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Interviewee: Colin Kreitzer

Interviewer: Barry Loveland

Videographer: Catherine McCormick

Date: Thursday, February 16, 2017

Place: Colin's home in Harrisburg

Transcriber: Amanda Donoghue

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Finalized by Mary Libertin (July 2020)

Abstract:

Colin Kreitzer was born in 1947 in Enola, Pennsylvania, and grew up in Wormleysburg, Pennsylvania with his parents and his younger sister. He attended West Chester College and moved to Harrisburg in 1977, where he began getting involved in the gay community through activism and social activities. In this interview Colin reviews his involvement in the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard of Harrisburg, Dignity, Metropolitan Community Church, and volleyball. He also talks about the stigma of growing up as a closeted gay man, the bullying he experienced in primary and secondary school, and how he came to accept his sexuality and come out when he was in college. He discusses his past relationships and the struggles that he has experienced trying to forge healthy, emotional connections with others. Colin is also involved in Alcoholics Anonymous, he and explains the values he has gained from the organization and the changes in his own character and behavior.

CM: So we are recording.

BL: Okay, my name's Barry Loveland, and I'm here with Catherine McCormick who's our videographer, and we're here on behalf of the LGBT Center of Central Pennsylvania History Project. Today... is the 20th—

CK: 16th, it's the 16th.

CM: It's the 16th, my daughter's 39th birthday.

BL: Uh huh, February 16th, and we are—2017—oh look there's the cat now—

CK: Hi, Jube! Good girl!

BL: 2017 and we're here to conduct an oral history with Colin Kreitzer.

CM: Alright, I'll go ahead and stop.

[video 1 ends]

BL: My name's Barry Loveland, and I'm here with Catherine McCormick who's our videographer, and we're here on behalf of the LGBT Center of Central Pennsylvania History Project. Today is February 16 and we're here to conduct an oral history interview with Colin Kreitzer. This interview is taking place at Colin's home in Harrisburg, and Colin do we have your permission to record this interview today?

CK: Yes.

BL: Okay great, thank you. We also have a consent form for you to sign at the end of the interview, so I'll show you that afterwards and you can read that over and sign it. Could you state and spell your name so that when the transcription is done they have the correct spelling of your name?

CK: Colin Kreitzer. C-O-L-I-N K-R-E-I-T-Z-E-R,

BL: Great. Well, thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed; we appreciate your time and your memories ... to get your memories and your stories today. So, I'm going to start at the very beginning. If you could tell us what year you were born and where you were born.

CK: I was born in 1947 in Enola [PA] right across the river, and I lived there until I was nine, and then we moved to Wormleysburg, which is the next town. And that was my hometown, and I have a lot of good memories from Wormleysburg, I love that town, but it's changed so much. It's so different than it was when I was a kid. We had two churches, two stores, all kinds of businesses, gas stations. Now it's all restaurants and a few gas stations but I thought I'd like to live there. But I like it better over here, so.

BL: Tell me a little bit about your family. Did you have brothers and sisters, parents, and all that ...

CK: I had a sister when I was—you know she was just two years younger than me. And it's the strangest thing with her because she married a man that later divorced her—but I always thought that he would be homophobic to the Nth degree—and it turned out my sister was homophobic, not him. He said to her whenever I had a boyfriend ... and it was 1984 and I took him out to meet them and I found out that my brother-in-law said, "I don't care what he—who he loves, I don't care." And my sister was like "Well, I don't think it's right," you know. And I thought woah, jeez: I mean I was shocked, cause I thought that she would be very supportive and he would be horrible, but he was, he never had any problems with my sexuality and it just goes to show that you just don't know until you reveal things.

BL: So tell me a little bit about your parents.

CK: Oh, well my dad was an alcoholic but I never thought he was an alcoholic because he had a job. I thought, if you were an alcoholic, you couldn't have a job. And he always worked; he had many jobs. And I can remember my mom; she was a c-odependant, always badgering him, and I became co-dependant. I'm terrific, you know, I'm so attracted to alcoholic men and ... I haven't dated in years and years, but I've gotten involved in Al-Anon [Alcoholics Anonymous] and I've really been healing and learning—not to stay away from alcoholic men because they have a sickness and only they can cure it—I can't. But I always thought I could like my mom because she was always after my dad telling him: "Quit telling the kids you're going to take them to the amusement park, you always go out drinking." You know, like "quit lying to them!" And I always thought I always wanted her to be quiet, don't harass him.

My sister and I loved our dad like crazy; we both thought he was the greatest thing since sliced bread and I remember when we first moved to Wormleysburg: he bought me a baseball cap with an 'E' on it for Enola and all the other boys had 'W' on their caps, and they took my cap and threw it all over the place. And my dad was there one day and they were all in awe of him, you know, cause he was passing with all of us. But I have one blind eye and the vision is terrible, so I can't—I was never really good at sports. I loved them, I loved playing basketball and even

baseball, but I was never good at it because you need two good eyes or else you just can't, you know, like when they pass the ball to you and you're going for a layup. I could never coordinate that, the other guys were fantastic and I always missed it, you know. And so I realize that it was the eyes. And my dad would say to me, "get behind it, get behind it," and I would! But I still couldn't really, I mean I was—I needed glasses real bad, and I got them in Wormleysburg, and that was when we first moved there.

But I remember I was afraid to come out to my parents because I remember my father saying often, "That guy's queerer than a three dollar bill," or "That guy probably sits down to pee," and I thought woah, boy, I better not tell him that I'm gay—I better not, cause he ain't going to like that. And my mother I always thought would be way more accepting, and yet she wasn't ... at first.

She—I remember in 1981 I went to the bar and they were having a Mr. Buns contest in 1981 and I had no interest in doing that. Even though I love Miss America, I didn't want to be a contestant. And my buddies were with me in the bar that night and Gary Norton was organizing this and he says "Colin, are you going to enter the contest?" And all my friends all said: "Yes he is, yes he is!" and I said "Oh, I don't ... how many guys are in this?" And he said, "well you're the second one." And I thought, wow jeez that's not that much competition, okay okay just the two of us. Well it turned out there was 27 guys that night for the contest. And a couple of my friends were in the contest and one of them ... He and I were among the five finalists out of the 27. But I never had a good, a good image of myself. I didn't have good self-esteem. And I remember they were, they started to call out the second runner up and that was a friend of mine, and then they called the first runner up—and I started getting dressed. I was just wearing a jock strap because that's what they wanted in the Buns contest and as I ... You know, like I was putting my clothes on and they said "the winner is number two!" And that was me and I just about fainted. But you know, I just couldn't believe that I could win, and I won.

