

LGBT History Project of the LGBT Center of Central PA

**Located at Dickinson College
Archives & Special Collections**

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

Documents Online

Title: LGBT Oral History: Cecelia Wambach

Date: July 20, 2018

Location: LGBT Oral History – Wambach, Cecelia – 131

Contact:

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

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu

Interviewee: Cecelia Wambach

Interviewer: Barry Loveland, assisted by Ashley Formularo and Tessa Burns

Date: July 30, 2018

Place: Home of Paul Wambach in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Transcriber: Julia K. Bray

Proofreader: Taeya Viruet

Abstract: Cecelia Wambach was born on May 26th, 1942 in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Cecelia begins the interview by talking about her family life, the dynamics of her relationship with her parents and religion, and how those facets shaped her adult identity as a lesbian woman. She grew up as the second-oldest of 14 children, with a stay-at-home mother and a father who had a radio talk show and late-night talk show. She describes being very happy and satisfied with her upbringing. Raised as a devout Catholic, Wambach later became apart of a Convent and school named Sisters of Notre Dame. From there, she taught as a nun in several Parrish schools on the East Coast. She also worked with Dr. Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement. After leaving the Convent, Wambach received her Masters in Math and Fine Arts from New York University. She later got her PhD from Fordham University in Math Education. She explains that during this time in her life, she did not yet know she was lesbian.

Wambach got married to an ex-priest in 1973. It was not until the day after getting married did she realize she was lesbian. She had a son named Nathaniel and raised him while working as a teacher for public schools in New York City. In realizing her sexual identity, Wambach went through years of therapy to cope. She also became apart of many different Lesbian and LGBTQ+ communities and activist groups, such as the S.O.S (Shelter our Sisters), Mother Tongue, The Names Project, O.L.O.C. (Old Lesbians Organizing for Change) , and B.A.C.W (Bay Area Career Woman) and others. Currently, Ms. Wambach is deeply involved with refugees on the Island of Lesbos, where she and other LGBTQ educators teach children.

BL: I guess we're ready. My name is Barry Loveland, I am here with Ashley Formularo and Tessa Burns who are assisting with the interview as videographers and assisting. And we're here on behalf of the LGBT Center of Central Pennsylvania History Project. Today's date is July 30th, 2018, and we're here for an oral history interview with Cecelia Wambach. This interview is taking place at the house of Paul Wambach in Harrisburg. And Cecelia do we have your permission to record the interview today?

CW: Yes, definitely.

BL: Great. We have a consent form that we'll have you read over at the end of the interview and-

CW: Okay

BL: You'll read and then sign that. And I know you also go by Cissy and I didn't know if you wanted to be-

CW: Definitely Cecelia.

BL: Cecelia? Okay.

CW: Cecelia.

[Both chuckle awkwardly]

CW: Only my family calls me Cissy.

BL: Okay -Yeah- very good. So please say and spell your name for the transcript.

CW: Okay, my name is Cecelia Wambach. C-E-C-E-L-I-A W-A-M-B-A-C-H.

BL: Great. And what is the date of your birth and location of your birth?

CW: May 26th, 1942, and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

BL: Okay, great. So I'd like to start out with is talk a little bit about your very early years growing up in your family and talk maybe about your family along the way and then we'll get into maybe school and things like that. Let's start out with your early years

CW: [slightly over lapping BL last sentence] my very early years were interesting because I was the second oldest of 14 children. And-- but I was brought up in, at first, which just grew and grew and grew. And it was a very loving family- a very happy family. We did a lot of singing together. I had a father who was very popular here in Pennsylvania and so we had a lot of opportunities to be on his radio show and his television shows. And it basically was a lot of fun being a part of this great big giant family. In my early years as a person I was a very spiritual- we were raised as Catholics and I was one of these kids who had a very very close relationship with my guardian angel and I just- I was very happy, I was very gregarious. I was a very bright student as a little girl- I loved school. My mother taught us to love each baby as each baby came along and we weren't deprived being in this big family at all. I meant I'm not talking about financially because we did have things like hand-me-downs and that sort of thing-- but we considered each birth a real gift and the naming of the child was very important, and we had responsibility for one another. Actually, Paul [Wambach] was my first baby. I was five years old and I use to buggy him down the street. And Paul was twin and Patty [Wambach] was a year older than I was and Peter was her first baby and so- I remember my early childhood as very happy- very special. We had an extended large, Zarbo family. My mother's sisters and brother were also in this area- of Pennsylvania. And so- it's a very unusual upbringing I don't have any of this junk like a lot of other people have that I know.

BL: [hums in agreement]

CW: so, I think that's probably...

BL: What- in terms of your schools- what schools...

CW: Oh, Schools? We went to Catholic school and I attended first Saint Patrick's, then Saint Margret-Mary's is elementary school and I was a very fun-loving- I was a very bright student, but I was a bit of a hell-raiser in seventh and eighth grade- I had this- I was part of this girl gang, you know? We had- we had a lot of fun. We were very mischievous, especially in high school. And for high school I went to Bishop McDevot. I was very active in- I was an artist, I'm still an artist and I was very very active in speech. I did declamations and original oratory and debate and that was really fun for me so I excelled in that area. And it was really- I loved McDevot, it was- I had very good friends there-I have very good memories. I was- I always hung out with the girls who were hanging out with the nuns and I was very girl-woman identified, but I thought that that meant that I had a vocation to the religious life. So you know, there were large groups of

girls that hung out together and I was one of them. And-and in high school the one hard thing for me is that for some reason I-I knew I wasn't like the other girls because I- I didn't have a boyfriend- I couldn't really know how to get a boyfriend. And I knew as a young woman that's what you were supposed to do and it was very hard for me because I didn't quite know what was wrong with me and I figured I must have had a vocation to the religious life. My sister was dating- my older sister. And- let me see what else about that- I- I actually finally finished my education and got my PHD in mathematics education but-but in high school I was more an English, Speech, and Art. So. That's about it...

BL: Did you have any-

CW: For high school.

BL: Did you do any sports or any special activities or anything like that?

CW: [over lapping BL's last sentence] No, girls- girls really didn't do sports-

BL: Back then, yes.

CW: I mean I am 76 years old and so we- you could be a cheerleader, but it was mostly the girly-girls that were cheerleaders and- you know- the girls- no we didn't have really anything for the girls. Not even a girls' basketball team- there was nothing. And so I was very spirited. I would go to all the games and scream and yell for the boys and that's the way it was. No, no sports at all for the girls. I- I actually, to tell you the truth I was never into sports, like I had one partner-back in the early days and she like, loved to play Hop-Along Cassidy. No, no, no- I was not a tomboy at all—

BL: Hm.

