laugh]

MMH: He saw it in the thing and he said, “Yeah, I don’t think I want to have somebody in my department.” And then he went over to Hopps and he saw the same ad and he called me. So Fred lived in one of these little rooms. It worked out great. He was the youngest of eight and all sisters until him.

BB: Yeah.

MMH: So he’d lived with eight women. He--

LD: He had no problems with us.

MMH: He went—he basically went to school sometime in the mid-afternoon and stayed at the computer center until, 1 and then came in and slept all morning.

BB: Yeah.

LD: We barely saw him.

MMH: We- I might as well not-

BB: That would be great. That’s a great--

LD: Yeah.

MMH: Yeah. He was fine. And then the next year I rented it to another- to a woman. And then Lynn moved in the following—that year—the next year. And so we--

LD: I kept my house for two or three years after that and just rented out the house with lesbians, pretty much.

MMH: So it was quite, I mean Lynn had never lived with anybody in her life. And I had never lived alone. I mean, think about this. I had shared a room with my sister, you know, I'd never had my own space. And I had two children that, you know, basically followed me to the bathroom, you know. And so I—it was... I'm still amazed—

LD: I am, too.

MMH: That we managed this because it was tough. I was very possessive of the time I have with the kids. When they were at their dad's, you know, I just crashed.

LD: And when she wasn't- yes, when they were at their dad's you did crash. And that was hard for me, because of her. But one of the things before we committed to each other—I—my sisters have many children, and I've watched them a lot and how they brought up their children. And one of the nicest things about watching Mary with the kids was what a terrific mothers she was. And I was well aware that when push came to shove, the kids were first. For several years. For many years.

MMH: Many years.

BB: Yeah.

MMH: Yeah.

LD: And—but ...

MMH: And it was tough.

LD: That wasn't easy, but I knew it. And I think the fact that I was older made that possible. I don't think—you know what I mean?

MMH: Mmhm.

LD: Yeah.

BB: Yeah, I can see that.

MMH: But it was scary.

LD: Just a little more life experience so.

MMH: When John and I first split, you know, he was, I mean he'd obviously known for a couple of years I was gay, but, you know, he may... One time when we were sitting and trying to talk about what kind of arrangement we were going to do with the kids, he brought up something

about he wasn't sure he was comfortable with, and I just lost it on him. But the fear there was out—out of sight. I mean, I remember calling—during those couple of months I remember calling Lambda Legal and asking like “What are—what kind of right do I have?” And they said “None.” They told—their advice was “Give up everything including support, you know, property, if you can get him to sign on to even to joint custody.” And it didn't come quite to that but the fear that I lived with. And I had these nightmares that lasted for years, and I can still remember them.

BB: What? That he could go after your children because you're a lesbian and take them away?

MMH: Yeah.

LD: Yup, yup.

MMH: Yeah. And he had been an involved father. I mean, he, you know, he—never mind. We don't want to go there. But, he got lots of credit for changing a diaper, you know. No one ever patted me on the back for changing a diaper. But, this nightmare that I had, and it was—it was just awful, and it was always the same. That somebody drove up to the—was—had driven up to the house where John and I were living and had put the kids in the backseat of the car [voice breaks] and were driving away and the kid were banging on the back window and I couldn't do anything and... Shit, you know, I still can't talk about it. I was scared all the time. But—but I couldn't do anything with it. You just had to shut it off, you know. I—John especially in the first years never made any overt threats or anything, but you felt like you were totally dependent on his benevolence. And I was.

BB: Yeah.

MMH: I was. And it had a real effect I think, to manage that kind of fear. I think I became... I shut down in some ways, looking back on it. You know, the stress of—aand you know, I was—It was scary. It was just scary. And I think about all the stuff—changes that have happened over the years and I look back—it wasn't that long ago. I mean, my kids are in their forties, okay, but still.

BB: Yeah.

MMH: It's like—it was terrifying. Just terrifying. And there was nothing I could do about it.

LD: And that—and we were the only couple we knew...

MMH: Who had kids.