And afterwards I remember walking down the street and guys would say "Hey Mr. Buns!" And I was stunned that they were so out and they didn't worry—1981. They didn't. They had no qualm about what anybody thought and I was really proud of them for, you know—and being so friendly. I mean I had no idea who they were. I had never even known that they were at the contest. But I do remember one thing: that one of the guys that I dated, he was at the contest ... And he was a son of a bitch, and he came up to me afterwards and he said "well, you'll never be Mr. Cock." And I said to him, "Look, I have perfect anatomy, and don't you ever forget it." And that was because I had a boyfriend that was hung like a horse and I was embarrassed by the difference in our size and I'll never forget one night we were having sex and we went—I went to the, I told him I had to go to the bathroom and he said so did he, so both of us went to the bathroom and we were both standing at the toilet trying to pee and I started saying "I'm sorry, I'm sorry," and he said "for what?" And I said "well look at the difference between us! I mean it's night and day," and he said "look Colin," he said "I'm taller than you, I weigh more than you, you are perfectly proportioned," and I never forgot it. And when that son of a bitch of a boyfriend of mine said you know "you'll never be Mr. Cock," I said "perfectly proportioned—don't you ever forget it." And I don't think he knew what to say.

And I tried to be friends with him over the years but he was—he just was nasty and, you know ... and I used to think that I needed to help people to understand or to fix them. But I don't need to do that. You know, like if they don't want to talk to me or like me, that's okay, because

everybody has—they have the right to their own opinions and their own ideas. And that was part of my co-dependency. Like I know my mom was always wanting everybody to like her and she would do really nice things for people and I always did too, and ... but it was so that you'll like me. I'll do nice things for you so that you'll like me. And, you know, it was tough dating in the gay community cause a lot of men aren't healthy and they'd rather attack you than, you know, have camaraderie with you, and I've had to learn not to attack them. I mean, right now I've been attacking my ex but I didn't tell you his name and I won't. And I ... You know, like I try to be positive, even with him. But I don't see him anymore and I'm glad—cause, you know, like I can tell he doesn't like me—and I don't like him either so, you know, perfect. [Laughs]

BL: And what bar was it that you won that contest, remember?

CK: It was at the ... Oh, I know ... the second year in 1982 ... It was at the Strawberry, which is still down there. It was at the Rose. Yes it was at the Rose, and that was on second street. But that's been closed for years now, but that's—there was only two in town then. It was the Neptune and the Rose, and that's where it was, at the Rose.

BL: Okay. Go back and tell me a little more about your childhood growing up, in terms of what kind of experiences did you have with school, for example, and that sort of thing?

CK: Well, you know, when we moved to Wormleysburg ... I remember the first day of school. My sister and I moved from Enola and they told our parents that we, Enola schools, were not as up to the same level as Wormleysburg. They looked, they had higher standards, and neither of us were up to par with our grade. So they wanted both of us to go back a year. And my sister bawled and cried and said, "no, no I'm staying." So she stayed in third grade and flunked, and they put me back in fourth grade cause I didn't know how to resist—I didn't want to cry. But I remember when I went back to fourth grade, and I was tearful because I didn't want to do it. But I went in and I'll never forget the kids in the class were so nice. They were—they'd all gather around and they were making me welcome.

And there was a boy named Chuck, and that was my nickname in school, and I remember him saying to me, "Do you have a canary?" And I said, "No, we have a dog," And he just snickered ... and it took me a while to figure out that he was talking about a sex organ. He said, you know, "Do you have a canary?" and I thought that was bizarre—but he helped me to start to recognize that I was gay.

And I remember it was, you know, a month after we moved there in October ... I went up to the playground after school. I had to go home and change my clothes, and then I go up to the playground and play. And I remember that it got dark, and I was still at the playground and nobody else was there. I don't know. I don't remember anything that happened that night except looking out over the trees and the moon was bright and there was—the lights were on in the houses and I remember standing there thinking, "Why me? Why me, out of everybody in the whole world? Why am I the only person who likes guys? I don't get it, why me?" And I never, you know, I wouldn't talk to anybody about it, but I picked up my ears when anybody said anything about being gay.

And I gradually I learned there were feminine men, and I would think to myself, "well I'm not a feminine, so I must not be gay." But you know like the ... These other guys, they were very effeminate and I didn't think I was, but I was. I mean I know years later a friend of mine invited

me over and tape recorded our conversation, I couldn't believe it was me, because you know [in higher pitched voice] "Oh yeah, so yeah" [returns to normal voice] I'm talking like a girl, you know like in a ... And I never thought I did, but after that I really tried to talk more masculine. And I think I succeeded cause when I heard my voice later I thought, you know, I don't sound like a girl, but whenever you talk like a girl I think everybody assumes you're gay. But I've met a lot of guys who talk like girls and they're married and they have seven kids and I'm thinking like, Justin Timberlake, that guy, you know he's married, he's got a son, and he talks like a girl, and I always think, Lance Bass was in his group and I think that guy is more masculine than he is, and he's gay. He was on *Dancing With the Stars* and I loved him, but Justin Timberlake I can't handle him, you know. I just grrrrr when I see him.

But you know like I think that I was aware of my sexuality but I tried hard not to be attracted to men. I dated girls all through high school and college. I hated it because I knew that that wasn't me, but I went to church all the time and they never said anything positive about being gay, nothing. It was all, you know, negative. And I had pastors, you know, who would say things to me that insinuated that I was gay and I never had the courage to say, "What do you mean by that?" You know I would just let them say it and you know and be kind of embarrassed by it ... But I do remember when I was in college I met a guy who was very feminine, and I thought he was gay. He hung around with girls a lot, but I remember that I got to know him and I wasn't so attracted to him because he was so feminine.

But gradually you know he would come to my room and we'd talk and everything and I remember him saying to me one time, "I have a confession to make to you." And I wasn't surprised you know, and he said "I'm gay." And I said "Oh." I said, "Well, I have a confession to make to you: so am I. But I'm a Christian, I don't think I should be doing anything like that." And he said "Okay, okay. You know we're just friends, you know, like that's fine." But he came to my room one day when I was doing laundry over the weekend and I had a basket full of clothes and I was going through the door, and he was coming through the door, and he kissed me. Wow! [lifts arms up] I heard violins, and I thought I saw Elizabeth Taylor up on the screen ... You know in that picture, I think it was *Butterfield Eight*, I remember watching her and it was like wow! And that's what I felt like. And we had a great big picture window, and I could see me as Elizabeth Taylor up there and I loved it, you know, cause I thought wow! I am gay! Yessiree, cause man that was the best kiss I ever had.

I'd kiss girls and I'd get sick! I remember the first time it happened: I dated this beautiful girl in my class. Well she was in the class below me ... but I thought everybody was after her cause I thought she was the most beautiful girl in the whole school. But I don't think she was that popular but I just thought she was the end ... But we went out and we sat in the car and we talked for an hour or something, and she kissed me. I got sick. And I remember when I left her, you know when she went into the house when we were sitting outside her door and when I drove away I was in my dad's 53 Oldsmobile and I remember hitting the steering wheel and saying, "You like that, you like that!" [Shakes head] Trying to convince myself that, you know, that was okay. But boy when Greg kissed me, oooooowee ... Cause I always wondered, cause I used to think—I said, "why do people like to kiss? It's boring, I hate it." Greg kissed me and I knew why people kissed, you know, cause that was fireworks for me, you know....

