

Interviewee: Ted Martin

Interviewer: Lonna Malmsheimer

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Abstract:

Prior to coming out at the age of 32, Ted Martin had worked for many years for the government and public policy organizations, chiefly in the areas of communications and advocacy. Martin lived in Washington, D.C. and worked for Congress before returning to Pennsylvania, where he worked at the Historic Harrisburg Association and then his alma mater Dickinson College, at which point he came out. He became involved with the Team Pennsylvania Foundation and became part of the Rendell administration, serving in the Department of Community and Economic Development and as an advisor on LGBT issues. He currently works as the Executive Director of Equality Pennsylvania, the PA LGBT advocacy organization. In this interview, he discusses his life prior to, during, and since coming out, as well as the ways in which being out and gay has affected his life and his work.

LM: My name is Lonna Malmsheimer, I'm here with the LGBT History Project, and I'm interviewing this morning Ted Martin. This is June 4th, 2013. Would you please state your full name?

TM: Sure. It's Ted Martin.

LM: [chuckles] That's easy enough. Birth date and place?

TM: April 20th, 1965, and I was born in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, which is in Fayette County in Western Pennsylvania.

LM: I know. Parents' names?

TM: My mother's name was Bernadine Woods—is her maiden name—Martin, and my father's Ted Martin as well.

LM: Okay. Did you have any siblings?

TM: I have one sister. Her name is Lori (sp?).

LM: Is she older or younger?

TM: She's three years younger.

LM: Okay. What were your parents' occupations?

TM: My father was a carpenter and a coalminer, actually, and my mother worked part-time at the Montgomery Ward Jewelry counter.

LM: Okay. How long have you been living in Central PA [Pennsylvania]?

TM: Well, I went to college here from 1983 to 1987, so I lived in Carlisle [Pennsylvania] for four years. Then I left. Then I came back in 1995, and I've been here ever since.

LM: 'Kay. Where did you go to school?

TM: So, I went to high school at Father Geibel Memorial High School, which is a Catholic high school in Connellsville [Pennsylvania], which is where I grew up. And then I went to Dickinson College.

LM: Which is where we met.

TM: Exactly.

[“Stop!” is shouted in the background; the video cuts and picks up again]

LM: Is it okay now? I'm getting through a lot of this short stuff quickly.

TM: Sure.

LM: How many years of schooling did you have total?

TM: I had—I have a Bachelor's Degree, so four years of college.

LM: Okay. Are you a member of a church?

TM: Not officially, no.

LM: Okay. Were you ever married?

TM: No.

LM: Do you have any children?

TM: No.

LM: Grandchildren? [chuckles]

TM: No.

LM: Not likely. What—what about your work history? What occupations have you worked through since you graduated from college?

TM: Sure. So, my occupations have always—I've always worked for non-profits, so I've, I've worked for—I've never worked for a for-profit anything. So, my occupations have always been around government or public policy, and usually between some element of advocacy and communications is really the work that I've done the most of since, since college. [nodding] And, you know I think it's really been the communication skills that I've used the most—that have, that have kept me employed for the longest, and I think that's probably been the centerpiece of my—my work. I always seem to be advocating for something as well, too, so I always had—I think it seems like I've always most happy when I've been advocating for something or had a reason, or there was something that drove my work.

LM: Could you name particular organizations that you've worked for?

TM: Sure, sure. So, after college, I worked for eight years for the U.S. Congress. I worked for the House of Representatives. I worked for the House Education and Labor Committee. And, I started out as a Lyndon Baines Johnston intern at a \$1000 a month, which was big money in 1987. And, I ended up as a Deputy Chief of Staff when I left. I came back from Washington [D.C.] to Carlisle, I worked for Dickinson College. I don't remember exactly how long, but I worked for there for three years—I did public relations, essentially, for them. I ended up leaving there to go to Historic Harrisburg Association where I was—which is the city's architecture preservation organization, and I was the Executive Director for three years. That's where I really learned to fight with city councils, I like to think, and be a really—an advocate for sometimes things that aren't always popular. I left there to go to Team Pennsylvania Foundation, which is a private-public partnership that does economic development. It actually—it actually kind of advocates for business growth in Pennsylvania. It was sort of an interesting switch for me, and I did that for three years. And then I went to the Department of Community and Economic Development. I was appointed by Governor Rendell, and I did marketing, so I marketed the State's business programs. I was Executive Director of Economic Development Marketing—was my title. And I was there for seven years, I think? Seven years? And then I started this job three years ago—three years ago as of June first, and I've been the Executive Director of Equality Pennsylvania, which is the statewide LGBT Advocacy Organization since 2010.

LM: So, Equality Pennsylvania is the first G—GLBT advocacy organization you've worked for?

TM: It's my first professional gig as a professional homosexual, yes, that it is. [laughs] That it is.

LM: Okay. Did you work before you went to college?

TM: My father was a carpenter, and so I used to do a lot of work with him. I actually did a lot of work with him as a sort of handyman and hated it. I did every—I did everything, but it was not my favorite thing to do, and I think my father knew that, and I think that's why they encouraged me to go to college, and get out of Western Pennsylvania as quickly as I could, but I did do that, and then actually for three summers during college, I was a tour guide, so I stayed the summer, and I did tour guide work, and I did some office work at college as well in the Office of Student Services with Mary Francis Carson and did a lot of that work.

LM: Did you have any involvement in college with gay organizations?

TM: Well, I was a member of a fraternity. [laughs] Which—which technically is it—no, I did not. I mean, I really didn't. I was pretty closeted 'til I was 32, and so... and you know, it was an odd time, I mean, it was the mid-80s. It wasn't the end of the AIDS crisis or the HIV crisis, but it was sort of the beginning of the end, or at least, the height of it. I was deeply closeted. I was incredibly conflicted. I certainly knew that I was gay. I certainly knew there were gay people around me, but it just wasn't a time. I think it just wasn't a time or a place where, you know, LGBT issues were talked about or advocated for... [nods]

LM: Was Dickinson a difficult place at that time?

TM: [shakes head] No. You know, I had a wonderful time at Dickinson. I really... you know, I had a great four years. I think I enjoyed so much of it. It helped me to grow up, it helped me to be outgoing, it taught me how to work with many people... so no, I mean, I don't—it wasn't a bad experience at all. I think if I look back, I guess at regrets, perhaps, you know, my regrets are for—like didn't come out earlier, I guess. But, you know, I think it's all worked out well for me, and my life, I guess, would have been very different, so... you know, there are the regrets that I hold about not being out in my 20s, which of course is, you know, that decade where you're supposedly the best-looking, the most sexually active, and all that kind of stuff, but you know, I think it is what it is, so... it didn't really... I think that didn't all really happen 'til much later for me.

LM: Okay. Did you serve in the military?

TM: No, no.

LM: Okay. Memberships in any organizations, fraternal societies, professional organizations...?

TM: You know, I was in a fraternity during college. I've always been, you know—I've always been involved in some type of volunteer work. I've always been involved in some type of a volunteer work. You know, when I was in Washington, I did volunteer work at a soup kitchen. I've always been involved with, you know, preservation organizations—architectural preservation organizations, some type of history organization. I've always been a board person—I mean, in a—you know, I was on—

LM: We should have you interviewing.

TM: [chuckles] Yeah.

