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Interviewee: Sabrina Dare-Bledsoe
Interviewer: Barry Loveland
Date: March 6, 2021
Place: Harrisburg, PA via Zoom
Transcriber: James van Kuilenburg

Abstract:

Sabrina Dare-Bledsoe was born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in 1960. She grew up in a large family of entrepreneurs and bar owners, whom she worked alongside as a child and teenager. Her father, Stuart Withero Dare, inherited and ran The Clock Bar from his father George Dare. Her mother, Maureen Goodman, was from England, and lived above The Clock Bar before she met and married Stuart. In this interview, Sabrina talks about The Clock Bar, as well as the many other queer bars and restaurants her family owned, including the Commerce Diner, City Line Diner, The White Elephant, The 400 Club, The Golden Coach, Orpheus, The Rose Garden, and The Candy Shop. She describes the homophobia of her peers and teachers at school and the welcoming environment her family cultivated at work and at home. She tells the story of The Clock Bar's 1965 raid and the jazz scene her family participated in. Sabrina shares the stories of some of her family's close friends who frequented the bars and restaurants, many of whom have since passed away.

BL: I'm going to hit record and.... So my name is Barry Loveland and I use the pronouns he/him/his and I am here on behalf of the LGBT Center of Central Pennsylvania History Project. And today's date is March 6, 2021 and I'm here for an oral history interview with Sabrina Dare-Bledsoe. This interview is taking place via Zoom from Sabrina's home in Harrisburg. And Sabrina, do we have your permission to record this interview today?

SD-B: Yes.

BL: Very good. And we have a consent form for you to sign and - and - or read over and complete and sign. And send back at the end of the interview -

SD-B: Okay.

BL: And we send that to you... via email. Okay, let's get started with the interview. First, if you could say and spell your full name so we have that for the transcription.

SD-B: Yeah. It's Sabrina Dare-Bledsoe, and it's S-A-B-R-I-N-A D-A-R-E and it's hyphenated B-L-E-D-S-O-E.

BL: Very good. And could you give your preferred pronouns too?

SD-B: I- Well, I've never been asked. But I'm glad you did. She and her. [laughs]

BL: Thank you. And I assume you - [chuckles] - I shouldn't assume anything. I'll ask you. How do you self identify in terms of sexual orientation?

SD-B: Well – I don't really know. But we'll just say straight. [laughs]

BL: [laughs] Okay.

SD-B: It depends, I'll just say. [laughs]

BL: Straight - straight ally, I think.

SD-B: Yeah.

BL: That'd be a good way to characterize it.

SD-B: Okay.

BL: So what is your date of birth and where were you born?

SD-B: April 18th, 1960 and I was born in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

BL: Okay... Now this is a little different from our standard interview because of the unique situation your family was involved in owning several LGBTQ bars in Harrisburg so I'd like to have you talk about your memories of that and... Let's start with your grandfather. What was your grandfather's name?

SD-B: George Dare.

BL: Okay, and this was your father's father, correct?

SD-B: Yes.

BL: Okay. So what are the earliest memories of your grandfather?

SD-B: Yeah, I only have a - had a picture of him when I was little. He died when I was very young. Like around three or four. And... I don't really have much memory of him. I know- they had - I've heard, like... things about him. Like he was involved as a gangster and stuff. And I know he had a lot of property in Harrisburg, owned a lot of things. He owned these businesses I learned as I got older, you know, who owned them. But... I just remember that picture of me sitting on his lap. And he was nice to me. So that's about all I know of him unfortunately. More with my grandma, Mary Dare, his wife.

BL: Were there - were there stories, though, that the family told about him that you can recall?

SD-B: Yeah, that he was a bootlegger. [chuckles] And... that was he was supposed to... bootlegger. And... owned a - that he was a good cook, and owned the restaurants and stuff. I don't really unfortunately know a lot. I'm going to be getting - I'm in touch with somebody else in my family, in fact, they just talked to me today, that might be able to give us some more. So I hope I can help you with that. [chuckles]

BL: Okay, good.... And so... Do you - do you remember hearing anything about... the motivation that he had for opening a bar?

SD-B: No, I don't... Unfortunately. Because my father ran the bar, but the - in fact, I'm as surprised as... I guess out of the... I don't know as much as-as-as you. Because when I saw - I just got that picture of my grandfather in front of the bar, and I didn't know that it was... I only thought of when my dad had it from the fifties and then in the sixties when I was a little girl. And so I was surprised that in the thirties - to see that picture of my grandfather, and I think that's very interesting... [chuckles] So he was out... might have been quite a character. I mean, not a character, but an interesting... I didn't mean that word. But an interesting person. So I did not know what went on with The Clock Bar- I don't know if it was called that in the thirties.

[video and audio buffering]

SD-B: But until I found that picture - who I was just speaking about - a relative when you gave me that picture. So hopefully I can find some more. I've been thinking of it a lot lately. Because I didn't hear much about Grandpa- Grandfather George Dare. Not that he was mean, though, he didn't like my mom, but he was nice. So I find that interesting. I'd like to find out more about that for-for the community. Yeah.