And I always managed to pick unavailable men, not only alcoholics but unavailable. I had one boyfriend ... back I think it was in 1985, and I dated him for—I met him in May and I broke up

with him in October. Everybody broke up with me, I didn't break up with anybody. But I did break up with Mike, because he was so loving and supportive I couldn't stand it. I thought—I was always thinking ... you know I would get cards from him: I miss you, I love you, I can't wait to see you! And I'm thinking to myself, "this guy hardly knows me, how can he feel like this? This is crazy! I can't trust him."

And I remember he and I went to Rehoboth Beach [Delaware] and he was so loving and kind and everything, and I remember I thought we were going to find a room when we got there because it was September! We could find a room! When we got there we couldn't find a room! And we drove all over the place—no room. Mike said "let's go to the hotel." I said "we can't go there, I don't know what that costs but I know that's expensive." He said "I'll pay for it." I said, "Well I don't have enough money to do that." And he said, "I do! I have a credit card. I'll get the room."

So we got a room and they gave us two double beds and I said to him that we were going to sleep in separate beds because I did not want to have sex until I really got to know him and I think it depressed him but the one thing that happened right when we got into the room is I started crying and he said, "what's the matter?" And I said, "I don't deserve this," you know. And he said, "I love you. That's why I got the room for us because I love you." And I still didn't believe him—you know—that he could be real. So I remember I got us tickets to go to Williamsburg, and that was in October, the next month. And the date was coming up and I was getting more and more nervous. I called him up and I said, "Mike, we're not going to Williamsburg this year." And he said, "Why not?" And I said, "I just don't want to." And he said, "Well, what are you going to do with the tickets?" I said, "I'll sell them." And he said, "oh, okay." And we said goodbye, and that was it.

And I—I still run into Mike every now and then. He is a wonderful, wonderful man. And he's been with ... He met a friend of mine right after we broke up. He has been with that man for 30-some years and you know if I would have been healthier, he would've been here right now. And I really regret that I wasn't healthy. But I know that if we would've lived together I would've destroyed it, because I wasn't healthy. I didn't have good self-esteem and I thought it was my job to fix everybody, make them well, make them like me, all that stuff, which you can't do. That is impossible. If somebody doesn't like you, that's it, you know. There.—That's the end. You know.

And I don't waste time now on people like that, trying to get them to see me in a better light or a ... But, you know, it's one of the strangest things—because I do make snap judgements when I meet people. And I think to myself right away, "Don't like that one. Don't like that one." And what I've found that is so curious is that when I talk to these people, I find something to like in them, and some of them become very close friends. And I'm astonished, cause it's like I jumped to a conclusion—I thought, "I don't like them, they..." And the thing that I found out is the reason I don't like them is because they reflected the old me, you know, being really obsessive about everything. And you know and I would see them and hear them talking about how they had a bad relationship and they were going to get divorced and this and that and I would get angry listening to them ... And I—and I would be in meetings at Al-Anon and I wanted to say to them you know, "Shut up, I don't want to hear that." Because they would—they were speaking like the old Colin, and I hated it. I didn't like that, you know. They were presenting me with me, and that's what I hated.

But you know, whenever I discovered that, then I became good friends with them. And I remember one of them ... I went to a dinner party. Al-Anon has dinner parties and things like that and I went to it, and she was at a table and she said, "Colin!" And you know the old me would've been like woahhh [pushes hands away from body] but I went over and we had a wonderful time. And I keep learning that snap judgements don't work. You have to talk to people and find out. You may not have anything in common and you know ... Like in—that's the way I thought about Mike. I thought, "We don't have nothing in common because he's loving." But I didn't think I was unloving, but I was. I was, I didn't have the—I had no idea how to love someone else, I had to chase them, and I did.

Whenever, if somebody gave me a hard time, and they didn't want to go out with me or something, I was [slides arm out parallel to floor] I was after them like crazy, you see. And the guy at the contest that, you know, we only dated about a month or two, and when he left me. I talked to all his friends trying to get them to give me clues as to how to get in good with him and I still remember one night I went to the bar and I loved to dance and I loved pop music and they were playing George Harrison's song "Blow Away." It was 1979, it was a new song, and I loved that song, and so I said to this ex of mine, "Let's dance!" He said "No. I'm not dancing." And then I—then I said it again, "come on, come on, let's dance." He said "I said no, I'm not dancing." I said "Oh, come on, I love this song," and he says "you ask me that again and I'm leaving." I asked him again, and he walked out. I chased him, I went down the block with him and I put my hand on his arm as he was crossing the street and he shook it off and walked across the street and I stood and watched him and I think that is what helped me to get over him. Because I couldn't believe he could be that rude, but then I was pretty aggressive and, you know ... but I didn't consider my actions, just his. That was rude. And I, you know, I did, he and I became good friends, I mean, as good as you can get with somebody like that.

And I would see him at Gay Switchboard and that kind of thing, cause both of us were real active in, and both of us served as co-directors at one point or another. And I really liked working with the Switchboard, cause you know at that time there were a lot of guys and gals that called and didn't know where to go or what to do. And it was, it was really, really healing for me to talk to them and tell them you know that it's okay to be gay, there's nothing wrong with it, you know that's the way we were born and we need to accept it. And one thing out of scripture that I just adore, and I think most Christians ignore is: Jesus said, "and the truth will set you free." And he's right.

If you want to lie and pretend, oh I'm not gay I'm not gay ... I had a roommate here that ... he had sex with men constantly but he wasn't gay. Because he would never ask a man to have sex. They'd always ask him. He'd go to the gay bar and hang out, and they'd ask him, "Hey, you want to come home with us?" "Okay." But, he wasn't going to, you know, he was just going to be, let them use him, you know, and I often wanted to say to him, "but you're gay! Why don't you just admit it."

But he was Christian and he: "oh no, no, no, no, I cannot possibly be gay." And he campaigned for opposition to abortion and I think he rationalized his sexuality saying, "Well, I don't want to have a baby that a woman could abort, I'm going to have sex with men, then nobody's going to have a baby." But you know, like heterosexual men don't do that, they don't say, "well you know I don't want to have a baby with a woman so I guess I'll have sex with men." They don't do that. You know, like, ... but I never had the courage to say that to him.

I remember one time I did say something to him about ... A friend of mine told me to tell him that he was interested in him and he said to me, "What are you talking about?" And I said, "Well, you have sex with men." And he says, "Well, I don't do that all the time," or something ridiculous. And I felt—I was embarrassed by bringing it up. And I made a resolution right then: never talk to this guy about his sexuality because he is in rationalization about who he is and what he does. And he moved out of—he lived here for, I think it was three years, three years exactly. And he moved out in June and he was dead in November. You know, he had skin cancer and I can't help but think, you know, that like his dishonesty with himself contributed to that, cause Jesus is right. If you want to lie about who you are, you're going to have a rough time, because you gotta play charades all the time and pretend.

