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**Contact:**

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

717-245-1399

[archives@dickinson.edu](mailto:archives@dickinson.edu)

**Interviewee: Brent Weaver**

Interviewer: Mary Merriman

Date of Interview: February 5, 2015

Location of Interview: Grand View United Methodist, Lancaster, PA.

Transcriber: Andrew Dietz

Proofreader: Sara Tyberg

**Abstract:**

Brent Weaver was born in Corning, New York but primarily grew up the Lancaster, Pennsylvania area. Although his parents grew up in conservative Mennonite families, Brent and his brother were raised Presbyterian, and Brent recognized that he was attracted to boys as early as elementary school. He graduated from the University of Delaware with undergraduate degrees in German education, Spanish education, and geography. Brent continued his education at Welch University, obtaining a master's in educational curriculum, and at the University of Illinois, receiving a second master's in diversity and equity issues in education. Currently, he is a middle school teacher of Spanish and German and lives with his husband in Lancaster. In this interview, Brent discusses his personal struggle between his sexual orientation and religion, his ten-year marriage with a woman, and his experience coming out at the school where he works. Brent explains how he attempted to "become straight" as a young adult by seeking counseling groups such as Homosexuals Anonymous and conversion therapy to strengthen his relationship with God. Brent also comments on the fluidity of gender and sexuality as well as his distaste for labeling himself as strictly gay. In the future, Brent wants the LGBT community to look beyond their own singular issues in order to provide support to other minority groups.

**BW:** Hi, my name is Brent Ashley Weaver. That middle name was chosen by my mother. That would be Ethel Jean Miller Weaver. She goes by Jean. My father was Harry Elvin Weaver. He goes by Harry. I have one younger brother about 15 months younger, Kirke (sp?) with an "e" Dudley Weaver. He also got a middle name from my mother. We were

**MM:** Where do you live at Brent?

**BW:** I currently live in Mount Joy. [Full address removed.]

**MM:** And how long have you lived in Lancaster [Pennsylvania]? When did you—were you born here?

**BW:** I was born in Corning, NY, but my parents and their families are from Lancaster [Pennsylvania]. They were just up there for a year or two for my father's job, and they came back. So, basically, I have spent my life here.

**MM:** Yeah, three or four years old... Okay, and did you go to school here in Lancaster and how far did you go for?

**BW:** I started kindergarten in New Holland. I went—first grade through high school at Conestoga Valley High School. We lived in Leola. I went to the University of Delaware. Go Blue Hens! [pumps fist] Not too far away a distance, about an hour, but a whole world away in

culture. I was there for five years. I came back—my father had Alzheimer's, but during that time I had also lived in Spain for a short time. I lived in Germany for like six months, so I have been around a lot of places. And... yeah, then I lived here. I moved back to Delaware for one year for graduate school and then back here again.

**MM:** So where did you graduate from? You've got a... what level?

**BW:** I have undergraduate degrees in German education, Spanish education, and geography. I have two master's degrees in—one is in educational curriculum from Welch University and the other is diversity and equity issues in education from the University of Illinois.

**MM:** Okay, great.

**BW:** That's a really cool program.

**MM:** Now you mention that you have a brother. Just one brother?

**BW:** Yes.

**MM:** Your parents is... your mom is Ethel and your dad—your birth father's name?

**BW:** Yes, Harry.

**MM:** That's Harry? Okay.

**BW:** My mother goes by Jean. I think as soon as she could talk she wanted to be called Jean and not Ethel.

**MM:** Right, okay. Are they still currently married?

**BW:** No, my father died maybe 14 years ago of Alzheimer's. My mother remarried.

**MM:** Okay, okay. All right. Okay. So, let's just kind of talk through a little bit about growing up. I think we talked a little bit earlier you talked about coming out when you were about 14. Can you talk a little bit before 14 years old. Did your parents talk much about sexuality or... child development or any of those things?

**BW:** Sure. Both of my parents came from rather conservative Mennonite backgrounds. My mother wore a covering. She got in trouble at church for wearing white shoes to church instead of black shoes. It mean that kind of stuff, but then once my mother left home, she left the church and my father joined the army, and so he was kicked out of his church. They were—they became the progressive—progressive ones of both of their families. We were not by any means progressive or liberal, but compared to all my relatives, we were way on the left, and they were very... they were very keen on... trying to give us a very normal, middle class childhood. They did talk to us about sex, and we were introduced to a lot of things. We went lots of places. We were never sheltered from anything. I am trying to remember... yeah—I did notice that when I

was five years old—I did notice that I really appreciated men, and I knew there was something different about me in elementary school on up. I just, I knew there was something very different, and when I was—when I hit puberty, I definitely knew I was attracted to men. That’s when I told my father, mother, and then shortly after that, my brother.

