

Nadine Anderson

**MARY FOLTZ:** My name is Mary Foltz. And I'm here today with Nadine Anderson to talk about her life and experiences in LGBT organizations in the Lehigh Valley, as part of the Lehigh Valley LGBT Community Oral History Project. Our project has funding from the Lehigh Valley Engaged Humanities Consortium. We are meeting on Zoom today because there is a pandemic. And the date is May 12, 2020. So Nadine, thank you so much for joining me today for this conversation about your life.

**NADINE ANDERSON:** My pleasure.

**MF:** And to start, could you please state your full name and spell it for me?

**NA:** Nadine Ruth Anderson. N-a-d-i-n-e. I go by my middle initial "R." Anderson, A-n-d-e-r-s-o-n.

**MF:** Thank you. And will you share your birthdate, please?

**NA:** Fifteenth August, 1943.

**MF:** Thank you. So we had a phone conversation before the interview, where we talked a little bit about consent.

And so I'll just do a verbal consent now. Do you consent today to this interview?

**NA:** Yes, I do.

**MF:** Do you consent to having this interview transcribed, digitized, and made publicly available online?

**NA:** Yes, I do.

**MF:** Do you consent to the LGBT Archive using your interview for educational purposes in other formats, including films, articles, websites, presentations, or other formats that might become available?

**NA:** Yes, I do.

**MF:** And do you understand that you will have thirty days after the electronic delivery of the transcript to review the interview and identify parts that you might want to delete or withdraw the interview entirely from the project?

**NA:** Yes, I understand that.

**MF:** Thank you so much, Nadine. So I'm going to go ahead and get started. And I'll ask, would you begin today by telling me a little bit about the early years of your life? Could you describe your childhood?

**NA:** Well, a long time ago, I was born in Southern California. But even as an infant, I knew to get out of there. Though when we moved out, I was two years old, so I don't remember it real well. Dad was teaching flying for the Army Air Corps. That was before the Air Force existed. And we left there, went back up to Washington State, where mother was from. And turned out, dad was a better pilot than businessman. And he had an awful lot of pilots coming back, trying to work at that. And he had trouble getting a flying business going so he went back to logging, which he'd done before. And that took us over to the Olympics of Washington State.

I went back there when I was in graduate school and it was amazing how much smaller everything was than what I remembered. I lived there when I was six and seven. It was huge then.

We then left from there to another place in Washington, which was very close to Tacoma, which is where mother spent most of her growing-up years. And one thing I

remember from then, this was not very long after World War II and people were not real fond of the Japanese. And in talking about something about that once, I referred to them as Japs. Mother informed me that we do not refer to any group disrespectfully and that I would not do that. I was, at most, eight at the time and I have remembered that. Mother clearly had a strong influence on helping me develop values of, valuing people, of looking at everyone positively.

We went from there down to Crescent City, California, which is in the northwest corner of California and it's where we lived then. Well, I went from there to college and so haven't lived there since then. But mother continued to live there for quite a while. I was in the third grade when we went there and when I was in fourth grade, we moved into a house that father had built. And he built the back half of it and then we moved in, and then he built the front half. By then, he'd gone from logging back to flying and he was at the airport, managing the airport and doing a flight service. So he ran out of time to finish it. He eventually got someone else to do it. But then I spent fourth and fifth grade with this open beam built house in the front half of where I lived and I learned an awful lot about how to do that. Dad would put the siding on with two nails. And my

brother and I would put the rest of them in. It took us forever but it didn't take him any time. My older sister and my next-younger sister weren't interested. Actually, I'm not sure that Lois was old enough to do so. And Carol Jean, I'm not sure whether she was born or not. But Gary and I were the ones that did that a lot. And I did pick up a lot about woodworking and have spent a lot of time building things, particularly bookcases.

I think what I learned most during my childhood, though, was that effort, that message that mother gave, that you must always be respectful of people. It still floors me how I never heard anyone refer to the Japanese other than as Japs during that period. But not my mother. That was not acceptable. Actually earlier, when we were still up in Washington, I loved to play baseball. During recess, the boys would play baseball, but the girls wouldn't. I convinced the boys to let me play baseball with them by agreeing to be catcher all the time and not taking my turn at bat. So I became a very good catcher, had lots of practice at that and I did do a little bit more. But this was before the time when girls had anything but intramural sports. And while I played in intramural sports, there were no opportunities for other things. So I was very good at basketball and at softball. But then again, that was just a local thing.

I do remember, at that time, we had six on a basketball team for girls. We were so delicate, we couldn't run back and forth the whole length of the court. So I became able to hit the backboard every time from the center circle there. And one in three went in, which meant whoever we were playing had to cover me. And if I missed, then my teammates got the rebound and put it in. Last time I tried that, the ball rolled under the basket. My aim is still good, but my strength is a lot less.

I did play softball a lot down in Philadelphia. There were several leagues, primarily lesbian leagues that I knew about, I don't know if there were others. And I played in that probably for five years. I'm very good at hitting. And I can direct where it goes pretty well. I still play catcher. Well, I don't now, but I did then. And I would always hit it to left field if there was someone on first base. Usually, the weakest player was put in left field, because most people hit to right field. And that would ensure that the person on first base got to second base. I may or may not get to first base, because I was not a very fast runner. But I would at least advance the other person.