And I always hated those charades ... But whenever that boyfriend that I introduced my mother to ... It was in 1984, and he ended our relationship. And I thought I was going to die. But I found out that I could still live. It—I just remember that ... he, he ... I just believe that there could never be anyone but him for me because I was born the very first Friday of 1947, he was born the very first Friday of 1943, and I thought, "Perfect! We are perfect for each other! We're both Capricorn, everything's perfect." But it didn't work out, and I think that today he and I are still friends. He lives in another state and we do—we talk. Every birthday he calls me, every Christmas he calls, you know, like ... and I call him whenever I have something to share, but you know I'm not obsessive with him. I've gotten over him. I did carry a torch for him for like 22 years. Twenty-two years I thought we're going to get together cause I'm crazy about him. And I remember at the 22-year mark, my roommate was still here and he took care of the cats and I went to Massachusetts to visit my ex. And I was planning on staying two weeks. After a week he said, "Well, I think it's time for you to go because I've got a lot of things." He had horses and he ran a little farm and he had a lot of stuff to do and he said, "I think it's best that you leave after a week." And I did. And I was really depressed when I left, but on the way home I thought, "I can live without him. He's my friend, we're friends. I don't need him."

And I was astonished that I—how I got over it. I was really—the only way that I went to see him was a friend of mine called me from California and told me he was coming to Pennsylvania and he wondered—he didn't have a lot of money and he wondered if I could take him to New York so he could catch a plane. And I said "Yes, you can come. I'll take you to New York." And I was thinking, "Yeah, and then I'll go and I'll see my ex in Massachusetts." And it all worked out. But I think you know God plans things like that.

I have found that I always had faith in God, but boy it's gotten a lot stronger since I've been in Al-Anon because they practice faith. They practice talking to a higher power and listening to your higher power and I was astonished ... whenever I, after 22 years ... it was like, "I'm fine. You know, I don't need him, I'm enough." And that was really, really difficult. I still think that I have difficulty with committing to anyone because I think I've always ... My mother was a perfectionist, so am I. I like things perfect. And I'm learning that I'm imperfect—they're imperfect, they make lots of mistakes. But I have a sponsor in Al-Anon that makes tons of mistakes and that helps me, cause when she makes a mistake she corrects it. And she says, "Oh I did that wrong the other day, and I owe amends to so and so because I just wasn't thinking and I ..." and she calls the person and she says, "I'm very sorry for what happened between us." And when she does that, it educates me that I can do the same thing, and I do.

I used to argue with people whenever they would—if I crossed their boundary. I would argue with them like, “well I didn’t do anything wrong, what are you talking about?” And now, when they tell me “Hey, you crossed a boundary of mine. I didn’t like what you did,” my higher power steps in and says “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to do it, and I won’t do it again.” And what shocks me is the person says, “oh, I’m just a fussy budget. Don’t mind me,” and I say, “no no no no, you’re not, you’re not. I crossed a boundary, I’m sorry for it, and I’ll try not to do it again. I’ll work hard not to do that again.” And then you know like I get along better with people. I don’t spend time arguing. Every now and again, if somebody gets in my face, I will get mean, but I notice that in public, I am so much better than I’ve ever been before.

I just got a bill from the trash collection company. They want me to pay \$1.50 for these bags that you put your trash out in, and I’ve got, you know ... For the past two years I still have bags, because I don’t have that much trash to put out. And they were going to send me, they were going to charge me a late fee. And I called them up, and normally I would be irate. And I said to the woman, “I don’t understand why I have to buy these bags if I don’t need them,” and she said “well your township requires that. It’s our contract with them.” She said “You can take it to them and tell them that but you know there’s nothing I can do about that. I can remove the fee, the late fee, but you have to pay,” and I said “okay,” I said “I’ll take it up with the township.” Instead of bwaaa—bwa bwa bwa! And that’s you know the way I used to—I’d rip people apart cause I don’t like to be told I’m wrong.

BL: I want to get back to the Switchboard. The Gay and Lesbian Switchboard. Tell me how you first learned about the Switchboard and what made you want to get involved in the group.

CK: Well I remember it was 1977 and that was the year I moved into Harrisburg. And I looked up the Gay Switchboard in the phonebook, and I called them, and I hung up. And I called them several times and I hung up, because I was scared that if they knew I was ... If anybody found out I was gay I was going to get blackmailed—that’s what was going to happen. And so, finally, I did talk to somebody on the Switchboard, and the people that I met on the Switchboard were so accepting and warm and they didn’t threaten me, or you know, nothing like that. And they volunteered their time, their money, and their homes for us to have meetings and things.

And I was real active then, and I think it was in ... I believe it was 1980. I think I had—I can’t remember where I ... I was a co-director sometime between 78 and 80 but I can’t remember exactly when that was. But I remember in 1980, a fella that was one of the co-directors ... And we had—there was a woman, because they wanted a woman and a man to be co-directors, so we had that. Well, the woman—she was the only woman left in the group and she left. So there was no more women in 1980.

And the fella that was leading the group, he announced that he thought it was time to shut the Switchboard down. He thought that since we didn’t have any women and it didn’t seem like we were getting a lot of calls or something ... I can’t remember all of his reasons, but he announced that he thought we should close the Switchboard. And I went to the, my ex that had been co-director before, and told him about this. And I said to him, “Since we don’t have any women, you and I are going to have to run for co-directors in 1981...” I think it was ... I can’t remember if the new year started—I think it started in January. I don’t remember, but he and I were elected co-directors and I remember the outgoing co-director. One of his friends was the secretary of the group, and after he was re-elected secretary and me and my ex were elected co-directors ... and he brought a resignation letter to my house and put it in because he was angry that we won. And

I thought fine, we'll get another secretary, you know. I think my ex was magnificent working with the Switchboard, he was very good at that, and we kept the Switchboard going, and both of us—you know we didn't want to keep doing it. You need to give other people a chance to do things, and so we got new co-directors, and I remember I became the treasurer because I, the other treasurer was stealing money from the group, and I was upset as co-director when I found that out. I said "wait a minute, he can't be taking our money," and the other co-director said "well what can you do?" I said "well we can confront him," and he said "nah," he said "I told him he could borrow it if he needed it." I said, "well he took it! He didn't borrow it, he took it!" And nothing was ever done about it, so I ran for treasurer, and the new co-director spent money like it was water and I was watching the books. And I'll never forget: we had an outdoor meeting up in Negley Park [Lemoyne, Pennsylvania], and he was announcing the money he was spending on a refrigerator for the group and snacks for the refrigerator and all this other stuff. And I said, "Wait a minute. I don't have enough money here to pay for a refrigerator and all these other things you want to do. You can't be doing this." And he said, "Well we're doing it." And boy I lit into him like a bat out of hell. And I remember his boyfriend walking like tip toes around me because it made me angry that the Switchboard was being sabotaged by anybody. I—that made me furious.

BL: When you first started volunteering for the Switchboard, where were they located? Where were they headquartered?

CK: There were several buildings. I think, I think that we were in, there was a gay bar on... The Rose. The Rose had apartment—they had rooms and apartments upstairs, and that's where we started, in there.