**MM:** Okay, now were you—did you—you were raised in a Mennonite church, but it sounds like a little more on the progressive end.

**BW:** We went—oh, I’m sorry—we went to a United Methodist Church in New Holland. So yeah, so they didn’t—then we went to Westminster Presbyterian which is a PCA [Presbyterian Church in America] church, a conservative Presbyterian church. They didn’t return to the Mennonite church. In fact, they were—they were kind of concerned. They didn’t want us to go back to that church because they had some bad experiences there, so... [chuckles]

**MM:** Okay, okay. In terms of currently, you are involved with a church yourself?

**BW:** Yes, currently I am a member of Grace UCC [United Church of Christ] in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. It’s an open and affirming UCC church.

**MM:** Okay, okay. How about occupation—what are you doing for a living?

**BW:** I teach middle school. I am a secondary German and Spanish teacher. In my whole career, I have taught high school or middle German and Spanish. Currently—this year, I’m teaching all German at Manheim Township Middle School. My whole career—this is my 20<sup>th</sup> year—I have taught at Manheim Township schools. So, that’s my occupation, pretty much. I worked in a bake shop, I mowed lawns, and a couple other things, and I realized that I didn’t want to do any of that stuff, so... [chuckles]

**MM:** Okay, all right. Are you currently in a relationship?

**BW:** Yes, I am married... almost three years to my husband who was my partner for six years before that. So, we’ve—we’ve been together almost nine years.

**MM:** Okay, and is—where were you married at? Sorry.

**BW:** We were married in Connecticut. I can’t remember the name, [laughs] but they were great. It was really—they were very welcoming. It was wonderful.

**MM:** Did you guys get married as soon as they opened up? Were they legally licensed LGBT?

**BW:** Not right away, but as soon as more states began to... after Massachusetts and as soon as the next five or six—I don’t know—states started to, we started talking about it. So, we definitely didn’t want to wait until Pennsylvania. We wanted to get married as soon as possible.

**MM:** I think my spouse and I wanted to wait until for Pennsylvania then I started to push and say let's go to Maryland for federal benefits were starting to be recognized. And just for the purposes of this interview and timing it, this is February 3<sup>rd</sup>? 4<sup>th</sup>?

**BW:** 5<sup>th</sup>?

**MM:** 5<sup>th</sup>, I'm sorry. February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2015, and we've have had marriage equality since about June or July of 2014 in Pennsylvania, so a lot of people got married beforehand in other states. Some of us waited 'til this state and as soon as they opened the doors, we were at the doors, saying "We're getting this done now before you can close it again."

**BW:** Right.

**MM:** In the context of history, now we're waiting on the Supreme Court to decide what's legal or not legal.

**BW:** Oh, I know.

**MM:** Which is pretty amazing history. How about your husband's name?

**BW:** His name Jeffrey George Clouser. C-L-O-U-S-E-R. Yes, we got married also for federal benefits and tax reasons, and also because my husband has a son, and we wanted some stronger... stronger legal ties, so that if anything ever happened to my husband that I would still get to see my stepson.

**MM:** Okay. How is the relationship with your stepson? How is that?

**BW:** It is very good. My stepson is now 11. I met him when he was 1 years old. Already talking in full sentences, but he doesn't remember a time without me, so he's told me all—all the time that he grown up, he's told me that "You're practically like my father." So, he—

**MM:** You have a close relationship?

**BB:** Yeah, very close. It worked out very well that way.

**MM:** So no other children? Or adopt?

**BW:** No.

**MM:** I think we talked about military. You weren't involved. How about just affiliation with other LGBT groups? I know UCC is open and affirming. UCC—United Church of Christ. Any other groups that you belong to or had?

**BW:** I did—and Jeff did, too—I did work with Common Roads for a little bit. That is a local organization that helps LGBT youth... they have a safe space gathering so kids can come. I did that for a few years when it started here in Lancaster [Pennsylvania]. I did help some with

Central Pennsylvania Pride. My husband was in charge of that for two years, but—I'm trying to think—I think that's it.

