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**Interviewee: Teresa “Teddy” Maurer**

Interviewer: Rebecca Cecala

Date of Interview: March 14, 2014

Location: LGBT Center

Transcriber: Lillian Sweeney

**Abstract:** Teresa “Teddy” Maurer was born in Lykens, Pennsylvania. Following a move to Upper Dauphin County, she grew up and graduated from Halifax High School. From there she worked at the Nedrich shirt factory for a few years before moving onto a job with the state government. She eventually moved to Harrisburg and stayed there after she retired from her job at the state. She worked for the government for 37 years. She discusses her conflict with derogatory comments and other discrimination she saw in her workplace and in the greater LGBT community around her. She explains how her mother’s death at the hands of a drunk driver when she was 25 and how when a former girlfriend forced her to come out changed her life. She now works with the LGBT center to give back for the times when she could not.

**Rebecca Cecala:** Okie doke. So, hello Teddy.

**Teresa Maurer:** Hello.

**RC:** And can you hear us both? Okay, and how does—does she look like she’s the main person in the frame?

**??:** She does. She does.

**RC:** Okay. Alright, so.

**??:** Looks good, sounds good.

**RC:** We have just signed the consent agreement and the deed of gift and I am just testing. I am Becky Cecala, trying to look at the camera even though that’s not going to happen. And today is March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and I am interviewing Teddy Maurer, at the LGBT center in Harrisburg. And Miss Maurer is it okay for me to ask you a few questions about your involvement in the oral history project here?

**TM:** Of course.

**RC:** Great, could you please state your full name and that you are willing to be interviewed.

**TM:** Okay. My name is Teresa Mauer and everyone calls me Teddy. And yes I am willing to be interviewed.

**RC:** Super. And you also signed the consent form so we are all set. Okay. And sound is good for Andrea so we are ready to go. Okay! So Teddy would you mind telling us a little about the members of your family growing up and where you grew up.

**TM:** I grew up in partially in Northumberland County and partially in Upper Dauphin County. And I was born in Lykens and it was a little dinky clinic and I was five pounds, four ounces, my mother was upset cause she thought I was gonna have to go on the incubator and wouldn't go home, but I came home. So then from there my father was in the navy and so we went home to my mother's mother's house my grandmother's house. And so that was in Upper Dauphin County and then when my father came home about a year later. My father bought a house, a farm, in Northumberland County. And so I lived there and there was no plumbing in the house. There was a pump in the kitchen. No inside toilets. It was—it used to be an old cabin. Y'know with the timbers and all that stuff. And. But eventually my father put in a bathroom and he put in some plumbing. Y'know, we had big like coal stoves one sitting in the kitchen as what he did this for a long time. Then he bought another one to help so it wasn't so cold. And he farmed. But when he was in the Navy he wa—he was stationed on the USS Hornet, which is an aircraft carrier. And his station was right in front of the radar. And as the radar was going around. It damaged his bones. And he had problems with his back then. He came home and was farming and hurt his back and from then it was, you know, couldn't farm. So then from the farm we moved to just between Halifax and Elizabethtown in Upper Dauphin County and then that's where I grew up the rest of the way. After I graduated high school at Halifax, high school. I graduated in 1972 and after that I got a job at a shirt factory. Didn't want to, wanted to go to art school and my dad said "Absolutely not. There's no money in it. You're gonna get a job." So my mother and my grandmother worked in the shirt factory up in Eliza-Elizabethtown, Elizabethtown sorry. That's a little tongue twister there. And it was named Nedrich Shirt Factory. She got me a job there. So while it was quite quaint that all three generations of us were working there, I knew quickly it just wasn't what I wanted to do the rest of my life. I mean, y'know, it's honest labor cause, you know, but its just wasn't what I wanted. So luckily a friend of mine had gotten a job at the state. She said "Why don't you get a job at the state?" So, that's what I did. So I got a job at the state and I worked there for 37 years. Then I retired. Here I am.

**RC:** You lucky retired person. [laughter]

**TM:** Well, you know, it was quite an adjustment because your whole life you identify with what you do. And then when that is gone, even though you think "Oh, I can't wait to retire." But when that is gone, you kind of lose your identity and its like "I don't even know who I am anymore or what do I do now?" I woke up in the middle of the night like its sweats thinking, "Oh my god. How am I gonna pay my bills because I wasn't working." I mean I'm getting a check but it didn't equate right away. So. So, it was quite an adjustment for me and I'm sure there's quite other people that have that problem and just don't mention it because everyone thinks you should just want to retire. It's, It's, I'm okay now, but boy there for awhile.

**RC:** How many years has it been since you retired?

**TM:** In October, this past October it was three years.

**RC:** Okay.

**TM:** So.

**RC:** So it took most of those three years to kind of adjust do you think?

**TM:** It took a good nine months. Nine months. Then I decided. I always wanted to do art so now I have the time, I can do art. So I started out with art and I also like to write. You know with the creative writing, so I'm doing those two things and I'm helping out here at the [LGBT] center. So my calendar fills up really quick. So I'm busy. I'm busier now than when I was working. So, y'know go figure. [laughter]

**RC:** But it sounds like with things that you enjoy.

**TM:** Yes. It is. And I—I like the idea of helping here at the center and the reason that I got involved with it in the first place was because. Because of like. You weren't guaranteed a job if you were gay. Cause they could just fire you just because you were gay. So I was very not to get involved in too much. Because I didn't want to lose my job. Because as a gay woman I wasn't, I don't have a husband that I can fall back on should I lose my job. You know. So I just didn't get involved. But then once I retired I thought "Can't take my retirement from me now." So I—I can now help the next generation the way I was helped while other people were involved and I was working. And wasn't involved. So I figured this is my way of paying back.

