

# **LGBT History Project of the LGBT Center of Central PA**

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

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

## **Documents Online**

**Title:** LGBT Oral History: Ray Davis

**Date:** April 15, 2015

**Location:** LGBT Oral History – Davis, Ray – 022

**Contact:**

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

717-245-1399

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

**Interviewee: Ray Davis**

Interviewer: Jennifer Ott

Date of Interview: April 14, 2015

Location of Interview: Harrisburg, PA

Transcriber: Sarah Goldberg

Proofreader: Sara Tyberg

Finalizer: Mary Libertin

**Abstract:**

Ray Davis was born on April 30th, 1954 in Bethlehem, PA. After attending Catholic school, Ray went on to earn a bachelor's degree in ornamental horticulture from Delaware Valley College in Doylestown, PA. After moving to Harrisburg in 1986, Ray acquired his real estate license, serving a variety of clientele including many from the gay community. In this interview, Ray discusses the consequences of coming out to his Catholic parents, the success of his real estate business, and social life in Harrisburg during the late 1980s. He also explains his involvement in the economic development of Harrisburg and briefly about his personal relationships as well as the changes he has witnessed in the Central PA gay community over the years. Ray comments on the different experiences of gay youth today in comparison to his own and others' experience in the 1970s. Additionally, Ray touches on his perception of the 1990s AIDS Crisis and fondly remembers volunteering as a buddy for the South Central AIDS Assistance Network [SCAAN]. Ray credits the support of the LGBT community as well as the strength of his personal network in Harrisburg for the success of his business.

**JO:** I'm Jennifer Ott, and today is Wednesday, April 15th, 2015, and I'm interviewing Ray Davis at his home in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, for the oral history project of the LGBT Center of Central Pennsylvania. Ray, is it okay for me to ask you a few questions about your life?

**RD:** Yes, it is.

**JO:** Alright, could you please state your name and that you are willing to be interviewed?

**RD:** Okay, my name is Ray Davis, and I'm willing to be interviewed for this project.

**JO:** And can you sign the consent form?

**RD:** Sure.

[RD signs]

**RD:** Should I put my address too?

**JO:** You can fill that in if you want.

**RD:** Okay. [hands paper back]

**JO:** Thank you.

**RD:** Sure.

**JO:** If there's any time you want the recording to be stopped, just let us know, and we'll do that or if there's any questions you don't want to answer, tell us, and we'll move on.

**RD:** Okay.

**JO:** Okay. Alright, can you tell me a little bit about your childhood? Where you grew up, your family?

**RD:** I was born in April 30<sup>th</sup>—so my birthday's coming up—1954.

**JO:** Happy birthday.

**RD:** Bethlehem, PA. Great parents, two sisters—both a little younger than I am. And I had what I think you would call a pretty normal childhood. You know, great loving family, wonderful sisters. You know, typical spats as kids, you know, that sort of thing, but yeah, it was—it was good. I was a child of the fifties and sixties, so I loved it, you know.

**JO:** Can you tell me a little bit about your education, where you went to school, and then...

**RD:** I was raised Catholic, so I went to a Catholic grade school for eight years. And then Catholic high school for four—that was Beth—that was in Bethlehem. Graduated from high school and went to college for ornamental horticulture, so even though I sell real estate, my college degree is a Bachelor of Science in ornamental horticulture, which I got at Delaware Valley College in Doylestown in Buck's County, PA.

**JO:** You mentioned that you went to Catholic School when you were younger, do you still have an affiliation with the Catholic Church or any church?

**RD:** Not really too much now. I mean I, you know, when I go to church, I feel like I like to go to the Catholic church, although my sister and brother-in-law who live here go to a Presbyterian Church so I often, at the holidays, will go with them just 'cause it's all about family, you know.

**JO:** Did you ever have any military experience?

**RD:** No.

**JO:** No military?

**RD:** No, I always worried about that as a kid, when I was in high school, 'cause when I was in high school was when they were drafting for Vietnam, and I really worried about that, being a gay man, and of course my family didn't know any of that at the time, but I really worried. I thought, "What if I'm drafted? Well, I guess I could get out on the fact of my sexual orientation."