**MM:** Was that the Pride Fest in Harrisburg [Pennsylvania]?

**BW:** In Harrisburg [Pennsylvania], correct.

**MM:** Not here in Lancaster [Pennsylvania]?

**BW:** Yes, that is correct.

**MM:** Trying to see what else... so, let's then go back and talk a little bit about religious affiliation, history—we've done that. Can you just talk about between the intersection between religion and homosexuality and how your experience of that has been?

**BW:** [takes a deep breath] I was a very religious child. I really enjoyed—maybe not so much church, but the whole idea of religion and faith very much intrigued me, and I read the Bible... constantly. Many times in different orders. I liked the idea of different translations. I learned some Ancient Greek so I could read. This was all in elementary school. I mean, I just really—I liked the whole idea of... of... faith. I did not—I did not always like how it looked in practice, but the ideas were really—were really good. So, when I came out my first—to my parents, I was very concerned—I was very upset, because from my understanding, everything I had learned about my Christian faith said that being gay was wrong, and so I just automatically assumed that if it was wrong, then there a way to make it right, and I immediately went to a Christian bookstore and got some books by some now very much discredited or—authors and read a whole bunch of lies about how I could be turned from gay into straight and that began a very long and disastrous couple decades in my life. So, I—I kept going to church was very important to me. In high school, I sang in a—a singing group. It was a religious group. I went—I was involved in church a lot, and because I always felt that I had this big struggle inside of me... the more I felt that—how to put it? I don't want to say the gayer I felt [laughs] the longer I was—I felt gay or I felt attracted to men, the more I tried to become more involved in religion and in faith until it—got to the point I was attending ex-gay groups. When I was 14, I—I started counseling with Colin Cook. He was the founder of Homosexuals Anonymous. He's a great counselor, and actually we didn't talk a lot about being gay, but yeah, that didn't help my feelings. I then went to a group in Lancaster [Pennsylvania]. It was an early version of Day Seven. They told me that I should leave and go sew my wild oats and come back when I was twenty-something, which I didn't understand back then, but... yeah, they just couldn't understand why I would want to change when I was a teenager.

**MM:** Yeah.

**BW:** I went to college. At college, I was involved in a group from Tenth Presbyterian. In Philadelphia, they had a satellite group in Wilmington, Delaware, and so I was spending all these—this time going to groups. I still was seeking out counselors who were sympathetic to my idea that I could be turned from gay into straight, and this was just the biggest conflict of my life, and it kind of just defined everything about—about my life. I told a few friends—Christian

friends at school. I was involved in InterVarsity [Christian Fellowship] in school. Everything I did was Christian, Christian, Christian. And, eventually, I... got married to a woman right out—pretty much right out of college. She also grew up in a very religious—excuse me—very religious church. It was a—like a Southern Baptist type of church, very fundamental, and that was a disaster. Her own brother told me not to marry her. We could have been good friends, but she and I just did not... and I am so stubborn, and we tried for nine years—over nine years to make it work, and I just wouldn't give up, because giving up would—would be admitting that I was wrong—and during that time, I started—I started having really—just panic attacks. I was—I mean, the whole idea of feeling—being married to a woman and still feeling attracted to men was pulling me apart. I was—I was coming apart at the seams. And, I was going to—and that was a—Day Seven, which was an ex-gay group here in Lancaster [Pennsylvania] at the time. It was very active. I was going to three or four meetings a week. I had weekly counseling. They were—[coughs] excuse me—involved with Exodus. So, I went to Exodus conferences and the national conferences, and, yeah... it—I don't think there was—I don't know if it was more of an intersection of my feelings of being gay and my feelings towards faith more of—more as—more like a—a head-on collision. [bumps fists together]

**MM:** Yeah, I understand that.

**BW:** It just didn't resolve itself. And I was too stubborn—I am too—I am a Taurus. I was too stubborn to just—just too stubborn to not stick it out, and I kept trying, and it didn't work.

**MM:** How long were you married?

**BW:** I was married for nine years. [clears throat] Excuse me. We wanted children, but we didn't. We had three dogs instead. It was probably good we didn't have kids in some ways. Funny story about that—this interview is taking place in Grand View United Methodist Church, and my husband and I visited here about a month ago, and after the service my husband asked me how I like the—the church, and I said, “Oh, the walls have been painted.” He looks at me—this was the church where I was married to my—to my ex-wife.

