Frank Whelan

MARY FOLTZ: [It's gonna do just?] -- go ahead and press play. Or record, rather.

FRANK WHELAN: Record, good. (laughter)

MF: Okay. Oh, and I should just remind you, I'm going to ask you to say your name and spell your name. And it's Whelan?

FW: Whelan, yes.

MF: Whelan. And I'll ask for your birthday and then I'm going to just ask you to confirm that you -- all right, well, I'm Mary Foltz, I'm here with Frank Whelan to talk about his life and experiences in LGBT organizations in the Lehigh Valley as part of the Lehigh Valley LGBT Community Oral History Project. And this project is sponsored by the Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center and we are funded by the Lehigh Valley Engaged Humanities Consortium. We are here in Frank and Bob's home in Allentown and today is July 23rd, 2019. Frank, thank you so much for your willingness to be here with us today to speak with me. I'm wondering if we could start? Could you please state your full name and spell it for me?

FW: Certainly. My name is Frank Albert Whelan, W-H-E-L-A-N, Jr.

MF: And could you please share your birth date?

FW: My birthday is October 22nd, 1949.

MF: And earlier, before we started recording, did we go over a consent form? Are you consenting to this interview today?

FW: I am consenting to this interview, yes.

MF: Thank you. So, to really just start our conversation, I'm going to ask if you'd share a little bit about your childhood with us.

FW: Okay, I'll fill you in as I can. I was born in Orange, New Jersey and I lived there only briefly. My parents got a chance to move to a home in Livingston, New Jersey, and in Livingston is where I actually grew up and spent most of my childhood life till I went off to college in 1969. I had a interesting early life. My parents were interesting people in a lot of ways. They were city people. They were from the 1920s and '30s people, when they were born, and the culture of the '30s and '40s in the

cities of northern New Jersey, New York, Newark, East Orange was something that they a part of. That's how they approached life. My father had -- was an interesting life, his background. His father was the son of a man named Charles A. Whelan. This would have been my grandfather, my great grandfather. Charles A. Whelan was the founder of the Whelan drugstore chain and he was also the founder, with his brother George, of the United Cigar Stores. They were extremely wealthy, very, very wealthy by just about anybody's estimate. It was estimated, in 1920, that they were, my grandfather, my great grandfather, who was Charles A. Whelan, was actually worth fifteen million dollars, which was quite a bit of money at the time. And he had a lot of money and they threw it around, and his family. And they bought a lot of homes and they toured a lot and they did a lot of things and then the stock market crash happened. And although they were not ever having to worry about where their next meal was coming from, believe me, they were not as wealthy as they had been. The '30s were tough times for them. My father had two brothers and my father's brothers were a little bit rough on him when he was growing up. He was the youngest one. And my grandmother, not intending to, of course, used to embarrass him constantly by referring to him as Baby Frank. So, my father grew up, he was Frank A. Whelan, Sr. So, my father grew up sort of with this complex about masculinity, which we could get into at some

point. But he was -- it was an interesting household they had. My grandfather was a man who collected art. He collected rare books. He had the money. His father had plenty of money and so he did this kind of thing. One year in 1925, for example, my grandfather gave his father, my great grandfather, a copy of Joseph Conrad's manuscript of a novel Joseph Conrad had written. And so, this is the kind of thing that you're talking about here. And my grandfather knew a lot of painters in New York. He knew Edward Hopper, he knew several others who wouldn't -- John Sheehan, Sheehan,(John Sloan) think his name was, and these were the kind of people that he mixed with. And I got a lot of my information and background and interest in arts and things from him. I don't know whether he knew it or not but I think he suspected, as I was growing up, because of my interest in other things, that I was gay. My grandfather was a bisexual and I found this out one day. I was, like, sixteen years old and he and my grandmother used to come up to our home in Livingston on Sunday afternoons. And it was my job to take the lawn chair out of the back of the car and set it up so that he could sit there because he had a bad back. And one day, I'm doing this and -- (phone rings)

MF: Okay, you were right out, setting up the chairs.

FW: I was setting up the lawn chair that he always used because his back bothered him and he felt uncomfortable sitting in that kind of a harder chair. And while I was taking it out of the back of the car, he looked at me and he said, "Frank, I think you and I understand each other." And I said, "Yes, Pop, I think we do," because at that point I already had the feeling of where I was going with myself. And he didn't say any word. Nothing. We never spoke of it again but that's what was going on.

Well, my father was of a different type than his father. My father, he was present when the family money was disappearing and he didn't have that kind of money. Grandfather and my grandmother still had enough money to make themselves comfortable. They had a summer home at the Jersey Shore, they had an apartment in East Orange, but they did not pass much of that on to my father. One of the things that they did do was buy homes. My grandmother bought a home for my father and his brothers out of her money that she had in Livingston for each one of them. So, that was something because none of them could afford it. My father never went to college. He got out of high school. He was in the Navy during World War II. He's in a ship in the Pacific, an ammunition ship, which he always likes to tell us was going to -- lucky there was not an atomic bomb attack. He was lucky there was atomic bomb attacks on Japan,

otherwise, he would've been part of the invasion fleet of Japan. And he used to like to say to me, "And you would not be here."

So, (laughter) anyway, I was aware from him different stories about his growing up that his parents, although my grandmother worked very hard to keep them together as a family, raise their boys properly, nobody ever urged them to go to college. Nobody ever urged them to have any kind of -- it was just sort of assumed that they would have money. Well, of course, they wouldn't have money, so they would of had to start out on their own. My father met my mother in East Orange, New Jersey in the late 1940s after he got home from the Navy.