Apparently, I did that very often because the last game I played in down there, I noticed that the outfield shifted where they were at, appropriately for where I was going to hit. If there was no one on first, I'd hit it to left field so that... Did I say left before? You hit it to left field if you're going to get it far away and get there. You hit it to right field if someone is on first base. So apparently, I did that a lot, because they shifted appropriately for where I was going to hit it. When I came up here to the Lehigh Valley, I discovered the difference between the modified slow pitch and slow pitch game. We had modified slow pitch down in Philly. Up here, they do slow pitch. And I played catcher, like I've always done. Stood where I've always done. And was told I was too close to the batter. If I got hit, it was my fault. I've never gotten hit. I'm not that close to them. Furthermore, if I caught the ball rather than letting it bounce and then getting it, they didn't know whether to call it a strike or not. I only played one year up here. I couldn't do that.

But growing up down in California, it was very close to, well, it's on the ocean. I grew up six blocks from the ocean in two directions. And I spent a lot of time wandering along on the beach, playing there, climbing over the rocks, and things like that. We had a lighthouse

down there. And you could get out to it when the tide was out. But you had to get back in pretty soon, or else you'd have to wade back in. That wouldn't be a good thing to do. It was a good childhood. I enjoyed a close family, a lot of support, and a fair amount of activity to do things. One thing that was interesting, in recollection, we went to church all the time. And the person, we had a supply minister, someone who was filling in. He had retired. He had been ordained in the 1890s and he had some very old viewpoints. So instead of having two years of confirmation, we got three years of confirmation. So I learned a lot of stuff about the Bible very well. At that point, when you're confirmed, before that, the class would sit in front of the congregation and we would be given questions to answer. I knew the answers to almost all of them. But there was one that I couldn't answer. No one else could, either.

As I got older, though, and was very much into science, I started having some strong questions about Christianity. How do we know Christianity is right? Because the Bible says so. That's kind of circular reasoning and when I was eighteen, graduating from high school and about to go off to college, I let my parents know that I wasn't sure I believed this stuff at all. That was very upsetting, especially to mother. Father kind of took it as, eh,



she'll get over it. But mother took it very strongly at that point. I did eventually come back, but that was quite along further. Any other specific questions you want to ask about my growing up?

**MF:** Well, I have so many questions about how you moved from California out East. But I guess maybe I'll begin with a question about, did you know about LGBT people in your childhood? Was that just discussed in your family at all?

**NA:** No. Knew nothing about it. I don't know that I ever heard such a term, ever. I probably began to know a little bit about it when I was in high school. But it was not something you ever asked anyone about. If you wanted to know about it, you had to find the information out for yourself. It was not something anyone talked about. That was the dark ages, you have to understand. This did not happen. Everyone grew up, got married to someone of the opposite sex, had a family, and did traditional-role kinds of things.

Actually, my parents had a somewhat unusual marriage in that my mother was a teacher. At that time, you needed three years of college to be a teacher and that's what she had. And it's when she was doing that that she met dad. Dad, on the other hand, flunked out of high school.

He was in Northern Minnesota, Effie. It's not too far from International Falls. People who know Minnesota know where International Falls is. But I've never met anyone who knew where Effie is. So he had to go to Duluth to go to high school. And his mother was saying, why don't you come home and run the farm? Which does not tend to increase the desire of a high school boy to study. He did eventually come home and found out he had not passed ninth grade. He did not go back. Somewhere along there, his mother passed away. And probably later than that, though. I never knew her, she passed away well before I was around. So I don't have those dates down well. But he eventually went out to the state of Washington, where his older brother had already gone out and was logging. Dad did not want to keep the farm and farm it. He was not interested in farming. When he was out there, he discovered that he had to learn a lot of things to become the pilot he wanted to be. So he took correspondence courses to be able to pass the test on navigation.

So when you have one parent who has college and one parent who doesn't have high school, you have a somewhat unusual family system. He was very good at math, though. I probably got my math skills from him more than from mother. Yeah, with this unusual family situation, it was not hard to teach us that you have to treat everyone with

respect. And you can't be negative towards people because they don't have some of the supposedly required accomplishments, such as high school. Yeah.

**MF:** Well, so you had described a movement out East. Will you tell me a little bit more about that? How did you come to move out East and leave California?

**NA:** Actually, I was moving West when I came to Pennsylvania. I went my first year of college to U of Oregon. They then tripled the out-of-state tuition, so I went to Berkeley. Anyone from California who refers to Berkeley as a school means University of California Berkeley. I was there two years. The summer after my second year, I went out to New York City, because I'd met some people there. And I went out and saw them for the summer. While there, I ended up -- was in the hospital with an operation. Twenty-first birthday was in New York, which was very distressing. It meant I was now responsible for those hospital bills, not my father. And I couldn't go to the Top of the Mark, because that's in San Francisco. And furthermore, the drinking age in New York was eighteen. Very bad twenty-first birthday. I came back from there. And I couldn't go back to college on time, because I just wasn't feeling up to it. So I worked for a while. When I was ready to go back to school, it was January, February. I'm not sure

exactly when but I could get into the third quarter of the year. I couldn't get into the second semester of the year.

So I went to Cal State Hayward, finished up there. From there, I went to graduate school in U of Washington, Seattle. After I finished that, my first job was in London, Ontario, at the University of Western Ontario College of Education. And while I was there, I discovered the University of Maryland had these interesting programs, where they taught on US military bases overseas and I applied for that and I was hired to go to Europe. So I taught in Europe for three years on US military bases.

I was there for three years and I lived in twenty-five different places while there. I saw a lot of Europe, but when I came back, I was ready to settle down a bit. There, you could go wherever they told you to go and teach whatever they told you to teach and get paid well. Or you could decide whether or not to teach a course and get paid poorly. Obviously, I did the former. Then, when I came back, I came back to Seattle for a short time and then ended up down in Louisiana, where I taught at Nicholls State University. I then left there and went up to Pennsylvania.

