

**LGBT Center of Central PA History Project
Dickinson College Archives & Special Collections**

<http://archives.dickinson.edu/>

Documents Online

Title: LGBT Oral History: David Payne

Date: October 26, 2014

Location: LGBT Oral History – Payne, David - 090

Contact:

Archives & Special Collections
Waidner-Spahr Library
Dickinson College
P.O. Box 1773
Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu

Interviewee: David Payne
Interviewer: Marge Forster and Barbara Miller
Date: October 26, 2014
Place: Harrisburg, PA (David's home)
Transcriber: Andrew Dietz

Abstract:

This is an oral history with David Payne. It was recorded on October 26th, 2014. David Payne was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He attended Temple University in Philadelphia as a communications major. The focus of his career has been working in radio broadcasting for several stations based in the Central PA region of Harrisburg as well as in Rehoboth, DE. In this interview, David discusses his career path in radio broadcasting, his involvement in the Gay Men's Chorus of Harrisburg and other singing engagements with local churches, and also some stories about his relationships with his family members and their lack of awareness about his sexuality. David also comments on marriage equality and workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation. He remarks on his own experience of having his sexuality revealed in the workplace and how individuals should not have to fear that being out at work might cause termination. David's interview concludes on his existing relationships with friends and family and the search for romance.

MF-Marge Forster
BM-Barbara Miller
DP-David Payne

MF: This is Marge Forster and Barbara Miller interviewing David Payne. A continuation of an interview that started August 9th, 2014 and today is October 26th, 2014. And David, you were talking about your first job in broadcasting in after graduating from Temple University in Communications and Broadcasting, so tell me about your first job.

DP: Well, it came about—it was right before graduation in the spring of 1985. There was a job fair on campus that was having to do with my major. There were maybe about a dozen different media outlets that were represented and when I got there—basically, you know, it was a—I handed them my resume and told them a little bit out myself and obviously knowing we were about to graduate so most of us had a similar level of experience in the field we were being interviewed for and I was told that—that one radio station was there hiring. They weren't just there checking the field but they had a specific opening. My first assumption was that all of the media outlets were from Philadelphia and that area but in particular this radio station was in Harrisburg—and Harrisburg was obviously a place I knew and was familiar with, as the capital but as a city, I had never visited. I actually had never lived anywhere except the house that I grew up in so this was a little daunting as you can imagine. I showed them my resume and told them what I had done up until then and what I wanted to do and they told me about the opening and they said that they would be in touch. So about a week later, I get a phone call and they ask me to come to

Harrisburg for an interview and you know, I was very mixed because obviously—I wanted—they were interested in me at least enough to interview me in Harrisburg. I didn't know at the time if really wanted to relocate. I was 22 years old, still living at home—obviously anxious to go to work but again, did I want to move somewhere I had never been before and didn't know anyone.

MF: Right, right.

DP: So I hopped on the train and I came to Harrisburg, they interviewed me and they offered me the job before we left.

MF: Oh wow! So right on the spot.

DP: As you can imagine, my head was totally spinning and I had a relatively short time to decide. This was in mid-May. They wanted the opening to be at the end of the month so I had a relatively short period of time but by the time I returned to Philadelphia, I had decided that I wanted to take the job. So I told my family—the funniest thing about that was my brother said to me, “You know, you'll have to move to Harrisburg.” Thinking I was going to commute two hours each way! (Laughs) So I said, “I know.” I—to tell you the truth, I don't think that anyone—now one thing you have to remember is that I was the youngest. Out of six of us, I was the 3rd to graduate from college, which was a pretty big, you know, deal in our family. My two older brothers who were graduated, they were already working and—I think there were just two of us living at home and so I don't think that anyone thought that I was really going to leave—at least not that soon because, I, you know, when I went to college, I knew then that I didn't want to leave. I wanted to stay at home and I wanted to be as comfortable and as convenient as I could. So to pick up and to move all by myself to a place I had never been, I don't think anybody thought that I was going to. The more I thought about it—I kept going back and forth because I kept thinking, “I don't want to leave this. How am I going to do this.” So all of these things were going through my mind and then I said, “Yes, yes, I want to do this.” So graduation comes and then a week later all of the bags are packed, the train tickets in hand and here I am off in this adventure.