Oh, here's a story I'd like to share that I forgot about about my father in the Navy afterwards. In 1946, he was in San Francisco and he was with a bunch of other sailors and they went to this club in San Francisco and this person was playing piano. And he always liked the music of Eddie Heywood, who was a pianist, jazz pianist, popular in those days. And so, where he first heard him was in San Francisco. But they were in this club and he was with his friend, one of his little more older and more knowledgeable sailors. And he saw this good-looking woman and thought, boy, isn't she attractive? And so, you know, as we used to say in the Dark Ages, put the moves on her. And there

was this other woman around and, like, giving my father dirty looks, you know? And, like, just looking at him, like, you know, "What are you doing?" Oh, and that kind of thing. And my father is twenty and naive about the world, asks the friend of his, he says, "Well, what's her problem? What's the matter with her?" And this friend of my father's said, "Well, you're trying to pick up her girlfriend, for one thing." (laughs) And my father said, "Her what?" (laughter) So, you can imagine. This is where my father's experiences with gay things begin. And he and my mother -- I should tell you, my mother was a wonderful mother, very good. She was a wonderful person. She had a -- from a family that was nowhere near the social class of my father. And her father sold Beechnut baby food out of the back of a big Packard car he drove around in, because he was this salesman for Beechnut baby food. And they lived in various parts of the Northeast. They lived in New York City for a while, where my mother was born, by the way, in Brooklyn, in 1927. But she had her mother, my grandmother, her mother was not a very nice person. She was an odd lady. Eventually, she would drink herself into oblivion. But she used to pick on my mother and was very unfair to my mother. And so, my mother grew up with sort of an inferiority complex about this whole thing. Well, I, you know, sort of got that impression from things that I'd sort of picked up over the years about the way they acted towards each other.

It was a strange -- So, she had a strange relationship with her mother. My father couldn't stand her mother, just drove him crazy. And she -- it used to drive my father crazy. They mutually drove each other crazy. But eventually, my parents' marriage worked out to the point where they did have eight children, I being the first one. And my brothers and sisters, we all kind of developed very distinct personalities. None of us was really very much the same. So, as I was growing up, I knew what I wanted in life was a quiet place to read a book and be left alone and not bothered. And so, my brothers and sisters will tell you today it they were here, they would say something like, "Well, you were always in your room reading a book. You were never out with any of the rest of us." Well, I thought, well, yeah, well, why should I be, you know? What's wrong with that? And you have your life, I have mine, that's it. What's wrong with that? But they kind of knew I was sort of strange.

Well, it was about that time when I was in, I guess, I was in Catholic grade school that I first got my first inklings about possibly being gay or whatever it was. I didn't know. This was in somewhere between, like, the fourth or fifth grade. I had a friend, Martin, who I knew fairly well. He had some health problems and just they used to call a blue baby, as my mother

used to say. And that was something that he had some, when he was born, he'd had some problems or his mother had had some problems with the pregnancy. But he was the first person I ever actually had contact with sexually. And he was another boy. I mean, we were both boys, we were roughly the same age. We were both about thirteen, fourteen years old. And I knew at that point what I liked and I didn't know what it was. I didn't really know, you know? This is what I like doing with somebody else, with another boy, but I don't know whether, I mean, is this okay? And then, over the years, I met some other boys who I did this with off and on. This was not heavy duty. This is merely a lot of mutual touching and that kind of thing. But I tried to work that through but I didn't know, you know? It was so confusing.

People today, people assume a lot. They think gay people assume that people are gay, you know, that you can be gay and it's just okay and that's fine and that's cool and RuPaul and hallelujah and everything else. But I got news for you: in those days, it wasn't, especially if you were fourteen, because I was supposed to be interested in girls and I wasn't. I tried dating. I dated one girl, Christine. Very nice girl. Rather big but nice and she was a friend. I liked her as a person. And then, there was another woman that I dated, Penny, Penny Way. I knew her through

a church group that I belonged to. But, you know, it really became clear that, to me, at least I understand that these women wanted me to do something with them that I did not want to do and I didn't know why I did not want to do it. And that was the strangest thing to be involved with because you were going, like, between one thing and between another thing. So, I was, like, what does this mean? What does this mean? Why am I having these feelings towards these men, that I don't have any feelings towards these women. And, you know, then, well, at that time, I began to realize that I was having wet dreams and problems and masturbating myself thinking about men, not women. And I thought this is odd. What's wrong with me? And my father -- everybody knew I was odd, you know? My father knew I was odd. So, of all things, he sent me down into New York. This was 1966, into New York, to a priest there. There's a Franciscan monastery in New York, and to talk to this priest, to straighten out my life or whatever it was. And so, I did this and I talked to this priest and I finished speaking to him and he said to me, "Well, you realize, of course, you're a homosexual." I said, "What? (laughs) What?" (laughs) And I said, "Well, what does that mean?" And he said, "Well, you know, this is what you are. And, you know, you don't have to be. You can do things. You don't have to get involved with sex. You can do things that make you sexually, blah-blah, you have to recognize the fact that you're

a homosexual." And he said, you know, this is what they said. "And you have to deal with it." And so, I came back home and I told my father. (inaudible) my father practically fell on the floor. But I think at least it gave my father an idea, a context of what I was going through.

