

**LGBT Center of Central PA History Project
Dickinson College Archives & Special Collections**

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

Documents Online

Title: LGBT Oral History: Rick Schulze

Date: March 12, 2017

Location: LGBT Oral History – Schulze, Rick - 101

Contact:

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

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu

Interviewee: Rick Schulze
Interviewer: Bill Burton
Date: March 12, 2017
Place: Lock Haven, Pennsylvania
Transcriber: Liam Fuller

Abstract:

Frederick (Rick) Schulze was born in Delaware in the 60s and spent his childhood and adolescence in the 70s in the Harrisburg area. He first talks about his complicated relationship with his family and his gay identity, mentioning his mother's support and positivity, his dad's indifference, and other members' repulsion. He then goes on to discuss his first interactions with gay related material and media and his escapades cruising on State Street in Harrisburg. After high school, Rick went onto Mansfield University and was instrumental in forming The Mansfield Gay Alliance, first gay organization there. He describes the many abuses and acts of discrimination both he and his classmates faced. He goes on to detail the AIDS related volunteer work he did in the area, discussing the impact of the AIDS crisis on Central Pennsylvania. Rick worked closely with the organizations SCAAN, South Central AIDS Assistance Network, and AIDS Resource and then went on to work with the Department of Health in HIV/AIDS Counseling during the 90's. During this time, his mother and Hope Nancarrow, the mother of Mary Nancarrow, worked closely with PFLAG, Parents and Friends of Gays and Lesbians, and he talks about the speaking circuits she went on at different churches and community spaces and touches on the threats that have been posed to the both of them. He also talks about various activists and their interactions with anti-gay leaders such as Anita Bryant in the area. After his public service, Rick went on to a career in academia, eventually settling in as a professor in Health Ed and Public Health at Lock Haven University. Outside of the classroom, he works closely with students on an LGBTQ related focus group and has been instrumental in instating gender name change policies and gender neutral bathrooms at the school. Rick's story is a reminder to us all about the importance of public service and the impact just one person can have on a community and geographical region.

BB: Okay. Today is March the 12th. My name is Bill Burton and I'm here with Rick Schulze in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania in Rick's office doing a history—oral history—with the History Project of Central Pennsylvania. Rick do I have your permission to interview you?

RS: Yes.

BB: Okay. I got some questions here; we'll just kinda walk through them.

RS: Okay.

BB: First, let's start with just your basics. Your name and a little bit about your family and where you grew up.

RS: The full name is Frederick Schulze and I go by Rick. I grew up primarily in the Harrisburg [Pennsylvania] area, Camp Hill [Pennsylvania], East Pennsboro Township [Pennsylvania]. Enola

[Pennsylvania], we moved there '72 and from '72 on lived in the Harrisburg area, prior to that, Florida and Delaware and Southern Lancaster County and...

BB: Where were you born?

RS: Born in Delaware.

BB: Oh.

RS: But my, all of the relatives, they're from West Virginia. My parents moved to Delaware for their first teaching jobs out of college back in the 50's and then eventually my father, George [Schulze], joined FBI and we moved around a little and that's finally where he ended up and so we were there from '72 on.

BB: Oh, you're father's in the FBI [laughs]

RS: Yes, he was and yes.

BB: Do you have any siblings?

RS: I have an older sibling, who is estranged, a sister, who is in the Harrisburg area.

BB: So, you and she are estranged or she's just...

RS: She is estranged from my mother and I and it's partly because of LGBT concerns. Back in the—my sister and I—were very close up until, when I was in grad school, my mother was getting very involved with AIDS and I was getting very involved with AIDS in the 80's and she married a gentleman who was a fundamentalist and he was uncomfortable with that. When their first—my nephew was born—he was uncomfortable, a few times, he was worried that we would transmit casually HIV to the baby and there were a few heated discussions about that. Finally, I guess in '86, he told my mother, “no more contact and she was not allowed to come there anymore” and they broke off all communication with us and, you know, her grandparents and everything. So, we haven't had any contact with them. My mother occasionally will send a card or talk to them on the phone but—and I've sent my sister some letters, asking really, you know, what happened? And why can't you be in contact? And—but I don't hear anything, so...

BB: My god, that's...

RS: So, that's a whole, 'nother aspect

BB: We may need to come back to that.

RS: Yeah, it's very sad, it's crushed my mother totally because she hasn't seen her grandson since '86 and she finally contacted him, it might've been the last four or five years and he didn't know he had an uncle and he thought his grandparent—his grandmother—was dead. That's what the parents—my sister and my brother-in-law—said and she said, “have you been getting all my

birthday gifts and Christmas gifts?” and he said “no.” Apparently, what they do ‘cause she often would send checks and money that they would say it’s from them. They would cash the checks and give him the money and say the money was from them.

BB: Huh!

RS: So, it’s a weird, a very unfortunate story. I have no idea if my mother even talked about that in the interview, but it’s been devastating to her...

BB: That’s...

RS: And my sister was very close to her grandmother, on my mother’s side, you know, that was kind of her, we spent summers down in Ohio and West Virginia with them, all during our childhood, up until our teens and, you know, my grandmother was the first person who bought my sister a miniskirt like in 1969 or ’70, you know, she did all those kinds of things where my sister—my sister—well my grandmother died in Harrisburg, this would’ve been mid 90’s, my mother called my sister, you know, her daughter, and said, “you know, your grandmother died, do you want the information of where to come for the funeral?” And she said, “well, what do you want me to do about it?” and hung up.

BB: Huh!

RS: So...

BB: That’s just...

RS: Yeah, it’s so sad...that’s a very tragic portion of our story. [people talking in the background]

BB: Well, we might wanna come back to that...

RS: Okay, okay, yeah, I know...

BB: You [pause] you grew up in Harrisburg.

RS: Yes.

BB: Where did you [pause] [to self] “I’m not sure where I wanna go with this...” [pause]

RS: I went to East Pennsboro High School.