BL: Yeah, our research show that The Clock Bar opened in 1938... I went through the city directories in Harrisburg to find that out -

SD-B: Yeah.

BL: And so... yeah. It apparently... and I - I guess he was the first owner of the bar. So... yeah... so that was good.

SD-B: Yeah.

BL: And... did your - well, let's talk more about your father since your memories of your grandfather are kind of sketchy. But when... what are your memories of your father - what's your father's name, by the way?

SD-B: Stuart with a S-T-U-A-R-T Dare. Stuart Withero Dare. And... Those memories in The Clock Bar and with my dad was... probably when I was five the most. In 1965. And we would go

to The Clock Bar a lot. [laughs] My dad would make – unfortunately we lost a lot of our things and the pictures – my father passed away saving his sailboat and how the - all his pictures and the movies we had. He had all that. And my sister wanted to keep that and well, she would have, ‘cause we’re getting – my sister and I are meeting again soon. And I’m going to get some more pictures. But she begged my dad and he wouldn’t part with them and unfortunately they’re all gone. So we had these pictures – these movies – my dad used to let me and my mother was married before, so I had five – I’m sorry I keep looking at the [motioning to the camera] – five... four older brothers. And we would go into The Clock Bar and pretend we were drinking. [laughs] And my one brother would pretend he was bartending. And we’d be at the bar and we’d have these guys – I still picture them - these amazing movies in that, you know, midcentury modern bar. So that was... probably my first memory of it. And I remember the front door was really cool because it was the – one of the-the blocks that were made in Pittsburgh [Pennsylvania] or in Philadelphia, those clear blocks -

BL: Oh, glass blocks?

SD-B: Corning! Corning, right? Corning, I think it is. So that was the door. That door was so cool. And then being little – and my parents – and my dad being at the bar all the time. And he would always - I have these cool pictures of every New Year’s, he’d come home, and we lived on 2nd Street – in fact my house is still there. 1328 North 2nd St. And he would come home with these boxes of ... of the, you know, party favors from-from... New Year’s Eve. And we’d celebrate right after he got off. So and then, as I got a little older, maybe five... I was about five, then, or six then, while my dad was at the bar, I remember my mom always having these interesting guys over. I don’t want to say their names in case of – but one of them, I really remember his name, the other one I’m trying to remember. And they were gay and they were my mom’s friends and they would come over while my dad was working at The Clock Bar. And have dinner with my mom, and they’d discuss... you know, show-show movies and stuff, you know? Theater... And they both had great jobs, one of them was a court reporter, and the other one worked for the state. Another one worked in, I think, Philly or somewhere. And so I remember those memories... and then when my dad would come home, we’d have – we’d have – he would have dinner with my mom. They were all friends, these guys. And I have paintings here, I don’t know if you – I’ll show you another time, from these painters – these artists I’d like to look into – research too. Because they painted pictures of my mom - my sister just gave me that one - of my dad, of my brother when I was little. And these were all customers of The Clock Bar. So I find that interesting, maybe we could look into that more too... And then I remember... So... The stories my mom told me. And how she met my dad. She lived above The Clock Bar and the story – she was from England, and her first husband, she met in England and got married and moved to... Millersburg [Pennsylvania]. And then she moved to Harrisburg [Pennsylvania] above The Clock Bar. And she would tell me these great stories. [laughs] When my dad would be out doing other businesses – because he had the Commerce Diner and who-who- I really don’t know a lot of what - others – I’ll have to - I’m working into researching that. And so he’d come in and my mom would be – would be on the bar dancing with all her gay friends. [laughing] And doing show tunes and he’d say, “Marny, you have to quit drinking.” And she did. [laughs] I love

those stories! Yeah, they were great! So... that-that-that's from that point, and then I remember getting a little older and my mom telling me... So that was '65... But telling me – she'd – they always were real open with us, and telling me about the bar being- being raided. And even at an early – I'll start crying because I'm getting a little sentimental – at an early point, I never distinguished, until in high school, when someone said “Your dad's gay because he tucks his pants in his boots.” [laughs] I never distinguished – you know, just people. Same as people of... of diversity. My house was always filled with – my dad always had... I'll start crying, sorry. Always gave gay people jobs that were – back then, that was awful, they had the State Hospital. And we always had someone staying with us that he gave a job to. And we always had someone – like we had this really nice Black guy, Rufus, who was involved in our life all the time. And so that's... that's how my parents were. It was very interesting. And then they'd go to... New York on the weekends, do a lot of cultural stuff, and always had one of their gay friends with them. See, I remember another – this has nothing to do with the gay bar – but I remember being real little in 2nd Street and I had this little friend, and... and I guess my dad was babysitting me that day. And we played dress-up. And it was so cute. I can still think it – I dressed as a boy. And the little boy, I remember his name but I don't want to say it, but he wanted to dress as a girl. And my dad, he just - [shakes head] then, another, I think, ‘Wow, that was really cool of my dad! Anybody else would have freaked out, right?’ My dad probably thought it was adorable. So those are some good memories I have.

BL: Great. And... you mentioned about these paintings... Do you – you have them in your possession?

SD-B: Yeah. Do you want me to point one out now? [pointing behind her to the wall] Or another time?