**RC:** Okay. So, since you've mentioned feeling a little bit tense on the job to kind of hide that part of your life, did you feel that way at the shirt factory and working for the state?

**TM:** At the shirt factory I really wasn't. Let's just say I was pretty much in the closet. I mean I knew from a very early age. I was six maybe or before that. When I knew I—I was different and it wasn't the same. I mean when you have crushes on little girls instead of little boys something isn't right. And I often wondered. How when we're little like that—how do we know not to say anything. How do we know to keep that a secret. But—but, anyway I did. And when I worked at the shirt factory I was still, pretty much in the closet. And when I started at the State. I kind of sort of came to a conclusion in my mind that. You know, I was dating this guy and he was a really nice guy. I really liked him a lot. But I wa'n't in love with him. And he asked him to marry him and I was like, "Woah, somethings gotta happen here." So I decided in my mind that I couldn't—I couldn't know if I would never find a woman that I wanted to have a relationship with. So how horrible would it be if I was married to him and had a couple kids. And then found someone that I wanted to be with and then I'd have to uproot my whole family and cause all that problem. I thought, "I can't do that to him. I can't do that to any kids we might have. Or myself." So I pretty much, I broke it off with him. I didn't still come out of the closet but I—he was the last guy I ever dated.

**RC:** Do you think that he knew?

**TM:** I don't think he—he probably knew afterwards but I don't think he, I'm mean years later he might of found out but I don't know if he knew at all. I broke his heart, I really did break his heart and I hated that. But I figured I would rather break his heart now, then break his heart later. Worse, y'know. So.

**RC:** And you said you were working for the State at the time so how. Were you in Harrisburg for 37 years working for the State?

**RM:** No, I lived up in Northern Dauphin County for awhile. I lived with my grandmother for awhile in Millersburg. And then I moved down to Harrisburg because, yeah. Going over Peter's Mountain everyday, and plus if you think Harrisburg is bad, go learn about being gay back in, you know, in the 70's. You should be in the redneck town and it's just. You know, I had to get away from that. Just to feel decent about myself, you know. So I came down to Harrisburg. Lived down here. So I lived in Harrisburg since I'd say '75 or 6. And I lived in Middletown for about ten years. But, y'know, just in this general area.

**RC:** And you felt better. You felt a little freer?

**TM:** Yeah, I could be more free. I could be more myself. I could. I mean, I still wasn't out, out. So but.

**RC:** How long was it before you were out?

**TM:** [pause] Pretty long time actually till I was really out, out. I mean I went out to bars and, and to degem (?) which you know that was the big one back then. So I went to the Degym and stuff like that but I wasn't really out at say like work. I mean, I'd say at work it wasn't probably till mid 80's. Somethin' like that. And I wasn't out-out like I was shouting it from the top. There were some people who knew.

**RC:** And was it communicated to say the employees directly that if you were out you would be in danger of losing your job or was it kind of an implicit.

**TM:** It wasn't like, you know out there, it was more of a—y'know. And I know that now and they did pass the, quite a number of years ago. I mean, I can't remember exactly when it was, but the thing that it no matter the person's race you know, all that kind of stuff. That you couldn't lose your job but I work for the state, and I know that they can do whatever they want to do and call it something else. So I still wanted to be careful.

**RC:** Had you seen anybody else kind of get burned by being more obvious?

**TM:** I never saw anyone fired at the state for it actually but I did see people take pretty much a beating by other employees. Not, not a literal beating but, talkin', comments, and just kind of ill treat~~ment~~ment and just, you know, stuff like that. Luckily for me I didn't have a whole lot of that. I did have some friends that once they found out I was gay, they decided they didn't even want to be around me anymore and its like, okay, you know I can see if I was coming on to you or I can see it if I was coming to your house right after work and saying, "Hey let's hang out!". I wasn't doing that so. But that, that's not, not all me. That was on them, that's the way I see that. But, you know, it was the time, it was a sign of the times. People thought, "Oh, I'm hanging off someone that's gay then that's gonna mean I'm gay too." And it—that's ridiculous.

**RC:** Do you, when did you start to feel like that changed? Or has it changed?

**TM:** It has changed. It's not 100% gone, but it has changed. I don't feel. I don't feel like totally oppressed or anything, no. I can't say when I would probably say late 80's 90's. It started to change.

**RC:** And growing up in a rural town, I mean, did you hear, like, disparaging comments that people would make, whether they knew that you identified as gay or not?

**TM:** I—when I worked at the shirt factory, there was this woman worked there. And I think her name was Eppie or Effie (?) something like that. And she was definitely gay. I mean, definitely. She was an older woman, well, I say she was probably late 40's, 50's when I started there. And what made me sad about her was she was quiet and she kept to herself, but what made me sad about her was there was several times that she had been taken away and put it, I think it was Whitehall [?] or something because she was mentally. Because she was gay. And so she was sick and she—she was a nice lady. I mean I talked to her and she kept to herself. She was quiet.

**RC:** Do you know if she had family in the area, if there was something keeping her there?

**TM:** She probably did. I didn't know them. And y'know, I just remember my mom telling me that she was taken to Whitehall a couple times because she was, cause she liked women. [laughter] Okay. Alrighty. So.