BB: (Where, when???) What did high school did you go to? (Where did you???) spend most of your education in high school and college and...?

RS: I went to East Pennsboro High School, in Enola.

BB: Yeah...

RS: And I had come out to my parents in Junior High.

BB: So, you knew early on?

RS: Yes, the (carrier???)

BB: Your parents knew you were gay?

RS: Always knew, always knew and just didn't really have that label until last elementary school and middle school and I think what brought it to the surface is I was watching TV one night and there was a documentary by David—is it David Frost?—who was the talk show?

BB: When was this, what year was this?

RS: Oh, probably, '73 or 4.

BB: And you were how old probably?

RS: I would've been 14 maybe, 13 or 14...

BB: Yeah.

RS: There was a documentary by one of the popular talk show hosts about, well back then they called it VD, venereal disease...

BB: Yeah.

RS: In the gay community...

BB: Yeah.

RS: And what they called a homosexual community at that time and it was all about the bathhouses...

BB: Yeah.

RS: And, and all the gay people were interviewed over like a filter and they were, it was a very dark and dismal documentary and very depressing. I remember watching and thinking, "oh my god this is awful."

BB: Yeah.

RS: It basically was saying, you know, all gay men were just having sex everywhere and spreading diseases, this is what they're doomed to the rest of their lives, and I remember, you know, I was only 13 or 14 thinking, "oh my god, this is awful."

BB: Yeah.

RS: And so it was sometime around there that I was talking with my mother and I can't—I don't even remember the specific conversation that brought it up and I said, "oh, I'm gay," although I think I use the term homosexual and she, thankfully, was very neutral, you know, wasn't one way or the other, it was just like, "do you have some questions about it? You know, what can I, you know, that kind of thing..."

BB: Wow, what a wonderful mother!

RS: She was very—she wasn't really committed one way or the other—it was just kinda generic, you know, "what can I help you with something about"...

BB: Had you had a sexual experience with another boy?

RS: Boys in the neighborhood, by then...

BB: Yeah.

RS: But not any older, it wasn't until high school, that—that had...

BB: But you had had a same-sex experience...

RS: Yeah, yes, yes. Several of them and I think what helped is both parents [phone buzzer goes off] my father had started out a phys. ed teacher and I can remember him, you know, even before I had got into middle school, he had sort of the sex talk with me about contraception and intercourse and that kind of thing and I'm, I also remember another TV show, I think it was like an after-school special about some girl becoming pregnant in high school and my mother happened to have been around while I was watching the show and there was some question I had about birth control and then she went on quite a discussion about sex. So, thankfully, 'cause it could've been the opposite, she could've been very negative and blown up and, which is fairly common, and—but explained to her, "I have watched the show and I thought I was kinda doomed to really a miserable existence" and she, her response was, "would you like to talk to the family doctor?" and I'm not quite sure how all that came about...

BB: Yeah.

RS: But they sent me to the family doctor and I never got the sense they were trying to cure me or anything they just...And the family doctor asked me what I was upset about and I said I had seen this documentary, I was upset, I thought this is what's gonna happen to me and he was a very—at that time—he had his office in his house...

BB: Yeah.

RS: Which was pretty common back then of family doctors, and a elderly man, he must've been about 65-70 at that time and he said, "yeah, it's certainly possible." Once again he was very generic about it, I don't think they understood what to say...

BB: Yeah.

RS: So, thankfully they just didn't say anything and I do remember he asked me if I wanted antidepressants...

BB: Wow, that's amazing!

RS: [laughs]

BB: Well, you were very lucky then.

RS: I remember him asking, "are you depressed, do you want me to prescribe you some, I think he said Elavil, do you want me to put you on some Elavil?" And I said no, I didn't need that at that point but—so, that was that in eighth grade—and I would say around ninth or tenth grade I brought it up again with my mother versus my father. My father tended to travel a lot and was out and about a lot and I said I was, by that point I'd had met some people who were older men, I'd had a, must've been tenth grade, at that time they called it a Cinderella license, you could be out 'til midnight on that...

BB: Yeah.

RS: Yeah, it must've been tenth grade, and the only place I knew to meet people was at the cruising area, over in Harrisburg, on State Street.

BB: On State Street, yes I know about that [chuckles].

RS: And the only way I found that out is because there, at that time, there was a, guess you would call it a rag newspaper, that did exposés and they would have columns, you know, lambasting the governor or lambasting somebody. But they one week they did this exposé about the cruising areas and prostitution on Third Street and drug abuse and all that...

BB: Yeah.

RS: And they did this whole section on State Street.

BB: Now, what newspaper was this? This was on...

RS: I cannot remember the name of it, but it was out of Harrisburg and it's long gone. It was like one of those weekly papers...

BB: Weekly newspaper or?

RS: No, no, no, no. It was a very conservative, local...

BB: Local, conservative, okay...

RS: But to me, once I read that, you know, that was a draw for me as a kid...

BB: Yeah.

RS: And so that's what I did is I went over there because I didn't even realize at that point that there were gay bars in Harrisburg.

BB: Yeah.

RS: It wasn't until I started cruising and hearing from the other guys that there were bars...

BB: Yeah.

RS: And then, you know, Rose was right around the corner and went to The Rose some but. Anyways, so I brought that up to my mother and, thankfully, I do have to give her credit for that because I think if I would switch it around and I was in her place I would've been very upset that my son was going to a cruising area...

BB: Yeah.

RS: And I told her I was going on over there to meet people and she asked me why and I said, "well, I have no idea where else I'm supposed to meet people." It's not as if we had gay groups in high school...

BB: Yeah, there was no gay-straight alliance in high school or stuff like that.

RS: Yeah and there was no internet, I mean, I didn't even, I didn't know how to meet anybody and she said she wasn't, I don't even remember how she phrased it, but it was somehow like, I'm not happy you're doing it, but if that's what you're gonna do, do it, you know, kinda thing...

BB: Yeah.

RS: Which I have to give her credit for, I mean, if she had freaked out on a 16 year old and screamed and yelled...