LD: Who had kids. We had no role model. Nobody had a role model at that time of a situation like this, so you're kind of just winging it, in a way. And--

MMH: And we became—the kids became the TLC kids. I mean they came to everything. They slept on the pile of coats, you know, at the parties. You know, they--

BL: So they kind of grew up and were very accepting?

MMH: Oh, yeah. That was not an issue.

BB: I can just see that fear you would have.

MMH: It was just the way it was, you know. And—but, you know, but it also meant they were aware of the, the issues in the world. I mean, again, Sheila, my little Amazon, you know--both kids are extremely bright, but Sheila was like reading *Newsweek* when she was in kindergarten or first grade, I mean it was ridiculous. She was reading *Ms. Magazine* in second grade. I mean, she was right there. But it meant she was really aware of stuff. And—but you couldn't, you know I so—trying to hard not to communicate that fear to them that it meant that it didn't get talked about. I regret that now, because when things went bad with their dad, and they did, he sort of gradually disengaged in a way and it became harder and harder to manage this. And then they went bad in a big way when they were in high school that, you know. I remember Sheila telling me that John would make these comments, you know, about my being gay or about something, you know, and, you know I said, "Well, Sheila why didn't you tell me?" And she said, "Because I knew you'd go--" you know, he was doing other stuff, too. It wasn't just that. I said, "I knew you'd go argue with him. And I was afraid if you made him mad, you'd lose custody." You know, and...

BB: Yeah.

MMH: You know, I think about an eight-year old, a ten-year old having to think about that stuff...

BB: Yeah, yeah.

MMH: That's—that's not good.

BB: No.

MMH: And there were—there were a couple of incidents where it got kind of—it got kind of scary, you know. Teachers would find out that I was gay or something and I know, you know, it made a difference in the way the kids were treated in different ways.

LD: We had to try to find schools where our lives would be accepted or less.

MMH: The kids went to the Friends school, you know, the Quaker school in town, for their first-

BB: Yeah.

MMH: But then they were in public school from third to--third and fifth grade through high school. And for the most part those were positive experiences, but I knew it affected them. That my parents—when my parents found out—I told my parents why John and I were splitting because he... My parents knew his parents, I mean we'd gone to high school together. They were friends, and he was going to tell his parents because they couldn't figure out why we were splitting up, and he was going—there was no way I was going to let his parents tell mine. And, you know, my parents were pretty upset, and—but, you know things were sort of...under the radar for a while. But then when Lynn moved in with me they found out that she was living here and for a couple of years they didn't come visit. It didn't get acknowledged. My parents are, you know, they're conflict-avoidant, and it didn't acknowledge, but that was why it was happening and it—and it was hard on the kids. They—Rachel's birthday is in March and Sheila's is in June, so they often came out for Sheila's birthday but travelling in March was always kind of iffy, and so they had promised Rachel that they would come out for her birthday that following March, and Lynn moved in in October, and they found out at Christmas that she was living here, and they cancelled that. They didn't come. You know, and you try to explain to your kids why their grandparents aren't coming, you know, so it—it was tough. But, you know, it is the way the world is, too. And, you know, I'm not sure you're doing kids any service by sort of pretending that bad things don't happen. And my parents came around, finally.

LD: Yeah, they did.

MMH: They really did.

LD: I—I was less worried about that than Mary because...

MMH: Yeah.

LD: I—they were nice. They're good ...

MMH: They were nice people.

LD: They're good people.

MMH: [Simultaneously] They're good people.

LD: And their heart's in the right place and...

MMH: And eventually, yeah, they slowly sort of came around, and it just didn't make a difference at the end.

LD: Right.

MMH: And, you know, they—my brother had never come out. God damn, Jim. You know, they had been worried about him being gay, without acknowledging that even to themselves since he was probably four. And then—but he never came out, you know.

BB: Never?

MMH: Never. And he was not much support. But my brother, well, you know, his—his life was very—he lived in Manhattan after college. He didn't finish college. He quit six credits short of his bachelor's degree in Fine Arts. Can you imagine the effect on my parents?

BB: Yeah.

