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**Title:** LGBT Oral History: Joseph W. Burns

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**Interviewee: Joe Burns**
Interviewer: Lonna Malmsheimer
Date of Interview: May 24th, 2013
Location of Interview: Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania
Transcriber: Chalise Saunders
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**Abstract:**

From the time Joe Burns came out as gay at around 27 years of age, he was involved in gay activism. He was a part of many organizations that have helped to move gay rights forward, including the Mattachine Society and Le-Hi-Ho. He donated his entire library of gay-related books to Le-Hi-Ho before retiring from his activism career, and he donated books to the LGBT archives at the Waidner-Spahr Library at Dickinson College as well. This interview focuses on his memories of activism in the early years of the Gay Liberation Movement just before and just after the Stonewall riots of 1969. He finishes this interview with an emotional recollection of the Christopher Liberation Day Parade in 1970.

[The first 45 seconds are discussion of the camera and microphone.]

**LM**: Okay, so here we are. It is May 24th, 2013—is that possible? May 24th, 2013, and here we are in Boiling Springs [Pennsylvania] and Lonna Malmsheimer is interviewing Joe Burns for the LGBT History Project. Joe, do you agree to be interviewed?

**JB**: Yes, certainly I did. And I'm very happy to be—

**LM**: Good. We're gonna do a little bit different kind of interview this time because Joe's real well prepared and knows where he wants to start. So, why don't you tell us what you want to tell us?

**JB**: Okay, so what I want to talk about first was a little bit of the beginning. Okay, I came out in 1967 and became active in 1969, and I wanna make that clear, that that was a very different time and that was also the beginning of what effectively became the Gay Liberation Movement… in that period. I'd like to talk about that, because I think it's very distinctly different, and it's the period that I describe and the period in which I lived, and it fit neatly between two periods—fit between 1969, when in fact the Stonewall Riots occurred, and '80, when I went away. And what happened in '80, of course, is that we began to have the onset of AIDS and that whole [gestures with hand] was the 'gay cancer scare' thing at just the point which I left the States. So, it was a good breaking point. After this, I always say that after the first AIDS case, everything we had done simply became irrelevant. Everything that had been gay liberation simply went away and it had to because we had to address this incredible question of survival…of AIDS, and how to get through this, and how to address it, and how to get people educated, just wiped it out. So, it was a very different time in '67, when I came out. I went to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania—my sister took me there as a matter of fact, and ostensibly I was going to go to school, I had been to Moravian College prior to this… and I didn't graduate. And so I went back and I told everybody

I was going to go back to school and went out there in Jan—in time for school. I did not matriculate, as a matter of fact, I was away from home, which is what I wanted to be, I was 27 years old, I was born in 1940 so I was 27 then, and wanted very much to be away and be my own person. Didn't have a way to do that and so I kind of used this, this excuse, to get out. It was fine. Whenever I didn't go to school, the next day I went down to the bookstore and bought all of the copies I could find on—on—on anything about to do with homosexual. Now, I had done that before, so this wasn't the first time I had done this. They had excellent, excellent books at Moravian Bookstore in Bethlehem that I liked very much. And I was able to find books there. And I wouldn't have expected that because it was a church bookstore called the Moravian Church Bookstore. And—and it had the—

[LM stops him and adjusts his mic]

**LM**: Okay, so Moravian Bookstore.

**JB**: The next thing I did was the next day— I'm—don't—let's not even talk about the particular time, but I went to the library and said—tried to look up the Mattachine Society, had no idea how to find it, got a librarian, and she found that for me, the Mattachine Society of New York. I knew that it existed because in…'63, I believe it was, which was [waves hand] what, four years beforehand? I had seen a program with Mike Wallace, and he was interviewing with homosexuals and he, in fact, showed the door of the Mattachine Society in New York. I wanna be there. I wanted very much—that's all I knew about that, I had that—that was my key. I knew something I knew I wanted to do. So the first thing I did, of course, was join Mattachine Society in—in New York, was the East C—West Coast, was one in Los Angeles [California] that was the big organization on the West Coast, Mattachine—sorry, not Mattachine, but SIR [Society for Individual Rights] in San Francisco [California] was founded in '65, I believe, and that was another big organization out there. So I—if I couldn't do anything else, I gave them my money. In Philadelphia [Pennsylvania], there was—there were three organizations, it was the Homophile—[closes eyes and holds up a finger, pondering] Homophile Active League—Homophile Action League. This is why we're getting this. And then there were two others, it was the Janus Society, which I knew about, which was operated by a fellow by the name of Cray—[closes eyes and tries to remember] darn, I was afraid I was gonna forget his name… Leave it for the moment. I will think of his name. [Thinking about Clark Polak] He operated *Drum,* which was actually a physique magazine. And what—the thing about that was, it was for leather guys, but it was the only thing that I knew of that really had news about what was happening, in terms of the movement, what was happening within the gay community. It was one of the few things I knew about: the Janus Society did not have a newsletter that I knew of. The other organization was…same address…League of… it was a legal thing, but I can't…

**LM**: Homophile Action League?

**JB**: Right off the top of my head, I can't remember. No, it was…a legal fund of some sort. At any rate, it had the same address. And that's where I went. Okay, first, I went to Philadelphia, went to the address, went up to the second floor, and turns out this person was practically a pornographer with—doing *Drum* and that's what was clearly, when you walked in the place, it became very clear that this was what it was because there were shelves in back and all this

pornography. But he was an important part of that whole scene. So those were—and those were basically what was around, of course, New York Mattachine was very important, and that was the one that I really considered my home.

**LM**: Well, pornography was pretty important, wasn't it?

**JB:** Oh, very much so! Very much so. It hel—especially when we realized—I went to—one of the points I went to libraries—was that I went to the five libraries in Bethlehem's area, this would have been Moravian College, Lehigh University, Muhlenberg College, Lafayette College, and St. Francis De Sales, a little Catholic college off in Allentown [Pennsylvania], there were no books that I could find in the college catalog, in the card catalog, that started with the word homosexual. There were no books. There were no books on gay, which was a new term to me. I didn't know gay when I started, actually. I'm not sure when I was even comfortable with the term "gay". It was foreign to me for a long time. It took me a while to get used to that whole—that whole term. And I didn't know it until I kinda moved away and began to learn when I was away from home that it wasn't homosexual, and I began to value the difference between homosexual and gay. Homosexual is the old word, it was the word that was laden very heavily with all the freight of people could put onto it. Lesbian was that kind of term to me, too, and it is to this day, and I've never been comfortable with "lesbian," because it's always carried that old freight. And—but—so gay was what I knew, and gay is what I called myself all this time, and it always been a term that for me that included women, and I think it did largely for the people who were then involved. That they included women, but they did it under the gay term. And that was an important distinction to them. They were—the movement, especially then, was, in fact, male. There was no question about it—it was a separate group in the Daughters of Bilitis in San Francisco, who were very important in their own right. Barbara Gittings had been editor of the letter, and when she came east to do this other business in Philadelphia, she was no longer the editor—I don't think she was the editor, but she was sorta the most prominent person. [clears throat] So I came forth from this very male atmosphere, there's no question about the fact that it really, really was. And…it stayed that way for a long time. I brought [reaches down out of view] a couple of books with me that I just want to read, not just show, and not—not solely refer to that were about gay liberation. *Under the Rainbow* was written by a person who was there in the collective, this was also another person who was in the same place. [holds up two books] These guys were in New York and that was a very different experience. In New York was where they were really able to do it. [gestures with hands] It was all through a collective, they lived their lifestyle very, very free, and they were talking about the fact that we are so free that we can't even relate to the rest of you. We don't know—we think all we have to do is walk out the door and be ourselves, and they thought they were gonna change the world. Well, obviously it didn't happen, and they got very frustrated, they got frustrated and forgot the rest of us, too, and had to pick that up, that, you know, boy, we were leading—we were living our lifestyle that's so free. That has never been before because we never have—we have been out of contact, remember we couldn't contact each other. That world in '69 was—or in '67 was a very isolated place. And I was strictly isolated. I came from a hometown of 20,000-30,000 people. I didn't know anybody that was gay, until just a little short time before I left—finally met my first, you know, really solid gay person… [gestures with hands] ten years after I should have, okay. I'm talking, now we're 27. I had my first sexual experience when I was 13, didn't have any more until I was 23. Had to leave home to have it. And I didn't have anymore, until again, I was 27. So I actually

went away and learned about it—there was a gay bar that I knew of in town—in Allentown called Rube's (ph) and that was another place that I had—that was another part of my education was reaching out to Rube's, a gay bar, the only outlet I knew about was… and for many reasons that was important for me to find people who were actually gay, because you could trust them—you could trust them there. Anywhere else you had to establish by various means that somebody was gay, that you could talk to them, or you could come out to them, you could just listen to them, all kind of things. But very difficult process. The gay bars really facilitated that process, but it was the only place that was really that kind of safe. Nowhere in the rural area was that true, okay? It certainly wasn't true for me in where I was in Butler, Pennsylvania…

