

# **LGBT History Project of the LGBT Center of Central PA**

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**Title:** LGBT Oral History: Suzanne Kohr

**Date:** March 25, 2015

**Location:** LGBT Oral History – Kohr, Suzanne – 059

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**Interviewee: Suzanne Kohr**

Interviewer: Jennifer Ott [note: Suzanne is the interviewer's aunt on her father's side. Andrew was her uncle.]

Date: March 25, 2015

Place: Newberrytown, Pennsylvania

Transcriber: Jennifer Ott

Proofreader: Taeya Viruet

Finalized by Mary Libertin, July 2020

**Abstracts:**

**Susanne Kohr:**

Suzanne Kohr, formerly Ott, was raised in Shippensburg, Pennsylvania. She is now 60 years old, and resides in Newberrytown, Pennsylvania. Suzanne had two children with her first husband, and has been married to her second husband, Tom Kohr, for almost two decades. Suzanne was the second oldest of eight children. She had seven brothers; Steve, Danny, Alan and Brian are all still living—and John, Andrew and Greg have passed away. Suzanne was close to her youngest brother Andrew who died from AIDS complications in 1997. Sue discusses Andrew's strained relationship with his parents and siblings, and the prejudice he faced. She goes on to discuss some of his significant relationships, and life after moving away from Shippensburg to Virginia. Sue elaborates on Andrew's frustration over HIV/AIDS treatment available to him, and his treatment up until his death. Sue concludes by describing Andrew's legacy, and her hopes for increased acceptance of homosexuality by society.

**Andrew Ott:**

Andrew Ott was the youngest of eight children born to Arthur and Evelyn Ott, and raised in Shippensburg, Pennsylvania. He knew from a young age that he was homosexual, and faced prejudice from both his family and the small community he grew up in. Andrew attended Shippensburg University before relocating to Virginia where he worked and became involved in a serious relationship. Andrew contracted HIV that later progressed to AIDS—which he passed away from in 1997. Andrew remained close to his sister Suzanne, despite increased bigotry from the rest of his family after his diagnosis. Through interviewing Andrew's sister Suzanne, some of Andrew's frustrations and struggles as he dealt with both intolerance and illness are addressed.

**JO:** Alright, I'm Jennifer Ott and today is Wednesday March 25, 2015 and I'm interviewing Suzanne Kohr at her home in Newberrytown, Pennsylvania for the Oral History Project of LGBT Center of Central Pennsylvania. Sue is it okay for me to ask you a few questions about your younger brother Andrew Ott?

**SK:** Yes.

**JO:** Alright, great. Could you please state your name and that you are willing to be interviewed?

**SK:** My name's Suzanne Kohr and I am willing to be interviewed.

**JO:** Perfect. And can you sign this consent form.

**SK:** Certainly.

**JO:** Just print your name and then sign.

**SK:** Okay. [Suzanne signs the consent form] And what's the date?

**JO:** Today is 3/25.

**SK:** Okay.

**JO:** Thank-you very much.

**SK:** Mmm hmm.

**JO:** Alright. If at any time you want the recording to be stopped just let us know and we'll do that, and if there's any question that you don't want to answer, just let us know and we'll move to another question.

**SK:** Okay.

**JO:** Alright. So, you and your family and your brother Andrew grew up in Central Pennsylvania. Can you tell me a little bit about Andrew's childhood?

**SK:** Andrew— he was a nice kid. He did get sick a lot. He was kind of — what people would say today was kind of like a sissy. That's what my brothers said. I don't know that —if I agreed with that, but I just thought that he had a more gentle nature than the rest of my brothers. He was very smart. He took piano lessons when he was like three years old, and he had a really high IQ, and he was really smart. So, he really didn't fit in with the rest of my family except for my mother and myself. He had a tendency to hang out with me and mom more than the boys did. And that's pretty much how I grew up — am I going too far with th—?

**JO:** No, that's — that's perfect. Was he— you said he was really smart. Was he involved in any, like, activities in high school or college?

**SK:** By the time that Andrew was in high school, I was next to the oldest, so I had moved away for a while, and I went to live in Maryland for about 10 years. He did play track. I don't know if he also ran cross country or not, but he did participate in track and he had his varsity jacket. And I don't know if he participated in any sports, but I do know that he was involved in that.