And—or just defect to Canada [JO laughs]. But no, I never got drafted and have no experience there.

**JO:** You mention your family didn't know about you being gay then, can you tell me a little bit about when you realized you were gay, and when you came out to your family?

**RD:** I realized I was gay back as long ago as I can remember. You know, I never fooled myself. I—like I said, as long as I can remember, I knew that I liked men. My family... when I came out when I was in college, my junior year, and the summer after I graduated, I guess—I didn't come out to my family, but I did to a couple of my close friends then. And the summer after I graduated, I was seeing somebody and I—even though my parents didn't know my—my story at the time, I took this friend home for the weekend, you know 'cause I would often take friends home for a weekend—you know, just friends. It was just a really uncomfortable weekend. And my mom kind of knew instantly, she just could tell. There was some chemistry. So, it got to be really uncomfortable weekend, I'll make this kind of short—

**JO:** No, you can—

**RD:** They, after I left for the weekend, I was barely in the door and my mother called and confronted me, and said, “We didn't like your friend.” And I said, “Why not? You always like my friends.” And she said, “Well, we—we just didn't like him.” She said, “Are you gay? Is he gay?” just like that. And I denied a few times, just—you know, you got to remember, this was in the 70s, you know. Actually, '76. So, I denied it a few times, only out of—what then I might have thought respect to my parents—but finally, I admit—my mother knew. I mean, mothers always know, I think. So, I finally admitted to her, but I said please—I pleaded with her not to tell my father, because he'd had a couple of heart attacks, and I just thought it would kill him. But she, of course, said she couldn't not tell him, so she did, and they came to see me the next day. I was about an hour away, so they came to see me the next day, and it was a pretty uncomfortable meeting that we had. My father just—my mother tried to be kind of neutral—my father didn't understand at all. I mean he was a wonderful dad and a great man, but he was a blue-collar steelworker who had, you know—he had his prejudices, and he didn't understand at all. So, kind of the funny part of this coming out story for me is—and having been raised in a good Catholic family, my dad saying to me, “Well, just take a girl to bed, and you'll get better.” You know, he believed that was true, he—again you have to remember how long ago this was—forty years ago, and he had no idea. And my mom was mortified that he said that, but he did. So anyway, we left, or they left, and it was—it was a pretty strained relationship for months, I would say, and... then one evening, my mother called me out of the blue. And we were always really close, but it had been strained. And then one night out of the blue she called me to tell me that one of my sisters had been sick, and she took her to the family doctor and after her visit, she said, she asked my sister to wait in the other room, and she talked to the doctor, and she told the family doctor who had raised—I mean, he had been our doctor growing up—and he—she told him. She said, “Raymond is gay, and what do we do?” And he was wonderful. He—first of all, he said, you know, he reinforced that I couldn't help it, it's who I was, it's how I was built, and it wasn't a choice. And this was, again, back in the '70s—you have to keep putting it in—in retrospect, it was pretty cool. And she said, “What do we do?” And he said, “Just love him.” So, she did. She called me that night in tears, and our family doctor really changed our lives by his

advice and support to my mom. And after then, it was a 180 on my relationship with my family. My dad and I never talked about it again, ever. But we were fine. My mom and I talk from time to time and all that, and you know, all that. I ended up, about a couple years later in a long-term relationship. And they met my partner and really liked him. I mean he was at all our family events and things, so... it was beautiful—it was a great—I'm one of the lucky guys, really.

**JO:** That's a happy ending.

**RD:** It really is, yeah—

**JO:** It might not have been.

**RD:** Yeah, yeah, I really—I'm blessed in that respect. My sisters were the same way, they were really, really supportive. My brother-in-law, I mean, I'm lucky.