[LM and the camera person talk about how he's talking with his hands more than they can capture with their camera angle, adjust camera, etc.]

**JB**: There are two things that people tell me that I do, is switch subjects too quickly which I feel like I'm doing right now. And, two, that I simply wander. I—I just—

**LM**: Well, you started out giving us background and that's what you're working yourself through, your first years as being an out person. This is a question we would have asked.

**JB**: Absolutely, I would hope so. Because, as I said, it was a very different—a very, very different time. It wasn't...the organization of gay life that I knew and that I experienced, and this was even after I came out was that there were [folds hands] circles of people [gestures with hands before folding them again], circles of males in particular, who were governed by a queen bee, and the queen bee was the person who really was the social leader of that particular group. It might be any number of people, it may be two or three people, it might be five or six, it might be eight or nine, it might—and there were secondary groups, [circles with pointer finger] there were groups that were associated, but there was a queen bee that would, and they were a very important—very important part of gay life. They were also the leader, they were always—what happened with most of those groups was [folds hands again] when you had a party, you did drag. This was a big deal and these guys were especially drag leaders. They were very good at drag, they were very funny, very bitchy men, very dry, sarcastic and one of the wonders to me and one of the wonderful things about gay liberation, is all that sarcasm went away. I really, really wanted that to go away. I mean, that was just horrible to feel the bitterness and the sarcasm, and everybody was 'Mary,' and it wasn't nice, it was a put down. It was always, always meant to be a put down. And but that was what you were supposed to call each other. Well, of course I never was and didn't feel as if I was a 'Mary' and I didn't permit that about myself. So, that's a part of— another part of my male liberation. Is that for me, it has always been on the male side of things and yet I think that one of the losses of male liberation has been that we didn't fight for our real cousins. They fought for us, but we didn't—we had never done what we should have for them... in terms of the people who have really been out, who had no choice, ever. They had been too femme, or they'd been too recognizable, that they simply had no—there was no closet for them ever to go to. But—and when you'd go to gay groups, everybody was male. Everybody was straight-acting, straight-looking, and it's as if the other people didn't exist. They existed when you went to New York to the gay parade—then these people were having a great time on the street, acting out, doing whatever they could, and the importance of that is that they were really—when it came to revolution, they took the center stage. They had no place to hide. So

they were out there—when the Stonewall occurred, it was the femmes who were out there. It was the people who had no choice who were out there doing the fighting, and doing the teasing, and the cuffs. And they had a great personality doing it. Wonderful things. And… but you could hardly ever find a transvestite in a gay group. [starts speaking to the camera person and directs gaze to the camera] Barry, Barry was an exception to that. Barry—Barry's always had that… remember… Jenny? I forgot the name of the girl. Julie—Julie, it was. Remember Julie? At Barry's?

**Camera person**: Yes.

**JB**: He kept the transvestite in the house who was not a very good transvestite as a matter of fact. It was always a question to me—she would have been—I've known transvestites and she would have been one of the ones who wasn't, okay? Not a transvestite, she wouldn't have been a good transsexual. She wouldn't have been a good transsexual at all. She wouldn't have been my choice to give a change to. I think she was too young, too inexperienced, and not—and not... not the right mindset. I've known both and she was not, okay. But you just didn't see these kinds of people. They were hidden. They were put away. They were slapped down and they didn't come out. The people used to go to the parades and say, "Look at those people, they're taking—they're taking all the publicity." Well, we should have been fighting for them. We should have been right out front with them. And that's just been… just like our women. We really kind of left our women behind. So we'll go forward now to this distinction between old groups, about the Mattachine was an old guard and the Mattachine—the name of the Mattachine was to describe a group of men, of medieval jesters, who spoke from behind the mask and they could tell the truth, okay? And that's what—what the Mattachine was. It was masking so that only the people who were supposed to be out was the leaders. They could speak for the rest of us. They could speak for all of the people who were behind them who had to stay in the closet, but they could be the forceful voice for them. And that was the whole point of the Mattachine—is to get out there and be in the crowd.

**LM**: And you were a member of Mattachine?

**JB**: I was a member of Mattachine, but I've been a very distant member, and we're talking about the fact that it was in New York, and I couldn't get there, you know. I did, like I went to Philadelphia, I went to New York, I went to the door, I met Dick Leitsch, and—who was then the executive director of Mattachine—went in, met him in person and it was very important to me. I came out—speaking of Dick Leitsch—I came out when, during that same very early period when I was still doing the business with the libraries and so on, I saw Barbara Gittings in the newspaper, and it was just her name. I don't even think it was her picture, but her name in the Philadelphia paper, in *Philadelphia Inquirer*—the morning paper, is that what the one? Yeah. As being an out lesbian. Well, I just thought, "Oh my God, if she can do that, I can do that." You know, so that's when I came out. That's when I decided that's what I was gonna do, is—whatever else, I was not gonna hide anymore. If she could do it, then I had enough strength to do it. And that was an important decision to me, I think. That's one that I always felt after that. The other thing about Mattachine that I really want to kinda talk about for just a moment—the reason that I was so attracted to them—and I don't have the exact quote, unfortunately, but it was something about [leans forward] "We are…putting ourselves forward as a light to light a candle

so that those who follow us in the dark or immersed in the dark, so the light have somebody holding their hand." And that was so important to me to feel that there was somebody out there and that's all I wanted to be. I just wanted to be the person who, you know, if you had to reach, I was gonna be there. Or—or something. I didn't know but that's been very—that [leans back] very simple philosophy, I think has been, been my gay activist-ness. It's been very personal, it doesn't mean much to me to—to—to give speeches, or to outreach to heterosexuals, the only debate in my mind is why we want to bother with them, quite frankly. Why we wouldn't just go off and lead our lives when we can do this very, very happy, happy thing by—in our own space? We can go off and we can do it, we can forget them, we can walk away from them. We didn't, but we—I was awfully tempted, and I think that you find that in everybody else's—everyone is asking the same question, these guys, you know, kind of said, "We're doing our thing, why we should we bother?"

**Camera person**: [coughs]

**JB**: Why should we educate all those other people? [pauses and scratches nose]

**LM**: So…

**JB**: So Mattachine—

**LM**: Now you're in Philadelphia—

**JB**: Yeah, well, I was just in Philadelphia, only—I wasn't in Philadelphia. I was always at home, I was always in Bethlehem/Allentown.