BB: Yeah.

RS: And, "you're a horrible person for going over there." I would've been devastated and...

BB: Yeah.

RS: I was upset with her because I thought she should do something for me—like she should—I don't know what I thought, but, you know, a sixteen year old doesn't really think...

BB: Yeah.

RS: In some fashion that thinks things through [chuckles]. And in my mind I just wanted to be able to meet other men and boys and, you know, I couldn't and so it was soon after that, I happened to be reading the local newspaper and inside the *Patriot News*, they had what was called the "Metro West" section...

BB: Yeah.

RS: It was the West Shore and there happened to be a notice that Tressler Lutheran Services was—had a social worker—who wanted to do outreach with the gay people and I passed it on to my mother and she went and at that time it was called Parents of Gays and his name was Bill, gosh, I can't remember his last name, he was from York and he was a clinical social worker and a former minister in the Lutheran church and he and my mother and Hope Nancarrow, Mary Nancarrow, whose mother kind of all organized that Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays eventually and that actually was I think her saving grace because it really focused her energy on feeling like she was doing something for her family and, you know, it was a saving grace for me because, you know, it helped educate her...

BB: That was part of a national organization...

RS: It was, it was...

BB: So they heard about that and...

RS: Yes and they eventually got connected and she and I went to New York together one time during college to go to a Gay Pride March...

BB: When you were in college...

RS: Yes, do you need to make a phone call?

BB: Let me just respond to this. [pause] [phone beeps] Okay.

RS: The...

BB: Thank god for text. [chuckles] It just saves...

RS: Yeah, oh my god. The other thing that happened in high school, is before, I did go through a real depression because, well there were some things going on with my parents' marriage and that might have been some of it, but also, I just really didn't understand what would happen to me as a gay person. I didn't even fully comprehend that I could be in a long-term relationship or anything like that, I just felt very alone...

BB: Yeah.

RS: And my parents did locate a child psychiatrist who was affiliated Hershey Med Center at that time, this would've been '77, and his specialty was childhood sexuality and they sent me to a few sessions with him and I can, his office was in Hummelstown [Pennsylvania] and I remember asking him, I said, "you know, I'm pretty sure I'm gay, maybe I'm something bi, I have no idea" and he said, basically, his message was don't worry about it, you know, it's all gonna work out, you may be bi, you may be gay, who knows, that's gonna happen, you're young. Basically, he was saying that, you know, everything's gonna be alright, he wasn't anti, he wasn't...

BB: Yeah.

RS: So, I think I went to maybe two, maybe three sessions with him, he was an M.D. psychiatrist, he prescribed an antidepressant I was on for awhile and, you know, it was interesting to hear him say that to me...

BB: Yeah.

RS: He had me read some books that he, on sexuality and sexual development, we talked about fantasies a little, you know that kind of thing, he basically said, you know, you might be in a relationship, you might not and, I mean, basically he was telling me the truth, you know.

BB: Yeah.

RS: Some men do end up in relationships, but some end up single. So...

BB: You were really fortunate (that your parents, I mean, ???)

RS: Yes, yes, yes I was very fortunate because both parents, now, I do have to say my father was much less supportive than my mother. [phone buzzer goes off] He didn't go to PFLAG...

BB: Yeah...

RS: Do you need to respond to that?

BB: [pause] No, it's fine.

RS: Okay, he never was anti, but he never was supportive either, I guess...

BB: Yeah...

RS: They divorced when I was in high school. I do remember one time I came home from cruising and I must've been in maybe 11th grade and it was like two in the morning and like he—I was getting in trouble basically—I walked in and he was sitting in the living room with the TV on and I didn't get yelled at, but he said, you know, you can't be out this late and we didn't know where you were and he said, "I'm guessing you were over at State Street" and I said, "yeah, I was" and he said, "you really need to be careful over there, I can tell you that, you know, you could be murdered, you could be raped, you know, all kinds of things and that was really the only time that

he ever talked to me about that, but, anyway, I graduated. I went to little Mansfield University up in North Central PA...

BB: Yeah

RS: And I did, along with a few of my friends, we organized a gay organization, and this would've been 1980, and we did not per say get opposition from like the student government or anything. We got plenty of funding to bring in speakers and that kind of thing, but some of our members...

BB: Including, did you receive funding from the school?

RS: From the school, from the government.

BB: Because you were a legitimate student organization...

RS: Uh-huh. Yeah, we organized a constitution

BB: Yeah.

RS: It was the first gay group at that time but...

BB: What was it called?

RS: Mansfield Gay Alliance...

BB: Okay...

RS: This would've been '80-'81. But some of our members were terribly harassed, including myself, I got a few phone calls saying they were gonna kill me.

BB: Other students?

RS: Yeah, yeah. One time I was walking through, it's Manser Hall, which is similar to a student union, and there were a group of football players and they—a couple of them—hocked, spit right on me. There was a member of our club named Walt who, really nice young man, but he was kind of a stereotype, real small art major, real feminine, they—and we never could quite figure out who it was. The University said they couldn't either—somebody put lighter fluid under his dorm door and lit it on fire. Which is not just harassment, I mean, that could've really hurt him...

BB: Oh my god, I mean, yeah.

RS: So that was kind of a scary time for all of us up there.

BB: How many members did you have?

RS: We only had about six or seven. So we were very small, but the school only had like 2,500 students. So it was only...

BB: Well, (unfortunately, that's still???)

RS: So, in—when I came back to Harrisburg—that would've been '82-'83 and then went to grad school, up at Penn State, that's when all the AIDS epidemic started in Harrisburg and the MCC [Metropolitan Community Church] pastor dying of...

BB: That was Gary Norton?

RS: Yeah and I was never really close to Gary, I knew him, now my mother knew him well, and that was pretty devastating. And then there were a few other people that kept getting closer and closer in our circle over a period of a few years and both of us really felt we had had that calling that we had to do something because there was nobody else.

BB: Yeah, what, you and your mother?