My high school years, I graduated from the Catholic grade school I was going to, St. Philomena's, in 1964. In 1964 to 1965, I was at Mount Pleasant Junior High School. Then, from 1965 to 1968, I was in the senior high school, Livingston High School. It was an interesting place to be for a lot of people. Many of my college students, fellow students were extremely bright people. They had a large interest in a lot of different things. They had parents who were pushing them towards college. They were taking the PSATs and the SATs and all these things. And all you heard about from them was, "I'm going to get a good college and my parents are going to kill me if I don't get in a good college. I've got to go to a good college." And one of my fellow classmates in this class was a young man named Roger Chen (Tsien). And Roger Chen (Tsien), in 2014, won a Nobel Prize for Chemistry. So, gives you some idea of the kind of caliber of people. And not that everybody was at Roger's level but it was that kind of environment. I was not, obviously, in that crowd. I was very bright in history but abysmal in math and science. I could not

work my way through math. I could not do algebra, I could not -- you know, they said A plus B [adds up?] and I said, "Well, where's the numbers? And it's an addition, why do we have letters?" And so, my mind wasn't shaping its way around that. And then, I just was sort of out. I was not part of one group, I was not part of another group, I was not a brain, I wasn't a jock. When I was in grade school through high school, in gym class, when they picked classes, I was the last one picked and the guy would say, "You want Whelan?" "No, I don't want Whelan. Do you want a Whelan?" "No, I don't want a Whelan." So, you can imagine, (laughs) I was pathetic at the time period. But I went to high school, went through, got through high school, and then I graduated from high school. And then, bingo, I'm out of high school and then what do I do? What do I do? I want to go to college but my father doesn't know how to help me. He never went to college. My mother doesn't know how to help me. She never went to college. Oh, yes, she did, actually. My mother spent two years in a Catholic college, studying to be a kindergarten teacher. And then she met my father and they were married in 1948 and that was the end of that.

But I was basically left on my own when I got out of high school. So, took this little job here, took this little job there. And finally, and so at Essex County Community College,

was opening in Newark, And so, I went there. Had to see what it would be like. And while I was there, I met two very remarkable people, both of them African American professors. One of them was named Stephen Butler, he was a sociology professor, and the other one was named Clem Price, who died just several years ago. He was president of Rutgers, or Rutgers, Newark, at any rate, when he passed away. But the two of them saw that I had a lot more on the ball in their classes and finally one day, and I can still see it in my head, talking to Professor Butler, standing in the hallway, and he said to me, "You know, you're too bright for this place. You really ought to be in a real college." Turns out he had some connections. He had another job at something called the Upward Bound program for black students over in Queens Community College in New York area. He was from New York City originally. And he said, "I could, you know, let me look into things." So, I knew one thing I really want to do is I wanted to go away to school. All my friends in Livingston were going away to school. And so, that's what I really wanted to do.

I also had, I mentioned earlier, that I was part of a church group. That church group was not a Catholic church group. It was a Presbyterian Church group. I had broken with the Catholic Church and joined the Presbyterians because they accepted me and they liked me. And my mother, of course, cried, naturally, being

an Irish Catholic of her vintage. But I didn't know those people and those people were all going off to college. I wanted to go away?, so I said to Steve, "Well, I'd like to go away." And so, he came up with some colleges for me and then he said, "Oh, Blackburn College in Carlinville, Illinois. Why don't you try there? They have a work study program there, you can work there at college, and it's cheaper." And so, I could actually use the government funding that I got from the student loans for that. And so, I did, and I went off to college, Blackburn College. Well, Blackburn's, like, in the middle of nothing. But it was, a wonderful place for me to be, because I grew up there and I began to come out to myself and to come out to some people. People began to realize that I was gay or whatever that was.

And by 1969, when Stonewall's happening in New York, I am on a train for central Illinois to my first year at Blackburn. And I met some very good people there. One of my closest friends, Walt Harrington, straight man, who was a very good friend. And also, I met a lot of people that didn't know the other Frank and that was terrific relief. And so, I could begin to carve myself, who I was. And I still was dealing with problems with my sexuality. It was just something that I was trying to ignore and I didn't do anything about it one way or the other, you know? They used to say, "Oh, is that Whelan? He's just weird," you know, that

they just wrote me off. "He's just odd." But I was doing very well in classes. I was doing very well in things that were not science or math related. And so, I did well. They kept me on and I was a history major and gradually I got to know things and got to know the college well. And people knew and I knew and the boys knew, the other men knew, young men knew that I was. And this one guy I knew, very attractive young man, Michael [Stieglitz?], he was a Croatian background from someplace, from East Chicago, Indiana. And he and I would eventually end up sometimes ending up in the big shower together. (phone rings) And then --

MF: Can we pause? I'm sorry.

FW: Sure.

MF: Hold on one second. (break in video) In describing some of his experiences with other students at college, and I'll just let you continue.

FW: Well, I was particularly attracted to this young man, Michael Stiglitz. He was from East Chicago, Indiana. His family were a steelworker background. Very nice looking young man. And I would end up in the shower. I mean, they were big gang showers

at Blackburn. And I never would make an overt pass at anyone. That I did not do. That I would figure, as my old man used to say, be spittin' Chiclets, meaning that someone's going to punch me out if I try that. So, I didn't ever do it. But I sort of would look at him. I'd look at him and admire. He's a beautiful man, you know? Well, one day, I was standing in line for the cafeteria and everybody else was standing in line in the cafeteria. And I realized, you know, for a while, I was thinking, well, Mike's probably not liking this. I'd better not pay attention to him anymore. This is ridiculous. And so, I stopped doing it once or twice. And then, we're standing in line, getting ready to go into the cafeteria with all these other students around. And he says, "Frank, haven't seen you in the shower lately! What's wrong? You tired of looking?" Well, I could've found a place in the sidewalk and disappeared at that point but nothing came of it. Nobody ever harassed me, nobody ever complained. So, I guess they all knew but nobody was talking about it, I don't know.