LM: We should have you on the steering committee. [laughs]

TM: [chuckles and grimaces] Like I need more time—like I need any more things to do, but... No, I mean, I think I've always been—you know, I was on the board of Common Roads, I was on the board of the community center, so, I've always been involved in it, in some way. There's never been a time—Let's just put it this way, it's been rare in my life when there hasn't been some kind of volunteer activity taking my time.

LM: When did you first realize—now we get going—

TM: Sure.

LM: When did you first realize you were gay?

TM: You know, I think, if I think—‘cause people ask that all the time—it had to have been, [shrugs] I think I knew. I mean, I think I just knew I was different. I think I knew I was conflicted. I think I knew I was—there was something holding me back. You know, I was raised Catholic, which wasn’t a bad experience either, I mean, it was all—you know, I had a wonderful experience—went to Catholic school—12 years—and that was all wonderful. I think I just knew that there was always something that kept me back from being part of, you know, the larger fun that my coll—you know, my classmates were having. And, you know so I would say, I knew... oh boy, I must have known, you know, in junior high, somewhere right around in there that there was something different, but I never would act on it, I sort of... put it away, and I really pushed it down, and I really... you know, kept it secret, and kept it within my head.

LM: Did you feel that was necessary?

TM: I did feel it was necessary. I—‘cause I just didn’t want it for a long time, I think I really wanted to—I denied it for a long time, I didn’t wanna be like that for a long time. I felt that I could... you know, I felt that I could—some way, you know, lie my way through it... or, or, or just act differently or, you know... I did date women for awhile, and I think... you know, I think it slowly built up in my head that you know, I didn’t want to lie. I mean, I think I really didn’t want to lie, and so—I mean, now that I think about it, and I think at the time, you know, I’ve met people that were in relationships that were—were, you know, that—that—that one of the partners was suddenly surprised, you know, when their other partner came out, and I—I just didn’t want to do that to somebody. I really just didn’t want to do that to someone. It was in my head, I thought, “I couldn’t—I couldn’t do that someone, you know, and sort of... lie to them like that.” And so, I just really kept myself away from dating. I really sort of denied myself all of those things. And I, you know—I wasn’t an outcast—I was invited, I was social... I just never, you know, I never had a date. I never brought anyone with me, there was never anyone around... and I just never acted on it.

LM: This may sound like, it’s obvious, but it’s not historically—why would you feel that way?

TM: You know, I think I had been brought up. I was, you know, Catholic. I think that, you know, that was always sort of a part of my head. I was always interested in politics, and gay people didn’t get elected into politics. I mean, you know, I—I was really unaware of Harvey Milk who was really the only guy out there at the time, but you know, gay people just didn’t run for office. Gay people weren’t public figures. Gay people weren’t public figures of respect, I guess, you know. And I think that all played in my head. I guess I’ve always been an ambitious guy, I was an ambitious kid, and I had a plan of what was going to happen in my life, and being openly gay wasn’t part of it.

LM: When did—when did you actually come out, and what was coming out like for you?

TM: [exhales] Well you know, I always laugh, because you know, I was in Washington [D.C.], in Washington D.C. for almost ten years, and Washington D.C. is the gayest place short of Disney World. It is just—it is just loaded with gay people, and I worked on Capitol Hill, which is probably the epicenter of gay in Washington. There's just gay people everywhere. And, you know, I would... you know, and I knew, and I think I had like gaydar—I mean, you know, it was there and like, nascent gaydar, but I knew people were gay. I knew there were gay men around me, I knew there were lots of gay people. And, you know, so it was Washington, D.C. in the 80s... you know, my—my story—I remember, when I first went to Washington D.C., I had a job interview at the Brookings Institution, which is right off of DuPont Circle, you know, the epicenter of gay in Wa—you know, along with Capitol Hill, like it's the center of gay, and so, you know, I went early, 'cause I had to get a ride with someone, and I got there early. And so... you know, I was... had time to kill—it was July, and it was really hot, and so I decided I'd take a walk. So, I took this walk, and strolling down the street, all excited in Washington... and you know, I walked into the DuPont Circle. Well, it didn't really strike me as odd that there were—you know, I saw like more gay men there in the afternoon than at like, you know, Nordstrom shoe sale.

LM: [laughs]

TM: And so, you know—and they were all shirtless, but you know, it was hot, so I never paid much attention, so I walked in, and I had this really uncomfortable gray suit on that I bought in Carlisle, I remember, you know, to—to interview in. And it was this really uncomfortable, ill-fitting gray suit, and I was walking around—sweating and hot—and this guy said to me, “Hey! You in the gray suit!” And I kinda turned around, 'cause you know, that's what you do—people talk to you respectfully (?), so I turned around, and he said, “Nice ass!” And it so horrified me that I like ran, I just broke into this run out of the DuPont Circle, and I still remember, I can still hear it plainly in my head, this kind of... [gestures with hands around ears] cackle of laughter that only gay men can make, and it was this sort of this loud, went up behind me, and I was mortified—I was just mortified. And I ran across the street, and I ran almost right into a sort of a vendor, and I asked—and he looked at me, and I said, like, “An orange soda,” and I bought this orange soda, and I opened it, and I went to drink it, and half of it went into my mouth and half of it went down my lapel.

LM: Oh!

TM: And I literally sat down on the corner and cried. I was so, like—just like so unhappy with like the heat, and the fact that this guy had just—you know, really kind of outed me, and—like the stain, and I was just miserable. I was just incredibly miserable. I missed Dickinson. Actually my mother had just passed away. It was just this awful time, and I just remember all that, and so for years, I refused to ever to go to DuPont Circle. For years, I found reasons, because they—because I knew that they knew. And so I would go there, and I'd like force women to hold my hand, my friends—you know—it was just so uncomfortable for me. And so, I think that just chipped away, I mean, over time. It just finally chipped away, and so, you know, I lived in Washington all that time, never acted on it—never acted on it. I came back to Carlisle in 1985—

95 to work at Dickinson... You know, I turned 30. I had been to all of my friends' weddings, I had been the fun—you know, the fun usher at weddings—you know, the one they could—you know, that women could change in front of, and you know, all that stuff, and you know, it just reached a point where I was just miserably lonely. And, everyday I'd go to lunch in the snack bar at Dickinson, and I would sit with a group of people who are still friends of mine, but there was another group of people who—it was a mixed table of young faculty, and there were gay people in that—in that lunch, and I—and they were having fun. They were attractive, they were young, and they were going out on Saturday night, which I wasn't. And that made me really uncomfortable. I met one of them. He was really attractive. I sort of fell for him, and it really just drove me to the point where I just needed to act on it. Like, I just had reached a point, like I couldn't—I couldn't be alone anymore. I couldn't—I just couldn't not—not do it, and so finally, I came out to him. He was actually seeing someone else, but I had publically admitted it, and that kinda started the whole thing, and I have to say, that was 1997, and that—that's—that—like was in October, and that was, like, it was like the Fourth of July for—for, like, weeks. I mean, I had a great time telling people. I finally came out, and it was just glorious. It was absolutely glorious, and so... I think it was just—I just real(?) myself. I was just that sort of inner controlled that I just sort of finally decided, I just had had enough and I couldn't be alone, and I needed—you know, I didn't want to be 70 and suddenly say, like, "God, I just wasted 40 years of my life sort of wrestling with this," and that's what happened.

