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Title: LGBT Oral History: Laury McIntyre

Date: March 29, 2015

Location: LGBT Oral History – McIntyre, Laury - 080

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Interviewee: Laury McIntyre

Interviewer: Karin Carthins

Date: March 29, 2015

Location: Bosler Hall at Dickinson College

Transcriber: Karin Carthins

Proofreader: Michelle Clinger June 25, 2015

Abstract:

Laury was born in New Port Beach, California on March 20, 1961. She is the middle child with two brothers from a Presbyterian home. Laurie and her current partner Jan are not married and do not live together. She currently resides in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and is the Director of the High School Outreach Program at the Antonelli Art and Photography Institute in Erdenheim, PA.

Karin Carthins: This project is focused on collecting and recording the individual stories of LGBT people of Central Pennsylvania during the latter half of the 20th Century and the first few years of the 21st Century. My name is Karin Carthins and the narrator of this interview is Laury McIntyre. This interview is being held at Dickinson College's Bosler Hall. And today's date is March 29, 2015. May I have your permission to conduct this interview?

Laury McIntyre: You do.

KC: Also, please be aware that you are able to stop this interview at any point in time. After this interview is complete you will have the opportunity to decide how the material will be preserved and used. May you start by introducing yourself?

LM: Well my name is Laury McIntire. Legally my name is Laura Lee McIntyre.

KC: May you spell that for the record?

LM: Sure. Laury is actually spelled L-a-u-r-y. McIntyre is M-c-I-n-t-y-r-e.

KC: Okay. And may you please state your date of birth?

LM: March 20, 1961.

KC: Now may you allow me to gain some insight on your family origin and early development? This may include schooling, religion, family connections, and discovery of your sexuality.

LM: Wow [eye widen] okay. Well I was actually born in New Port Beach, California. My father is actually a graduate of Dickinson College. And after graduation he worked for a company called J.B. J.B. Cot or J.B. Lippincot Company. And he was a sales person in the publishing industry that took him out to California. Hence forth, where I was born. I have two older brothers. One who is a half brother, one who is a full brother. And we all got schlept out to California. We were only out there for about a year, so I don't even remember the experience and then came back to the Philadelphia suburbs in Fort Washington, Pennsylvania. Growing up

I guess we were Presbyterian. I remember going to the “First Presbyterian Church in Flowertown, Pennsylvania”, [mockingly] where I never wanted to wear skirts and dresses because the stockings/tights that my Mom would pull up was kind of sagged down and never felt comfortable. [laughs] I remember those battles and that’s...How far do you want me to go? [laughing]

KC: Go as long as you want. May you spell your parents’ names out for the record?

LM: Sure. Its Mary obviously M-a-r-y and Robert, R-o-b-e-r-t.

KC: And the same last name?

LM: Same last name. [nodding]

KC: And your siblings names?

LM: Robert Mack Lee is my eldest brother, “Bobby” and he passed away last year and my other brother is Michael, M-i-c-h-a-e-l and he is about 3 years younger and he lives out in-Cali-South Carolina now.

KC: And how far did you go with schooling?

LM: I have a graduate degree. I started out after high school at the local Community College. It actually took me four years to finish up. I was I have always been a working student. there was a-- I was having a hard time deciding whether or not I wanted to continue on for my Bachelor’s Degree and one of the deciding factors is, I remember when I came, when I was just starting to come out, going to a really seedy bar in Philadelphia called “Sneakers”. I don’t think it’s there anymore. But it took all the bravery I had to, because it was just me, to go out to this place and I remember, and it left, such an impression [laughs] it made me continue my education. It was a old, butch bar and there were these very tough, blue collar 7 to 3 workers. You know, whether they were factory workers and that’s nothing derogatory towards them but, they were tough. And their whole existence was getting through their shift, and blowing their whole money on the beer that they drank at this seedy bar. And the few experiences that they had and for me that was not what I wanted to do with my life. And so I continued my education at Temple [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania] and graduated. And then went into the working world but, then I went back to school [laughs] and I completed my graduate degree at Penn State Harrisburg.

KC: And what was your major?

LM: I was General Studies in my Undergrad, in my Associate Degree I was Marketing and Distributive Education major at Temple, and I studied Training and Development. So it’s always been very wrapped [circular motion with hands] around business, marketing, and education. I started out as an Art major but I didn’t think I had the chutzpah and so I really loved marketing and promoting things, and I love education. And oddly enough my professional career has kind of wrapped around [circular motion with hands] that circle.

KC: I know you mentioned some religion earlier, so what is your religious affiliation?