**MM:** Oh, really? Oh, that's—that's quite a twist.

**BW:** And it's true that the walls have been painted twice since we were married.

**MM:** Well, they've actually dismantled the whole front of the thing.

**BW:** Exactly, yep.

**MM:** Changed it. Let me—hold on one second here. I might just put this on pause for a second.

[end of video]

[second video begins]

**MM:** So, we're resuming this interview. Took a little bit of a break, and we were talking about your—that you're married here actually in Grand View. That's kind of an interesting story. So this is—this is also kind of as momentous as the interview goes. It is always interesting stuff. How about any other relationships after your marriage ended? How did you resolve that piece? The conflict in religion and sexuality.

**BW:** I was just thinking of how to describe that. I literally met maybe a couple thousand men and women in ex-gay ministries. Definitely here in Lancaster [Pennsylvania], I met a couple hundred that went through it. In the seven years I was there... not one of them ever went from being gay to straight. There was one who stayed married, and they were happier, but he still had feelings for men. There was some who stayed married and were not happy, but they still had feelings for men. Nobody ever really changed. They just were mostly unhappy, and it suddenly dawned on me this is just not working. There has to be something—there's something I am missing here, and I was reading the Bible one day, and it suddenly occurred to me that all my life, I had been assuming that God wanted me to be straight, and I had been almost telling him to make me straight instead of asking God what he really wanted me to be. I gave God a little box like this [makes small box with his hands] and said, "You have to fit my life into here." And He was trying to tell me your life is like [opens hand out wide] so much more than that box. Oh, I just, I don't know. I don't know how to describe it, but I—I realized I—it was all very selfish. It is, because I wanted—I wanted a regular "life" I guess. I don't know. It just occurred to me that if God was really God, he could do anything he wanted to, including love people who... were in same-sex relationships, and that if he did, there was a way that explained it, and—it just—my whole viewpoint just perspective just shifted, and I just—I felt a huge relief, a huge amount of peace. I went from panic attacks and fits of crying and rage to being happy and peaceful. My family said, "We are so glad you've changed, 'cause something's different. You're different, and we like you. You're back to your old self again." I told my wife we need to divorce. She said yes. By that time, we were definitely done, and I went back to my job that fall and the other staff was like, "What happened to you? You're like totally a different person." My mother said that she had her old son back. They just—it was a real—it was a change in my beliefs that had a real effect on me and on the world. And that's how I knew I was on to something. After my divorce, I gave myself one year, as far as relationships went, to not get involved with anybody. I didn't want a—I did not want a—what do you call that? [motions with his hands back and forth]

**MM:** A rebound?

**BW:** Rebound! [chuckles] I can—[mumbles] Relationships, so... I actually went on maybe two or three dates a week. I met lots and lots of guys. It was fun. I met lots of people. Some of them were really weird. Some were nice, but I didn't—I didn't want anything serious. I wanted time to kinda sort through my feelings, and almost a year since my wife and I decided to split up, I met my husband. We went out on a date and the next night, I pretty much moved [chuckles] into his apartment. [laughs] And we've been together ever since. I would not recommend that to anybody. We'll have to say—we have both been married before, and we knew what we were looking for and we knew what we wanted. We were much older. It was a second relationship, so that I would not recommend that generally though, for most people. And he had been married before to a woman as well. It had also been—had also had about a year since he had been out of his relationship. So, that's what—that's what changed.

**MM:** Do you think it had an effect on—well, you said you were happier. You said the people were reflecting a change in your outlook, it sounds like and even performance at work.

**BW:** Oh, yeah, yes. Definitely.

**MM:** Can you tell me a little bit about how that changed? From—to.

**BW:** I think when I was trying so desperately to follow God's will by being straight, I was always thinking about myself. What do I have to act like? What should I be doing? Should I not be doing this? I should not be thinking this. I'm thinking this, wait a second—I shouldn't be doing—this is wrong. And it was all these things—it was all self—I was so self-absorbed in my problems, I didn't have time or energy for anybody else. And so, when I stopped—I just let myself be myself and all of a sudden other people—I had time and energy for other people, and—emotional energy. And it wasn't—I wasn't just sucking the life out of everything around me, which I think that's what I was doing before.

**MM:** You mentioned that you have two masters degrees. When was the last one complete?

**BW:** That was completed maybe two years ago. Yeah, I did those because teaching—that's what you need to do to get---

**MM:** For your required areas?

**BW:** Yeah.

**MM:** So at least for you, it was almost a religious conversion to a place of acceptance.

**BW:** Yes. Yes, that's a good way to put it.

**MM:** The opposite of what Homosexuals Anonymous would say—you need a religious conversion to become straight. So, that's kind of—that's kind of interesting.