**JO:** That's lucky, we don't hear a lot of stories that that's the case.

**RD:** I know, I know. And believe me, I never ever ever take that for granted. And again, because you've got to remember, '76, '78. It was a way different world than it was today.

**JO:** Can you tell me a little bit about your work in real estate here in Harrisburg? Do you have a lot of LGBT clients that seek you out? Or, do most of your clients not know that you're gay?

**RD:** Well, to answer your last question first, most of my clients know. I work with a wide, wide cross section of people. But most of them know, and I don't ever make, I mean, I don't wear a pink triangle on my sleeve, but I also often times when I was in a relationship, would refer to a partner, and I never, ever had a bad reaction to it. When I started selling real estate, which was 23 years ago now—'92—my—most of my business in the early years was in the gay community, just because I had already at that point lived here for six years. I lived in Midtown, which there are a lot of—I had a lot of friends, a lot of gay friends that lived in Midtown, so I started really by working with friends and who—friends referred me to other people in the community. So in the beginning, that was a large part of my business, and I always supported events—whether it was a drag show to raise money for AIDS or whatever it was, you know, the Gay Pride Festival. I used to set up a booth at all the festivals and that sort of thing. So, in those days, I was much more active than I am now in the gay community, so because of that, I had a lot of connections, and the community really, really supported me. And I was in the—you know I'd go out for cocktails in the evenings, and I really—I was around a lot. You know, then you get in a relationship, and things change a little bit, and I wasn't out as much, although I still had, still have a lot of friends who do still support me. So yes, I do still absolutely have a niche in the gay community. Back in those days, there weren't that many of us that were selling real estate—now there's quite a few more, you know, gay men and women. So, that's, you know, there's more competition, so to speak. But, the community does absolutely still support me. I do still get people who call me and say, "We're just more comfortable with somebody who understands."

**JO:** What prompted your move to Harrisburg?

**RD:** My sister and brother-in-law, actually. I lived in Western PA for a few years, and that was with the partner who I was with when I first came out, and we were—our relationship was kind of winding down at that point, and we—I knew I didn't want to stay living where we were out in Western PA, so I actually had some flexibility with my job, so I decided to move here because my sister and brother-in-law lived here, and I knew they always would, and I wanted to be closer to family and friends and my nephews. So, it was really family that prompted me to move here. And kind of the interesting twist to that is that my sister's husband—my brother-in-law—and I went to college together, and we both studied horticulture and worked together, actually. I worked for him. He had a business way way way back in the 70s. I worked for him a little bit. But then I moved away to Western PA, and he ended up at that time getting his real estate license. And when I moved back here, he is the one—he's the reason I'm selling real estate today. He said, "I think you should get your real estate license. I think you would do really well with this." And honestly, I kind of did it kicking and screaming. I just didn't think I could do it, I didn't think I wanted to do it. But he convinced me to do it, and the rest is history. So, I think that my path was definitely carved for me.

**JO:** And what year did you move here?

**RD:** '86.

**JO:** Can you tell me a little bit about, like, what social life looked like for LGBT people in the '80s? I mean, I know '86 was sort of a—

**RD:** Mhm.

**JO:** There was a lot happening—

**RD:** Yeah, I—

**JO:** —in that time.

**RD:** I'll say, you know, here, I mean, of course, came out in where I went to college in Bucks County—so New Hope [Pennsylvania], which was the gay mecca of, you know, in the day—the days of the disco. So, that was all fun. Here in Harrisburg, when I moved here in '86, I had—I was in a relationship, so he had a couple of friends here that he had known for years, and we quickly grew kind of a nice social circle, because, you know, you meet friends through other friends. The social life for us was really going down to the Neptune, which I'm sure you've heard about it in some of your interviews, you know, that was the original—one of the original—bars in Harrisburg. So, my social life and our social life, and I think it was pretty typical of the day was, going out for cocktails, you know, going out for happy hour on a Friday night or, you know, brunch on a Sunday, and you know, and at that time really, the social life really did revolve around the bar. We didn't have a pride festival or the LGBT center or movies at the Midtown Cinema or any of those types of things. It was revolving around the bar, maybe fundraisers for AIDS, and that sort of thing was—that was pretty much it. So, a lot of our socializing was at the bar or at people's homes. You know, so it was fun times, but real different. You go out dancing at night and you know, that sort of stuff. It was fun.