**LM**: Okay.

**JB**: And I traveled—I traveled—

**LM:** So, you would travel to Philadelphia and New York?

**JB**: Yes, I traveled to all of those places, yes. And because I really wanted to get there to see, just to be there to see what—what's this thing about. Let me—if I can't, I can give them my money, I can give them my dues or whatever if I can't participate, I can at least do that. Mattachine started in about sometime in '69, and I think it might have been March, possibly earlier. I got a letter from Mattachine that said "There'll be someone in your area who wants to start a group." Okay… And that was all they said. Now, it wasn't a dated letter, and there was a reason why it wasn't dated, but so I don't know exactly when it was and I don't know exactly when—when I knew it was as soon as I got the person's letter, who happen to be a fellow by the name of Ron Seeds, who was the founder of Le-Hi-Ho [Lehigh Valley Homophile Organization] Got a ca—it sent out, they used his name—he allowed them—they allowed him [chuckles] to use their mailing list, is what I'm trying to say.

**LM**: Ah.

**JB**: To make the spiel about, "I wanna start a group out in West—in Pennsylvania, be the first one to be outside of the West Coast—the East Coast, that would be in a smaller community than a major, major city." You knew, HUB, Homophile Union of Boston, started at the same time, the same way. It was a person who was out of Boston who got the Mattachine and said "I wanna start a group." So Mattachine out of there—Mattachine was the biggest thing on the East Coast, in terms of names and numbers, so they allowed him to use their name. We got started—the first time there were only four of us, I think the first meeting that we had that Ron was able to get, you know, people responded. Three of us were members and one was an old guy that—fifty-year-old man—I always like to tell Herman's (ph) story—because a fifty-year-old man had never been out before, and he got out and he just bloomed, [gestures with arms] I mean he just went everywhere, went to all the (??), and just had such a great time and died about two or three years later. [chuckles] But I was so happy for him, that he was able to really experience that and he's blabbed about it all the time, about how wonderful it was to get out and you know, and meet people and so on. He was a part of it, and I think that he was the one who initially got our—where we met at, when we met on this strange, little country road out in a place. [chuckles] I think we're thinking like they're gonna come and arrest us if we don't do this in hiding or something like that. It's just the feeling because we were so remote, and I don't think that was what we really intended. But at the same time it was what we really intended. We really kinda felt that 'cause we weren't really sure about how safe were we doing this thing about, all that stuff, as it was getting together to start a group—we didn't know. So we met, about thirteen or fourteen people started that day. I don't remember how many people were there, but I know that there were, when we left, there were thirteen people—

**LM**: This is Le-Hi-Ho?

[both talk at the same time]

**JB**: —Who said, "We will begin Le-Hi-Ho,"—yes—"We will come join your organization." And that was the beginning of Le-Hi-Ho, matter of fact. And it was a very distinct group. The homophile organizations were—organizations like Mattachine that did service to people, they did a very peculiar service to people. At that time, the very special question that we wanted to organize around was—do you check the box or not, because this was Vietnam. This was 1969, and the big question was if you were using drafts, if you're gonna join up the draft, if you wanna check the box and say I'm homosexual, because it has consequences about—it has consequences about employment for the rest of your life, there's important consequences if you join the service and then are found out—then you really—then you can't get benefits, you'll be thrown out of the service, and you can't get benefits, all kinds of things. It was a very important question. And lots of people were asking, you know, who weren't going to—that was one of the questions that was very important. Le-Hi-Ho was formed to answer. I didn't have to be involved with that. The guy who the—Ron was involved with that, Ron… took the mailbox and I answered all that correspondence and answered all those questions, basically. I became the newsletter editor and started a newsletter, the first one that has ever been done by someone who simply said, "I'll do it." Put it in with some mailings that he was gonna do and got the first newsletter, the next month then, I took over as the newsletter editor, said "I will do this." So, the next thing that I did, and this is one of my—if I have pride as a gay, this is one of my big prides, was that I gave a library to Le-Hi-Ho of about 150 books, at least between '79—'67 and '69. I really gathered a lot of

books that were hard to find, because there were not that many books that—that was not—it was not that big an issue—the *Psychopathy of Homosexualus* was still a text that was a very important book that, my God, it was written in 1874 or some kind of—what, what year it was. The title's in Latin. You ordered and talked about it under that name, because there wasn't another one, never did get another one that I know of, but it was very hard to find, it was almost nothing positive either. We talked about the fact that there were so many negative people, I had a book in—that had been written in 1952, I think it was, by Bergler, Edmund Bergler.

**LM**: [groans in agreement]

**JB**: Did you know this book?

**LM**: Yeah, I do.

**JB**: It was the most evil diatribe I've ever seen in my life.

**LM:** It was horrendous.

**JB:** It was just horrendous, and it had gone through in the years—by the time I got it, it had gone through 16 editions, so I picked up the 16th edition of this book that had been printed in '52 and I'm reading it at what, maybe'66, '67, somewhere, I'm not sure when I got it quite…but it was the first thing I had to work through—is this, this is not me. This is not me. This is not me. This is not me. And he identified this as people who were self-destructive, we're criminals, we, you know, we couldn't do anything else, we had to be self-destructive because we were doing all these evil things and it was all just judgment, of course. Well, you had to look this through and it was very, very hard and there were books like that, they—everybody that was asking "Why are we homosexual"—was the big question. Well, you just fly that one out the window, but it's a long time of me working it through. So I amassed this—

**LM**: So was it difficult for you to see that that didn't describe you?

**JB**: Oh no, no, no, no. Now it does become—self-loathing has always been a very big issue for us. And there is no question about the fact that when gay liberation is and starts and even today, our own inhibitions come from within ourselves, so much of the time. We have a kind of a self—not self-loathing, but…I don't know what…there's a term for it…homophobic! We were homophobic about ourselves, and we don't know it and we don't know how to break it because we are, so we think we're experts on it, and the fact that we've internalized so much that—that I realized that in my own life, many times, that I couldn't make my own breakthrough. I could give this…it was—I was doing this almost for the next generation because it wasn't something I could quite handle myself. I couldn't quite reach myself. It wasn't fair, it wasn't true, but it was true, too, because there were inhibitions that I felt, that I knocked up against that hurt me, and that I couldn't overcome as a result of it. One of them was, for instance, and we kind of talked about this recently, because I'm still a little phobic about telephones. And one of the reasons I'm phobic about telephones is because when we were very—when we were doing our thing, way back when, we were trying to get a conference together and we couldn't. The first place, the

hotel turned us down—that's another story, I don't want to tell it here. Outside of the fact that we had gone, after that we went to a lot of camps, to the Poconos, and we went to colleges—

**LM**: This is Le-Hi-Ho?

**JB**: No, this was the Caucus [either Caucus Liaison Committee or Rural Gay Caucus], this would be later on.

[talks at the same time]

**LM**: Okay, okay. Okay.

**JB**: That's why I don't want to get into the story. I don't want to mix my stories, but that's why I felt that that was an example of how I felt my oppression was, because I really got hurt by that whole process. But I would call up, people would laugh at you, it hurt me badly. And to this day, I'm phobic about telephones, in part, because of that. Because it is an instrument that I don't trust very well. And I don't like to call people, I don't like to make demands, I don't like to—I feel like I'm out of control, that's why I like to write, for instance. And I don't like interviews, because I want to write, I can control what I write. Back to Le-Hi-Ho. And homophile groups. See they did two things, they did social outlets, education were their two big deals, and you will find this consistently about homophile organizations, that so much of the organizations call themselves homophile, homophiles of Waynesport [New York] would call themselves educational group. For many years—for years after the 1960s, there were always Homophiles of Penn State, Homophiles of Columbia [University]… homosexual students of Columbia were kinda all guarded in a certain sense, they had a different feeling for themselves, what happens in '69 when we had the Stonewall, is that we suddenly had this fight, and everybody wants to come out. This is the big deal, the old guard are those who want to stay in the closet, the Mattachine societies, the people who were very cautious about that. "We're gonna do this incrementally," boy, they said, "We're gonna come out." There was a magazine in New York that said "Out"—scared the hell outta people because that's what they demanded, you come out of the closet and you live this free life. Well of course, the young responded and the older people didn't, and there was a division in…in Le-Hi-Ho. When we were first confronted with that issue, they stayed what they were, they stayed educational. Gay liberation wanted to do a different thing, they were very much more out, very much more political, much less concerned. And we never did, we never did an outreach, we never did had a Speakers Bureau—we may have appeared a few places, but it was very rare, it was never our emphasis, wasn't what we did. We were really active trying to get—do different things. We had a confidence about ourselves, but that's again, that's a different story. But it really does play into it because when we were first out, there were no doctors, there were no lawyers, we were all doing it ourselves, we were very, very ordinary people trying to work through these issues as best we could, and we were our own answer. If there was a problem somewhere, we just rushed up and did it, and we didn't know, we got ourselves into trouble many times, because we didn't know what we were doing, and we were an organization that learned how to be organized and how to not have a meeting to have a meeting [gestures with hands], you know, not to have a meeting and say, "We're having a meeting to have a meeting." It just was ridiculous, the kinda stuff that we had to work through. But we did and learned to be more efficient so that we talked about, "Let's get it out of the way, let's put it in the committee,

