

LGBT History Project of the LGBT Center of Central PA

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Interviewee: David Klinepeter

Interviewer: Barry Loveland

Date: December 1, 2017

Place: Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

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Abstract:

David Klinepeter, father of the late Daniel Klinepeter, gives insight as a parent of a member of the LGBT community. He also speaks about his experience losing his son to AIDS and his advocacy with AIDS Memorial Quilt: The Names Project.

BL: Alright. So, first of all, let me introduce that I'm Barry Loveland and I'm here with Catherine McCormick, who is our videographer, and we are here on behalf of the LGBT center of Central Pennsylvania: History Project. Today is December 1, 2017, and we're here for an oral history interview with David Klinepeter.

DK: Correct.

BL: And this interview is taking place at his home in Harrisburg, and David do we have your permission to record the interview today?

DK: Yes, you do.

BL: Okay, thank you. We have a consent form, another form [laughs] which I'll have – I'll let you fill out at the end at – of the interview, and –

DK: Alright.

BL: Just to make sure that we have your permission to use the interview. So first of all, I want you to say and spell your full name, just for the transcription, so that they have the correct spelling.

DK: David J Klinepeter. K-L-I-N-E-P-E-T-E-R, all one name.

BL: Okay, very good. Thank you very much. And what I want to do, since this is a little different than our normal interviews, because we're normally intervening – interviewing someone who is LGBT, who's part of the community, and maybe has done various – various things in activism. Your story is a little bit different, because you're a father of someone who had AIDS and passed away, and was part of the community. But I do want to get some background of your story, as well, so, you and your wife, story as part of the family story. So, what I'd like to do is start with your date of birth and where you were born.

DK: I was born in Penbrook, Pennsylvania, right on the edge of Harrisburg. April 19th, 1926.

BL: Okay.

DK: And I lived there until I was 18 years of age, and I went in the service.

BL: Okay. And so you went to local schools in Penbrook?

DK: I went – I went to Penbrook School and then I went to John – I graduated from John Harris High School –

BL: Okay.

DK: in 1944.

BL: Okay, good. So, you went into the service immediately, then, after school?

DK: Three weeks outta school.

BL: Wow.

DK: I went in and signed immediate induction papers.

BL: Okay, and this was during World War II?

DK: Correct, I was –

BL: Mhm.

DK: signed up for the Navy.

BL: Mhm.

DK: Within two – it was in several years.

BL: Okay, so tell me just a little bit about your service, and what you did in – in the Navy while...

DK: Well, I was never in combat or aboard ship for the simple reason: I had bad eyes. When I tried to enlist at 17, they wouldn't take me. When it came to the draft they weren't sure. So I did know the Navy recruiting officer there and I sort of chatted with him a little bit and we fudged my eye test.

BL: [laughs]

DK: A wee bit.

BL: Uh huh.

DK: And, as a result, I was able to get into the navy. And I ended up down in Norfolk, Virginia, basically for about two years, in the Navy Post Office. So, I never got sea duty.

BL: Okay, okay. So well that sounds like an interesting part of the work, too. Because I'm sure people are sending letters back – back and forth from the ships and stuff, so that must've been –

DK: Right.

BL: Pretty interesting.

DK: Right, it was quite busy at times.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And – and one of those little ironies is, I learned to take orders from a – from a woman because my immediate superior was a – was a chief WAVE.

BL: Mmm, wow.

DK: Now, I had no problem with that, because my mother was a fairly strict disciplinarian at home.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And when us four boys were told to do something, we didn't argue –

BL: [laughs]

DK: --We did it!

BL: [laughs] Well that's great. So, so your – your family growing up, you were one of four boys?

DK: Correct.

BL: Yeah, wow, okay. And so, what was home life like growing up for you? Was it—

DK: I was just sort of easy-going. I was the number two son, of course. I was sort of classed as the slow one, the easy-going one, and just didn't get in too much of a hurry about a lot of things.

BL: Mhm.

DK: We went through the Depression and I – I seemed to be a happy sort of a kid. I couldn't go into sports or anything like that in school, so I took up a musical instrument, and ended up in the – in the Junior High School band playing a base horn!

BL: Okay.

DK: So, I was in Scouting program, and got to be an Eagle Scout, along with one of my brothers.

BL: Okay.

DK: And we kept busy that way, and of course we – we pulled together, you might say –

BL: Mhm.

DK: --the family.

BL: Yeah.

DK: My ma – my dad was able to work steady work and provide, and Mom took care of things at home.

BL: Mhm, great. So, after you got out of the service, what was sort of the next thing in your life? What happened?

DK: I – I went back to a drug store that I had worked as a – as a soda jerk while I was still in school –

BL: Okay.

DK: –part-time. I went back to that and the gentleman hired me as – as – as – a – an assistant to help out, and I worked there for a few years. And then it came to about 1949. I got married! And I started to have children, and – and that job didn't suit too well, and I was able, over the ensuing time, to manage to get hired down at Middletown Air Depot.

BL: Okay.

DK: So I – I was – worked down there for about 15 years, until McNamara and the – the powers to be closed the Middletown Air Depot, and I – I was able to take a civil service test and – and ended up in the Post Office.

BL: Okay.

DK: So, I was in the Post Office and – and I was able to save my federal time. And as a result of it, I retired from the Post Office with – with 38 years of federal service and I am – I'm very fortunate that I have the coverages and the pension that I do.

BL: Mhm, mhm. So, with – with the Post Office, that was at Harrisburg, that you –

DK: Yeah,

BL: Yeah.

DK: And the main Post Office –

BL: Main –

DK: in Harrisburg, I wasn't a – I wasn't a carrier.

BL: Mhm.

DK: I was what they called second story guy. I cased mail.

BL: Okay. [laughs] Good. Well, and tell me about your wife: when you met her, and what her name, and so-forth.

DK: Well, I loved roller-skating and when I – I did it before I went in Service and when I come home, I went roller-skating! And I forget just which rink it was anymore, but I met this here skinny, little, fuzzy red-headed gall!