BL: Well, that's okay, we can maybe towards the end of the interview, we can try and do that.

SD-B: Yeah, I have... yeah.

BL: And I was gonna say, it might be... good to... photograph them!

SD-B: Yeah, I do!

BL: And... then we could... possibly include some of those in the collection – the photographs.

SD-B: Yeah.

BL: Yeah.

SD-B: And then I just thought – spoke with the – I don't want to mention his name yet, but... someone – a relative – in fact, they just reached out to me today. But I kinda told 'em - you know, I have a Zoom interview with – about the family – and they have more stories. And we

just reconnected. And stuff like... I didn't know... he - the part of the family was... was involved with The Clock Bar too. So I'm looking into getting us a lot more information so I'm sure they could maybe give us some more information about Grandpa George Dare too. So -

BL: That's great.

SD-B: That's exciting, yeah.

BL: So... what do you remember about the appearance of The Clock Bar from - from when you were in there? Like, the interior décor and things like that.

SD-B: It had... the long bar that was real - you know, that long, mid-century modern bar. Tables. And that's... I'm sorry, that's all I remember. 'Cause I was very little. And... I was more at the Commerce Diner - and the diner - City Line Diner - but that's what I remember of The... The Clock Bar. Yeah.

BL: Okay. Do you recall if there were clocks in The Clock Bar? [chuckles]

SD-B: Yeah, I don't even remember looking- seeing clocks. I just remember... I barely - most things that interested me, because I was so little, was... Shirley Temples. [laughs] My dad would always make me a Shirley Temple. And we would pretend we were drunk. [laughs] That was it. And my brother - he even let us pretend we were smoking cigarettes. I remember George took it too far, my little brother - my older brother got busted. Those are most of my memories. I think my dad kept me - 'cause we were little, and my mom was at home then with us. So that's about all the memories... I remember going there and seeing - I remember the booths, you know, the décor. But it's a lot - my sister has a - well, she was too little - but she has a great memory. I'm gonna see if she remembers any more than I do. Gosh, her memory is better than mine. So, I'm sorry. My mom - you would've loved her, and she would've loved you - and I know a lot people say their mother was... my mom was amazing. And what a memory. And it's too bad - but they were giving her this for her memory. She had such stories, could've told us - you so much. But, oh well. I'm trying to do that in her place. [chuckles and sniffles]

BL: Let's see... so what role did your father play in the - in The Clock Bar? Was he the bar manager, bartender?

SD-B: He was the owner - yes! He did tend bar because somebody told me that's where he used to go and he was underage and Stuart - that was my dad, he used to serve them. And then my other uncle, I'm sure my - Mark, I know, he - he - he's happy that I'm doing this. His dad was my uncle George Dare, who - they were working. He and my dad worked together. In fact, Mark didn't know this, my mom dated George Dare before she dated - married my dad. So they both were bartenders, and then, I guess, it was - I'm trying to find out when it was called the White Elephant. Because I know there was a lot of jazz going on, and that was in the later sixties. I guess after the raid. Because I think what happened was it was sold but I think it was - still

stayed in the family. You know, that they got a new liquor license, because that's what I remember a lot of. The White Elephant.

BL: Well, we have – we've documented the kind of succession of bars in that location. The next bar that opened was called The 400 Club.

SD-B: Okay, maybe that's what it was called. I don't -

BL: I believe ya, and I believe that was your family owned that as well.

SD-B: Oh, okay. Yeah, I remember that name now and then I don't know where The White Elephant – maybe that was just a nickname. Was there any – did you ever find anything on that?

BL: No, but I think I've heard that was a bar at a different location -

SD-B: Was it? Oh, okay. Okay.

BL: So I've got to do a little bit more research on that, I guess -

SD-B: Yeah, my relative would be able to tell me that too. I'm going to be meeting with him for lunch so, we'll find out all about that. But yeah, I always thought The White – then when I started reading your book and reading things that you did, I was like, "Oh! The 400 Club, yeah!" So yeah, that was the jazz bar there. Or maybe they had both at that time. So yeah, my dad ran the place. He was always in and out, in a funny – my dad was a handsome, amazing man. And he walked in one day and my mom was at the bar and she was with the – her guys – her squad [chuckles] and he walked in and he had just shaved his head and he said, "Don't I look like Yul Brynner?" [laughs] to my mom. And they said, "Marny, he's in love with you!" That was her nickname, my mom's name was Maureen, so. Her – her friends told her that. Yeah. [laughs] And then, they got married, so thought that was a good story. [laughs] So yeah, he was always in and out, doing, he - when I was little, he would be going, stopping at the... the... when places went out of business, he would buy furniture and stuff. Or – or ordering the supplies. Soda, ice. I remember going to a place I think on Cameron St. or somewhere? Somewhere to get ice for the bar. I remember those memories. I was travelling a lot in with my dad. I was my dad's girl, so, I remember that, yeah. [chuckles]

BL: You mentioned to me before the interview about... that your dad also was a musician of sorts?

SD-B: Yes.

BL: And that he... a number of jazz artists would stop into the bar and he would jam... session with them?

SD-B: Yeah, he did.

BL: Talk – talk a little bit about your memories of that. _____???