And in college, he — I don't think he completed his education in college. But I could be wrong, cause like I said I was kinda out of touch and I didn't get to see my family very much so — I know whatever he did academically he did well. He had gotten a part-time job down at the silk mill, which was Richard Textiles [later became Hoffman Mills— "silk mill" was term used by residents of Shippensburg to describe the factory] I think it was called, and he was very good at drafting. I think he may have taken that a little bit in high school and I don't know if he continued that in college, but he was very good at that. So, when he was working at the silk mill,

they asked him to redo their books for the schematics on the machines and things like that because he was capable of doing that.

I think he was in college when he did that cause he was — I think he was going up to Shippensburg University at that time, but he was working there I think part time, so that gave him kind of a little bit higher pay job because he could do that.

**JO:** What other jobs did he have after he moved away from this area? I know little—

**SK:** The only one that I know of is — he worked for a printer in the Washington D.C. area, but I do not remember the name of the company, but he worked there. He made pretty good money, but — and I don't know what he did, but that's all I know. [chuckles]

**JO:** That's okay. So, when did you know, or when did he tell you that he was gay?

**SK:** He actually told me — I think the end of his high school or his first year in college. He confided in me because him and I were always close. He told me that he was going to tell my mother and my father and the rest of the family, and I tried to talk him out of that. I didn't think it was a good idea because I knew they were mean to him already, and — I don't think they would have understood. It was a time when gays were not accepted even worse than it is now, so. Living in Shippensburg — a small town — people were very close-minded and I don't think he would have fared too good. Some people knew, but it wasn't well known, and he told me that he was tired of being in the closet so to speak and he was tired of hiding who he was. And he wanted to tell mum and dad. And I said, "Well, if you have to, tell mum, but don't tell dad or the boys." And he told me he wished he could be like me because I always had the strength to stand up for what I believed in, and he respected that and that is one of the reasons why he wanted to tell everybody that he was gay, but I didn't want him to, but he did tell them — he told my mother and I begged him not to tell my dad and my brothers, but he did it anyway and it was not a good thing.

**JO:** How did they react? Can you give me maybe an example?

**SK:** They didn't react very well. They had already — years — when he was even younger, had made fun of him for being — they would call him "fancy pants" and that he was a "fag" and stuff like that. So they already treated him unkindly and you know that — that was the way we grew up to be tough—and once they found out they were really disgusted. Some of them wouldn't talk to him anymore. Some of 'em — alcohol was prevalent in my family, my father was an alcoholic. Most of my brothers drank and most of them drank to the extreme and they were not nice people when they drank. They would make ignorant remarks to him in front of people when it was holiday family gatherings, and to belittle him, and they just were not nice to him. You know the holidays were not easy anyway because everybody would get drunk and they wo— they'd end up fighting.

There's a lot of abuse in the family, so — my brothers thought there was nothing wrong with them [that they] were only being what they were raised to be. And I knew [laughing] that our childhood was not normal and I chose to get out for myself over the years, but none of them did. And so how they dealt with their pain and rage would be to be very aggressive and fight and you

know they say people that have been abused — the girls internalize and the boys act out — and boys act out by fighting. They were not very nice to him. He did not have it easy.

**JO:** Did he have any significant relationships that you're aware of?

**SK:** He had a relationship in school, high school — and I think when he first started college with April — I can't remember her last name — I'm friends with her on Facebook. And she wanted to get married and — he hadn't dealt with his sexual orientation at that time, but as time went on and he met somebody — he met a guy named Jason. I don't know if Jason was going up to Shippensburg University or not, and I believe that he was the first person that Andrew had a relationship with. And then things kind of dwindled with him and April. And he eventually told April the truth about himself and they remained friends 'cause she really loved him and she just wanted what would make him happy. He had another relationship with the guy that's in the photos, I can't remember his—

**JO:** I believe his name is Jeffrey.

**SK:** Yes.

**JO:** Jeffrey Vance.

**SK:** That was probably his longest relationship —was with Jeff. Very nice guy. They had a lot in common— they liked to go camping. They liked to go hiking and he was from a really nice family in Virginia. They had a really nice home down there and he lived with him until he [Jeffrey] died at a really young age. He had a heart attack. I guess it was genetic — it ran in the family. His father died when he was young from a heart attack, but he — they thought — I guess he found out that he had AIDS, and I guess with having the genetic problems your heart, ... he actually, I think died younger than his father did because of the complications of having AIDS or HIV.