MMH: But—and he—he was using a lot, too. He was using, you know, drugs.

LD: Drugs, yeah.

MMH: And drinking a lot, you know. He's sober now.

LD: Yeah. And we're happy. He probably wouldn't be alive.

MMH: Yeah. He's—he's damn lucky.

LD: So he's okay.

MMH: He was living in Manhattan all through the AIDS thing.

BB: Oh.

BL: Yeah.

MMH: You know, and using.

BB: Wow.

MMH: And partying. And stuff, and he dodged a real bullet and he knows it. But, you know, we were not close and so it was ... it was tough, but it—you know it sort of worked out.

LD: So, we have a family now. We just came back from Maine after visiting Sheila and her wife, Kim. And we have—it's just wonderful.

MMH: The other daughter lives in Boston.

LD: Right.

MMH: And is Catholic.

BB: Is she married?

MMH: No, she's not. But she's very Catholic. But she's still okay. I think Rachel, Rachel became interested in religion in high school kind of thing.

LD: Yeah.

MMH: And, you know, I always said-

LD: Except she was a real science/math person, too. She was really good at it.

MMH: Yeah. Yeah.

LD: But-

MMH: Yeah. So, you know, but that was never an issue for Rachel either. And Lynn's family gradually, you know... It was uncomfortable for me, especially Lynn's oldest sister is—was eleven ...

LD: She's more closer to your mother.

MMH: Yeah. She was eleven years older than Lynn, and her kids were from a little older than me to a little bit younger; you know, she had ten kids. There was never pressure on Lynn to reproduce.

LD: Right [laughs].

MMH: You know? And so, when I would go visit, you know, they had this huge family that's like with all these grandkids and stuff and- and everybody sort of congregates at Janet's house because it's right on the water on the Long Island Sound and East Haven and stuff. But it was like how do you exp-- it was like I could tell people were trying to figure out, "Well, how does this person with her two kids fit in?" And they sort of figured—and then after a couple of years of this, and Janet's husband gave off some pretty hostile vibes.

LD: Yeah, okay. Right.

MMH: And Janet is very traditional, Catholic kind of—she was not comfortable either, I could tell. And ...

LD: But—but she would, I knew she would--

MMH: She was friendly. I mean, she was not unkind.

LD: Yeah.

MMH: But it was still—and finally after a couple of years ... and, you know, we'd been together more than a couple of years at that point--

LD: Yeah.

MMH: You know, I just sort of started talking about things a little bit.

LD: Right, yeah.

MMH: And, you know, and they--

LD: And then once when I was sitting with several of my nieces on the—oon the stairs at Janet's house, I told them I was gay. I can't remember how it came up, exactly. But I told them. Oh, they were asking about what my life was like growing up with my—t heir mother, basically, and I said, "Well it was like being in a different generation. She was eleven years older." And they said, "Oh, yeah that's like me and one of the brothers or sisters who are about fifteen years younger than them." And, and then I told them out of that conversation that evolved and some of them—I don't know how they felt. They've never treated me any differently.

MMH: No. I felt uncomfortable with Anne for a little while. Anne was not—I could tell Anne was not comfortable—one of your nieces.

LD: Mmhmm.

MMH: But, for the most part, it was—it just—and it just became not an issue. And they've been really—t hey've been very supportive.

LD: Right. We go to all their weddings.

MMH: God. Millions of weddings.

BB: Yeah.

MMH: Like, if you think about this, you know, there were sixteen kids all together. Nieces and nephews between the two families, and then a whole bunch of grandkids who are now in waves getting married.

BB: Yeah.

MMH: But--

LD: You know, I'm just thinking—it's kind of jumping around—the organization, the LGBTA on campus has become much, much, much, much, much stronger. I mean, it's—it's—it's a big deal.

MMH: Yeah, they've got a center and all kinds of stuff.

LD: They're very—lots of stuff going on, yeah.

BB: At Penn State?

MMH: Penn State, yeah.

LD: Really good. Yeah. Really good. Which was not—I mean, Hopps served for that purpose.