**RC:** That's, that's really interesting. Do you, maybe you don't know this, but do you have a sense for whether, you know, some, some stranger on the street or your neighbor could tell the authorities that their neighbor was gay and they could get taken to Whitehall? Or did you have to have like a family member?

**TM:** I, y'know.

**RC:** Commit you.

**TM:** I don't know w--how wha' happened that it, that she was taken there. I—it may have been someone that maybe thought she was coming onto them. I don't know.

**RC:** Yeah.

**TM:** I—it—I don't, she didn't want to go, so I'm sure it wasn't something she said, "Oh can I please be put away?"

**RC:** Gotcha.

**TM:** Y'know. So, and I've heard people when I worked, when I first started at the state, there was this, this one guy. He—he was cute but he was real flaming, I mean flaming. And they used to talk about him like a dog all the time. I think they called him Fluffy or something. I was like, "Oh my, boy." So an I heard one of—of the ladies that I used to work with, she was just this little, most little short thing. She was in her 60's and wrinkled and little and chubby. And I heard

her say to her one friend, and they were sitting behind me, and I heard her talking to her one friend at lunch time, I mean she said that, “So-and-so somebody she saw somebody that was gay.” A “leh—lezzie” she called, lezzie. And she said, “I’m telling you what, one thing, lez you better never come onto me.” And I had to chuckle to myself because I thought, ‘Oh my goodness, just because someone is lesbian doesn’t mean they have bad taste’. I mean come on, I mean. Look at you, whose gonna come on to you, y’know? So it’s like, umm, but y’know that’s what everyone thought. Y’know I have to be afraid of a gay person, they’re gonna come onto me and they’re gonna do bad things to me and stuff. I—I just don’t understand where they get that mentality. I—I don’t get it.

**RC:** Do you ever encounter that still today?

**TM:** Not as much, no. Not as much. I mean I’m sure there you can see the, like, the old ladies in church sometimes, like. Because, you know my partner and I go to church and we, y’know, when you take communion, you’re up front and then when you come walking back you see everyone and just, y’know, sitting there and every now and then you see the little old purple-haired ladies going [chitter sound]. But other than that, no, not much. Not much. If someone thinks that I don’t think they say it. Anymore like they used to.

**RC:** Does that make it better or worse?

**TM:** It doesn’t make it better, but, I don’t have to hear it.

**RC:** Okay.

**TM:** Y’know.

**RC:** Do you go to a chuh in Harrisburg?

**TM:** No, I actually go to a church in Hershey.

**RC:** Okay. Have you been there for awhile?

**TM:** Probably for about 11 years. Ele—y’know cause it’s, it’s the church that my partner grew up in and she wanted to go there, so I was like, “Okay we’ll go there.” Y’know I really. The last time I had been to church on a frequent basis was when I lived up in Northern Dauphin County. And I never renewed any church down here, I just—I’m more spiritual than I am religious anyway so. But she wants to go, so I’ll go.

**RC:** Was your family affiliated with a specific religion, or?

**TM:** Lutheran.

**RC:** Lutheran. So growing up you were goin’ to Lutheran church?

**TM:** Uhuh.

**RC:** I was also.

**TM:** Right.

**RC:** Okay. So are you—what denomination do you consider or does your partner consider herself now?

**TM:** Lutheran.

**RC:** Lutheran.

**TM:** Uhuh. She grew up Lutheran, we go Lutheran, y’know. So.

**RC:** And—did—she grew up here in Hershey.

**TM:** Between Hershey and Elizabethtown she grew up yeah.

**RC:** Cool, how long have you guys been together?

**TM:** 11 years. [laughter]

**RC:** You started going to church right away. That’s nice. [laughter]

**TM:** Ah—I’m—It’s not that I don’t believe in God. It’s—I’m just more spiritual and I just wasn’t affiliated. I mean I—Every now and then I go to like a Catholic church with a friend of mine. Or I go to another different church with a friend of mine. But, y’know, not on a regular basis.

**RC:** When you’re not going to church you say that you identify as spiritual. I mean are there—are there certain rituals or music or habits that you have that you kind of consider part of your—your spiritual observance?

**TM:** I pray and although I’m not sitting there going “hmmm” I kind of meditate, y’know. And, yeah I kind of talk to nature and talk to the God, talk to the sky, y’know. So.

**RC:** Are there any books or songs or movies that have meant something to you. Not necessarily spiritually, I’m kind of segue waying into a different topic now. But do you have a favorite book or a movie or a singer?

**TM:** Well I always—I enjoy reading about Native Americans, whether it’s totally absolutely, positively true or not. I enjoy reading about Native Americans, the real Native Americans, not the, y’know, Hollywood ones.

**RC:** Yeah.

**TM:** Y'know. And I have a Native American blood in me and to me, I find that I like that. Native Americans respected gay people. They embraced it. They—They held them in high esteem. They were the two-souls. So, I like the idea that some of that blood's rolling in me and I—I kind of attribute that sometimes to my acceptance of all kind of people. Y'know. As long as they been good to me, I'm good to them. Y'know. But, anyway, there's a book called Hanthayell (?) by Ruth B. B. Hill. I probably read that five times. But that kind of thing. I don't read as much as I probably should, but.

**RC:** What do you—what do you like to do, especially now that you're retired. Especially now that you're retired, I mean I know you're busy working for the center and.

**TM:** Well, I do my art and I write and, y'know, help people out at—how I need a ride here, can I have a ride there? That kind of stuff.