BM: That must have been very fast.

DP: It was. It was and you know, I was excited and terrified at the same time but you know, I didn't—I mean, it was an opportunity and the thing is I didn't know how many opportunities would come. You know, if I had had the opportunity to stay in Philadelphia, it would have been my first choice but here was a chance to go to work in my field.

BM: So tell about this job. What did you actually do every day?

DP: I was a news anchor. This was a radio station. This was an am station in Harrisburg and they had decided to expand their news staff to go into the evening—

so I was an evening news anchor. Every hour we did news headlines and I also was the engineer—the control board operator for a nightly talk show we did. So those were two –you know, at the time in radio was much different than it is today. Most of the time if you were on the air, that’s what you did. If you ran the control board behind the scenes, that’s what you did. Two separate things. That’s the way it had always been for me anyway up until then. I didn’t know it at the time, how things were beginning to change and how much work was being consolidated. One person doing the job of three different people and I did find that out as my career advanced. I figured out that radio wasn’t going to be it. And part of it was my own—my own—was being naïve about this. You know, things were a certain way in the mid-1980s and I just assumed it was going to be that way forever. Of course at that time, nobody had ever heard of the internet, no one had ever heard of streaming audio or video or you know, video cassettes were state of the art back then. That was a new thing. The VCR—those of a certain age remember and you know-that was what people were talking about. I didn’t get my first VCR until about ten years later but that’s another story. So I—it didn’t occur to me that things were at that time beginning to change—the radio business. People were not—I mean, news was just at the time beginning to change for not getting their news from newspapers as much as they had been. I remember our class—I mean the personal computer was new. The desktop was brand new back then. The first apple had just been sold for thousands of dollars which people don’t believe me. You know, it was almost like buying a new car when the PC was new. And I do remember one of my teacher’s in college, I think he was kind of joking-saying, “Who knows maybe one of these days we will be getting our news from one of these new fangled computers.” We all laughed thinking how insane is that—and that’s the thing. You can look back at most of those things now but at the time, it’s a certain mindset and you’re used to doing things a certain way and you think it is always going to be that way.

MF: So how long did that job last?

DP: That job lasted nine months.

MF: Oh wow.. was it technology that caused it?

DP: It was technology—that was a part of it. Part of it was—the format that they had tried did not succeed to the extent that they wanted. I once again, did not know this at the time but they had eliminated other jobs to create the job they had hired me for. And when they decided to change the format, they didn’t want news and talk in the evenings anymore so they decided to eliminate my job and created a job for other people. So that was a tough lesson to learn that this business is not always going to be, you know, what you think it is. Things change, people come and people go and so—

MF: How many jobs have you had now since coming to Harrisburg?

DP: That's the other thing—that—you know, I was—this was now—now we are talking February of 86, that's how long this first job lasted. I had once again some decisions to make. Did I want to stay? Because I was still new to the area. I had met some people. I was gaining some friendships but I still---you know, I still was learning my way. I didn't have a car at the time. So did I want to stay or did I want to—and my mother, bless her, said—because she knew how all of a sudden things were not turning out the way they planned and she said to me, “As long as I have a home, you have a home.” I have never forgotten that—in fact the letter she wrote me saying that, I still have that. I have never forgotten that.

MF: Does she know you still have it?

DP: I don't know if she does or not. (Laughs) So—I knew that was always an option but then I thought to myself, if I do move back to Philadelphia, then what? Do I want to start all over there or do I want to stay here? Well at that time, once again—without even realizing it or without even knowing that this was going to happen another job opened up. I was notified, now this was—it was in news, it was in radio. It was a smaller radio station, where it was in Carlisle. So I had to one, decide if I was going to take it and two, decide that I need to get a car because public transit was not very convenient between Harrisburg and Carlisle. It still isn't all these years later. So I bought a car, took the job and that lasted seven years. That was something that I, you know, once again, it wasn't—now the one thing that I knew wasn't going to happen—I knew I wasn't going to make a lot of money in this business, but it was steady employment, it was in my field. It was what I knew how to do so—

MF: And you've got that presence of voice.