MMH: To some extent, yeah.

LD: Yeah. So that worked.

MMH: But, you know it's--Lynn and I, when we—the kids were—let's see. I had been teaching at Penn State. I taught at Penn State for about six years, and then I sort of shifted gears. I wasn't going to get tenure, it was clear, and so I shifted gears. I had all the necessary things for getting licensed as a psychologist, so I, you know, did this transition thing of getting some of the experience hours you needed for licensing and stuff, and then went to work for a local community mental health agency. And the kids were ... how old were they when we moved out here? I think they were like, ten and twelve, eleven, thirteen, you know, and we—we started looking for a place. And this place came up and it- it didn't look like this when we moved in.

LD: This room didn't exist.

MMH: Oh, yeah. It was—but, you know, we loved the location. It was clearly a handyman's special or whatever. Thank God for Lynn's skills. But we got it at a good price and we spent three months that we had the shell of this room put on. It was actually an apartment in a house. We had the shell of this room put on and then we came out every weekend with the kids for three months, for four months.

LD: Mmhmm. Before we lived here.

MMH: And worked on it so that we could live in it and kept working on it.

BB: Yeah.

MMH: The kids worked on it, too.

LD: Yeah, the kids did a lot. It's great.

MMH: And so, you know, this is—so we've been here since eighty—we moved in in '87. So...

BB: Yeah. Thirty years.

MMH: Thirty years, yeah. It's a really different place now. And it's really, I mean, life has been good. There were some really hard, hard times. And this stuff with the kids and their dad was really tough. Really tough.

BB: So today, how are you connected in with the LGBT community in this area? Are you—do you still go to events and things or--?

MMH: Oh, yeah. And, you know, we're sort of the old-timers in the group. We've been here since the beginning. There are a bunch of people who've been here for a long time, but there are only a few of us that have been here since '80.

LD: Mmhmm.

MMH: But, you know, we have—you know, we've planned for the last, God, ten, twelve years now, every spring, every May, we have a plant swap and potluck, you know, and so—so there are certain annual events. We have a big Christmas party. We usually have a party out on the side deck in the--

LD: Late summer

MMH: Late summer. This is a good place for that, you know, it really is. It's a great place.

LD: And it's private...

MMH: It's private.

LD: When that was really an important thing to people.

BB: Yeah.

MMH: And so, you know, we've still—our network of friends is really based in that organization and the people that have been around in it.

BB: The TLC?

MMH: Yeah. And new people have obviously moved into town, and we've gotten to know new people.

LD: Yeah.

MMH: Kept in touch with some of the people who have moved out of town. You know, Kim, Sheila's spouse, is from sort of out Evansburg area. You know Evansburg? It's on the other side of Altoona.

BB: Yeah, sort of. I know about where that is.

MMH: Yeah. And also grew up Catholic and all of that and had a, you know, had a tough time when she and Sheila—she and Sheila actually met in Boston because Sheila was living in Boston at that time, working up there. Kim had come to some of the TLC things even though she's a little bit younger than most of us with her partner at the time, who was a little bit older, and they split up, and she wanted to move to Boston. And so she asked if, you know, she said, "I've"--she met Sheila at an Altoona Curve baseball game and- when she was home one summer for a visit and we—the group was going to the game. She met Kim there. So Kim asked for Sheila's phone number and stuff so she could know somebody in Boston. The group had given her many connections, she said, "But you know, I'd kind of like to meet somebody my own age."

[All laugh]

MMH: And so they ended up connecting and now they're married and living in Maine. But when they got married three years ago? Three? I think it's three. Three-and-a-half years ago? Kim's mom didn't come to the wedding. Her dad did. And one of her brothers, but mom didn't come.

LD: We got married three years ago. The twenty-

BB: I was just going to-

MMH: Two years ago?

LD: Three years ago. The twenty-first of April.

BL: The twenty-first of April?

LD: Uh-huh.

MMH: Yeah.

BB: Yeah, I was just going to ask you if you got married.

MMH: Yeah.

BB: Yeah.

MMH: And it seemed kind of—I'd always been real negative about the idea.