BL: [laughs]

DK: And there was just something about her that fascinated me, and – and I chatted with her. And of course, I had a car by that time, I was out of service. And I took her home a few times, and I made her – made her an offer: anytime she wanted to go roller-skatin' or – or go somewhere, I was always available. And, finally around 19 – early 1949, I got together with her and the – the family likes to joke the way I proposed to her. And I – I was sittin' on her mother's davenport, and I – I just politely asked her, I said "do you wanna give it a try for a year?"

BL: [laughs]

DK: We'll go, we'll – you know, we'll get married and try it out for a year.

BL: [laughs]

DK: Well, that started to end up as a joke many years later, because every year on our anniversary I would ask my wife "you wanna go another year?"

BL: [laughs]

DK: And we got to our 50th, and we went to one of the gran – the grandchildren's birthday parties, and they asked Grandma how we'd met and all of that, and how I proposed. And she got

up and told them the story. Of course, they all laughed and got a big kick out of it. But she says “from now on, I’m giving him ten years and if he doesn’t have it right, [whistles and points], he’s out of here”.

BL: [laughs]

DK: and I have three great gr – three grandchildren that never let me forget –

BL: [laughs]

DK: –how I proposed to Grandma.

BL: Aww.

DK: But it – it was – it’s – it’s just sort of the family, you know the family joke there, that, you know, I had – I had to – I had to ask permission every year.

BL: You’re on a year to year basis [laughs].

DK: Yeah [laughs]. But she didn’t throw me out at the end of the 60 years. We did, fortunately, before she passed away, we did have 62 years.

BL: Wow, that’s great.

DK: And we also had the four boys.

BL: Mhm.

DK: The same as my mother and dad had –

BL: Yeah, that’s –

DK: –four boys.

BL: that’s amazing, isn’t it? [laughs] So, well tell me then about your sons, and then we’ll focus on Daniel.

DK: Well, the oldest son’s Michael, and then Patrick was next, and then Daniel was next, and each one was more or less a year apart. Then we waited a few years and then she made the comment to me, she said “if we’re going to have any more children, I want to have another one”. So, as a result of that, we had Daniel. Now, the—the first three boys she had no problems with. With Daniel, she had problems when it came to the delivery part.

BL: Mmm.

DK: But, Daniel seemed to be more or less a loner as— as he grew up. The other ones intermixed, they were real active in the — in school. All four of ‘em sang in— in the school— school choir when they got older.

BL: Mmm.

DK: And they sang in — sang in the — the Youth’s Choir in the— in the—in our local Church that we went to Sunday School in Church and like that.

BL: And what schools did they go to? What—

DK: They went to Penbrook School –

BL: Okay.

DK: And then when they left Penbrook, they went off to Central Dauphin East –

BL: Mmm.

DK: with the exception of Tom, the third one. He wanted – he wanted food preparation so they sent him over to Central Dauphin. And he did go to Central Dauphin, when he graduated he managed to go to Culinary Institute in New Haven, Connecticut –

BL: Mmm.

DK: –to study to be a chef.

BL: Mhm.

DK: Michael and Patrick both ran into the Vietnam War situation. And both of ‘em, as soon as they were out of school, enlisted in the Navy, so they wouldn’t get drafted for the Army.

BL: Mmm.

DK: So they both did time in the Navy.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And then Daniel was too young for that. Tom was actually taken up and they didn’t take him because the war was just about done. But Daniel was – was too young for –

BL: Mhm.

DK: –for service there.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But then of course, in those days I was workin' two jobs an – an – and quite busy, so I really didn't follow too much. He was in the – in the Cub Scouts.

BL: Mmm.

DK: And then the Boy Scouts. And he – he was very active but he always seemed to be a loner.

BL: Do you remember what year Daniel was born?

DK: July 2nd, I think it was in '53.

BL: Okay.

DK: Yeah, because let's see, [counts off fingers] '49, '50, '51, '52, '53.

BL: Okay.

DK: Because the other three: Mike was '49, Pat was '50, and Tom was '51. And Daniel was several years after Tom –

BL: Mhm.

DK: so it was '53.

BL: Okay.

DK: But she did have pro – she did have problems with delivery with him.

BL: Mmm, mhm. So, Dan – what was like, what was Daniel like growing up? Was – you said “he was a loner”, and –

DK: Well, like – like I said, I was busy with two jobs like that –

BL: Mmm.

DK: and I wasn't around the house that much –

BL: Mmm.

DK: with him. Of course, they – they went to school. He never – he never was a “A” student. He managed to get by in – in school, and they – and he didn't go into sports or anything like that.

BL: Mhm.

DK: The only activity they – he – the boys did have in school, basically, was their singin'. They enjoyed that, and then the – their scouting and – and, you know –

BL: Mhm.

DK: things like that, in those days.

BL: And you said all four – all four of your boys were in scouting?

DK: Yes, all four –

BL: Mmm.

DK: of 'em were in scouting.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But... I – I really – I don't remember that much, my memory's a little bit – it's a little shaky at my age now but –

BL: Mhm.

DK: but I don't remember the exact dates of what all they did.

BL: Yeah.

DK: I know Daniel, when he graduated from High School –

BL: Mhm.

DK: his wish was to go to Disney World!

BL: Okay.

DK: So, his mother, his favorite Aunt –

BL: [laughs]

DK: which – which he loved dearly –

BL: Uh huh.

DK: his favorite aunt – the three of us went down to Disney World in June. Not a place to go in the summer.

BL: Yeah. Florida –

DK: But –

BL: [laughs]

DK: He – he – he really enjoyed it, and he – while he was down there and – and comin' back, we was goin' down on the auto-train. And comin' back, he says “you know I'd like to come down to Daytona Beach and live”. So, when – when – when we got home, he got himself a job. I think he was a – he went to a – took school for welding, I don't know where.

BL: Hm.

DK: But he – he got – ended up being a welder down here at a place in Middletown. I don't remember the name of it –

BL: Mhm.