**JO:** When did Andrew tell you that he was HIV positive?

**SK:** I think — after Jeff died — Jeff wanted him to go and get tested so that he could be treated as much as they could back in that time. They had just started studying HIV and people were just starting to get HIV and it was like an epidemic when it first broke out. And so my brother John hung himself [pause] when Josh [John's son] was just a baby. So Andrew waited till after some had time had gone by that John died before he told us that he had AIDS, or HIV. So that would probably be around I'm thinking '92 maybe, around that time frame.

**JO:** How did the family react when he told them that he was HIV positive?

**SK:** Well, I thought it was bad the way they reacted when they found out he was gay, but when he told them that he was HIV positive it was worse. I mean, they didn't want to be around him, and it wasn't just their reaction to the disease. It was the way everybody was at that time because they didn't really know a lot about it. There were not a lot of medications out yet to help treat or prolong their life with being HIV positive, so they didn't want their kids around him cause they thought—they didn't wanna touch him—they thought, you know, maybe if they touched him that they'd get it and so he was kind of — just kind of left on the loose.

**JO:** Do you remember any specific struggles that he faced once he was diagnosed? Be it with like being able to work or —

**SK:** He was lucky with the respect he had a good bit of money. So as they developed medications to treat AIDS, I mean he could afford the best healthcare that anyone could, whereas a lot of the people that had AIDS were low-income or they had no health insurance. Andrew had talked to me about the HBO special that they made *The Band Played On* [Sue is referring to *And the Band Played On* an HBO film based on the book of the same name by Randy Shilts] and he was very angry because he said the government drug their feet on coming out with treatments for AIDS because they ... primarily at that time the gays and blacks had HIV. It was very unusual for a white person to get AIDS. So Andrew said they did that because they didn't care. They said, "Let them kill each other. They're — they're misfits you know they're faggots, they're blacks." Only they used the n-word. So, "Hey, let them kill themselves. We don't care." So, he was very angry about that. And I never watched the total documentary [the film is not a documentary, but a dramatization based on real events] on that. But from what I saw ... he said the government is the one that held up things in helping them that had AIDS.

**JO:** Did he ever like, participate in any activities by organizations that helped people with HIV and AIDS?

**SK:** I can't really say cause Andrew — I told Andrew to move away from Shippensburg after he told everybody that he was gay. And he had moved away from Shippensburg; I believe before he diagnosed with AIDS. I know that. He told me in Virginia there were a lot of gay people that lived there, but they were still being singled out and that they would, you know, do stuff to them or write words on their car. He said they would put stuff on his truck and they knew where they lived, they would come to the house and, you know, do stuff to the lawn and stuff because they were gay — like hate crimes. As far as him being active in any other [group]—that I really couldn't tell you.

**JO:** Okay. After his partner Jeffrey had died, did he have any other kind of support system down there?

**SK:** He had a couple of really good friends. John — I can't remember John's last name — but he had told me when he got ill and — I told him that if he needed somebody to help take care of him when it was his time that I would be willing to help take care of him and he had said that John had made him the same offer. He was living with somebody for a while, and they kind of went their separate ways and then he had a friend — Richard that was a nurse at one of the hospitals down there and Richard actually ended up taking care of him when he got sick near the end. I, you know, told him he was welcome to come here, but my husband had concerns about it. He — he said, "You don't know how you get that disease," and "You've got kids to think of." And think he was afraid to of me, you know, taking care of somebody with AIDS. You have to be very careful about touching any fluids. And so he ended up ... He was sick and had been in the hospital and Richard brought him home to his place to live while he cared for him. And Andrew financially compensated him for taking care of him till he died.

**JO:** And when did — what year — he died in —?

**SK:** I think it was — oh it was 1997 the year Tom and I got married. In January about a week before my birthday.

**JO:** And it was from AIDS related complications?

**SK:** Yes. I guess when Andrew got diagnosed with AIDS they told him that he probably already had had AIDS for 8 years. And at that time it was impossible to live with AIDS that long, but he could afford the best care and the best medicines. But he was still slowly going downhill. And I don't know how long it took until it was full-blown AIDS, because there's one thing being HIV positive, but then there's a time frame that goes by where the disease actually becomes active and so ... It was a very — it was a very horrible way to die. It — cause the — the patients just basically wasted away to nothing like a cancer, and a lot — a lot of people didn't have the means to take care of themselves. They didn't have the medicine, so some of them didn't live a long time once they got full-blown AIDS, but Andrew was lucky.