LD: [Talking over each other] It seemed superfluous.

MMH: You know, been married didn't... You know, at the time when all of our—a lot of our friends were having commitment ceremonies, Several of them had them in our backyard, you know, people tell you, "Oh, you and Lynn ought to--" I'd go, "Mmmhmm. Yeah, nuh-uh. Not doing that." But, you know, it became—with age, the legal implications and the idea that, you know, whichever one of us got left behind when one the first one died would end up paying Inheritance Tax on half of what we owned.

BB: Right.

MMH: And then, if it were me dying first, when she left it to the kids, they'd be unrelated.

BL: Yes.

LD: Right.

MMH: You know, and it just galled me. I said, "Nah." So we—we toyed-

LD: So—so romantically we put together a wedding.

MMH: Yeah. We just decided, you know, after 35 years this was a little anti-climactic, but—so you- at that time Pennsylvania hadn't, you know, passed if, you know, it was--

BB: Right.

MMH: Whatever. And so Maine had passed it. And Sheila and Kim got married up there. And in Maine any lawyer can marry you. And Sheila had a friend that was a lawyer who married them, and so we decided--

LD: We wanted to have the friend.

MMH: We weren't even—we weren't even going to tell anybody until after. And so we made arrangements to go up to visit Sheila over Easter weekend and Monday was Patriot's Day or whatever. But anyway, we got—we got the paperwork and Lynn's friend came. Sheila's friend came over on her lunch hour, we signed papers, and we were married.

[All laugh]

LD: I had one of my nieces came to represent my side of the family.

MMH: One of her nieces came by. My sister was already going to be in Maine doing something, and so they came over, so we went out to dinner.

BB: So you didn't have a ceremony? You just...

MMH: No, we didn't have a ceremony.

BB: Yeah.

MMH: We just signed papers.

[All laugh]

LD: Cold.

MMH: Yeah. Some of our friends had some really nice parties.

LD: Yeah.

MMH: And I could see it, but ... yeah. It just seemed sort of silly.

LD: Are either of you guys married?

BB: Yes. Mmhm.

BL: Yes.

LD: Yeah?

BB: We did—we've been together for 30 years.

BL: Not to each other [laughs].

BB: Not to each other. But we got married when Massachusetts passed the law. They were the first state in 2004, so we did the whole thing.

LD: Oh, lovely.

BB: So we've been married for 13 years. We did the wedding, the minister, the...

LD: Yay!

BB: [Groans] Tent. I'm glad we did.

MMH: Yeah.

BB: I cried. [All laugh] Well, I never thought--

LD: Yeah.

BB: That I would have--

MMH: I know.

LD: Right.

BB: I was—because I was—I knew I was gay and I never thought I had—there would ever be the possibility that I'd get married.

BL: Yeah.

LD: Right.

BB: I put it out of my mind. That--

MMH: You know, I didn't think it would mean anything to me because, you know, Lynn and I are obviously... And we have a family. We have an obvious family. And sometimes that's been a little hard because, you know, from the beginning when the kids were the group kids, you know, and we were the family and the kids—with the kids and, you know, none of our—the people we knew at that time had kids. Now, some of the people my age, you know, kids because they all ...

LD: Were catching up.

MMH: But at that time we stood out and it was, you know, it was certainly a warm and inviting atmosphere but it also, I think, put a lot of pressure on us, you know. We became the... People

were always coming up to Lynn, “She’s a role model” or they’re saying, “You—you’re—your relationship is a role model” and we’re going, “Oh God.” You know?

LD: I don’t want to be anyone’s role model.

MMH: I don’t, and I can understand why that happened, you know? People that we knew, were friends with, you know, but not close friends, you know, our relationship came to mean a lot to people. And the longer we were together and as the kids grew the more that—and it became—I can understand it in some ways, but in other ways it was tough. And I think for me, I never fit in with the other women who had kids, even when, you know, the kids were at the Quaker school and stuff and everybody was very accepting and yet, they treated our experience like it was different. I wasn’t the same. And I felt different in a lot of ways, and they didn’t understand. They were very accepting and stuff, but I was never one of the groups of mothers, and that’s really tough. It’s tough raising kids when you don’t have a group of mothers. And yet the lesbian group was our home in lots of ways and yet they had no clue-

LD: [laughs] What’s happening.