DP: Well, thank you. I do appreciate that. You know, I think now—once again, now that I am older. You wonder—you make one decision, you wonder what if I had made the other. What if I had decided to go back to Philly or what if I decided to try and maybe do something different from what I was used to doing. I have always been the type of person—I have always been a pretty risk averse person. I---even though I took an enormous chance moving here, I knew I was coming to do something I was prepared to do or that I was qualified to do. That was the same thing with taking this other job, even though the atmosphere was radically different from what the first job was. It was still in radio and it was still doing, you know, what I thought I did well. Those are the decisions that I have always made. I have always tried to stay away from something that is too risky. Something that is you know, totally unknown, although, I did do it again. Like I said, at the end of seven years so now we are talking summer of 1993. I was offered a job, still in the field but in, once again, a place I had never been. This was in southern Delaware. So once again, I had another decision—the thing about it was—it was an offer. The job is yours if you want it. So—I visited the place. It was near the beach, so that was a—you know, that was definitely a selling point, but once again—it's funny too because I can remember this now, all these years later, I almost felt exactly the way I did when I first moved to Harrisburg. Here I am, ready to pack up, ready to move. You

know, once again to a place I had never been. This time though, I was 30 years old. I wasn't 22 anymore or I wasn't as naïve as I had been and you know, a little life experience and there is something to be said for that. I knew, you know, there were things that I did when I first moved here—decisions that you make and you take a chance and they don't always work out. This time I knew what to avoid, I knew what pitfalls to avoid. This transition was a little better. Now this was Rehoboth Beach, Delaware. Now, once again, I had never been there before, but I knew a lot of friends who visited there. Rehoboth is very popular in the gay community. It's a very popular resort. So there I knew that I would at least have, you know, I would have a community to turn to and it wasn't hard to find. It wasn't hard to know where to go, who to talk to. Unlike, mid 1980s Harrisburg—early 90s Rehoboth, there not only was a community but there was a place to go. There were people to talk to, people who helped you when you were new and you know, when you are not familiar with the area.

MF: So you found Rehoboth more open than Harrisburg?

DP: Yes, absolutely. I will say that Harrisburg—the thing that impressed me about being here was—now at the time some of the things that exist today, did not exist then because the community was still emerging, but I did find the LGBT community here (Harrisburg) to be much bigger than I had expected. You know, because you think Harrisburg, obviously not as big an area as Philadelphia but it really impressed me. You know, the people who were out, the people who did—who were considered the leaders, the people who were considered the prominent ones in the community and—like I said, just in terms of numbers. I'll give you one example. In 1988, once again, I was still relatively new here. They weren't—one of the first pride festivals, and they weren't calling them pride festivals at the time, for numerous reasons--it was called the open air festival. It was—I am trying to think who—there wasn't a specific organization or committee, it was just a group of people who got together and said, you know, Philly has been doing it for years, D.C has been doing it for years, Baltimore has been doing it. Why shouldn't Harrisburg have a celebration? I think part of the reason why they didn't call it a pride celebration or a gay pride celebration at the time was because not a lot of people were out. The idea of a law protecting the community was in its infancy at the time. People were afraid of being outed, or being you know, of discrimination that still obviously, can exist. So if you tell your colleagues or your neighbors or your family that you are going to the open air festival they are probably not going to question it.

MF: Where was it held in?

DP: It was held at—I am trying to think—I wanna say, I think—this is going to be odd to say, it has something to do with the state police barracks. It was an open space that was either owned and operated by the state police.

MF: Okay, state police grounds.

DP: Yes, okay. That's it. Thank you. It was held in July of 1988 and it was on a Saturday afternoon. When I got there, I could not believe the number of people who were there. It just absolutely blew me away and of course it was a lot of the friends I had been making in the short time that I had been here (Harrisburg). I hosted—I was asked to host a gay version of the dating game. (Laughs)

MF: That sounds like fun!