While I was in Louisiana, I got involved with NOW. I was about an hour outside of New Orleans and people would say things like, why would I want to go to the city? I've got everything I need here on the bayou. And I talked to people and it didn't seem like we were agreeing but it didn't seem like we meant the same thing. Some students wanted to start a chapter of NOW and I became their faculty advisor. They were the people that, we seemed to mean the same things by what we were saying, and I then got involved with state NOW. I became the state VP of NOW and I was in charge of the Equal Rights Amendment effort there. Well, we got enough people in the state legislature to say they would vote for it if it came up for a vote. They probably knew it was highly unlikely to come up for a vote, and it did not. But I became known as the ERA lady and I would get phone calls from people saying, "My husband says if I leave him, he'll only pay me a hundred a month. Can he do that?" Actually, probably not. But you have to get a good lawyer. So I was very involved with the ERA there. But it just didn't feel like a comfortable place, so I came up to Pennsylvania. Then I quit working and for a year, I worked full time on the Equal Rights Amendment. Five or six months of that was going into Manhattan for a phone bank. That was in the early days of answering machines and we would call people

up and if we got an answering machine, it was an affluent family. And we'd leave a message along the lines of, this is NOW calling. Would you call us back? We're trying to raise money for the ERA. Every day, at least one person called back and the first time we left that message, someone called back and gave us a hundred dollars and a hundred dollars back then was more than it is now. I was then down in South Carolina. Again, we got a lot of information and we had a lot of people saying they'd vote for it. But again, it never came up for passage there.

At that time, there was a time limit on the ERA. We were three states short of getting that passed when we got through that time limit. Well, guess what? It's been passed by three more states now. So now, the effort is to get the congress to pass something saying that the time limit is removed. Did you know that there was a constitutional amendment passed two hundred years after it was proposed? After the Constitution was first put forward, people said, ah, no no no no no. There's not enough of our rights protected. And a lot of amendments were suggested. Ten of them passed and are known as the Bill of Rights. Well, this eleventh one was passed two hundred years later. But it was proposed as part of that group. It says you can't increase the pay of anyone in congress until there's been another election, i.e., you

can't get voted into congress and then go in and double your pay.

Anyway, so while I was working on the ERA, I ended up back in DC and I taught a course with U of Maryland there again. And I went in to talk to them once and they said, would you like to go to Bermuda? Well no, actually, I wouldn't, because I've lived in too many different places. But it was late on a Friday afternoon. They weren't going to get any more people to offer it to until the next day. So I said, sure and thought about it over the weekend and decided, yeah, I should go there. And I did. I spent three years in Bermuda. That was interesting. That was fun. But it also -- I found out why Bermudians are very friendly (audio cuts out) involved with -- my microphone is muted?

**MF:** I can still hear you fine, Nadine.

**NA:** Okay. It just said something about muted. Okay, sorry. Okay, I got to know a lot of people in Bermuda. But every year, the person I was closest to left and I discovered then why Bermudians did not get real close to people who were there on a short contract. Because at the end of your three-year contract, if a Bermudian was qualified for your job, they got it. It wasn't a matter of who was

best for it. If the Bermudian was qualified, they got it. And that's reasonable. They have to protect jobs for their people. So I left there after four years and came back to the US then and that's when I came back to Pennsylvania.

I did a respecialization. My doctorate originally was, well, my doctorate's in social psychology. Every week, at least one person, students or staff, ended up in my office asking for counseling. So I finally decided to get some training there in so that I could do that appropriately and I did that at Hahnemann Hospital, there was a program there. Well, I was used to the students being rebellious. But while we were there, the faculty resigned, en masse, and moved to Widener University down in Chester. Well, there had been a head of the psychiatry department who had a degree in psychiatry and psychology, and he understood how psychology fit in. He retired and the person they got in really saw psychology as irrelevant and was treating the faculty very poorly. So they all found another place to go, too, and resigned en masse, and went there. And students, for the most part, went with them. Well, I had taught a couple of courses down there, because I still liked money, even though I was going to school. It was good to have money to pay one's expenses. So I knew a little bit about it. I was



okay with that move. But I did finish up my respecialization in clinical and child psychology. Spent three years after that working in an inpatient child and adolescent hospital in Cherry Hill, which I enjoyed, but it's very intense. The psychiatrists, for the most part, had a third of their time in the inpatient unit, a third of their time teaching, and a third of their patients in outpatient therapy. That would have worked okay, but being full-time inpatient, very very intense and I decided that was too much. So I went from there to working as a school psychologist in Phillipsburg, New Jersey, right across the river from where I lived in Easton. And so that brought me to this area. I was basically moving west when I came from Bermuda to Pennsylvania and moving north when I came from Philadelphia up to the Easton area.