**JO:** What happened after he died? Like was there a funeral? Did the family —

**SK:** Well, when Andrew started getting really, really sick, that he knew that it was — he didn't have a lot of time left. I think what happened—and this is just what Andrew told me — going by what Andrew told me and other gays that he was friends with ... But, because the government were basically thumbing up their nose to the gays and the blacks in getting them care and stuff long before they could were able to — the gays kind of as a way to get even, have you, with society and their poor treatment of them, they decided to take out large insurance policies on themselves. They would leave their significant other or a good friend of theirs a lot of money so that they could, you know, better take care of themselves and kind of live it up before they died. Because back then they didn't do health checks on a lot of the insurance policies that were being offered to the younger kids that were getting life insurance. Andrew had I think — I know he had at least two, possibly three insurance policies. The one was for \$150,000 dollars and the other— one of them was for I think \$30,000 and I think there may have been a \$50,000 dollar life insurance policy, And he also owned a house, a really nice house and he had a lot of personal belongings that were nice and he wanted to leave the majority of his estate to my mother so that she would be taken care of. And he was going to leave something to me to use as a down payment on a house, and he didn't want my brothers to have anything. He didn't want my father to have anything because of the way they treated him. So, that was their — they didn't bother with him. They didn't go and see him. I think I'm the only one in my family, besides mum and dad ... I think once that ... even went to see him whether he was well or he was sick because they didn't want anything to do with him. Prior to him even dying they had gone to his house — because he wasn't staying at his house, he was staying at Richard's. And they were going down to his house and stealing from him — even before he got sick enough to die.

I guess Richard had resuscitated him a couple of times when he did die, because he was a nurse, and I guess Richard was— had access to his checkbook, so he may have helped himself to some Andrew's mon — money, but I think that for what was left of Andrew's money and property Richard was probably the most honest one of them all. So, you know, and all they were worried about — my brothers — [all] they were worried about — and my father was mum getting this

money. And when Richard started taking care of Andrew he — he kind of lost communication or stopped communication with my family other than me, and that was before he got sick at the end. My mother called me one day and she told me that Andrew had been in the hospital and they said that they couldn't do anything more for him with the AIDS, that it was going to be his time.

So, my mother said that she was worried about Andrew and she was afraid that Richard was taking his money and there wouldn't be any money left when he died and maybe Richard would talk him into putting the house in his name instead of my mother getting it ... and it's just ignorant stuff. I think my mother loved him as much she was capable of loving anybody, but she also did him dirty and so did my brothers.

When Andrew died, my mother got the house and before Andrew died — Andrew and I had talked and he told me how he felt about dad and my brothers and about them not getting any of his money or his belongings or anything. He thought that if he left the majority of his estate to mom, that she would leave dad and she could go her ... buy a house. And that she could be free from him and not be abused anymore. The boys were waiting for her to get the money, and I think in about six years — well, he was gonna make a will and either name me or John Hardy as executor of his estate so that mum would not get all the of the insurance money in one lump sum. That either I or John would dispense the money to her a little bit at a time, because we knew that if she — once she got that money that the boys were gonna be there and they were gonna bleed her dry. And you couldn't talk to her — I mean she'd do anything for her boys, it didn't matter.

So, they basically dogged her and she whittled her money away. You know, she gave money to even their children. The grandkids would come up there, not all of them, and you know get — ask my mother for money or ask help in buying them a car or something. And when the money was all [gone], nobody bothered with her anymore. So, they sold the house and she never left my dad. And my brothers went down there ... The day — we had just been down there that weekend. I was taking off the weekends and going down there and helping to take care of him, and [laughing] ... He would ... He was a semi-comatose state and he loved my husband [laughs]. He had quite a sense of humor. He was down here a couple weekends and stayed with us. When he met Tom he just —he says, "Where did you find him?" [laughs] And I said, "Andrew, get a hold of yourself." Cause he and I could joke about things that other people would just look at you and lift your eyebrows and say, "Oh my God." And then he saw a picture of Tom's military picture on the wall and he says, "My God, what a man!" [Laughing] And I even told Tom and he says, "I'm spoken for. I'm quite happy with your sister." [Laughing] And he whispered to me when Tom was out the yard he said, "I know you never keep any of them long — around long, you get bored with them. So when you're ready to get rid of him let me know please!" [Laughing] Tom said, "He's crazy." [Laughing] ... But he — Andrew was mostly just angry the end. I mean — who got married? Somebody — oh that's when Steve [Suzanne and Andrew's older brother] got married to — what is her name? [laughs] The — not Nicole, the one before her.