DP: It was a lot of fun.

MF: So was there a panel separating the contestants?

DP: Well, one person, the person who was looking for a date came from one side and the three—the three bachelors—it was actually a male version and a female version. So the three bachelors or the bachelorette were on one side—they could not see each other. The people who planned it, they did a great job with all the logistics and such. The person who was asking the questions really had to make a choice because on both occasions there were three very different people and you know, they got a dinner at a restaurant somewhere in Harrisburg—

MF: Are any of those couple still together?

DP: I don't think so. I do know—and the funny this is—I was friends with one of the contestants and we are still friends today. We have been friends for over 25 years now. It was funny, about a year or so ago, we were reminiscing about that and he doesn't even remember the person who chose him. (Laugh) I don't think it was the first pride festival but it was one of the first pride festivals in this area. Like I said, it is just, you know, the community is—just the sheer numbers impressed me.

MF: So you found that Harrisburg was impressive, it wasn't as quite as overt as Rehoboth but then you went to Rehoboth and how long were you there?

DP: I was there for five years and I did make some really good friends. I was on the board of the local AIDS organization and got to meet other people through there. I went there for one job and ended up about a year or two later in another but still in my field and I had a good time. I really enjoyed it.

MF: Did you have any significant relationships?

DP: I had one—in Rehoboth. Well one person. I lived there, but he didn't live there and so it didn't—you know, I didn't—you never really know how long things are going to last.

MF: So was he just a summer person?

DP: That's how it turned out. (Laughs) I don't know if---

MF: That's the problem with the beach.

DP: Exactly, exactly. The summer is over, things change. People go back to their normal lives, but there was one particular person that I do remember from that time.

MF: So when did you come back to Harrisburg?

DP: I came back at the end of 1998. And once again, there was an opening. Now, I had—I knew when I moved there (Rehoboth)—I knew that I wasn't going to stay there forever. I knew that that was going to be my—circumstances just worked out the way they did and once again, there was a job here that I was offered. It was—this time it wasn't a specific radio station, it was network. It was a—for those in this area, it was Trafx. The person who started that by then had sold the business to a larger corporation, they created not only the traffic service but the regional news networks so that we were on the air doing news for different radio stations in Central PA. I came—I did have the advantage, even though I hadn't lived here in a while, I still knew the area relatively well. I knew, you know—if you are in a specific location- a county or an area of central Pennsylvania, that is the area where the news is going to be the most important. That was—it gave me a bit of an edge because this was something different from what they had done before. Where we tailored their news to that specific area where the station was located. The counties surrounding where they were.

MF: So you have always been behind the microphone rather than out gathering the news.

DP: Yeah and radio has always been—and people have asked me how come I never decided to do TV and this is one of those roads less traveled. I probably could have at least looked into, early on, but once again, this is part of being naïve where you think radio is the way it is today, it is going to be the way it is forever. I don't know if that's the best decision I ever made, I probably—if I had to do it over again, I probably would have looked at getting into television just to broaden my options—

MF: So you have always kind of landed a job—how long of a stretch were you ever out of a job in Harrisburg?

DP: Actually, just recently—I was—with the job I came back to Harrisburg for in 1998 lasted until—almost 10 years so until 2008. That was now—I hadn't been specifically out of work but that's the longest that I have been out of my field. Between 2008 and 2014, this year, six years I have done very little. Just part time here and there, but in terms of a career, in terms of a sustainable position, I just this year was able to return to radio and return to news.

MF: Great! You know, in terms of your work environment, you're out in the community in terms of your identity but what about the work environment?

DP: I had never been specifically out. It had never been an issue for me. I mean when I was new—that's the thing, when you are the new person and I have been the new person several times—you focus on your work. There really isn't—there really are not a whole lot of opportunities to let people know about your life outside of the job. The first time that it almost became an issue, and this was the job I had in Carlisle, and it wasn't a—it didn't become—I almost didn't lose my job over it, it was just one of those responses of now we know. It was at a pride festival in Reservoir Park, I sang with the men's chorus as I do now and it was the very first time we were on television because this was the first year it was held at Reservoir Park. It was in 1992, a presidential election year, and there was a candidate for the senate who wanted to become the first female elected to the senate from Pennsylvania and she made an appearance and that made the news. We just happened to be standing behind her and so I get to work the next day and I mean—I couldn't tell what my boss was thinking. He didn't make it an issue, he just acknowledged, okay, this is what it is and that was that.