CW: No. I was a different kind of- yeah- I was constantly trying to look better, be prettier, because that's what you were supposed to do, yeah...yeah.

BL: And did you have any sense of your attraction to girls at that point or was that still something you didn't really resolve until later?

CW: Yes, now in hindsight, I see that I did have attraction to girls because I was hanging out with these very good girlfriends and I was very, very close to them... But, none of them actually grew up to be a lesbian interestingly enough. And I- I had a – I definitely had attraction to different nuns--like this nun, Sister Gilmaria--I was very attracted to her. But, she was my English teacher and I loved poetry and she introduced me to poetry and so...So I think that that may have also been the connection. I never heard the word lesbian. I didn't know there were any gay folks at all- as a matter of fact it was only later on that I heard about gay men and I- I heard about them before I even heard about gay women! You know? And so, there-there was no indication of that at all. Except that I did go to my Aunt Teresa's house to-for the summer to help take care of her kids and there was a woman named Pat. There was this volleyball team and the neighbor girl, Pat, who was a couple years older than I wanted me to come and play volleyball. There was something very exciting about Pat and her friends! And I- my Aunt wanted me to hang out with this other woman and I said "I like them". She was saying "No, no you can't be around them. They're weird." And I was saying, "What do you mean?" I- I still had no idea and they were actually a group of young lesbians. But that was-that was it.

I- now I know that. You know? And I talked to my Aunt about that at my last family reunion. She was saying “Yeah, well, they were lesbians- and I didn’t want you to hang out with them.” And I said, “Why? I’m a lesbian.” And she said “Oh. Don’t say that to me.”

[Both laugh]

CW: So, you know, I think that- no, no...I didn’t have- well I did have...I did- your question was about attraction to lesbians- so just my girlfriends and-

BL: Yeah.

CW: Yeah, but nothing sexual- nothing, no.

BL: Right, right.

CW: More emotional-

BL: Yep.

CW: and those kinds of connections. Yeah.

BL: So, talk a little bit more about your father- since your father was sort of a famous figure in Pennsylvania...

CW: Yes.

BL: And also about your mother, just to get some background.

CW: Yes. Well my father, first of all, I was madly in love with my father. My father and I were twin souls. He was just a beautiful father. He was loving and charismatic and caring and he loved his big family- he loved my mother. He was very demonstrative- he would dance around the living room with my mother. And- and interestingly enough my mother was entirely different. She was a typical Sicilian and my father would take her to Rome and would sit in the carriage with her in Rome and play the flute for her and she would say “Pete [Wambach]!” you know?

BL: [Laughs]

CW: She was that type. She- he would say “I love you Margerita Carmella” and she would say “Pete, the kids need shoes.”

BL: [Laughs]

CW: You know, they were total opposites. And I was actually much closer to my father than I was to my mother. And it... that was interesting because I really spent a long time with my mother. I retired and came, because my mother was dying. And I spent a long time with my mother, really growing to love her at the end of her life. I thought that she was negative and...She was so different from me, I- I had my father’s spirit and I couldn’t...you know, she had these Sicilian sayings that she would say to us and they were negatives things, you know? And she would always- she could look at someone and she could- she could tell me the negative things about them. Meanwhile, everyone though my mother was a Saint. I thought she was a Saint too, she raised all these kids, she cooked, she-she cleaned, she went along- she loved my father and she went along with every--all of his ideas and he told me a lot of his ideas were

mom's ideas. But in terms of my relationship with them, I was closer to my father than I was to my mother.

And interestingly enough, a lot of my lesbian friends are closer to their fathers. And a lot of gay men are very close to their mothers. So, I wonder if there's some kind of thing about that, I don't know.

BL: Yeah.

CW: But, but they were...my father was- I thought my father was famous, you know? Because he was a big shot in this little city. And I loved that he was famous, I was very proud of him. He taught us how to sing together and that is something I cherish. I mean, even at the university in my math classes I sang with my students. I have singing in me as a part of how I live my life and I owe that to my father. My mother loved to sing too, though, you know? We all sang together, and it was- it was- that was wonderful.

And my mother, my mother...there is this quality that, as Catholics, you're taught these- the gifts of the Holy Spirit. And one of these gifts is called Long Suffering. And my mother had this thing this- this quality called Long Suffering; which is that she had this very, very large family, she worked and worked with each of us. And you know, she raised us and she cleaned and cooked, I mean, she never had any help. She sewed, she sewed our clothes and, I mean, she-she was amazing as a mother. As a, as a care giver and in terms of the arts of the home. And-but, I'm telling you I don't know how she did it. The only thing I can think of is she had Long Suffering. She would always- she would do everything that she did with pleasure really. And-and she acted her whole life as if she loved this life that she had. And I couldn't figure that one out until the end of her life when she told me, "You know what? I did love it." [chuckles]

BL: [chuckles]

CW: So-so she-so she was a good solid, good Italian woman- a great partner for my father. And my father was one of these- he had a million ideas. And he could actualize his ideas and I learned from him. I have a million ideas too, and I lived my life really being able to actualize the ideas I had. And I think that's because of my father.

BL: And he was a broadcaster personality, right?

CW: He was everything. He was a broadcaster, radio personality, a television personality during the early days of television. He was also speech writer for many of the governors. He was Pres-Secretary of Pennsylvania for many years. He was leader of the Democratic Party. He was very progressive, and he always went to all of the- oh, gosh what do they call these things. They have these presidential- the places where they nominate the president?

BL: Convention?

CW: The Conventions.

BL: Yeah.

CW: He was a delegate to many, many conventions. And he was also a lover of Pennsylvania. And so he had a radio show called "This is Pennsylvania" it was broadc--it was only a three minute long show broadcast five times a day. On many, many stations in Pennsylvania. And it was a lovely show, it was about these little towns and hamlets of Pennsylvania. It was about

characters who were a part of Pennsylvania's history. And – and I think that for me that was his capstone, “This is Pennsylvania”, but he also had a newscast- newspaper column, a daily newspaper column called “Around the Square with Pete Wambach” that ran for over 50 years. He was the first man—ever--in the whole United States to have an evening talk show. And it was here in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. They wanted him to come to New York City to do it and my parents decided, no, they couldn't move out of Harrisburg.