**RC:** What do you consider your art? What kind of art do you do?

**TM:** It's more a realistic, like realism more than abstract although I have done some abstract. It's—I do drawings with graphite and I usually do a acrylics so it's all kind of stuff.

**RC:** And is that something you learned, y'know early on in elementary art school or did you just kind of pick it up as you went along?

**TM:** Just sort of picked it up. I mean I went to art class in high school, well, school all through school. I—I don't think they have that anymore. I mean do they? I don't know, yeah I went the whole way through school and had art. And. [pause] I just picked it up, y'know, three years ago. So. I'm just gonna do this—so I did. So it's—I'm still learning, I'm still picking up ideas and things, techniques. But-but that's all good. That's okay.

**RC:** Have you gotten support?

**TM:** Yeah. I have. I have. I—was at art, I mean I was at writing class last night. It's not really a class so to speak, it's more of a gym session. Y'know? But, yeah.

**RC:** That's cool.

**TM:** Positive feedback makes you feel good.

**RC:** Yeah, helps you keep going.

**TM:** Uhuh.

**RC:** You said that when you graduated from high school you wanted to go to art school. So it sounds like pretty early on—

**TM:** Uhuh.

**RC:** You—did you self-identify as an artist like pretty early?

**TM:** I probably [pause] I—I would say probably most of my life I've drawn or done something and my mother was always doing crafts so y'know. It—she helped, yeah. She's the one who bought me, and I still have it, she bought me my first oil set. And so that was cool. So she—she supported me and encouraged me which meant a lot.

**RC:** Do you have any brothers or sisters?

**TM:** I have one brother whose two years younger than I. He lives in Maryland. And I have two sisters. One is four years younger than me and one is eight years younger than me. The middle sister lives in Michigan and the baby sister lives in Georgia. So all over the place.

**RC:** Are they still part of your life?

**TM:** Yeah, we chat like on Facebook or phone calls. Yeah

**RC:** Are any of them artistic?

**TM:** Mhm, no. [laughter] No, they always tell me they can't even draw sticks. They could if they tried but okay.

**RC:** Do you think that growing there was any extra pressure on you since you were older than the other siblings?

**TM:** I think the oldest always has a little more pressure on them because it's your duty to look after the little ones y'know.

**RC:** It sounds like you had little ones to look after for awhile too with how spread out they were.

**TM:** Well, I did because my mother worked at the shirt factory and my father worked in York. So he worked like swing shifts. When he was home he was mostly sleeping. So my mother was at work, I was like ten years old taking care of—what six month old baby. That meant dirty diapers. And they were diapers-diapers, not Pampers. [laughter] So y'know—but y'know he had to do it, someone had to do it. And it—it for babysitters it was expensive, they couldn't afford it. So.

**RC:** So you're father was in the Navy and then he hurt his back when he was farming. So what was swing shifting in York?

**TM:** He was a machinist, worked for—when he went there it was the Navy owned it. And then it later became AMF (?) and then it—I think it became Boyt (?) or something. An' I forget what it was but it still—ah it's still Harley now. It's Harley Davis.

**RC:** And so did he work there until he retired?

**TM:** He—yeah he retired there—oh pro'laly about 15 years ago. He just past away like fours years ago or five years ago.

**RC:** I'm sorry.

**TM:** So.

**RC:** Is your mother still with you?

**TM:** No, my mother was killed by a drunk driver in 1979.

**RC:** Yikes.

**TM:** Yeah.

**RC:** How old were your siblings?

**TM:** I was 25, my brother was 23, my other sister was 21, and my baby sister was like 18. 17-18. She was just 17—she wa—'cause we had it for awhile. She had to be under one of us because she was still a minor.

**RC:** Sure.

**TM:** But it wasn't long. Y'know less than a year.

**RC:** Wow. That must have really affected your family.

**TM:** [sigh] It did.

**RC:** Understatement of the year right?

**TM:** Yeah, 'cause I was 25. I had to handle all the lawyers because my dad and her lawyer were divorced. He had remarried and so I was may. And lawyers are buggers le' me tell you that. They are.

**RC:** Had you—had the—had you and your siblings been living with your mother after the divorced or with your father.

**TM:** My baby sister was still living with my Mom, but everyone else was out of the house.

**RC:** When they got divorced.

**TM:** Uh, yeah.

**RC:** And was that a surprise? [pause, Mauer shaking her head and smiling] Gotcha.

**TM:** They fought like cats and dogs the whole time. I can't remember growing up if they fought all the time, so.

**RC:** So what do you remember—what do you remember about your mother? If she had to have hobbies or enjoy things when she wasn't working at the shirt factory or taking care of kids. What do you remember about her?

**TM:** She did. She—she did crafts. She—she would make stuff to sell for extra money. And she loved to sew. I would say in anyway shape or form that I had then find my mother it would be in front of the sewing machine 'cause she did it a lot. She would make—She made raggy Anne dolls for, y'know, awhile. And I remember she would sew up the arms and the legs and we'd have to turn 'em inside out and we'd have to stuff 'em. You'd have this big—this big bag of the foam pieces and you'd have to stuff 'em down in there with a—you know with a ruler or something to get 'em all filled up and that—that was our duty. And then she'd sew everything all together, make clothing for 'em and sell 'em for money. My mom, I don't know where she got her energy most of the time. I mean she would work all day and she would come home and she would do the craft things or she would like remodel the house. I mean, I know how to do a whole lot of stuff because I was number one child so I had to help. I painted, put up, y'know, wall board and—and windows, flooring, anything you can think of, y'know. So in a way it was goo. It taught me some more stuff and skills in life. But. Yeah, my mom had. Y'know my mom was no angel, I know she was no angel. She—but she taught me a lot.