**JO:** Do you remember—you mentioned helping out with some sort of—like the drag shows, like giving money or buying tickets to things like that to raise money for AIDS. Can you tell me any, sort of like, you remembering that time or like, was it scary? Was it sort of not in your per—

**RD:** No, it wasn't scary at all. I mean, I really loved. I loved moving to Harrisburg and being part of a real gay community. And it really was, I mean, my group of friends, and we did have a really close group of friends, we really were a community. And you just felt, even back then, I mean, it was a strong and—I hate to keep referring to the bar, but you would go in the bar, and it was like *Cheers*, I mean, you always knew somebody. And even if you went by yourself, you know, you never felt uncomfortable, you never felt alone. So, it was a real sense of gay community back in those days. I never ever felt scared or alone. I think it kind of felt empowering, because there were—you were a core group of people. And you were, at least, my world—and I know other people might not have the same story but... you know, on a personal level, you know, being a professional and being a successful professional, you know, really from the early days of my real estate, I always was respected by people as a person and a real estate agent first, and then my sexuality might come into play later with some of my heterosexual clients, and so I never—whether it was personal or work or social—I never felt any sort of fear or intimidation. And that's eighties [shrugs]. So...

**JO:** I'm glad to hear that!

**RD:** Yeah, yeah. Again, I'm sure—you know, being self-employed too, you're sort of, you're a lot more independent.

**JO:** Yeah.

**RD:** It's not like I had to go into work in a factory where you might be with people who were not so understanding or—so my experience is probably different than some of the people you've spoken to.

**JO:** Just trying to figure out how to phrase what I'm talking about. What changes have you seen, from then to now? It sounds like you had a really good start, so maybe there hasn't been as much change, but has there anything you can identify happened?

**RD:** Well, yeah, I've seen—I've certainly seen changes. Obviously, the biggest one being the legalization of marriage. I mean, it's funny—I've been in two very long-term relationships, and I couldn't get married. And now I could, and I'm single, you know, so you know, that's not—but it's just kind of funny. But I see that sort of change, I mean, people just having—being able to express their freedom and their love even much more differently than we could. Even though we expressed it, it was really within the confines of somebody's house or a bar or a pride festival or a drag show or something like that or maybe at the Fall Achievement Benefit, you know. You could express all of that—and there would be, [air quotes] “straight” people there. But you were still in the confines of that sort of organization or place. But today, of course, the expression is so much more or can be so much more public for a lot of people. The social expression that people are able to have on things like Facebook. I mean, of course we didn't even have Facebook back

then, but now people are out on Facebook, and it's not a problem. So, I think that's probably the biggest thing I see is the [air quotes] "gay lifestyle." I don't believe—and it's really been a while since I've really been in a bar for any length of time, but I don't think that it revolves around the bar anymore, 'cause that's not the only place you can go, you know. You can go anywhere now as long as you're not being terribly obnoxious, you know, you can be accepted and have a good time. So, I think it's—that's probably the biggest change that I've seen. And, you know, one other thing that just popped in my head which is... maybe a little different a thought, but when I was single, if you wanted to meet somebody, you would go to a bar for that, too. You wouldn't just go for social purposes, but if you wanted to maybe get lucky for the night or meet a potential date or something like that, you'd go to the bar, because I mean, where else would you go? And, today, you don't need to do that. There's websites, and there's chatrooms and all those kinds of things so—now that's not just different for gay men and women, that's I think that's it for everybody, it's different in that respect, but I think that, in some respects, makes it a little—makes it a little easier to meet people, even though it's from a distance in the beginning.