let's make it work…"And Le-Hi-Ho was no different than that. The—the points where we got to the meeting got to be so long that—that we just had to ultimately get a board and say okay, the board's gonna deal with everything else. And we're going to—we put up presentations for most of the meetings and that was a year afterwards. It took a while to get the name Le-Hi-Ho, it took six months to figure out, get the by-laws, and then saying, "Okay, what are we gonna name it?" And somebody came up with that and that was good enough, it was clever enough. And that's enough too. It's Le-Hi-Ho—le, hi, and ho. [spells it in the air with his pointer finger above him] L-E-H-I-H-O.

**LM**: How did the name come about?

**JB**: Sorry?

**LM**: [a bit louder] How did the name come about?

**JB**: Someone suggested it in that committee, and I don't remember who it was. I think I do, but it's not important…in that little committee, and we adopted it. And, I think actually the—there was a person who was called—Ron became…the executive... What was it called? [scratches head] Damn it. Why can't I think of that? Simple term…and anywho, he was the executive director. He was the executive director. Now this would be the person who would handle the whole—the whole group, and there was a president, too, and—but Ron would be the person—the go-to person, the person who was responsible. I'll tell a story about that. It was very revealing about what happened. About a year after that, remember Ron was handling all the stuff that was coming to this wonderful [gestures an explosion with hands] P.O. box of his! [chuckles] And you know, and we just—we would—he would chat the board about what he wanted us to know or the root of what he wanted us to know. So we got these long meetings and all that kind of jazz, and… now some of that obviously could have been personal, and some of it was personal, because he was dealing with the street house (ph) stuff and so on that I was not dealing with, and dealing with—with kids that were troubled so on—at one point I led a revolution, and I said, "Okay, we want the key here, we want to get the key to the box," and—because this is important stuff, and I don't know what's coming in. We don't know what's coming in. I didn't think that he was doing anything wrong with any of it. But I wanted to share it, I wanted to know what's coming in—all this good stuff. We went and had a meeting and I think six or seven of us went to this meeting, and Ron said no.

**LM**: [Laughs]

**JB**: [laughs and opens arms] "You can't have the key, I'm going to keep it." Well, that was the end of that, but what Ron also said was, "I'm gonna be here. I founded this group to be here and I'm gonna be here when the rest of you are gone. You can come and go, I'm gonna be here." And he was, and that was true. For at least the first 25 years, Ron was around. As—and I think he was very—well he probably wasn't the executive director—people did, but he probably wasn't enough—he had the telephone, but the next year, we decided to have a telephone—well, it was installed in Ron's house, since Ron was the person who answered it. It was under Le-Hi-Ho, it was under Homosexual Le-Hi-Ho, and it was under something else, but if you called the phone, that was definitely—his was the house you got. And he was the person you got. So I think

that—I know that there was good stuff coming in there, there were one of the things that I could—we could talk about that concerned me that I just realized when I was working the papers again. There was an archivist, there was a person who was taking care of the library and probably whatever else, okay? Now at one point, I noticed that the archivist said there are 309 books in the library, 177 publications of newspapers and so on, and there are numerous, numerous articles. That's a big lot. That's a lot. And that was 7 years, that was 1977, so it was 7 years after the—actually, we had had the library founded, it had now grown—it had doubled in size, and it kept growing, and it—they would publish the newsletter, this number of books were contributed, this number of books were out, this number of books were taken and so on and so on. That was a very, very important function, so when I talk about my pride in it, I really was proud of it, because it was one of the most important things that I felt I ever done was to gather this library, get it founded, and get it started and to make the contribution it did. It was very active.

**LM**: Is it still an ongoing group?

**JB**: I don't know that. I don't know what happened to the library. The last time I saw the library, I had it in my home, just prior to when I left Pennsylvania, and at that time it was some 500 books, I don't know how many it was. They were in cartons, I never counted them personally, and all I had were the books. I didn't have the other parts of it. So I mentioned the archives earlier, this was important because I think that archives, somewhere—

**LM**: Exist.

**JB**: Especially, it was more stuff and Le-Hi-Ho got archived, okay. It was the archives in Connecticut Central State—Central Connecticut State University Library. And I think 1970, not '78… '87, and I'm not quite sure the date, but I know that's where it's archived. It was definitely, definitely—and I didn't realize the importance in that, because now the importance was that there was an archivist who was taking care of all of these papers, of all these organizations from all over the country that were sharing us their newsletters, we're taking care of the records for Le-Hi-Ho, who called, the telephone log would be very important, what the board did… Matter of fact, I remember asking at one point the person who was doing the newsletter, and I said, "Are you keeping—are you sending one to the arch—are you saving one for posterity?" and he said, "No."

[LM, the camera person, and JB all laugh until the camera person coughs]

**JB**: But I think, I think that somebody was—that Ron probably, who was, and I just hadn't realized that—

**LM**: So, that was deposited?

**JB**: So, I think that's deposited. I think I want to go there now, because there are big blanks, for instance, and I was, up until '79… I'm sorry… I was very active the first year, as the newsletter editor. I met my lover through Le-Hi-Ho. He was at the first meeting, and I didn't meet him again until New Year's Eve, 1970. And after that, the newsletters kinda got pretty scarce.

[laughs] We walked in, walked out for about five years! [smiles] And I only have a few of them! Now I knew I was more active than that. I mean, I—even the meetings as much as I did, I was basically—I know I was doing stuff, but I was also involved with this new lover and—and simply this is gaps, all of a sudden, in the study. This is kinda honest, funny because you know, I was the newsletter editor and you would think that I really tried to keep on to things—[throws hands back] big blank. But after Le-Hi-Ho, they really, they went to plays in New York, big deal with that, very cultured. They sponsored everybody that came through town, anybody they could get to come. And they had everybody, they had Albert Ellis as a matter of fact, and it amazed me that they even had this man. [chuckles] But the Unitarian Church had him and they contributed to it and also had him address the Le-Hi-Ho group, made movies—or not made movies, but sponsored movies… did all kinds of—their speaker's bureau was very, very… busy in town. The colleges call them year after year after year after year after year, they had the same classes they went back to. Did all of the speaking around—the library was very, very much used in terms of importance. But they…

**LM**: Did the group continue to grow?

**JB**: Absolute—yes. Well, the group, I always say that there are always five activists, and it was true, and it was true in every other organization I belonged to. Five activists who were your core, this was true in the Caucus and it was true— it was true for Le-Hi-Ho, it was—and it would have—it would have 30, 40, 50, they could have, there were times when we had parties, we would get 225 people. But that was not the core. That wasn't what they were there for. And Le-Hi-Ho, the distinction that I really want to make about Le-Hi-Ho was that they took care of themselves. They were a very, very, distinctly different group. I would get mad at them at times, really mad at them, because they didn't, they had no women involved, and I would talk to them about it, and I couldn't [chuckles] get them to change on it. That just wasn't their language. They just didn't talk that language. They didn't know that they weren't talking that language.