MMH: You know, what it was feeling—you know, I remember there were a whole bunch of different bars after the Scorpion Den, and they were usually, like they would last for maybe six months, or nine months or whatever. You know, people go out and when they had finally only the one, Mr. C’s?

LD: Yes.

MMH: Which was Sunday night it went gay. Okay. 10 o’clock everybody—you know, ten--ten thirty people were going out and I’ve got kids at home, you know, so ...

LD: Go to school.

MMH: I think I closed every bar, I mean I got to one of the bars, I’d get out dancing once, and then by the next time I could figure out how to do that it didn’t exist anymore [laughs]. You know, it was just being... And people would plan things, you know when they’re doing a community, you know, meetings—they’d plan things, and they’d plan them with such an ease of—such freedom.

BB: Yeah, right.

MMH: And it—it wasn’t like there was anything wrong with that, but--

BB: But you had other... responsibilities.

MMH: I—I’m trying to figure out how to me-- so you know, I really missed that. I missed having some sense of community that encapsulated my experience, you know. It was—it was hard and I, you know, and I was very protective of my relationship. At times that was an issue

between Lynn and I because I wasn't sharing much of the time I had with the kids. I mean I—I was a terrible—but you know I was the one that was going to be reading to them at night, you know. It was clear. I was their mom, you know, and that, I think, Lynn often felt sort of left out or on the side of things--

LD: Right.

MMH: Because we were so connected. And then, like I said, when the kids were here I was--

LD: One of the feelings I had was—I really didn't have anyone to talk to who could help me out in my position. I did not want to usurp John's place in the—and I didn't want to do that. And I didn't know how to be part of the family in that way, but I tried to. I feel like we missed some things—doing some things with the kids because of that kind of awkwardness.

MMH: Yeah, it was—it was tough. And overlaying all of that was the anxiety.

LD: Yeah.

MMH: You know, it really—you just—that... So the world Sheila grew up in I think is very different. She grew up with that as a kid, that anxiety and stuff, but she's been--she's been out since she was in high—you know, really. She's always been really political. I mean when she was in seventh and eighth grade she was applying to then what they called the "alternative program" at Chetta [ph]- anyway- but for school. And she decided she was going to start volunteering at the AIDS project in town. She's in public health now, but she was into it, and you know, she showed up and said "I want to do things." So they let her do things in the office for a while, and then they let her do some training, and then she and another couple of kids put together, you know, a peer education thing that they would go around to the different schools and stuff. And you know that was—that was Sheila. Sheila was- was out there but she also felt very isolated, you know, and she told me.

LD: I know.

MMH: When she, you know—when—it was funny. She ended up going to Smith. She was a little worried about that, but she went to Smith, and she'd been accepted at Penn State and stuff and I said, "Oh, I don't think you want to stay here, hon. I really don't." But she got scared. She was afraid everybody at Smith would have money and be smarter. Well, they weren't smarter, they had money.

[All laugh]

MMH: But not everybody did. And what she realized was that there were a lot of kids that didn't.

LD: Yeah, there are a lot of...

MMH: But—but she was—she was—she didn't have gay friends who were her age. She knew all of these gay people. She'd grown up with gay people, she'd, you know, male and female more than certainly. I had- my—our groups were always pretty, you know, female, but you know, she was doing stuff at the AIDS project, she was, you know, it was always where she was, and... But she didn't know anybody her age. And when she went to Smith they had, you know, they obviously had a gay group on campus, and she went to the first meeting and I called her to ask her, "How'd it go?" and she said, "God, mom, it was so big. Nobody paid any attention to us. I didn't know anybody." It's like, "Okay, that's not going to be a problem for long, kid." But, you know, it was a good place for her to be. A women's college with, you know, really pushed her and—and so her experiences have been... She's always lived since she left here in places that she could be out.

