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Interviewee: Marlene Kanuck

Interviewer: Nancy Datres

Date of Interview: July 1, 2013

Location of Interview: LGBT Center of Harrisburg, PA

Transcriber: Katie McCauley

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Abstract:

Born in 1949 to a Lutheran minister and his wife, Marlene Kanuck married a man, had two children, and got a divorce after 11 years of marriage before realizing that she was a lesbian. In this interview, she discusses her coming out process and the effects that being a lesbian has had on her life. A teacher and a divorced mother wanting to retain custody over her children, Kanuck was not able to be openly gay for many years, and she discusses that experience, as well as her experiences in long-term relationships and in raising her children with those women. Additionally, she describes her relationship with religion and where she thinks the LGBT community is heading in the near future. Currently working at the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Kanuck is also a founder of the LGBT Center, in addition to being involved with a number of other organizations, and she discusses her involvement in opening the Center.

[The first 30 seconds of the video are the people involved chatting.]

ND: It is July 1st, 2013, and my name is Nancy Datres, and I am here at the LGBT Center in Harrisburg interviewing Marlene M. Kanuck. Even though I just said your name, would you say your name?

MK: Marlene Kanuck.

ND: And what is your date of birth, and where were you born?

MK: January 4, 1949, Hazleton, Pennsylvania.

ND: And what are your parents' names?

MK: John [glitch in tape] differently, John Kanuck and Mary Kanuck. My father [glitch in tape], he would go by Reverend John.

ND: And what was his profession?

MK: [glitch in tape] was, he was a Lutheran minister.

ND: All his life?

MK: Mhm.

ND: And what about your mother?

MK: She was—my mom was a housewife and a pastor’s wife, which is a full-time job.

ND: And any siblings?

MK: I have an older sister who’s almost six years older than I am [clears throat] and she lives in Minneapolis—outside, in the suburbs of Minneapolis.

ND: And her name?

MK: Lydia.

ND: And...no other siblings?

MK: No.

ND: And how long have you been living here in this area?

MK: Harrisburg area?

ND: Well, the Central Pennsylvania area.

MK: Since 1989. [clears throat] I moved to Lancaster in October of 1989 for a position with the Intermediate Unit 13. [glitch in tape] Initially [clears throat] in their alternative ed. program, alternative education program. And then took a job with the state, which I was sort of waiting to go through anyways, at the Department of Education in December of the same year, and I’ve been there ever since.

ND: And [glitch in tape] you moved here, where did you move from?

MK: From the [glitch in tape] area, where I lived from 1965 until I moved here.

ND: And where did you go to school?

MK: [laughs] I’m chuckling, because in a lot of different—lot of schools. When I was three years old, my father took a church in Minneapolis, in south Minneapolis [glitch in tape] Minnesota, and I grew up there. I went to an elementary school that was about two blocks away from my home, and then to a junior high school that was a little further away. [unintelligible] I went to [glitch in tape] high school that was a private high school, was a very small Lutheran high school, and my sophomore year, transferred to a larger high school that was actually run by the Covenant Church, and although it was pretty strict there, I—I loved the high school, and I loved the environment, and then fortunately or unfortunately, my father decided to take a [glitch in tape] in Sharon, Pennsylvania between my junior and senior year, and so I graduated from Hickory High School in Hermitage, Pennsylvania, so it’s three high schools in three years.

ND: Wow.

MK: It makes for being able to get along socially pretty easy once you go through that. [laughs]

Unidentified off-screen voice: Now, I'm gonna tell you, talk to her.

ND: Yeah.

MK: Okay.

Unidentified off-screen voice: 'Cause what hap—[unintelligible] in the video, we don't want people's eyes to shift back and forth.

MK: Okay.

ND: How about beyond high school?

MK: I went to—initially I went to Thiel College, which is a Lutheran College in Greenville [glitch in tape] and it's about 10 miles from my home, but not because I wanted to go there. There was some...there was a lot of disappointment in my life, and I couldn't return to Minneapolis to finish my senior year, and so there was a lot of rebellion on my part when I was a senior in high school, and I didn't—you know, I didn't know what I wanted to do. All my life I wanted to go to college, because I wanted to be a doctor, but I was upset by this move that I—for the first time in my life, my grades went down, and so I started applying finally to colleges, and then I decided I wanted to go to the college that my father went to, Muhlenberg, and found out in 1966 I couldn't be accepted there because...the tests—all the tests I had were Midwe—from the Midwest, and they knew nothing about the school. Nothing—and that school I went to was—was so academically high and achieving that even to get into the [glitch in tape] you had to achieve, have a high achievement. And—to be accepted. And I was doing so well I was even testing in the National Merit Scholarship testing, and it just kind of—things slid down, so then when I applied to Muhlenberg, they told me if I had been a boy, they would accept me [glitch in tape] my scores as a girl.

ND: Well, did they explain why, though? Would—that wouldn't have mattered if you had been a boy?

MK: Probably because the school had only been co-ed for approximately five years, and I think they were still pretty well trying to keep out as many females as they could, so. So then I ended up applying at Penn State, and—and got accepted at the main campus, and my fa—[glitch in tape] to go there, so he said that was the place I was gonna go to college, at Thiel, and I rebelled, I guess, again, and I started dating a—older fella from the church and ended up eloping and getting married to him April of my freshman year, so I had had it by then. [laughs]

ND: Okay—April of your freshman year of college?

MK: Which would—of college, right, so that would have been 1967. In April

ND: Okay.

[tape cuts out and cuts back in]

MK: —Doing pretty well!

Unidentified off-screen voice: Okay. We ready?

ND: Now you say you got married [glitch in tape] to an older...

MK: Yeah, he was some—Steve was 27, I was 18, just had turned 18, because when I graduated from high school I was 17.

ND: Were you still living at home at the time?

MK: Living at college, in a college dorm, which was probably the first time that they had experienced somebody eloping out of one of their dorms. Ah, leave it to a minister's kid. And so [glitch in tape] spent very few months to...and we, when we were initially married, and then I went on to go to the Allegheny Community College in Pittsburgh. His job was—he was a physical education teacher and [glitch in tape] area, and so I went to that, and that—that was a community college that was just starting out. Community colleges really were pretty new at that time. And—went there, and the following year—did well there, but the following year, he was asked to interview for a position at Slippery Rock University—then Slippery Rock College—as a gymnast—as the head gymnastic coach. He got the appointment and we moved to Slippery Rock and I [glitch in tape].

ND: So you finished your degree at Slippery Rock?

MK: I finished my degree at [glitch in tape] and—actually it was in biology and natural sciences—biology, chemistry, premed.

ND: And... Are you a member of a church?

MK: Not really, I—I had been going to one of the supportive churches here in town for quite a number of years, and it just wasn't clicking, so I decided to start looking at other churches, but I really hadn't decided on a particular church.

ND: And... Had you gone to a church when you were going to college and when you first got married?

MK: Well, I certainly went—yes. Actually, I do—I guess officially on paper I still belong to my father's church in Hermitage, Pennsylvania. My father went there to build a new church in '65 and completed it in '67. It's a gorgeous, large Lutheran church in Hermitage, and—on—because my daughter lives in Hermitage, or in—near—in that area, I still have membership in that church and still contribute, and—particularly in honor of [glitch in tape]. So—but I don't—the other churches I go to around here are just kind of hit-and-miss.

ND: Okay. We'll be coming back to religion, but let me [glitch in tape] you mentioned your daughter—the next question would have been: how many children, if any, do you have?

MK: I have two children. I have a daughter, who is 42 and lives, as I said, in that Sharon area, and [glitch in tape] son's 36 and lives in Raleigh, North Carolina—just relocated to Raleigh, North Carolina from Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

ND: And what are their names?

MK: Stephanie Susan and Mark Andrew. [chuckles]

ND: And—were you—how long were you [glitch in tape] Steve?

MK: I was married—officially, on paper—15 years. However, I left him after 11 years. The marriage was just not working out—it was pretty emotionally abusive, as far as I was concerned, and I decided that this—I—it just wasn't working for me. I mean, I had tried leaving many times before that, and for various reasons, I would come back. It's hard to leave a marriage—I mean, I—first time was probably when I already had my daughter, and I think it's hard to leave with a young child, but I eventually got pretty disgusted and decided to—even with the two children, decided to [glitch in tape]. And at that time Mark was two? Not quite two, or two. And Stephanie would have been about seven.

ND: And did you remarry after that?

MK: No.

ND: And do you have any grandchildren?

MK: One! Brand new baby girl, and I just adore her. Her name is Kennedy.

ND: And when was she born?

MK: She was born December 15th, 19—2000—19, that's my kids—2012.