But, then, gradually, other people started to pick up this- this idea of the evening talk show and he had his regulars- he used to call them his ‘crazies’ like there was someone who used to call in to the show all the time and say that she thought that the cows and horses should be wearing underwear [chuckles] out on the- and she was a part of his show, you know he had his regulars, his Esperanto history people who were trying to build up Esperanto as the international language.

So, you know, he had-he had this amazing evening radio show and he also had “The Quotation” which was always on his radio show. “It's a Beautiful Day in Pennsylvania!” and he was so positive he always thought, he could always find something about this city, this place he loved and Philadelphia his birthplace, and Pennsylvania his homeland. He loved it. He loved it. And it was a beautiful day in Pennsylvania for him. Yeah, he was a great man. He was a great father. And, yeah.

BL: Great.

CW: Thank you for asking about him.

BL: So, talk a little bit more about- sort of after you graduated now from high school--

CW: --From high school.

BL: Yeah what did you- how did you make the decision for the next step in your life?

CW: Well, well I was talking earlier to the women who were assisting you about this and I actually went into the convent. I think that because I was so women identified and so... I guess- I guess I just-you know, I liked women a lot. Also I was very spiritual person and I was religious I- I loved the Gregorian chants and I was in the choir when I was a girl. I loved God and I was a believer- a great big giant believer as a matter of fact and...and I actually still am. Even though I'm not a church goer or I wouldn't even consider myself a Catholic except that I'm a follower of Roman Catholic women priests. But as a human being I'm a spiritual, religious being.

So, I entered the convent and I entered the school Sisters of Notre Dame and they were a teaching order and I was interested in being a teacher. So, I went with fifty other young women in 1960 to Baltimore, Maryland to the Mother house and entered the religious life where I lived for the next 10 years with a lot of women, yeah. In a completely female society and it was wonderful. I loved it actually- it was fun. It was wonderful. I never- I have heard- I've read the books about lesbian nuns. As a matter of fact, I met the women who wrote *Breaking Silence*, the story of lesbian nuns but I never actually knew any lesbian nuns when I was in the convent!
[laughs]

BL: [chuckles]

CW: It's true! I never- I don't know if I was latent sexually- sexually latent. I don't know what I was but, I didn't actually know that there were women who were lesbians in the convent. I was

not, but I was enjoying my teaching- my other, the friends I made there and- and I stayed for ten years. I got my bachelor's degree at our college: Notre Dame of Maryland College. I majored in English and Art. I had a double major following my high school leanings. And- and that was it. It was a lovely, wonderful life. I was in many different houses. I was in Baltimore, Maryland, I was in Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania--beautiful Parrish there. And I was in Fairfax, Virginia, where I had my first love affair with the Pastor. [laughs]

BL: [laughs]

CW: And that's why I left the convent. I broke my vows! Oh god, I shouldn't probably have said it on tape, but whatever. You know, I still did not know that I was a lesbian for those ten years.

BL: So, did you have like teaching assignments that you would to a- to a school and teach? Or...

CW: Yes--

BL: Like a Catholic schools or...

CW: I would- I would go into a Parrish and so I was in the Parrish of Saint Jerome in Baltimore, Maryland first. I lived there for a year and I taught in the school in that Parrish, I lived in a convent there. Then I went to For Oglethorpe, Georgia to another Parrish and I lived there for a year. Then I went to... I think I went to--yeah I went to Saint Jerome's. Did I...I don't think-Did I mention Saint Jerome's? I don't think so.

BL: No, don't think so.

CW: Yeah, I went to Saint Jerome's for, I think two years. Then, after that I went to- I went to Saint Leo's in Fairfax, Virginia. And so I was for five or six-- I guess for seven years I was in different houses with different nuns and I became very close friends with all of them and just enjoyed convent life a lot. And teaching in the Catholic schools, I enjoyed that. It was really fun.

And-and so I was really living a life with all women but I was teaching in Catholic Schools, mostly with teachers who were all women and teaching in elementary school. And so, I mostly taught fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades in these Catholic Schools. Yeah, and it was a rich and fulfilling life and I was learning how to teach as I went along. Because I never majored in education, I majored in Art and English but it was really fun.

We would- we would teach in the school and then at night we'd come and the old nuns would look at our plans and they would assist us and we would plan out our next day and we would go in the next day and teach and come home and plan. I mean that's what it was- it was about- it was about teaching. I grew to love teaching, I grew to love other teachers, and I grew to realize that if you teach, you are really developing-- you're really helping to raise the next generation. I mean I really, really believed in teaching. I was great because- because I believed in children. Yeah, I've always loved children. My mother taught me to love children. Yeah.

BL: Good. And you mentioned the priest that you..

CW: Father Malloy? Oh, God...

BL: Want to talk more about that?

CW: Yeah, the Pastor- the priest. I fell in love with the priest and I had an affair with him and- I mean I had an evening with him and I decided I broke my vow of chastity and I had to leave the convent. And I was shocked that he wasn't gonna leave the priesthood, interestingly enough. I was so surprised. [chuckles]

BL: [chuckles]

CW: But anyway, I did leave and after I left I decided "Oh my god I've got to go find my man". This is what you have to do, so I did. I found my man, he was an ex-priest. And it was- he was actually an ex-seminary, he never actually became a priest himself, but I went to New York City. I had a friend who was an ex-nun and she said I have a job for you. I mean there were so many jobs, there were jobs galore and you know it was- it was a very interesting time because it was the time of Doctor Martin Luther King. There was a civil rights movement. I worked with him as a nun and...

BL: So, the early 60's then?

CW: This was the- yeah this is the 60's and early 70's. I even went to his- I went to- I even heard his "I have a dream" speech when I was in the convent. I had to- I was in a speech class and we had to go hear this man give a speech. I had to go on the bus with all these other girls- women in the class I was in the Notre Dame of Maryland College. I went on the bus and I heard this man give speech. It was Doctor Martin Luther King- I had never heard of him, but then I became very, very interested in the Black community and in working with him and I was a volunteer with him for a number of years which was really wonderful. I was in Baltimore and Fairfax, Virginia and he was in Washington, D.C. so after the poor people's campaign I- I volunteered with him- so I had this other life going on too. I had this activism life happening.

BL: Hm.