BL: Okay are you sure it wasn't the old Strawberry?

CK: It might've been.

BL: Cause I think the old Strawberry is where I saw that the Switchboard—

CK: Was that the first one?

BL: Yeah. But the, before that, I think they were in a little-

CK: [points up] They were on the back porch of Jerry Brennan. He had, he enclosed his back porch—

BL: Okay.

CK: —and it leaked. You know, like it was freezing and they put in a little—he plugged in a heater, but you know it was a flimsy old thing, and it leaked. And people would drink coffee and sit on the back of the porch that was enclosed you know. But then, I think they got the bar, but wherever that bar was, it burned down.

BL: It burned, yeah.

CK: But I can't remember, I don't think that was the Rose, it was another...

BL: It was the old Strawberry.

CK: And that was on Second Street? I think-

BL: Yeah.

CK: And it burned, and when that happened, the Switchboard rented a closet at the YWCA on the second floor, and it was just—it was a broom closet. And we... It wasn't much bigger than, you know, my bathroom, which is—you know, it's tiny. But we had a desk in there and all that stuff and we went up there. And the Switchboard was really growing then, and I can't remember we did leave there. But I can't remember where we went after that. I know they eventually went on Birkbeck Street in the basement, and that was recent like the new—like in 90s or something they were in the basement or something ... And I don't think there is a Switchboard anymore, I think it's gone, yeah.

They have the gay center and they can meet there and everything, and I can't get over how healthy today's gay men and women are. I mean, they don't think nothing of ... Yeah I'm gay, so what? But boy I'll tell you, back in the 70's, you know I never heard anybody saying that, like they... It was like, oh well you gotta be careful, don't, you don't want that to get out, you know. And boy, today's young people I mean, they just throw me. Whenever I go to the Pride Fest, I see all these young guys and gals that ... They don't even—they don't need to talk about it. They don't defend themselves like, "hey, I'm me. You don't like it, fine." They—and I just want to hug all of them because I think that they're so positive, and that's refreshing to me, cause I just remember being so scared all the time, growing up.

When I was their age, oh jeez, I didn't want anybody to know cause I was afraid that I would get blackmailed or threatened or whatever. But, I remember junior high school though, I would get picked on by bullies, and my mother taught me ... When I was about ten years old, the kid across the street and I had an argument, a fight, and I ran home trying to get in and my mom had the door locked. I rang the buzzer, she opened the door, and she said "what's the matter?" And I said "Ronny's after me, let me in," and she said "oh no, you ain't hiding behind my apron," she turns and she shuts the door. I thought I was going to die, but he caught up to me, and nothing happened. So in junior high when bullies picked on me ... and I remember one in seventh grade after school one day this one guy walked up, punched me in the stomach, and I hit him right back and he said, "You hit like a girl." I said "That's all right. You hit me and I'm going to hit you right back you son of a bitch!" And nobody ever picked on me after that in seventh grade.

And I had friends that were always getting beat up, and I said "hit them back," and they said "I don't want to stoop to their level," and I said "stoop to their level!" And you know I remember in eighth grade I went to school and one of the biggest bullies in the class was in my home room and I walked in and he said "Hey Kreitzer, how are ya?" I almost fainted, because, you know, he was always picking on me, but I think he probably heard that I stood up for myself and he was okay with me. And I would tell all these friends of mine that you know were always getting kicked and punched, you know, kick them back, punch them back. And they wouldn't do it.

BL: And at what age did you really start your coming out process? Do you remember what...

CK: I think it was when Greg kissed me. [Laughs] I think that's when it happened because I was positive.

BL: And at what age was that do you remember? Or what year it was or...

CK: I think I was about 25, it was 1974. I think I was... 27? And I remember that really helped me to be more open with people. But it's the strangest thing that, you know, after I won the buns

contest, my mother, her roof leaked. I didn't make enough money hardly to cover my rent so I couldn't help her with it, but when I won the buns contest they gave me 50 dollars, and I thought wow! And I went to her and I said, "Here, I've got 50 bucks for you roof." And she said, "Where'd you get that?" And then I thought well I need to—I need to come out to her. And I said, "Well, I won the buns contest and it's thanks to you, because you have a great backside, and so do I." And she ... and I ... and she was: "Oh, well... you're gay." And I said, "Yeah," and she said, "O, don't you think it'll change?" I said, "No mom. I've known this since I was nine. And now, I'm 34? It's not going to change." But my mother went to, you know, the parents of gays—

BL: Oh, PFLAG [Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays].

CK: She went to those meetings, and when my boyfriend came down from Massachusetts, I introduced her to him and I really expected her to be like [leans back and makes disgusted facial expression] "Oh." She wasn't. You know before we left, she went over to Richard and hugged him and kissed him, and I was thrilled. But I never wanted to talk to my dad about it. But when I was with the Gay Switchboard, they gave us a whistle that said "Gay Switchboard" on this whistle because we were supposed to use that if we got into trouble. And I left it in his car, I left my keys in his car—I don't know how I did that, but I left them in his car. And the next time I got in the car, he said, "Here you left your keys." And you know, he could've seen that "Gay Switchboard" but he never mentioned it and we never talked about it. But I know he was okay with it because my brother—I have a very young brother. He's 19 years, younger than me ... he's an alcoholic and I never see him because he's an outlaw. But he would say to my dad that I, he told my dad that I was gay, and I think my dad said "so?" It was okay with him, you know, and my brother thought that my dad would disown me or do something like that, but I was always right about my dad. He was a great, great man, and I remember the ex that I worked with on the Switchboard, his car broke down. My dad was always, always working on cars. My dad came over and fixed it for him. I don't know what it had to do ... I'm not sure if he was even able to fix it, or if he told him what to do. I can't remember, but my dad came over and helped him and you know, he never said to me, "Who is this guy? Is this your boyfriend?" Cause you know I was pretty close with him at that time. I mean I thought I was, but he didn't know how to love anybody either. We were a perfect pair, neither one of us knew anything about love, nothing! So, we were great for each other. [Laughs] You know...

BL: What else do you remember about early gay life in Harrisburg when you first came out? Do you remember going to some of the bars and...

CK: Oh yeah, and I ... I remember, I never went to a bar before I came out, because I hated alcohol. I loved my dad, but I hated alcohol because of what it did, and I was always afraid that if I drank, I'd become an alcoholic. But I learned over the years that I do drink, but I'm not an alcoholic. I can, I hate beer with a passion. My dad let me taste a beer of his when I was seven and I thought "ewww, yuck," cause, you know, he bartended for my grandfather who owned a bar, and we'd get orange sodas for free! He was tending the bar, we'd get orange sodas, he let me taste that and I said "nooo, no no no, I want orange soda." And my ex on the Switchboard used to say, "You oughta try a beer, they're good!" I said "I hate those things." He said, "Here taste it." I said, "tastes as bad as it did when I was seven." And I don't want any of it. And I still like drinks that have a lot of sugar in them, and I had to get off of White Russians and things like that and drink Gin and Tonic with diet tonic in them and things like that.