**BW:** Yeah.

**MM:** Does that affect also—political views? Are you—do you tend to be more liberal politically? I think you grew up kind of in a more liberal environment in some way.

**BW:** It did affect me a lot, because all of a sudden I started realizing more and more that I had always know—had sympathy for people who were different or who were underdogs, but I began to see more and more—I could begin to see things from different perspectives, and I wasn't afraid to see things from different perspectives. And with religion—with the Christian religion, Jesus was a pretty radical person, I mean, a lot of the stuff he believed in—the church of that day was horrified by. And, I just had this idea that I shouldn't just dismiss everything out of hand. I... I am much, much more liberal—I'm probably more liberal than most people know.

**MM:** Okay,

**BW:** People—a lot of people I know who are very liberal would not accept the idea of polygamy, however, first of all, I'd say it's not me, it's them. They can do what they want, but also—when I started thinking about it, I thought, “So, there's a guy with three wives—he's only legally married to one. If the other two want to leave, they would have nothing. If they were all legally married and they left, they would be getting like royalties—royalties—they would be getting money. They would get spousal support and all that kind of stuff, and it would actually elevate people to a more equal status. Not that I would want to do that, but it would actually like... might be a benefit. So.

**MM:** So you really did—so it sounds like you've gone through a lot of, kind of, reorganizing of a lot of things and stuff. That's interesting. How about—this says LGBT identity and/or issues influence or effect on other aspects of life. We have talked about family and social, religious, civil, political, and spiritual, but how about—are you involved more in the gay community? I think you said just through UCC [United Church of Christ]. A little bit with the...?

**BW:** Not in a lot of official ways.

**MM:** How about hooking up or connecting with other gay folk in the community?

**BW:** Yes, actually. We do have a pretty extensive network of LGBT friends, so that like, if a company is having difficulty—if they are not treating their employees equally, we will help—we will help write letters or make calls. If there's an issue somebody is having because of them being LGBT, we are there to support them.

**MM:** And who is we?

**BW:** My husband and I. Yeah, so, it is more of an unofficial thing, I think, but we do I guess consider ourselves a part of a community.

**MM:** Do you have a lot of social friends? Or...?

**BW:** We have a lot of social friends who are LGBT, but a bunch who aren't, and we are both very family-oriented, so we do a lot with our families. Which both of them have been extremely supportive of—of us.

**MM:** How about other turning points in life other than the identity thing? Were there—have there been other things that—that were also a part of these shifts? Or has that been kind of the seismic moment was dealing with your own identity?

**BW:** I think identity has been a huge one. I continued at the school where I teach—to pretend I was straight. There was no teacher that was out at school, not even to other teachers. I didn't think so. And, students one year were talking about me, and there was rumors about me being gay, and I heard them say something before class one day, and I thought they are not going to pay attention to a thing I say, and so I just said, “You know, you're right. I'm gay. I have a

partner—a boyfriend. Can we talk about direct objects now?” They were so disappointed, they were like, “Ugh.” It’s like they didn’t have anything else to talk about, and it was so low key. The whole process of coming out. I didn’t have any bad reactions from students. I had a lot of parents congratulate me. The administration was okay. The worst part was some the other teachers [chuckles] were a little bit—some of them were a little bit... religious judgmentally and had a little—had a difficult time accepting me, but that was a real eye-opener too. I realized that I was... that, not being able to be myself at work was very stressful, and that is why I am—I am looking for ways and have been working towards trying to get employment protection and protection to housing and, you know, civil right protection for LGBT people and others in Pennsylvania.

**MM:** Yes, it’s a—it’s a current issue. We don’t have—I think we were saying earlier it’s the only straight—the only state where you can be married, but you don’t have employment protection in place, so.... it can be stressful. So, your coming out process—how long ago was that? At work, with students...?