RS: Yeah and some of the people were just being treated horribly by the hospitals and by the healthcare professionals and by their families. I can remember one gentleman came back from New York City. He was a writer and I think he ended up in the Shippensburg [Pennsylvania] Hospital or Chambersburg, PA Hospital, south of Harrisburg and I remember going down to visit him and they made me suit up in this like almost like a space suit, just to go in and chat by the bed and they had him in isolation and, I just, it was a horror, it was just a really bad, bad time.

BB: Well they were (contaminating???) everyone (who they were???)

RS: Yeah, oh—it was—it wasn't just that hospital. It was just such a bad time and eventually some of our dear friends who were very close ended up being diagnose or, you know, positive and dying within a relatively short period of time and...

BB: I remember that time and it was just horrible.

RS: Oh, it was just horrible.

BB: Yeah, so what did—so, what was your calling—what did you end up doing?

RS: Doing body work, essentially, volunteer body work where-going to the homes and either running errands or taking people to appointments—that kind of thing and then after—I guess this was about '88-'89, I got a job up in Williamsport [Pennsylvania] with the Pennsylvania Department of Health doing HIV counseling and testing and up in this area, they didn't have anything for people with AIDS and so there were two public health nurses who, you know, you could call allies who were just wonderful people and so we organized a buddy program up in this area...

BB: You mean Lock Haven?

RS: Williamsport, Lock Haven, Bloomsburg [Pennsylvania], Sunbury [Pennsylvania], all that area and that was very successful for a number of years and...

BB: Yeah. So, how did the buddy program, what is, how did it work and how many patients did you have? How many people?

RS: We, we, we had several dozen people living with HIV/AIDS. Most at that time most of were pretty far along and you know it, because there was so little treatment, we didn't really have—people weren't just, just HIV positive, they were into, I guess, full-blown AIDS at that time and we had, I would say, in the whole region, now some counties we only had a couple volunteers, in Williamsburg [Pennsylvania], we had quite a few, probably a couple dozen volunteers and they would do the things, you know, go to the house, cook meals sometimes, run an errand, go to the pharmacy. A couple didn't have transportation so we'd take them to appointments at Geisinger [Medical Center], Williamsport Hospital, and then I ended up, I had a, one of the earliest people I gave HIV positive test results to, his name was Bob, and for whatever reason, I just clicked with Bob. Bob was such a good guy and he was a pharmacy tech at Williamsport Hospital and he and his lover both ended up testing HIV positive and Bob went from being positive, he'd obviously been positive some time, he ended up being like deathly ill within a relatively short period of time and his partner was from up in Troy, which is about an hour North of Williamsport and they lived in a trailer way out in the boonies and 'cause it was on his partner's family's property.

BB: Right.

RS: And Bob's family was from Williamsport and they totally disowned Bob. They told him...

BB: Because of AIDS...

RS: Because of AIDS... They told him he deserved it. His father told him he deserved it and, you know, die in hell and was really a terrible, terrible...

BB: My god!

RS: It was a horrible, horrible time and so, what I would do was go up there and on weekends and give his partner, 'cause his partner didn't get ill and eventually didn't die 'til maybe 2010 and this was like 1994, the years are kind of fuzzy it was like '94 or 5, it might've been '94 'cause Bob and his partner tested positive at least with me, I think, '92 and by '94 Bob was really ill and then died...

BB: Yeah.

RS: But his partner was fine for many, many years and was a long-time volunteer for us with the AIDS organization. He would even do volunteer clinic work with the Department of Health. The two nurses and I would do these field clinics like at gay bars and gay groups...

BB: Yeah.

RS: And drug and alcohol treatment centers and he would come and kinda be like the quote on quote secretary, he would just...

BB: Yeah.

RS: You know, check 'em in and say, "you know, they'll be with you in a few minutes. Could you—would you—like to read a pamphlet or a, you know, that kind of stuff." And he was such a wonderful—they were such a good pair...

BB: Yeah.

RS: I just, I don't understand why that happens, but that was a terrible, terrible time.

BB: So, in the early days of the crisis, because I think there's the early days and then it became manageable...

RS: Yes.

BB: So, let's look at the early days when you were involved with like, first of all was, did the people that—was it hard to find volunteers—people to help, because, the people that, the fears surrounding?

RS: In Harrisburg?

BB: Anywhere.

RS: Okay, in Harrisburg, it was not hard to find volunteers.

BB: But out here, because of the fear of the disease?

RS: But out here depending on...

BB: Where you afraid?

RS: I was never afraid, no, 'cause I knew better. You know, I did the reading, but some of the counties up here, it was hard to get volunteers. Whereas other counties, it wasn't.

BB: Because they were afraid of getting the diseases or being around...

RS: That was some of it and I think just general homophobia and, you know, by that time it was also people in recovery from substance abuse or were active users and we would sometimes go out and do educational programs and, you know, you would still get that blaming people, saying, "well they did this to themselves" type thing.

BB: Were most of the cases, were they gay or (was it because of???) drugs?

RS: At the beginning, it was gay. By mid 90's, late 90's, here anyway, it was drug related and now it's a mix of everything, you know...

BB: So in the beginning it was gay...

RS: Yeah...

BB: So how many cases, now you were working for an organization or who were you, you were strictly a volunteer?

RS: In the—in the 80's—I was strictly volunteer.

BB: Volunteer for who?

RS: Yeah, South Central AIDS Assistance Network in Harrisburg.

BB: SCAAN.

RS: SCAAN.

BB: Yeah.

RS: Up here, I was an employee of the Department of Health and then also a volunteer for an organization called AIDS Resource, which, they're still in existence. They're an AIDS organization.

BB: The Department of Health, was that to the governor's counsel? Or was that way after (that was just was this???)

RS: No it was way after, way after.

BB: Mhm.

RS: It was Department of Health and it was Ryan White moneys, essentially...

BB: Oh, okay.

RS: That were given to AIDS organizations and also to do HIV counseling and testing and community use and STD testing and that kind of thing.