DK: But a place in Middletown. And he worked for about two years or so, savin' money, and then the day came: he bought himself a car, and the day came, and he said “goodbye!” And he went down – he went down there to Daytona Beach. And as far as I know, I don't remember how many years he lived down there, and all that.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But then, he decided to – decided to come home. And I still remember, he – evidently, he didn't have too good of a job down there, because he called his mother and says “Mom, send me 75 dollars for gas”.

BL: Hmm.

DK: So, we mailed – we sen – his mother mailed him a check down and he – he come home. And when he come home, he lived with us.

BL: Mhm.

DK: In – in Pennbrook, there, we had a big ol' house there. And – and he lived with us for a number of years.

BL: Mmm.

DK: And he went to another place and was working a welding place. Then he got involved with some people and, I don't know how – I don't know his whole story on this, but he ended up down in Philadelphia in a modeling service. He would – he was a male model –

BL: Hm.

DK: for – for this organization –

BL: Mhm.

DK: I never did learn too much about that, because he and I didn't confide in each other that much –

BL: Mhm.

DK: He was much closer to his mother –

BL: Mhm.

DK: and, so as we weren't really that close, because I was never home.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But he got to be a modeling place down there, and then for some reason or other, he gave that up –

BL: Mhm.

DK: And then he come back home again. And then, he got into a – an organization sellin' skin products! And, I remember he was in that for a while, and he used to go to – to a beauty school or somethin' like that for a while.

BL: Hm.

DK: Then he gave that up. And then of course, in the meantime, he did, somewhere along the line, pick up the HIV AIDS.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And I don't know where or when or how, you know, what the conditions were.

BL: Right.

DK: But he – he did mix in with the community here. And he sang with the Harrisburg Chorals – not the Harrisburg Choral Society, but the –

BL: The Men's Choral?

DK: the Barbershops –

BL: Oh, Barbershop Quartet.

DK: the – the Barbershop.

BL: Hm.

DK: He – he sa – he sang with them for a while, then he dropped that. And of course, he lived... when we moved from Harrisburg, when my parents passed away, we moved out to where I am now from – from Penbrook.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And, when Dan – Daniel had lived with us off and on for all those years –

BL: Mhm.

DK: And when we moved from Penbrook, he come out here and said, “oh, that second floor’ll be real nice for me!” And I says “oh no, it won’t –”

BL: [laughs]

DK: “you’re not moving out with us!”

BL: Mmm.

DK: Because I – I forget how old he was that I – I figured it was time for him to get out on his own.

BL: Mhm.

DK: So he did, he moved into an apartment down, I think, off Second Street in Harrisburg.

BL: Mhm.

DK: So we didn’t see him that often –

BL: Mhm.

DK: until he gradually started to get – get into problems. He was – had a habit of illegally parking.

BL: Oh. [laughs]

DK: So, he started to get parking tickets and he didn’t pay ‘em.

BL: Mmm.

DK: Then, he started to have financial problems. And then of course we didn't know about it at first and he confided in his mother. And as – as things progressed a long – a long time there, I had to – I went in one time to visit him at his apartment, and I didn't know anything about it, but here the – his apartment door was open! And there's people in there repairing and remodeling that apartment in partic – they – the apartments there. And I happened to see a letter layin' there for him from the owners of the apartment. And I, maybe I shouldn't have, but I – I took the liberty of reading it.

BL: Mhm.

DK: He was about six months in the rear on his apartment.

BL: Oh.

DK: They were willing to forgive it if he moved out. And the date on there was about two or three days away from when I was reading the letter.

BL: Mmm.

DK: And he had been – had been doctorin' and had all these financial problems. So I caught up with him, loaded him up, and brought him out, and he – he moved in here –

BL: Mmm.

DK: in the back room with us.

BL: Mmm.

DK: So then he – he gradually progressed to go downhill, and ... well, let's see. We – we used to run – we – we used to run him to the doctor because he got to the point where the – the doctors wouldn't let him drive anymore.

BL: Mmm.

DK: I forget the name of the doctor in at – in at Harrisburg Hospital.

BL: Mhm.

DK: He – they took beauti – they took terrific care of him.

BL: Mmm.

DK: But he was gradually going downhill. And then, I forget the exact date that he did pass away, but he's we – we put him on hospice. And he stayed laid – he was laid in the back room back here, and his mother and I took care of him. Now, by that time, I had – I had retired in '86 –

BL: Mhm.

DK: and by that time, I was retired. So I was bas – his basic caregiver because his mother continued working.

BL: Okay.

DK: But, as he started to go, fail worse, about one month before he passed away, my wife retired.

BL: Mmm.

DK: She took – she took a quick retirement –

BL: Mmm.

DK: and come home to stay more with him.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And of course, things had to go on. We took care of what we had to with the times, and I had to help him get in and out of bed, and stuff like that.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But even before he had got that bad, he had known about the AIDS quilt, and had left us know about it –

BL: Mhm.

DK: and he wanted to make one.

BL: Mmm.

DK: So his mother and his aunt got together with him, and they made – I think they made about three or four from him –

BL: Mmm.

DK: and of course in the meantime, her and I got interested in the AIDS memorial quilts.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And we worked our way in with that, and the next thing you know, her s – her sister, Marie, and my wife, Gloria, are teachin' some of these young fellows how to sew!

BL: [laughs]

DK: They would go down – they would break a fella down – take a fella down to Marie’s in Steelton [Pennsylvania] or bring him right out here and they’d set up the sewin’ machine, and they taught I don’t know how many fellows to sew!

BL: Mhm.

DK: And we got more involved, but she – as he gradually got worse like that, she spent more time with him back here. And I still remember the – it was – and the – we had the hospice people, they come in and checked on us. They did a terrific job.

BL: Mhm.

DK: We – I remember one morning I get up – I get up, I forget what – what day of the week it was, I get up and I said look dear, I’m gonna go down around the corner here to McDonalds and – and get us a couple of orders of pancakes instead of foolin’ around with breakfast and stuff like that. She’s sittin’ on the bed back there with him. When I come back in, she said “he’s gone”.