BB: Yeah.

BL: Yeah.

MMH: You know, she worked for a couple of years after college. Went to the University of Michigan for her public—Master's in public health and social work that was—and, you know, was active there, and then she moved to Boston and, you know. So she's never—it's a very different life. And it's not—a lot of the things are very different. And Kim, who came from a much more restricted background and for whom this was a real struggle and stuff when she moved- [phone rings] when she moved to Boston--

LD: Excuse me-

MMH: It was like, "Oh my God," and it's been really fun to watch her just blossom, you know.

LD: Sorry, sorry, sorry.

MMH: Into this whole other experience.

LD: Talk a little bit about Rachel.

MMH: Rachel's, you know, been a harder one to—but that's for other—for other reasons, for other issues, and so she's had a lot of health problems, and physical health problems, so. But she's also the gay issue has never been an issue for her. And for a while she actually went to Divinity school after college. She was a Math and Chemistry major, and then she shifted gears and went to Harvard Divinity, and then she was working at a college in Maine for a while as sort of their campus chaplain, Catholic chaplain. She said it was actually a benefit for her that she--

LD: That she had--

MMH: That she had this gay family because it was kind of cool [all laugh] that her whole family was gay. So... I don't know if we covered what you needed to have covered. We've sort of gone on.

BL: I—I think we’ve—I think we did. I mean, I think we ended up covering all these—all these points that we’ve been ... yeah. Anything else that you can think of that you want to add?

LD: Well, as soon as you walk out the door we’re...

BL: Yeah [laughs]

MMH: I think I started to say it before, I--I thought that it wouldn’t affect me getting married, because it was really a practical decision. It didn’t—you know we—we didn’t have that feel—I didn’t have that feeling of, “Oh, I never thought--” Even when I was a kid, marriage never seemed like, you know, who cares?

LD: Me either. That was--

MMH: You know, it was not like, you know—I didn’t feel I was deprived of anything if I didn’t get married or something, I don’t know. And my experience with marriage the first time was like, “Meh. I don’t think I want to do this.” But what I noticed after we got married was that all—all of a sudden it was—if—especially once Penn, you know, right after we got married in Maine, Pennsylvania—our governor did it with an appeal. And so we could have gotten married two months later in Pennsylvania. So it, you know, it really was—we were married when we came back. And all of a sudden it became somebody else’s problem if—that it—it wasn’t mine anymore. You know, I didn’t, I don’t know how to describe it as much, but it was like having to figure out how to identify Lynn, you know, as my, you know--

LD: Mother, sister-

[All laugh]

MMH: Well, no, it wasn’t that. It wasn’t that so much, but like you go to the doctor’s, or whatever, and they want to know who your-

BB: Right.

MMH: Contact person is and—and stuff, and, you know, all of that and it was like having to think about how people would react.

BB: Right.

MMH: You know, and it wasn’t like I didn’t do things because of that necessarily, but all of a sudden it became, “Hey, you don’t have any power over me. So if you don’t like it, that’s not my problem anymore. It’s yours.” And I was surprised at that. You know, after all these years and being fairly out, you know, I didn’t expect that. But that legal recognition made a difference. I mean, it still galls me that we don’t have civil rights protections in Pennsylvania. That you can still get fired: you can get married, but you can get fired. That stuff, you know, we don’t want to forget that stuff.

BB: Right.

MMH: But, I was surprised at that.

LD: Yeah.

MMH: I really was.

LD: And I—I was surprised how quickly it seemed to me after that, that making appointments and identifying yourself as having a wife, people don't even blink anymore.

MMH: Yeah, I don't know what they're thinking.

LD: I'm amazed that that just seemed to turn over. Of course, I'm probably not going to places where people will, but nevertheless.

MMH: But they don't feel as free to tell you how they think if they really don't like it. They're not going to make faces at me the same way.

BB: Yeah.

MMH: And I know there still are people that feel that way, and certainly that's out there, but it really does feel like now it's their problem, not mine.

BB: It's true.