CW: Which was great because I also met my ex-husband at a-a place for- at a club for ex-nun and ex-priests called "Bearings" where you could get your bearing after leaving... everyone was leaving the convent, you know? We were also Anti-War demonstrators and protesters; we were working to get us out of the Vietnam War. He was- he was working with Phil and Daniel Berrigan- the Berrigan Brothers. I was marching... and we met one another in this club and we were activists and, so we fell in love with one another because of those reasons probably. I married him and we had this one lovely boy, Nathaniel, whose my- the love of my life today, my son and- and he's a good, charismatic, caring, bright man whose a great father. I raised him and I'm very proud of that. That's probably one of the best things I ever did in my life because of the kind of man he is. And he knew how to choose a woman that was a wonderful human being and he knew how to love her. That's a great thing that I did in my life-- and you know, lesbians raise great sons. After I left my husband I belonged to Dykes and Tykes in New York City and I actually am very good friends with a woman who founded that group, Carrol Martin. She now lives in San Francisco, but this was in New York. I lived in New York and taught in a New York City public schools and raised my son. I just - I had a wonderful life bringing him up and teaching in the New York public schools. And so I don't know do you want me to continue on just chronologically?

BL: Yeah, yeah. Talk a little bit more about your experiences when you were married and- and what made you decide at that point that it was the end of marriage or...

CW: Yeah, well do you know that- Oh gosh, I hope that Joe (ex-husband?) never sees this film, but he probably won't but the day after I got married I realized I was a lesbian. How I will never know--

[End of Video 1]

[Video 2]

Unknown voice of camera: I got you.

[End of Video 2]

[Video 3]

BL: Okay

CW: Okay. Okay so, probably the day after I got married I realized that I was a lesbian, Definitely. And, I said "Oh my god." Yes, oh my god I knew about lesbians at that point I- I don't know how I figured it out but I got married and I said "Oh my god. Yes, this is who I am." It was like a neon sign flashing on and I was saying "Stop! Wait! Help! No! Go away!"

BL: [chuckles]

CW: and I was turning around and running as fast as I could the other way and I was saying "Okay, I'm gonna make this work. I-I can do this. I've done other things before. I know how to do this life." And "I wanna be married. This is who I want to be." And- and I really fought it. I really fought it. I actually stayed in the marriage for ten years, but I was not faithful in that marriage. And so I started trying- experimenting- trying to figure it out. So, I had my son, I was a young mother. I loved it. It was really fun. I liked the other mothers. They were great. We all hung out with our kids and talked about them and how was this developing and that developing. It- it was fun. My sisters had children so I was-- they were really happy that I had a child. So, that part was very, very good.

But I still knew in the back of my mind who I was. I did. Then I- when I got pregnant I stopped teaching in the New York City- for the New York City public schools because I had a number of miscarriages and I realized before my son was born and I realized that that work was too strenuous for me to carry a child. And So I stayed at home for a while and I had a child and then I- and I applied for a job teaching at Felician College in Lodied, New Jersey. It was a small Women's College and it was run by the Felician nuns and I said this would be the perfect job for me. So, I began teaching there. I was like practically the whole education department. I mean, I taught everything. And by that time...actually I should back up, because I had taught in the New York City Public Schools and I become their-their math supervisor of District 13 in Brooklyn. I did that...back, back. I have to back up a little bit. I got my masters in Math from New York University, then I got my master's in Fine Arts Painting from New York University.

BL: [whispers] Wow.

CW: And I mean, I got my PHD in math education from Fordham University so while I was living in New York City and after the convent I was doing all this education stuff I just kept going, you know? I was always interested and loved education. The university. I loved that life- I loved living my life and learning also. I'm a life long learner. So I...and then-and not, 'and then'

simultaneously, you know, I was throwing rocks in the windows of Lobe Center at NYU with all the people [chuckles].

BL: [chuckles quietly]

CW: You know, we were protesting the Vietnam War. I was doing that, I was raising my child, I was getting my masters, I was getting my PHD, I was being a mother and okay. So then I go to Felician College and I see these women and I say, “Woah. They’re- they fascinate me.”

So, I said to this one nun, Sister Aquinas,

“Those women- who are they? They’re so fascinating.”

She says, “Stay away from them.”

Just like my Aunt Teresa. “Stay away from them!”

“Why?”

“You don’t know? They’re lesbians...”

“Oh my god, they’re lesbians? Really? Hm, I wonder that they’re about?”

BL: [laughs quietly in background]

CW: She says, “Stay away from them to stay away from them, you’re a happily married woman.” So I say, “Okay, yeah. I’ll stay away from them.” So I secretly started to befriend these students and there were a couple professors that were like ‘in with them’ so. Then, there was this singer, Chris Williamson, and she was signing these wonderful songs- she had this... this was the first lesbian, fabulous album, *The Changer and the Changed*. And we had our women’s music which was so fabulous. I can’t tell you because... [begins singing] “Born of the earth/child of God”. I- I mean she was a lesbian like I was a lesbian. She was a child of God she was born of the earth and her things- her songs- the lyrics were about caring for people and counting on... “you can count on me to share the load”. I mean the lyrics were so wonderful and lesbians- we were such activists and movers and shakers. We were taking care of battered women and we were do all of this activist work and nobody even knew we were around. We were doing it quietly. I was even afraid to say the word lesbian. I would go, “L. She’s an L”. But, we were very active and in social movements we really were. And its interesting because the young lesbians don’t even want to to be called lesbians because they don’t want to be about that. Which is great! I mean we’ve evolved. Its- everything’s changing. But back then it was a real, activist- we’re going to change the world, we’re going to save the world. We’re going to be there for women and we’re going to help battered women, we’re going to help women get promoted, we’re going to help women become doctors and lawyers... take their place in the world. We’re gonna become those women.

The lesbians were really at the forefront of the Women’s Movement. Of course, I didn’t even know there was a Women’s Movement going on because I was so active in the Civil Rights Movement. So, I had a different movement happening, but anyway we were there, it was wonderful. It was great, but where am I? Lemme see, I’m at Felician College, I’m following these women around.

Then, I met Sandy Ramose and Sandy Ramose was the first woman ever to have battered women in her home. She ran this group S.O.S. "Shelter our Sisters" and I was tell- I was saying "You know, I think I'm a lesbian, I'm not sure". Then, one of- someone, she was a straight woman she told me, "You know what"-- AH! My friend from graduate school, Dorothy. She said "you ought to call this woman, he name is Sandy Ramose. She lives in Hackensack, New Jersey and she's a lesbian- she's- she's out there doing things, but she says she's a lesbian out loud."

I said, "You're kidding me."

She said, "No," she said, "Here's her phone number."

She gave me her phone number. I called her and I said, "I'm afraid to tell you why I'm calling you." I said.

She said, "Well why are you calling me? Do you wanna, are you a battered wife?" and I said "No, no, I'm not a battered wife."

I said, I said "I'm to this very nice man."