SD-B: Yeah, he played the bongos and my sister just gave me some great slides that I'm gonna get developed of him with the bongos... But sorry to go off the subject, but we are going to her storage soon, she wants me to help her. So hopefully I can find some more – so he played the bongos and then he had a buddy Rich, who was a drummer, used to come there and play. And I remember stories of him because my brother got in trouble for being on his drums and my dad said he was always an asshole. Mean, buddy Rich was. And... Stan Kenton and then there – I'm trying to find out - my-my cousin, I'm gonna ask him. I wish my mom was here. The name of a very famous jazz player and it just slipped my mind, that used to come over after he would be in town and I'll - trying to – it can't be Glen Miller, it's somebody else. I can't remember who – who it is. I'll work on that too. So yeah he was – they was – he was very popular and there was a family – I don't know if I can mention peoples' names – another family, that house is still on Front Street. And... he was a jazz player too and that house is still there. It's something maybe off the record I could give you – we could find out about them. And he played, jammed with my dad too. So maybe that family we could get back in touch with. Which is interesting since I put that picture up on – on the Facebook, a lot of people reaching out. So... you know, that are more – lot of memories to share. Yeah.

BL: Well, good. Yeah, we had gotten some information... about the... The Clock Bar that it was a jazz club at some point in its history... or at least had some live jazz music -

SD-B: Yeah.

BL: So, that was from the – the – there was a book in... the Dauphin County Historical Society that was a history of the jazz -

SD-B: Oh?

BL: - age in Harrisburg. So it talks a little bit about The Clock Bar. So..

SD-B: Oh, that's cool. Thanks, I'll have to check that out too. [chuckles]

BL: So, let's talk about the bar raid and what sort of... stories you'd heard about that. And that would – that was in 1965.

SD-B: Yeah. [takes a deep breath] That one I'd heard because then I got older and my mom would talk to me more and... that – these were her friends too. 'Cause that's where she met – met – yeah, didn't know my dad yet, I believe, before she lived above – yeah, that's right, she started dating my uncle. And she'd hang out and she was the life of the party. Listened to jukebox. You know, they'd dancing and stuff. And then... Well, then she started going out with my dad and I

remember the story them telling me that... the liquor control board came in and had been – had been... what is it? Scoping it... keeping an eye, you know? I can't think of the word. You know. Casing the joint! We'll say that, right? [chuckles] Casing the joint. And then one night they said that they raided it and this all the story I have – but before they raided it, they went in the men's room, at least one of them did, and... propositioned – or the other – and got a, you know, something happened in the men's room. And then that night they raided 'em. So that's the only story I know about that. I know – in fact, I'm interested to see that you had known – you had wrote about that. So I'm gonna find out some more. I'll try to. [chuckles] And then... I don't remember, it closing or whatever, I think my dad just took over, start – worked at the diner more. And then... then I heard about the jazz. Then, you know, the jazz came and got involved in my life. But my parents were still friends with all of the – their- their friends. You know, they still continued to come to our house and stuff, yeah.

BL: And... do you know if they had ever mentioned about the bar being raided before that? Was that the first time? Or was that...

SD-B: That's the only memory I know. I mean, maybe, it has but that's all I – that's the only one I heard. You know, maybe when... before... but, when my grandfather, but I don't know much about that era at all.

BL: Did your father or mother ever talk about... what happened to some of the bar patrons who were arrested or... or whatever?

SD-B: No... no. I don't remember. [shaking head] Yeah.

BL: Do you remember them talking about anything the rules they had to follow about serving patrons back then?

SD-B: No, sorry, I don't.

BL: Okay... So... what other bars do you recall that your family owned?

SD-B: Then we had... I know we had the diners too. But then we had... the... I'm trying to think if there's anything in between that, I don't think so. Then we had The Golden Coach, it was a restaurant. And that was in the seven... seventies. I don't remember if that was in the sixties. Yeah, I think, yeah, in the sixties we lived on Second Street. And didn't have The Golden Coach then. And my dad was always, I guess, at the 400 Club or the City Line Diner. I was involved in the City Line Diner a lot. And... then we opened up The Golden Coach because my parents – that's where – we'd been in the Bahamas and my dad saw a salad bar, so he put a salad bar in [laughs] at The Golden Coach. So we had that as a restaurant for a few years. And then I remember my mom waking me up, I was about fifteen, in the middle of the night, and her and my dad had been out. They said, "we're changing – Sabrina wake up! We just met this person - "

I don't wanna mention his name – Bust – that's... no, anyways, they'd been to a place. I think it might have been called The Underground? In Harrisburg? Have you heard that? Or...