[LM and JB talk at the same time:]

**JB**: But they took care of—but they took care of themselves in Lehigh.

**LM**: This is as—as Women's Liberation launches and so forth?

**JB**: I'm sorry?

**LM**: This is as Women's Liberation launches and so forth? That you're trying to get Le-Hi-Ho to engage women?

**JB**: No, I'm just trying to get Le-Hi-Ho to engage women because women were around—

**LM**: Because there were lesbians.

**JB**: Yeah, because there were lesbians and they should have been—this was a gay group. Well that was the definition of gay group, [mocking macho man voice] "We're all guys, and we're just

gonna do our thing" and they just couldn't see past it. And I couldn't get them past it. I couldn't get them to understand. There was a woman who—

**LM**: Certainly not the only one. [chuckles]

**JB**: Yeah, that's right. Did you know Lou Augustine (ph) You remember Lou? Lou was the woman who went to Le-Hi-Ho, and she was the only woman who ever went to Le-Hi-Ho with any regularity. They tried to claim Janet Cooper one time. [LM and JB chuckle] Ha ha! [slaps thighs] Can you believe this?! She went to one meeting! [holds up hand] There's some funny, wonderful, funny things about that. She went to one meeting, but then they—there was a note somewhere in the paper afterwards, in one of the newsletters, that the… council or somebody has been looking for women, if we had a couple that we could suggest. [laughs heartily] Janet Cooper and Lou Augustine! The two women [holds up two fingers], that they could get—that they couldn't get them to stick. And Lou at least stuck around. Lou is this wonderful recovering alcoholic. I love recovering alcoholics. If anybody's in my life, they're just my favorite people, 'cause they—so absolutely honest. There's no bullshit with them ever, and so Lou was a recovering alcoholic, but [shakes head] isn't that incredible? That they had the balls to say that. [laughs] But that's the way—that's the way it was, and it was that way with so many organizations. Now, I think after the Caucus, okay, it was '75 when we began to form—when the Caucus was formed and we insisted in equity—

[LM and JB speak at the same time]

**LM**: Which—this is the Caucus. What is the Caucus?

**JB**: Okay, the Caucus—I'm sorry. The Caucus was—I don't wanna talk about it right now but it was a group that—ha! I really don't want to talk about it because there will be a whole section on the Caucus—

**LM**: Okay.

**JB**: But it was the inner organization out of all of the groups and since Le-Hi-Ho supported it, Lancaster supported it—everybody that we knew supported the organization. By both members sometimes sending by money, sometimes by simply doing whatever you wanted them to do, in terms of writing letters and so on. And so it was very important, but it was five years after the beginning of Le-Hi-Ho. Le-Hi-Ho was there all by itself until about '74 all of a sudden, then there are other groups that began to form. But again Le-Hi-Ho remained this all-time group, all the time, never changed, and took care of itself in all of those years that I know of in term of social hour— it was a very, very important thing. Most guys just loved to come and they would do any program that you wanted and it would be on transvestites, transvestism, theology and gay, and Ellis. Wonderful, wonderful things. Wonderful programs, and they would sit through them, and then they would go walk by themselves and have this great time. [folds hands together and chuckles] But they were there for the conversation, they were there because it was the alternative to bars. It was the way you can meet people, not behind the meat rack, talk to them about sensible things, and so, I really—I always thought it was a very, very, important function.

**LM**: So, it functioned as a contrast to the bars?

**JB**: Oh yeah, in part, absolutely. But that was—again, that was a conscious choice about it, too. And homophiles, at least, that did it. You can—they'd talk about it. We're constantly doing social things as an alternative to bars. Discussion groups in which there were very personal levels were very, very important to everybody and Le-Hi-Ho repeated this. That we had to start another discussion group, because the last one was so important for a while, and you get people and so—and they need to communicate. They do it, and they get in, and communicate with each other and get these warm, warm groups, and then they're done. Now they've done that thing, then another need comes in, another new group comes in. And you have to feed that. You have to constantly feed it and constantly renew that group and that excitement. But that's—that was Le-Hi-Ho very much is that… that particular thing. That they were—they took care of themselves, they were an older group, they were—when I was in the Caucus and all the other groups I belonged to, are much, much younger. I was by then, by the time Le-Hi-Ho formed, I was 30 and that—

**LM**: And that was—remind me, and that was in the mid-70s?

**JB**: That would be in the mid-60s… that would be '67.

**LM**: Oh right, that's real early—

**JB**: It was '69. I was born in 1940, so I would have been 30 by the time Le-Hi-Ho—almost 30 by the time Le-Hi-Ho operated or began to operate. And so, I was—later, when it began to be younger people that I was dealing with, like Mary, Mary, who was still in college, and people I knew were all getting jobs. I always said that the unemployment line fit gay liberation, and it did. [smiles] There's no question about it. That's when people could really be active and they could stay on unemployment for as long as they could and stay active, in Lancaster [PA], in everywhere. We really—we really—we really milked that system. Actually, it's because they were so young, and they couldn't hold jobs and didn't stay with jobs. So, that was particularly important. That they were able to make those contributions and get the time to do it.

**LM**: Do you recall a certain reaction to the Evelyn Hooker—

**JB**: Who?

**LM**: The Evelyn Hooker research.

**JB**: I do, because it was hard to find. It took me a while to find that out and again, I'm saying this stuff afterwards, okay. I don't remember quite her years a little before that, and I had to find—hers was the book I had to find. *Homosexual in America* was a book I had to find, Donald Webster Cory. The Money Studies were books I had to find. Fordham Beach, who did the cross-cultural studies, were books I had to find. Wainwright Churchill wrote a wonderful book on homosexuals about gay-positive cultures, as opposed to gay—to non-gay-positive. I thought it was a wonderful revelation, about you know, calling the Greeks a gay-positive and the American culture a gay-negative. And the fact that there were these very distinct differences, you could embrace it or you could reject it. And those cultures were both viable and very much a part of it,

but there were choices as to which you were going to do and what would result if you didn't. Well, it was great. It was a very important argument. So many books like that--that kept coming out, coming out, coming out and coming out. But the—yes, do I remember Evelyn Hooker? I looked it up as soon as I could, and finding—I don't remember where it was, but yes, I was certainly very aware, and what she had—did you talk about what she—?

**LM**: She did the study of "normal" gay men. She found gay men who were fully functional and—

**JB**: Yeah, she took the Rorschach and said okay, now. [LM and JB talk at the same time]

**LM**: Yeah, exactly. And it was absolutely blinding to the APA.

**JB**: Yeah, yeah. Now you wish these people were blind, well, they couldn't, so she said, okay it's not pathology. It's not pathology. Remember Freud said that.

**LM**: It just blew everything away. Just…

**JB**: Freud had said that this person is—there isn't anything wrong with them. The only thing that's going on with him it's that he's got this aberration, this social aberration, but outside of that, he's fully normal, fully human, and fully moral. The moral part was the part that I think was, the important part, because that's what we're always disclaimed about.