But in the gay bar, I can remember that the guys who tended bar, the one at the Rose, he owned it. I think his lover owned it, but he pushed drinks, and he always tried to make you, he always made me feel weird if I wasn't drinking like a fish and, but I refused. You know I would get diet soda, and I would only allow myself one drink, because with diabetes ... I remember one night I think I had two drinks, or maybe three, but I couldn't feel my feet touching the ground when I left, and I thought "ohhh boy, I must be drunk. I'm not doing that again." And I never did. I allow myself one, and that's it. And that doesn't affect me the way two or three—and I still can't remember if it was two or three but I don't drink a lot—and it's just, a glass of wine. And at the gay bar, I remember a lot of ugliness between people. I mean fighting, and things like that, over a boyfriend or something. It didn't seem to be real civil. I mean most of the time it was good, but I really hated those kinds of confrontations when people would threaten one another and doing things like that. But I don't think I ever tried to mediate, because I thought I'd get slugged, you know, and I just sort of back out. [Laughs]

BL: What about other gay organizations, did you get involved in?

CK: Dignity. Yeah. Dignity. And Jerry Brennan was... He was really a tough guy. Real tough. He didn't take no nonsense, and he controlled. He controlled Dignity, he held on to that position, and it took years before a candidate would stand against him, and she won because people were sick of him controlling everything. But I always liked Jerry because he would tease me all the time. He always treated me like a newbie, and he'd always tease me about being gay and everything and I just went along with it and I always enjoyed Jerry. I know he was pretty rough; you didn't cross him or you got it. Cause I started going to MCC [Metropolitan Community Church] because it was a much larger crowd, you know—like there were many more people at MCC. But I ... I really grew tired of MCC because of all the favoritism that went on. The pastor expected everybody to kiss her behind, and they did, but I didn't. And she didn't like it. And I just ... I put up with that for years. I think I was with MCC about twelve years I think....

BL: When did you start going there, do you remember?

CK: It was 1982. I think it started in 1980, and I think I started in 1982. And I became the editor of the newsletter, because Gary was—he was very—He was a wonderful guy, like you know inclusiveness, and he would welcome everybody. He'd call Dignity and say "come on, we're going to have a meeting," you know, "we want you guys to get involved and let's get together and let's do things together," But Dignity was sort of like [puts hands up with palms facing away] "meh, we're not sure." But Gary would still be real friendly and open to everybody, and I remember that I think that the MCC thing ... I was only with it I think like two year. Yeah, when I started dating Richard in 1984 I went to a congregational meeting. And Adam Debold I think was the leader of—I think he was the leader of the group and ... like at the district or something like that—

BL: District, yeah. He was district coordinator.

CK: And he made the announcement. He said—he said, "Are there any ideas for the group? Things you'd like to do with the group? I'd just like to have some suggestions." And I brought up some suggestions. I don't even remember what they were, but he attacked me, and he said, "Well obviously you don't understand what this group does," – or something that I thought was ridiculous. And when he said that I thought, "Oh, okay. I'm done." And that was like 1985 cause

I was getting ready to move to Massachusetts and I thought: “you know I don’t need this. You know, he asks for suggestions, and then attacks you. No! I ain’t doing that!”

And whenever Eva came, I liked her a lot, I really liked her, but she hated me. I know she hated me because I spoke my mind and didn’t like that. She wanted you to go along with whatever she wanted to do, and I was ... She came in ’91, and at Christmas ’99, I would read to the congregation *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*, which was a children’s story about exclusion—not including everybody. And the congregation loved that story, and I’d read it. Every other year I’d read a children’s—I mean another Christmas story—and some of them were adult Christmas stories, like you know ... But I’d always read a story and the congregation just loved it, and I still remember there was a woman who had a business in New York, and she heard the first edition, because I’d read one chapter every week for six weeks. And she was at the first one, and I was standing on the side here and she said, “I’m so disappointed.” She said, “I’m going to be in New York for the next two weeks and I won’t get to hear the next two issues of the *Christmas Pageant*,” and Eva said, “Well, he’ll read it on New Year’s; you don’t have to worry about coming.” And I thought, “You don’t want people to come to church? Jeez!” You know, but, that’s the way she was. And in 1999, we had posters up, *Best Christmas Pageant Ever* beginning the week of Thanksgiving, and I had it all prepared and everything, and we had a children’s Sunday school class at the time, and I had my book to read and Eva and I were leaving the office, and she said, “Oh by the way, we’re not reading the Christmas Pageant this year. You’re going to have to read it to the children.” And I thought, “What?” But I mean she did it right on the cusp ... I mean, what could I do? I couldn’t say that the congregation’s expecting it, it’s been advertised, they love it! But I [microphone falls and sound fades out temporarily] She was a bulldozer and she just....

CM: I’m going to hit stop.

BL: Yeah.

[video 2 ends]

CK: You know she told me that I have to read it to the children. I went in to the children to read it, and I read it with them, and the thing I found so amazing is that these kids all knew the story, and as I was reading it, they were reading it with me, because they knew—they loved the characterization of the children—because these kids were hoodlums that entered the church and took over the Christmas pageant. And I would read their dialogue in character, and so would they. You know the kids would go—they would play whichever character it was, and they just loved it. And I thought to myself, watching them, I thought, “These kids really love this story, I’m going to let them read it,” and I copied the bulletin for years at the church because I loved doing it. And I started doing that in the church that I went to because they always needed a volunteer for that and I loved doing that.

So I did it, and I did it at MCC for years. So after that episode, I just copied the story about 15 times so every kid could have a booklet and they could read it. And I left a note for the teacher saying that I thought it would be better if they read it because they’re so into it—they love to do the characters, and I would prefer that they read it. And I never went back to the church. And Eva never called me about that. I think she knew that I was angry, but she didn’t have the guts to face me. And I think it was a year and a half later, I got a call from her and she said, “Colin could

you come and visit me in the office?” And I thought, “Oh wow, a year and a half later and now I’m going to get an apology. I can’t believe it.”

I went into the office and she said, “The board had a meeting, and they want the key back.” And I thought—what! And I never brought anything up about it. You know, I wanted to say: “You know Eva, it was really criminal of you to stop the Christmas pageant when everybody loved it as much as I did. And I found it real hard to forgive you. And I just can’t come here with you railroading everything your way. I’m not going to do it.” But I didn’t say it.

And I remember I brought my best friend with me because I was afraid I might choke her if she did something like she did. But I didn’t because I had my best friend, and Eva said to my best friend, [hold out arm] “Oh, you can take a tour of the church while I talk to Colin.” And I said, “Oh no she can’t. She’s coming in.” And Eva stood in the doorway with one of the board members and went [shrugs shoulders with arms out] like that. And I thought, “You witch”... But you know, like my best friend came in and sat down. The board member came in and sat down, and she had her say. And I said, “Well I don’t have the key, but I’ll go get it and bring it back.” And I didn’t get into any kind of argument at all.