BL: [disagreeing noises]

SD-B: Okay, I'll have to look in there. I thought – I keep wanting to say The Underground... and they'd been there and it was real late. And so they go, “We're changing The Golden Coach. We met this fabulous guy, we're changing The Golden Coach the restaurant into a disco.” And I was like, “oh, okay!” It sounded fabulous. [laughs] You know? So that's what we did. Right away... It was the most – thinking about it now, what a great childhood, teenager years I had. You know, I couldn't believe it... They came in, all these wonderful handsome, gay men and just took over. And we had this amazing chandelier, I've some pictures, but I'm gonna work out getting some more. We'd been to Italy, my mom was from England so we went there a few times, and my dad remember being in a boutique in Italy and they had these giant chandeliers. And my dad bought one. So he came back [laughs] to Harrisburg, and it was so big they had to cut off like a lot of it. Like about ten feet. And then they hung it up in the restaurant. So anyways, when the gay bar – when the – well, it was changing to a disco. So I don't wanna say gay, it was a mixed crowd... when it changed to The Golden Coach – there was one guy, a good friend of mine, he's so sweet him and his brother, they... hooked up the gels in the lights and so they turned that into – the light show. And put the parquet floor on and moved the tables out... Put the – got the Mylar, covered the windows so people couldn't see in and out. And that turned into a disco. And then I was the hat check girl, my mom worked the door. And it was just amazing. It was a mixed crowd... I met all – that's – before it was my mom's friend[s] but that's when I had all these great gay friends. Girls and guys... dancing and I was like the mascot. They'd bring me ice cream sundaes and... it was just amazing, it was wonderful. Halloween, dressed up in drag with a - I remember one guy with a moustache and a... peacock feathers [motioning to her head to mimic a headdress] It was a great time. Let's see and... so that was The Golden Coach. Oh! We turned the – the fireplace into the DJ booth. Oh man, was that ever cool! [laughs]

BL: [agreeing noises]

SD-B: So most everyone who worked there was gay... except for, you know, once in a while my brother would work there. But I was there all the time. 'Cause I just loved it. [chuckles] And my mom worked the door. And then there was this... mixed crowd, and it wasn't - you know, there was no... judgement or any problems. You know, everyone just got along and everyone was there to have fun and dance. There were some crazy things my dad had to get involved in but that was just people trying to get in that were... were mean, you know? But nothing... I don't remember – recall any... any... how do we say it? You know, race or racial... anything like that... discrimination or anything like.. Now I heard it in school. When I went to school one day, all my friends said, “Sabrina, Sabrina, they're talking - teacher talking about your dad.” And I remember I went in there – I was very bold when I was back then. [laughs] Now I'm such a mellow person. And I went in and he was bringing up, I guess my dad was on this radio show. Which I'd like to find about that too. And they would talk about my dad a lot, it was like a live

talk - you know, like that that guy who just passed away [Rush Limbaugh]. One of those type of shows. And he was always talking about my dad – which I didn't know. And he was talking about - they said, "Yes, Sabrina, he's in – the teachers in there are talking about your dad and the gay bar and being a gay." And I went in there, I'm trying to remember what I said. But I said... I just said... I think I just stood up and said, "You know, you don't even know my parents. And it doesn't matter if my Pa is gay or not." You know? I don't think you'd be able to go there! [laughs] So, I do remember that a lot. And a lot of things in the town we lived in. 'Cause we moved from Harrisburg to Dauphin because we got a fabulous house. But they were kind of... a lot of them didn't understand my parents. And so they would say, "Oh, your dad's gay because he tucks his pants in his boots." Back then we just thought that was funny, you know. Like, oh my god, right? [laughs] So yeah. That was an amazing time, The Golden Coach. And then my parents, with the person who opened the – The Coach with them, it's George Smith. That's who it is. I'm not talking to him right now, but anyways. He... we would open clubs all over and my parents would go like on the weekend to Washington, 'cause he opened one up there, Washington Square... When I was fifteen, I think, or sixteen, I got to go to Studio 54. And that was fun, with my mom and dad and they opened the rope and we walked right in. [laughs] So that – then we had The Golden Coach and then – remember the guy, our friend R-Ronnie Bourgo [ph] who opened up Class One. He wanted to buy The Golden Coach. He was obsessed with it, so instead of buying it, I don't know what happened, he opened Class One. And... Then, now, as I got older, I look back and see how... the attention span of a nightclub doesn't last long. You know. So it had already, you know, had had a good run for like two years and I remember – I still have weird nightmares about that too, of it being empty. Because it was so sad. 'Cause you're going from this packed thing to – the music and everything – to gone and everyone stopped going. So... then they sold that and then – well, one of our friends who had worked with us, Jeff McDonald, and his sister Jill McDonald, she was gay. He was cool. And then he had another brother who was straight – Jeff McDonald - and my dad – I think Jeff did most of the work – I believe. Got the club on Front Street, called Orpheus, I believe. And that was an after-hours place. That was pretty... that was gay. And it was kinda wild. [laughs] It was. And I have pictures of my mom with Danny Hartman in there. And we'd go in there afterwards. It was nice – it was fun, though, because my parents weren't working. So we'd just go there and hang out and you know, partake in the seventies stuff. So – no! Then in between that there was another one. That's right, that they opened up, but I don't - I think it just didn't - it was only open for maybe a weekend. It was called The Rose Garden. And that was near Derry Street, and I keep thinking, trying to find where that was. But that was really cool, and that was – but it didn't last. It didn't - I don't think anyone showed up. But I remember, because I'm an artist, a painting... murals of the Wiz – no... of Alice In Wonderland! And all these really neat – all these old chairs in there, and it was all mid-century modern. And they opened that up but it didn't last long. So... I-I don't know what happened. The liquor license or nobody showed up, so my dad just, you know, so... that never amounted to anything... So yeah, Orpheus. And that's about it for Harrisburg. Then my dad and mom – because we were in the seventies, and we partied a lot, my mom – it's funny now I'm older. God, I moved back in with my mom and she always blamed my dad for everything but my mom made the decisions. [laughs] It was her who woke me up and said, "We're changing The Golden Coach!" It was her to say, "Oh, we're selling The Coach and