So, 1973, I graduated from Blackburn and I was having trouble because of my history degree, I couldn't find a lot, different jobs. I was working in a lot of places. But one thing I did know: I came home briefly, for about two, three weeks, and I decided I did not want to spend the rest of my life in

Livingston, New Jersey with my parents. Whatever else happened to me, I did not want that. And so, what I did was my grandmother actually loaned me some money and she said, "Well, you go out to the Midwest, you find yourself a job." And so, I went back to Carlinville because I had known people there, and found a job. And was a laboring job. Wasn't much and I was not terribly good at it, to be honest, but I did it. And the fact that I could do it and do something for myself and did not feel dependent on people, that really helped me. And so, gradually, I evolved.

And then, my friend, Walt Harrington, who I mentioned, he was at the University of Missouri and he was with the sociology department. And he said, "Well, you have to go to a big school. You can't be here." So, I went there, back to the University of Missouri at Columbia for about a year or so. And I took some graduate courses and I was doing fairly well. But it wasn't perfect. It just still wasn't working out exactly as I wanted. So, I ended up going back to the work life and I found an opening for a small magazine in Springfield, Illinois. And my friend, Walt, who had helped me get to the University of Missouri, I said -- and he was just graduating from the University of Missouri's journalism school. He has a combined degree of journalism and sociology and he said, "I'm looking for

a job" and I said, "Okay, well, here's this small magazine. Maybe you'd like to start there." And so, he did and he and I worked together for a long time. And he got a little bit nervous with me but not because we were [at it?]. Never proposed anything sexual with him. But one time, he said to me, he says, like, blew up, he said, "We're living too close together here. Just, you know, like, you're eating off me and I can't deal with it." And I said, "Oh, okay, well, I didn't mean to do that." But so, the magazine finally failed and I went back to journalism, back to the University of Missouri and I got a part-time job with the sociology department. And also, I was a graduate student in history.

And in 1978, I graduated, I had gotten my master's degree. In that interim, something happened that changed my life, totally. There was a man there, a young man who was working with me in the sociology department. He was a computer guy. He was married but he had been in the Air Force Academy and had left it because of some sort of cheating scandal or something like that. But he knew about computers, so he was handling the computers for this particular professor whose project I was working on. Well, I found this man very attractive and so went up to him and propositioned him, which isn't something -- I didn't do much. At this time, I was also -- the Columbia -- Missouri had a small

adult bookstore and so I would go there on occasion. Not often, but on occasion. And Tom [Jokehurst?], this fellow I knew as the computer guy. I said to him, you know, I told him, expressed my interest and then he picked up a copy of the University of Missouri's newspaper and he pointed to an organization called the Gay Liberation Front. And he said, "Frank, I can't help you but maybe these people can." And so, I was, like, okay, I hadn't even thought of that. Why wasn't I thinking of that? So, I went to the meeting and I went to the door and I tried to open the door at the meeting. And a doorknob wouldn't open totally. And finally, I was pulling on it and finally a voice from inside said, "Come on, come on in!" And I did and I've been gay, officially, ever since.

MF: That's a good place to pause for now. (break in video)

MF: So, I'm back from break and he's just described encountering the Gay Liberation Front for the first time. So, Frank, I'm going to ask you: well, what happened after you encountered GLF?

FW: Well, after I encountered these gay people, I suddenly realized that, you know, I don't have to try and pretend that I'm straight because I was trying to date with young women from

the sociology department who I was working with. And it was clear to them and clear to me as it had been way back when I was in high school to the women involved that I was not there with them in their space, interested in them sexually or, you know, romantically. And so, I began to see these people there as who I was and a part of what I knew. And so, I began to mix with them and go to club meetings and I didn't really have heavy duty sex with anybody there in that group. But I did get to know what it was like to be a gay person and out and open. And this really changed me. It changed me because then I realized I don't have to try and be something that I'm not. And that was an earthquake for me. People talk about moments that changed their lives and this was the one that changed mine.

So, I began to just, you know, go to the gay meetings and this kind of thing and identified myself as a gay person. And once I was sitting in this restaurant in Columbia where a lot of students gathered and I was with some friends of mine from the sociology department and I was talking about being gay, you know? Just a little -- casual, I mean, I'm gay, yes, I'm gay man, and that's what I am. And then, a friend of mine, one of the sociology people who knew all this, he said, "Frank, you know, there's people in this booth over here. They don't like what they're hearing you say, what you're talking about." So, I

said, "Well, they're going to have to learn to live with it because I'm going to do it." And nobody came around the corner and smashed me in the face or anything like that, so I guess that was that. But, boy, I tell you, it was -- and I just blossomed as a person. That was just wonderful for me. And finally, I was not only good in history and other things but I was finding -- making a name for myself.

And so, by 1970s, 1978, I had my master's degree. And I'd also, at that time, while I was at Missouri, year or two after I joined the Gay Liberation Front, I got a job as the assistant archivist to the University of Missouri. And Ralph Havener and he was, you know, worldly enough to deal with it, you know? It didn't bother him. He was seen with me, it didn't bother him at all. Was a married man and had children, you know, this kind of stuff. But very, very with it for that period of time and it just didn't bother him. And I was working with him and with a woman there, Cora. I can't think of her last name at the moment but she was very nice. And so, we all got along fairly well and I gradually began to read gay publications. I had a good friend who got *The Village Voice*, so I started reading *The Village Voice*, started thinking about New York and I'm thinking about, wow, what's all going on there? And then, I got a subscription to *Christopher Street*, which is a gay magazine at the time and I

was reading that and began to see, you know, there's a larger world out here of gay people that you don't know anything about.