And the board member, later, told me—she said, “I left the church too, because,” she said “I was tired of Eva railroading everybody to do as she wanted done.” And the thing I learned about other churches is that pastors aren’t board members. They aren’t allowed. But at MCC they’re allowed, and they rule. In Al-Anon, we have a guideline. Our—our group representative governs ... Our group representative does *not* govern, and it’s up to the group and the group to do that. But Eva was always a mess. Like ... And I remember times of telling her, she’d be in a real bad mood and I’d say: “Eva, did you eat today?” And she’d say, “No, no, no, I haven’t had time.” “I can run over to the store and get you some ... There’s a fast food over there I can get you something.” “No, no, I haven’t got time.” And I thought okay stay grouchy.

And she’d yell at me because the board wasn’t copied properly. She didn’t number the pages—sixteen pages, no numbers. “I had to do the bulletin over,” and I’m thinking: “Well, you didn’t put numbers on the pages, that’s why. And you know you could’ve really handled this—if you just would’ve renumbered it.” And we could’ve had fun with it—we could say, “Okay, board is out of order. Colin didn’t have the numbers, so I’ll have to tell you what page one is. You to go back to the seventh page to get to page one, and play with it!” But you know, she’d rather waste money, print more, have a lot more stuff ... And stuff like that really irritated me. But I’m learning to, you know.... I run into Eva every now and again and we are real cordial, you know.

She’s far more pleasant than she ever was because I don’t threaten her now, Cause I always spoke my mind with her; I told her what I thought. And that didn’t mean that it had to go my way, but it did have to go her way ... cause I remember that she wanted us to pay someone to sign the congregation for the deaf— sign language. And one of the members said at the board meeting ...you know, they invited the whole congregation and everybody could vote. And one of the board members talked to the deaf people. And they told him, “We don’t need a signer during the service, cause we read lips, and we can hear when just one person is talking. Some of us have good enough hearing to hear that, so we don’t need a signer. We need a signer whenever we’re in the congregational meeting afterwards when everybody’s talking, cause we can’t focus on the person we’re talking to and we get all messed up.” And Eva was like, “Well, we need a signer.” Three hundred dollars a month. Well, she lost by one vote—my vote. And then she said, “Well

we'll see about that." But they never, she never took it any further. But I was really appalled that she wouldn't accept it.

In Al-Anon, I've learned when I go into a group—often the way I feel about an issue, I vote the way I feel. We don't vote out loud, like at MCC. We voted private ballot. But I lost, and our group consensus tells us that group consensus is God speaking through the group, and I accept it. But you know, Eva didn't do that. And I know I was bullheaded then, and still a tad bullheaded now because ... I think that I just go away whenever things like that happen. I can make a suggestion now without blowing a gasket. But I find that, you know, if people—if it's real important to me, and it's not important to the group, then I leave. And that's healthy—you know, if the group is going to be bothering me when I go, I leave.

And I can't remember when I left the Switchboard. I think it was when I bought my first house, 'cause I renovated it and I was amazed that I could do all the things I did. I did plumbing, I remodeled the kitchen, the bathroom ... built closets. And boy did I hate to leave that house, but it was in a bad neighborhood, so.... *This* house was a lot more expensive but it's a great neighborhood. My neighbors are fantastic. And some of them—my one neighbor ... I know they're not gay, but they have that gay equal sign on their truck. I think their son is gay. They never told me that—I'm afraid to ask them—but I think he's gay. And he's living in Israel, but I'll bet you if gay people see that sign, they'll probably think that they're gay. [Laughs]

You know, when they drive by, like hey! But I love those people because they have a sign in their yard that says "I'm grateful that you're my neighbor." And they exhibit that, constantly. And last year when we had that awful snow, everybody on this block was out helping each other, clearing the snow, shoveling, using the snow blower, I mean all, up and down the block, and it... I don't remember anything like that anywhere else that I lived. But here, it's like these folks are for real. And they don't have any qualms about anybody's sexuality, their religion, anything. They treat people like human beings, and that's a good lesson for me, too.

BL: We didn't talk any about your work experiences, where did you work, 'cause you're retired now, correct?

CK: Right.

BL: Yeah, so tell me about your, where you worked and what you did.

CK: Well, when I graduated from college I...

BL: Where did you go to college?

CK: West Chester.

BL: Okay.

CK: State College. Now it's a university, but when I graduated, that was 1975—January 1975. And I thought, as a man I could get a job easily, but I couldn't. I went to Delaware. I went to West Virginia. I had an interview in West Virginia, and when I got there the guy said: "We need a science teacher in the Middle School." I said "I hate science! I ain't teaching science, I hate it!" And he said "Well, that's what we need." and I said, "Well then you don't need me." And I never got another interview.

But I did substitute, and I hated it, cause kids ... Never ... They didn't act the way I did when I was in Elementary School. I never talked back to a teacher because they would correct me and I didn't like it. You weren't allowed to correct them in 1976-77—not allowed to correct them. Don't touch them ... you know. So they did whatever they wanted, and I thought, "This is what I trained to do? No, I'm not doing it."

So, my dad knew somebody that worked at BlueCross Blue Shield Insurance and I started working there as a claims adjustor. What I did was I processed doctor's bills to pay the beneficiaries. I worked with the Medicare, and paying the doctors who provided services for Medicare patients, and I loved it, cause I—My mother worked there too, but she hated it, because she hated being at a desk. And I loved it! Being at a desk, she said: "How do you stand being at a desk." And I said "I love it, cause I hate running around and losing things, you know." She loved it, she was all over the building when she got a new job. She had the same kind of job I had. Got another job as a secretary for the maintenance man—and she was everywhere over the building and she adored it. And she said, "You ought to try to get a job like mine." I said, "I don't want a job like yours." And she retired from there.

And I had some real crummy supervisors, and I had some great supervisors. But you know, I'll never forget one of my supervisors. They had to give us a review every six months, and she said to me: "Colin, you adjust better than everybody in the department to change." And I thought ... me? Cause I hate change. But she said that other people would complain and moan and groan, and I never did. But I thought ... well what can you do? They're not going to change it just because I don't like it. And I'd never say anything. And I was shocked that she would tell me that I adjusted to change better than anybody and it was hard for me to accept praise, but I remembered it. And I thought, well you know, maybe I am good at, even though I don't like it. I must be pretty good at if my supervisor gives me points and she gives me raises all the time, so she has to be right, you know. Who am I?

BL: So, were you involved in any other gay organizations? or—okay yeah?

CK: Well, volleyball. We had gay volleyball. That was so much fun and I remember when we were at the Pow Building it was really run down and the floors were crooked. And I would take a basketball with me because they had basketball nets, because I loved basketball. I'm lousy at it, but I was on a team and we almost won the championship, but it wasn't because me, because I was the worst player, I think, on the squad. But I still loved it. Cause one of the guys on our squad played high school basketball, and I remember him saying to me one time "You're really lousy, Colin, at basketball." And I said, "I know, but I love it." And when I would go to volleyball, I'd take my basketball, and I'd play, and some of the guys would say, "Oh Colin, that's too butch." And I thought, well, I love it, so I'm going to bring it, cause I love it. You might not like it, but, you know, too bad. I enjoy basketball.