Actually, meantime, when I was down in Louisiana and working on the Equal Rights Amendment, that's when I came back to the church. In that, the only place I've ever been where everyone presumed you were involved in church, and when I was setting up meetings pro-ERA, we were starting and ending them with prayer to show this was not anti-family. Well, I wasn't going to lead prayer in public when I wasn't praying in private. So I looked for every woman, religious person I could find and there was

a Presbyterian minister. We kept missing each other on the phone and so I finally went to her service on a Sunday morning, with the thought that, well, she'll be there. I can find her there, and I did and she agreed to participate in the meeting I asked her to. Then the next Sunday, when I woke up, I was reading a book. I said, eh, should I get up now and go to church? And, nah. So I continued reading. And then I had an experience, I had an emotion I'd never had before. I was sorry I had not gone to church. So I went back to church at her church after that, and that led to some changes. The Louisiana State Board of NOW met Sunday mornings and they kinda/kind of had to meet a little later, because I said I can't get there until noon or 11:30 or something. The service was fairly early. So that's when I got back involved in the church and I have found that a positive thing since then. So when I was up here, actually, I attended both the Lutheran church and MCCLV, Metropolitan Community Church of the Lehigh Valley, when I first came. The MCCLV had a morning and an evening service and so I went to the evening service there. If you want to meet people in the gay community, you can go to bars. I don't really want to meet people that are drinking too much and besides, they tend to be very smoky and I don't like that. You can be involved with sports. I played on the softball team one year and it was weird how they expected me to play

catcher. So I found, through MCCLV, a real good way of getting involved in the gay community and met a lot of people there and continued that until they stopped the evening service. Because in the meantime, I had been involved at St. John's Lutheran Church in Easton and was on the council and was treasurer for a long time. So I was very involved there. I wasn't going to give that up. That's actually kind of an overlap of the things in that we started having St. Johns have a booth at the local PRIDE festival. They started the PRIDE festival after I was up here. I don't remember exactly when it was. I think we had a booth there in the second or third year that they had that. Pastor Grace Olson was our minister at that time. And she had led us into becoming RIC, Reconciling in Christ. Lutherans are very good at coming up with a description of someone that no one else is going to know what it means. Somewhere in, I think it's in Acts, Paul says we need to be reconciled in each other and be accepting of and supporting of each other. And so the organization had been Lutherans Concerned North America. It included both US and Canada. But then in '09, 2009, we got something passed nationally that said you could be ordained if you were in a committed LGBT relationship. Before that, if you were not married, you had to agree to be celibate to be a minister. And since you couldn't get married if you were gay, that was kind

of restrictive for a lot of people. So we then became RIC. Well actually, we'd become RIC before that. We became RIC in '02, which meant St Johns publicly stated that LGBT people should be fully involved within the church. And we then worked on supporting people doing that. We went to the Pride every year, had a booth there. And that was always fun and interesting. Met a lot of people. Of course, there was always the assumption if you met someone there, they were probably gay. So you learned a lot of things about people that you hadn't known. That was actually before people started being open about being gay. Since it still can get you fired in most places, it's usually wise not to be open about that. Being that I'm retired, I don't have to worry about it anymore.

However, we worked at supporting people in all sorts of different ways. I became a member of the synod - that's the regional organization of Lutheran churches here - that had a task force on LGBT ministry, and actually, I'm still a part of that. And so we work with congregations that are considering doing this. We try and provide information at the synod assemblies, at the regional meetings, helping people to understand that this is very supported by God and the Bible is not really against it. If you look at the negative things in the Bible about the

homosexuality, they tended to have other reasons than anti-homosexuality. The one in the Old Testament that most people quote, Israel is a small nation. They needed to get lots of kids so they could grow, so they could hold their own. You don't get a whole lot of kids out of a same-gender relationship so they were against that. And while people are quite willing to talk about "It's an abomination to lay with a man as you would with a woman", they forget that it also says "it's an abomination if you curse your parents and if you do that, you should be killed". Somehow, they don't find both of those equally important from the Old Testament. And if you look at the various things that are said in the Bible, they usually have other kinds of explanations than anti-LGBT. If some of the New Testament ones, yeah, if you get involved in a same-gender relationship when, in fact, you are not gay or lesbian, then that probably is not appropriate for you. And that seems to be the viewpoint behind most of the things in the New Testament. So anyway, I have worked with them, with the group and various Lutheran congregations, to help them decide to become publicly supportive of gay people. Since the Supreme Court said it was okay to have gay marriage, people have been much more accepting of it since then. The Supreme Court was probably influenced by the public view, but the public view is also influenced by the Supreme Court.

I was involved with the Pennsylvania Diversity Network when it was working on getting the -- added to the list of those you shall not discriminate against, LGBT people. And we got a lot of people supporting that and it was passed by the Allentown City Council. Pennsylvania still does not have that as part of a "thou shalt not discriminate against" listing. When that was passed, there were some people who didn't like it and they started getting petitions signed by people to ask for it to be undone. Put on the poll, put on the ballot and get it voted down, was their thought. Well actually, they did a lot of lying to get people to sign their petition. One councilwoman said she signed that, they told her it was pro-LGBT people. So what we started doing then was getting people to sign letters saying they take their signature back. Liz Bradbury and Trish Sullivan were very efficient in setting up a database where we put in the petition number and the lines on which everyone signed. And then, when we got someone to sign a letter saying, I take my signature back, and we gave it to the city, they said, how do we pull that? We had to tell them what petition number and what line number the signature was on.

Well, when this was going on, some of us would go out on a Sunday morning to the churches where they were trying to get signatures. And I could engage them in a long discussion of this, with all sorts of references to the Bible that I was quite knowledgeable about and that would take up their time, so they couldn't go get signatures from other people. This was when they were trying to get signatures to get on the ballot something to oppose the lack of discrimination against LGBT people. And this kind of impressed Liz a lot. She was pretty good at engaging them in a long discussion of this. If they're talking to me, they're not getting someone else to sign it. That was the thing that I did a lot there. And then we would do specific things. If we found someone having problems, we'd try to help them out in some way and I guess I became known as someone in the church community who was very involved with LGBT groups and very accepting of that.