LM: Well I wouldn't say-I was brought up Presbyterian and then I remember my dad going, taking us to Gloria Day Lutheran Church and, but I never really caught on to the dogma of religion. I do remember when I was twenty five and I believe I was living out here in Harrisburg at the time that I reading Shirley MacLaine's, what was it? Was it "Gone With the Light?" or one of her books. "Out on a Limb." That's right. And having an epiphany of a different way of thinking. And that took me on a lifelong search of probably as many metaphysical, eastern philosophy, spiritual books, even to this day, non-stop. And digging and digging and digging so I don't necessarily consider myself religious. I am deeply spiritual. I was I was a member for a while, I guess I still am, with Unity Church, but it's Non-Denominational. So I am I am more of a believer of that we are all born Divine. That we are all spiritual beings living a human experience. So that would probably wrap that philosophy up.

KC: What is your occupational history?

LM: After graduating college I worked for the Art Institute of Philadelphia, in downtown Philadelphia as a high school Admissions Representative. What that entailed was we learned presentations to promote their art and photography and interior design programs and I would go and schedule presentations in high school classrooms and do that for a living, for 9 months out of the year, and then during the summer months we would actually re-design the whole program again so we'd have something new the next year. Now that was, I learned that job old school, we actually, before cameras and everything else we had these big boards that we would take original art work and put them on the boards to display in the classroom. I actually schlepped around a 35 millimeter film. And I actually know how to thread one of those cameras that are probably in your archives today. And that's what we would show. Now since then I moved out to, I left there, and moved out to Harrisburg. I actually worked for which is now Verizon but it was Bell Yellow or Bell Yellow Pages and I sold directory advertising for yellow page books. And I hated it. I was very good at it. But I hated it. I had a couple of other sales jobs and then thank goodness I landed back in a high school admissions again, this time for Culinary School, in Baltimore, doing the same thing I did for the Art Institute. And once again I loved it. I actually kind of, I was one I was their top recruiter, their top high school person, bringing in the most leads. I would actually go in and do little duck swan demonstrations, do things in (gormage ph), and plate decorations. I actually brought in demos into the classroom. And then as I was working on my graduate degree the partner that I was involved with, at the time, wanted to go in and have their own sign business. And prior to that she also had a cleaning business. Which actually helped to pay for my graduate degree. So after I left the culinary school and then I actually cleaned a lot of toilets, holding graduate degree, and worked that very, very diligently. I didn't like it. And then we opened up our own sign business. And that lasted for about 3 years and then 9-11 hit and all the businesses kind of went. The sign business went down, the cleaning business leveled, so we closed the sign business and kept the cleaning business for another year. And finally after my mom passed on, I had enough umpha to say, "This is crazy!" I left the cleaning business, I left her, I moved and I worked for the company I now work for, Antonelli Institute, which is an Art and Photography school. And again, I went back into high school admissions. And loved it. And now I'm the Director of their High School Admissions Program. It's like starting out and ending up in the same spot, just with a whole lot more experience.

[video cut out]

KC: What is your connection to the LGBT Community?

LM: Let's see, I moved out to Harrisburg when I was doing my grad work and once I was involved with the current partner that I did all that crazy cleaning stuff and I didn't do anything cause all I was doing was working 100 hours a week. So, I can appreciate you when you're working fulltime and going to school. I lived the same life for many, many years. So I really wasn't involved at all. I was in a 13 year relationship that should have just lasted three years. But then after that ended and when I worked for Antonelli, I got involved with another women actually who was the publisher of The Lavender Letter. And I started getting more involved in the community and I was actually rather thrilled because I was like "Oh my gosh" I had, everything was new. I had a life. I actually didn't work on weekends anymore. I wasn't working a hundred hour work week. I was back doing the job that I loved so having a social life and meeting people that was amazing. And then I joined the Central Pennsylvania Women's Chorus. And which I'm still a member today. And that's what really brought me into the LGBT Community through that organization, then I served on a few boards, for the Women's Chorus Board. I was also, involved in the Women's Circle, on their board and just... Judy, my partner at the time was involved in the Stonewall Democrats, doing The Lavender Letter. She was very, very active and so living, now I never had anything to do with The Letter, other than making a few suggestions, but, I never really handled that, I just watched it. And so that's when I got more involved in the community itself. Which was always a very positive experience and sometimes very frustrating too. But at the same time, it was very nice to be out and about and active. And the Women's Chorus is still where my passion is and I think through the music, that has been a very steadfast organization. And same thing, I've, we're also, very connected with the Men's Chorus as well.

KC: Would you mind recounting your coming out story for me?