we're buying a sailboat and moving to Florida." And that's what we did and moved to Florida and lived on a sailboat. And went to The Monster in Key West. We took the - had the boat out in Key West. Oh, that was fun. [laughs] That was fun. Yeah, that's all about I have right now on that. I mean, I'm gonna work into some more, and I can set up with a good relationship now with my sister. And I'm going to her... storage and dig around. And get some pictures and stuff.

BL: Okay, good... Do you recall where The Golden Coach was located?

SD-B: Yeah, Linglestown Road.

BL: Okay... Do you know whereabout on Linglestown Road?

SD-B: Yeah, and I do have a couple old faded pictures of that. And I think my sister has more. Yeah, and my sister just sent me the card. [drawing the shape of a rectangle in the air] The... business card of it! Yes, it's... the lot is still there. There's something built there now but it was right next to 3B's [3B Ice Cream], you know, where Arooga's is there. That corner. So -

BL: Okay.

SD-B: - we loved 3B's. And at that time it was really neat because there was a - behind there - there was like a pond, and we were just little kids then when it was the restaurant when my dad wasn't making us work. He did make us work a lot, I'm glad. [chuckles] And... we were getting tadpoles and stuff. And then there was - it was weird, there was an A - A-frame there. And somebody came and got that, bought that, for a helicopter and took it off - took it away. And then next door to the... The Golden Coach, was a beauty parlor. And it was attached. [laughs] Some shady stuff happened there. If you want me just to tell you. I mean, I don't care, it's something to share... you know? [chuckles]

BL: Okay.

SD-B: You wanna hear it? So, next door was a beauty parlor. And I remember going in there, and... 'cause we were always with my parents, always. And taking my sister, dragging her in there - and as I got older, it's like, "there was never any customers in there!" No one was ever getting their hair done. [chuckles] Well, I always find this stuff, always explore, I found these negligees and put them on and my sister. Came into The Golden Coach and my dad had a fit. So, then, as I got older, a few years later... that place got raided. They got raided and closed down. It was... call girls. And - but the politicians from the state, it was kind of kept it in the dark because of the people, clientele that were going there. They were from the state. So... [laughs] Then I look back and, "no wonder he didn't want me having those negligees on." [laughs] So yeah. So yeah. That was that _____ ??? I don't think it even had a name. It had the set up for it, to get your hair done, but I never saw anyone getting a hair cut. [laughs]

BL: [chuckles] Okay... and... let's see... Orpheus. You mentioned that bar.

SD-B: Yeah.

BL: And where was that located?

SD-B: That was on Front Street... I drive by there... occasionally and it's strange seeing that area... because that was a party heavy area – seventies time, for us, in our life. That's why we left to go to Florida. "It's time to get away." But it was... it's not there now. So I'm trying to think, now what's that one? It's... like there was, was it The Purple Onion that was up there? I don't know. So it's like about past McDonald's – well, they moved McDonald's. So the old McDonald's. So it's on Front Street on the way – right before – because then we had an antique shop too, the building's still there. What's that? Rockville, is it called?

BL: Mmhm. [agreeing noises]

SD-B: Yeah, so it was right before that. Just a small place that had a... I have some pictures of that. Of the inside, not the outside unfortunately. But Jeff McDonalds was the DJ there. And.. It was done with the aluminum wall, just had a dance floor, and a back room that was really bad. [laughs] Guys had a lot of fun in that back room. Okay. [chuckles]

BL: Okay, was the... was it near The Glass Lounge or -

SD-B: Yeah! Yes, that's what I was gonna say! The Glass Lounge. Yeah, it was near that.

BL: Okay.

SD-B: It was just a one story. No... something was upstairs there. No, it was two stories. I remember being up – yeah, it was two stories. And then there was a back room too. Yeah, that stuff went on. [chuckles] It was fun though. And..

BL: Because, you know, there was also the D-Gem up there.

SD-B: Yes! I remember the D-Gem. Now was that the – did girls go there? Was that more a girls bar?

BL: Yeah.

SD-B: Yeah, I've been there too. Yeah, I went there.

BL: It wasn't - it wasn't that building?

SD-B: No, it wasn't. No, no this building's torn down for sure. It's right before... okay, the – the - The Glass Lounge is still open, right? You can go there and eat?

BL: Yeah.

SD-B: Because my friend who lives near me is a bartender there. So it's... it's not too much farther than that. Of course, on that side. And yeah, it's gone. It was a pretty beat up... because we were like, "eughhh" when we were opening – because we had gone down from The Golden Coach to that. [chuckles] But, you know, it is what it is. It was dumpy, you know. Yeah, so, it's not there anymore. And unfortunately, my dear friend, Jeff McDonalds, he's been gone for a long time.