**RC:** What do you feel like you learned from your dad?

**TM:** [pause] I would say from my father I learned kind of patience and a more even tone. My mother was hot-temper. I mean, you—she could just look at you and you knew you were dead. My father was more slow burn which is more what I'm like. I mean, I take a whole lot. I take a lot, take a lot, and then when I've had enough then get out of my way because I will blow up then, but I'm kind of like him where I was—I'm more even keeled. [laughter] And when my father—he was, he—he read more often than anyone that I knew and he, he was very intelligent, he, y'know. And so I think I learned for him that it's good to be knowledgeable, it's good to know things, it's good to go somewhere of something that you don't already know and just pick it up and learn or whatever. Just so you have that back in your mind.

**RC:** So when you started working for the State were you doing something that ever in your wildest dreams thought that you would be doing?

**TM:** No.

**RC:** What'd you start off doing?

**TM:** I started off typing. It was—I was a clerk typist trainee or something like that and I was actually doing keypunching. So it was the early key punch machines. So. But it was like a trainee thing so they called me a clerk typist. And it was typing on the machine so—and so that's how I started out. And I keypunched for like 16 years. Not a fun job.

**RC:** Could you talk to your co-workers while you were doing that?

**TM:** You could.

**RC:** Okay.

**TM:** You could.

**RC:** Okay.

**TM:** It was [pause]

**RC:** What did you move onto after keypunching?

**TM:** To data, working with the data that would come out of the computers than after that actually running the computers. I moved up to actually programming and running the servers.

**RC:** That's pretty cool.

**TM:** Yeah it was cool. It was cool. The—matter of fact, I worked for—I retired from the lucrook (?) control board and I used to run the servers at the three warehouses they had. Keep the booze flowing. [laughter]

**RC:** That was probably—like when you were meeting people and people asked you what you did. “Well..”

**TM:** Yeah, I keep the booze flowing for yeah. Of course everyone asked if they could get any free samples but.

**RC:** They probably don't want you testing samples on the job.

**TM:** Hm, no.

**RC:** Yeah. So it sounds like you had a kind of a 9-5 job didn't really have to take much work home with you.

**TM:** No, I actually was on call.

**RC:** Oh, you were, okay.

**TM:** No, for the first 16 years or 20 years but then when I worked as actually computer—whether it was a repairs of the computers or whether it was the programming and the actual keeping the thing up round the clock.

**RC:** Wow.

**TM:** --call. I can recall two-three o'clock in the morning and I was—and you know there's no one to call cause everyone else is sleeping so you either figure it out or, y'know.

**RC:** So did that affect your social life for several years?

**TM:** Not near as much as when I worked—I used to work for welfare so, and I worked at—at their one off site computer warehouse. It was like the disaster recovery area. And I worked 2<sup>nd</sup> shift there and that affected my social life more than anything. I was working when everyone else was home and vice versa. So that affected—Y'know a lot of people say to me, “Oh, you remember that episode on Seinfeld?” And I'm like, “No, I was working.” Y'know. So.

**RC:** So you feel like you missed out on a chunk of pop culture for a few years.

**TM:** I'm not one for those—that kind of stuff. I'm mean I watch TV but the—the little sitcoms kind of work on my nerves. Just too short of a time to actually get any kind of a story going on. And stuff isn't funny. I don't know if it's just cause I'm getting old. This stuff they have this little canned laughter thinking that's not even funny. But, that could be me.

**RC:** So what did you—what did you do in your free time while you were working? You mentioned that you, in the 80's I think, went to some of the bars that were available for socializing.

**TM:** 70's, 80's, 90's, yeah. But I didn't really hang out at the bars a whole lot. Now for awhile, like from '87 to like 91' or something like that, I used to be at Stally's (?) every night dancing. And, y'know, a friend of mine we—we'd go down and we'd dance all night. Boy then I was in shape but—but most of the time I don't really hang out at the bars. Especially if you're in a relationship there's trouble at the bars. There's just no point in going there. I mean every now and then you go out and meet some friends, but hanging in the bar's trouble. But what I did mostly was I had horses so I would ride horse and hang out with my buds. Y'know, that kind of stuff.

**RC:** Cool. So you've been with your partner—what's her name? I'm sorry.

**TM:** Cara.

**RC:** Cara. So you've been with Cara for 11 years.

**TM:** Mhm.

**RC:** And before that had you—was there someone else or?

**TM:** Mhm. [laughter]

**RC:** Remember you don't have to talk about anything that you don't want to.

**TM:** I—I had several partners over the years and there's only one of them that I just—it's best that we don't even talk.

**RC:** That's fine. That's fine. So let's talk about the center then.

**TM:** Okay.

**RC:** Once you got involved in the center and you obviously became involved in the art gallery and the aging program. What drew you here, what drew you here? Sorry.

**TM:** Well for all the years that I wasn't involved but I was reaping the benefits.

**RC:** Yeah.

**TM:** Y'know, as well as everyone else. I mean people were putting their lives on the line and I was reaping the benefits. And so I thought now that I can. I'm not working anymore, I can't get fired. Now that I can it's time for me to start giving too, so. I had the time.