LM: [smiles] That was when I was still living in Philadelphia. I didn't come out till I was 21. Growing up, if I, thank God I was involved with Marching Band, because I wanted nothing to do with boys. It just didn't, jive with me I think, the few ya know boyfriends I had, I got rid of as soon as I could [laughs]. What are you gonna do with em'? Ya know, no idea. I was also molested as a little kid, by a neighbor. And I think that probably led to my non interest of anything sexual. In fact, for years I thought I was asexual, once I learned what that word meant [laughs]. And the thing that saved me in my high school years was Marching Band. And that's where I found my sense of community, it was where I really got to experience the arts and I threw myself into that and we were the "Award Winning Marching Cardinals" [laughs]. And so I had a great time with that. Then once I got into Community College. Let's see, coming out lemme... I got very, very drunk on my 21st birthday. It was also my mother's, my parent's had divorced, and my mother was getting re-married, she also got re-married on my 21st birthday. And my step brothers I remember giving me a goose that they picked up at a local farm as a birthday present. And I remember taking this goose, or this yeah it was a Canadian goose. And taking it back with me and putting it in my father's bathroom overnight [laughs]. I did. And uhh my best friend at the time Susan Kirby was with me and after everybody, my father was gone that night and my brother wasn't home so Susan and I just sat around and drank champagne.

And It wasn't me but, one thing led to another on her part and all of a sudden it was like the world opened up. And I was like "Oh my gosh! This is what...Is this what they're talking about? Oh my gosh. Well this is very different. I like this." And I remember talking with Susan on the phone the next day and she was, she was really rattled cause she was like, "Oh my gosh, I went over a line" and she felt she had definitely distanced the friendship cause she was just freaked out and me on the other hand, I was like, "Wow, you opened that door! [laughs]". So, but, I didn't know what to do with it. So it was, I took me a while to figure things out and my best friend at the time, his name was also Steven Macintyre, spelled differently. And he was gay, and we hit it off. We were friends going to community college together. So, every weekend we would drive up to New Hope, Pennsylvania because those were the only mixed bars, that were both lesbian and gay at the time, and there was a place called The Prelude. And we would go there. Every weekend. And it was so funny because they would have, the guys would hang out upstairs and then the girls would hang out downstairs and the guys always referred to that as "The Pond" [laughs]. And ya know "the fishes" so to speak. And it was very separated, even though it was together it was very separated. And so that's where I met a number of different women off and on but I was always looking for love in all the wrong places. And it was a while until I finally landed myself in, my, one of many dysfunctional relationships. Like most of us do. So, so, I was late in life.

KC: Because of how you identify sexually, what issues have influenced or effect other aspects of your life?

LM: Hmm. [Long pause]. For me, I think it closed me off. And I don't know as much is I just didn't share that part of myself. I didn't share that part of myself with my, my parents. Now, I lived with my brother, so my brother helped to come out, so to speak. Helped me come out so to speak vicariously through my parents, I'm sure. But we still didn't talk about it. That was the big thing in that you know growing up in the 60's you just don't talk about stuff. So all of that got shoved into whatever closet. So I lived, dual lives. It's very different today, but then I didn't bring that to work, I didn't bring that really to anywhere other than this social life that you would have outside of everything else that you're doing in your life. So yo'ure very much a dual person. Which is completely unhealthy. I don't recommend that to anybody. I think it also changed me from my religious slash spiritual sense. I think had I grown up in a traditional marriage, identified myself as a heterosexual, I probably would've been in a more of a traditional religion and gone down that path. But because I lived in a non-traditional world, which that religion didn't kind of fit into that box, it allowed me to look at life in a whole different way. So, and I guess I questioned like, everything. And I had one of these quizzical, very interested mind so I'm always looking for, "Well, why is this happening, why is that happening?" So, in a lot of, you know looking back, especially now, when I see my-generations like yours and I certainly see it. You know when I really see it is when I'm Facebooking kids who are coming into my school and I'll hit their Facebook and here they are with their significant other. And it's a girl, two girls, or two guys, or something like that and I'm thinking, "Oh my God, I would've never been able to do that when I was their age. How comfortable is that? How wonderful is that?" So, its, I guess it's pushed us back, my generation, and it's pushed us back. But now were experiencing things that you guys have an opportunity to experience at this time right now. So I think it's an interesting thing that you're doing with this project is you're getting to talk to a generation that

grew up differently than LGBT teens are growing up today, hopefully. Now, were, there's still a long way to go. But hopefully it's a lot easier, it's a lot healthier.

KC: So, I know you just mentioned some changes you've seen in the world in regards to the LGBT Community. So what are some challenges that you would say still remain?

LM: Well the trans community right now, that's the next door that's gonna be opening. Having gay marriage really flipped. And it's interesting, it opened really fast. It opened really fast. Pennsylvania opened fast and unexpectedly. And mind you we're having this huge surge of gay weddings. You know I have a lot of friends who are getting married right now that have been in relationships for years. And it's also very scary too because now it's permanent. [video cuts out] Where we're having people in transgender roles getting significant jobs and of public personas. We're seeing now, media is latching on to that and so that's the next door that you're going to be seeing open. Oddly enough, maybe we actually might see women being paid the same as men. Maybe. I don't know why for some reason, you know all these other doors are opening and that one hasn't opened. Or the first women president, or you know things like that. So hopefully soon.