MF: He just said that he saw you on television? He didn't say anything about who you were with or what it meant?

DP: Exactly and yes. It didn't become an issue. I think he just wanted to let me know, "Well now I know." Since then, I haven't had—I don't know if I am specifically out at work but it is relatively known and I am very fortunate because I know that not everybody has that—not everybody has that advantage. Because, even though gay marriage is legal in Pennsylvania, as people have continued to point out, you can get married but if you put the picture of your significant other on your desk—you could lose your job, because there are you know—with the exception of a few municipalities within Pennsylvania, there is no statewide anti-discrimination law as there should be as you know, it's been proposed at the legislature several times over. We seem to be getting a little bit closer each year, but it is still not the law of the land and it's still not illegal in many areas of Pennsylvania to lose a job or a home because of your sexual orientation.

MF: I think we need to get to that law. On a scale of 1 to 10, how much in the forefront of your mind is that little bit of fear about job loss?

DP: Well, it is certainly there because I don't make it a habit of discussing my sexual orientation to just anybody. Most of the people that I talk to already know, because it just happens to be the situation we are in. I have never been—I take that back. There have been very few occasions when someone didn't know, but most of the time it was because they asked me. It wasn't because I just volunteered the information. If someone were to ask me, "Are you gay?" I would have no reason to lie to them, but I have never had an occasion where I have something to tell you. But yeah, it certainly does weigh on you. The fact that you know—and going back to the

issue of gay marriage there has been some backlash and you know, people—the more visible you are and I guess this is inevitable with any issue like this—you have the more people—those who are against you will feel that they have a reason and that they have something to use against you. I suppose it just goes with the territory.

MF: So you still have to be somewhat conscious.

DP: Yes, you do.

MF: Now you spoke about in Rehoboth, you worked with an AIDS organization and recently you mentioned that you were at the LGBT Center for a special program about crossing generations. So you were talking with younger people? Tell me about that. Was it specifically around the issue of coming out?

DP: That was part of it. Now that I am the age that I am, I can—when I was first coming out in my late teens and early twenties, I never really thought about what it would be like to be gay in your fifties, because I didn't know a lot of people at that age. Under any circumstances, much less in the community. So I never really had a lot of interaction with older people when I was younger. Of course, when you are young, when things are new and you are trying to find your way around—most of the time you seek out your peers. I am certainly no different in that sense. By that same token, an LGBT center did not exist when I was in my teens and twenties. I don't want to play the role of the wise old sage showing the younger people the way, but it is a good way to bridge the gap. Because, you know, if someone does have a question or a concern most of the time those of us who are this age, we've experienced that. So not that we can necessarily say this is what you should do, but if you can relate your own experience. If you can say this is what it was like for me and share your own experience—I am certainly willing to share that with other people.

MF: Now since you are not technically out to your family, although they may somewhat know—what did you experience with the younger people you were talking to?

DP: Most of them are out to their families. I haven't – I mean—there can be things that they obviously don't wish to share with you but there seems to be those that I have spoken to who will—this was with the organization Common Roads. I was a volunteer with Common Roads about ten years ago so I did have some experience in interacting with younger people. The one thing that I have found with this particular generation is they are a lot more comfortable in their own skin than I certainly was coming out. Maybe a part of it is a little bit of recklessness with youth. The attitude, "I don't care who knows." There is a little of that, a little swagger. I was—like I said before, I was never that bold. I always was very, very careful with my words and with my feelings. One difference that I can see with younger people, and once again, because they have a lot more allies than we did at that age, I kept a lot inside. I kept

a lot to myself because you know, you don't know who the wrong person is, somebody who could use things against you. I was a little more careful. I will say though, going back to my time and my first coming out, this would have been around 21 or 22—when I finally started meeting other gay people. That made a huge difference. I knew they were out there somewhere, but finally getting to meet other gay people and to not only just meet them cruising and that sort of thing—hooking up if you will, but to meet them in college, to meet them as peers, to meet them as other people my own age—people with similar interests made a world of difference.