**RC:** Yeah.

**TM:** So, I head some—the aging with pride because I figure I'm not getting any younger. So, y'know.

**RC:** Has that been fun?

**TM:** Mhm, mhm, mhm. And then through—it was through the—the, it used to be called C-Plan but now it's called Aging with Pride. That's where the actual history project came out of and we were all sitting in the reading one night, and the whole like stair (?) committee at the center here. And we were the C-Plan meeting. We said, "Is there—what can we do?" 'Cause there were things that—y'know we had dances for like oldies and—and they were fun but not many people came and so we were trying think what could we do, what are projects that we want to get involved with that will be a worthwhile thing. So, y'know, we go around the table and so-and-so said stuff and other people said this and that and it came my turn and I said, "History, because we're losing people every day that we'll never hear those stories. Y'know we won't know. And so we went around and Barry said the same thing, "Yeah, history." Y'know he said, "Teddy said what I was gonna say." And so from there that's how we got to the history project.

**RC:** I read—I read Barry Loveland was really very excited about this particular project and realized very quickly how big it was going to be. What are—what are some of the things in LGBT history in the area you feel like are missing? What do you want? I'm sorry if I'm not articulating this well. What do you want the LGBT community that's young here to know about what came before?

**TM:** I—I just want them to know that we've been here for a long, long time. Don't let anyone tell you that, "Oh gay people just came out of the woodwork." No, we have been here since the beginning of time. And we have been meeting, in secret mostly when—in the early years way

back. For a long, long time and I would like for them to understand that because of the sacrifice from some. Heavy sacrifices from some in this general area even, we enjoy the freedoms that we enjoy today. I never, when I in high school and when I came out of high school and was thinking of even coming out, I would of never in my wildest dreams believe that this possibility that we can get married in my lifetime. When—when I was coming out and when I was going to the Degym there would be people watching the windows to see if the cops were gonna come to raid the place. And we go from that in the 70's to being able to get married. I mean, wow! In my lifetime. So I would have never dreamed it. But I don't think we should forget about the past, just like how we shouldn't forget what happened in Auswitzch and all that stuff. We shouldn't forget that. Doesn't mean we have to worry about it all day long everyday. But I don't think we should forget it either. Because people suffered. I mean there are people in this area that suffered death threats and—and their houses were trashed. And, y'know, people would break into their houses or throw stones through their windows. Y'know, why? Just 'cause they were gay? It's sad and I think that we should remember that. So, that is one thing I'd like to—the younger people to know.

**RC:** Some of those—some of those things that used to happen that kind of affect you the most when you think of about what needs to be passed on. Did you ever read about them in the newspaper? I mean were—were those events talked about? When somebody's house would be broke into or if somebody was attacked? Or did you kind of hear it.

**TM:** It—it was mostly word of mouth through the gay community. Because they weren't going to put it in a newspaper 'cause the cops would come and wouldn't do anything. They weren't gonna put anything in the paper that we didn't do anything. Y'know, so. It was mostly word of mouth though I heard a lot of this stuff. I found it sad.

**RC:** So it was just—would you say that in the 70's, the 80's, maybe even into the 90's you could just assume that the police wouldn't really care if something like that happened?

**TM:** They would come, they would do a whole lot. They'd say, "Well, you know I can't really do anything about this." Well what did you expect? I mean, matter of fact one of the—one of the baby's that wasn't interviewed, she had the police come to her house and they said, "Well what did you expect?" That's like, what? Y'know, she ended up having to move.

**RC:** Do you think—do you think a lot of people had to move out of this area over the years because of that?

**TM:** Yep. At least—at least probably five people that I know of, like I don't personally know of them. They're not like my buddies but, y'know. There's people that used to live here and were like, "I can't take central Pennsylvania conservatives anymore."

**RC:** Yeah.

**TM:** And they moved someplace that's a little more, y'know, friendly.

**RC:** Do you know if they stay in touch with the community here?

**TM:** Some do but many don't. They just make lives where they're at. Can't blame them.

**RC:** So you said that it was kind of a network of friends and friends of friends where you would hear these stories of aggression, I guess, against the LGBT community. Are those just very carefully built up over time, or were people—were people very good at finding you? Do you know what I mean? How did you find your allies and your resources?

**TM:** Well back in the day when I first started going out, if you wanted to be the gay person, you had to go to a gay bar. If you didn't go to a gay bar—I mean I couldn't walk up to you in the mall and say, "Hi!" Y—Because I had to be afraid that if I said hi to you, you would think, "Oh my god she's coming on to me." And, and so I wasn't being able to meet people, women in say in—in the mall or the grocery store or the laundromat or wherever. You had to be very careful what you did. So if you wanted to meet someone who was possibly a love interest or even just for a good friend, you had to go to a bar. And there wasn't not a big way around that. I mean I guess you could go to San Francisco, I guess it was different there. But I never was there so.

**RC:** Did you ever consider moving somewhere else like those people did?

**TM:** No. I'm a Central Pennsylvania girl. I love it here I—I'm probably a sicko but I like the weather, I like the seasons, I like it here. I'm comfortable. I, y'know. I haven't personally gone through a lot of trauma because I was gay. And so I guess I don't have the bad taste in my mouth that some people do.

**RC:** But it sounds like you at least wanted to get out of a rural area.

**TM:** Yeah. I had to come to Harrisburg.

**RC:** But maybe—do you think that it was—do you think that it was because mostly of the prejudice or do you think you were also kind of a person who was interested in living somewhere where more stuff was going on.