See, I didn't understand, when Stonewall happened, I was way on the other side of the country. So, I had thought, I mean, it was, like, yeah, well, there was this thing that happened but it was only till years later that I began to realize what Stonewall was. And I think that was the case with a lot of people. I mean, Stonewall grew to be a legend but it grew to be a legend largely because of time, people talking about it and writing about it in the gay community. When we were talking the other day about some of these things, I said that I was thinking, you know, this is how the movement spread and it didn't happen overnight. (inaudible) caught fire about Stonewall and the entire gay world was aware of it, it took quite a while to penetrate.

So, I was doing this in Missouri and then graduated in 1978. And then, Ralph Havener is the archivist at the University of Missouri, put me in touch with the archivist for the State of Missouri, Gary Behan. And that was a shake-up in my life because I would have to move from Columbia, Missouri, which was relatively, by Missouri terms, enlightened, quote-unquote. But to Jefferson City. And Jefferson City was not enlightened at all. Has a population of thirty thousand people, which was

smallest state capital in the country. And I could do my work and do my other stuff but I had to, you know, I had to try and find gay people. And I had, again, to do that and I found some bad -- some guy who was a little bit older than I was, but a gay man. And he clued me in on the scene in Jefferson City. And he was actually from Springfield, Missouri. And believe it or not, Springfield, Missouri had a gay bar. And so, he took me down there to that place once or twice. There was a gay bar in Columbia called the Wheel or the Cartwheel, I can't remember, but it was down there. And so, it was there in Columbia. So, I also went to that sometimes when I was in Columbia and met some men there. But I didn't really get into the Jefferson City scene. And then, there was all the talk, you know, as the gays in Jefferson City used to call it "Closeta City" because there were so many closeted gay men in Jefferson City, one of whom was a very prominent state legislator. And the rumors were circulating around in the gay community that he was doing it in the office, his sexual office -- yeah, sexual office -- his senatorial office with boys he picked up on the monument that overlooked the Missouri River, behind the state capital building. And Missouri had this huge state capital, beautiful building. But there's a monument there and you look over this huge area and his car would cruise, his Cadillac would cruise back and forth there, trolling for men. So, I guess I wasn't

worth it, so nobody trolled for me. But anyway, so that was a part of what my life in Jefferson City was like.

Meanwhile, my friend Walt Harrington had gotten a job here in Allentown with *The Morning Call*. And he was working very hard and got involved with the owner of the paper, was trying to change the paper. Paper in those days, in the early ’80s was really beginning to make a move, it was out of its provincialism. And the owner’s son was taking over and he hired Walt and a bunch of other people and they were doing really groundbreaking journalism stuff. And so, Walt remembered that I had helped him get a job at that magazine in Springfield years before. And so, he contacted me and said, “Hey, I think you really ought to look. [I will try and?] help you get a job here.” And he did. And he did. And then, there were all kinds of problems at *The Morning Call*. Not with me directly but with the paper, the father of the son of the own-- the original family was father and son. The father was not quite ready to retire. The son was pushing. There were a lot of people at the paper at the time who were very disillusioned with all of these new people coming in from outside. And so, there I was in the middle of all this. But it worked out okay for me. A lot of them left. Walt left to go to *The Washington Post*, which was a dream. And I think if I had asked and tried hard enough, I would have, could

have, might have been able to get a job at *The Washington Post* in the library or some capacity. But by then, I had met Bob and that was a little thing that changed somewhat in my life, my -- approaching it. But I was interested in just trying to find my way in this town of Allentown. And then, I knew that, I sort of suspected that Bob was gay. He didn't come and talk to me. And he will tell you this story, and so I can tell you a little bit about it: at the time, I'd had a problem.

When I was in Jefferson City, I had fallen down some stairs in the home which I was and my neck went back like this. So, I had to wear a neck brace. Well, every once in a while, it would act up. So, I'd put the neck brace on. So, I was in the newsroom, walking around, carrying huge piles of books because I was supposed to be a researcher. And then, Bob looked over and saw me and said, "Who the hell is that?" to this woman who was sitting on his desk. And another reporter, "Oh, that's Frank Whelan. Don't you know Frank Whelan?" Said, "No, and I don't want to." Boom. That was the end of it. And so, I said to Walt, like, still contact with him, he was at the *Post* at this point and I said to him, "Are there any gay people here at *The Morning Call*?" And he said, "Yes, there are," because Bob was open at the paper, it was not a big deal for him at the time. And I said, "Oh, well, like, how can I meet them?" He said, "Well," he

said, “if you people can find each other the way you tell me you can, you’ll find him.” Click. So, (laughs) okay.

Walt and I had a -- interesting relationship. But so, I did. I began to look in back about this local, this organization, this Le-Hi-Ho. I heard talk of it and I went to find out that a lot of these articles about Le-Hi-Ho and about the gay community were written by Bob Wittman. And so, one day, I went over to Bob and he was sitting at his desk and I said to him, “I see you’ve written a lot of articles about this Le-Hi-Ho organization.” And he said, “Yes?” And I said, “I’d like to get to meet these people, get to know these people. Could you tell me about them?” And then, he looked at me and said, “Okay. Let’s go have a cup of coffee.” (laughs) We went down to the cafeteria, had a cup of coffee, and that’s really my first introduction both to Bob and the local Le-Hi-Ho scene. Now, Le-Hi-Ho in that day, in those days, was going through a kind of a transition. You have to understand, AIDS had not broken on the scene yet. I was still doing things with and picking up men at the adult bookstore and having tricks.