But you know when we played volleyball, I found that the people that came to that. They weren't all volleyball stars and nobody cared. And nobody made a big deal out of ... you know, like: "You've gotta be good to be on my team!" There was none of that. Some of the guys were picked last, and they would say, "Well, you know, I'm not that good, and I understand, and all..." And they said, "It's kind of embarrassing, but you know, I understand. Everybody wants to win."

But then I started going to—the Salvation Army had a volleyball and *those* guys were brutal. They—BAM! They pushed that ball down and, oh man! I remember once ... You know, there's rules in volleyball. You're not allowed to go over the opposing—You're not allowed to get your foot under the net over onto the other guys' side. Well one of the guys that was on the opposite side of me had his foot over the net there and I jumped up to hit the ball and came down and landed on his foot, and I twisted my ankle. It was so bad I couldn't walk; they had to carry me out of there. I was so mad at that S.O.B. for, you know, not following the rules, but they had to win! And to me, it really wasn't that important who won, cause I remember when I used to think it was very important. My self-esteem was on the line, I had to win.

And I had a buddy that I played tennis with and I'd argue with him over every ball, you know. "That was in!" "No it wasn't, it was out." "It was in." And we'd argue and argue, and one day he said, "Well you're always right about everything." And I said, "No, I'm not." And he said, "Yes you are—you argue about everything." And I thought, well I'll show him: I won't argue with him. And so we played, and when he would say, "That's out," I'd say, "Okay." It almost killed me, I thought I was going to pass out from shock, because I was positive it was my point, but I played the game. I think he won, and afterwards I thought, boy I had more fun not arguing than I ever did arguing with him.

So at any of the volleyball games, it didn't matter to me win or lose, because nobody was recording this, as you know—like, "Hey Colin's team won five in a row"—You know, that didn't matter. We had fun. And I stopped going to that volleyball at Salvation Army with all those brutes and some of them.... I remember one of the guys: he was the nicest guy, but boy he had to win. And he was a good player! I mean, man he'd spike that ball all the time. And I haven't seen him in years, but every time I'd see him ... Great guy, great guy, but had to win, had to win. And sometimes I wanted to say to him: "You'll have more fun if you just let it go," cause it's more fun than being right all the time, you know. I'd like to run into him again.

BL: Let me just look through my notes here about different topics to make sure I didn't miss anything.

[A cat walks up to Colin.]

CK: [whispers to cat] Hi girl, my little girl. My little baby. See, she hates to be held.

BL: [Laughs]

CK: See, if I pick her up she'll run.

BL: [Laughs] In terms of—You mentioned that since leaving MCC, I guess you've gotten back involved in another church?

CK: Al-Anon really is my church.

BL: Okay. When did you start going to Al-Anon, do you remember?

CK: I started going, I was in therapy after my relationship with Richard broke up. I went into therapy. That was like 1985, and I started going to "Adult Children of alcoholics." I didn't think I needed to go to Al-Anon, but when I got another therapist, she said "Yes, you need to go to Al-Anon. And I went, but I only went for about 3 or 4 years—but I don't remember how long. And I thought, hey I'm cured, I'm out!" But all the old stuff comes back if you don't practice, so I went

back to Al-Anon in 2012—and I still remember my anniversary date, cause it was 10-11-12, easy to remember, you know. October 11th, and that's your anniversary and every anniversary you get a coin in Al-Anon.

And I tried going to a couple other churches, but I found myself running up against similar things to what happened in MCC. Like I remember one of the churches, they said that they wanted you to go—they said that you *must* attend two congregational—you have to attend two meetings for membership in the church. You had to attend both meetings, or you couldn't join the church, and that was the rule. And I thought that's fair. So I went to the first one and it was history and I loved it and I thought it was great. I really liked everything about the church, I thought it was just great. But then the second week they brought in a holy roller to speak and my child inside was terrified, cause he was screaming, going up and down the aisles, you know like [lifts arms up] "Praise the Lord!" And I was scared. And in the past I would sit there and pretend I wasn't afraid, but I thought, I'm taking care of myself, I'm getting out of here. And I stood up and left, and that was the second congregational meeting after the service.

But I went to my sister's cause she was building a shed and she needed help. So I was helping her and I was going to go back, but we got so involved that I never went back. But a couple weeks later I went to church and the pastor said, or one of my friends came up to me and said "congratulations!" And I said, "for what?" And she said, "Joining the church." I said "I didn't join the church, and he told us that we have to be at both meetings," and she said "Well, they announced your name for a membership." And I said, "but I didn't join." And the secretary called me and said "I have your membership here. Would you like me to mail it or would you like to pick it up?" I said, "Put it in the trash! I never joined!" She said "It's no trouble to mail it." I said "but I didn't join! Put it in the trash!" And you know that ended that experience.

And I've thought about going to some other churches, but I find in Al-Anon, people respect each other. They don't force you to do things or tell you that you can't have a different opinion from somebody else. One of my friends just recently had a difference of opinion with another member and they got into a fight in the meeting, and my friend said, "I didn't mean to offend, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to do that, I was just expressing how I felt about this issue." And I called her to talk to her and she said "I still feel bad about that." I said, "but you did the right thing. You apologized, and I really am proud of you for standing up for what you believe in." And she said "I'm still going to apologize again because I don't want him to think that I wanted to cause him trouble." I don't think I've ever seen anything like that in the churches. Now, I'm sure it has occurred and I haven't seen it, but at MCC, there was a lot of screaming between people, like telling them "Hey, you bought this, I want that money for it right now!" That's the treasurer talking to one of the members that didn't pay their bill for some sale they had or something, and I kept thinking boy oh boy, why can't he just, all you have to do is say, "Hey, I'd like to make a deposit, when do you think you could get me the money? Cause we're a little behind." You don't have to scream, but ... I guess people get results, I guess, and they think "well, I'm going to keep doing it."

But I find the results are way better when you respect other people and you listen to what they have to say, cause I think I was always preoccupied with my way....I want my way. That's why I got into that thing with the co-director that wanted to spend all the money, man I went into him like a buzz saw, and today, I'd never have done that. I think I would've said, "I don't understand why you're spending this money because we don't have it. Could we have a fundraiser? Could

we do..." You know, civil. You don't have to be nasty. But growing up, I learned to be nasty. If people got into my face I could get nasty, you know.

BL: Is there anything else that you can think of that we've missed in your background that you want to talk about?

CK: Well I think we've covered everything, I mean this tape will probably be way too long, now. [Laughs] They'll probably say we gotta cut three-quarters.

BL: No, we're happy to have it, so. Okay. Anything that you can think of?

CM: No, I think we're good.

BL: Okay, great. Well thank you so much Colin, we appreciate your interview and we appreciate your time.

CM: Thank you.

CK: Sure, yeah.