MF: It sure would. You weren't just one person with your own internal thoughts. You were validated as just a human being. Now tell me about your—what do you consider your family now? Do you have a really close knit constellation of friends?

DP: Yeah, we do. This is not necessarily because of sexuality or that sort of thing—it would be interesting to hear their feelings—although I'm not so sure I want to hear everything my family has to say but there are still some conversations that we need to have. One of the things though, that has brought us together—this is something that is inevitable as years go on but we have lost a lot of family members including two of my siblings. So when we do get together—in fact I just lost two cousins, our families kind of grew up together. One who was my age and one was slightly older than me. They were siblings and they both died within the last year and so—that part of the family dynamic brings you closer together and one of the things that I hope was—we have never been the heartfelt discussion type. The sit down, there is something I have to tell you type. We've never been that type of family. If something comes out, it just comes out. That's just the way it has been. Needless to say I have been having this conversation in my head for the last 30 years, if someone were to ask me what would my reaction be? What could their reaction be? In my own head, can I anticipate what questions people would have for me and that sort of thing. It hasn't happened yet.

MF: How often do you get to see your family? Your biological family?

DP: Mostly during holidays, most of the time. I do go to Philadelphia for other jobs that I have. Occasionally, I will stop in because my mother is getting on in years and obviously I want to make sure that she is okay, so I will stop in.

MF: Did you say that she wanted you to sing in the choir over there?

DP: Yeah, that was an interesting story. My mother is very active in her church and she—well, she wanted the Harrisburg Men's Chorus to sing at her church. At the time, we weren't calling ourselves the Harrisburg Gay Men's Chorus so that part she did not know. Needless to say, I have been putting it off and not being specific. Quite frankly, all she has to do today is go on Facebook and she'll see. Like I said, that is a conversation—my mother is almost 80 years old so there isn't a whole lot of time to have that conversation. That is one of the great regrets that I do have—that I never came out to my father. I have been hesitating saying anything to my mother not

because I think that she would be against it. My mother has always been my champion. She has always been a great supporter of mine, even now. I have been performing one way or the other since kindergarten and you know, she has seen most of the things that I have done.

MF: So your family has never come here to here you sing in the chorus?

DP: No, they haven't. My mother has come down to see me do theater a couple of times. In fact, I did a dinner theater, a Christmas show—this was almost 10 years ago now and several members of my family did come from Philadelphia to see that. That meant a lot to me.

MF: What if you look out in the audience and they just decided to come to the concert on their own via Facebook?

DP: Oh, of course. Yeah, that would be a sort of surprise to me. (laughing) That would be—

MF: Would you lose your voice over it?

DP: Oh, no. Not at all. I would definitely perform but I would definitely have some explaining to do. The one thing that I am—the biggest worry that I have—like I said, I am 51 years old, my mother is in her late 70s and yet I am still worried about—well it still matters to me what my mother thinks and some people think that's a good thing and some people think that it is a bad thing.

MF: Well, being a mother-- she will always love you.

DP: Absolutely. The one thing that I have been trying to avoid is if others have something to say—have something negative to say, I know my mother will come to my defense like she always has, but do I want to open up that can of worms. Do I want to introduce that stress in the family? You know, that has always been my biggest worry.

MF: You don't want to put her in a position of having to defend you—

DP: Having to take a side, yeah.

MF: Are there any other civic affiliations other than the LGBT Center and Common Roads and the choir?