**TM:** It was a combination I think.

**RC:** Yeah.

**TM:** I mean I wanted to be able to meet people and I knew that would be the bars and back then it was only the bars. And so who wants to come have a few drinks and then go over Peter Mountain? [laughter]

**RC:** So it was—

**TM:** Not good.

**RC:** a lot safer driving here?

**TM:** Well, it was a lot safer 'cause you could walk home, y'know.

**RC:** That makes a lot of sense.

**TM:** 'Cause I used to just live right over here on Bow (?) Street and so I would walk to the bars.

**RC:** And where do you live now?

**TM:** I live right now off Union Deposit Road.

**RC:** Okay.

**TM:** Lower Paxton Township.

**RC:** You like it out there?

**TM:** Yep. I do. Good neighborhood.

**RC:** I'm—I'm new to Central Pennsylvania myself. I'm not gonna move myself into this interview very much but it's fun to hear people talk about why they're attached to this area. Because for me coming from the outside it is strange. And—and I'll—I'll qualify that. There's just a lot going on. Harrisburg has its own culture, Lancaster has its own culture. Then you've got all the farm lands in between and each individual town has its own culture. Do you—do you think of that as something as something unique to Central Pennsylvania? The kind of—

**TM:** I never lived anywhere else so I don't know. But I do know, I mean, I know when you go over Peter's Mountain and you hit Halifax, it's a subculture. And it's different and that's just the way it is. I know that when you go further North and you're in North UMBERLAND County, guess what, that's another little circle. It—It is that way and I don't know if it's because many of the areas around here are small communities and they just haven't kind of infiltrated each other yet. I don't know if that's it or not but it's definitely, yeah. It's unique around here, it is.

**RC:** And it's growing on me I have to admit. I've lived in Elizabethtown for four years now and they are not super welcoming people. It's not because they're not nice it's just because they've lived there for so long that why did they need to meet someone new. Do you know what I mean?

**TM:** Well—and I think too a lot of us around this general area came from the old Dutch, the old German in—immigrants and so they were kind of keep-to-themselves kind of people. Farmers, y'know? So I think we still have that kind of mentality.

**RC:** They're really nice folks though.

**TM:** Oh yeah, they—people are—once you get to know them it's just, they're a little bit like, "I don't know you. I don't know you." Y'know.

**RC:** So at the center what do you think—what do you think that this physical space and also the ability of people to gather here. What opportunities or services do you feel like this center is providing that maybe weren't available before?

**TM:** I think just being visible. Just—just—just giving people a—a feeling of “I'm part of that, that's my place. I can—can meet here, I can be who I am and it's okay”. I think that, more than anything. I mean they do have programs that they help. We have—y'know where people come borrow crutches and wheelchairs and stuff like that should they need them. And, y'know, we have programs here that—y'know—we help the community but otherwise. But I think just being visible is—is a boost because when I—when I was coming out it was like there is no such thing. There was but you never knew unless you were in the circle.

**RC:** And not everyone was in the circle?

**TM:** And again, you're in Central Pennsylvania, where it's that little stand-offish thing that we were just talking about with—y'know everyone lived here for so long. I don't know you, I don't know you. So it was hard to actually become part of the circle because number one I don't know you, number two I don't know what you're up to. So.

**RC:** Yeah.

[pause]

**RC:** Oh I wanted to ask you, since you are part of the history project. Are there—are there any material objects or artifacts that you have particularly hoping people will bring in? Do you think that there are—I don't know, physical representations of people's lives that you think are particularly needed for people to see.

**TM:** I would hope that we would somehow get some of the AIDS quilts if somebody had a piece. That would be great. I think some of the old, there are some artifacts over there that some of the old advertisements and stuff, the t-shirts. But there was a magazine put out—I'm pretty sure that was probably the 80's. And it was called, “Crossroads”. And it was a gay publication and it had stuff in it that I found fascinating. I—I subscribed to it and got it in the mail in a brown wrapper and everything, y'know. But it was—it was cool and I would hope to see some of them here. Because I mean that took a lot of courage to be doing it. And to foot the bill for that knowing you might well get shut down. So.

**RC:** Are there anythings that you plan to donate?

**TM:** I don't have a whole lot. I am so upset that I threw away my Farrah Fausset t-shirt.

**RC:** I am too.

**TM:** Because I would give that. It was mint green. It was so pretty and it had Farrah on the front of it in her swimsuit and I was like wish I hadn't thrown that away.

**RC:** How long did you keep it?

**TM:** I think I had it up till like ten years ago.

**RC:** Wow. That's hard when you go through those spring purges—

**TM:** I know.

**RC:** When you're cleaning up. It's hard to decide.

**TM:** You're not going to wear this—number one it's too small for you, number two, where are you going to wear it, y'know?

**RC:** Yeah.

**TM:** So, I thought.

**RC:** Somebody's probably very happy with it now.

**TM:** Probably somebody over at Africa or Thailand. Yeah.

**RC:** I was wondering if you have had—this is kind of the last deep question—

**TM:** Okay.

**RC:** I was wondering if you have had any particular important events or turning points in your life. Where you either changed the way you looked at life or changed the way you were going.