**BW:** At work, that was maybe six years ago. And, I don’t regret it for an instant, because all of a sudden, I think—I don’t know if the counselors had anything to do with this or not, but kids who had LGBT parents were showing up in my classes. There were students who were coming out in middle school. Some of them didn’t say a whole lot, but they told some friends, and they were in my study halls, and they just—a lot of students told me that I was the first gay person they’d ever met in person, which to a lot of people might be shocking, but it—this is Lancaster County [Pennsylvania], and I realized I was really having an impact, and it’s probably a big reason why I am still teaching. It can be a terrible job sometimes and exhausting, but I know that I am having a big impact, bigger than if I were a regular teacher there, because I’m still—there are a couple of teachers who are out now to other faculty and possibly to students, but they will not talk to students at all. I had former students come back to me then at the middle school, and I helped them get a GSA [Gay-Straight Alliance] started at the high school. We got—I talked to a bunch of the younger—mostly younger, straight teachers, and we had a big campaign to stop homophobic slurs, and kids don’t call each other “faggot” and “gay” at my school anymore, and if they do, people jump on them about it, and that’s made a big difference, and that happened in just a couple—couple years. So, and—yeah, so I feel like a made a big difference—I’ve made a big difference there. That was another, I guess, big turning point. It affected my life—in a good way.

**MM:** How about any other areas where you seen big changes—we’ve seen equality in marriage, so you’ve seen changes in your school area... other things that you think that—that you’ve seen as big changes or things beside equal protection in employment and housing, education—what other changes need to be made? What other changes need to happen?

**BW:** Well—I... I think that LGBT people need to stop looking at LGBT and look at LGBT and beyond, because—there—it’s not—how do I put this—we’ve had such an experience being persecuted as LGBT people and fighting for rights that it is—I think we would be very good at helping other people, and we should understand other people... who need protection. Some places there’s lesbian and gay laws but nothing covering transgender people. That needs to be stopped. There’s—there’s still so much racism in the United States, and that’s not about what

happened and who shot whom [referring to the shooting of Michael Brown in 2014], but it's about any kind of persecution, you know. My husband and I have been stopped by cops, and we've been laughed at, and we've been—our licenses were checked, because we're together—when I'm alone, they're not. But, you know, we shouldn't have to be worried about what the police are gonna do to us or how they're gonna treat us. A woman shouldn't have to worry about whether a policeman is going to stop her, 'cause she has big tatas, and he wants to look closer. People of color shouldn't have to worry about whether they're going to be stopped because of their skin color, and it just—I think we need to look at a broader—broader—beyond the LGBT scope.

**MM:** Kind of redefine the constructs and the intersection between various groups.

**BW:** Yes, right, and I think right now is a good point, because we're—to realize this, because we are getting a lot of rights, and we are getting a lot of what we have fought so hard for so many years, but I don't think it's a good time to stop fighting for equality in people's lives. I feel like I am on a soapbox. [laughs]

**MM:** That's what you get to do here. [chuckles]

**BW:** Yeah.

**MM:** How about—just—we kinda covered a lot of the material that is generally covered in these interviews, and sometimes people have artifacts or things like that, signs and banners—did you go through that period of time in your own life and—things that you may have kept?

**BW:** My husband and I—oh, that's right—my husband and I, when we got married—or when we got engaged—he wanted our picture announcement put in the paper. Which, fine. They did in York, Dauphin, Lebanon, Montgomery, Reading, or Berks County—all those counties, they all put them in, but Lancaster newspapers would not. There sent us a very snarky letter about community standards, and we called up a former classmate at GAL—WGAL, the local TV station and some other editors we knew, and before we knew it, Susan Managian (sp???)—if you know—she had—she had people protesting in front of their offices, people were canceling subscriptions and writing in, and eventually they gave in, and we were the first—we were on television, interviewed several times—we were the first LGBT couple to have our pictures in the Lancaster newspaper as a engaged or having kids or—and my husband kept a scrapbook of all that kind of—kind of stuff. And we've gone to the marriage rallies. He's had our picture [laughs] He had our picture from our wedding in Connecticut blown up about this tall [makes a big square with his hands] so we could carry around at rallies, and—and stuff. Yeah, we've—it's been good. It's been good to be an—an activist. But, that's why I feel it's so good not to leave it just for myself, but I think it's a good way to keep advocating for people... that need help. I also—I also have to say the whole LGBT thing, I've changed a lot, too. I don't necessarily consider myself gay. I just tell people that, because that's what they'll understand. And, I think sexuality is not even like a line. It's more like a sphere, and I—there's a lot of things I like about women. I wouldn't say I am totally one way or the other. I am somewhat attracted to women, and I am a lot attracted to most guys, but I think most of it is that I am attracted to a person, so I don't eveny like the label bisexual, because it's—it doesn't... so, I just say gay, because that's what most

people will understand, because I'm married to a man. And in terms of gender, I stopped thinking of myself totally as male. I don't think people are entirely male or female. The only—the only thing that men and women have that are different is, like, breastfeeding, I think. I don't think a man can do that, but everything else pretty much—or child birth—is very socially constructed. And so, I just don't—I just don't even think of myself as male half of the time. I just more think of myself as a person. It's very weird—different than how I grew up.