**MF:** So I'm curious about, you described being really active in the gay community when you lived in Easton. And I'm wondering if you could just go back a bit and talk about when you first encountered gay community, and what those communities were like when you first encountered gay community.

**NA:** A lot more hidden. Yeah. When I was down in Philadelphia, I was involved with the gay community primarily through the softball league. And when I came up here, I joined the softball league up here. But I also both found a Lutheran church I wanted to be involved with and found MCCLV. And I attended MCC regularly, oh, I don't know, for ten years at least. And was involved in doing the various kinds of things we did to be supportive of the community there. And as I mentioned, I was involved with the softball league for one year. I had decided not to go for another year, because I didn't like the way it was played. I think they basically didn't invite me back the next year, either, so we seemed to be in agreement on that. But that was okay, because how can you be a catcher and not catch the ball? I've never understood that. One of the things, well, the community tended to be pretty private then and you would be careful who you admitted anything to. I find that difficult. I tend to be fairly open about what I'm doing and to have to keep it quiet is difficult. But when you look at the possibility of being fired, you work at it. And I was up here in December of '93, so basically '94 on that I have been up here and it was probably not until ten years after I'd been here that I began to feel comfortable letting it be known. Yeah.



At that time, I met Jan. And we were, well, when I met her, she had been given a one-year prognosis. She outlived it by three years. But she outlived several others. We got together after knowing each other for a little less than a year. We had a wedding in the church. It was not possible to have a wedding in -- the state-recognized wedding at that point. But we did our own through the church. She didn't want to do it at my Lutheran church, because I knew everyone there and she didn't know hardly anyone. So we did it at MCCLV, but my Lutheran minister also participated, and that was good. The area, the part of the service when it says, who gives this woman? I've always thought that was dumb. No one's ever giving me away. So I substituted for that, my family welcomed her to the family and her family welcomed me. So her father read that. My sister, I wanted one of my sisters to play, for Marilyn to be my attendant and Carol to play the organ. Carol has the degree in sacred music. Both of them were church organists for forty years. Carol Jean still is, but then she's a whole lot younger than Marilyn and I. And Marilyn finally retired from it. She would not be my attendant. But it was very strange. Anyway, very good friend, Diane was my attendant and Marilyn was playing the organ. And so I asked Carol Jean to read the welcome her to the family thing. Carol Jean gets very emotional and she got emotional through it, so

Marilyn took over and read the rest of it. So both my sisters welcomed her to the family. I really liked that a whole lot better than, who gives this woman. Bah, humbug. Who can give? You know, that goes back to the days when women didn't have any rights at all. They were, in essence, owned by the males in their life and I do not accept that. So we did have that. And we essentially showed that you could have a same-gender relationship approved by the church, before it was approved by the society. That was ten years, more than that, before the Supreme Court said it was okay. And we met in '98 and got married in '99. After church, after school was over. I was not going to have a wedding during the Spring of school, which is the busiest time in the life of a school psychologist.

We moved in together, got the house and moved in in March of '99, and have been here. She passed away in '01. So she outlived their predictions. Her son was twenty-five at the time and she had been told she would never live to see him graduate from high school. So she lived a bit longer than that. But all her medical problems did catch up with her. That was unfortunate but not unexpected. And I do still miss her. So yeah. I was kind of giving a relatively public witness that it's okay to be LGBT and

it was okay to do this in the church. And I was very involved in MCC, which was quite a strong, well, clearly the strongest advocate for LGBT folks in the area. Well, equally with the Pennsylvania Diversity Network, which then became the Bradbury-Sullivan Community Center now.

I was quite involved with doing the Pride. St. Johns has had a booth at Pride for quite a long time. I think by the second or third year it was existing, we have had a booth there virtually every year. I also, through my membership on the synod, the regional task force of the Lutheran church, we've also gone to the Reading pride and had a booth there. And well, the Lutheran synod, fairly early, I'm not sure when, '02 or '01, told people that, told the congregations that they should be more accepting of LGBT people. And the synod became RIC, passed something saying that they think LGBT people should be fully involved in the church. And so as a member of that task force, I did a booth at the Reading pride every year. I'm not sure if it was the first year or the second year that they had one, that we started going there. A few years, three or four years, we had a church service, asking people from all the different congregations and all the different religions to come and have a worship service the night before Pride. That was fun. I organized that for a few years and then keeping going with it

became difficult. So it didn't continue, partially because I had some medical problems. And if I'm the one that's supposed to be doing this, and then I can't do it, it didn't keep going. But I overcame all those medical problems and I'm still here and I plan to be around for another thirty years.

**MF:** So I have a question about -- you worked with PA Diversity Network on the anti-discrimination ordinance. You were a major leader in the Lutheran church and advocacy for LGBT Lutherans. And then through MCCLV, LGBT Christians more broadly. I'm curious what other kinds of advocacy work you might have done. You did mention marriage equality a bit. Was that something that you were involved in in the Lehigh Valley? And if so, how did you get involved in that?