BL: Ah. Mmm.

DK: And I had gone down, got it back, and that quick he had gone.

BL: Wow.

DK: So right away I called Hospice. Within about six minutes a lady from Hospice walked in the door! She said “I saw you over at McDonalds”, she says “I had a premonition”.

BL: Wow.

DK: She said “I was gonna stop up and check on him.”

BL: Hmm.

DK: So as a result of it, they – the Hospice took care of everything. You know, they come in, took care of everything –

BL: Mhm.

DK: and by his request, he was cremated.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But, we offered to – to have him buried up alongside of his grandparents in Mansville Cemetery up in Perry County [Pennsylvania]. But he wasn’t too close to his grandmother, he – he – but he loved his grandpop.

BL: Mmm.

DK: But he said “no, I don’t want to be buried”. So, the wife kept his ashes here at home, till she finally was about – I’d say roughly a – a f – a couple of years later –

BL: Mmm.

DK: maybe two years later –

BL: Mhm.

DK: We – we took his ashes... Let’s see, she got – she got I think about two or three black balloons and two or three white balloons. We went up to the c - Mansville cemetery, and we released one of each color –

BL: Mhm.

DK: Threw some of the ashes around in the cemetery there, and then went to our old f – we had a little old farm place up there, like a little eight acre place that the wife and I own –

BL: Mhm.

DK: that he used to love when he was a kid.

BL: Mmm.

DK: So, we went there and spread a few ashes. And then we come down to this place here and released the last two balloons and spread the ashes, and she was satisfied.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But then we – her and I, it’s another story. Her and I got all involved with the AIDS Memorial Quilt.

BL: Mhm.

DK: Because when sh – she was very introvert when we were first married. My aunts used to complain, she’d never talk. You’d have to ask her a question and she’d answer, that’s it.

BL: [laughs]

DK: But, as – as we – as we got into this AIDS thing, she blossomed out.

BL: Mhm.

DK: Of course, her and I were also involved..... Just as – as a – as an aside, her and [I] were involved in polka dancing. And she got to meet more people, and got out to meet the public, and opened up a little. But the thing that really opened and blossomed her, she took this to heart with the AIDS Memorial Quilt. We ended up going up to the Red Cross and getting to be Red Cross HIV Instructors.

BL: Hmm.

DK: And from there, we – we kept on – we kept right on with – with the – anytime any of these – these young people needed help with a quilt or somethin’ like that –

BL: Mhm.

DK: or – we got – we used to go up to the – the Quaker Meeting House.

BL: Mhm.

DK: I don’t know how many funerals we went for – for the – for these y – for these young people. I don’t know how many times we – we went to different places to – to different meetings and things like that. We – we used to go to the – the – the Man’s and the Women’s Corps on numerous occasions.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And, so many of them got to know her. She was either “Mom” or “Grandma”.

BL: [laughs]

DK: And I still remember one up there. It was – I think it was a Presbyterian one up at Italian Lake, both of ‘em were singin’ there. And what – and when I look back now, I sort of chuckle at the way it happened. After they were done they had refreshments. We went back and I got a little somethin’ to eat and a drink and I went over and gave her a drink. And tha – and alongside of her was a whole line of – of young fellas in tuxedos, and every one of ‘em – I swear every one of ‘em that was in that [line] course had to walk up, talk to her, and give her a hug.

BL: [laughs]

DK: She never did get any refreshments.

BL: [laughs]

DK: And that – that just sort of tickled me and that’s a true story. Because I stood there, and I waited.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And – and another time, we went out and we gave a talk over at Herr Street. That’s the old firehouse there. It’s a mission for one of the – one of the churches and – and it’s mostly – and it was in the – the – the colored area there. And we were asked to give a talk to young people. And – and they were all – all young ones in there – teenagers. A talk about AIDS.

BL: Mmm.

DK: And – and I still – I still remember they were very tentative. And we explained – you know, told them how you can get AIDS, and how to – you know, to be careful and all of this stuff, we give ‘em the talk. And then when we were all done, the preacher had us join hands in a circle. And they gave a prayer, and each one of the kids was allowed to say something if they wanted to.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And then they – “Mrs. Klinepeter, would you like to say anything?” She said “if the boys and the girls don’t mind, I would like to give each of ‘em a hug.” Every one of ‘em. And there was one boy there that was about three sizes bigger than everybody else –

BL: Mhm.

DK: and I just – I held my breath. I looked at him when he walked over to her. And when he put his arms around her, she disappeared –

BL: [laughs]

DK: I couldn’t see her. And I thought “oh golly, I hope he doesn’t squeeze her too hard”. We went – when we went out to the car that night, I said “Dear, I was a little concerned about that one big fella”. She says “you know somethin’? He was the most polite, and the most gentle one-”

BL: [laughs]

DK: “he thanked me for comin’ and he appreciated it”. And these – these are the memories you don’t forget.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But I – I could go on and on with various places. Her and I took this seriously enough. We would go to the various seminars that the er – AIDS memorial people would have.

BL: Mmm.

DK: We ended up with a p – I forget his full name – the full name of Barry up on Second Street [points]. It was –

BL: Oh, um, Ma–

DK: the three of us used to trav –

BL: Marlin Barry Snyder?

DK: Yeah, I think that's his name.

BL: Yeah.

DK: Marlin Barry, yeah right.

BL: Yeah.

DK: Yeah, Barry Snyder –

BL: Mhm.

DK: and the three of us sort of teamed up because we – we had a – a – a local organization here that we would go along with.

BL: Mhm.

DK: We ended up going out to San Francisco [California]. We went down to the Cask – Castro Section –

BL: Mhm.

DK: where – where a lot of this was supposed to have started.

BL: Mhm.

DK: We saw the home of the AIDS, we met the fella who was more or less the father of the –

BL: Oh, that's Cleve Jones?

DK: Right!

BL: Yeah.

DK: We met Cleve Jones –

BL: Mhm.