But anyway, that’s what I was doing. And I didn’t think twice about those. Nobody thought twice about any of that in those days. And so, I just sort of figured, well, you know, and here’s

this guy Bob, he's nice, and he knows me, so we started to date a little bit and then go out. And he took me down to New Hope, which was the gay universe back then, you know? And I went down there with him a couple times and, you know, but about a year or so later, we moved into this apartment. It's up the street at 1036 Walnut, where we lived for ten years. So, at that point, Bob was telling me in the early '80s, because I came to *The Morning Call* in 1981. And so, this previous editor left, his father took over. There were all kinds of things happening. But I was asked to become a writer by the editor that took over. Said, "Can you write?" Said, "Yeah. I've done that." He said, "Well, go ahead and do some, we'll see what happens." So, I began to write local history stories and people seemed to like them. And so, that was the beginning of that. But with Le-Hi-Ho, Bob said to me -- I wanted to ask him questions about it. He said, "Well, I don't know. They're really kind of a strange organization. You know, they're okay, but the real movement that they were pushing is gone and now they have parties where they macramé and it's this kind of thing." And I'm, like, oh, wow, okay. I'll talk about macramé to people. But, you know, I want to meet people, I want to meet gay people. I wanted to meet gay people and I didn't just want to meet gay people at bars, men at bars. I did do that but, you know, it was not working for me because I had been out in Missouri and was not going back in the

closet just because of -- I'm in Allentown, so I wanted to be with people.

And so, I went to a few of these Le-Hi-Ho meetings and I could see what Bob was saying about it because it was just not happening here for me at those meetings. And then, I met, well, then we went, the new group of people had taken over the Le-Hi-Ho and they were the ones that invited Barbara Gittings to speak at Muhlenberg. And this would have been about 1982, '83. And Bob and I had been living together at that point, had already taken a trip to England. We'd gone to Europe once and so I said, "Let's try it. Let's go see what it's like." Well, then we met people there who were gay people who were out and were interested in gay politics and gay life and gay everything. Nothing to do with doing macramé.

So, that's when Le-Hi-Ho began to fade out in the local scene. Never disappeared entirely but it wasn't *the* gay organization. Couple of other people who I met as a result of this meeting, older people, one a faculty member at Kutztown called Paul Kendall. Another one was Clint Miller, who was an organist at St. John's Lutheran Church over here. And these were people who had larger gay experiences far beyond anything that I'd had. And I became very good friends with some of them. And Paul Kendall

and his partner, Paul Reeder, they had been living in the Village in New York. And Paul Kendall got a job at Kutztown, so then they bought a house out in rural Kutztown area, a nice property, ten acres of ground. It was on a mountaintop, but they weren't farming, trust me. They did, like, new things. And we would go out to their house and have dinner. And Paul Kendall was a gourmet cook and he would cook these wonderful meals. And we'd sit there and Paul Reeder would make sidecars and I, like, after a while, Bob's driving, we're coming back from their house. And their house is way out in the country. It's, like -- (hums nervously) and I, you know, that, and I was sound asleep, so it didn't bother me.

But we got really interested in the gay things from there and Paul Kendall began the process of bringing forward the concept of the Lambda Center, a gay community center. He actually went on local television. He went on Channel 39 and they used to have a "Manager's Chat," they called it. And he came on and explained what this was about. So, he was perfectly open. And he was a professor, you know, so these kind of people just really were the people that I got to know and I really, really liked them. And so, that was my kind of life. That's the life that I saw and I wanted to get involved with. And so, then, Le-Hi-Ho was, like I say, was there and we were part of it. But the Lambda Center

begin to consume more and more of our time. And it was just at that point when the Lambda Center was starting to emerge that AIDS hit. I can remember clearly the first day that I knew there was something called HIV or "the gay plague". Or I didn't know what exactly they were calling it at -- that was a day in the summer, July, and I picked up a copy of *The New York Times* and there was an article by their medical writer, Lawrence K. Altman, about this strange illness that seemed to affect gay people and that the people were calling the gay plague and all kinds of other things. And I read this thing and at first I was just, like, I -- many gay people, you know, at the time, we'd always been hearing these people telling us about, oh, you know, this'll happen to you, you'll get cancer, you'll die, you know, for having sex, gay sex. And so, people were, like, what the hell is this? Who's cooking this up, the CIA, the FBI? What's behind this? At first, I was just not buying it. Just not buying it. And then, they said about it happening in New York and San Francisco and then I began to think, well, maybe it's a New York or San Francisco thing that they're doing.

See, I had begun to get even more involved in the Lambda Center. I got on its board. We were doing all kinds of things having to do with being gay. Like, if your partner's involved in the hospital, how to get access to them. If you're doing a will, how

to make sure your partner gets -- when you get out of the will, you can actually give to them. And that was something that, you know, I was interested in. All these things were happening. I was thrilled. And the Lambda Center, we had a lawyer come in and explain about wills. We had all kinds of -- or I gave a lecture on the rise of Nazi Germany, the anti-gay movement in Nazi Germany and what happened to the gay people in Germany. And, I mean, I was really moving, things were happening. And then suddenly, we felt the need, the organization felt the need, a number of people within the organization felt the need to create something, what they called the AIDS Services Committee. And then, the roof caved in as far as I was concerned.