BB: So how did you find in rural Pennsylvania, the general population's attitude towards you?

RS: Very negative, very negative. I can remember around 1990, '91 there was an infectious disease specialist at Williamsport Hospital named Dr. Lattimer (?) and the public health nurse and I went in and met with him 'cause he was seeing some of the patients and he wasn't real good with patient communication, patient, you know, interaction, and we were just trying to get a feel about him,

and, you know, offer whatever services we can and he was not real kind to us and we...actually, the public health nurse said we—to me—we need to develop this guide for the families of people with AIDS and people with AIDS about where to go in the region, who they can see and who are like friendly counselors, you know, all that kinda...

BB: Yeah.

RS: So, we put this guide together, but on the back page, we also added some national organizations and one of them was the AIDS Law Project, out of Philly [Pennsylvania]]. And Dr, Lattimer saw that, 'cause we sent it to all the doctors in the area and, now he didn't call me, he called the public health nurse and yelled at her and said, "why would you, these people aren't entitled to any rights" and, you know, was really just terrible to her over the phone and I just couldn't—we couldn't figure out why a physician—who is an ID specialist would be so horrible about that, but he was the type of, if you were gay, you know, God put this disease on you and, thankfully, he retired soon after that but that was—that was not good—that was a bad time for the patients, it was a bad, because it meant the patients in Williamsport then had to drive 40 minutes to Geisinger Medical Center because they couldn't see Lattimer. I mean, who would want to go to a doctor like that?

BB: Right, right.

RS: I mean, I wouldn't if I had been...

BB: So then they had the same, they had the same prejudices with the doctors here...

RS: Yeah...

BB: I mean, did you, did you ever go to Philadelphia or larger of an area to see the difference?

RS: Oh yeah, yeah.

BB: I mean, so you can make a comparison.

RS: Oh yeah, there was a big difference.

BB: Because that's not happening in large urban areas if you were gay, if you had AIDS.

RS: Yeah, however, I do have to say Geisinger has been a great facility, even for gay people.

BB: Geisinger is in?

RS: In Danville [Pennsylvania]. Which is, from here, it's almost an hour.

BB: It's an hour? (A location???)

RS: Yeah. It's an inconvenience to get there and it's one of those big regional hospitals...

BB: Yeah.

RS: And, you know, children's hospital and everything, but still, you know, a 40 minute drive or an hour drive there. It can be a burden for a lot of people to get to that center, it really can.

BB: Well that's—that's I guess the point I want to understand for those people that suffered in the AIDS crisis during the crisis time. What they went through, I mean, knowing what they went through but the volunteers went through in the rural versus a large urban area.

RS: Extreme isolation. Well, yeah...

BB: Not that having even having AIDS is an easy time...

RS: Nobody was having an easy time but it, I think it was much harder for people in these rural counties, because it's not as if they were in a Gayborhood or something...

BB: Right.

RS: Where there might be somebody around the corner, you know, their, their body, their volunteer may be 45 minutes away, their doctor an hour away, their...

BB: Do you think the volunteers knew that they had it harder?

RS: No.

BB: The volunteers in the rural areas.

RS: No, I don't think so, they just did— 'cause they all had grown up in this area—they were used to that kind of...

BB: Attitude...

RS: Yeah, yeah, I think so. I think it's a big difference of the importance religion plays in this region versus if you went to Philadelphia or Pittsburg [Pennsylvania]. Still today, as a...

BB: Meaning?

RS: That, you know, religion is very powerful up here and the, some of the associated discrimination that can go with that of, you know, I'm just thinking of some, even here at Lock Haven University, today. Like in the last year, I've had freshmen students who are even struggling with coming out because they come from very tiny towns or farms, they don't have, except on the internet, they don't have any of that contact with other gay people and church is everything in their community. I mean, if you didn't go to church on Sunday, your family isn't part of that community...

BB: Right.

RS: And I think that's a big difference than in, you know, inner city Philly and that's still today. That homophobia's so powerful. In our culture...

BB: Yeah.

RS: Up here versus Harrisburg or Philly or Pittsburg.

BB: So, jumping back to...yeah, I agree with that. I think religion though makes it difficult for, 'cause I was raised in a very strict fundamentalist, went to a Christian high school, in an urban area, in Phoenix. Still makes it difficult to come out, because of that, you know.

RS: Oh, okay, okay, okay, yeah, yeah. And I think the guilt that is so much more powerful, yeah.

BB: Yeah, but going back to the AIDS crisis. So, is that your major, during that time period, was that your full-time work, was it...

RS: No, it was a full-time volunteer...

BB: How long did you do that?

RS: I did the volunteer work all through the 80's and I finished Department of Health in about 2000. So, the year 2000. Now, right now I'm still a volunteer but I'm not doing—I don't do patient work—I do fundraising and board work with an AIDS organization in Williamsport. So, I...

BB: So, you really have been involved haven't left it...

RS: Oh, but—but I'm not doing patient, you know, patient or client work. First of all, that isn't needed in the same way it was back then because...

BB: Yeah

RS: You know, the government money has stepped in with a lot of that so, you know, from the AIDS organization, they can pay for the housing and the utilities and all those other things and they have the case workers, who are full-time...

BB: Yeah, the disease has changed dramatically, so that's a...

RS: Yeah, yeah, it's almost an industry now...

BB: Yeah...

RS: Which is good and bad, you know, but...

BB: Yeah...

RS: It's a very effective AIDS organization over in Williamsport and...

BB: Alright...

RS: I do my—I see my role as just raising money—making they have—that they can pay for things that normally the money that comes from the government wouldn't like...

BB: Yeah...

RS: Like, a person wants acupuncture or something like that...

BB: Yeah...

RS: To have that fund or, you know, they can send an employee to a training or, you know, those kinds of things...

BB: Right. So, one more thing about that, I mean, during the AIDS crisis, what sticks with you the most during, from that time period, looking back at it. I guess what would—what won't you forget?