ND: All right, so she's about six months old.

MK: [speaking at the same time] Six months old! Yeah.

ND: All right, now we're going to talk about your occupation for a while. What was the first occupation you had after you finished college?

MK: The very first occupation, or do you consider it—just a small [glitch in tape] job or really when you were working?

ND: Really—full-time working job.

MK: Full-time work. Okay. 'Cause I had a few things. The first, really—what I—when I graduated from college, initially, I didn't have any education credits, because again, I had intended all along to go to medical school, but my ex-husband decided to try to talk me out of that, that I would be [glitch in tape] family to be teaching, so I went along and decided to get education credits, and I graduated in January 1971 and student taught after I graduated, actually, because I had my daughter in April of that year—I was—so we sort of graduated together, in a sense. And then, after that—1974, got a teaching job at a rural school district out in western Pennsylvania—Butler—northern Butler County, teaching biology, and it was a small school district, and the school was seventh through 12th grade, so I would have always biology classes, but then they'd—whatever else they'd [glitch in tape] to teach also, so it could be life science, physical science, ecology, senior science—that kind of—I taught all of them along the way, but always bio, too.

ND: And how long were you a teacher?

MK: I was there until 1989 [glitch in tape].

ND: And that's when you relocated to this area?

MK: Right.

ND: And what's your current occupation?

MK: I work at the Department of Education here in Harrisburg—started working there in December 2000—excuse me, 1989—oh, these dates—1989, and I currently am in charge of a grant called the Accountability Block Grant, which is cur—this year was just refunded—meaning current—well, we're already in the next fiscal year, so our past fiscal [glitch in tape] was 100 million, and it's 100 million budgeted for this coming fiscal year that we're in now—'13-'14.

ND: [glitch in tape] years have you been with the Department?

MK: 24 in December. Long time.

ND: And do you have any plans to retire soon?

MK: [sighs] That's a question a lot of people will ask me. Yes. I keep trying to max out my retirement. I kept in a system which—the teacher system, and 40 years is the maximum that you—I mean, you can work beyond that, but [glitch in tape] you don't gain anything financially. So probably will retire soon.

ND: All right. Did you serve in the military at all?

MK: No, I didn't.

ND: All right. Then we're—

MK: I did look into it, though.

ND: Really? Go ahead.

MK: I looked into it [glitch in tape] after I left Steve, and after I got my divorce, and I had custody of the kids. And at that time—this would have been 1980—divorce occurred 1981, so it was probably around '83, '84, somewhere in that time—that you could not, as a woman with children, you could not join the military unless you were willing to turn over custody to your—to the father of the children—full custody. And—so they couldn't—I couldn't say—my parents, who took care of the kids when I was working, couldn't continue taking care of the kids. And since I had already been through an ugly custody case that he brought about for not really any good reason other than I was a full-time teacher and he was a college professor that worked less hours than I did, that after that, I wasn't about to go over and turn the kids over.

ND: Yeah, that would be a lot to ask. Did you, or—and currently, do you have memberships in any community organizations or fraternal societies, profess—[glitch in tape]?

MK: Not really professional organizations, but a lot of community organizations. I'm very active in the community and have been since 19—since I moved to Harrisburg area—actually, Lancaster—I lived in Lancaster—Mark was pretty young. He was only in eighth grade, so I lived there from the time he was in eighth grade—he graduated in 1995, and finally in 199—[glitch in tape] I moved to the Harrisburg area. The—that's when I started getting more and more involved. [glitch in tape] There was an organization—a women's organization, which they called a professional women's organization, that was a lesbian organization, that was kind of like a potluck organization [glitch in tape].

ND: Do you remember the name? [glitch in tape]

MK: I think it was called that. I think it was just called Professional Women's Organization, because it was almost like it was code, you know, becau—and—and that's how we would meet together. Most of the time it was women from Harrisburg. I knew some other women in the Lancaster area, but not many, and so then, when I moved here [glitch in tape] I started getting involved with [glitch in tape]. I was asked—I—I met—I would—I met people through my work, actually—like I was planning a conference and I met Sharon Potter, who started Common Roads here at the Center. And she in turn introduced me to somebody else, Nan Spears(ph), who asked me if I would go and join Fund for Choice, which is an organization that raises funds for women that can't aff—[glitch in tape]. And so I joined that, and I was involved with [glitch in tape] ten years [glitch in tape] and in those ten—eight—eight, nine, ten years—in [glitch in tape] years I chaired the—the Fund for Choice for [glitch in tape] three years, and I also ended up, then, serving on the Susquehanna Valley Planned Parenthood board and [glitch in tape] merged with Northeast—I served on that board—the larger organization's, so to speak. I also [glitch in tape] involved in the Center for [glitch in tape] Center. When I was working at the Department, I had met—I guess—I guess I had met Ted Martin somehow, because he—he in turn told Carol Reisinger, who [glitch in tape] executive director of Common Roads at that time, if he wanted—if she wanted some help somehow with, maybe funding, that I should—he should—she should

get a hold of me at the Department. And I was involved at that time [glitch in tape] Safe Schools money, and what they called the Student Assistance Program. So [glitch in tape] Carol did call me, and ended up getting—I get—ended up getting very involved with teacher—teachers training, counselors training [glitch in tape] nurses on LGBT youth. On—so that they were more [glitch in tape] what Carol found out is [glitch in tape] there was no education on the topic for those folks in school districts.

ND: [glitch in tape] would that have been?

MK: That would have been in [glitch in tape] in the late '90s, very late '90s or early 2000 [glitch in tape].

ND: [glitch in tape] at [glitch in tape] about LGBT youth—were you doing that as an employee of the Department of Ed., or as a volunteer of Common Roads?

MK: Actually, I didn't do the training itself. What I did is, I came up with—through my boss, with my boss—and came up with a funding for the training [glitch in tape] didn't have any funding, and I also had access to databases of teachers and [glitch in tape] school nurses, so I worked with Carol and actually to put together [glitch in tape] to put on the [glitch in tape] also the registrations [glitch in tape] all the App 48 credits for the registrations, so [glitch in tape] Common Roads and the Department of Education. We paid for all the lunches [glitch in tape] for the nurses, and Carol was the one that [glitch in tape] Wheaton College in Massachusetts, [glitch in tape] who worked the [glitch in tape]. [glitch in tape] train, and when we got there, [glitch in tape] for this, they're just [glitch in tape] no, you know, about [glitch in tape] kids, all of that, and we [glitch in tape] we ended up during that time training altogether like 6, 700 people.

ND: [glitch in tape] school districts [glitch in tape] one Pennsylvania [glitch in tape]?

MK: [glitch in tape] altogether. But [glitch in tape] I couldn't remember, but it was probably [glitch in tape] this area, certainly, because we kept having trainings and trainings. I don't know how many exactly over the two years that we ended up [glitch in tape] but it was a lot. You know, I—and it was—it was really [glitch in tape]. The—the number of people that wanted to [glitch in tape].

ND: And when you first presented this to your boss at work, you didn't meet any resistance or he himself wasn't [glitch in tape] someone higher up over him that [glitch in tape] be [glitch in tape] by this?

MK: Actually, it was a woman, and [glitch in tape]—

ND: [glitch in tape]

MK: [glitch in tape] so it probably was [glitch in tape] working and supportive of an organization that gave safe space to—to young LGB [glitch in tape] youth, so—and she [glitch in tape] idea, because of—I mean, you can—there were so many statistics about youth and the

harassment and the bull[glitch in tape], and for that particular [glitch in tape] kids, and plus they—that they’re three to four times more likely to commit suicide, that—I don’t think it was—and part of the Student Assistance Program [glitch in tape] health component, and I had been working with Myrna(ph), who was my boss—I had been working with her on a youth suicide prevention plan in Pennsylvania—I mean, it was just a natural to—part of it, so no, there was no resistance at all.

ND: Who was governor at that time?

MK: When I first initially started, it was Casey, so it was probably Ridge.

ND: Okay. Now...

MK: Who followed—who followed Ridge?

ND: I believe Rendell.

MK: Well, so, yeah, I think it—it was probably somewhere—it was either in the Ridge administration or the Rendell administration, but there was money for [glitch in tape], and it was still coming from the federal government at that time.

ND: All right. Now, our—I want to [glitch in tape] us on our own sexuality. When did you first—

MK: [interrupts, pointing] Can—can I go back and—fill in?

ND: [speaking at the same time] —realize you were—yes! [glitch in tape]

MK: Can I go back and fill in organizations?

ND: Yes! More organizations? Yes.