**MM:** It is about that reframing and how you start seeing yourself. Once you're—once you're kind of open the construct, you can start thinking differently.

**BW:** Right, right, like I don't wear socially like [uses air quotes] “women's clothing,” but it doesn't bother me. It doesn't bother me whatever anyone wears—it just doesn't—it just doesn't register with me in different activities and jobs, and it's just—it's a whole different way of looking at the—the world, but a lot of my gay friends think that's... they're still very “You're either lesbian or you're gay.” And some of them even think that bisexual doesn't exist.

**MM:** There is a lot—a lot of different ideas, but it is good that you're able to kind of open that up. We are—we are in this project also collecting artifacts that—and I know I took my Chris Williamson albums and things like that and sent them over to the archives, so they are collecting those kinds of things and never get rid of them. They really do—they are really trying to build a stronger history.

**BW:** They would take my big banner from my basement for me?

**MM:** Sure, sure. They might. They're enjoying all of it, so. Are there other areas that I haven't covered that you think should be covered? So I will probably talk to your husband [mumbles].

**BW:** Yeah, he might say more about this, but I have to say that my—my stepson lives most of the time with his mother who is—they are members of a very conservative church. From early on—as a three year old, he was told his dad was going to hell. That was from his grandparents. When my husband wore an earring, he told my husband, “You can't be my Daddy anymore, because you wear an earring,” because his pastor told him that. He's been told we should shoot Muslims, because they are going to hell. I mean all kinds of—of things and he comes to us with all this stuff, but then, he's lived with us all of his life, too, and so, it has been very interesting. We don't them down at all. We just let—whatever, they are his grandparents—that's his mom. And, it's been so interesting. He is eleven now, and he basically said that he doesn't understand why the people at his church won't let people be people. Not that he totally approves of what his dad and I are doing, but he just doesn't think it's worth it to—to hate other people, because they are different. I think that has been very telling. That—compared to those two environments where he's gone back and forth—the one—we didn't say much to him, and it's won out over the other one. He did say last year on vacation—he did have a long conversation with me, and he was very nervous, and he didn't want to tell his dad, he just wanted to talk to me, and [laughs] he said—he said, “I really—I really...” and I'm like, “What is it? You need to go to bed.” He's like, “I don't want top—I don't want to disappoint you guys, but I think I am straight.” [laughs]

**MM:** Another yet—another new construct.

**BW:** Yeah, this whole another idea. So, that's been a very interesting... interesting thing to have—to have to deal with. And, I will say, he has dealt—my stepson has dealt with it very well. He's a very well-adjusted person. He does—he's—he's a very great kid. He's a great person. He will do fine in life, but he has gone back and forth between some very different ideas and households.

**MM:** So, probably, there is a lot yet to talk through around parenting and raising children and how do you do that when things are different kinds of families and not having—not getting caught in the middle of it kinda thing. That's hard. Any other issues or areas?

**BW:** Let me just look at this paper real quick. Maybe it will jog my memory. No, other than just—I—I—I have been realizing more and more, and one reason I really appreciate this project, is that the life that I leave—that I lead now and a lot of the things that I really consider the best parts of my life would not have been possible without the bravery and sacrifice of people who came before me, and I am very much appreciating the history of LGBT rights in our country, and there's not much to appreciate sometimes—you can't really find a lot of information, so I think this is a really great project. I think this is...

**MM:** I think this is going to be an important one.

**BW:** Important.

**MM:** There are a lot of history projects going on, and I think you will see some of it on the website, the Central Pennsylvania site, and going in and looking at some of those, because you can get access online and things now. We're just learning so much about each other and what we're thinking about—that like I said, you can read it in a textbook, but it never comes out quite the same. I think we talked a little bit about interviewing your husband. If there are others that you think of, you know, we'll set up interviews in the future again and kind of go from there.

**BW:** Wonderful.

**MM:** Okay, anything else?

**BW:** Thank you so much for your time.

**MM:** No, thank you very much.