MF: That might be a good place to pause. (break in video) Record. Okay, this is Mary Foltz. I'm back with Frank. We were just talking a bit about the Lambda Center. And Frank, I'm wondering if you could tell us just a little bit more about what was the impetus to start the center, what was it like getting it up off the ground?

FW: Well, the impetus for starting the center really did begin with this professor, Paul Kendall. He was saying and he did say quite a bit that we need an alternative to the bars. We need a place, an organization where gay people can deal with the

political realities of life and that this doesn't have to be just someplace where you get to meet somebody. Now, Paul wasn't opposed to that but Paul said his attitude was that someplace, people should have some way to talk to each other besides a drink in their hands. And Paul was not opposed to drinking, I can tell you that right now. But he felt very strongly that a political slant had to be given to gay life. Okay, now we were trying to get -- gay people had begun to win some acceptance in the late '70s, early '80s. Now maybe this is time to have an organization to help, also, other gay people come out to deal with who they were, to [00:49:00] give them an idea that, hey, gay is okay. It's normal. It's not odd, it's not weird. And just because you lived in a small town somewhere, you can feel isolated, but there's a place for you to go, a place for you to -- people will understand you. And that was really what attracted me to it and I think Bob to it, because we could remember quite clearly what it was like to feel like you were the only one and nobody else is going through what you're going through. Nobody ever had and nobody ever will again, you know? God or something, fate has dumped all this on you.

So, I got together with Paul Kendall and various other people did, too. Paul Reeder, his partner, kind of got a little -- Paul Reeder was kind of a shy guy. He did the stuff but in the

background. He did not take an active role in running the organization. There was another friend of theirs, interesting enough, also a Paul, Paul [Boutin?], who they knew from New Hope and who was also from New York, had been in New York. And they all got together and began to think about this organization and to talk to each other and to put a board together that would be the board of the Lambda Center. Paul Kendall very purposefully went on television on Channel 39, the "Manager's Chat," and this was a big moment for us all, too, because we did not -- you know, how would the public take this? Would there be outraged phone calls? Would there be, you know, threats to firebomb the place? What would happen? And Paul was very, you know, he was in a jacket and tie and he was pointing out that he was a professor at Kutztown and that what the Lambda Center was and what the explanation of Lambda was, and that was the beginning of the Lambda Center's birth, really. And when that program was on television, we began to get volunteers. People wanted to, willing to work on the hotline and people called. We began to get people contacting us.

One of the things I had not mentioned which I probably should had to do with the inception of Le-Hi-Ho. Now, I only know this because several years ago, about two years ago, Ron Seeds, who founded the Le-Hi-Ho, told me, sent me a letter. A fellow in New

York named Dick Leitsch who was with the Mattachine Society, and Leitsch was very influential. I mean, he was the driving force behind making it able for gay men to drink in New York bars without being accused of being gay, you know, and that kind of thing. Or saying, "Oh, you can't have and drink now, you're gay." So, he was involved with that. And so, when they were forming Le-Hi-Ho, this was created basically because Ron Seeds had met this young man, Rick [Balmer?]. And Rick Balmer was afraid of being drafted. This was still the Vietnam War era. The draft was still out there. That would have been 1968, '69. And, well, and Ron Seeds was acting as a draft counselor. And so, the two of them came to the conclusion that there have to be a lot of other gay people like us out there who need this kind of organization.

So, they contacted Leitsch at the Mattachine Society in New York and they asked him, "Could you possibly give us a list of people from the Lehigh Valley who have contacted the Mattachine Society about gay issues?" And all they wanted to do with that was to send something out to people saying, "Hey, we're going to form this group. Do you think that there's a need for a group like this in the Lehigh Valley?" Just to these people because, clearly, these people had already contacted the Mattachine Society. And Leitsch did but he said, you know, "We don't want,

you know, [you don't want to?]" -- they were a little uneasy about giving out names. So, I think they gave out, like, addresses or something like that instead of -- no names attached. And they sent those out across the Lehigh Valley. And from there, they got some responses, Ron and Rick did, and they began to write the people who responded positively about the creation of Le-Hi-Ho. So, that's how Le-Hi-Ho spread from the Mattachine Society and Dick Leitsch to the Lehigh Valley, because of Ron Seeds and Rick Balmer making the outreach to them, okay? So, that I wanted to clarify.

So, now, have that on the record. Well, fast forward to 1984, '83, '84, and, of course, AIDS is now popping up. And this is the time period when a lot of people, wealthy individuals in the community who had lost their family members, in particular Ardath Rodale of the Rodale Press, her son, David, had died of AIDS and he had been in New York awhile and was very active in New York. And so, she came forward with some offer for money. But she refused to give it to an organization that advocated homosexuality. You know, it was, like, oh, oh! And I was, like, yeah, well, if she doesn't like us because we're gay, then why should we even think about this? But, of course, we live in America and money goes and money talks. And the idea of getting money for this AIDS Services Committee was too, too much. And

so, they spun off and became the AIDS Services Center. And that was what really infuriated me. I was just livid. I thought to myself, my God, all we've tried to get to make this organization work and for all gays at all levels and the gay issues and now we're going to turn this into AIDS morning, noon, and night. And I didn't care for it. I mean, well, I guess I was being selfish to an extent and I grant you that. I didn't know anybody who had AIDS, I felt this was more like a New York and San Francisco kind of thing as many people in the Lehigh Valley did. And then, I was sort of distant from it. And it was at this point that Bob found or someone came forward to Bob, our friend Brian Foley, later our friend, who told us that he was HIV-positive. And told Bob and he wanted the story in the paper. And Bob wrote that story. I'll let Bob give you a lot of the details of that. That's his bailiwick. And he took that and wrote the first story about it. And except for one or two letters to the editor of *The Morning Call*, we didn't get a lot of reaction that was negative, any negative reaction. But I was fighting this other battle at the Lambda Center and I was watching what was happening. And it was all AIDS all the time and I was, like, okay, well, yeah, it's important. It's really important. It's really, really, really important. But I could see it was being eaten alive, Paul Kendall could see it was being eaten alive. Whole organization was being eaten alive by people who just weren't -- interested

in AIDS.