MK: [speaking at the same time] ‘Cause really, Planned—Planned Parenthood and Fund for Choice were just an early—I think it was a—not only because I believed in it very much—in the organization—because I faced a dilemma [glitch in tape] at one time when I—I [tape glitches a few times over the next few sentences, but words are still intelligible] got pregnant with my son and didn’t know if I could handle—I knew I wasn’t gonna be able to handle two kids. But the point is that I believed that—that women needed that choice, and so they [glitch in tape] two organizations, and then I got involved with an organization, a women’s organization called the Women’s Circle that was [glitch in tape] by Bobbi Carmitchell who’s—who lives over in Lancaster [glitch in tape] and I was on the board of that organization for a while, and they—the main thing that they did was a fall retreat for women that they could come to, and—and have a good time, have workshops, which [glitch in tape] is a great exper—bonding experience. And then after that I got involved with—there was a focus group that—that met [glitch in tape]. The foundation actually, I think, initially [glitch in tape] that we know about the survey, and—but I

went to a meeting, that they were gonna have this focus group that says, “Well, these are the results of the survey,” and the consensus was they needed a center.

ND: [glitch in tape] was this?

MK: The Foundation for Enhancing Communities?

ND: All right.

MK: So—so then what came out of that meeting is the fact that they needed a small group of people [glitch in tape] make it from that point and put [glitch in tape] by-laws, and talk about bo—particularly board members and come up with board—because there were specific guidance from the group that it should come from all the [glitch in tape] areas, like all the different counties, eight counties [glitch in tape] balanced in all different respects, you know, through the LG—LGBT—should be balanced in that respect, should be balanced geographical, as far as what people—what kind of—what—where people came from, work-wise. So they asked for volunteers, of course, you know, and—and people volunteered. [glitch in tape] Martin and Ben Dunlap and David Zwifka, and then they were gonna leave it at that, and I—I’m not very shy, so I raised my hand and said, “Excuse me, I think there’s an ‘L’ in that center name? And so—if there is, I don’t think three guys, as great as they are, can do this—do this and represent the lesbian voice.” And so they asked—they said, “Well, fine, if you’re gonna say that, will you join them?” And I said, “I never say anything unless I’m willing.” And so I did and so really, the four of us met for almost two years to form the whole basis or foundation for the Center.

ND: For this center.

MK: For this center.

ND: That we’re sitting in.

MK: Well, at—at that time it was—we were just meeting and we formed a board, and I think we were initially—met down on—in Ben’s office building down on—down across from...where—where Mike the flower guy works. [laughs]

ND: Downtown Harrisburg, across from...

MK: Yeah, downtown Harrisburg area. And so, you know, and we came up with names for board members and dr—I mean, it was a lot of hard work. You know, we were—we joke about it sometimes now, because we would meet over at—at a little restaurant over on North Street, and—but the other day, as—as DOMA [Defense of Marriage Act] went down, I—I looked at a couple guys and I said, “You know what, that was—this is what this”—‘cause there was a hundred people here celebrating. And I said, “This is what it was all about. This was all those nights.” So. Also on the Women’s Chorus board, I was asked three years ago to be on that board, I’m Vice President of the Central Pennsylvania Women’s Chorus, and a year ago I was asked to be on the Harrisburg Gay Men’s Chorus board.

ND: And that's not a conflict of interest?

MK: So... Ac—no, not at all. Actually, initially I was a little hesitant because I didn't know a lot of the guys well, but I've come to really love them. And they are so well-organized. Sometimes it's a relief. [laughs] Their meetings are well-organized and their whole—the way they operate their whole organization is extremely good, so, not at all.

ND: I'm gonna ask you, just to flesh out a little bit the years for this actual Center, because you said it was essentially in the planning stage since about, when, 1998?

MK: I—no, it was over—it was further than that, it was, like, in the mid-2000s... I—I—I knew you were gonna ask me dates, and I don't even have dates in my mind anymore.

ND: Well—

MK: [interrupts] I think when we—I think that those initial board meetings, or when we were initially meeting, must have been 2000...

ND: Three? [2003]

MK: Three? [2003]

ND: And then when did the—the Center—what year did the Center actually come to occupy this physical state?

MK: [speaking at the same time] Oh, this is a year! This is a year.

ND: Okay, this is a year.

MK: Because at first, we—there was a lot of discussion on the board of whether to have a physical space. We're—we were renting space on Front Street at the Episcopal Church for Common Roads. The problem is there wasn't—it wasn't, like, a lot of meeting space. It was enough space for the kids, and it was enough space for—maybe small committee meetings and stuff, but it really wasn't—I mean, it wasn't even conducive to the—to the board meeting there, and it wasn't handicap accessible, on top of it. So some of us on the board wanted to kind of charge ahead for a physical space, and they—I think there was a lot of hesitation, 'cause it's a big chunk to bite off, when you talk about a physical space, and I have to kind of really give credit to our new president, Stuart, because—and he's not new-new, but he's newer—

ND: Stuart—last name?

MK: Um...

ND: Landon?

MK: Yeah, Stuart Landon—that—you know, because he’s the one that sort of—when he came on—on as president, kind of said, “This is what we need to do,” you know? And I think it was a young, new face, and it kind of gave us old-timers a kick in the pants that we needed to forge ahead.

ND: And as you said, when the Supreme Court decision was handed out last week, there were approximately how many people here celebrating?

MK: At 1—I heard over 100. I heard around 100. It was—well, it went from eight to, I think, 10, and I wasn’t here the entire time, so. But when I walked in, holding a pizza, I had to hold it above my head to get it in, so. [chuckles]

ND: Well, that must have been a great moment. Not only for the decision, but the fact that this place existed.

MK: I—I think what—what was apparent that night, very much, is that when something happens, the people think of the Center first. And that’s exactly what the whole idea behind having a center in Harrisburg was. It’s that we are the premier umbrella place to be.

ND: And clearly you played a very integral role in that.

MK: I think so, I’d like to think so.

ND: All right. If—if we have gone through the organizations now, I would like to go back to—turning the attention to your own sexuality and my ques—my first question would be: When did you first realize you were a member of the LGBT community, and which do you identify as?

MK: Definitely a lesbian.

ND: When did you first realize?

MK: [laughs] When I should have realized, or when I did realize?

ND: No, when you did!

MK: It’s a—kind of a strange story, I guess, in a way, or people would think it was a strange story, because a straight man brought me out. [chuckles] And I think that’s kind of usual—and this was not in a negative way, but a very positive way.

ND: Can you explain?

MK: After I—yeah. After I—after I’d left my marriage, I—because I didn’t leave it for any other reason other than—than what I perceived as, you know, differences—irreparable—[stammers] how do you say that? You’re an attorney. [both chuckle]

ND: Irreconcilable.

MK: —Differences, yes! And I perceived as—as emotional abused, that I just kind of—I was—first of all, I had to find a place to live, because he wasn't moving out of the house, and so I found a place near my parents', because my children were so young, and my work was at quite a distance, the school, you know, and I—I didn't want to put anyone I didn't know in charge of the children, so I lived in Sharon and I started going to young singles group for heterosexual—single heterosexual people to meet, you know, after—after a while, maybe after a year or so. And I met a woman there that was also divorced, had a couple kids, almost the same ages of my kids, and we got to be very good friends. In turn, we—you know, we met a couple fellows that were also good friends, and one of them—actually, they were both named Bill, and so we dated the Bills, and I became close to one, and Bill and I decided to move in together, because the divorce wasn't coming, wasn't coming. Steve kind of decided to fight the divorce, and at that time, you had to wait three years if it was a unilateral divorce in Pennsylvania. So—and—so we decided to live together, and somehow during that time period—as I said, the two couples were very close. We did a lot of things together, and Bill said one night, to me, that he thought—he asked me if I ever thought I was gay, and I said, “No.” I mean, I was just even shocked that he brought it up, 'cause I—I hadn't. And—and he said—I said, “Well, why?” and he says, “'Cause I think you're in love with Anne.” And—and I probably was, but I wasn't ready to admit it, and—and so I think what happened is that I had to really think about that, and—but he was not—he was just presenting it, as, like, “Did you ever consider this?” You know, “I'm not angry, I'm not—” You know, but I think then I finally was—I think I finally decided of—of a label, I decided I was bisexual. [laughs] 'Cause I was living with him, and certainly I had feelings, affectionate, for a woman. But then I started looking in hindsight, and I mean, hindsight's 20/20. I mean, for God's sakes, I could have gone back to—certainly junior high school, and—of crushes, and—and sometimes they say girls go through that, but there was sometimes—some time—particularly my senior year in high school, that I definitely had a lot of fantasies about my best friend in high school.