And she said, "Well why?"

I said, "Well did you ever hear- hear of Chris Williamson?"

She said, "Of course."

And I said, "Well, I'm calling you about her." And she said "Well what about her?"

[Both Laugh]

CW: And she said "are you a lesbian?"

I said, "I'm not sure."

And she said, "Well I'd love to meet with you and talk to you."

And I told her I was a professor at- at this women's college and- so she said, "Lets meet". I met with her and she talked to me and we-she introduced me to some of her friends.

I said "Oh my god, I'm a lesbian! Now I have to go get a divorce."

So, I separated from my husband and-and then, I mean everything was crazy. All these women that we were all sleeping with one another too. That was like a big deal, you know? You didn't really know your friend unless you slept with her and I'm saying "Oi ve!"

BL: [chuckles]

CW: "Jesus what am I doing?" You know?

BL: [chuckles]

CW: And so, okay I- I- I just...I was so totally mixed up I started to go to therapy. Yeah, I started to go to therapy and- and that was great. I was hanging out with these lesbians. I got myself a lesbian girlfriend. Her name was Pat and she still lives here somewhere. Not here.

Where am I? I'm in Harrisburg, yeah. She lives in New Jersey. And- New York, New Jersey area.

So I had my first lesbian partner, but I was still married and I told her, you know "I have to stay married and will be" and she says "That's fine." You know. But then after six months, it wasn't fine. So she said, "You got to break up with this guy," you know, "we've been together six months"

I said "He's my husband, I can't!" [chuckles] So- Do you know how many stories like this there are? We were all trying to figure it out and when I think about it and when I think of the young women today and they're able to be out and- they know they're lesbians at an early age, and they've heard the word and they know they're queer. They know they're queer, they know they're different.

I knew I was different too, but I didn't know I was queer, I didn't know I was a lesbian- never heard of the words. And we were figuring it out together. We were giving our selves permission to have these girlfriends and these affairs and we didn't know what we were doing. But we were- this was the early days- this is about this history project. This was the early days of trying to figure out who I am, who a lesbian was, I'm married what am I gonna do now? Am I gonna be divorced? I don't- my parents are gonna be so upset if I get a divorce. No ones divorced in my family. Oh my god, their gonna find out I'm a lesbian. What am I gonna do?

So all of this was a great big giant deal and not just when I tell the story to my friends- they have similar stories and these were the early days. We were all...and then after that we were all in these books about coming-- telling our coming out stories, you know? So, it was just a different- it was a wonderful- it was- actually wonderful, but terrible too.

BL: Mhm.

CW: I had a lot of guilt and shame because I was raised as a Catholic girl. You know, there was that devil running after me saying you're gonna go to hell. You don't- do you want to go to hell? Okay, divorce your husband and... and just divorce your husband, that's the first thing, you're gonna go to hell. I had this inner devil chasing me around my whole darn life! So- but I don't have him anymore, thank god. But- and I never think of him when I think of my childhood, but he was around then too so whatever. So where am... I- I got a divorce.

BL: About what year was that? Do you remember?

CW: Let's see. I got married in 1973, so this was now about 1983. And- so everything had happened. Yeah, that whole civil rights piece, Martin Luther King was killed and RFK was killed and JFK first. I mean it was very very, heavy serious time yeah I got in 73 and I was married for ten years so, that was 83.

BL: Did you end up coming out to your husband to let him know why?

CW: No! No. Oh god no. No. I divorced him. That's a shame that I didn't do that but I did divorce him. I mean he does know I'm a lesbian now. We're in one another's lives now. And you know he knows all my friends- they're all lesbians and he likes them. Yeah you know we like, have this whole California life now so it's like okay my ex-wife is a lesbian and you know and- its fine, its okay. Its very good actually.

And so I... Oh no what happened to me is... Okay, Pat told me I had to divorce my husband. She broke up with me, it was a very sad time in my life. I was very sad. I loved her, she was wonderful and- and then- you know. And I had this child, Nathaniel, he was like five or six. Okay and so, we got back together. Joe and I got back together because he called me and he said "My company is moving to California to San Francisco do- lets get back together- do you want to get back together? And let's see" and I said "San Francisco? [laugh] Wait." I mean I didn't know what to say. So, I said "Okay come on lets try it again."

So, the second I got back together with him I realized oh my god, why I divorced him to begin with. It was just about being a lesbian. It was...you know, he was like- he was very controlling guy and I was- I was like, all over the place. I have all these Gemini in my sign. I'd go flying around the world. I'm an absent minded professor type. He is like you know, 'this way' holding me down and boy I needed that. He was grounding me. So, I said "Okay. I'll get back together with him. We'll move to California."

We did that about a month after I was out to Cali- out in California I went into the Castro and I said "Oh my god, this is fabulous!" I saw in the paper "Do you think you're a lesbian? Come to this group". So, I went to this group and I began the process of coming out. I went into therapy and it-- therapy was very big in California. I mean spending so much money on therapy, but it was necessary. I had to do it. I needed help. But I actually began... there were a lot of other helps at that point in the community too. There was operation concern, which was- in the Castro and it was for gay men and lesbians. There were- there were many, many different groups there to help you. It was very very active time. Harvey Milk, you know, was very active. I was teaching at San Francisco State, where my good friends with Sally Gerhart. She was like the first out lesbian in any university anywhere. I had a lot of good lesbian friends who taught at San Francisco State and I was hired right away at San Francisco State. I was saying to my therapist, you know I don't know any lesbians. She said, "you're teaching at San Francisco State!"

BL: [laughs]

CW: And I said "yeah, but...I can't tell whose a lesbian and who isn't". And she said "Well, you know, I'll give you the names of some of them and call them up." And so, Sally Gerhart was one of them, Quirky Wick was another, she's one of the founding mothers of Mother Tounge. She's currently one of my best friends today. So, I met a lot of wonderful women, it was a wonderful women's community. We were very, very instrumental in working for AIDS. I was a volunteer in Shante Project, which was big...you know, the lesbians in San Francisco at least-- we were very very active in the working for AIDS community. I was not actually a part of ACT OUT, but I was on the side lines cheering for ACT OUT. I did a couple of lesbian avengers things, you know we'd put these bandanas on our face and go into the gay bars and say stick 'em up for AIDS, you know? And with these play pistols and that was we were trying to raise money for AIDS research.