**NA:** Not a whole lot. Basically, sometimes people would go to a national gathering, if there was something. We would write letters to the editor and write congress people supportive of this. We would try to be supportive of individuals who were having problems. It's still the case, however, in an awful lot of the country, that you can get married on Sunday and be fired on Monday. Since getting married is usually a reasonably public event, people are likely to find out about that. You hear lots

that didn't know you were gay before that. Could find that out and say goodbye. We did various activities where we would hold some kind of a demonstration, pro-LGBT marriage, supportive of LGBT people. Usually, they were relatively low-level things. But there was a lot of contacting congress people and pressuring them. And I still contact congress people a lot. Even though I think two of my three congress people are very pro-LGBT issues, they need to hear from us to counter whatever they are hearing from the anti-folks. And so I will likely sign off on an awful lot of emails that come saying, support this. Golly, I'd have to think about it. I do remember doing different things where we would demonstrate in front of the courthouse or something for this. That was all a while ago. It led to what we were after, which was the national acceptance thereof. And it's good to be public as much as possible. But it is sometimes dangerous to the livelihood of people getting out there. So we try to be working on it in ways that won't get the people doing it in trouble. And we talk to people in the various churches where they are willing to hear us. And we talk to people in other organizations, if they're interested in hearing from us. And at this point, it feels fairly positive, fairly supportive in the community. Yeah, no, everyone doesn't support us, but there's enough that do.

And the law is supportive enough that we stay with that.  
Okay.

**MF:** Well, I have a question that is about the Lutheran church. And I'm wondering, as someone who's been an active leader and a change-maker in your churches and also with your work with MCCLV, have you noticed an evolution from your childhood to your adulthood in how the church thinks about LGBT people? Could you talk a little bit about maybe some changes that you've seen across your lifetime, within the churches that you've been a part of?

**NA:** When I was growing up, I never heard anything about LGBT people. If someone had told those initials to me, I would have had no idea what they were talking about. If they mentioned "lesbian," I would not necessarily have known what that meant. The message in the church was very clear, that you had to behave yourself, behave appropriately. Remain pure until you got married and remaining pure meant restraining from any kind of sexual involvement. And there was never anything mentioned, that I recall, about same-gender sexual involvement. That was just presumed not to exist. And then we had Lutherans Concerned North America develop. That was kind of independent from the church, but it consisted of

Lutherans and I think they developed in the eighties, though I'm not totally sure about that, and started pestering the church about it. And then more of us got involved with it and we started working on our local congregations. And there would be a lot of ministers. In fact, I think if all the ministers who think it's a good idea to be reconciling Christ, RIC, to be supportive of gay, if all their churches were, we'd probably double or triple the number of churches who do that. But a lot of them do not want to cause a big commotion in their church. They think it works better to quietly work on getting that kind of support. But now, I don't think any congregation can not look at that. I don't think kids growing up without any understanding of LGBT exist anymore.

I remember, oh, it was probably fifteen years ago. We were talking about support for LGBT people and the "we" that was talking about it was a group of adults and some students. And the kids basically said, why would anyone object to that? They didn't see any reason. So they had clearly changed their viewpoint from that that was prevalent when I was a kid. They don't seem to think it's an insult to be considered that you might be gay. It's just accurate or inaccurate. While when I was growing up, well, I wouldn't have known what it was because we didn't

talk about it. But it would have been considered an insult by a lot of people. The church has come a long way, though not all branches of the church. There are three major Lutheran denominations in the US, and the ELCA, the one I'm a part of, is very accepting. Missouri Synod is not accepting. It doesn't even accept ordaining women and the Wisconsin Synod is even worse, much more restrictive. So there's still a long way to go to get everyone to accept what Jesus said. Love your neighbor doesn't have an exception. Unless, of course, they're gay. Then you don't have to. I don't think it says that anywhere in what Jesus said.

So the effort has been one to have this recognized. We usually have some kind of a program at the synod assembly, which is where we encounter a lot of people from a lot of different churches. We did one on marriage. Do you know how many different kinds of marriage there are in the Bible? It's unbelievable. There's examples of when the Israelis conquered some group, then they were to kill everyone except the virgins and they could marry them if they wanted. I don't think the virgins had any choice as to whether or not they'd be involved in these. Someone put together a listing I think there's about ten different kinds of marriage in the Bible, only one of which is where both parties agree to it. So we have done



a lot of talking to people about these different kinds of things and what is consistent with Jesus' message of loving your neighbor. Love God, love your neighbor. And these are two major aspects of what Jesus says to do. And when we have these programs, we usually get a lot of people at them. Because they're all interested in what's going on here. How can I explain this to other people? Can you give me some information that I can use to argue about it? And we have done that. Okay. My memory of all the specifics that have happened is not coming through real well. I'd have to go back and look through materials to see what else we've done.

**MF:** Well, I think you're doing great. The stories you're sharing are wonderful. I have a question about your own faith journey, because this is... You're really describing so much work in the church to build inclusivity. Was that a struggle to you, to work through some homophobia within the church in your own personal faith journey? Or did you always feel that God accepted you just as you are?

**NA:** Oh, I always felt God accepted me. My supportive family expressed that in different ways. No, you can't tell mother about this at Marilyn's twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Then she'll have these negative associations

with it. No, you can't tell mother about this at Carol Jean's graduation and marriage. Then she'll have these negative... This is from my supportive sisters. So I finally wrote mother a letter and her response was, well, you young people certainly look at things differently than we did. And by the way, do you remember so and so, who was a third cousin of so and so? The rest of it was a letter like she usually wrote, mentioning someone and what their relationship was to everyone that I might know, and did I know about this happening?

And mother was going to come to my wedding but she had a medical problem. Found out at that point she had a heart problem and was unable to travel at that time. But Jan and I went back for Christmas the next year. And was quite accepting. Mother was fine with that. And the rest of the family was okay with that. So I have felt fully accepted by my family all the time and therefore, if others in the church were not so accepting of it, well, that was their problem. And I would like to change their viewpoints, because it's clearly a stupid viewpoint. But I didn't feel put down by it. I guess I do find, as a minority, fighting for our minority rights. Yeah. And my family did come to Jan's funeral at that point, including Carol Jean brought her daughter. It's one thing, as an adult, to accept what this stupid thing your sister is

doing. It's another thing to bring your kid to it. So I was impressed that she brought her daughter with her to that. They're in Nebraska. And the rest of the family was in California. So it was quite a trip for them to come for Jan's funeral. But they did come. And yeah, I have never felt negatively, negative devaluations from the family. We don't always agree with what the other's doing. But that's a different... They're still a positive member of the family. I don't know what one could do to have that change.