ND: Female friends.

MK: Female friend, yes. So—but I think what I realized is I didn't have the words. I didn't have anything to know how to acknowledge, or—I had—I had never heard the word 'gay' in respect to a woman. The only time I even ran into the word 'gay' in respect to a man is that we had a student pastor at our church who later—he stopped in—this is when we—we would travel, my family, my—this is Mom, Dad, and me—because my sister was so much older, she was pretty well out of the house pretty early. But we would travel back and forth from Minnesota to Pennsylvania to visit relatives, and one time, stopping in Wisconsin, where they—where this pastor and his wife lived—and it was all hush-hush, and—because he had—Tom had left. And then it was—Tom had left because he was gay, and Tom had left because he was a minister. So it was all negative. And—so I didn't have an—if I had—if I had any knowledge of the word, it was only through that, was negative, and I certainly had never heard of women being together, you know. Even though you have feelings, you have fantasies, you don't know how to put that together. So I think that was—even though I was 30, I think—and this was in 1982 that—19...yeah, it would have been 1982—that I finally said, “Well, maybe I should find out,” you know. And the surprising thing is that Bill was—this sounds funny too—was willing to help me find out [both laugh] or explore this—

ND: A very supportive guy!

MK: Yeah! And mostly what he did is—I said, like, “How do you meet women? Like, how do I know?” I mean, I didn’t know anything. And—it wasn’t like Anne—Anne was very straight, and so it wasn’t—that wasn’t...you know.

ND: That wasn’t gonna happen.

MK: It wasn’t gonna happen, exactly. That wasn’t gonna happen. So I said, “What do you do?” And he said, “Well, I think it’s the bars, as that’s the only thing.” Because that’s what people only knew back then. And so we would—you know, we’d go to the bar in Youngstown, Ohio, or we’d go to the bar—one of the bars—found out one of the bars were in Pittsburgh, and we’d go down there. So—and—so it was—it’s kind of funny, because when you go to a bar with a young—he said he—oh, he was a young, good-looking, baby-faced blond. So he said he’d only go with me on one condition—is that I protect him. [both laugh] And I wouldn’t let anybody try to pick him up. So I said okay. So one time we were at a bar in Pittsburgh and I remember a guy approached him and said—asked—was kind of, like, coming onto him, and I said, “No, you can’t, you can’t do that. He’s mine.” And he said, “What do you mean he’s yours?” And I said, “Don’t ask me, he’s just mine!” [both laugh] So it was kind of a fun time, but what ended up happening—and I did end up meeting somebody, and—while I was still living with Bill. Actually, she was another teacher at my school, but... But I think what I realized soon after that was just short—very short couple months, mostly in the summer, is, like, as August approached and that didn’t work out, I said that it—I had decided that it just wasn’t fair to him, that I knew this was gonna be my journey now, and—no matter how much he—you know, we loved each other platonically—it wasn’t fair to him. He needed it—to be able to find someone that loved him in a relationship. And I did too. So I found an apartment, and—and decided to kind of go on my journey. And he helped me move, and that’s what happened.

ND: Oh, okay. So when did you have your first—I’d say—long-term relationship, or committed relationship?

MK: I met some—committed relationship. I met somebody—

ND: Well, in other words, not someone just for the weekend, or the...

MK: [laughs]

ND: When did you first get into a relationship?

MK: [laughing] Somebody just—[unintelligible]

ND: Correct. [both laugh]

MK: [takes a drink] Oh, I’m not going there. [pauses] First, I moved to Slippery Rock. I decided to move to Slippery Rock. Now he—we were living in Newcastle—you know Western

Pennsylvania. They're very small towns, a lot of them. And so I moved—it was like ending up—what was kind of ironic is I ended up where I started out, 'cause I was back in Slippery Rock now. And although I should have been a little afraid at that time to be in Slippery Rock, because of my ex-husband being there, I guess I thought that was one of the places I could meet women, because it was pretty well-“known”—quote-unquote, “known”—is that Slippery Rock had a lot of gay women going to college there. Because I was a professor's wife there for—from '68 to '78—ten years, I even knew some of the women professors that were gay. So it was—I figured, well, if I was gonna meet somebody, that there was a whole [starts laughing] crew of people there to meet, and so I thought that would be the easiest place to meet someone. And what I found out is, although I think a lot of people at—a lot of women who—who met me and found out that I had come out thought it was kind of a—maybe a kick in the pants to a very heterosexual, chauvinistic male on campus, a professor—

ND: Meaning your hus—ex-husband.

MK: Professor meaning my ex-husband, that they also were very closeted, which—I didn't realize how closeted they were at that time, but they were. So it was among the faculty people, they were open, but not outside that, and, you know, it was a big risk for them, too, if Steve found out, so I didn't meet anybody there, you know. And—so I started getting in—there was a—oh, there was a bar in Ford City at that time, and I went down there and—and ended up meeting somebody who kind of targeted the new kid on the block, so I started dating this one woman. And the thing is, it wasn't—it wasn't—it was a good relationship, but mostly, I think it was a—good timing for both of us, because Mark was in kindergarten, and it—and it was only half-time, and so I needed somebody to take care of him, and I—and I didn't want to move back to the Sharon area, so—and this woman that I met, her name was Sheila, she—at that time was unemployed—they laid off staff from the steel mill, she was a foreman at the steel mill—and so she would pick him up. She would take care of him. She'd get him dressed in the morning and get him to school and pick him up and take him—and—and she was what I call a “soft butch,” or a “baby butch,” and Mark had a great time with her, you know, that year. I mean, you know, from teaching a—she used to draw Smurfs for him, and—you know, she'd—I'd come home and dinner was there, and—and teach him how to catch a ball and do all these things with him. So it was good in that way. But just like she spotted me, she spotted somebody else by May, [laughs] and—so that was that. So.

ND: Okay. And you mentioned, obviously, in the little town of Sharon and Newcastle, there weren't any gay bars. I think you said you had to travel, like, to Youngstown, Ohio...

MK: The closest gay bar was Youngstown, Ohio, or the other popular bar was Ford City—outside of Ford City, Pennsylvania, by Pittsburgh—or going all the way into Pittsburgh, there were some bars there, which was a little far, not—at least initially, when you were just, you know, trying to find places. Actually, the—I was—I wasn't happy with the school system—this ties into why I moved again. I wasn't happy with the public school system, because Mark had gone to a Montessori daycare and he—he was just, like, bored silly in kindergarten, no matter what I would do to talk to the teachers. And so I had decided to put him in a private school, and in—when you talk private schools in Western Pennsylvania, the only kind of private school you talk is Catholic school, parochial school. But since I had gone to private schools that were

religiously based, that didn't present a problem to me—it was more the academic rigor that I was after, and lo and behold, it didn't present a problem to my father, either, even though it was Catholic. He didn't have a problem with Mark going there, so that's when I decided to move back to the Sharon area, so Mark could go to a very good Catholic school there, and the day I enrolled him in the Catholic school, I met the new principal of the Catholic school. And—I didn't know—I don't—I didn't know much about Catholic schools, other than academically, and so I still thought all Catholic schools were run by nuns. I mean, what else, you know? I go back to my experience, and what ended up happening is that night, I was walking into the bar in Youngstown, 'cause my mom would babysit, and I would—walked in to go out, it was August—and lo and behold, walking out of the bar was the new principal of the Catholic school I had just enrolled my son in. [both laugh]

ND: [speaking at the same time] That you just...

MK: And I said, "Excuse me, I think we just met." [laughs] And I think she was as surprised because I had children, and that wasn't in her experience, and she wasn't a nun, she was just laid off from teaching here in this—actually, further east, Eastern Pennsylvania, in the Chester County area—and so had taken this job, because she couldn't find a job, you know, and she had very good credentials. And so that started the first long-term relationship I was in.

ND: All right.

MK: So I was in a long-term relationship with my son's principal. [both chuckle] So.

ND: Okay. I want—I want to talk now about the impact of you coming out. Now, you have suggested, at least, that you probably were fairly closeted over there in that time period in those little towns—Sharon, Newcastle. When do you feel that you came out, and then let's talk about the impact on different aspects of your life.