DK: and there was one little thing there that I – that I always remembered for me personally. I always liked Kathy Mattea [a grammy-award winning country music and bluegrass singer].

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BL: Mhm.

DK: We were out there for – we had our dinner, we had our seminar classes and all of that. And that night at dinner, she entertained. And of course, it was a long line, and she says “why don’t you go up and get her auto – go up maybe ... and get her autograph?” I went up, and I – I waited my turn.

BL: [laughs]

DK: And when I came to her, I says “Kathy I don’t want your autograph, I don’t co – collect your autograph. But I would really like to give you a hug”. She grabbed me and I don’t think she wanted to leave go for a little bit.

BL: [laughs]

DK: I – just to me, she was the ultimate entertainer.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And of course, the wife and I had gone down to Washington, D.C., which I get – the material that I gave you, we went down to Washington, D.C. –

BL: Mhm.

DK: Her and I helped arrange a bus with the locals here. We only had about a half a bus full of people, but we couldn’t get too much of – of – you know – public people interested –

BL: Mmm.

DK: So what we did, the last week or so, we opened it up to any one of the – any one of our – our friends that had – that you know, that were – that had the AIDS and the stuff like that wanted to go –

BL: Mhm.

DK: and take a companion.

BL: Mhm.

DK: So we filled the bus up with them for free.

BL: Mhm.

DK: We took them down for free. Now we were only down for all one day. But that’s – that’s – that was an individual experience all on it’s own.

BL: And this was the display of the quilt on the – the mall?

DK: That – that was the –

BL: Yeah.

DK: That was on the mall, I think that was in '96 I believe.

BL: Mmm.

DK: And that – and that's when they a – that's when they brought all of – all of – all the – the quilts in from out there in California and had them layin' on the ground. And we were monitors, and you had to be dressed in white.

BL: Mhm.

DK: White top, white pants, and stuff like that. And we had to walk up and down the aisles to keep some people from doing harm.

BL: Mmm.

DK: And of course, that's – that's the one time I saw Bill Clinton, because he did come and speak to 'em there.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And then we – we had gone other places for these seminars up to Providence Town, Rhode Island. We had a number of close friends up there. I still get a Christmas Card from one of the – one of the fellows up there. He's – he's retired now. And we were up to Boston [Massachusetts], and we were up to Portsmouth [New Hampshire]. And I for – I forget all the d – you know, we went every year we would go to – to the – to these places –

BL: Mmm.

DK: to learn the latest procedures –

BL: Mmm.

DK: and things like that.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And another thing locally here, we used to go up to s – I don't know if the – if the AIDS Society People still go up to Saint Stephen's Church or not. Back in those days, now it wasn't particularly the quilt people – you know it was the whole group –

BL: Mhm.

DK: the SCAAN I think–

BL: SCAAN Mhm.

DK: Yeah, SCAAN. They used to go to Saint Stephen’s –

BL: Mhm.

DK: one Thursday night a month. Every – the one Thursday night a month, they would go up there for a dinner.

BL: Mmm.

DK: It didn’t cost you anything.

BL: Mhm.

DK: Anybody could come in for the dinner. Well, there was three Thanksgivings, my wife and I and her sister, paid for and basically prepared the Thanksgiving dinners.

BL: Mmm.

DK: Now we had one fella there – one fellow that was – was – had AIDS helped us. He was a chef.

BL: Hmm.

DK: He – and he helped us prepare these meals. We used to go up there –

BL: Aw, that’s great.

DK: and he – he even would send I’d say – well my wife’s been gone six years now, but even in later life, after we sort of – sort of left us after a number of years –

BL: Mhm.

DK: and moved on, you might say –

BL: Mhm.

DK: we would be goin’ somewhere and all of a sudden, here would be somebody “Klinepeter!” We’d turn around and they’d run over and grab us –

BL: [laughs]

DK: and – and wrap their arms around us like that, and it was someone that we had met up there, or somewhere in our travel, you know with the – with the quilt –

BL: Wow.

DK: and stuff like that.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But it – it's – it's a tremendous experience –

BL: Mhm.

DK: and I'd never trade it – trade it for anything –

BL: Mhm.

DK: you know what I mean? And another thing I should mention about the wife blossoming out, the one that I really remember the most, is when she started out she was introvert. And I still remember, I don't remember which year it was, we were asked to go over for – for AIDS Day over to – to the college here at Carlisle [Pennsylvania] and to give a talk on the quilt.

BL: Mhm.

DK: Here we are, I have a couple of quilts des-displayed there, and my wife gives her talk to over 200 people in the audience.

BL: Mmm.

DK: So, she blossomed out. And after that, she was always willin' and – she was never too busy. If we were around any – any – any of – any of the – of the – of the people like that that we could be of help with.

BL: Mhm.

DK: She was always there, always willin' – always willin' to help out.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But, well I could probably think up other places and things that we did and all of that but I think, in a way, we actually did as much after Daniel passed as we tried to do for him before he passed away.

BL: Right, right. The kinds of things that the – like presentations that she did and that you were involved with, what types of things would she talk about? Would she talk about her own personal story, or –

DK: She would basically give her story.

BL: Mhm.

DK: She would give her story similar to – to what I’m sayin’ here.

BL: Right.

DK: She would give her story of how it was with Daniel.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And she – and the – and the thing is, if she was here, she could probably enlighten you much more on Daniel. Because they – the two of them were much closer.

BL: Mhm.

DK: I was workin’ all the time and he and I – but she – I remember once thing, when she – when she would get near the end of her talks with about – and Daniel about – ready to die, she said “do you know one miracle in particular?” She says “David”, which was me, “and Daniel finally bonded.”

Because when Daniel got sick enough, I had to wrap my arms around him and he had to hang on to me to get him up out of the bed to even take him anywhere or to use the facilities that were in the road, or to put him on the wheelchair, or anything like that. And she said “they finally bonded”. And she always – that was always close to the – the end of – of her – but she would basically give her thinking and it sh – and the thing was, she was so elegant with it, because she spoke from the heart.