**JO:** Bobby's mother.

**SK:** [Laughing] Yeah, I forget her name.

**JO:** Me too.

**SK:** I never liked that woman. [All laughing] Anyway, what was I gonna say? What was I gonna say?

**JO:** He was angry.

**SK:** Oh, he was very angry at the way society treated gays and he was very angry about the research that was — that they were doing on AIDS to find medicines to treat it or cure it. And so at the end he just wanted to embarrass the people that hurt him. And that being my family [chuckles]. So when we went to the wedding [laughs], Steve's wedding. They had a wedding DJ there and Andrew says, "He's cute. I'm going to talk to him." And he blatantly was very obvious in his like for this guy, and he did it to piss my parents off, and my brothers. I go, "Andrew, really?" [Laughing] Anyway ... and then he would come back to the table and he would talk really loud saying that he got his phone number and — anyway it was [laughs] kind of funny I thought.

But, I wanted to have — I — I ... My mother sent — we were down the weekend before he left, my mother and I. And Greg [Suzanne and Andrew's younger brother] came down to see him for a little while and I'm not sure if Danny [Suzanne and Andrew's Brother] came down. Danny and Greg went down to Andrew's house that summer before he died to live with him. That was very strange because they weren't too happy about him being gay, but I think they [were] setting him up and trying to gain his trust or setting him — themselves — up to get on the good graces of him knowing that he was going to die. So, I guess Andrew ended up asking them to leave. Surprise, surprise [laughs].

And Danny was upset because — I guess they had bathhouses that they used to go to in Washington [D.C.] and Andrew went to those places and they were not having safe sex. Andrew, when he would see me he would tell me about all these famous people and politicians in Washington D.C. that he got together with in the bathhouses. That they would go there 'cause they were very ... You're — you were anonymous kind of like in there. So that they could hide being gay and he said, "You wouldn't believe who I have slept with that's pretty high up." And I said, "Well I really don't care, but you know if you're gonna go to those type of places I don't think it's a good thing. I mean it's just the same as if you're straight, you need to be protected." But it was already too late for that, but — anyway.

When he died — he died a couple days after we were there the last time, and I guess Richard was gonna try and resuscitate him again and my mother sent two of my brothers down there when Richard called us and told us that he was getting close to the end and were we coming down. And I was just exhausted. I had taken extra days off work so I could have three day or four day weekends down there to help take care of him. And I didn't feel like making another trip down there when I had just got back. I was out of leave. And mum was tired. It was draining watching him die. So my mum sent Brian [Suzanne and Andrew's brother] and I think Danny to Richard's after she found out that it was close to the time he was gonna die. And they went down there cause all they wanted to do was get a copy of the will, cause they couldn't find the will. I guess

one of the reasons why they went to his house — they were ransacking the place for the will to see if he had changed anything.

Richard supposedly had the will, so they went there; and they really went there to get the will to make sure that mum was still gonna gain from the majority of his stuff. And even though Andrew said he was gonna have a will made, he got a will kit and he had put the software on his computer before he got dementia at the end, and he was gonna fix it so they couldn't get their hands on his money all at one time. And Danny was down there right before he died till after he died to guard the house in case anybody came down there to help their hands to stuff ... [coughing] He wasn't even supposed to be in his house. But I did not find the will. If there was a will on there and he made one, it was deleted. So, the will was in effect for my mother. So she got all the money. And I asked her ... When he died they called the undertaker. I guess, I think Brian and Danny were still there, and Richard wanted some alone time with Andrew before he took him.

So, the undertaker told him to just call him when he wanted him to pick up the body. And supposedly—I don't trust the source—but supposedly [he] had some friends come to the house and — that had already come to the house. While they were there, if I'm remembering correctly ... And his best friend who lived in Florida — his friend had told him when Andrew died to call him and he would fly up there and stay with him as long as he needed him to. So, Richard was — had to go to the airport [coughing] to pick up his friend, and I guess Brian and Danny left and went back home and they told my mother that, well you know, “all gays are perverts, so you know if you're gay you have to be a pervert.” And they had some twisted idea in their head that Richard was going to have a party with all his gay friends and they were going to have sex with Andrew's body because they're all perverts, you know.