MK: Well, the thing is, I—I grew up in Minneapolis, which isn't a clo—I mean, Minneapolis is—well, it was just starting to be an up-and-coming area. And I was very—I—I never considered myself a typical teenager anyways, growing up in Minneapolis, because I was interested in things that I didn't think typical—I mean, some typical things. Like you—you like to go downtown when you're growing—when you're a teenager, and go shopping, and all of that stuff, but—and I had a very good friend, who I'm still friends with, in Minneapolis, that we went through junior high and high school—not in the same high school, but we only lived a block away. We became fri—very close friends. And she also liked these things, which I'm conv—which is what I'm saying is the Guthrie Theater, and—and going to see theatre, going to see plays, going to see singers that weren't on the radar of teenagers, such as Sammy Davis, Jr. Going to see things like Henry Mancini and Ferrante & Teicher playing out at what used to be—now is the Mall of the America, but that used to be the baseball stadium, where that is. And they had music under the stars. And those kind of things wasn't—that wasn't typical, you know, and so I had a lot of exposure to the arts, but—so I don't consider myself closeted, but closeted as far as anything to do with gay and lesbian. And so then when Sharon—oh my god, Sharon—it's like, the first time I ever saw Sharon, I thought my dad had lost it to come to that place from Minneapolis, 'cause it was like, where do you go for culture, you know? So I really was in that

area. But that would have been—I moved there in '65, I came out in '82, so in that time I really didn't know anything.

ND: Now, when you say you came out in '82, did you come out, meaning, did you tell your parents? Did you tell close friends?

MK: When I was living with Sheila—no, I didn't tell my parents. The coming out experience—I think when I read about the coming out experience, I think you really do go through it in stages. I mean, the first one—the first stage is definitely coming out to yourself, and I definitely went through that. Then I think you—you go through—I felt you go through an adolescent period again, because all of a sudden you're in a dating—they even—a dating type of—where you've never been, you know, to—all of a sudden—I was used to dating men, I was used to going out with—with men, but I—I certainly had no experience in—in like, well, how do you start here? You know? So it's almost like starting your youth all over again, so I think that's coming out, in essence. So when I was living with Sheila, when—sometimes we would go down to the bar on a Saturday night—again, my mom would babysit, so—and all we would say was, “Oh, we're just going to a bar down in Pittsburgh.” And so—I don't—who knows where she was—you know, put two and two together. And my mom was pretty s—with it anyways. She grew up in Europe, and—near Vienna—and I think, you know, she—I don't—back in, I would say, the '30s—in Europe—the late '20s and early '30s—it was probably a lot—I—from what I've read historically, it was certainly not unheard of for women to have women lovers. And so I think one time I was there in Sharon, and she asked—my mom didn't drive, and she asked me to go to—and take her to a store, which my dad usually did, to pick something up. It was an excuse, because on the way home, she asked me why we always went to Pittsburgh, that there were plenty of nightclubs here in this area, in Sharon—believe it or not, there was a nightclub in Sharon. And I said, “Well, I don't know, we just like them.” And I'm sitting there, driving, and my mother all of a sudden said, “It's a gay bar, isn't it?” [laughs] And I think I almost—I wasn't quite sure what to do, 'cause I really hadn't prepared myself for my parents to—either one of my parents to just come out and ask me. I figured they were just ignoring it or something.

ND: Wow.

MK: And as I held onto the steering—steering wheel and looked straight ahead, I decided, “Well, what am I gonna do? I could lie about it, or I could just be done with it and just tell her.” And I said, “Yeah, it is. Yes, it is.” And—so my mom—that was—that was coming out to my parents, at least my mother, and then—she really didn't say much, but I—but I had found out later, she immediately called my older sister and—to find out, [laughs] “What the heck's going on here,” and you know, to talk to her about it, and “What should we do with your—your little sister, now that she's not doing something else?” And my sister, although we're not close at that time, she probably gave my mom the best advice anybody had ever given my folks, and that is: “Leave her alone, she's probably happy for the first time in her life.” And—so that was coming out—although my mom did go through, “Are you sure we can't get you a psychologist or psychiatrist?” And I said, “No, there's nothing wrong with me! I'm happy!” So—and that—and that was just a brief question, but. It was a little harder on my father.

ND: I was gonna ask you next about your father.

MK: Yeah—

Unidentified off-screen voice: Can we pause?

ND: Yeah, we—

[Tape cuts out. On the next tape:]

Unidentified off-screen voice: There we go.

ND: Now, you were saying about your father—that was much more difficult than—than your mother’s reaction.

MK: Well, I think my dad had a lot of internal conflict with me being gay. I’m not sure how long afterwards—I mean, it wasn’t like, months or something, it was, like, within weeks that I was over their place, and I remember sitting in their kitchen and sitting across the table from my dad, which is where we usually sat, each of us—you know, you kind of end up having the same seats all the time in a family—and I—I remember my dad saying—‘cause he had to play the minister first, because he was my minister also, you know—so he looked at me [glitch in tape] and he said, “Well, you realize you’re going to go to hell, don’t you?” And I looked at him, equally as serious, and said, “Well, you don’t have to worry, because you didn’t cause it, and it’ll be me going, not you.” And I think it was just, like, the smartest thing I could have done, because it lifted the guilt off his shoulders. My dad wanted a boy all his life, wanted a son. I think my parents lost a son in between, although I, you know, they didn’t—they were never specific about that. People just didn’t talk [glitch in tape] in their generation. And—and I know—I mean, there was a cruel—I consider a cruel family joke that I wasn’t a boy and that was—it was no uncertain terms that that was joked about, you know: “Well, John, you can’t put her back, because you got a girl.” You know. But I tried to make up for that, because I—I—I mean, it was very obvious to me at a very young age to try to be the boy my dad wanted, so I was very much of a tomboy—I—my personality lends itself anyways, but on top of it, I even wanted to—because I wanted to be accepted by my dad so much. So I think he thought maybe that was playing into this, the gay thing with me, and that’s why I was gay, I was a lesbian, and I had to lift that burden from him, and I think after I did that there was just not any repercussions after that. He let it drop. He just never brought it up again. And—and when I met Gloria, the principal, in August ’83, they really got to like her, and she’s—you know, she’s very special person and very intelligent and had an extremely good education, and—like my folks, and same nationality background, I think that helped—that kind of helps in that area, meaning Western Pennsylvania, people tend to hang with same nationalities still. And—so it was never a problem. We’d go over to my folks’ house, and we’d sit on the couch together and I’d put my head on her lap or something like that, and they just never—they handled it just as if it was my sister and her husband, or something like that. They just never had a problem after that. So—you know, I think—I think maybe, maybe in hindsight, too, maybe it was they were happy, because at least I was settled down with somebody? [laughs] Because certainly I came out of that marriage thinking, “Well, there’s gotta be a guy somewhere for me,” and, you know, initially it just wasn’t—although it seemed like here, because Bill was the longstanding—it wasn’t just Bill that

I dated initially, and so it was like, you know, like, “who—who’s knockin’ on that door next” type thing. So—so I think they just—I think they could just work and—I mean, Gloria really became the—in a way, the dad that Mark never had. My son, Mark. And I—and I’m not—and she was also very good to Stephanie. The kids—Stephanie elected to go live with her dad when she was almost 12, and I guess I [glitch in tape] guilty enough from tearing her out of her school and her friends when I did that she went—I let her go back, and then of course it was kind of like, then we just let the kids—I had Mark and he had Stephanie, and—and the kids would be together every weekend, either with me or with their dad, but the weekends that we had the kids, we’d always be doing something special. Gloria’s great with kids, absolutely wonderful with kids, and we’d be going to the Football Hall of Fame, or we’d [glitch in tape] picnic, or we’d be going here, we’d go to a baseball game. She’s a great sports fan. And—she’s a wonderful golfer. She taught Mark how to golf when he was, like, seven—maybe younger, I don’t know—and we’d go to—we’d go to the tournaments that—whether it was the PGA or the LGBT—LG—no—LPGA tournaments. Got to know—I mean, got to meet the golfers. She was also famous for that—autographs. And the kids loved that! She knew how to work autographs just wonderfully, and—I mean, they met so many people. I mean—you know. They met all these famous golfers, and she made sure that they met because she had a respect for the game—she probably should have been professional at one time, and—she was that good—but she’d make sure they’d meet Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicholas and all of these [glitch in tape]—you know, role model golfers. And the same with the women, you know. And so it was just a wonderful life for them. She was the first one that ever took Mark to a professional football game in his life. That was his birthday present. And [glitch in tape] I went along to the first birthday present football game, froze our cookies off because his—his birthday’s December 22nd, and decided to get Gloria and Mark to go to the next games themselves. [laughs] You know. She graduated from [glitch in tape] Georgetown University, and she introduced him to the Hoyas, and the Hoya basketball team, and John—John Thompson, who was a famous coach at that time. She would take him to the players’ celebration that they have at the end of the year. I mean, it was just—it was a wonderful life for the kids. And—and I can’t say enough [glitch in tape], you know. And so—it was very accepted by my folks. They saw how well she took care of my kids, and I think that was the most important thing for my parents, you know, is—is Mark, Mark and Stephanie, and their education, and of course she was all for education, too, so.