So, I was active in that community and I was very active for thirty years at San Francisco State. In the mathematics education community and in the education community and in the Public Schools of San Francisco and I was an out lesbian, which was- which was great. I mean how did I jump- at first I wasn't out in my department. Its interesting, until I got tenure. They told me- these other women- they said "Look they're giving a lot of lesbians tenure and you know you may not be one of them, you know, because you have a very- your department- the education department they're very conservative." Which was interesting, because I didn't see my

department as that at all conservative, but they said “Yeah, they’re very conservative, they didn’t strike with us”. I wasn’t there during the big strike and so I said “Okay” you know, and I didn’t actually come out until I got Tenure. And then I got Tenure and I- I came out and- and everyone was very happy that I was a lesbian. There was a gay man in the department too. His name was Rob Moore. He was a very, very loved professor. He actually- he was an early childhood professor and so we were the team- we were the Gay and Lesbian team in the department. We had all these gay men coming into elementary school teaching and all these lesbians coming into like high school math and science, you know? It was interesting. Very, very interesting group of men and-- Lesbians and gay men and women coming into teaching and we were advisors to them. Which was very, very fun. And I remember one of my students, Timothy Farrenfigle [ph], one of the most brilliant, education students I had--who died of AIDS, by the way--and he- he came to me and said “What am I gonna do?”, he said “I’m a teacher in this school” and he said, “I- I need to have a picture of my wife sitting on my desk!”

You know, he was scared to be out in his school because he was working with your children and there was all this junk about young children. Even though Tom Amiato [ph], he was like very very strong and working for- you know his partner was an elementary school teacher and a dear friend of mine, but any way so we had all these gay men in elementary schools and they wanted to come out. I remember marching in the Gay Parade with the gay teachers. I was working at the- in the University so I could march but on the sidelines were all these elementary school teachers waving to me because they couldn’t be in the parade because they couldn’t be out! These gay men! Because they’re gonna ruin these little kids and they were just such beautiful teachers, you know. But I was really there for them... and yeah, and- by the way I, Timothy... So, I said to Timothy, “You won’t believe what I did! I arranged for Timothy to marry this woman from Holland who had to get married to stay in this country because she had a partner she was a lesbian and her partner had to- she wanted to stay here. So they had to get married so I- I introduced him to her. I said “Woah! This is a gift! You can get married to one another!” And they did! They got married. And I’m telling you they were followed by the-the immigration people, you know?

But any way, so he had her picture sitting on his desk. I mean-I mean, you know. And then eventually Timothy, his partner got AIDs...and then Timothy died of AIDS. I mean it was unbelievable, all these gay- young gay teachers were dying of AIDS- all of my students. So, I was a friend of Cleve Jones, he started this project, The Names Project. And I was actually one of the first persons who- who made a- a quilt because I needed to help Timothy heal because his partner- they didn’t even recognize him at the funeral. You know, he was buried at the Unitarian Church of San Francisco and he had a family--he had been married but was divorced. So, his family was all at the funeral, but Timothy couldn’t really be a part of his family and they were even living together! So, I- I went with Timothy to make a Names Project quilt for his partner because it was very much... you know we made these great big giant quilts and you sewed them, you know you didn’t glue them together. And it was a whole process of healing and sewing. It was like being in the artistic process and so my sister Rita called me, this is-- I’m telling this story because this is a Harrisburg Story. My sister Rita called me and she said that her friend- her friend- she was the flower girl in these people’s wedding, their last name was Tuci. And she said “You know their son just died of AIDS, but they don’t know it they think he died of Cancer.” And he called himself Joe Tucci, he went by the Italian name. I said “You kidding me! Some one should tell them that he died of AIDS.” And she said “Oh, it would kill them! They don’t even

know he was gay.” And I said “Are you sure he was gay?” she said, “He was definitely gay! He had a partner and everything.”

And so, I made him a quilt for Joe Tucci, one of the first quilts that was made was for him. And I said, “I don’t know you, and you don’t know me, but I’m a hidden Gay girl from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and you’re a hidden Gay boy from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and I’m making this quilt to honor you”. That quilt- I went to Washington to the first laying out of the quilt- you know we had this whole thing- we laid it out and we put it on the capitol lawn and he- Joe Tucci’s quilt- made by me- and also Timothy- Timothy went with me we went together. He brought his partners quilt, I brought that quilt. I mean they were all sew together at that point, but we unfolded, we were part of the people who unfolded the quilt in Washington. Joe Tucci’s quilt is in the first book of the Names Project. You know the- they put out a book of the quilts and his quilt is in there, made by me. I was so scared that my parents were gonna- or his parents were gonna get this quilt book. I mean I don’t know what I thought. [chuckles]

They’re weren’t gonna go to the book store and buy that book. But I was so scared that- you know- my family would- would find out and his family. You know, my brothers and sisters knew I was a lesbian but my parents didn’t and so but I guess I should just jump to there. When I finally told my parents, they were wonderful. They were thrilled. Well first my father said “No, you’re women identified” I said “How the heck does he know that term?” He said, “You’re not a lesbian, you’re women identified,” and he said, “I knew it the day you entered the convent.” I said “Dad, that was twenty years ago.” He said, “Yeah I knew it the day you married your husband.” I said, “What?” and he said “Yeah, you’re women identified.” And I said, “What’s that?” and he says, “Well, you know they’re writing about it. They’re writing about these women identified women.” Sure enough he was right. You know he had done his research. And, and I said “No, I’m actually a lesbian,” you know. And so he...you and I told him- I sat down with himk... they were lovely, lovely, loving, they were- they were lovely, you know. So anyway

BL: And- and you--

CW: Accepting.

BL: You had some out to some of your siblings before that?

CW: Yes, yeah.

BL: Who was it first that you started with?

CW: First I think probably Rita. Yeah, probably Rita. I think I might have actually closest to...of my older brothers and... well, my sister Patty was still living. My sister Patty died of a brain aneurism. Very suddenly. But probably Patty and Rita. And then probably, those- the in-betweens, probably Peter, Paul, Vinny and Joe. Probably that. We have like two generations in our family. We have the, you know, the seven oldest and then the three year space, then the seven youngest. And so probably the oldest and then- and then I think everybody just knew. Everybody just told everybody. Yeah.

BL: How- how was the reactions from your siblings?

CW: Loving and fabulous. They were thrilled. They were thrilled because my family has always had a whole bench of Gay men in their lives. We’re like, you know. For some reason we’ve always had a lot of gay men in our lives. Yeah because gay men are very nice, you know? I love

gay men. And, and I have a lot of gay men friends now. And I love them. Their very artistic and clever and creative and brilliant. They generally all have a- something their an expert in. So I like that way of being, so yeah.