BL: Mhm.

DK: You know what I mean? And she could articulate, oh my goodness. She even went – she even went up here to HACC when it first started and took English courses for e – for – for writing.

BL: Mhm.

DK: She was very, very good at – at – at writing and composing things.

BL: Mhm. How many – how many quilt panels do you think you and – and your wife helped prepare in Central PA -

DK: I – I woul– I woul – I – I would have no particular idea now but I knew there were numerous ones.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And several – and of course her and her sister made – each one – I think each one of ‘em made two or three for Daniel.

BL: Mhm.

DK: I think there’s two or three or with them – I think you [points at BL] have two of ‘em –

BL: Right.

DK: Which she – she forgot to put in – they got packed away, and we forgot about those until I found the boxes that I gave you.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But there were numerous ones and – and then again, a fellow by the name of Steven, I forget his – his last name, lived over on Paxton Street. We used to go over to his place and help him put together, and he put together for – for two or three or four of his friends. And then she would go with a – with a couple of the ladies from where she worked, and they would work on – on quilts – on – on the – on the panels –

BL: Mhm.

DK: but I – I have no idea how many they really made.

BL: Mmm,, mhm.

DK: But Daniel’s, in particular now, he – he was sort of – he was sort of – of – of a nut on – on all black and white movies.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And I think the pa – one panel that you have there has the old motion picture machine that Hollywood used –

BL: Mhm.

DK: on there. And he was always av – Groucho Marx, the Abbott and Costello –

BL: Mhm.

DK: You know, the – the comedy types like that. And another thing that was a very, very good favorite of his – I did mention he loved to sing. He knew every word and every motion and every move in the Sound of Music.

BL: [laughs]

DK: Ev – we had a 33 and a third record of that, and he must've played that thing almost every week.

BL: [laughs]

DK: And every time it'd come back on TV over the years, he would watch it –

BL: Mmm.

DK: and he would sing along with it.

BL: [laughs]

DK: And I think there's a picture of that on one – one of his quilts: the – the front of the – of the 33 and a third record, there.

BL: Mmm.

DK: But he – he'd like the – the old things like that.

BL: Mhm.

DK: He was basically very quiet, but he had a sense of humor also. He and his – he and his aunt, we were down at the Ocean City, Maryland, there. And he and his aunt had gone in a drug store, and next thing you know, my wife and I hear 'em laugh, and of course it was rainin' outside, that's why we went into the place. They're back there lookin' at – lookin' at the silly cards. All the old dir – the dirty, funny, comedy cards back there. And the two of them the – they – they – they – they – they were just together. They – they were – they were mates, in a way. You know what I mean?

BL: Mmm.

DK: They just accepted each other and be – besides – I guess besides his mother, that's – that's – the lo – the woman he was the most comfortable with.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But there was tremendous love between them.

BL: Mhm. Did Daniel come out to the family at some point, before he died?

DK: Not at – not at first –

BL: Mhm.

DK: When we were livin' in Penbrook [Pennsylvania] there, he was livin' with us. And, I don't know, there was just somethin' about his mannerisms that I – it felt he – you know, he just – there was just somethin' that made me wonder what was wrong. And we got to talkin' to the next door neighbor lady who happened to be a – a registered nurse –

BL: Mhm.

DK: and worked around with a lot of the sick people.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And we were – I remember we were – my wife and I were on the front porch the one day, and talking to her. And she says “you know, have you two ever thought that there is a possibility that Daniel may be gay?” And I said “no! I – I don't think so!” But then after that, we started to – to – observe him more closely.

BL: Yeah.

DK: And – and – and then we – we talked it over. But we never said anything to him.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And then – I don't know for sure – he told his mother first.

BL: Okay.

DK: Because one day, she mentioned to me, she says “Daniel and I sit down and have a serious talk,” and I says “I – I imagine – I can imagine what it is.”

BL: Mhm.

DK: And she says “yes, you're right, he came out to me, and admitted to me –”

BL: Mhm.

DK: “that he was gay.”

BL: Mhm.

DK: And she said that didn't make a bit of difference

BL: Mhm.

DK: And with me— it was a little at first there— I was a little uncomfortable with it.

BL: Mhm.

DK: Because my generation, fellows— a lot of us fellows, you just didn't hug. And, you know what I mean.

BL: Right.

DK: It wasn't an outward type of thing. But as far as I'm concerned, gradually being around it and her sister never thought much of it. But after she found out— out about Daniel, she accepted it— she, like me, she learned: learned to accept it. You learn to go with it, you learn r—they're individual people.

BL: Mhm,

DK: You treat each one with respect. And I think that's one of the reasons my wife was so popular with— well with everybody, even at work and all that. She used to be the mother of confessor for all the young girls at the office, over at— she worked at Blue Shield. She was very soft spoken, very gentle and if you would ask her to keep a secret, she kept it.

BL: Mhm,

DK: I think when she passed away, she took a lot of secretes with her.

BL: Mmm, [Laughs]

DK: Because she was that type of person, she was an exceptionally good listener. She never offered advice, but she was a good listener. And she always treated anyone— even when you first met her, she treated everyone with respect. It didn't matter, you know what I mean?

BL: Mhm,

DK: And of course, as you know, it was any society. Her and I met the dredges— some of the dredges of it— of society. And... Always— I-I-I met some of people that I wouldn't want to walk down a dark alley at night with them at night because just from seeing them, scares them. Scares the heck out of ya. But, we...and she—she bolstered me to [be] accepting more of this and y'know what I mean? As far as I'm concerned. And we just went from that. And if she didn't like someone, she just simply avoided 'em. There was very, very few people like that.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But, everybody just seemed to love her and...oh, I still can't get over how the fellows, anytime we would go anywhere. These guys would recognize her, "Mom!" [makes a hugging gesture]. "Grandma!"

BL: [chuckles]

DK: I think I'm talkin' too long.