ND: How did you—how do you believe coming out affected your work life, and when were you first out in an employment setting?

MK: [sighs] I was... I—well, as I said, I came out in—in—to myself in ’82, and that first year that I was living with Sheila, I did—I—I mean—it was a little difficult, because you have no protection in Pennsylvania for employment. You still don’t have any protection for employment. And in school districts, you sign a contract, and the teaching contracts—almost all teaching contracts, at least at that time, have a morals clause, and morality is by whatever the definition that the community holds and the school board holds. So it was pretty scary. I certainly couldn’t afford to lose a job. You know—it wasn’t like there was, even though my ex-husband made more money than I did, it wasn’t like there was money coming—flowing from him to Mark, because there was an inequity in—in—in salaries. So that was—it was like, [glitch in tape] just, you know—[glitch in tape] come out in school, you didn’t, you know. I mean, except for that brief encounter with one of the female teachers—and she really—she went back. I’m not sure

that was a relationship, that was what I thought it was gonna be—I think it was more of a rescuing relationship on my part, I rescued her from this abusive, domestic violent household, and she went back, which often happens to that household, so it was like—it was—nobody really knew at work. You know, and because I lived 45 miles away from work, it was easy to keep that separate. And—so that’s kind of how I played it. The—the one scary time was when I was down in the bar in Ford City, and I bumped into one of my former students—female former student. And I remember her coming up to me and saying, “Oh my gosh, I—I didn’t expect you to be here.” And she had—I think she had gra—I’m sure, it was a former student, she had graduated already, maybe a couple years out of school. So I had to—“Oh! I didn’t know you’d be here!” And I looked at her and very serious—very seriously and said, “I’m not.” You know, “Don’t even—don’t even go anywhere else with this.” And—and so—I think what happened is—even though my life was so separate from my work, I was pretty—there was a couple things that scared me. I knew that, as time went on, [glitch in tape] could come out. And you also want to go places with your partner, you know—faculty has get-togethers with their spouses, and I could never do that. And—and so I couldn’t take Gloria with me anywhere, and—and—and the folks—you know, the folks at the Catholic school seemed to love her so much as a principal that was like—they either didn’t know or didn’t want to see it. You know? I mean, they knew—eventually most people knew we lived together in an apartment. We were living together in a two-bedroom apartment with a young son. [nods] Um, duh. [both laugh] So I knew eventually that I’d have to eventually move into a job where I was safer. And then on top of that—unfortunately, Gloria had a problem. [glitch in tape] problem that I didn’t realize at first. And she—it was getting too close for comfort, too, because she would stop at bars and—to drink, and—I mean, she realized that eventually somebody was—she was going to run into somebody from the church—from the church meaning the church the school was attached to. And so she decided to get a job in Lancaster at a school district teaching. Although that wasn’t any healthier for her, I guess it was—if you know anything about alcoholism, geographical moves are sometimes the easiest thing to do in thinking that if you move away, it’ll—it’ll stop. And so she took this job, and I—it was—what initially was she was going through the process of [glitch in tape] job, I had blinders on, like, no, she wasn’t gonna go, and one day I found myself looking around and indeed she went. And it wasn’t that she wanted to break up, but she—her livelihood was at stake, she felt. So my next move was to try to get a job out in this area. And I started looking for jobs, and it took three years before I [glitch in tape] a state job. The—initially the IU job, but then the state job. And luckily I had implemented a—a program, the Student Assistance Program, in my district, and in the neighboring districts, I helped them implement it—that I got to—some people got to know me, and—and when I was at training out here—they used to train for the program in E-town, at the Masons’, and I was told about this regional coordinator’s job, which is in charge of, like, eight counties, or seven counties—whatever they were at the time—six. And you would work with all the districts within those counties. So I got that job, and I moved out here, and we tried to get it back together, but it was too difficult by then.

ND: Well, what about [coughs] in your work life, then? Did you ever feel comfortable after you started working at the Department of Ed. to be out at work?

MK: Oh yeah. I mean, not initially. Not initially, because I still had another problem that—and of coming out full force, and that is that I was still a mother of a son who I [glitch in tape] custody of who was 12 years old when I moved him out here, and in eighth grade. And you can

lose. I probably in that period of time, from the time I was with Gloria, read a lot about custody, because I was so afraid of losing Mark. I mean, there were enough cases on the books of lesbian mothers losing their kids, or the judge would rule at the—at the minimum—separate, move out, establish your own place, no contact. So—and I lived with that fear for years, to the extent that I would keep [glitch in tape] spoken to my parents. My parents—my mother, obviously, had family in another country, even though it was Communist, but had a niece in Vienna. I would have—I would have run with him. I would have run with him, because—even though it meant totally leaving Stephanie behind, because—it’s just like the famous movie *Sophie’s Choice*. Sometimes, you know, you have to choose. And even though it was against the law, ‘cause I was just so afraid. And then what happened is—so I knew I couldn’t really come out totally until he was 18, and so I didn’t totally come out at work, although that—I still had...I met somebody in ’91, and I—we ended up living together and building a house together, and he was in probably tenth grade at that time—ninth grade, tenth grade—and—but be—[glitch in tape] what happened is when—initially—when he turned 12—and this was when he was in—I’m trying to think of where we were living. I’m trying to picture his world. It was when we were still in Sharon—it must have been when we were still in Sharon.

ND: What happened?

MK: I’m not sure, but Mark came home from visitation with his—with his father, and he was visibly upset. I was always very close to him. Visibly upset—something had happened, something disturbed him. I—I couldn’t figure out what it was. Well, Steve was very bright, he knew—he [glitch in tape]—and he was also, he—maybe he didn’t want to pay for a custody case [laughs] since he had paid for one and he lost, and he had told Mark... I said, “Mark, what’s wrong?” And he said he didn’t want to talk about it at first, and then I asked him a little while later, “What’s wrong?” And he said, “Well, my father told me something.” And I said, “Well, what did your dad tell you?” Now this was over—he had already been the experience of living with Gloria, being very close to Gloria. So...we were living still in Western Pennsylvania, I know that, because he was—he was modeling at the time. He decided he wanted to model.

ND: Mark, your son?

MK: Mark. My son decided to model—wanted to model when he was 10, so he was like 11, almost 12, when this happened. And—and [glitch in tape] so I said to him, “What happened?” And he said, “My dad told me that you were a homosexual and that was bad.” And although he knew that we—that Gloria and I loved each other, he—and that we had never hidden the word ‘gay’ or—you know, away from him—because we wanted him to know there were different people in this—that were in this world. And—but without defining it, okay, specifically. But he—of course, Steve defined it as ugly as he could, and that this was wrong, it was against the Bible, and all of this. And I said, “Oh.” And—and the second part of it was: “And he told me that’s why your marriage broke up.” Which wasn’t true! And I figured, well, I could face that one first. And he never said, “Are you gay? Are you homosexual?” He didn’t use the word ‘gay,’ he said ‘are you homosexual?’ He never said that to me. He never asked me—Mark.

ND: Okay.

MK: And—so he said to me—I said to him, “Well, Mark, I don’t—I don’t think it was right for your dad to bring you into why we got divorced, because that was between us, and we both love you. You aren’t part of that, and you shouldn’t have to deal with that at your age. You know—that’s between us.” And I said—and then dealing with—“Well, let’s deal with the word ‘homosexual.’” And I said, “Well, do you know what that [glitch in tape] means, ‘homosexual?’” And obviously somewhere he picked it up, and said, “Yeah, Mom, I think it’s when somebody loves somebody else that’s the same sex.” I said, “Yeah, that’s right.”

ND: And he was only 12 at this time.