RS: Shit, yeah, well, one is the diarrhea. There was, some of the men just had terrible diarrhea for so long. Just being alone, being alone...

BB: That's for you?

RS: Them, not me, them. That they were alone, that their families had left them, that, or friends, had left them and the ones that had come from the bigger cities, like New York and San Francisco, 'cause they had left Harrisburg, you know, to start a new life and came back. They were just—they were leaving everything that they had kinda built in those cities...

BB: Yeah...

RS: And they were, even though we were there for them, they were still alone I guess...

BB: Yeah...

RS: I'll never forget that just alone...

BB: Yeah...

RS: A lot of alone, loneliness, I think and...

BB: Were a lot of the people like that—that had left this area and went to New York?

RS: There were, there were just a few, there were a few.

BB: (had left???)

RS: And not all of them, the family didn't reject. I remember there was a gentleman who had left, you know he had went to college and grew up in Camp Hill [Pennsylvania], went to college in Central PA, I think to Millersville or Shippensburg and then went to New York to be a clinical social worker and had developed AIDS and was back home with his parents and, you know, they were fully supportive and everything but still he was lonely, he was in his forties, he still had his whole life...

BB: Yeah.

RS: Ahead of him, and he, what, you know, the medication wasn't there. So, it was just miserable...

BB: Yeah...

RS: They felt miserable, most of them looked miserable, you know, looked uncomfortable. It was just not a good time, it was just not a good time...

BB: Yeah...

RS: Versus now—I mean—I have plenty of friends who are HIV positive and then they go through periods where they're not real well, but they're pretty well...

BB: Yeah, I know 'cause they all are on pro-tease and whatever...

RS: Yeah, they're doing pretty well. And, oh, anyway

BB: So...

RS: But I do have to say at the same time there were so many good people, especially in Harrisburg like Rodger Beatty, Jerry (Brandt??), you know, there were just so many good AIDS Activists...

BB: Yeah...

RS: Down in Harrisburg that I—I don't know what would've happened without them...

BB: Right.

RS: I just—it's just hard to imagine what they did.

BB: Right. So, after, then is that when you went back to Penn and got your doctorate degree or (when???)...

RS: Yes, yes, and the 90's I went for the doctorate, mhm, part-time.

BB: Part-time...

RS: Yeah...

BB: That takes years...

RS: Couple semesters full time...

BB: Yeah...

RS: 'Cause you had to do some semester full time to maintain...

BB: Yeah...

RS: Your status.

BB: And then you...

RS: Then I transitioned from public health into academia. I took a job in Jersey at a university over there. Did that for about a year. I didn't really like the area and then came over here and I've been here about, I think this is my fifteenth year.

BB: At Lock Haven?

RS: At Lock Haven. And when I came here, there was a gay—there was a gay student group. Lock Haven is primarily—attracts lesbians for whatever reason. It always has, it goes back. Even when I was in high school, back in the 70's, this used to be, their biggest major used to be health and phys. ed.

BB: Yeah.

RS: And was for decades, it's not anymore, but it used to be. And so, for whatever reason, it used to attract a lot of women who, if they wanted to enter that field and they're very well known for women's athletics and back in the 70's and 80's, it used to have the, a real derogatory term called, "dyke haven."

BB: Oh.

RS: And, but anyways, so you, when I first came here, I did go to the student group to say, you know, I'm here if you need something and it was all women...

BB: Yeah...

RS: I mean there were like 30 women, no men...

BB: No men? Yeah...

RS: So that was kinda funny but, I guess in 2010, a couple allies and myself met with the president of the university and said, ‘cause he has these commissions on campus that have direct access to him and women have one, people of color have one, and so we approached him and said we need one for LGBT affairs and he did agree...

BB: Yeah...

RS: And so we’re funded and we have, you know, developed non-discrimination policies. Now there’s a preferred name policy, gender neutral restrooms in every building...

BB: Yeah...

RS: We get speakers on campus, that kind of thing. So, we feel good about that and...

BB: Yeah...

RS: And the small, there are only about 4,000 students here...

BB: Yeah...

RS: And so...

BB: I saw that on the website, yeah...

RS: Yeah, so, we, you know, it’s a start—it’s a start...

BB: Yeah...

RS: We do have a Women’s and Gender Studies minor and part of that commission, we started some LGBT courses and LGBT studies, which I think is good for a tiny college...

BB: Yeah...

RS: In here. I wish it was more, but we’re, budget problems, just like anywhere else...

BB: Yeah...

RS: It is not the most welcoming campus, though. I’ve been walking across campus and I, this was about maybe a year and a half ago, I was walking across campus and a car went by and some guys yelled out, “faggot.” Now, I’m not—I don’t start every class with, “hi, I’m Rick, I’m gay.”

BB: Yeah...

RS: I think ‘cause I’m on the website and stuff, some people know that...

BB: Yeah...

RS: We haven't really had terrible bullying cases or anything like that...

BB: Yeah...

RS: I do know of some students who've had things written on doors, you know, in the dormitory or, you know, faggot or those kinds of things, but so, it still happens...

BB: Yeah...

RS: It still happens...

BB: It is amazing...

RS: But, it's still much more of a women's campus, the—the gay-straight alliance or whatever, you know, gender-sexuality alliance is mostly women...

BB: Yeah...

RS: There are only, the men seem to be much more closeted here and I'm not quite sure why that is. I really don't know.

BB: I think it's gonna be rural Pennsylvania, I don't know, I don't know...

RS: I think it is too...

BB: I notice that there is a difference, coming from an urban area, but, so. So, you teach what?

RS: Health ed, public health.

BB: And you live here, obviously, in Lock Haven...

RS: I live in Williamsport...

BB: Oh...

RS: Which is a little bit bigger, not much [chuckles] relative to Lock Haven it's big [laughs]

BB: Yeah, moved to an urban area compared to...

RS: Actually, quite a few faculty live in State College and Williamsport. Now there's a cohort that live here too, but surprising, you know, quite a few who commute. Some of them who have children, they want their kids to go to certain high schools...