KC: So I know that you've mentioned a couple of the relationships that you've had in the past but would you mind describing for me your adult family formation and development? This may include your marital status, children, and current family.

LM: Well I've never children. And I don't regret that. I don't, I don't think I was wired to have children. I've had a few long term relationships. When I was with Dawn that was a 13 year relationship. Should've been three. And it took my mother's passing for me to jolt myself out of that. I was with Judy for 5 or 6 years and that ended, that was just a, a very weird ending to that relationship. She was not the person I thought she was. So that ended about 3 years ago. Currently I'm in a very, very happy relationship. We're not married, we don't live together. Jan has her home, I have my home. And that's a very precarious situation when you get involved, and your both in your 50's, and you both have assets, so then you're like well, well what are we gonna do with that, and how is that going to proceed. I have a wonderful animal family. I have a dog Shelby, I have 3 inside male cats, Michael, Sebastian, and Zack. And I have an outside cat Cali. And they are my family. And, so I have an extended family of friends. I have one sibling who is still alive and that's my brother Michael. I have an amazing sister in law, Conny. And a few cousins here and there but my family's getting smaller. And so my current family, and my partner, are very, very important to me. And who knows where that's gonna lead. That'll be an interesting journey.

KC: Here's a quick question. Did you ever accept commission into the military?

LM: No. Never had a desire to. And I was never fit like you, I was always and artsy fartsy kid. And I always battled with my weight. So I wasn't much of an athlete and the idea of trying to get through boot camp would just scare the bejeezus out of me.

KC: What would you say are some important events and turning points in your life?

LM: Coming out was certainly one of them. That was a huge piece of the puzzle that set my whole life in a different direction. It answered questions, I had an identity. That was a big part. My parent's divorce was also pivotal. That happened prior to me coming out. Moving out to Harrisburg was big. Moving from my home out to here that was literally the first time I was on my own with no extended family. I think the other big thing my mother's passing. I was always a mommy's girl. Always. Still am. And when she passed away, I helped I helped her die. I would work nights with the janitorial business, take a nap, drive from Harrisburg to the Philadelphia Suburbs, and arrange my mom's nurse's assistants, and drive back. And I did that for a number of months. And, but it, it was the most wonderful, and heartbreaking experience, and probably one of the biggest growth experiences I ever had. And it helped me come to age per se. And after she passed, it was like a veil came off of me, and everything that I was afraid of before I wasn't afraid of. I got out of that job. I left my partner. I got an apartment. I even left the home that was in my name. And started a new life. And found a job that I loved again. I feel very blessed because I love what I do for a living. And I'm really, really good at it. And I like to think that I help the next generation, or the next generation after you, help them connect with interesting and thoughtful careers that fit them. And so that most recently, the big turning point of my life have been meeting my current partner Jan. And realizing that you can really fall in love. And be loved. Again, and again. And meeting somebody who really, really loves you back 100 percent. And is, there's not nearly as much dysfunction as I used to have. So I must have matured a lot to attract someone like Jan into my life. And all her feistiness. And that really fills my family. She fills my family void. And most recently last year I was promoted to Director of the High School Outreach Program. And that has been very exciting. Now I'm actually in charge of the department and that has been very, very exciting. So I am in a really good spot right now with my life. Now my next thing that I am trying to take on is the weight issue that I still have from all of the baggage. It's true what they say, when you are molested as a little kid it's not uncommon to see a weight pattern. Because you use it to protect yourself. But you can only hang on to that excuse for so long. Then it becomes your habit. And then you have to own it. So that is the next journey that I am trying to take is my own personal, it's the one area of my life that I really haven't been able to control. And so I hope I can get, I know I will get control of that, and that'll be the next big shift. You never stop changing and you never stop growing and I'm sure when we all die that's the next big change. And but it has been an interesting journey. And I am so glad that this is where I am. I glad to live this life as a lesbian women, at this particular time. It's a kick. And it's a lot of fun.

KC: So as this interview comes to an end, do you have any materials from the LGBT community that you would like to share or donate to us?

LM: Well I donated to the LGBT Center and ultimately it ends up here in your home here at Dickinson College which is oddly enough where my father graduated college so its apropos. Those copies of the Lavender Letter that my partner who was the editor had kept over the years, and I think there's enough copies from that from her time as editor. And then also a span of time when Jodie Evans had it, and then there was another women who had started the letter prior to them. And my hope is that maybe somebody from your generation or somebody within the community, especially the "L" part of the community, and I was saying earlier that we as lesbians have a tendency to nest, and we fall away from one another. Except from our immediate group, unless there's something really big within the community that all of a sudden

you're like, "Oh my gosh. There's multiple generations and I don't know these people. So it would be nice if somebody could pick up the torch.

[video cuts out]