DP: No, those are the ones that I have—

MF: Are you still a member of the MCC Church (Metropolitan Community Church)

DP: No. NO, I am not. I was member for over 20 years, once again it was work circumstance unfortunately. I still do attend a number of their events. I am still a supporter. I think it is a great thing to have, particularly in this community. As you know, as many people know—LGBT members of the community and religion have not always been compatible and still aren't in a lot of people's eyes. So for those who do still have that spiritual side that they want to express, you know, a church like MCC is a great place. One thing that I had noticed—a great thing actually- there is an organization called Christian Churches United and they are a group of affirming churches in this area and its growing a bit around the country. Once again, even for those who do want to express their religion—MCC is a non-denominational church but for those who still want to follow a specific denomination there are resources and there are choices that LGBT people can make, and I think that is a great thing.

MF: But don't you still sing in a church choir?

DP: Yes, I do. I sing at St. John's Lutheran Church. I don't know if they are an affirming church or not—

MF: There are two affiliations of Lutheran. I know that there are two sides.

DP: I was talking with—this was about a year ago. I was talking with our choir director who is a good friend and a very, very talented person. I don't remember the topic that we were talking about but I said something to the effect of, "Do you know if we took all Sundays off, churches would just not know what to do." (Laughs) When you think about it, even in churches that are not affirming. I know a lot of musicians and I have been fortunate enough to work with a lot of musicians over the years and most of them either have or at one time have had church jobs and—

MF: So you are saying that there are so many gay musicians—

DP: If the gays were going on strike on Sunday—church would just not be what it is now.

MF: So are you a soloist or are you a part of the choir?

DP: Occasional soloist but most of the time, I am just a member of the choir like everyone else. There are occasions where I do get a solo.

MF: But you are not a member of the church?

DP: No, no I am not.

MF: In terms of Harrisburg—you mentioned that equal rights for employment is something that still needs to happen. Is there anything else—what would Harrisburg look like if there was complete acceptance?

DP: I just think that these issues wouldn't be—they wouldn't even be brought up. The one thing that I hear—well just in general whenever there is discrimination and there are proposed laws that deal with it—you hear people saying, "Well, why do they get special rights?" Why do you have to protect this group of people and not that group of people? Yes, it is about protection, not about special rights. It is about not singling you out because this or that happens to be true about you.

MF: You're right. It's about equal rights but usually takes a certain sub group being mistreated—to bring it to the floor.

DP: Exactly. It just—it has always puzzled me—why is this even an issue? Why is it that if you are gay or lesbian, that part of you—because it is only one part of you—and yet that is the part people want to focus on and that is the part people want to use against you. I have never understood that. I don't know why—why do people consider us a threat. I have never understood the reasoning behind that. Once again, with the marriage equality issue. We hear that it is a threat to tradition. It is a threat to the family. I have loved when allies have come to our defense—straight allies have said, "I have been married 30 years and my marriage isn't going to be affected if my gay friend gets to marry his partner or my lesbian partner gets to marry hers." You know, what is the big deal?

MF: It is reinforcing that people can be committed to one another.

DP: Especially when—not to be sarcastic but when heterosexual marriages—I read somewhere—for those who want traditional marriage and want that not to be threatened, why don't we outlaw divorce. (laughs) That's the thing—once again, maybe I am a little naïve or overly optimistic but I have never understood why these issues have lasted as long as they have.

MF: I sometimes think that it is just a flaw of human nature. That there always has to be someone under our thumb or someone---has to be put beneath to make them feel better.

DP: That you have to be against something.

MF: Are there any other important events or turning points in your life that you would like to mention?

DP: Somebody asked me—I was at the marriage equality rally in the spring and someone asked me if I would like to get married someday. I will say that romance is the one—it is not necessarily the one, but it is certainly a major thing that has alluded me so far. Getting married or not, I am certainly not against it. It is not something that I am dreaming about but obviously if it happens, I would not be against it. Let the romance come first. That would be a major thing for me. I am fortunate that I have a lot of friends and they have all been very supportive of me in so many ways, so in that sense I am very fortunate. I have seen a lot of people, I have

seen how they have fallen in love, how they fell out of love, and fall back in love and that sort of thing. That is something I would like to—it would nice for it to happen. It would be a great experience.

MF: I would like to thank you for spending time with us. It has been enlightening.

DP: Of course, it was my pleasure.

MF: I look forward to having you a part of the archives.

DP: I am looking forward to it as well.