LM: And then did you find some people to date?

TM: I did, I did. You know, I found... I found some people to date. I got connected and I started going out at—

LM: At Dickinson? Or elsewhere?

TM: Elsewhere. Actually sort of. I started going out with the people from Dickinson who are great, and they took me to places like Baltimore [Maryland] and they took me to places like Harrisburg, and I found the clubs and... you know, suddenly it was just fun. I mean, suddenly life just had something to do every weekend, and suddenly things were wonderful. And, I have to say, I made this whole plan, 'cause I'm a planner, so I made this whole plan after coming about of who I was going to tell. So, all of my friends, you know, I was gonna visit them I was gonna this and this and I'd tell them this thing, and my Dickinson friends were most of the people that—that I told first. And, you know, my college friends, and so I remember I—my, my roommate John and his wife, who I'd help introduce, lived in—outside of Washington D.C. at the time, so you know, I made this call to them, and I said, "You know, I want to come down, I have something to tell you." And they're like, "Oh, come down for dinner on Sunday," and so I did. And, so, you know, they had dinner and they had a daughter at the time—one, they have two now, but she was a little, she was a toddler... and they said—well, they put her to bed and then they sat down, they said like, "What's—okay, what do you have to tell us?" You know. And so I—I sat down with this whole big story and I'm like, "I really wanted to tell you, you know, I'm—I'm gay." And John turned to Courtney and said, "You win the bet." And so, you know, the bottom line is like I so firmly(?) remember that, and I was just like, "Are you kidding?" and, you know, like, they were like, "We're just happy you're happy. We've known you're gay for like years now, like we are just so glad you're finally admitting it." And then, that opened up a

whole world in Washington for me, that just opened so much, and so, you know, it was just a glorious, glorious couple of months of just being—you know, being me, I mean, being free and being able to go out and meet people and date people and see people, and not worrying about, you know, being in places [scratches nose]... you know, and I'd lived in Washington, so I now—I'd left and I was sort of coming back. My other favorite story about D.C.—then I'll let you get back to your questions, but... so, one night I was with some people from Dickinson, and we went to a—

LM: At D.C.—in D.C. now?

TM: In D.C. [nods] at a bar... and, you know, they say—they were a couple, and they said, “you know, you need to walk around, you need to meet people.” So, I was like, “Okay, fine.” So, my sister and I walked around, and there's this big crowd of people at the bar around someone, and it was like “take your shirt off night and drink for free” kind of thing—not like I was taking my shirt off—but, so I looked, and there was this guy in the middle, and this guy in the middle of the whole thing was my former roommate from Washington [chuckles] and who had gone to Dickinson with me, and—and it was like, got—went through the crowd and he's like, “What are you doing here?” I said, “Same thing you're doing here.” And so like, we hung out that whole night, so... you know, he and I came out—like you know, came out, and you know, that led to a lot of other things that, he would invite me down and we went out, but—so we hung out that evening for a while, and then he had something to do, and then my friends and I went to another bar and so... I was standing there, and they're like, “Go walk around.” So, I walked around, and I look down at the end of the bar and there was another former housemate of mine from Washington D.C., so my joke of the evening was if there was anyone that my friends wanted to meet, please point them out, because the chances that they were a former housemate of mine were pretty good, so... like that, like, one evening, I met all these people, and that was just it, I mean, I think that just gave me the confidence to really sort of be out and just... be a part of it all.

LM: So, you did travel to other cities to interject—interact with people there. Then you—did you come to Harrisburg at all? Did you think there was anything in Harrisburg?

TM: No, I came to Harrisburg first. I mean, I absolutely came to Harrisburg first, and so, you know, I went to the bars I did... you know, I went to Stallions, I went to all the places that you're, you know, supposed to go, and I joined all the clubs. I remember I joined there was a camping group at the time, I think there was a book group at the time... 'cause you know, I didn't want to meet anyone at a bar. I wanted to meet them like in sort of a, you know, highfalutin way, so, you know, I joined all those things and that was good, so, you know, yeah, absolutely Harrisburg played a big role in that—those first couple of—those first couple of months for me, being out.

LM: What inner—what impact did coming out have on your work life?

TM: [exhales] Well, that's a good question. [chuckles] You know, I was working at Dickinson at the time, and I had come from Washington, and, you know, I was—I had come from a place that was very serious. You know, a place where you wore suits, where Congress people had heated arguments that impacted millions of people... and I came to Dickinson, and it was an odd

adjustment for me, you know, I had gone there, and suddenly I worked there. And working there and being a student there are two very very different things. And so, you know, I had—I still wore the Washington D.C. suits, and all this other(?) stuff—now, I did a very public part of the—what the college does, I'd interact with students. You taught, so I—I didn't do that. But, when I'd wear the suits, it would scare students. I remember they'd get like really nervous about like, who was I, and you know, why was I sort of walking around, so that sort of separated me from the place. So, when I came out, I kinda softened my look a bit, I guess. I sort of changed how I looked, got my ear pierced... and you know, I was interacting with—I was interacting with donors. I was interacting with important people for the college. And... I think—and I have no way of proving this—it caused a lot of discomfort within the administration. It caused a lot of discomfort with the administration. People had a lot of questions about me, people suddenly—there was just talk. I could tell. And, I honestly—and so my departure from Dickinson was not the best. It wasn't—it wasn't a termination or anything like that, but I left not in the best ways. I had applied for a job. It went to someone else, and I honestly think that a little bit of homophobia played a role in that. And so, you know, unfortunately, you know, everyone when I came out—everyone at Dickinson was fabulous. Everyone was fabulous, and I still have great friends that were—and I'd known people from being a student there. It wasn't—I hadn't been that—gone that long. And they were terrific. But I think many of the newer people that I got to meet, at the time, some of them were very, very uncomfortable about me being out, about me being sort of... you know, and I wasn't vocal about it, but it just was—I was in a role where suddenly, you know, I was interacting with people of—of im—import.

LM: Were there—were there gay organizations out on campus at that point?

TM: You know, I think there were student organizations. I just wasn't—I wasn't—I didn't interact with them. I wasn't too familiar with them... so I didn't seek that out. I didn't seek that out of the, you know, out of the school. I mean, I obviously knew there were, you know, out people there, but I, you know, and I'd become friends with some of the younger faculty that I talked about, but...being a faculty member and being an administrator as you know are very different things, and so... you know, and I think, you know, I think being out as a faculty member, you know, might be considered par for the course, in a lot of ways. I mean, it's a certain element of, of academia. Being an administrator is a different world.

LM: Were you still there when... the... health care argument went to the Trustees?

TM: [exhales] I believe that was before my time. I think that was actually before my time. That was with Ken Marvel and—

LM: It would have been about the same year. Mid-80s.

TM: [nods] Probably... yeah, somewhere in and around there, but that was after, yeah, that was after—yeah—oh, I think it was after my—it was between when I was a student and an employee, I think.

LM: Okay.

TM: I think that's, you know, when that happened. I never felt the place was not welcoming. I never felt the place, like I never felt rejected. I never felt that there was like an active bias towards me, but I think there was some—this is just me. I have no way to prove this. I have no way to say that this is—but I think there was, you know, a little bit there. [shrugs] There was something there, and it wasn't comfortable. So it, yes, it did impact my work environment.

LM: And did it impact your family life?