And I think my cousin- my cousin chipper is gay. He's a very loved cousin and has one of the Zarbos. We just had our Zarbo family reunion. My mother had one brother and four sisters and we're the Zarbos and the Wambachs are one branch. So my uncle Angelo has this son Chipper and he was one of my favorite cousins and he was a gay man. Just a lovely, wonderful man. And so we're the only two so far. Yeah. So we don't know, you know? But I'm sorta losing track of where I am. I think I'm all over the place.

BL: Well, I think we talked about San Francisco, that you were active in the Community out there.

CW: Yes.

BL: Especially during the AIDS crisis.

CW: Yeah.

BL: So, sort of post Aids, may be we could talk and little bit about what- what your live was like in San Francisco after that

CW: Yeah, my life in San Francisco. I went, actually- I had a long term, ten-year relationship with my first partner, Alexa. She was a professor at City College and so. There were all these different groups of lesbians. And so there were the academic lesbians and so I was in that group. And there were the- then there were the- what do they call themselves? Olock! They were the old ladies and they're- they're now old lesbians organizing for change. They've become a national movement. But they started out as these old ladies from Operation Concern. And they had a senior group. And this- this senior group men and women there were a lot of really good- like John DeChecko. I don't know if you know that name, but he was a gay professor from San Francisco State. He did a lot of the early academic work on gays and lesbians. Monica- Monica- what the heck was her name- Monica Kehow- she did a lot of the early work on older lesbians. But anyway they formed this group, these old ladies- I mean you can't imagine they were all- they were like [laugh] Oh my god! They were, well they dress, they look like old- you know they'd dressed in like old raggedy clothes, they were sorta downwardly mobile looking.

BL: [laughs]

CW: They looked, you know they had hairs on their chinny chin chins and they- they were geezers. They were these old lady geezers and there was this whole group of them and they hung out together. They were very activism oriented. And they were- and they were very- they liked being- they- they were- their part- they- they were butch-femme all of them- they- they had that old model way of being. They were fun. There was this one, Jenny McKarge [ph] and she wrote a lot of old- she wrote a lot of these old songs and sang them and banged on the piano and they played the gut bucket.

BL: [chuckles]

CW: -you know they were- I don't know. I wish I had a good name to describe these gals. Could just describe them as old geezers but the one thing that did was that they started this

group. O.L.O.C. Old Lesbians Organizing for Change and the academic lesbians looked at them and said “Ha ha ha,” you know? And the the Lesbian- Lipstick Lesbians they were from Bay Area Career women, you know, everybody all dolled up and all like hot looking and everything with high heels. That whole group. There were all these different groups. It was a very colorful community and- and B.A.C.W. used to have- Bay Area Career Women- they had a kind of a prom called “Putting on the Ritz” during Gay Pride. And everybody came looking their different ways- you know? But there were all these gorgeous dressed up women, then there were the women who all wore tuxedos. You know, they were all women thinking they were men, kind of thing. So there were all these kind of little groups and I was in the academic lesbian group and I was also, because- I was also apart of B.A.C.W. because my partner was the President of B.A.C.W, Bay Area Career Women, they were all these business women. They were all about networking, but these old ladies, they were- they were wonderful.

And my friend, Sheryl Goldberg was in charge of these old ladies at Operation Concern. She was the director and she use to run these tea dances. She use to say, “Come on, come to the tea dances,” you know? For these old lesbians. And they were wonderful. A lot of them had been in the military and they were very, very...they were very butch and very dyke and very “I don’t want to be-- I don’t wanna hang out with any of these people who think they’re lesbians who were married once. Okay? They’re not lesbians. They’re not the true lesbians. That’s us.” You know? These old gals. But they started this O.L.O.C. And O.L.O.C. has become a national movement. Old Lesbians Organizing for Change and those old lesbians that started that were just a whole motley crew of lovely, lovely, wonderful- they wouldn’t want to be called ‘lovely’ but a group of characters. Characters. And I think we owe a lot to them. But the community- you also had- Oh! We had all these bars in San Francisco. So you had your bar girls and your pool playing girls. Your flannel shirt girls. Everybody was different. You know they all- everyone had their own unique uniform and they were all in these different groups. And so I was in the- the academic group. But, I kind of liked- I liked hanging out with all the groups, you know? Once a Wambach, always a Wambach.

BL: [laughs]

CW: You know? So...I sort of- I was in B.A.C.W. and I liked the O.L.O.C. ladies, I went to the Tea dance and you know, I sort of- yeah, did the whole thing. But, then I broke up with Alexa and I said, “Never again” because she was- she was very strict. She was a lot like my Ex-husband. And she was very strict with my son and I was trying to raise my son to be a caring, loving kid. But, he was a lot like me, which is sort of like flying around everywhere. He was a creative, sort of creative- we were little creative geniuses in a way. And so he, he would never be able to find his key and so she wouldn’t let him in the house if he didn’t have his key. And it was mean, you know? She was mean. And so I started to see this, but again it took me ten years to leave her too. And I started to sew keys in my sons jackets and everything, you know? It was interesting raising Nathaniel then because in elementary school... He was okay that I was a lesbian, but then as he grew into- got into middle school and high school, things changed, you know? And he wanted to spend more time at his- his dad had very nice wives and so he was happy over there on weekends with them and so.

Yeah, and so I used to do these lesbian things when Nathaniel wasn’t around, yeah. Like have everybody over to my house and it was the center. Definitely at one point the center for every... and I was- I was always in with a lot of Jewish Lesbians so they would all come to my house for

Christmas and they would all come- you know, so they were another whole group. Twice Blessed, Lesbian and Jewish they used to call themselves and so that was another group that I hung out with and yeah. I feel like I'm scattered at this point.

BL: Well- well you said that when you broke up with Alexa.

CW: I broke up with Alexa.

BL: Right.

CW: Then, I met Bobby and we've been together 23 years.

BL: [whispers] Wow.

CW: That's been a long and wonderful life together with her. Sort of like grow old along with me, the best is yet to be is true. And she's 82 and I'm 76 and she's very much- very active and very...she- when she- she ran a theater with her ex-husband and they ran one of the first Lesbian theaters. No, no, no, it was the first Women's theater, during the Women's movement. They had one of the longest running plays. The first play of the women's movement called "How to Make a Woman" was-and it ran in Harvard Square for many, many years. She's from Boston. And she was always an activist but when she retired from theater work she started to do- her daughter wrote a book called "That Takes Ovaries" and she started to do activism and women's empowerment work. She did it in India with sex trafficked women to try to help them move out of these sex industries and into other lives. And she did this with her daughter and- and it was called "That Takes Ovaries" and then I joined them after I retired and did some of that work. But anyway once she turned 70 she started to do this work. And we have lived a very interesting life in San Francisco, just perusing- its interesting when your in your 60s and 70s and you're a lesbian its- it's a wonderful life.