BL: Let's see... if there's another... Oh, talk a little bit about The Commerce Diner then.

SD-B: Yeah, I was real little then. My friend, he could give us some good stories, but... I'm not talking to him right now. But I – which I didn't notice at all – "The Commerce Bar was the - the best, your dad was so smart," This is my friend [saying this] who opened The Coach, this is George. "Your dad was so smart after... the –" Everyone would be at The Clock Bar and then the hookup would be The Commerce Bar. And that was right up the street, and so that's where everyone would go and hookup afterwards. You know, meet their, whoever they wanted to – relationship or whatever. And I was just a little girl at that time so I just remember going there and... I was real little, like four or five. So just going there and having cheeseburgers and... [chuckles] Was gonna be in a parade, I remember, but my dad – I forget what happened there. I just remember that. [chuckles] So yeah, that's about all I know. I'm trying to find – I wish, like I said, my dad must've had all those pictures. I remember what it looked like vaguely, you know, it was a small place with the booths and the little... Jukeboxes at the table. In fact, my dad would bring me – that's where I got into music – he would bring me all the records. I remember the first one I liked was Rolling Stones. [chuckles] And he would bring me all those when they'd change the records out. And that was like, '65, I'd say. Unfortunately that's all I know about The Commerce Bar. And then we opened up another place... on the Clay Street, that was Candy Shop, like a soda fountain bar. And that didn't last long. And then my brother, my dear brother from my mom's first husband, he had... a pool hall there. Which I'm finding out more about now too. I don't even know the name of it, but it was like "oh yeah, that place was great! Your brother had the pool hall." Yeah, I remember that. The candy store, I loved it. So yeah, that's all the Commerce [Bar], City Line Diner I know a little more about.

BL: Was the City Line Diner some place that gay people went or was it more -

SD-B: I think -

BL: - or just a ____???

SD-B: - it was just a diner, yeah. I think it was just a diner. I do remember, though, that, kind of an interesting story. I was... eleven. And for some reason a man got in a fight with my dad, and he said, it was my first day waitressing too, he says, "I'm gonna tell your... tell the, you know,

the county or whatever about her working here underage!” Well then, this guy, that was in ‘71, and then in ‘76... I remember his name too, Butch, he was – became boyfriends of one of our good friends who did my mom’s hair. And I was like, back then he was like this mean horrible, and I was like, ‘aww’ he was such a nice guy. And he was gay and I didn’t know. [laughs] I don’t know what about he got mad [with] my dad about. So he... my dad was not... like I said, I think they kept a lot of things that they didn’t talk about. You know, so they wouldn’t - not because he was embarrassed, because he didn’t want people to get in trouble or closed down, you know. It was like that, so it was all kinds of things on that guy but always be dressed in Pendletons and some guy would be at the back of the door with all these clothes. But I didn’t know about, you know, only just – so, you know, and plus I was little. I’m sure other people knew this story – my mom, unfortunately, knew all of ‘em. Yeah. So wish I could be more help.

BL: Is your – is your mom passed away or...

SD-B: Yeah, yeah she passed away in... let’s see, I moved back to Pennsylvania in... 2011 and I was glad I was able to be with her. And she passed away in... 2014. Yeah, 2014. And she had so many stories. Gosh. But my sister has a memory like her and she has things we should have recorded my mom. But you never think – I know you don’t want to do that because you don’t want to think that they’re gonna leave. But in fact, she found some poems that my mom has. So she has a good memory, my sister, so she might be able to... just stuff that’s like, “how do you even know all that?” She’s more like my mom in that way. So I’ll work on that and she’s doing really good. So we’re gonna be hooking up soon. I wish I could share more but I’m working on it! [laughs]

BL: Well, what was your mother’s name?

SD-B: Maureen. Maureen Goodman, from England. But they called her Marty. And that name started at The Clock Bar and I don’t know why. “Hey Marty!” And then they were gonna call The Golden Coach “Dirty Marty”. [laughs] So yeah. Yeah.

BL: Do you remember much about the patrons of the bar? Well, was it mostly – well, at least start with The Clock Bar, I guess... Was it mostly men at that point? Were there women that would come there? And also, what about people of color? Black people and so on...

[Extended silence from Zoom lag.]

SD-B: A lot of people that would come to my mom’s house, I told you, my mom said, “Oh, they’re friends from The Clock Bar.” And they were – there was two gentleman, and they didn’t come together. And they were two gay men that would come and so I knew them. I really didn’t know the clientele there. So I couldn’t - I don’t want to say something I don’t know something about. Yeah...