TM: You know, no. [chuckles] Remarkably so. You know, my mother had—my mother has been deceased for a long time, so I never came out to her, unfortunately. But, you know, my sister was one of the first people I told, and my sister was terrific. She was like, “Great. I’m—I just want you to be happy.” And so, you know, I slowly told—and that was—I have a very small family. My grandmother knew about it. My grandmother at the time was in her, you know, mid to late 80s, and she was really good about it. So, I used to say like if my grandmother could accept it, like everyone could accept it. I was nervous about my father. I was really, really nervous about my father, and so I didn't tell him until last. And I didn't tell him until I had met someone. And the person I met, I knew was a special person, a person I met—still is my husband of thirteen years, almost fourteen years, and I think—I think once I had that, once I knew that I wanted someone in my life and that that person was gonna—we were gonna lead a life like everybody else, that I was going to extort every wedding gift out of every person who had extorted one outta me over the past 20 years... I, you know, I knew, and that's when I had to tell—that's when I felt like I had to tell my father. And my father was actually really good about it. Like, my father was really great. He noticed that I was happier. He noticed that I had changed. He noticed that I was better. And so, he was—it was a remarkable, easy conversation. So, yes, I think my family was very good about it. And Dwayne, my husband's family was terrific about it, so... you know, I think I've been very lucky. I was very, very lucky.

LM: So then, you were with Dwayne from then on?

TM: [nods] Mmhm. Yeah, yeah. I have been.

LM: How did it impact—this—there may be a little redundancy here, though—social life?

TM: Well, you know, I think—

LM: I mean, you've talked about some about that.

TM: Yeah. Well, you know, I think... I was finally happy. I think I was finally happy. And, I knew that there was outlets, and I knew there were things I could do, and I knew that, you know, there were places I could go. And that changed my world. That really, really changed my world. Because all of that stuff I'd been denying myself, all of it, for years, I could finally act on. So, at 32, I was really, like, 17. You know, with some experience, I mean, I wasn't stupid. But, you know, I think... I think it really made my life better. I mean, it's made me—I mean, I remember—so, you know, when I was struggling to come out, and all these things, I mean, I remember... you know Tales of the City was on—was on American Playhouse on PBS. And I watched it, you know, quietly, without telling anyone, but I loved every minute of it, you know,

and I loved every minute of it. And there's this scene where Michael writes a letter to his mother. Michael's the main character. And he talks about being gay as being the light of his life, and I think—and that he would never go back in, and I just so firmly remember that making such an impression on me, because it really is this centerpoint of my life, even when I wasn't a professional homosexual, it was always some element of my life. And so, socially, it just—it's just what I do, you know, and it is really sort of this centerpiece of so much of me. [shrugs]

LM: How about—and you've talked a little about this, but how about civil and political life? Because they were very important to you.

TM: [exhales] Well, that was a—you know, that was a real question I think in my head, you know, "What—how will this impact so much of, of, you know, my—my work?" You know, after Dickinson, I took over, you know, I took over for a preservation organization, arguably probably in the top five of most gay-heavy industries in the world, so, you know, once again, I think it was—you know—I went—and that was great for me, professionally, it was a good thing to do, but also socially, 'cause I got to interact with gazillions of gay men. I mean, you know, like on the board, and there's was just lots of gay men, and so, you know, and—and not as much women, but that's when I really met a lot of gay men, because they were very involved with the organization, so that was incredibly helpful to me.

LM: Did you think about that when you decided to apply for this job?

TM: No, [shakes head] I really didn't.

LM: So, it was a surprise to you when you got in.

TM: It kinda was a surprise to me. I always laugh, because there's a woman who's still one of my best friends—so this—that job came with all these women that became my mothers, like I've had this wonderful experience of life that everywhere I go, like there seems to be someone who's—wants to mother me. I don't know if I have like a look, but it's great, and I've welcomed it, and I've learned to love it, and so there were these—there was this woman at Historic Harrisburg, who's still a very good friend who I still have over for Christmas Eve, Dwayne and I, you know, still take care of her, the whole nine yards. And so, she was—she was a widow, and like, men would come in and talk to her, and like they'd talk to her, and she'd look at me, and I'd go [scrunches up face] like I was like, "Oh, Diane, no, that's just—" [chuckles] You know, like I just knew, and it was just so fun. I'm like, "You know, you're just so in the wrong indust—you need to volunteer," and she was a volunteer. I was like, "you need to volunteer like—here's where you need to volunteer—for the Harrisburg Senators—or, you need to, like, something else, you know, for the like, like the—the—I think the veterans organization—but not here." And, you know, I think it was just a bit of a surprise to me. And so—but how it impacted me beyond that, you know—so I was there 'til—so then I went to—I went to Team PA Foundation, which was a little bit different. And the way that I got involved really with the Rendell people was that, you know, he was running for governor. There were several people running for governor in 2002. He was the long shot at the time. And, you know, I felt he would be good for gay people. He was the former mayor of Philadelphia, he knew people, he had a long history of interaction with the community, and I thought, you know, he was in a tight race with then Bob

Casey, if you remember. And, I said, you know who, at the time, wasn't so great for our issues as were the other candidates, and I said, "You know, if you won—if you, Mayor Rendell, want to get ahead in a small—in a narrow race, you need to come to central Pennsylvania and meet the gay community, who can give you the edge. And some people from Philadelphia had made that connection for me, and so I invited him here, and I—and I took him to Business Association of Gays and Lesbians. I was the co-chair. That's the forerunner of the—today's chamber. I took him to those meetings. I took him to Pride festivals. I took him to these events, and then he was just the former mayor, and that's how I got involved, so I was valued for my gay connections at that time, I mean, they wanted—you know, he wanted that interaction with the community, and the great part about it was here was a guy who was running for governor who didn't care about the fact that he was being photographed with gay people, when, you know, other candidates in 2002, quite honestly, referred to the LGBT community as [air quotes] "those people," in print. And so, you know, Ed Rendell was like, "Well, I don't care." You know, I remember I got him to come and speak at the Fall Achievement Benefit, back in 2002. I think it was the end of 2001, and he said, he stood up and after we worked the crowd, and he said, "You know, a lot of people had controversy"—or—"there was a lot of controversy about me coming here. People said, you know, 'Why would you come?'" and he said, you know, "I'm looking around the room at 600 well-dressed people who vote with a lot of disposable income. Why wouldn't I be here?" and that was the end, I mean, that was it, I mean that was the defining moment, and from then on out, you know—you know, I remember looking at him, and I said, you know, you know, "Mayor"—'cause he was a former mayor—it's like "Mayor, you know, I think you're used to those, kind of—you're used to those sort of mouthy... tightly—tightly-wound Philly gays." And I said, "We're not going to ask you any hard questions. We're just happy you're here." And—and, you know, I think he remembered that, and I think in that sense, so he started involving me in his campaign. I started sitting down with all kinds of different people. You know, businesspeople that were making up the bulk of his campaign. I was raising money for him. So, in essence, the gay part helped me a lot. I mean, it helped me to break into politics and make—an impact in a much bigger way, and you know, he was—he appointed a lot of LGBT folks to his administration, and so, you know, in that sense, it was actually something that—that worked in my favor. That's something that absolutely helped, and when he was governor, I would still bring him to Pride festivals. We'd walk in parades. You know, and, you know, my job was different, but he would call on me, I mean, I'd get calls on my office from him. It was always terrifying, believe me. [chuckles] You know, when they say like, "Please hold for the governor." And, he would, you know, and we would talk about things, and he—you know, and I helped him with those issues, and not that he needed help, but like sort of maybe navigated. So, it was actually a very good thing. I mean, it was actually a really, really good thing—

LM: And that's what took you into the Rendell administration?