**JO:** That's—it's interesting you said that. I've been part of another interview where the person expressed that they felt it was harder to meet people now, because the bar was where you went to and now, not every gay person feels like they need to go to a gay exclusive bar.

**RD:** Right.

**JO:** So, that's interesting that it's sort of a flip.

**RD:** I don't think it's harder. I mean, I guess it depends on what—what you're looking for and for me it's easy to meet people 'cause I've lived there for so long and 'cause of what I do.

**JO:** Yeah.

**RD:** But you know, yeah, that's interesting.

**JO:** Can you tell me a little about—Barry prompted me and said that you've been very invested in like, economic development and city life here in Harrisburg. Can you tell me a little bit about some of the things you've been involved in?

**RD:** Mostly things at the—I'll say, sort of the [air quotes] "grassroots" level. You know, if I'm involved in something in the city it's been more revolved around my neighborhood, like when I lived in Midtown or when I lived uptown, I was involved in a Neighborhood Association. I'm involved and still involved in—I used to volunteer for the Historic Harrisburg Candlelight Tours, and—

**JO:** Okay.

**RD:** —that sort of thing which really created a nice awareness of city living, that sort of thing. Harrisburg Young Professional Home Tours. I've either acted as a volunteer or had my own home on the tour. Now, I'm on the board of Historic Harrisburg.



**JO:** Okay.

**RD:** So, I make my contribution more in that way. And, I think also having lived in the city for so many years, I've been able to make my mark sort of by working with people who I've helped to understand home ownership in the city, you know, and accomplished maybe their goals in that respect.

**JO:** Is Harrisburg a city where someone from the LGBT community can live anywhere or would you prompt them to this area or another over another?

**RD:** Anywhere, really. I have yet to sell a house to anybody in the community who has said, "I've got to move, because my neighbors are—I'm uncomfortable with my neighbors." That's for me—my experience with clients and friends—that's, I shouldn't say non-existent, but really, really rare. You know, I probably personally had one of the worst experiences when it comes to that. Years ago, not that many years ago, but when I first moved up to North Second Street, I lived in a duplex and—my partner and I—and the other half of the duplex was owned by a couple—a married couple—who had two kids. And in the beginning, we were really friendly with them. I mean, they'd come over, you know, for burgers. We'd go over for a glass of wine, whatever. And that went on for several years. And then all of a sudden—and this would go back to the—of course it was in the '90s, I guess the—no, it was in the early 2000s—when people started talking about gay marriage. And do you remember the bumper stickers? Marriage equals and it was a stick figure of a man and a woman? Well, they, all of a sudden, they just did a 180 on us, and they were very unfriendly, and they got one of those bumper stickers. Now, you're [air quotes] "friends" with your neighbors who are two gay men, and then all of a sudden you put that bumper sticker on your car? And it just got really strained, and now, they fortunately moved about two years after all that started. They didn't move because of us. They just moved because they need more space for their growing family. But I experienced that a little bit. I mean, they were never really unkind to our face, but it was like this double standard. I don't know, it was just really strange.

**JO:** That's unusual.

**RD:** But that wasn't because of where—that was them, it wasn't because of where we lived. So, I've never, like I said, I've never had anybody in a place where they felt uncomfortable, because they were outnumbered by people who were not accepting.

**JO:** That's good.

**RD:** So...

**JO:** Do you see LGBT people in—being able to make it in business or in political or in economic success in the city, or do you think it's still an area where there's underrepresentation or?

**RD:** No, I think we're—I think we're pretty well represented. I mean, politically we, you know, of course, Dan Miller broke a lot of ground for us, which was really nice. Chris Dietz—I mean I

don't know if you've talked to any of those guys. But, you know, I think, we've had some pretty good—and again, from my perspective, now maybe a young person would say, “Wow, there's not nearly enough.” But—and you know, Dan is no longer in office, and Chris didn't—didn't—win, but I think we're—I think there's good representation. And with business, I just—I don't know, I look at it as a non-issue. I really do. I think—I mean I'm trying—now I'm trying to think of—I mean I do know several people who are gay and have successful businesses in and outside of Harrisburg. They had their businesses—I mean, I think the fact that they have the businesses way outweighs the fact that than the fact that they're gay. If you know what I mean.