I- I love her. I love being with her. She is- we help one another- we inspire one another to be our creative selves. I left mathematics at the university, I took those numbers and I buried them as deep as I could get and everything else about being a math professor- a math education professor. I started to go to city college and I became the artist I always knew I was. So, I'm a painter now and she encouraged that and I encourage her and her theater work. She did a number of theater pieces in San Francisco and worked with Terry Bowm [ph] who is one of our famous- she calls herself a slightly-renowned world famous lesbian playwright and she's very funny. She's a playwright and a comedian in San Francisco and Bobby has been her director for many years. So, we're involved in the development of our own creative lives as lesbians. We live in a community where there are loads of gays and lesbians, 55+ community. We're a very much a part of these other people- this community figuring out who we are in this later part of our lives- they call it the fourth act of our lives, the third act of our lives- what ever you want to call it.

So, we're constantly- we're still figuring out who we are as old lady lesbians and we wanted to be mentors to younger lesbians, but they don't really- they want to figure out who they are themselves, which, which is interesting. That's fine and that's good, you know? Because I don't know if we ever did figure out, but we love the word lesbian and we love carrying that name, even if the younger women don't want to carry that name. We love it.

So Bobby and I constantly inspire one another. And- but mostly as artists and as members of this community and as supporters of the- of other gays and lesbians in this part of our lives and we've

gone in and out of different stages because at one point we had these beautiful lesbian bars in San Francisco and we don't have that anymore. Now, the lesbians are having dinner parties. You know? With their own-whatever and or we-we- we go out together or we- so what ever we do, you know? But we do inspire one another to continue to be activists and that's a big part of our lesbian selves and so that brings me to something which I'd like to talk about- I don't know if we have time.

BL: Sure, having a quick- we have a little bit of time left, right?

Camera Person: Yeah.

CW: Okay. So what I'm doing now is something which I think is wonderful. And its that I'm working with the refugees on the Island of Lesbos. It's Spelled Les-V-os, but its said Les-B-os because the V is the B sound in Greek.

Lesbos is the Island where Sappho, the Lesbian Poet was born. And so on the- when the big crisis hit, the refugee crisis and people were leaving their homes and their lives and fleeing for their lives from Syria, Afghanistan, Africa, many, many, many places, Iraq, Iran- when they were leaving Saudi Arabia, when they were leaving these places and they were making their way into Turkey, then they were saying we've got to get to Europe. We've got to get to Greece and they would go to Ismir, Turkey and from their they would take these boats and they would land on the Island of Lesbos. So this was before the big political Hilary and Trump stuff and so it was being covered by the news and I was watching it. I had just retired from San Francisco State and so. I was watching--not just-- I was watching this whole scenario unfold in from of the television. I was saying, "Oh God, they're going to Lesbos. I think all the lesbians should go over there and help these refugees!"

I called all of my friends, I couldn't get a single person to go. I started off with all the lesbians. Any lesbian I knew in the whole world. I called them and they were saying, "You're crazy! You're gonna be killed! It's dangerous!" and it wasn't dangerous. These Refugees aren't dangerous, certainly!

So, when I first went we were pulling people out of the water. I went with Dirty Girls of Lesbos and Dirty Girls of Lesbos is this big lesbian--her name is Allison Terry Evans--she's a lesbian from Australia. She was running this Dirty Girls of Lesbos, she was bringing all these women from...she put it on Facebook and she got all these women to come over from all over the world to Lesbos. So, when I started I saw this article in the New York Times about people going over and volunteering and I said, "I'm gonna go."

So, I wrote to all the people they listed and she was the only one that got back to me, and she said, "Come on!" and I said, "I don't anyone to come with."

And she said, "It doesn't matter! Come by yourself. You're gonna meet people, all the people who are like you. They want to change the world- they want to help these people. Do you have the money?"

I said, "Yeah! I get a pension."

She said, "What better way!?"

[Chuckles] So that's what I'm doing. I'm volunteering! I went over there the first year and I worked with her. Then I said, "I want to get into the refugee camps". And So the women at the hotel said to me, "Well you gotta- do you know how to cook?",

I said, "Of course I know how to cook!"

And she said, "Well you can go into the refugee camps as a cook. I know the cook."

So I said, "Great! I'll go and cook."

She said, "Well you have to bring something. Bring 50 loaves of bread."

Fine! So, I brought 50 loaves of bread. Meanwhile I was writing to my friends and they were coming over. So a group of us went- and we went in and I went into the refugee camp and we started to cook with this guy who was cooking. And so then I saw these tee-shirts walking around- red tee shirts, Save the Children- Save the Children! Oh my god, we're all teachers. We want to save the child. So we said- I made my way to their trailer and I said, "Hey, we're volunteers, we're cooking but were teachers. I just heard on the news that the kids don't have anything to do."

She said, "That's right."

I said, "We can teach them."

And she said, "you're kidding me!"

I said, "No!" I said, "I've got these people."

So, we taught in the camps- in these horrible refugee camps. And so we taught. Then I went home after two months and I started to get other people to come. We started to get retired teachers to come. And so we called ourselves. So basically to make a long story short, I've been going now for the past three years. I've gone six times. I've gone two or three months at a time. And we've helped to develop a school called Gecko Kids School- it's a school for unaccompanied minors. The second school now, that's more of a center is called Tapawatts [ph] Center which means "Mothers and Children" in Native American. And so we're working in Tapawatts Center and I'm- we're teaching. We had 11 retired teachers come this summer, many of whom are Gays and Lesbians- some are not. We have this wonderful group of teachers coming to Lesvos and we call ourselves REAL. REAL International Volunteers. Refugee Education And Learning. R E A L. And so I feel like it's a gift to me and I feel like Sappho is there for me the whole way. Everyone is there for me. God, the Goddess, Sappho, Allah, Buddha, all these spiritual people they're guiding the way for me. And I feel like I'm- I'm doing this really wonderful piece of work now. And- and other people are doing it with me and I- I feel very gifted to have been at this last part of my life. Given this very meaningful role to fulfill. And well I guess that's it.

BL: That's Great

[Both laugh]

CW: The End

BL: I think- I think that's a good place to stop

[End of Tape 3]