TM: [nods] Correct. Yeah, exactly. And that's how I got in, so...

LM: How 'bout your spiritual life?

TM: That's kind of a bad thing. I think that's kind of a—not a bad thing, but you know, the more political I've become, and the more involved I've become in—in sort of the LGBT world, the more I think hard spirituality has become for me. Not that I don't—as I like to say, I don't have a

problem with God, I'm—I'm not too thrilled with his employees. [scratches face] And I think that in a large way seems to be my take on it. You know, I was raised Catholic, and once again, not a bad experience. I had a wonderful experience in high school, in grade school. The nuns took care of me, once again, you know, mothering me. You know, I was an altar boy for years... and even, even after I met Dwayne, I mean, we would still go to Mass. I mean, Dwayne and I used to go to Mass all the time. You know, and so—we went on a regular basis—I was raised much more of a Catholic than he was, but we would go to Mass, and I just reached a point where I couldn't take it anymore, and I started to act out during services, like I couldn't, I just couldn't listen to it anymore. And, you know—you know, every time like the priest would start some sort of sermon, you know, I would—I would—I used to—I remember it was this worst—it was like the loudest stage side, and every time he'd start, I'd go [deeply sighs and LM laughs] and you know like 40 people would turn around and look, and, like, Dwayne would like look at me, like, "Shut up." Or I would say things like, "Here we go again," in that tone, and you know, people—and it just reached a point that I couldn't, you know, I just simply couldn't take it anymore, and I think the breaking point was the 2002 election, you know, after Mass on Sunday, Dwayne and I had spent—we spent, you know, weeks, every week on Saturday evenings and Friday evenings at the bars, giving out information about Governor Rendell. Like, we'd do all this sort of stuff. And so, I was exhausted. It was the last weekend before the election, and Dwayne and I had been at the bars, so we came in, and I used to wear my Rendell button [draws a circle on his shirt front] to Mass, and I'd go to communion like this [puts hands together as if praying with "button" side of chest forward], you know, I just would do it, 'cause I knew it would get a reaction, like, that's just me. And so, I was after—you know, the priest said, "Your—your Catholic voter guide will be available after services." And I was just like, "Okay," and I said to Dwayne, I'm like, "Here we go." So, I walked out and, you know, in this crowd, and this little old lady comes up to me, and she hands me a thing—I say, "What's this?" She says, "Your Catholic voter guide." And, so as I was looking at it, she leaned in, and she looked at my button, and she said in a very low voice, "You know, you can't be a good Catholic and—and pro-choice." And I said to her, I said, "I'm sorry, pardon me?" And she looked at me, and she repeated it again, and I said, "You know what, you know what I can be, a good American. Which trains me to use my brain and separate church from state. Now I would suggest you get your empty old head out of my way, before I knock it into next week." And the blood drained out of her face, and she stepped back, and I crumpled it up and I threw it away, and I walked away, and I remember, Dwayne said, "Do you feel better now?" And I said, "I feel great." [laughs] "I feel great." But, that was it. I mean, I think that was it, and you know, in this job that I do, you know, people of faith or at least their leadership—let's put it that way—their leadership do some awfully nasty things. Some really mean, horrible things.

LM: Do you have some examples?

TM: Oh, yeah. You know, the Catholic Conference spends over—has five lobbyists in the legislature. One's a nun. They spend over a million—probably a million and a half dollars per year to lobby against everything, everything. They take LGBT protections out of bullying bills. They stop everything. They work on everything behind the scenes. And they threaten legislators with things that would make the Borgias smile. Things like, "We won't give you communion. We won't give your child First Holy Communion if you—your child—if we won't give—" This is the kind of—this shit actually happens in the 21st century right down the street. That kind of

stuff, you know, any discussion of—even remotely LGBT-related things sends them into overdrive, and it's not only the Catholics, it's the Evangelicals as well. That's horrifying to me. And I know, I know that people who go to Mass, for example, or go to services, who put money in the collection basket, you cannot tell me that that money isn't going to support this. You know, that kind of activity. And, you know, and polling overwhelmingly shows that the people in the pews don't agree with the people spewing this hate. And so quite honestly for me, it's really hard. It is really hard—personally separating from the Catholic Church was really a painful experience for me, really a painful experience for me. They have been my parents. They have been, you know, such a part of my life—to really separate that out was awful. I still keep my altar boy manual on my desk that's back there [nods with head], you know, I just have it—it was an awful thing. This job unfortunately—and maybe being gay in a lot of ways has made me—but I think really the job more than anything else—has made me a little bit of the anti-religion guy, because as I said, I know how it's used, and I know—and I just simply cannot believe any deity would kinda sign off on this one. I mean—

LM: What did you think of Dignity [Philadelphia]?

TM: So, here's the thing. You know, I think of Dignity, and I think of like—there are a lot of other faiths. And I'm not—I don't wanna paint faiths with a broad brush, because you know, I don't like us—I don't like being painted with a broad brush, I don't want the gay community painted, you know, there are lots of—and so there are a lot of denominations working on the issue, have accepted the issue—I mean, there are a lot of good people, so I don't want to paint—I mean, I guess it's just I look at the bad guys. I just simply feel that my faith was stolen from me, and so, it was hard for me to even adjust to something else. Like, I went to Episcopal services, I knew I was welcome, I knew about Dignity, I knew there was all these other outlets, but it's just hard for me, like I can't. It says—Catholics say that it's the smells and the bells, I mean, it's the stuff that you're used to. It just was—it's just really hard for me to suddenly say, like, “Okay, I'm not that. But I'm this.” And, it's just tough, I mean, I just have a hard time—and I know a lot of other people like this, it's a hard time reconciling that, so it's still a pretty raw issue for me. I think it's a really raw issue for me, and I can be very careful in talking about faith when I do my work. I certainly don't shy from talking about my personal side of—you know, my—my journey with faith, and like I said, I know there a lots of wonderful people out there—the MCCs [Metropolitan Community Churches], I mean, they're wonderful people, but for me, it's just a hard—it's a hard lift. It's a really hard lift, and like I said, you know, thank God—thank God that many people don't have to face these folks all the time in the legislature, but they need to know that all of those folks of faith are knifing them in the back repeatedly when it comes to getting anything done for—for, you know, equality.

LM: Speak a little more about that.