When I called my mother to find out about the funeral — she was telling me this — and I said—I said, “Are you crazy?” I said, “Really? What? He's gonna have an orgy with dead body?” I said, “Just because you're gay doesn't mean that you are a pervert.” So anyway, she had Danny call the police down in Virginia where he lived. And they called the fire company and they told the police that Richard was a pervert and he was gonna have a party with Andrew's body. And since they were not married legally, because gay marriage weren't recognized or legal, the police had to act on what my mother told them to do. And she wanted the undertaker to go and take the bo— remove the — the body from Richard's house. So, the police went there with the firemen. They axed the door down and took my brother's body out of there. [They] didn't fix the door or nothing, just left it there after they smashed it. And when Richard came back from the airport Andrew was gone. He was beside himself.

So, I called my mother and I talked to her and I wanted to know what they were gonna do about Andrew, and she said, “I told them to cremate him, and Fed-Ex his ashes up to me.” And I said, “You're joking.” [pauses] It was — was just like he was a piece of garbage. That's how they treated him. [Suzanne becomes emotional] And I said, “You couldn't have somebody go pick the ashes up?” I said, “That's your son.” And “Well, I don't drive.” My mother — my mother was a very go— my mother was a good woman at one time, but after living with the abuse and everything she was a victim of — a person who lives with an alcoholic and becomes just like the

enabler, dysfunctional — they — they're no longer themselves anymore. They're—whatever rules there is what is rampant. And — and she just wanted that money, and they all wanted the money.

So, I said, “Well, couldn't you have one of your lackey boys go down and get the ashes?” I said, “If you would have called me I would gladly go pick his ashes up.” I said, “He's your son.” And they had him cremated because that got rid of the disease, and that, that was — that was common. When I was at work when this was going on, you know ... You know, I talked to people about my brother dying and stuff and they said, “Oh, what's wrong with him?” And I would say, “He has AIDS.” And they were like, “Oh, well how did he get it? Is he gay?” And if I told them yes, that he was gay, then you could see by their body language and the expression on their face that because he was gay and he got it from having unprotected sex he deserved to die. That that was the end of the story. There was no compassion, no “Oh, I'm so sorry to hear it.” But, it was like, “Well they deserve what they got. It's a sin to be gay, and so they deserve what they got.” And I just couldn't believe it [laughs]. And, so I got to the point where I told them, “Oh, he had cancer.” Or I would say he had cancer or I would say, “Yes, he has AIDS, but he had a blood transfusion and that's how he got it.” And they'd go, “Oh, that is so awful. If there's anything you need.” As long as he didn't get it cause he had sex and he was gay.

So, I called my mother and she said they got the ashes. And I had already called the funeral home to see what a funeral would cost, and I was willing to pay for a funeral. And mum said, “Well, we're not having a funeral.” And I said, “What are you talking about?” So they decided they weren't gonna have a funeral because they didn't want people coming to the funeral and seeing gay people coming in there to see Andrew to pay their last respects. And they didn't want people to know that he was gay, even though most of the people in Shippensburg by then knew he was gay. I mean, you can't live in a little town of Shippensburg and not know who's gay and who isn't. So everybody's secrets are not safe. So, I asked her if I could have his ashes that they sent to her in a plastic bag [Sue stands up to get ashes].

**JO:** Careful your mic. [Stands up to follow sue with mic]

End of video 1

Video 2 [Sue got Andrew's ashes and has returned to her seat]

**SK:** These are my brother Andrew's ashes. [Holds and opens a Ziploc bag] This is how they sent him to my mother in a plastic bag. She wouldn't even get an urn for it. He wasn't worth the money. I guess I sound bitter. And it's been a lot of years. So, some of the ashes — April went to my mother when my mother had the ashes.... “Hi Andrew [looks to the ashes]”... and so my mother gave her some ashes. April wanted some of his ashes, and I touched his ashes. I spread some of his ashes out on my flower gardens. And that's what ... my mother had his [ashes] sent to her in from Fed-Ex. And they were in her house all this time until she died. And when she died I asked if I could have the ashes and they were more than glad to give them to me. So, there was no funeral. I had even wrote up a little — the little flyers that you get at the funeral with the

poem on it—and I put the song, the words to the song that ... What's her name? She's gay, she's a musician and she wrote a song about how the gays are treated because they love the way they do. And ... "I'm Talking to My Angel," that's the name of the song. ["Talking to My Angel" by Melissa Etheridge] And it talks about, you know, it's okay if you don't accept [being gay], but I'm a person, and I have a relationship with God and that's all that matters.