**LM**: You also said that you weren't gonna change it, either. [laughs]

**JB**: [at the same time:] So it was very important. And they were—they were hard. Yeah, yeah, you really—you had to go back and *Sexology* magazine, for instance, this was—this magazine literally is sex. It was published in the '60s, the "free" '60s—was a very important basis of a big part of the fight went on in those spaces. Fights everywhere, people were coming out of the closet gradually… they went from first to zero, to some, well before 1969, but then it exploded when the Stonewall occurred. That was the big deal. Now the Stonewall was that—that—watershed moment when something changed here. They called it the hairpin drop that was heard 'round the world. That was one of the great descriptions of it. I wanna talk about that for just a second because what really kind of—what really kinda divided is—immediately after Stonewall—immediately after Stonewall—things began to get—this Gay Liberation Front [GLF], suddenly [gestures with hands] bloomed. And the Gay Liberation Front was leftist. No question about the fact that the leftists joined us as an original group, when the Mattachine were Communists, originally, and they—and one day they just had a meeting and they didn't invite them and walked away with the treasury and that was the end of—that was literally the end of the leftists. They gracefully withdrew and said, "This is, well, for the health of the movement—" withdraw, Henry Hay and—and George, I don't remember his last name. Cooper, maybe… So now there's only these two groups, this Gay Liberation Front. It's very, very less incendi—they want you to support everything, they want you to support the blacks and the grape—people that are growing grapes in California, the Soledad brothers, the Chicago Eight, the whoever it was, it was a radical, who was supposed to be espousing their clause—their cause and lesbians and all the rest of them. They really—they really became very radical. Now, so they were the first ones

out there, they were the first ones who really made the name in New York, and suddenly there were GLFs on college campuses, all the liberation and I don't think they lasted a year. What took their place was called the GAA [Gay Activists Alliance]. Now this was a group that said, "Okay, we aren't gonna support everybody else, we're gonna just do the gay thing." And that is the one that took hold. This is the one that is testified in all these books as the one that—that—that—succeeded whereas GLF did not, because they were the moderates, they were the ones who said "We will do—we will focus on this fight and no others."

**LM**: So we're talking about early '70s now?

**JB**: We're talking about—No, we're talking about '69—

**LM:** Now, was there—

**JB:** As soon as '69, we're talking about the fact that—that—in—in—was it…? Okay, that was written in '70, this was written in '70… [points to something off camera] …'69… (indiscernible) There was an organization called ECHO… and ECHO was—or ERCHO, I think it was. The Eastern Region Conference of Homophile Organizations, ERCHO. They had—that was the first group, and then they formed another group called NACHO, which is the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations. That became the national representative for several years. I'm not sure when they formed quite—60s, late, mid-60s… and, so ERCHO formed in '60—met in '69 in I say October, I—now I have three dates for it, so I really have to straighten it out. (Indiscernible) has one date, I have another date and Le-Hi-Ho is telling me a third date, so I really don't which of those three is in fact accurate for the meeting. But important.

**LM**: So did Gay Activists Alliance form in—was everyone against or separate from Le-Hi-Ho?

**JB**: We're gonna talk about that. Yes, it was separate from Le-Hi-Ho, this was the overall organization arching from—it had Mattachine and all of the groups from—the old guard groups, there were, I think, seven of them, were the original members. And suddenly there were more than double by student groups and by new groups like the GLF, like the GAA, like the… And so we went and had this meeting and this was in a place called My Sister's Place [chuckles], which was really a gay bar in Philadelphia. Kinda sleazy but had a second floor that was empty and meeting them up there, you know, dust all over the place, they weren't cleaning it, and we went and had our meeting up there with all of these people and it was [widens eyes] very, very, very contentious… very contentious between the old guard and the new guard. And about the fact that the old guard wanted to keep the power and say, "We are—we're gonna do things the old, traditional way ,or we aren't gonna support all these issues," and they had a big fight about it, it was this tremendous, tremendous fight on the floor about the new people who said, "We are here, we wanna vote, we don't want just an organizational vote, we want a vote for every person that's here. This is democracy. We're here, we're gonna vote." Well, of course, they didn't quite get that. And but there was a tremendous fight about it. And acrimony said that they were calling at one point… this is—again, this is before… before Roe vs. Wade, somebody called, were yelling about Barbara Gittings—"baby killer," because this was abortion. She favored abortion rights.

**LM**: Oh!

**JB**: Yeah, and it was just—it was just brutal, brutal, brutal. And I didn't—it shocked me, I had no idea what a baby killer was or why she was that, but that was—these people were there yelling at the top of their lungs, "Baby killer! Baby killer!" [throws hands up] It was brutal. It was a brutal time. Frank Kameny was in charge of that, you know—you probably never met Frank. But Frank was a physicist who had been—

**LM**: Who?

**JB**: Frank Kameny was—

**LM**: Yes, I did meet him actually. Once.

**JB**: [smiles] So, you know what I'm talking about. Yeah. He was a very stiff, very formal man. Had an accent that he talked like he was just running from God all the time. He just was this wonderfully intelligent person, but he just had such tight control, and he was so specific about what he wanted that he just kind of—it was hard to know him. It was hard to deal with him, because he just delivered from on high. He was in charge of this thing and he did a good job, but my God, we were talking—we were talking about Robert's Rules of Order down to the fine lines [laughs] about what precedent. But that was—one of the reasons for that that came out was that they had demonstrations, first demonstrations that had ever been… one in the White House—this was Frank Kameny, in front of the White House… and got about maybe ten or 15 people in '63, I think it was. And that was his important contribution. And then the next year, I think they said, "We wanna do more," so they—what they called the "Day of Remembrance." On the 4th of July, they all went to the Liberty Bell and marched there and again it was the same number of people, but Frank said, "We will all wear suits," and he insisted on this because if we don't, we aren't going to be accepted ever and of course, these people came in and they said—we got our glad rags, they were colorful, they had the leather vest, red shirts, and this really—glad rags, they were just happy, happy people. And they were mad about the fact that people had come to the Day of Remembrance and got turned away because they weren't properly dressed. They didn't have suits and ties—they didn't wear skirts.

**LM**: We have to stop. We need to change the tape.

**Camera person**: [whispers] Yeah.

[changes tape]

**LM**: I don't think we should go any more than half an hour longer.

**JB**: It won't be long, half an hour longer.

**LM**: You will be more tired than you think.

**JB**: I'm very nearly finished with what I had to say today. I probably really want to say more about Le-Hi-Ho that I can't think of… and I think I covered most of the—going back over the highlights, the thing that's been very distinct—that they belong to that—they belong to the timeline. They may not necessarily belong to this—to characterize homo—the older cha—the older group, what I wanted to do—they were more mature. Le-Hi-Ho was always more mature and they did more mature things. And—and handled themselves very much more responsibly and lasted a lot longer than anybody else by doing what they did. Had more money, they had a better newsletter, they just—everything was better. We already talked about the—that we used this whole spirit—purple—[gestures with hand as if he was cranking a handle] but that was all I had. I got that from work—and I stole it from work, and… print off at your service! [pretends to crank handle again and laughs] That was revolution. I mean, you can make a revolution on a mimeograph machine, is what I thought and it really was true, then Xerox came along. They weren't quite as useful, but boy, we sure could have used a copier, let me tell you. [laughs] We had to write the scripts—

**LM:** Pretty astonishing, what we have now.

**JB**: Somebody did that, but the—NEPGA, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Gay Association, did all of theirs on Xerox, and it was just plain crazy. This stuff is—got that putty feel to it, it's faded, and it got black all over it. You cut it out—you just kinda just cut it off wherever you wanted to. It was just a mess. [throws hand down] It—they didn't need anything. [laughing] It just—it just… such regarding. That was different. Okay, we are on [picks up a faded Manila envelope]… we are talking about ECHO—ERCHO. Because this was the conference that—that there was this gigantic fight going on about old guard and new guard, and the fact that they were so young, as composed to other people who were older. I mean, clearly Frank Kameny was in his 50's, Barbara Gittings was older, and Foster Gunnison—Foster Gunnison was a very stiff man. He was an organization all by himself. He was the archivist for the whole early gay movement. He started around the Mattachine and became the archivist, and he kept all these wonderful newsletters that he kept all—you know, that's what he did, that was his function, his thought, was to do that… and in a group called the Institute of Social Ethics, in Hartford, Connecticut. [chuckles] He was the single member of it. But he got his own vote, okay, in like, ERCHO. Well, that sort of pissed people off. Like the young people, were there—very different feelings, you know? "Let's go, let's go, let's go, let's go! [punches air in front of him] Let's do all these things!" So one of the battles that I was talking about was this Day of Remembrance and the fact that they wanted some sort of memorial every year, and people were mad, because—the young people were mad, because they couldn't participate in their own clothes. They just didn't want to pay attention to this dress thing, if you came, you marched—it was—and happily. So the compromise to that came on Sunday morning—the Sunday morning, and this is just a piece of paper that I have somewhere that has—the proposal was to make a Christopher Street memorial march for the Stonewall. Plain sheet of paper, but that was the beginning of the Christopher Street—now this has gone on as I now know, it had been planned by a fellow by the name of Craig Crodwell—Rodwell for a long time who wanted to do this, this Christopher Street Commemoration Day, is was what he originally… thought up, but he was never able to—to enable it until three or four months later when we started this ERCHO convention. Now remember, this is just three months after the—after the—after the Stonewall. [makes gesture with hands as if something is bursting] These things exploded in everybody's face so fast that—