**JO:** Yeah, I do. Alright, back to maybe some more personal things. Can you think of any, like, pivotal or important turning points in your life that...?

**RD:** Moving to Harrisburg was probably the biggest and best pivotal turning point for me, because first of all, I was closer to my family, and it wasn't too many years after that when I got my real estate license. So, moving here—I loved it, and my social life really grew, and my relationship with my family really grew. And then, I think after that, I know [plane makes noise above] Can you still hear me?

**JO:** Yeah, we can still hear you.

**RD:** After that, I think it was... after I—my first long-term relationship and I broke up. We'd been together for about 13 years and when we split, and we had a relatively amicable break up, it was just time—but after we split, I went through a tremendous period of personal growth. I just—my personal relationships became a lot deeper with people, 'cause, all of a sudden, it's not us, it's me, and... so, that was huge for me. And my professional life really grew, too, 'cause I had more time to work without feeling guilty about working. So, moving here and my break up were both big growth periods for me.

**JO:** What are some of the challenges you think still are faced—I mean, I feel like you found a sunny [laughs] set of stories and maybe not a lot of bad things, so maybe you don't have a lot of things you see that need to change—

**RD:** I, boy. You know, I do. I don't know, and I haven't lived in a bubble. I mean, I guess I've kind of seen it all. You mean, me personally or just the community, or—

**JO:** It can be personal if, you—

**RD:** I don't know, I might have to come back to that one. I have really think about that a little bit. Because I just think things are, for so many people, are so good right now. I mean, you know, compared to the struggles that—not even so much that I went through, but even people before me went through that—I mean, again, I had really good stories to tell and a really good coming out story for the most part with a happy ending. And everybody from my generation doesn't really have that. But I mean, I can think about people who struggle because of their personal situation. I feel really badly for people who are married and trapped in a marriage that they just can't get out of, because they feel a sense of responsibility, or they love their wife or

they love their husband, but they're just not 100% fulfilled. Those people, I feel sad for, but that's really so much more of a personal problem than, you know, something anyone can fix. They've got to fix that themselves. That is sad to me. And I guess I can say that having some out of two relationships, even though they were both with men, you know, it doesn't really matter, I guess. That kind of thing I guess is tough, but I think about when I—back in the 80s—the 70s when I came out, actually, and the early 80s—the big thing that we had to deal with was AIDS. And not that's still not an issue. Like, I understand that it is, but there's so much—I mean, the awareness and the treatments and all that. I mean, I know people who I never thought would be around today who are perfectly healthy because of all the advances. So I look at that, and think, how's that—how're there problems today when we got through that, you know? How are there problems today when people can get married, when in my day and before, people were firebombing bars in some cases or you know, there were gay bashings and that sort of stuff. I don't hear about that anymore or rarely. So, I guess maybe, I do look at things as a little sunny compared to—and again, not me, but even going back before me.

**JO:** Do you see a connection to the community going through something like the AIDS crisis and the successes since then? Like, those organizations maybe changing once that, like, sort of emergency was sort of dealt with?

**RD:** Yeah, I think they really—they expanded really, because all of a sudden, AIDS was not the gay plague anymore. It became, you know, the Hispanic community or whatever community, I shouldn't say Hispanic, but any community that maybe was a lower socio-economic that was affected. And so those organizations—the outreach kind of grew into different communities that were not necessarily part of it in the beginning. So, exactly what your question was, but—

**JO:** I just, like, people really organized to deal with raising money for AIDS and things and once that need wasn't so necessary anymore, do you think those groups got to focus on other gay issues?

**RD:** Well, I think, yeah, I think people who do things always do things so there were people who were really involved in some of those organizations that maybe did turn their attention to completely different—some people burned out, you know, 'cause I, way back—you know, I don't know if anyone you've interviewed has mentioned SCAAN -- South Central AIDS Assistance Network?