So, I made up the flyer, the little thing [with] the words on [it] and Andrew's dates and stuff. And another poem about death. And I was gonna take the ashes and have a small viewing, not a viewing, just a service, but then I ended up not doing that. And he wanted his ashes spread down in Virginia where he lived with Jeff. And Jeff and him used to go to Harper's Ferry all the time. That's why I went there the one time because Andrew said I should go see it. It was beautiful. So, he wanted the rest of his ashes spread at Harper's Ferry where the three oceans meet. And I finally talked mum into doing that after her [and I] became friends.... And then she had her stroke, and she wasn't able to go. So in the spring, I'm gonna finally put the rest of his ashes down there 'cause I don't remember where Jeff lived. But there was no service. So there wasn't any closure — closure. It was really hard, but I got some closure 'cause when Greg died six months after Andrew — I asked Norm if I could put part of Andrew's ashes in the casket with Greg and he allowed me to do so. And I didn't care if they wanted me to do it or not, I did it. I asked 'em, "Do you care?" and they were like [makes face indicating indifference]. What do they care? They got the money and they blew it and so...

**JO:** How do you think Andrew would want to be remembered?

**SK:** That he was a person and he had value, and just because he was gay doesn't make him a bad person [chokes up]. Out of all my brothers, he was probably the nicest one and he wasn't a drunk. He didn't do drugs. He was a good person. He did well for himself, his lifestyle wasn't to do drugs and drink the rest of his life. He was a good person, but they treated him ... and society still to a certain degree still treats them like they're a piece of garbage, and it's not right. It's not right. And I think he would have would want people to remember that about him.

I don't know if you ever saw the movie *The Elephant Man*. Remember this guy was disfigured and they had him in side shows. And this rich gentleman found him and took him out of the freak show and got him a home and dressed him in fine clothes and treated him like a human being and for a while ... Somehow this circus people found out where he was and they kidnapped him and they took him back to the circus for a short while — I think that's what happened. And his care taker, the man that saved him from that life, found him and brought him back. But he told those people, "I am not an animal. I'm a human being." That's what Andrew would want.

**JO:** That's all my questions. Is there anything else that maybe I forgot to ask, or you think would be important to Andrew's story?

**SK:** No, I mean times are changing. I — I can't honestly say what's right and wrong, but — 'cause everybody has their own religion. They have their own beliefs, and those beliefs are based on someone's interpretation of the Bible. And from going to church till I was 16, and learning about God and stuff, all I know is: who's to say that whose interpretation of the Bible is the true one? I mean this book was wrote how long ago? And it's only ... It's like a computer. The

computer is only as good the people work it, so who's to say that it's been interpreted right? But I do really believe the teachings of Christ are about goodness, about being humanitarian, treating people right. Treat people how you want to be treated: to be honest, to be virtuous, to be ethical, and that's the important part of the Bible. I feel that people need to remember ... And it's the same with gays. I'm not gonna say they don't deserve to be married. I'm not gonna say it's wrong for two women or two men want to be together. That's God's judgement. It's not mine or anybody else's. I think God would want them to be loved and treated like a human being. And I think that's the answer. We don't have to any further than that, and we all will get judged when our day comes, so it doesn't really matter what man says or interprets. He's the only one that knows, and by his teachings of what he taught about people — you treat 'em like a human being.

**JO:** Alright. Thank-you very much for doing this interview with me Sue, and if you have any items that you think — pictures or things that the Center could put in the collection with this, let me know and we'll get that arranged.

**SK:** Okay. Okay.

**JO:** Alright.

**SK:** I think Andrew made this duck actually. [laughing] [The duck is a container that the ashes were sitting in.] Can you believe that they just ...

**JO:** I've never heard that story before. That's —that shocks me.

**SK:** So, what did anyone of my family...

[Suzanne asks me (Jennifer Ott) about what I had been told about my uncle Andrew when I was growing up.]

End of video.