TM: Well, like I said, I mean, you know... the... the Evangelicals and the Catholic Conference are incredibly powerful. I mean, they are incredibly powerful. I would say they are probably on par as powerful in legislature as the NRA [National Rifle Association], which is saying a lot, which is really saying a lot. And they quietly and very stealthily go behind the back and so—I'll give you a perfect example, so, you know, there was some bullying legislation—House Bill 156, the PASS Act—great piece of legislation. It would mandate a number of things, but it would

allow—it would ask schools to have programs on LGBT education, you know, to train students about LGBT students. And we all know there is no denial, there is absolutely no denying the fact that bullying—the students that are bullied predominantly are gay, it's just—or LGBT, there's no denying that. And so, training—and I also firmly believe, you know, you have to be carefully taught, as the musical says, you know, students learn this kind of stuff, so if there was training, maybe it would stop. House Bill 156 asked for LGBT training. The opponents of that, the Catholics and the Evangelicals went behind quietly and had that all removed. I don't care how you slice it, but you have blood on your hands. I don't care how [hits table with each word] you slice it. Because of that, kids kill themselves. Period. So, you can go to church all you want, you can have Communion all you want, you can pray around the clock, but if you are actually preventing laws that talk about training and equality, and treating people decently which by the way, is really all that Christ ever said [chuckles], I mean you know, period, if that's your deity. I mean, I think all he really ever—I mean, remember, I always like to say, he actually got in trouble, because he kind of hung out with the people that the [gestures with hands] regular people said he shouldn't be hanging out with—I think he was pretty—wasn't discriminating at all when he—when he came, but if you can sort of ignore that, and you can sort of toe this line, and you can cut—and you can gut legislation, and prevent legislation, and stop things from people—you know, being able to have inheritance rights in marriage—you know, if your partner dies, and you've been together for 40 years, and you know, you're stuck with a 15% inheritance tax immediately, and you know, the IRS doesn't wait for some mourning period. Immediately, that's wrong. That is absolutely wrong, so, the things you're espousing, the things you are doing, the things that you do every day cause you to have blood on your hands. This causes people to be miserable and take their lives, and—and that's what's hard for me, I cannot, I cannot fathom that. And that is deeply hurtful to me as a person who was brought up in that world to see that happening. In the same week, the absolute same week, that the Philadelphia Archdiocese closed two Catholic schools—two Catholic schools—they sent \$50,000 to the effort in Maine to stop marriage equality. \$50,000—that's probably two teachers. That's probably two teachers, but they actually could somehow find 50 grand to send. Astonishing. And every diocese in Pennsylvania donated some level. It wasn't 50. It was a thousand, it was here. But every one of them, and—there is no way in God's green earth that you can't tell me that was—that came right out of the collection plate. So, that's—I mean that's—I mean, I'm sorry I get so emotional, but that's—it is—

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

TM: It is—it has just been—it angers me to no end, it really does. And that—and so that makes my spiritual life very difficult. Like I said, no problem with the boss. It's the employees.

LM: So, in the past, then, you've been very much involved—you're very aware and very involved maybe even not professionally, but as a sidelight, in civil rights efforts.

TM: Yeah. I mean, though—so for—I've been doing this for three years, but like I said, I was the—you know, I was the board chair of Common Roads, that's the youth group. I was the board chair of the Community Center. I was the board chair that combined—you know, the merged the organizations. You know, I did that for a long time. You know, I remember Common Roads, you know, years ago, when this was still somewhat common when parents would throw their kids

out, you know, the executive director would call me, and she said like, “Can you—this kid needs 300 bucks. This kid needs 1000 bucks.” And I would like raise money—I’d go quietly and like—and have to like—friends would see me coming, and they’d like, scatter, ‘cause like, they knew I was coming, you know, for money. I was gonna come for—I mean, there was—I remember the one kid got—was gonna get evicted—didn’t have rent money, and... you know, so I went—it was Christmas Eve, I’ll never forget—or not Christmas Eve, right before Christmas, I went to a bar, and I had to get up in the middle of a drag show—which is, like, always astonishing—and with a Santa Claus hat, and pass a Santa Claus hat to get money, you know, and I did that, you know. So, you know, those kind of things, you know, were always issues that I was gonna talk about. And so, I’ve always been—I’ve never been shy about talking about politics. So, you know, those types of civil rights... you know, even before the gay stuff in my life, I’ve always...

LM: And now that’s your job.

TM: It’s my job. It is really my job. I feel very—

LM: Does that make you happy?

TM: It does. I feel remarkably lucky, remarkably lucky to be here. I think that for all of the [exhales] the hard hours and the constant grind of this job, I mean, it’s never far from me, it is never, ever far from me. The constant asking, the constant pushing, the constant dragging, the frustrations—I love every minute of this, I mean I really feel almost that this is kinda what I was meant to do, in many ways. So, I feel incredibly lucky that I found this niche. I really found this incredible niche. Now I also have to say, I have a remarkably supportive husband who helps me in so many ways to do this. So many ways to really go through this. But, you know, this is—this is... this is glorious. It just—it really is. I mean, this is real change. This is real change.

LM: Again, and we might be a little redundant here, but probably not...

TM: I’m sure I have a story to fill it. [chuckles]

LM: Are there events in your life that you would cite as critical events?

TM: Yeah, I mean, I think—I always think of my world as, like, pre-coming out and post-coming out. I mean, I really think that that was such a—such a—I mean, that changed my whole world. I mean, it really did.

LM: So, it was a turning point of some sort?

TM: [nods and exhales] Yeah, it was a huge turning point, it’s... you know, I think coming back to central Pennsylvania was probably another huge turning point.

LM: In what way?

TM: Well, you know, I grew up in western Pennsylvania. My family was not poor, but we weren’t rich. You know, I mean, you know what my parents did, and my parents—one of the

first things they told me was to get out of Pennsylvania. I mean one of the first things they told me was to, you know, go somewhere else. And that had impact. I mean, so I went somewhere else, and I never, ever thought in my life I would be back here, I really never ever thought I'd be back here. I loved Carlisle when I was a student. I mean, it was a wonderful place to live, and so, I mean, I think the fact that I'm here, now, at 48... is probably pretty some grand irony, because I never really wanted to be here, and the fact that I'm trying to change the place, or working to change the place—also a huge grand irony, I think, in my life. So, those are—those are turning points. Those are absolute turning points in my life.

LM: Mhm, mhm. What are the greatest changes you've seen in your lifetime?

TM: [exhales] You know, the greatest changes I think in the world—I mean, I have to say the changes that are going on right now with—with LGBT issues are pretty remarkable. They really are remarkable. I mean, I think... I think the... I like to say—so I go to these meetings, always in meetings, so meetings with, like, you know, legislators who, you know, wanna understand—I mean, the pro-people, the supportive people, they want to [uses mimicking voice] understand gay people, they want to understand the gays, and they want to “get the gays,” and like, I make cracks all the time. Like, I—my—you know I'm—one of my probably biggest strong points is I don't take anything too seriously, and it's probably one of my—gets me in a lot of trouble, too, [chuckles] so... like, I make cracks all the time, so I say, like, in these meetings, “Well, you know gays are the new black. Everyone wants one.” You know, and these meetings are politicians trying to figure out, like, how to get their votes, and their money, you know, and all these sort of, you know. And it's just so, it's just so funny, so I think the fact that I'm having conversations—I mean, I remember, you know, talking to, you know—so back to the governor, I think I remember when... he was sitting next to me, at Fab, and my husband was sitting next to me, and Dwayne doesn't like chocolate. It kinda—it bothers him sometimes with you know, much to my—you know, good for me. So, I was in a big, serious conversation with Governor Rendell—Mayor Rendell, and Dwayne was sort of shoving his chocolate dessert on my plate. And, you know, Ed Rendell was having one eye on me and one eye on the food, 'cause if you knew Governor Rendell, he loved his food, so you know—loves his food, so and so, he said to me, in the conversation, “He's feeding you, Ted.” And I said, “That's why I love him, Ed.” And at that point, I was just like [leans back and laughing] “Wow,” you know like, I said—this guy's gonna be the governor, and I just was that direct. And I think that was another turning point for me. I remember that being so clear, and so, you know, when I use the term “husband” with legislators who still sometimes are uncomfortable, I love it. I mean, I really, really love it. It's a good—it's a good feeling. So, I always say like, I use the term “husband” with people I like and don't like. So, you know, it's a real, you know, black and white thing. But, you know, that was a turning point, too. I mean, I think that was absolutely certainly a point.