BL: What about some of the other bars -

SD-B: And then... I have a lot pictures of The Golden Coach and I'm getting more. And that was always a diverse crowd and there was – there was girls that were bisexual, I remember that. Well, because my mother was, okay? [laughs] So yeah, that's a lot. That's my mom. And.. A couple gay girls, but they were like in love with me, I remember that. [laughs] And they – it [the club] was too frilly for them, they'd go to D-Gem. And they took me there too and I was underage... Well – a lot of – I don't think it was some nights gay, some nights straight, I think it was always that way. But I do believe... well, I think the gay guys just started moving out of Harrisburg and wanted – wanted more of a, more of their crowd. Because I do remember some complaints, "Oh, it's getting too straight." I do remember that. And that made me so sad! [laughs] Yeah. But... but that was all – interracial couples, I don't know if we still say that these days. Do we say interracial? Because I don't want to be doing the wrong – saying the wrong thing... and I have pictures of my mom and dad, you know – you know, they never judged them. In fact, back to The City Line Diner, the partner of my dad's... Dick! Married Yong [sp?] a lady from Vietnam. And she was wonderful. And she babysat us all the time and taught my mom how to make kimchi. So I was always around – and then there's a sad story about The City Line Diner, I could tell you that. I might as well just go in there now. There was a girl named Cookie who worked there, who my mom became friends with. And... she had a girlfriend who was in jail and my mom kinda took this guy – there was a little, oh yeah, there was a little shack like place – my place is kinda like a shack now that I think of it. [laughs] Small! But it was a little tiny place where someone lived, right behind The City Line Diner. And Cookie and this girl lived there and then this girl went to jail. And she was trying to get away from her because she was abusive. And I remember, me being nosy, finding all these letters up in Dauphin in our – we had a big, like, mansion, I guess. From this person to Cookie. And I don't remember if this is from before this happened or not, oh yeah, I think it's happened – so anyways, I was out front in the car and Cookie's - the girl got out on patrol [parole]. And they were gay and I don't know if I mentioned that. They were lovers. And Cookie got out on patrol and I was in the car and the parole officer was there and she killed the girl, Cookie, and stabbed the parole officer with a fork. Yeah. So it was – I'm sad that that happened but ____?? My parents were always very open and always tried to do the right thing. And that was really sad, I was about like, ten or about – probably less than that. Ten. I was sat in the car and I don't know if my mom was in the car, but I think she went in the diner to tell my dad what was going on. And in a split second she was murdered. Yeah. And that was... yeah, there was some couple – I guess that was my first... memory of two gay girls But my mom never explained it, I never even thought to think about it, you know? [laughs] But yeah. So that was sad. And then... that happened. Now that we're talking about it, more things are coming back to my head, you know? [chuckles]

BL: You mentioned a little bit about like when you were in school and kids would talk about different things about your family. What – do you recall any stories about that in terms of – of... How did they know that you had family that were involved in gay bars and stuff? Did they -

SD-B: I don't - yeah, I think it was that talkshow. Because... I – I don't know. I know a lot of my girlfriends hung up – hung out with me and see, I – I was always more – my sister was more

intuitive. And I was very naïve. And I thought everyone got along and I didn't know these stories too that I had... well, guys that had hung out, just friends – I'd have big parties, it was fun. I was the party host. Well, I find out they stopped coming up to our house because they found out that – so-and-so was gay and my parents let him up there. So things like that, I was a bit naïve and not knowing – not kown a lot. Except for that one time when – I do remember my teacher talking about my dad. And I went and told him off. I don't remember what I said, but I told him off. So my girl – my friends always thought I was cool. And I guess I was kinda cool having that! [laughs] My parents came to the – the school and smoked pot with us. They were crazy. On our last day. [laughs] So yeah... nothing else luckily. I think things are not as mean as they got, you know what I mean? I don't think it was – or judged. I know a couple of my teachers came in there, you know? And I remember that. Because the teacher said, "Oh, you - you stopped eating ice cream." And I'm like, 'What a weirdo! Why were you even looking at me then?' You know? [chuckles] 'Cause he thought I lost weight. But yeah I remember the teachers coming in and so they were quite interested. But I didn't hear too much negative stuff about that. And I'm from the family – my parents – my grandparents – they don't dwell on that kind of things, you know? And if they did talk about it, it was little – but most everything was talked about with me.

BL: You mentioned a little bit about some other relatives you had that were involved, sort of peripherally with the bars and stuff. Maybe just touch again -

SD-B: Yeah.

BL: - to...

SD-B: Sorry, can you stop a minute?

BL: Sure. Let me just pause the video -

SD-B: Okay.

BL: - real quick.

SD-B: I'm gonna take the dog out!

BL: Oh, okay.

SD-B: Okay? Wait, sorry! [laughs]

BL: That's okay.

SD-B: [off-screen] Hold on, Tucker. Come on. Come on little dog. Alright, let me get the boots.

[video cuts off and restarts with Sabrina Dare-Bledsoe on screen again]

SD-B: My cousin's wife got in touch with me and they wanted to... meet me! For lunch! And they told me – he - we haven't talked on the phone -

[video cuts off and restarts again]

BL: Alright, we're back recording and... we're going to wrap up the interview right now with Sabrina Dare-Bledsoe. Thank you so much, Sabrina, for agreeing to be interviewed -

SD-B: Sure.

BL: You've got some fascinating stories to share about your family's history with the gay bars in the area. So we may try and... do another interview again with you in the future. And we thank you again for – for -

SD-B: Okay. Thank you.

BL: - for doing this.

SD-B: Thank you.

BL: Yep. Alright, great. Bye-bye!

SD-B: Is it over now? Because I wanted to tell you something.