MMH: You know, now it's also easier—I'm retired now. You know, when I left the community mental health and went into practice on my own, I'll tell you I was worried. You know, I was not sure whether it would make a difference in terms of being able to support myself and stuff. I'm sure that there were people that didn't come to see me because they had heard I was gay, but I don't know. I've never had any—I had a lot of people who came to me because they'd heard I was a good therapist and didn't know. But—you know, but it—it did worry me at times. I really—that—but it—over time that worried me less. And now I'm retired, it's just not an issue. And I'll tell you the biggest—the biggest reduction in fear was once the kids were old enough it didn't make a damn bit of difference what their dad did, you know. And they don't—they don't have any relationship with him now. I mean, things fell apart that badly for other reasons, but they haven't seen him since they were in high school. And I feel kind of bad about that in some ways, but... But they, you know, it still amazes--if you had asked me fifteen years ago, you know, if things would have changed the way they have ... yeah. I never would have believed it.

BB: Yeah.

LD: I—I'm sure this is old folk's talk, is that I worry about young people, who come into the world with all the privileges in the lesbian and gay lifestyle that did not exist, don't really realize

how precious it is and that they need to protect themselves, as it true with many other things, but for us, that's-

BB: Right.

LD: I think that's a big deal.

MMH: Yeah. I think it really is. And also, I'm amazed at how many people, friends, family, who are supportive, but don't understand the work that still needs to be done. Like we—we were talk—we were sitting around on your—on Anne's deck, you know--

LD: Right.

MMH: In the evening which, you know, we do when we visit, and everybody was sitting around drinking wine and talking and stuff, and we were talking—somehow came up about the gay marriage. And I think everybody there did not realize that in most states it's still legal to discriminate. They'd kind of assumed that gay marriage meant it was—everything was okay.

BB: Yeah.

MMH: And they didn't even realize that.

LD: And they were on our side, you know what I mean?

BB: Right.

MMH: Yeah, it's like—and I find that a lot among allies and supportive people that they don't understand that, and how scary that can be.

BL: That's why that's the importance of gay history, and that's why we're doing this. And that's why this book is important. It's part of chronicling—chronicling gay history.

MMH: Yeah.

BL: So that the new generation, younger generation knows.

MMH: Yeah.

BL: And that's part of what—it's not just gay history, history in itself, that's why history is important. That's why people write about history.

MMH: Yeah.

BL: It's so... you know?

MMH: You have perspective.

BL: You have perspective, you know what happened, what went on. The wise man knows what's—what history teaches us and what we have to do. It's why there are battles that still have to be fought in gay...

MMH: Like I see so many—Sheila's got a whole bunch of friends that have, you know, gotten pregnant and had kids. She's got a whole—you know, she said it's—all of a sudden it's hard to be a lesbian couple if you don't have kids.

BB: Yes.

MMH: You know? Everybody keeps asking them, “When are you two going to have kids?” You know?

BL: Yeah.

MMH: It's like...

LD: Just like the straight people, right.

BB: That's true.

MMH: But, you know, how—I don't want to say it's easy, but they—they're not having those nightmares.

BL: Right.

MMH: And some of it is that my kids came from a marriage, rather than from, you know, a choice like that, but--but when I think about how much distance there is between those nightmares and how real, you know, most of the time I walk around and I don't think about that but then I try to tell you about that, you know, and I realize I still—I still carry there that, you know, I really carry that. And it's been forty years. But it---it's a part of who I am and—and how scary that was, knowing that you have no protections, and that you're dependent on the good will of other people for things as basic as the relationship with your kids, or whether you can have a job, you know, whether you can support yourself.

BB: That story is very, very important. Those feelings.

BL: Yeah.

MMH: Yes. It is.

BB: Really critical.

MMH: Yeah. And I've got that coffee cake in there. Would you like a piece?

LD: Do you have time?

BB: Sure, we'd like to have you look those over and sign those.

MMH: Oh, sign our things. Okay.

BL: And we can turn these off now, I guess, too.

MMH: Okay. Unless you have some other question you can think of.

BB: Nope.

[Tape ends]