LM: The greatest changes—I go back to that—do you see changes in the situation?

TM: Yeah, and I think I got off track a little bit on your question, but—

LM: I mean—it was a good off.

TM: —But I think—I think there are people struggling to understand these things of varying degrees. I think a lot of people have just said, like—the vast majority of people have said, “You know what, this [makes face]” because they know, they know out people. They know LGBT people, and they’re like, “You know what, like, the foundations of society haven’t collapsed so, you know, let’s just have lunch.” You know, and it’s like, let’s just move on. You know, and—and I think—I think that’s a remarkable change, because people... when they know you’re—they know you as their coworker, your neighbor, the person that picks up your mail when you’re not home, you know, or on vacation—and like, that kinda stuff, it just changes the world, and that’s a remarkable change. That’s an incredible change, so—so when I see that, I think is incredible. When I see conversations, I think—you know, that I have with legislators that I’ve worked with—when I see young people—when I see like high school people, you know, fighting to have a GSA, you know... I gotta tell you, high school is—is the worst—for LGBT kids, that’s like, the jungle. I mean, if you get out of high school, you’re lucky. Then your world’s good. Then it’s all better as they say, for the most part. So these—you know these kids, seventeen, and I never had the guts to do this, standing up for themselves in places that are rural and places that may not be the most advanced in the world, but standing up and fighting. That’s a change. That’s a remarkable change. And those kids are going to run the world, and that’s incredible.

LM: I’ll ask you about artifacts and so forth after this, but, do you... have we missed something that you would like to talk about?

TM: No, I think that, you know, I think—I think we are winning. I just—I just really—I want people not to be discouraged. I want people to sort of keep fighting, and I think [exhales] you know, what I say to gay people all the time—what I say to audiences all the time—and I mean, LGBT people—I don’t mean to, you know, but you know, being—being LGBT unfortunately comes with a special little level of recognition. We’re almost there, but you gotta keep fighting. You just gotta keep fighting. And you have to realize that people are gonna ask you questions that they would never ask anyone else. But, you can’t always be insulted.

LM: What kind?

TM: What kind of questions? I mean all those sexual questions, I mean all of those sort of goofy—you know, like stereotypic questions about, you know, like... you know, lesbians and their trucks and gay men and their designs, and all—you know, that kinda stuff. I think you just have to realize that that’s a sign of progress. ‘Cause most of the time, you know, I always say, like, I speak to a lot of audiences. I’ve never had a question thrown at me in malice. I can say that honestly. I’ve had a lot of goofy questions, but goofy questions are good. So, when you’re—I have to say, when you’re—so for the LGBT community, don’t always be offended by those things. We’re almost there. You just gotta hang on, you just gotta keep pushing, and I think in ten years, the world is going to be remarkably different. I mean, my goal is just really to kind of... work myself out of a job, so, you know, but I think that’s gonna happen. I really do think that’s gonna happen.

[Voice in the background says, “Can I stop you there?” and video cuts off; following video begins with Ted sitting down]

LM: We're going? Okay. You were going to tell us about going to the White House.

TM: Well, this has to be, I'd say that's—

LM: Well, maybe it wasn't the White House.

TM: It's the White House.

LM: Going to Washington.

TM: Yeah, it was a big... So, so, Dwayne and I—or, I got invited to a holiday event at the White House, and it was a holiday party at the White House, and so—you know, Dwayne and I went down, and, you know, we went in, and I remember walking towards the White House, and I said to him, I said, “You know, if this is only a tour,” you know, I said, “this is going to be a pain, ‘cause I’m gonna, like, have to carry my coat around,” and Dwayne just, like, rolled his eyes. So we get in line, there was a very small group of people, and they usher us into the White House, you know, in the East Wing of the White House, you come in, and so we’re met immediately by two beautiful Marines, and they bring out the best-looking Marines ever in the White House for these parties. And the one guy said, like, “Welcome to the White House, the coat check’s right ahead of you on the right.” And I said to Dwayne, I said, “This is the real fuckin’ thing, there’s a coat check.” And so we walked forward and we checked our coats, and so we walked a little bit further in the end of the building, and some—two more guards—Marine guards, and they said, “Can you please”—you know—“here’s your ticket for the photo line.” I said, “Oh, thank you,” and I put this ticket in my pocket and didn’t think anything of it. They said, “Please enjoy, the building’s open for your pleasure, just enjoy yourselves.” So we sort of walked around, and then we kind of walked a little bit further, and the—the—the hallway—the, I don’t know but the ground floor hallway was divided in half—there’s this really elaborate division. So we went into the one, like, the China Room, and there was a library, and we walked around and everything’s open, so you can go in, and they’re butlering food and all, it’s just sort of—pretty fantastic, and so, you know, we’re in the White House, and so we came out and there was this line forming, and I said, “What is this?” And they said, “Oh, this is the line for the photos. You might wanna get in line. What’s—what’s the ticket on your pho—what time is it on—on your photo,” and I’m like, “I don’t know,” and I pulled it out and I said “6:30,” and they said, “Oh, you should get in line.” So we got in line. Dwayne and I were standing there, so we’re talking to these folks in front of us, and it turned out the guy in front of us was the former chairman of HBO, and the guy behind me was the former chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, so we’re thinking—we’re thinking, “This is okay.” So Dwayne and I were sort of chatting, and then they sort of said, “Please come this way and find your name on the table inside this gate.” So we go through this big partition, and we walk around, and this huge table, and—so you find your name, and you, it’s spelled correctly, and you hand it to them with your ticket. So then we said—they said, “Please get in line,” so we went around this line, and so—we passed the—it’s the diplomatic reception room, it’s the Oval Room you see when the President comes in and he brings, like, you know, prime ministers and all those sort of folks. And there was this other room next to it. So we’re get in line, and the line is in front of us, and then it turns sharply into the room, and then the Oval Room’s in front of us, and so—

LM: This is the photograph line.

TM: Correct.

LM: Okay.