BB: Yeah...

RS: And that I understand, I just, I stayed in Williamsport 'cause that's where I moved to when I came up here and there's a little more to do over there and...

BB: Yeah...

RS: And, you know, my friends, but Lock Haven's okay, it's just, I think if you're a lesbian, it's a little better to live her than it is for a gay man.

BB: So, are you involved with anybody right now, are you?

RS: No, I'm single.

BB: So, that's okay, you could still be single.

RS: Hell, I could still be single. Yeah, it's been awhile the, I [phone rings]

BB: Sorry...

RS: That's okay. Did you need to return that?

BB: No. It's just a message, that's alright, go ahead...

RS: I'm trying to think what I was trying to say with that...

BB: You were saying...

RS: Oh, the last person I was dating left the area because he wanted more urban area...

BB: Yeah...

RS: And that's not unusual—that's not unusual. There are benefits to living out here, you know, less traffic, a little less expensive, you know, all those kinds of things...

BB: Cost of living, yes...

RS: But, the drawback is, you know, you don't have that big community up here, and for some that can be rough. Especially if they've grown up elsewhere and moved here for a job, which this person had, so...

BB: Yeah, so, is there a big gay community in Williamsport or the area?

RS: Small, small gay community and there's one lesbian bar, no gay bars...

BB: No men's gay bars?

RS: No, nuh-uh...

BB: Huh...

RS: The one—the last one went out of business a few years ago, yeah...

BB: So...

RS: And we used to have a potluck group but that doesn't meet any longer. There is one gay group, that tends to be more younger people...

BB: Yeah...

RS: Dan's involved with it, helps them, you know, Dan (Maneval???), who you mentioned...

BB: Yeah...

RS: He's still around, still working...

BB: Yeah, so, we use him and his voices...

RS: Yeah, he's—he is—has been around forever...

BB: (He's gonna be in Brian's story???)

RS: And...

BB: I hope that's never said about me

RS: [chuckles] I didn't mean it that way...

BB: It's like...

RS: No, he, I can remember when I was at Mansfield...

BB: Yeah...

RS: As a gay student, we came down to, 'cause we were trying to network. We went up once to the gay student group at Cornell, we went up once to a social at Ithaca...

BB: Yeah...

RS: 'Cause it's a—they're about an hour North of Mansfield—and we came down a couple times to the group in Williamsport and he was...

BB: Yeah...

RS: Running it...

BB: Yeah...

RS: And that was 1980-81...

BB: Yeah, well he did Homophiles of Williamsport and you know...

RS: And it's funny, you know, that he still's around...

BB: Yeah, his story about being—having to move when he was—after the Anita Bryant thing...

RS: Oh, he has been through terrible things...

BB: During that—that was terrible—but that was during the Anita Bryant time which was terrible...

RS: Yes, yes...

BB: Yeah, I remember that time when—when she was at her peak and all across the country...

RS: It promoted such hatred...

BB: Hatred that she stirred up...

RS: It's the same—well it's not the same—but, like when Trump was elected some of that hatred...

BB: Right, yeah...

RS: That has come to the surface...

BB: But what, you know, not that this shall be part of the oral interview...

RS: Yes...

BB: Because one thing that I did in studying part of the history of during the Anita Bryant time, they, the one—the one thing that she did do in vilifying, you know, trying to vilify the gay community, is that she helped create the gay identity...

RS: She did...

BB: Because she brought such attention to it at that time, to the gay community and then we end up—she ended up being vilified at the end—that she ended up doing us the big favor, you know, it's funny how [phone rings] the whole thing, you know, turned around. By what she sought to destroy, she helped to create. You know, and solidified...

RS: Yeah, that's a very good point

BB: The gay identity and helped us change our language, (in sum??). That was all part of my thesis too, you know, helping with the religious right and changing our argument and...

RS: Do you think Jerry Falwell did that too, for us?

BB: Yeah, it helped us refine the argument of who we are and what we had to do with the religious right and on their attacks and their—our counterattack and what we—in our activist arguments. I mean, looking back at...

RS: Yeah...

BB: I certainly wasn't part of that argument, I was so young...

RS: Yeah...

BB: You know, but what the activists did, when you start back and look at it and study—study it. They really helped shape—shape the movement. You know, and when you look at Dan's stories, the oral history, when Anita came to the Bloomsburg Fair and her position not only because gays but women and the anti-feminist movement, Phyllis Schlafly, you know, and then they all...

RS: Oh gosh, yeah...

BB: That whole thing was really critical...

RS: Uh-huh, it was, it was...

BB: And him taking a stand and the women taking a stand against her, you know, and what they were representing, I mean, even though it's real, they were doing it—she was doing it all across the country [something banging] and getting people all revved up. So, Dan made an important contribution back then, you know, so...

RS: He did...

BB: That's why it's in the book, you know, it's like (more of that???)...

RS: Yeah, yeah, I'm glad he's getting that, he needs that notoriety to somebody to say, "this is somebody who has really made a difference."

BB: Yeah...

RS: Up in this area, 'cause I'm not sure, I think the—some of the people who've been around a few decades understand that...

BB: You know, so....

RS: Like if you even know, you know, the march next month in D.C., that he...

BB: Yeah...

RS: Organized a bus to go down from—from Williamsport and that somebody, I mean, I don't know if that would've been done...

BB: That's...

RS: Without him there...

BB: Yeah, that's—that's important, I mean, I think that is...

RS: And...

BB: So, (but a lot of???) yeah, yeah, sorry about the AIDS crisis back then. 'Cause I think that even, you know, people today, AIDS, they forgot what AIDS was like...

RS: And it really changes you after you go to so many services, memorial services and funerals, it really does...

BB: It does...

RS: It's a—it really...

BB: I lost a lot of friends...

RS: Yeah, it's —it's never the same, it really isn't...

BB: Yeah, I guess, a couple things, just looking at the, what are, just recapping a couple things, what were the important events or turning points in your life, looking back, if you wanna recap?

RS: Coming out to parents...