**JO:** We know a little bit about SCAAN.

**RD:** The South Central AIDS Assistance Network. Well, when I first moved here, SCAAN was in its early days, and I worked as a buddy. I volunteered as a buddy for a few—few years and that can really burn you out, of course. So, I think some people probably took those energies and funneled them into something else, but I think a lot of people probably burned out, too, and said I just can't do this anymore, you know, because you suffer a lot of loss. And maybe you went from something that was really negative, like that, to working on a Pride Festival or something like that, which, you know, was certainly much more positive—a much more positive experience.

**JO:** Can you tell me a little bit about your work as a buddy for SCAAN, like...?

**RD:** Just really a little bit, only because I had three buddies, actually. All unfortunately passed rather quickly after I got hooked up with them. And again, because the treatments back then we didn't have like we have today, so it was—really was—a death sentence. You know, back in those days, so... I can remember all three of them clearly like they're sitting here. But both—two of the three, I really only was with a handful of times and maybe took them grocery shopping or out for an ice cream cone or, you know, something fun like that. The third buddy was actually somebody who was a friend of mine, and we had been a buddy for somebody, and then—his name was Jeff—and then he found out that he was sick. And he really didn't last very long either. So, I don't—it wasn't like—well, we don't have those—those things don't even happen I guess today for the most part, but... You know, I know that there were some people who really lived with AIDS a long time and maybe they had a buddy for years. I didn't have that experience, really.

**JO:** Once they would pass away, like what would happen? Would you be involved—I know sometimes the families wouldn't been involved in funerals and things—is that something SCAAN would help with?

**RD:** Yeah, SCAAN was really a great organization, and there was a lot of personal connection with the families. I did keep in touch with my first buddy's family for a little while, but you know, not anymore. I guess unfortunately, you know, we all get busy and move on. But SCAAN was a great organization, of course, it became the ACA, the AIDS Community Alliance, I guess, the AIDS Community Alliance. And I just actually ran into a client, a woman I'm working with on a house who was involved with ACA and we had some—she's much younger than I am—we actually have some common connections going way back to the days of SCAAN. She knew what I was talking about which was kind of cool, you know.

**JO:** Interesting. Is there anything that we've missed? Like any burning stories that we need to hear?

**RD:** You know, there's a funny real estate story I'll tell you.

**JO:** Okay.

**RD:** I won't mention any names, although she probably wouldn't care if I did. But I don't think the name is really important, but, you know, when you sell real estate, and you learn a lot about people, and I did really work—and I still do work a lot in the gay community. But my favorite all-time real estate story happens to be a man who was going through a sex change. And I'll refer to him as she from this point on, but—and I knew her as a she. But I knew that she was going through this—and I don't know to what extent her procedures were, but nonetheless, she called me and said "I'd like to buy a house." So, we met and did the financial piece of it. We were—we looked at homes for a couple of months. In the meantime, I got a call from some people that lived in the city, and they said their house had been listed with another agent for like six months and it hadn't sold, and they were desperate to sell this house, 'cause they had kids, and they wanted to move into the country and blah blah blah blah. So, I list their house, and I take—