BL: No, no, no. You're good. I'm trying to think what else...maybe to expand on...After, well, tell me a little bit more about the experience of going to Washington to see the whole quilt display and you said you were monitors for the quilt. Did you participate in like the ceremonies of folding the quilt at all or any other parts of the program?

DK: No. No. Basically we would make the quilt and fill out the paperwork for the fellows and mail 'em in. And of course it was all out in San Francisco then.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But, when we went down there...we—because we were going down with a busload of people, we were not involved in opening 'em up—

BL: Okay.

DK: Laying them out.

BL: Right.

DK: And we—we had gone down...Oh I'd say we were down there about six or maybe eight hours.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And just the one day.

BL: Yeah.

DK: Because it was only over the weekend.

BL: Right.

DK: But we did walk around...that was your basic job. Every so many rows, you would have monitors walking up and down to see that people would protect y'know—

BL: Right.

DK: To protect them.

BL: Yes, right.

DK: And we did have a—it wasn't exceptionally bad but—they did have police around there. And you did have some of your chatters and people hollering and screaming—

BL: Oh, really.

DK: y'know, tryin' give ya a bad time. Stir up things like that.

BL: Mhm.

DK: Of course, we had learned over a period of time that you let it go in one ear and out of the other ear.

BL: Mhm.

DK: At times. You don't involve in an argument—

BL: Mhm.

DK: --because you're not gonna win with 'em. But...we were, I could say we were there about six, maybe eight hours at the most.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And they had a lot of tents there and a lot of t-shirts.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And I don't know if, I don't know...I think there was a few t-shirts that were in, in the stuff that I gave you there.

BL: Mhm.

DK: That we had gotten. I mean when we went to the seminars and like...

BL: Yeah.

DK: W-we met a lot of terrific people. Oh my. I'm just—I'm disappointed with my memory. I can't remember the names of them.

BL: Mhm.

DK: Although I think I'd recognize some of their faces today.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And the same with the ladies' group. Now, we were never that active with the ladies. Other than when I—the--, y'know when they were singin'. At different ones, we had met a number of them there. But we were never too active with them.

BL: Mhm. Trying to think of other...can you think of any questions?

A person from the back: I can't think of anything else at the top of my head...I guess, well I guess one of the things, 'cause I know that when we first arrived, you had mentioned that the time from contracting HIV to death was shorter then. So how long was that process for your son?

DK: Well, I don't know. I would say it could've been about 8-10 years. Well, you see, if I remember correct, in our training and stuff. In those days it was basically about 15 years. 10 to 15 years.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And I still remember him—the one time he was back here and he and his mother were talking. And he didn't tell me, but she told me later on. She says, he was cryin' there and he said "Mom, I've been clean for over five years now I can't understand how I got this". But the thing was...and he was down in Daytona, I can't remember how long he was down there. But he was down there for a number of years.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But it wasn't too many years after because when he graduated, like I said, when he graduated we went down to Disney World with him. He'd come home, he'd work for a couple years to save the money and then he went down there. So he'd have been maybe in his early 20's. So he was down in Daytona I don't remember for how many years.

BL: Mhm.

DK: Because, when he passed away he was 38 years old.

BL: Wow.

DK: So he was down there for a number of years, then he come home and he lived with us a number of years 'till we moved out here. And of course, I didn't realize when we moved here and I wouldn't let him move out with us, that he had already. I don't think he realized himself that time that he had contracted it.

BL: Mhm.

DK: After I had more or less went from the HIV to the AIDs. But...

BL: Was he—did he say anything about whether he was involved in any organizations as far as the LGBT community or anything?

DK: No. I've...Ironically, he must've been a little active around here. I've only ever met two fellas that knew him.

BL: Mm.

DK: And one fella said he went with him for a while. Now I don't remember what his name was, he looked...he looked a little, fairly short. He has a bushy black hair and a black beard. And because this was after Daniel passed. I had gone somewhere and I met up with this fella.

BL: Mm.

DK: And we were talkin'. And he says "Daniel Klinepeter. I used to go with him!" But, under the circumstance we didn't really have time to talk.

BL: Yeah.

DK: As to where, or when or anything like that.

BL: Mm.

DK: But I only ever met two people here in the Harrisburg area. Now, he used to go to Baltimore. Oh yeah that brings up another one. He wanted to go to Baltimore one time and his car didn't start so I give him, left him my truck. When he went down to Baltimore over the weekend. At three o' clock on a Sunday morning we get a phone call from him down there. He had parked in a no-parking zone and the truck had been towed.

BL: [chuckles] Oh. [back: Yikes].

DK: To make a longer story short, my wife and I got dressed, we went down to Baltimore. We took cash, which he told us.

BL: Mhm.

DK: We went down to Baltimore, finally located a police car and asked him where the towing place was.

BL: Mhm.

DK: Went over there, had to pay the cash in through the fence.

BL: [chuckles]

DK: Get the receipt. And then the fellow unlocked it, let us come in and get the car. And he rode home with his mother while I rode home with the truck and she said he cried almost the whole way home.

BL: Hm. [back: Oh, wow.]

DK: He was so scared when he called here.

BL: Mm.

DK: When I answered the phone, he said, I wanna talk to Mom.

BL: [chuckles, person in back laughs as well]

DK: H-he was scared because you know I, never thought anything of it.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But I never forgot that either. I never tried him, I never said anything to him 'bout it. I just told him that things happen.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But then after that, he never borrowed my truck again.

BL: [chuckles]

DK: He never asked to borrow the truck again either.

BL: [laughing] Yeah.

DK: And I know it came when he got real sick and we had to start takin' him into the doctors there. He almost had an accident, and he told us about it. He said his leg got so weak it couldn't hit the brake quick enough. Like that. He bumped a fella.

BL: Hm.

DK: I mentioned it to the doctor in there. The doctor said "well, you know it's about time to take his keys."

BL: Mm.

DK: And, I didn't say anything that time to him. So we come home and said, "Daniel, I think you're gonna have to give up the keys to your car." Oh, [chuckles] he didn't wanna do that. I guess it's the same as myself.