that—that Mattachine was simply out. I remember going to Craig Rodwell's shop… he owned the Oscar Wilde bookstore, he had opened up just sometime before, just months before that, and the world's first gay bookstore that we knew of. And I went to there, because that was where I could find the books that I could never find [smiles and LM chuckles]. So I went in and there were these young people in there and they're saying, they're talking about Mattachine, and I'm listening, of course. I'm an eavesdropper. They're letting me know that, "You're an old guy and you really don't belong here." Okay, you know, and they're talking about, you know, Mattachine is old line, and we don't like Mattachine a lot, as they're lookin' at me. "You know, you understand." And, I went up to the desk and picked up all these books, these wonderful books that I found in this collection and took them up to the desk, and they said, "That's the lending library, [laughing] you can't buy those books. They're the ones that we lend out to people for money, so you can't…" They weren't for sale, but that was Craig Rodwell. That was how I met Craig Rodwell.

**LM**: That bookstore just closed recently.

**JB**: And he kind of gave me that sheepish look about, "You understand, you know..." I was obviously a stranger. He was the one who definitely knew I wasn't New York, that I wasn't… and I think that's probably when I went to Mattachine… the first time. Just after the Stonewall, I'm sure, that I went to the door and met Dick Leitsch and said—and saw the library that they had. Amazing, you know, it's in right in front of the office, all these steel shelves and [sighs] oh, it just kinda took my breath away. But that's again, that was my proud moment, yes, thank you. I keep talking on that. Where am I at?

**LM**: So, what issued from ECHO?

**JB**: Hm?

**LM**: What issued from ECHO? You had a very real struggle there.

**JB**: Okay, yes, yes, okay. We're talking about the fact that they wanted to start this Christopher Street demonstration, okay, and it was a radical idea, I mean, we didn't know what to do. There had never been anything like it, quite. It was to be open to everybody. It was an odd day, too. Did we really wanna commemorate the Stonewall? Some people did and some people didn't. But again—again it had been this big deal… knew that. So, we went away, and we did it. [chuckles] The first thing, we got home, and Le-Hi-Ho said, "Okay, we aren't gonna support Christopher Street demonstrations, but we are gonna support the resolutions from ERCHO… this center." Well, okay. [metal clangs to the floor in the background] They changed their mind the next month, which I'd really forgotten about, but what's funny about that is that—that in—a year later [picks up manila envelope again and opens it], when in fact they did do the Christopher Street demonstration and march [pulls out folded, faded copy of *The Advocate*], then Le-Hi-Ho was very—by then they had changed their minds and they had said, "We will support it." But when it came down to it, I think there were four people there at this march, okay, that I knew of. I was there with Fred Reed, and Fred was the vice president of the organization. Okay, this is page five. This was 1970. This is the issue of the gay pride papers, this was *The Advocate* on the gay pride marches that had taken place, and there were three or four of them, I think, was one in

Providence [Rhode Island], one in Chicago [Illinois], one in Los Angeles, or wherever… but the big one had been in—the big one had been in New York, and I just thought it was so ironic that they said they didn't wanna do it. But when it came down to claiming that they had been there, [interviewer coughs] now they want to claim that they had been there. [laughs] So—so, I wanna show you… I have to show you this picture. This is… [flips through pages of *The Advocate*, then hands the newspaper over, and the interviewer holds it in front of the camera; we can see black and white pictures of the gay marches] Okay, it's down there, the one of Le-Hi-Ho— [points to picture on bottom left and reads] "Homosexual is not a four letter word."

**LM**: Cool, wow.

**JB**: And if you look at the guy sitting there holding the sign, that's my bald head… [laughs] that's the back. Turn around the other way.

[camera zooms in]

**LM**: Is that you? All right!

**JB**: That's me, so I was there, okay!

[both laugh]

**JB**: That's—I'm part of history. I'm part of history.

**LM:** All that black hair!

**JB:** Yeah, black hair… And, my lover is standing up. My lover—my lover was there beside me and Fred Reed is there. And the other person that was marched was—I think it was… I don't know if that was the girl or not, but she marched with us—we met her in New York—Ricky and I had gone to New York, and at the start of this march in—down in Sharon Square. And she came along and said, "Oh, I see that you guys are holding the sign from Lehigh or from Bethlehem. I'm from Bethlehem, too." So, she stayed the day with us. But I've forgotten her name, sadly. I don't know. But I do mention the three of us and Le-Hi-Ho of course, 'cause I'm very proud. And so there was—this picture is now in the collection—in their collection at [scratches his head]... in Connecticut. There was a whole series of pictures—this was not the only picture taken. This sign was even hit since Stonewall.

**Camera person:** [coughs]

**LM:** Cool.

**JB:** This sign was one of the ones that were probably covered.

**LM:** I mean, this is the first period when people were letting their pictures to be taken at such things.

**JB:** Well, okay, now, let's talk about that, let's talk about that day, because that day is terribly important. We went, and there were—went down in Sharon Square—on the way down, going on the subway, (indiscernible) well enough to get around. [putting newspaper back in manila envelope] Next thing I saw was somebody was crying [cameraperson coughs and JB becomes inaudible for a moment] …tried to get to know him, all that kinds of—it didn't work… but we got off and found Sharon Square, and we met her… but we're down there about maybe a half an hour beforehand—I'm not sure, maybe an hour beforehand. [gestures with hands] Lots of things were going on, lots of things were going on, people are milling around, there are—there are—there's a whole block of people… we're containing a block, we're waiting for the parade right by the Stonewall, not at the Stonewall, the Stonewall is around the corner. We were in Sharon Square, and… Lots of things were going on, people were taking pictures all over hell and creation. Now a lot of those people, and we knew this, were FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation], okay. They were definitely… and it was proven later on and they admitted later on that they had been investigating the whole homophile movement while it was young. And yes, it came out and was known and published in the papers. [scratches forehead] So we knew that that was going on—*Newsweek* was there, and somebody was running around saying, "This is a historic day, you know—who are you, what are you here for?" [shrugs] You answered the questions, you talked to everybody, but you also knew that—that some of these people were the, you know, the opposition—were the FBI or whoever wanted—the New York Police and so on… Mattachine was there, and I remember looking at them and seeing Dick Leitsch, and followed by Austin Wade—Austin Wade was this great lawyer—doesn't he sound like marble halls—[deepens voice dramatically] Austin Wade was the lawyer. [LM and JB laugh] I was so impressed by that! [lowers voice and leans forward] Wasn't his real name. Okay. Like everything else, he was supposed to be in the closet. Frank Kameny always said that his group was in the closet—one of the funniest things that I ever saw, and so he—Sam Pregits (ph) looked up Mattachine, Washington—Frank is insisting that everybody that was in the organization was in the closet, but Frank. Frank could be the spokesperson—the only person in the thing that could talk about it —his vice president couldn't remember his pseudonym he was supposed to use. The board members couldn't remember the pseudonyms they were supposed to use. [LM laughs and JB chuckles] It was right behind us, right behind Frank talking to me 'bout the fact that he was the only one. He was never the only one, Frank always believed he was the only one because he wanted to be. He was just a—he was a wonderful man, but he was so wrong sometimes, and so stubborn about it, but he did get what he was after. He got, you know—we got rights to have social security clearances and to join the Service, which he would have been very proud of—he didn't live that long, but he did live to see security clearances. He would have been very proud, and that was his fight, and he really—he really did a number on that. So we're at New York, milling around, and we know this is all happening, and GLF was there, they're gonna lead the parade, because they're the most out people. Mattachine is there with these nice little signs that say "Mattachine." They were very pretty. I think they were red and gold, if I recall. There were maybe fifty of them. I'm not sure how many there were, but they had… and of course, my sign, and very few others. There were no bands, there was nothing around here, just this bunch of people milling around. Maybe—it was some hundreds, we don't know how many… hard to count because everybody was [gesture chaos with his hands] interacting, just going around—going around doing our thing. So then Frank starts, and we start up the street… and this is amazing. I mean, this is the most wonderful thing you can think of, doing this—this—this marching business and starting out and—and echoing off the buildings about "Gay power, gay