BB: Yeah...

RS: In college, starting the Mansfield Gay Alliance and getting threatened at that time that kinda galvanized me, the AIDS, SCAAN, in the 80's, Department of Health in the 90's, I would say those are the main...

BB: Okay...

RS: Those are kinds of the landmarks.

BB: So, and what—what changes have you seen, in your lifetime?

RS: Well the marriage was one...

BB: Yeah...

RS: That's phenomenal. Just a lot more general acceptance overall or at least it—maybe it's not all acceptance, they're less visibly hostile because I can remember going with PFLAG to speak at universities and churches in the 80's. Especially early 80's and there would always be a core of people who were incredibly hostile to the parents of even, you know, why are you supporting your kids and not that I go out and do that speaking now but I don't know that that would happen in the same way now...

BB: Yeah, yeah [phone rings]...

RS: [pause] You're very popular.

BB: Yeah, sorry...

RS: That's okay. The money that's with the AIDS organizations now that wasn't there...

BB: Yeah...

RS: Lot more institutionalized LGBT kinds of things that aren't—that weren't there a few decades ago...

BB: Yeah...

RS: Protections, those kinds of things...

BB: So, did we miss anything?

RS: I don't think so.

BB: Trying to think before I let you go. Turn this thing off...

RS: Is that what you were looking for, you think?

BB: Yes, some really good stuff in there.

RS: Some very good and some sad, you know, I—I never am quite sure how to handle my mother when she starts, she gets very discouraged and every once in awhile, start crying about my sister and especially at holidays...

BB: Yeah...

RS: I have a feeling there'll be something this weekend 'cause of Mother's Day, you know, which I obviously do for her...

BB: Yeah...

RS: But...

BB: I can't believe that, I mean, I think that, I mean I don't know about the, maybe the AIDS thing. I mean you were working. Was—was your mother involved here too for screening?

RS: Yes, oh very much so...

BB: You know, I think that, had to be the fundamentalist...

RS: I guess, I guess...

BB: Fear of the AIDS transmission, I can't...

RS: I don't—I don't know...

BB: And her husband. Are they still involved in religion?

RS: As far as we know...

BB: You know, I mean, I think that, it's terribly hurtful and, you know...

RS: It—it kinda casts a shadow over our family...

BB: Yeah...

RS: It still does and it's something that I—I'm not even sure how to handle with my mother...

BB: Yeah...

RS: Well...

BB: One thing I want to ask you about your mother. I mean, when she was involved in PFLAG, you know, there was a, 'cause I, they fire-bombed their door or something, were you there, then?

RS: I was at graduate school then and she has testified during hearings at city council on, they were going to pass the Human Relations Ordinance at that time or they were debating it. And so, if you...

BB: What, for the city of Harrisburg?

RS: Yeah, for the city of Harrisburg and the non-discrimination and if you testified, you had to have—state your full name, full address. Because they wanted to make sure you were a city resident, if you were testifying...

BB: Yeah...

RS: And so, she lived in an apartment building at the time, on Second St and Harrisburg and she testified and then in the *Patriot News* they listed her name and address, which she didn't mind. But, what happened then is, at the corner telephone poll was one of those, how you call the fire department to that corner, you know, in cities they have those...

BB: Yeah...

RS: And so that kept pulled one night and so the fire company kept responding and I—I think that after the third or fourth time, what had happened then is somebody had gone in the lobby, and there was a dental office on the first floor, you know, in the building and they had piled a bunch of bible tracts by the door that went up to the apartments, and there were three apartments, and she was in the first floor. Then there was—there were two other women who lived in the building and they set the bible tracts on fire and I don't know how it happened that somebody saw it or pulled the alarm then who was, you know, in the neighborhood and, you know, the fire company put it out. But they said they were so fortunate that it was put out because those bible tracts could've burned up the door and up the stairwell...

BB: Yeah...

RS: To these apartments and the fire chief thought it probably had to do with her name being in the paper...

BB: Yeah...

RS: My, surprisingly, I don't remember my mother being, you know, terribly upset by it, but maybe she was trying to appear stronger to me...

BB: Yeah...

RS: But, she used to get a lot of hate mail, at that time, when she would speak, and Hope Nancarrow, Mary Nancarrow's mother, because it was really the two of them that did, I would say the majority of the speaking during the late 70's and the 80's and more in—on media, you know TV and stuff and she often got bible tracts in the mail saying she was gonna burn in hell or her son was gonna burn in hell or both of us were gonna burn in hell and, now that I look back, I wish we had saved all that because it would be interesting to look at all that. Yeah, she got some really...

BB: Yeah...

RS: She got some really vitriolic letters in the mail over the years. Now, she got some, just the opposite that were, you know, how she helped them through their son or daughter and their coming

out. I mean, I—I can't even count the number of late night calls when, you know, I was home that, you know, a parent would call her upset...

BB: Yeah...

RS: You know, parents were doing terrible things back then. I can remember one parent or these parents even got a warrant or a court order that their son couldn't step foot on the property, like the day he came out to them. They threw all his stuff out on the lawn and said get out and he wanted to come back in, they called the police and then ended up getting a court order to prevent him from coming back in and, you know, after awhile then somehow they connected with my mother and I can remember my mother spending a lot of time on the phone with them and they eventually came around, you know, but, (you know???)

BB: Yeah...

RS: But, you know, I—I sometimes worried about her, you know...

BB: Yeah...

RS: When—when I was away, yeah...

BB: Where does she live now?

RS: She lives with me.

BB: Oh.

RS: I moved her out from Harrisburg 'cause her health deteriorated...

BB: Oh, to Williamsport...

RS: So...

BB: So, well, I'd like to meet her sometime.

RS: Sure, sure.

BB: Well, I think that's it...

RS: Okay, if you need anything then just let me know.

BB: A good interview or if I get any follow-up questions that I know when I get the transcript back, I've got your numbers now.

RS: I wish...

BB: I'm gonna stop the interview right here...

RS: I wish I could...