and I can't stress how anxious they were to sell their house. So, I take this client of mine, this woman, who was the—going through this sex change—to look at this house. Well, she loved it. Absolutely loved the house. So, we go back to the office to do the paperwork, you know write the offer and everything, and she had her ducks in a row with the financial pre-approval and all that stuff, so we come down to the end, and I got a photo ID for some reason and, of course, her name wasn't on the driver's license, it was his name. And I said, "Oh, this is a little interesting, I'm not sure how this is all gonna to play out with the mortgage company." So, she said "Oh, don't worry about it, I told the lender about it at the bank, and everything is fine." And I said, "Okay," I said, "but you know, I want to be up front with the sellers just in case at the last minute there's a problem." Now again, you've got to remember, this also 15 years ago, so—so—and she said to me, "Whatever you have to say to the sellers, I don't care. My life is an open book." I will never forget those words. So, we part, and I go to meet the sellers, I call them and say "Hey, guess what I have an offer on your house." Well, they are so excited, because their house is going to be sold. So, I go to meet them, and I was a tad bit uncomfortable with them, only because I didn't know them very well, and he was—I mean he had a gun rack on the back of his truck. And, you know, I mean, he was one of those guys—I'm not discriminating, but I mean, he was a guy's guy, okay? So, I go to deliver this offer to him and his wife, and—I—they, like, greet me at the door practically kissing my feet, and I say—I deliver the offer, and I say, "Here's the price, here's the terms." I said, "There's no surprises, it is what it is." I said, "It's a really good offer." And they looked at me, and they're all, "Where do we sign? Where do we sign?" They were really excited. And I said, "Well there is one surprise," I said, "And I have permission to tell you this. I just want you to know that the buyer is a woman, but she's going through this operation or this procedure, and I just want you to know that just in the event something comes back at the last minute, and we have to do some kind of affidavit or addendum with a name change, that this is really, you know, important. And I don't think it's going to trip us up, but you need to know this, and I have her permission to tell you all of this." And he looked at me, and he said, "Ray, I don't care. Give me the pen, where do I sign?" It was really funny. So, we sell the house. There's two more little bits to this story that make it even funnier. So, we go to do the—now, when we looked at the house, they were actually leaving with their kids. So, they saw her, you know, in a skirt and all that stuff. So, we go to get to closing, and she actually didn't even drive, so I had to pick up the buyer and take her to closing. So, we walk into the attorney's office for closing, but I had to pick her up from work, so at that point she was still living life in the public as a man, but, you know, after hours was a woman. So, I picked him up at work, as a man, and he had a blue-collar kind of job, so he was actually wearing a uniform, and we go to closing as a man, and the people are there with their kids, and the kids were little, and they had seen us the first time we looked at the house. So, they looked at this man and they were—the kids were—the look on their face was just priceless. They didn't quite get it, and again, 15 years ago, you've got to remember, it was a different world. So, it all worked out. I mean, it was totally fine. They were very gracious, and—and the buyer was happy. The sellers were happy. What was probably—maybe six months after that—I got a call from this man, who coincidentally I just spoke with today and he said, "Ray, this is so-and-so," he said—now, he called me today, but 15 years ago, he called me to say, "Ray, you just sold my daughter and son-in-law's house downtown. My name is so-and-so," he said, "I'd like you to sell my house and my partner's house," which was also in the city. So, it turns out this guy with the gun racks, his father-in-law was gay and living with another man. It was just—just a beautiful moment in the full circle thing, and here I was so intimidated by this—not intimidated, but a little uncomfortable with this

guy. He couldn't have been cooler and more accepting. Turns out, his—basically his father-in-law was gay and living with a man. They're still together. So, that's my favorite real estate story, and it wraps in the community and the changes that I've seen over all the years, I think.

**JO:** That was a lovely story. I liked that a lot. Alright, can you think of anything else we haven't covered? [Laughs]

**RD:** She's pretty quiet back there.

**JO:** Yeah, we usually have more—just drama and sadness so I'm glad we've had an interview where—with a lot of good.

**RD:** Yeah, no, you know, I—no tears. I mean, I—I've really lived a pretty good life. And I really do credit my parents, my family to that. The Harrisburg community, you know, the gay community has really supported me with my career really well. People like Barry who hooked us up and everything. I mean, I'm just really a fortunate man.

**JO:** Have you gotten to do anything else with the Center, other than this?

**RD:** I have not. I've donated a little bit of money, I've supported FAB [Fall Achievement Benefit] in the past. But no, other than this—I work a lot, that's maybe a little bit of a fault, but I really do spend an awful lot of time working. So, I don't do a whole lot beyond that at this point.

**JO:** Well, thank you very much for taking the time to do this, I really appreciate it.

**RD:** You're welcome.