TM: And they're butlering food and everything, and we're just chatting with these people, and it was all great. Well then, over to my left, there was a—there was sort of, like, the hall—there was—an entrance, and there was an elevator right there, and there was a hallway. And I wasn't thinking anything of it, and we're all sort of talking and laughing and it was all really lovely, and all of a sudden the elevator opened, and—Secret Service appeared everywhere. And the President stepped off the elevator with the First Lady, and he was putting his jacket on, I remember, he was sort of putting his jacket on, and he stepped back for her, and I said to Dwayne, I was like, "Oh my god, turn around!" And so we turned around and there's, like, the President, and he's like, "Hello everybody! How are you?" And she waved, and he put his jacket on, and then they walked by us, and I'm like, "Oh my god, this is real, we're going to have our photo taken with the President! This is, like, the real thing! This is, like, real!" Dwayne's like, "I know." So—so we get in and the line starts moving, and then you sort of—so you enter the—the room, and you're met by a Marine guard, and the Marine guard is there, kind of, to educate you, essentially. So they're like, "You're Mr. Ted Martin from Camp Hill, this is Mr. Dwayne Heckert(?) from Camp Hill, you live at six-four-blah-blah-blah, you're—you know—and you're here for the photo right now," and we're like, "Yes, yes." So you're sort of moving around the room, and there's—they're your escort, and they're talking to you. So you get to the other side and they take—and they take anything, like, purses or envelopes or anything you're carrying. So then you go to another entrance, and another Marine guard meets you, and this is your escort to the President's, and I remember this guy was just gorgeous. He was this beautiful Marine with this little tiny waist and dress uniform—he was just really handsome. And he said, "I'll be your escort to meet the President, please follow me," and he—so he's saying, "You're—you're Mr., you know, Mr. Ted Martin, you're Mr. Dwayne Heckert. Please understand that you're going to have your photo taken with the President. Mr. Martin, the First Lady will be on your right. Mr. Heckert, the President will be on your left. Please greet them promptly. You'll have two minutes with them, then please turn promptly for a two-minute photo, you'll hear two clicks, share niceties, and please move on." So they're giving you stage direction while you're moving around the edge of the room. So before I knew it, literally two feet in front of us was the President and the First Lady, greeting these—the people in front of us—the HBO guy and his sister, it turned out. So it's like, amazing, it's—it's this amazing thing, and so I turn to the—I—I—I turn to the Marine, and he said—he looked at me, and he looked at Dwayne, and he said, "Husband or partner?" And I said, "Husband." And I just—I looked at him and I said, "Husband," and he immediately turned and he said, "Mrs. Obama"—He said, "President Obama—President and Mrs. Obama, allow me to introduce Mr. Ted Martin and his husband, Mr. Dwayne Heckert, of Pennsylvania." And I met the President, and, you know, he very tall, they're both very tall, and, you know, we talked, and we had the photo taken, and it's—you know, they're very lovely people, you know, you're with them for literally two minutes, and then they kind of usher you off—I remember, Mrs. Obama's next to me and she's very tall and she looked down at me and she said, "You know, have a good time," and all I could utter was, "Yes Ma'am." That's all I could utter.

LM: [laughs]

TM: She's like, my age, you know, and I—it's just like, I just didn't know what else to say. So they usher you in this room to pick up your things, and Dwayne and I started to cry. I mean, because, you know, yeah, we just met the President, but—we had just been introduced as “husbands” to the President of the United States. To the President of the United States! And it was at that point I said to myself, “You know, if I can say ‘husband’ to the President of the United States, damn it, I can say it to anybody. [bangs hand on table a few times] You know, I am saying it to anybody.” And so, at that point, it was just like, such a moment, you know. And literally, we were with him and the First Lady for minutes, but it was just like, glorious. I mean, it was just so amazing. And I think—you know, and that's an incredibly special moment for Dwayne and I. But people need to understand that, you know, this is—this is part of the shift. I mean, the world is shifting. You know, for that Marine to know that. And so, you know, later on in the evening, you know, so, I said to Dwayne, I said, “Oh, there's the Marine.” And Dwayne said, “Yeah.” And I said, well, I said I wanted him for Christmas, but Dwayne kind of ignored that, but I said, “I wanna talk to him,” and Dwayne's like, “Oh, go ahead.” So I went over and I said to him, I said, “Excuse me,” and he, you know, very polite, they're incredibly diplomatic. And I leaned down—he leaned down, and I said, “You know, you introduced—you escorted us to meet the President and the First Lady,” and he said, “Yes.” And I said, “I—I just wanted to thank you.” And he said, “For what?” And I said—and he—and I said, “You know, you were really kind enough to intro—to give me the option of introducing, you know, Dwayne as my husband or partner. And I really wanna thank you for that. That meant an awful lot.” And I—my voice broke, like I'm getting a little teary right now, and he said—he leaned down and he said, “We're not all that bad.” And I thought that was the most—and he said, “Now please enjoy the evening,” and it was just, like, the most remarkable—once again—and I think—Dwayne and I, like, floated out of the building. I mean, we just, like, left, thinking, “My god.” You know, that this is just so—such a—such a point in time. And that was—that was another thing. I think that has to be, you know, really remarkable. And here I was—you know, I'm a professional homosexual, that's why I was invited—you know, because of the organization I'm executive director for, and it was just something. You know, it was just really, really something. And then there were—my other colleagues were there from other states that I got to see, and like, we were there! We're sitting under this White House Christmas tree, like, having cocktails. I mean, it was remarkable. It was really a—really a—an incredible moment.

LM: Well, it's true. Straight people don't understand how big that is.

TM: Well—yeah, exactly. I mean, I think—you know, what, twenty years—less than twenty years ago, there was no Pride festival. What, less than, you know, eight years ago, there was no Pride celebration in the White House, and—there was plenty of gay people around, believe me, but, you know, it wasn't anything that was recognized, or understood, or—you certainly didn't have the President not batting an eye being introduced to two men as “husbands,” and, you know, or the First Lady sort of being gracious and warm and fun and—you know, I mean it just—I think that's just such a remarkable thing. You know, I think that's just such a remarkable change, and that's—that's a moment I'll never forget. Never, ever, ever forget.

LM: I guess not.

TM: So. It's something.

LM: Do you have any more like that?

TM: [exhales]

LM: Not quite like that, huh? [chuckles]

TM: No, not quite like that. I think that was a big one. I think that's a hard one to top. I mean, I really think that's a hard one to top, but, yeah, I mean, like I said, I just feel really honored to be doing this. I really feel honored to be doing this. I think I am lucky in so many ways in my life. I think I was lucky to land this job when I did. I mean, I think there's so many people that worked so much harder than I have. I mean, I think—so many people who've suffered, you know, in these similar positions, and really—you know—I've never faced physical violence or, you know, the hoses at a riot or any of that kind of stuff. Those people really...

LM: Have you—have you experienced homophobia apart from what you were sort of reading at Dickinson? A kind of reticence?

TM: [inhales] You know, I just—I just—maybe I'm just innocent enough to not pay attention. I mean, you know, I'm sure it's there, you know, I'm sure there are people—and I know that—I mean, I know that when I talk about these issues, I know people are uncomfortable sometimes. I mean, I know people kinda, you know, when you talk about the gay stuff, they—you can see, you know, through body language, but I don't know. I mean, I'm not out there lookin' for it, you know—I—I have to feel that every step forward is progress, and I just don't—[chuckles] you know, I don't know. I'm sure—yeah, it's out there. Trust me, it's out there, but, you know—if I had to, I think, if I had to worry about that I'd never get out of bed. I mean the o—I mean, I had to, like—if I didn't think things were going to change, I'd have like, jumped off a bridge a long time ago. I mean, I could never do this work, you know, I could just never do this work.

LM: Do you have any recommendations for other people we oughta talk with?

TM: I know you're talking to—you're talking to like Mary Nancarrow and all those folks that are... I know—I think she's on the list.

LM: Yeah, she is.

TM: Yeah, Mary's terrific.

LM: She's—she's gonna be...

[Voice in background says "I'll stop now."]

LM: She's also an interviewer.