MK: He was 12. And I said, “Well, what do you think of that? What do you think of that idea?” And he said, “Oh”—he said, “I think anybody should be able to love who they want, Mom,” and that was his response. He didn’t ask me anymore beyond that. I said, “Well, that’s a pretty good answer.” And—or “very good answer.” And I just let it go, because I felt that if he wanted to make—take the next step of saying, “Are you gay?” or “Are you homosexual?” he would have asked me directly. I mean, this kid was right on target. He wasn’t—you know—this is now my lawyer kid. [laughs] So he had been—he would have asked. And then, as I said, he was modeling, and I would take him—I would actually take him down to Pittsburgh to go to lessons on how to model runway and all that stuff. So we would always have something to eat, either before or after his lesson, and we walked into this restaurant at that time. And I said—and he walked by as we—you walk by to get your table—and he said, “Mom, are those two guys over there gay?” I said, “I don’t know if they are or not. They could be, maybe they’re together, maybe they’re not. I have no idea.” And he said, “Oh, okay.” I s—and then I thought, “Well, let’s see. If he’s asking who’s gay...” I said, “Well, who do you know that’s gay, Mark? Who do you know that—that—that’s...yeah.” I just thought you used the word ‘gay’ at that time. And he said, “Oh, well, you know, Martina Navratilova, and...” People he had seen on—on—on, you know, that we would talk about, in a [glitch in tape]-versation. He said, “Oh, and you and Gloria.” [both laugh] So it was like, we got kind of included in the group. And I said, “How do you feel about that?” He said, “Oh Mom, that’s no problem.” So that was kind of the acceptance. And what also happened back at that day that his father got into that conversations, he didn’t want to go back and see his dad, because he didn’t want to have to defend me. And I—he—so his dad is putting him in a really precarious position for a little boy, and I said, “Mark, I think you need to at least tell your dad how you feel about wanting to come over or not wanting to come over, ‘cause you should see him, because there is—he does have a right to see you, so if you can do that, and if you can work something out with him, you should.” So he basically called his dad and said, “I’m not gonna come over if you don’t stop talking about my mom, but I’ll come over if you do—if you don’t do that. But I’m gonna live with my mom.” And so that was like—then it was—and then I think Steve backed off, because he knew he would have a hell of a fight when—if this kid—because the first thing they’re gonna ask, is they’re gonna look at this—the situation, the living conditions, you know, of two educated women raising this kid who wants to be there with them, and there’s no quote-unquote “damage” or anything, I—I think he would have had a hell of a fight on his hands. So even though I was afraid, I still knew that—where Mark wanted to be on all that. So—and even when I came here with—and Mark came, he still saw Gloria even though we weren’t together—they still golfed together, they still did all kinds of things together. And she would take him on vacations to these big Pine—Pine Hurst

and all these big golf courses—things that I couldn't do with him, I couldn't afford to do that. So they—you know—I mean, she was there in his life, you know.

ND: And then after he turned 18, because you said at that point you said you no longer had the fear that custody issues—was it soon after that that you felt comfortable coming out at work?

MK: I think I just came out gradually. It wasn't a—like I had—you know, I had a house with a woman—as I said, I built a house with a woman, and I—we had Christmas parties, and this house was a pretty nice, big house—large house and a nice, you know, in a nice development. And so my staff—meeting our staff, which was eight regional coordinators and the boss and the secretary—we threw a Christmas party, and—it's pretty obvious, even though we kind of set up the house as—they used to call it “de-dyke-ing” the house. [both laugh] But—even though we had two separate bedrooms—it was almost like a house built with two separate master bedrooms—but I think—I don't think it was fooling anybody, you know. And I think then finally it just, like, evolved—I just finally wasn't, you know, too careful about it, or something. I didn't try to hide it. I didn't try to throw it out there, but I didn't try to hide it, so I think that's what happened. And it depends on, then, you know—relationships and how comfortable the other person is in the relationship, and how closeted they are, you know, so.

ND: So—is it fair to say that within a few years of Mark turning 18, you felt more at ease after having this Christmas party, and did you at that point become involved with gay—the gay community at all?

MK: Probably... [nods] Probably started getting—well, I—you know—relationships aren't stable. [laughs] I have to say that, for sure. The woman I had built the house with had—at that time, I was having to take care of my parents, in a way? Who were in Western Pennsylvania. My father went through a bout with lung cancer, and at the same time he went through what they call rage dementia. So my mother, who had never been afraid of my father—he had—he—he did some very angry things that really scared my mom, so I was very much ignoring the relationship and locked into trying to care for my parents, and would travel out to Western Pennsylvania on the weekends and what I found out is—is that in 1995—my dad died in December of '95—but that summer and during that fall she had met somebody, and—so after [clears throat]—in '96, I had... I—she moved out, and we kinda—it took a—it was kind of a nasty separation because of the house, and I was more involved with that and trying to work through that separation, and I didn't—I met somebody finally in late May of '97 and decided to—and because the house was a huge issue, and—at that time—and still, in Pennsylvania, you have no protection, really, although I think it's a little better when you go to court and you have the name on the house, even though you're a lesbian couple, I think it's a little bit more fair, but back then it was like, “If you can't take care of this house yourself,” and, it's like, “Whoever grabs it, grabs it.” And she ended up deciding just to walk away, and it went into fore—'cause I—and I couldn't handle it on my own, so it went into foreclosure. Thank god it ended up selling for more than was owed on it, so it didn't hurt me to a great extent or for a long time. But I think I had finally, by '97, like I said, 'round June 1st I finally had had it with trying to repair that or live there in that house that was half-empty by then and fell in love with somebody—love at first sight—and decided to move here to Lancaster, and—excuse me, to Harrisburg, and then I

started getting involved more in the community here. That's when I started getting more involved with—

ND: More of an activist.

MK: Active, yeah. Well, it definitely started with the Women's Circle, and then from there it just bloomed.

ND: How do you feel that coming out affected your spiritual life? How did it impact...?

MK: [pauses] I don't think I—you know, I—initially, I—I mean, I went to my dad's church, because I really wasn't out that—that much, and so as long as [glitch in tape] went there, I sort of went there, but I also—then I had—I had a conflict because my son was going to a Catholic school, so I would attend Catholic Mass, and—and actually, finally, I decided to convert to Catholicism, because it was such a conflict of going both places. And then—it wasn't a good fit, but it was giving him what I felt was—was what he needed. And then when I moved to Lancaster, it—there—he was going to a Catholic school still. I mean, he went—he graduated in '95, so up until the time he graduated, I just attended Mass with him when we did, and he was an altar boy and the whole nine yards. And then when I moved here to Harrisburg, I was seeking a church that was gay-friendly, and lo and behold, I heard about a church, and—a Lutheran church, which was unusual, to have a gay-friendly Lutheran church—St. Michael's—and I heard about this pastor that was there, Russ Mueller, who to this day, I think is—you know—I guess I—we can have words, so saying I really just think he's the great—a great man. And not only that, he was on the Common Roads board at that time, and so I got to know that church more, and I joined that church, and I got very involved with that church for a while. I—and so I didn't have—I didn't have any conflict at all, because there were a lot of members that were gay in that church, and—matter of fact, Russ performed a ceremony—commitment ceremony while he was still at that church, and he could have literally been bounced out of the church, but he felt, because he was—had been a minister so long, and he was about to retire, it was kind of like, “What are they gonna do?” [both laugh] And I love that attitude. “What are you gonna do?” So—but I even went so far as—when I was part of St. Mike's, I went and represented St. Mike's at a—what they call a synod meeting? A synodical meeting is when—there's a—a synod is a group of churches in a certain area, and they meet in Gettysburg, and I went down there, and the church at that time, the greater Lutheran Church, was considering gay and lesbian ministers, and there was a big controversy about that. The synods were voting for or against it. And I'd had a lot of public speaking, but this was still pretty scary, to get up in front of a synod with the head of the synod presiding, and spoke—I spoke for them passing that and why they should pass it. So I didn't see a [glitch in tape] in being gay and my spiritual life. I felt that I really—I took to the idea that Christ didn't condemn anyone, that when He—He—when He—He wouldn't condemn the poorest of souls, no matter what they did. He would always forgive. He always taught love. And I just couldn't come to grip with a god that was, you know, going to bring hell and damnation on people because they loved somebody, you know. Might be a lot of things you go to hell for, but it's not because you love somebody of the same sex. And so I never had—it just never was a conflict for me, and I try to fight for the rights anywhere I could, whether it was in the church or in the community.

ND: Now, you—you left St. Michael's, then?

MK: I left St. Michael's, but it had nothing to do with [glitch in tape], he retired, which is a—was—deeply affected me, although I stayed on and still was continuing, as I said, as a lay minister, you know, the whole nine yards, but what happened is when Russ left, they—they got a new minister, and he's a great guy, he's a really nice guy, Larry—I call all these ministers by their first name because—I think it's because of my father. You know, you grow up with a minister for a dad. But what happened is many of the people that didn't like Russ came back to the [glitch in tape], sort of took it over.

ND: Okay.