So I've been very lucky in having a strong family with strong support for the various members. And I suppose that comes, at least in part, from the fact that my parents were very different in some ways. And while a lot of people consider education level has to be similar for a marriage to work, it didn't for them. And so they could see beyond other kinds of things. And see to the positiveness. And they clearly taught that to all of us, because it seems all my siblings and their spouses have the same kind of view. Yeah. We don't discuss religion a lot, though. Two of my sisters have married men who became second-career Missouri Synod Lutheran pastors and they have different views than I have about the acceptability of LGBT. They've never had that interfere with their relationship with me. But it works better if

we don't discuss our different views of religion. We know what the other ones believe, and we know why and we know where we differ. So we don't have to talk about that. We can focus on the family factors that are positive.

**MF:** You described you sending a letter to your mom to tell her about your sexuality. I'm curious, when did you know that you were gay?

**NA:** I think I was in my forties when I realized, very explicitly. I knew, at a young age, there was no way I was going to end up married to some guy and supporting him going through college when I hadn't gone through college. I did date guys for quite a while. There were some very nice guys. But I wasn't real interested in a lifelong relationship with them, for the most part. I was, well, if you go back... I got my degree in '72. So if you go back to the sixties and seventies, it was very difficult to be involved in any kind of a social life without having some level of dating going on. Things were done in pairs a lot. I did a lot of activities that were more athletic. I did a lot of cross-country skiing when I was in graduate school. We went out backpacking every weekend, except Thanksgiving and Christmas. I was home for those. But every other weekend, we'd be out backpacking. And in the winter, we would be cross-country

skiing. I usually went downhill skiing a couple of times a year to work on techniques. But mostly, I did cross-country skiing. When I was working up in Canada at University of Western Ontario, there was a cross-country marathon from Ottawa. It started at Ottawa. I don't remember exactly where it went now. But it was basically a hundred miles. There were ten sections of ten miles. Maybe it was less than that. Something like that. And you'd go on one or two of them each day. And whichever ones you want. Well, basically I managed to trip and break my leg on one of those and that got me into the hospital. I did discover the Canadian medical system is much better than the American. The only thing I had to pay for was flying home from Ottawa back to where I was going to, where I lived. But all of the medical stuff was paid for by the system. And we hear about how bad the Canadian system is. Not at all.

So I was very involved in these kinds of athletic things. We kept our skis in our office and went out and skied around the campus after five o'clock. That was a lot of fun. And I wasn't dating a lot at that time. But there was not a sense of, it was okay to be looking into same-gender relationships. You had a lot of close friends that were women. Just didn't become sexual a lot. And then, oh, probably starting in about the eighties, I started

admitting that these strong attractions I had for women was more than a friendship. That I wanted a lot more from those relationships. I can be a pretty independent person and can get along by myself quite a lot. So I did eventually begin to realize that I wanted more from these relationships than just friendship. And that's when I started acknowledging that I'm lesbian and that that's a positive thing. That's okay. I never felt really negative about that. There's a lot of variety in life. And I have no problem with being one of those minority people, even though, in a lot of ways, I am not. As a white Christian with a high degree of education, that's not exactly a minority, as most people see it in our country. And I guess I was accepted by the important people in my life. And if they weren't accepting, I probably quit being involved with them much. But family, I have not gotten any real strong negatives from family. I've gotten some "well, we don't agree with that, but that's you" kind of statements. But I haven't gotten any "you're bad because of" kinds of statements. So there is that strong sense of family support there.

I have been involved with some people. The relationship with Jan is the only one that became strong enough that we were married and together. Actually, she was in the process of changing her will when she passed away. Her

son had come up, and we were going over it and he knew what she wanted to change it to but it hadn't gotten actually done. But he followed what she was trying to change it to, as closely as he could after that. So he didn't give me any problem. The house was set up that, if anything happened to either of us, the other one inherited it. And her will also said that any inheritance taxes would be paid out of her money. So I don't even know how much the inheritance taxes were. They paid that. We've kept in touch somewhat since then, though not a lot, over the years. He's up in Michigan. And that's kind of a long ways from here. I don't get up there real often. And since, well, before that and since then, there have been some relationships. But they've been fun while they lasted but they were clearly not going to last forever. I wouldn't mind getting into another relationship but at this point, it's kind of hard to start a relationship with all that's going on now. So just surviving everything is going to be the goal at this point. Also, I plan to live to be one hundred and seven and I suspect that when I'm in my nineties, I'll probably need more family support than I can get from being here.