**TM:** When my mother passed. That was a biggie. That was a biggie. I—I—Immediately when—when I got the phone call I was like, “Oh my god!” ‘cause it was a cold October day. In—and it was cold and it was like—it wasn't really raining but it was a heavy mist. So it was just a gooey, ugly day. And the first thing I thought of was, “I gotta hope somebody covered her up, she'd be cold.” Well, I mean, she died immediately. According to them it was almost instantaneous. And so that didn't really matter but it was the first thing that came to my mind. Then the next thing that came to my mind was, “Did she know I loved her?” And, y'know, you would think, of course she knew, y'know she was your mom. But I was at that age where you don't go round telling your mom, “I love you.” Y'know, you're 25, “Hi, Mom I love her!” Y'know you just don't do that. And—and it worried me that she never knew I loved her. But I know—I know she knew. Still, would you think of that? So from then on I started telling people when I hang up the phone with them, “Love you.” Y'know my brothers, my sister, good friends, whatever, cousins. And if—if I care about someone I let them know that I care about you, you're important to me. ‘Cause I don't wanna ever have that feeling again. Did they know? So that—I would say that changed my life drastically.

**RC:** Totally understandable. I guess what I want to ask next is did we anything?

**TM:** I think we could sit here for a week and still miss something.

**RC:** Yeah.

**TM:** But, y’know. Y’know. No, I guess not. I mean. My—my first—the one girlfriend that I would not want to talk about who was a royal, yeah. She’s the one that outed me. She was mad at me and she called up my mom and dad and told. So that—that was a big thing because, now my mom’s crying, “What we do wrong?” And my dad’s saying, “You’re not bringing women home to this house.” Y’know, it was. And for have—to have someone that you cared about do that to you, yeah that’s a little bit of a life changer.

**RC:** Wow.

**TM:** So that’s how I came out. I didn’t actually come to my mom and say, “Mom I’ve got something to tell you.”

**RC:** Did your parents know your girlfriend? Had they ever met her before?

**TM:** Ooh they knew her.

**RC:** So she was outing herself as well.

**TM:** Mhm. She didn’t care, she was angry at me.

**RC:** And, dare I ask was your relationship with your parents different after that?

**TM:** Yes, it was. For awhile my mom boo-hooed and cried, “What did we do wrong? What did we do wrong?” My father wasn’t real bad but he didn’t say much. You’re not bringing women home here, trust me I wasn’t thinking about that. But they both kind of got over it. My mom died not too many years after that so. But she was okay with it. I mean she called me when (TMI) which was March ’79. And she called to make sure I was okay and that kind of stuff. She died October 1979 so of course I knew she knew I loved her, so. But still, y’know. So I would say that—that was a life changing thing right there. Someone outs you. You—y’know, who does that?

**RC:** Yeah. So did that spread to all your childhood friends and everyone, or I mean I imagine you parents.

**TM:** The whole community. Mhm. And that’s when I still lived there. Tht’s another reason I moved to Harrisburg.

**RC:** And Harrisburg was better.

**TM:** Yeah. ‘Cause I didn’t have to. No one cared. Neighbours didn’t care. They didn’t care. I don’t know you. Y’know you could come and go and use your place. And she followed me down here and she told my neighbors down here. Yeah.

**RC:** She sounds like a very dynamic individual.

**TM:** If that's the word you want to use. Yes. We'll use that.

**RC:** So bringing it back to—that was a—that was a really—is there anything else you wanna say 'cause that was—that was important.

**TM:** Well—well I guess I could bring up the fact about my partner's biological son. He was my son, but he wasn't my biological son. He committed suicide. He was bipolar and committed suicide and he was—he was kind of really weird 'cause people would console her but I wasn't. I wasn't part of the pic—y'know what I mean it was one of those unkinda things. And that was 2003-4, so even then, y'know. I couldn't have my name in the obituary announcement. I—It-it was weird, y'know. Everyone consoled her and his father but I was just like there. Y'know—y'know and that hurt 'cause, y'know I loved him too. So, but, I would say that some other thing that I hope changes as things go on because when you become part of someone's life like that, you're mourning too. You're sad too. You're hurting too. So I—I hope that changes. And I guess that's it.

**RC:** Wow. I guess I just want your opinion on something.

**TM:** Okay.

**RC:** 'Cause I'm interested. On—on the website, the LGBT center says that it wants to provide educational, cultural, and community activities that foster wholeness. I'm really interested in the word wholeness with my research. I was just wondering how you would describe or define the concept of wholeness.

**TM:** Wholeness?

**RC:** Wholeness, if you've ever thought of it before.

**TM:** Wholeness to me means that it encompasses every part of your life. In other words, spiritually, physically, mentally, y'know, educational, fun, every—y'know every little corner. Y'know. 'Cause if you feel good about yourself I think you feel, y'know, whole. I feel more whole when I can be myself. Y'know.

**RC:** And you feel that way at the center?

**TM:** I feel that this is a really good step, yes. Y'know, I—I realize we can't have a religious affiliations so we can't have church here. I mean I guess we probably could but do we want to go that way where we're saying, "This is a church that's here." And then assume that's the church, that we're only accepting. And now—so we have to be careful what we do but I think—I think like I said, just this being here, being visible and this active and there's people coming here all the time. I think that is a big step that helps kids say, "Oh there are people like me." Y'know

someone's isolated, they feel really crappy. And then when they find out, oh look a whole bunch of people in there. I can belong. So, that to me, that's what wholeness is.

**RC:** Thank you.

**TM:** Mhm.

**RC:** Thank you for very much for talking to me today, I really appreciate it.

**TM:** Yeah.

**RC:** And I've been informed by my camera woman that we are almost out of memory.

[laughter]

**TM:** 'Kay.

**RC:** And so for this interview, goodbye and good luck.

**TM:** Thank you.