BL: Yeah, yeah.

DK: A normal person. When you take the keys, you're grounded.

BL: Yeah. [person in back: Mhm].

DK: But a week or later we had to go see the doctor again. Before Daniel went to go see the doctor I went in: "Doc, I mentioned to him about the keys and he didn't wanna give 'em up". He said, "Don't you worry". The next day, we got the keys.

BL: Mm.

DK: Because he had gotten so weak that he...

BL: Yeah. Mm. Well, so you don't know if he had boyfriends or relationships—

DK: Oh yeah, h-he had boyfriends down there 'cause he used to write about a couple of fellas. I think he was more...[mic moves around, audio becomes fuzzy]. What I think...

BL: Whoops.

DK: Oops. Did I bump that? [referring to microphone]

BL: Yeah, we'll have to fix that. [person in back: I'm not gonna turn off the camera I'm just gonna come over here and...] Reset. [person in back: refind your microphone. Could you pick it up--It hit the floor--for me?]

DK: Oh.

BL: There you go.

DK: Now, I forgot what I was sayin'.

BL: Oh. [laughs] Boyfriends.

DK: Oh. He had boyfriends down there. I think he was-- what I always like was the female and his buddy was the male dominant. Because he did...just like, right across the street years ago were two young ladies. The one young lady had met the other one in high school and they were...lesbians.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And the two of them...you know, hung together all the time. But the thing as the one, she was more or less the dominating, the male factor. She did all the outside work, you know, cut the grass and all that. Where the other one did all in the house.

BL: Mm.

DK: And Daniel like to fuss around, y'know, did a 'lil cookin' and stuff like that. He sort of did like, the indoor chores while the other one did the others.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But, we never learned the names of them or anything like that. Because sometimes, he'd talk to his mother on the phone and he'd say "We went there" or "we went here" and they used to go to the Daytona Race and you know things down in that area there. But like I said, finally, finally he got to the point he wanted to come home. Evidently, they probably broke up.

BL: Mhm,

DK: And he just decided.

BL: Yeah.

DK: But, like I said the one up here I never...I only ever met the two of them. Just very briefly.

BL: Mhm.

DK: That said that they knew Daniel. The one said the two of them had gone out together to different places.

BL: Yeah. Okay.

DK: But see all this other stuff with the Saint Stevens and stuff like that was after he was gone.

BL: Mhm. And how did you, like, connect with Bar—with Marlon Barry Snyder? How did you find out about him and what he was doing?

DK: Basically, through SCAAN.

BL: Okay.

DK: Yeah, I forget how we made the contact with SCAAN. And stuff like...I think the wife had to have met someone and they were talkin' about it and they said somethin' to me. Because I was busy workin' all the time and she-she was talkin' with some of her lady friends and stuff like that and found out about it and checked up on it.

BL: Mhm.

DK: And I, I guess probably went to a meeting or somethin'—maybe one of the dinners, or meetings or somethin' like that and met Barry.

BL: Mhm.

DK: Of course, we always knew him as Barry.

BL: Right.

DK: Yeah, he used to be in a—live in a great big stone house up on Second Street there.

BL: Mhm.

DK: Half a double.

BL: Mhm.

DK: But, he hauled us around a number of places. We'd gone up to Binghamton New York for a seminar up there.

BL: Wow.

DK: He had a heavy foot though.

BL: [laughs]

DK: [laughs]. He had a heavy foot and he, ironically—you know they talk about being in the military—he was in Vietnam.

BL: Mm.

DK: He was a Vietnam veteran I remember that. Because you know, sometimes they would make comments about gays and service and like that.

BL: Mhm.

DK: [chuckles] He says, "I was in."

BL: Mhm.

DK: And I had met several other ones [LGBT people] who were in.

BL: Okay. Anything else that you can think of that you wanted to add about your experience?

DK: Well, it was a learning experience. A deadly learning experience. But there's all kinds of people in this world. And I guess...I've learned a lot from it. I've learned to accept people. My wife taught me to how to be more respectful to people. Not argue with 'em all the time. And things like that. But you have to go with what you're given. And of course, I could get off on a soapbox on that too. With the young people today, even with the married and all that stuff.

Because I'm the old generation and we went through the Depression and stuff like that. We had...my mom and dad had four boys, my dad run trolley car. He worked the extra board so he could get a little more hours in, a little more money. We never starved. We always managed to pay our bills. And of course, we also managed to do our duty to our country because all of us boys were in service. My oldest brother was in India for three years in the Army, I was in the Navy a couple years. My brother, he was a year younger, he sailed around Gibraltar in World War II in the Navy. My youngest brother was over, wassin the Navy, sailed the Atlantic. My two oldest boys Mike and Pat were both in the Navy. Mike was in six years in Submarines, Pat did four years in states here jockeying a crash truck. So, you know, you do what's expected of ya.

BL: Mhm.

DK: Now I'm getting' off on a tangent.

BL: [chuckles] Well, thank you for your service. Thank you for your story today.

DK: Well, I don't know. You probably have to chop it up a bit.

BL: [laughs] Well, I think it was very interesting and very useful and very heartfelt. We appreciate your sharing all that with us.

DK: How disappointed I missed your last dinner out there.

BL: Oh yes.

DK: At the church.

BL: Oh yeah, right.

DK: You just had one here a few weeks ago, didn't you?

BL: I think so. With the Women's Chorus maybe?

DK: Yeah, Women's Chorus.

BL: Yeah.

DK: I was gonna go to those but well, I have a pretty busy schedule.

BL: Yeah.

DK: [takes out his planner from his sweater and shows them]

BL: Wow. Yes. [laughs]

DK: Now see, this...

BL: [chuckles] A lot of activities.

DK: Well, I don't know if you, you might as well turn that off. I'm supposed to be, possibly moving. At one of those two weeks there.

BL: Okay, we can. [back person: You ready?]

DK: Yup cut it. Here's where I'm gonna be livin.

BL: Oh.

DK: I'm gonna be livin' right next door to my grand...

[tape cuts]