I was not able to go home for Christmas three years ago. I had, well, I had a broken hip in '16. I had uterine cancer in '17 and I had an insufficiency fracture of the

spine in '18 and I've overcome them all. And I'm still here. But I couldn't sit up long enough to fly across the country in December of '18. So I guess it was two years ago, not three. So I didn't go home then and that made me realize I really need to be closer to family. I miss seeing them. I did go out in May to my great-nephew's high school graduation. And there were a few more people there, because of his graduation, than would have been there otherwise. But not as many as would have been there at Christmas. So I'm aiming to head back to California probably sometime next year. Meantime, I have an awful lot of stuff here that needs to be sorted through and gotten rid of. And you can't really do that now. I lost a lot of weight and I gave away all those clothing, luckily early. But then I bought a lot more clothing very quickly. You've got to have clothing. Your tops, you can wear. But the bottoms start falling off when you lose a lot. So I have some that I bought because I needed something and I don't like them and I need to get rid of them. But I can't do that now. I also went to the PEA [Phillipsburg Ed Association] representative assembly every year for ten years. And I got a lot of bags from those so I probably have fifty bags I'd like to get rid of but I can't give them away now. So I am hoping to get through this soon enough that we can start, people will accept things and I'll get rid of all of this. And I will



move to California to be closer to family. I will probably look for both a Lutheran and an MCC congregation out there.

The Lutheran churches are more likely to be involved in LGBT things, so that I can get to know that community through them. But MCC is the gay community. So I will be looking to both of them to get involved in the gay community when I'm out in California. I think that having someone my age being very supportive is a positive for a lot of the younger folks, who may or may not have family support for that. But when they know someone who knows a lot about the Bible and can quote the various things, and is very supportive of it, that is positive to the people who have felt dumped on by the church. So I try to do [01:29:00] that as much as possible. Though I probably don't encounter them a lot, because I tend not to go to the churches that are likely to be negative. But you encounter people constantly that have some negative experiences.

**MF:** Well, we're getting towards the end of our interview time. And I have one more question. And then we'll move towards closing the interview. We've talked about the evolution of the church. And we've talked about your different work with various organizations. But I'm

curious about being someone who's in the field of psychology, how have you seen that field change around LGBT acceptance throughout your career? Because that is a field that really has undergone a major sea change. So I'm curious about your thoughts on, your reflections about being a gay person in that field, and what you've seen change across your career.

**NA:** Okay, well, my original field was social psychology and there were concerns with kind of how people interact with each other, the social kinds of things. And there had not been a whole lot of looking at LGBT things in that field when I got my degree. It's shocking to me. It was forty-eight years ago that I got that degree. That's a long time ago. There has been more looking at it since then. When I re-specialized in clinical and child psych, what was amazing to me later is I actually did a course on counseling LGBT people and there was never any mention of some of the problem. The transsexual was not there. If someone was born one thing and they said they were something else, that was never mentioned in those courses. I hope it is now, but it wasn't then. I followed up on it a lot and found out what I could about it. But it's been kind of a, you've got to look into it on your own, kind of thing. I don't think psychology is against it so much as it has never been a major focus in the

field. So I would say that it's much more likely to be something that people talk about, people ask about now. It was never mentioned. I don't recall it ever being mentioned when I was going through my doctoral studies.

I wasn't doing a lot of clinical then. We had one course thereon you had to take, whatever your field was. You had to get courses in all the different aspects of it. But when I did the re-specialization in there, it was still pretty narrow in what was looked at. I think at this point, I would feel quite comfortable that I have never felt any kind of negative force from the field. When I was at Phillipsburg working as a school psychologist, I was also on the New Jersey Education Association task force on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. And at one point, an article came out in *The American Psychologist* about the different aspects. You know, some people say you're either this or that. Well actually, there's a lot of psychology that shows that there's a much wider range of things there. And so this one article talked about five different aspects of your sexual identity and I made that available to the other members of the task force. Some of it was pretty detailed, but there were nice summaries of each of the five sections that they could all understand, whether they wanted to understand the rest of it or not.

So the field psychology has been more accepting in the sense of saying positive things about the diversity of sexual identity. It wasn't that I ever experienced anyone saying, you're A or B before, you're male or female. It's more that there is an emphasis on the wide variety of things that equal sexual identity since then. When I was teaching at the University level, I would go to the American Psychological Association conferences, which tend to be in August each year. When I started working in the school district, the K12 system, I was less likely to go to those. I still do try to read a fair amount of the stuff, but not nearly the wide range of journals that I used to read. I think the changes I've experienced, it has been more doing research in areas that weren't researched much before. So while there are some psychologists who will tell you that you're A or B, the majority of the field says, that's ridiculous. There's a much wider range of views there. And so I have not felt any problems in psychology. And I have found a lot of support for whatever your identity is.

The field focuses more on how you should be supportive of an individual, in whatever their sense of identity is, than in figuring out whether it's a good identity or an accurate identity for the person or not. It's more like

the field feels that individuals know what their identity is. Our job, as psychologists, is to help them negotiate how they express that in the world. You probably are better off not being explicit and open about it in a setting where there's a lot of people who disagree with you. You will get into a big fight about it and you won't gain anything. So how can you negotiate that if that place where you get into a big fight is your family? That would be more the kinds of things that psychologists would look at in counseling, than trying to convince someone they are or are not. Now, there has been a lot of effort of some people to change individuals from same-gender to opposite-gender attractions. It's pretty clear that doesn't work. It's pretty clear that that is a useless effort and you cannot get any support, as a legitimate psychologist, in trying to do that. The American Psychological Association has position papers that say, no, no, people know what their identity is and you don't try and change that.

**MF:** Well, thank you so much. Before we close the interview, I want to ask you, Nadine, is there anything that we haven't talked about that you really want to discuss today?

**NA:** I don't think so. I'll think about it. If I come up with something, I'll let you know. But no, I don't think so. I think we've covered a lot of things here.

**MF:** Well, I am so appreciative of your time. Thank you so much for agreeing to speak with me today. I'm so grateful. Thank you.

**NA:** You're welcome. I've enjoyed it.

END OF AUDIO FILE