MK: And a lot of [glitch in tape] those folks even—you were either gay or straight. It was like, they were gay and coupled—they—they didn't recognize the relationship as being coupled. And certainly—that was hard. It wasn't as open, it wasn't—didn't feel as good to me, and when I said to my—I said to myself, “You know, this isn't a comfortable place for me anymore.” So I decided to stop going, I guess, and find another church. But I haven't. I've gone to the MCC [Metropolitan Community Church] Church—one of the things I was asked to do for four years in a row is—I put together the service, after Pride, the Sunday service after Pride, and I put that together for four years, and it was quite a service, and—and—and I would bring as many churches, gay-friendly churches into it—and as many faiths as I could get. So I—you know, and at one time, I even felt that—that I might go to the seminary. I checked out the—I found out that the Lutheran seminary in Philadelphia is actually pretty open to the idea, [laughs] although Gettysburg seminary isn't, which isn't a surprise around here. And the Lutheran theologic—no, the theological school in Lancaster is very friendly to couples. I even went for a—for an—like an orientation once, and—and I mean, out of the 10 people that were there, probably a third of them were gay. So. But I guess my life—life has taken into an activist mode now instead.

ND: Speaking of the activist mode and of course you referenced early—much earlier in the interview the very historic decision last week from the United States Supreme Court in finding provision of the federal DOMA law unconstitutional. So you certainly have witnessed and in fact participated in a lot of—of activist venues to help bring about things and changes. However, one question I—I do want to ask you is: what challenges do you think the gay community still has before us?

MK: Oh, the big thing is the state-by-state recognition of same-sex marriage. That's the next big agenda item. There's no doubt about it. There's one—you know, I was—I was so emotionally overwhelmed when I had heard that DOMA went down, because it just isn't right to have all those rights, and people—and you get married, and you don't have them. I mean, it's like second-class citizenship. And then, I was talking to Ted Martin about it when I got to the Center, and what I didn't realize is that [glitch in tape] you couldn't—'cause of course I didn't read the whole thing, I was just so e—elated about the whole thing that day—is you couldn't get married in another state and bring that federal recognition—I don't care about the state recognition, I don't care about Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania doesn't want to recognize it, so be it. You know, fine. You know. But bring those federal rights here with you, which I don't understand, because if a heterosexual couple gets married in New York, they certainly are

married in Pennsylvania. So I think state-by-state—that's gonna be that ballgame. It's gonna fall. And I think—I heard the judge that had decided Prop 8, and that's what—that's what he said, too. I—I listen to a lot of—and read a lot about this issue, and about gay issues and gay rights and—and it's—it's just like it was, domino effect, when it came to interracial marriage. It'll be a domino effect when it comes to gay marriage, same-sex marriage. It'll go state by state by state. They're already—they meaning the activists—are already targeting the easiest states. [glitch in tape] going to be—people are going to get married in other states and bring—go back to their home state and sue their states—governments to say, “You can't stop me.” I think that's one way. I think the other thing is the same thing—one of the reasons I wasn't too surprised—in one way—that DOMA went down is that once Don't Ask Don't Tell went down, how can you possibly tell servicepeople—and my son's in the Reserves, Air Force Reserves, he's a JAG, okay. How can you possibly tell a serviceperson that the—that they're gonna—you no longer [glitch in tape] you can be gay in the service, but we're not gonna recognize your relationships. We're not gonna recognize if you're married in the state that you marry in. You can't have any of those rights. You can't bring your [glitch in tape] on the base and live with that person. [glitch in tape] go to the PX. Your spouse can't go into the PX and buy at that store. That's nonsense. And there was just no way that [glitch in tape] that the government or the Supreme Court was—was not gonna take that into consideration, all these servicepeople, you know? And since Don't Ask Don't Tell, I mean, people have been coming [glitch in tape] service-wise, you know, a lot, and—and—they just—they can't—I couldn't see how they could continue that. And I think [glitch in tape] thing is with the military that's going to change this [glitch in tape] issue, because if a person is married and lives in New York state, [glitch in tape] New York state, and they're in the service, and they get involuntarily transferred—because they get transferred [glitch in tape] from the base here to the base in Texas, let's say—San Antonio, where my son was stationed—and then they're gonna say, “Oh! You're no longer married here. Even though we brought you here.” They're not gonna—they're not gonna put up with that, you know. The military is gonna be a big issue, and then the individual people that are [glitch in tape] take on their state, state by state, and I think they're gonna fall. The problem is, I think Pennsylvania's gonna be the—one of the last states to fall! [both laugh] And I think the big issue with Pennsylvania—and—and I totally agree with Ted—is you've gotta get the equality law passed first. There's no way they're gonna give [glitch in tape] a right to marry and recognize your marriage if they don't—if you can still get fired, if you can't get accommodations in a hotel, if you can get asked to leave a restaurant. [glitch in tape] You can't possibly have, you know—get the greater prize without getting the smaller prize first.

ND: Makes sense.

MK: And—and—and so, and I don't mean equality is [glitch in tape]—you've gotta work by the biggest [glitch in tape] first, and that's the equality issue. And you asked me before if I was ever gonna retire—or when I'm gonna retire—people say—my son says, “Retire already!” [chuckles] But the thing is, I've told Ted, and I don't know if he'll take me up on it, that once I retire [glitch in tape] if I'm still in Pennsylvania and not in North Carolina, that—god forbid, go from one state to another [laughs] to have it just as bad—that I would [glitch in tape] work for him and volunteer for him, for equity—because—Equality PA—because [glitch in tape] really feel that I could do something in that realm. I feel very comfortable speaking to people and our legislature

[glitch in tape] have already on other issues, such as the teach pension issue. I was actually asked last year to run [glitch in tape]—

ND: For what?

MK: For Jeff Piccola's office.

ND: That would be the Hou—Pennsylvania House.

MK: Pennsylvania—no, Senate.

ND: Pennsylvania Senate.

MK: And—believe me, I was flabbergasted [glitch in tape] well, but it was because Rod [glitch in tape] had been redistrict out—that's when they're redistricting—and he had already been preparing this [glitch in tape] for a year or two. He wanted that position. But they didn't know what to do [glitch in tape] after he was redistrict out, and I guess—I'd got a call when—I don't exactly know what happened, but I just got a call [glitch in tape] night from the Democratic Senate Committee, and they asked me if I would consider running. They explained to me what happened, and I was—I was so flabbergasted that the first thing I said—which was just, like, to me, totally, like—duh—is I said, “Well, you realize I'm openly gay, don't you?” [laughs] Because to me that would be a—you know, a problem! And they—their response on the phone was—'cause there was like, four people on the phone—“Yeah, that's exactly why we want you!” [laughs] So—and [glitch in tape] they said my name kept coming up and up and up in conversation, which I [glitch in tape] thrilled about, that anybody would even know who I am, at that level, and what I responded [glitch in tape] is, because I wasn't retire—ready for retirement at that time and I would have had to give up my job—civil service, you can't work in—when—[glitch in tape] office. The minute you sign petitions, you're done, you know. [glitch in tape] Senator [glitch in tape] Leach, and I told him that I really was honored [glitch in tape] that this was why I [glitch in tape]. But I said, “I'd be very honored if you took a look at me after I retire.” [glitch in tape] But it's that, or any other position. [glitch in tape] I'd consider running. But it's tough. I saw Kelly run, and it's hard, it's really hard.

ND: Kelly...?

MK: Kelly McEntee. Run for Representative against Marsico, it's—it's tough. There's a real... You know, it's just a huge stum—in this area, it's huge to try to get elected if you're a Democrat. [glitch in tape] Because of the re-[glitch in tape] area, and a highly Republican area.

ND: Okay. I want to ask you in—in closing, is there anything else that you want to say that wasn't asked, or that you feel you'd like to leave as the last message on your interview? Words of inspiration or hope or anything you would like to say in conclusion?

MK: [repeats] Words of inspiration. Well, I don't think I ever dreamt that—that gay rights would go as far as they have so fast. I remember going to the first gay rights march—not the first one in Washington, but the first one I went to. I think it was—it must have been in '84—'84

or '85. And seeing—when you enter in something like that, and you see all those people, and you know that there's a huge number of people out there like you, but everything is against you—I never dreamt that we'd go—get this far this fast. And I just think—I just hope that the movement will continue, it will be strong, and that just like in the movement for women's choice, that young people have to step up to the plate and take our spots, because we can— [laughs] we can only be here so long, and we get tired—you know, those of us who have been, you know, and—around for a while doing this and are now in our sixties, like I am, and just— just take those spots and—and get out there, and, you know, fight for those spots. You believe in it, you believe in equality. The young people today are great. Now just go out there and see what you can do to—to continue this fight for equality.

ND: Okay. Well, thank you. I want to ask you if you have any—like, artifacts, anything that you have, like, from the Women's Circle, like brochures or—they must have put out to let people know when the annual retreats were—that you would be willing to donate to...?

MK: Sure.

ND: To this project for the archives?

MK: I have—I have t-shirts.

ND: Oh, that— [tape cuts off]