power. Two, four, six, eight… how do you know your husband's straight?" That's one that I especially appreciated, and we went past… the New Yorker Hotel and all these rich people are out there with their limousines and their heads (?) and there we are walking by like, "Two, four, six, eight, how do you know your husband's straight?" Just really enjoying ourselves. Same when we got to the Cathedral. Now, "How do you know your priest is straight?" [chuckles] St. Patrick Cathedral, and that was always a big moment, when we got to St. Patrick cathedral and everybody was really cheering and trying to get the Bishop on the platform (?). But—

**LM**: Were you picking up people as you went?

**JB**: There weren't very many people starting out and lot more spectators were watching, who weren't gonna join. They were coming down to be with their friends and support their friends, and they didn't start out with us, okay? And so the crowd—the big crowd was off—off the sidewalks and into the streets. We really wanted, like, please come out and join us. And that was what I thought was the important part of the day for me was to get people to join us. And we started out in this very silent group of people, and now we're just yelling, making all the noise we could. In New York, that's not a whole lot, [chuckles] but we felt very brave about it, and we looked, we were on one lane, okay, of traffic. And I don't think—we were maybe a block long when we started out. We just fit in that traffic lane, and we started out and started up, and people kept coming along the sidewalk and joining us, but they weren't coming onto the streets, they were coming off the sidewalks. We had to change flow all the way up the street. You had people who were participating and the people who weren't participating—and we'd been marching quite a while. And I remember getting out of line, finally, and getting something to drink. I got out of line… and realized all of a sudden that now we're five blocks long. Just that many more people. And I think I did it again, and then we were eight blocks long. And it was just… [closes eyes and tears up] It was so exciting. Yes, there was people that followed right along with us up the street, and we went clear up—60 blocks, I think, was—made up the walk, I think. So it was a long way, it may not have been that far, but I don't know how far it is from Dennis Point. Somebody said 60 blocks. I know it was a long way that day. It was two o'clock in the afternoon. But we started a little late, and we got into Central Park, we went to all those wonderful benches where you see people and the curves and all that kinda jazz. And we went to a place called the Sheep Meadow, which is this great big area out there in the middle and that's—we went clear across the Sheep Meadow and at this point, there wasn't anything else going on. We got across the Sheep Meadow, and we were allowed to be there, we had had a permit to be there, and we're on this rise, and we turn around and there are eleven—there's—[leans forward, squeezes eyes shut] there's all these people. [pauses for a short while to gather himself] And it just was—so amazing. And I always talk about that as the—beginning of the movement. That's how we knew how successful we were. And Le-Hi-Ho claimed that day, and they got that picture, and they got a bunch of—some other pictures that they show now on their webpage in Connecticut, which tickles me, because they were against it to begin with. [chuckles] And I always thought, ha, take that! Wonderful… a good story, I always thought. But that was, I think there were, officially, there may have been 2,000. Really, there may have been 2,000. And that was the biggest of the parades across the country. And it was certainly the turning—it was the most amazing thing. And I think that renovated…Now there had been earlier things that had been, could have, been other demonstrations. There were demonstrations in the 1960's for instance, '61 I think, that could have been the same—well it wasn't. Now the (?)could have been as important, but that was the

one that really congealed, I think, and said we are powerful, we are going to win, and we knew at that moment that we are now historical, we are historical fact …we've won, just by being out here. And—and so I guess the rest of it was, you know, footnotes to history, for me, in a sense. I've always been confident about the fact that the right was on our side, we knew what we were doing, and we were successful already. Very, very powerful feeling, and New York was always renewal. Every year I went, you come away from that, and you go walk around Central Park holding hands, you couldn't do anything else. But that day was set down, and there were no speeches, there was nothing going on. It was kinda—we cried for a while, and sat there and talked. With nothing else to do, but had our little gay-in for hours I think, just enjoying the simple peace of—of what happened and the joy of it. And walked away from there, you couldn't—again, you just couldn't help yourself. You—I held Ricky's hand, and we kissed when we wanted to and liberated the park—went away from it every year, and it was that kind of rejuvenating experience every time I went to it. I always say that people, when he talked about the fact that—gay pride—when I talked about the fact that gay pride would hit people hard, that's why. I saw that numbers of times with gay pride people. We're very un-neat when we do parades. We crowd in, we get, you know, [chuckles] we like to see them right up close—we want to get there and touch 'em. That's an amazing feeling walking down with a press of people like that. You just—and your friends, the people who—the love and the support is just so incredible. Everywhere you find it. I marched in Pittsburgh, we were 40 one time. I think the first march in Pittsburgh was 40. The Philadelphia parades we have the picture from. Went to New York for years and years. I don't remember when we last went. And I would love to go again. I think just to see what the differences were. They were always amazing. And New York offered again all those other characters. There were always transvestites who were—somebody went up and down the streets on rollerskates. Very, very, famous character who did that weekly. Weekends. That was what they did. And the fight was always about "Look at those—they're stealing all our thunder." Well, they were supposed to. We should have been very proud of them. We should have been fighting for them, and saying "Yeah, go do it, get out there and do our speeches." We didn't feel that way. And we couldn't find, and again, I talked about the male organizations—they excluded them. They didn't mean to, but they certainly were never hospitable to them. They came around, the one cross-dresser that I do remember in Le-Hi-Ho was, we had somebody came from—in drag one time. Not only came in drag but he brought a young boy with him. We wanted to tell—you were sitting with a lot of nervous men—you oughta see that group. They were very nervous, because we were all over 35. And we've got this kid there with us—never had happened before. Nobody'd ever brought them. So the next time, I think the kid came—the guy came without the kid, in drag, and he wanted to endorse NABLA, North American Boy Love Association.

**LM**: [groans]

**JB**: And you know what happened with that. But that was Le-Hi-Ho, they turn down everything. They turned down NABLA, they turned down anything, they turned—there was an underground newspaper that supported them in Allentown—underground newspapers suddenly sprouted in the 60s and 70s, because it was the alternative to the news. "They aren't telling us the truth, so we're gonna tell you the truth," [chuckles] and the truth had a slant to it, a very definite slant. But it was what they saw, and they were—Le-Hi-Ho didn't support the newspaper that supported them. It was that kinda thing that made me mad, because, you know, it's just the character of

them—that they were conservative, they wouldn't do it. It wasn't their style, and they made very firm decisions about it, you know—recorded them. And so nobody ever endorsed NABLA, I don't—that wasn't a bad decision, even I had to go with that one. And said—we have to not do this again.

**LM**: [as JB speaks] Yeah, that's pretty straightforward.

**JB**: [coughs] Asked him not to come again and certainly never to bring another boy.

**LM**: Well Joe, I'm thinking this is a good place to pause.

**JB**: I do too. I got through what I wanted to say. I'd almost forgotten about the picture, and I wanted to get through the Christopher Street Liberation Day, because that was so important. It really was…[shakes head] and I—again, I think… let's quit for a minute. I want to talk you about—[tape cuts off]