And so, eventually, the Lambda Center folded. But Le-Hi-Ho was still there. And Rick and Ron were gone from the area at that point, or I think they were thinking about leaving, or they sort of got out of their involvement with it because they had some rough periods in the ’70s when locally things here were not too pleasant. But I was not personally involved with that, so I can’t speak to all that. But I can speak to the fact that we sort of -- remnants of the Lambda Center sort of took control of what was left of Le-Hi-Ho. And we tried to have meetings and we tried [to have?] organizational things and we did a few things. And we had members who were happy but Le-Hi-Ho kind of fell into a group of friends working on gay issues and socializing. And that was what happened to Le-Hi-Ho. Meanwhile, the AIDS groups and these kind of things were moving forward with where they were going. And so, we kind of, well, that’s it, you know? They’ve co-opted us. And I think Paul -- one of our good friends, Clint Miller, this organist from the church said, “We’ve been usurped.” That was his word for it. “We’ve been usurped.” And we were, basically. So, that ended the role of the Lambda Center. But we tried having, we did have some meetings, we had some things, various discussions and that kind of thing. We did attract some people to the meetings but it just was not

the same after AIDS, the AIDS bulldozer came charging down on top of us. And so, I continued to go to these meetings. We continued to hold Le-Hi-Ho meetings till finally, Rick contacted us and contacted what was left of Le-Hi-Ho. He didn't know really what was going on, Rick Balmer. Rick, I'm sorry, Ron Seeds I should have said. Ron Seeds did not really know what was going on but he wanted some of the books that were down here, part of their collection and the gay novels and those kind of things, not the papers of Le-Hi-Ho.

And so, at that point, as I'm remembering it, and you might want to clarify some of this with Bob because I'm sure he may remember parts differently than I do. But as I remember it, Ron, a lot of these books, he wanted to bring them back to Connecticut up there to use them for a gay community center up there that he was involved with. And so, we did that and then we decided, well, what do you want us to do with these papers and things? And he said, "Well, I don't have any use for them now." He said, "Why don't you keep them and see" -- and so, that was the consensus. Le-Hi-Ho's board, such as we were at that point, said, "Okay, fine, let's put these someplace." "Well, where are you going to put them?" "Well, I don't know. I don't have any space." "Well, I don't (inaudible)." Finally, they realized we had the space upstairs in our attic. And so, that's where they

went, for years, (laughs) until, obviously, we decided, when Le-Hi-Ho was on the point of abandoning itself, to vote to go out of business, officially. And Bob and I said to the leaders, we got Paul Kendall and some of these other people. And so, "What do we do with the archives? What do we do with the records?" And Bob and I came up with the proposal and I'm pretty sure, you know, it was us, we came up with it, that we think they ought to be turned over to the Allentown Public Library. It's an Allentown institution, it concerns people involved in Allentown, primarily, and it was something that we felt, at that point, that this would be the best place for them. And we decided that, and we talked to Renee Harris over there, and she was very thrilled. She appeared to be very thrilled; I assumed she was about it. And so, they came over here and we got the records out and brought them over there to the library. And there they sat till when Susan showed up. (laughs)

But when I did this, we did this, when Bob and I did this, I sent a letter to George Chauncey up in Yale, and I said to him, "I know you're interested in these kind of things. I've read your book, *Gay New York.* I enjoyed it very much and I want you to know that this is where these records are." And I got a record back, I got a letter back from him saying, "Thank you very much. I wondered what had happened to them. I'm working on

book on how gays, gay culture, grew across the country after Stonewall. And so, thank you for telling me where they are," You know? That was the end of my conversation with George Chauncey. That's all he wanted to know, [as far as I can tell?]. But I was pleased with that and Bob was pleased with that. We wanted very much for those records to be preserved because it was important for us that the country know it wasn't just New York, it wasn't just San Francisco and a lot of things happening with a lot of people across the country. And Allentown had a gay organization six months before Stonewall, a gay political organization. So, if not the oldest, I -- we like to say we were the oldest gay political organization outside of New York and San Francisco, because we weren't the Mattachine Society, obviously. But so, that's what we did and that's where students of -- here you are. Any questions?

MF: Well, I'm wondering, after Le-Hi-Ho closes its doors --

FW: Right.

MF: -- you continue to be active in the LGBT community.

FW: Yes.

MF: So, what happens for you after Le-Hi-Ho closes its doors? You've secured a place for the archive.

FW: Right.

MF: How do you continue to be involved?

FW: Well, I continue to be involved with consultations with writing about things about gays. I'm a little bit skittish about some things because, first of all, the younger people, I don't want them to look that I'm interfering with them. I want to share this with you. So, this is something that -- the transition with Liz and Trish taking over the movement and basically, you know, they did -- excellent people, fantastic, what they did to getting the gay rights ordinance in Allentown. That was something we both were involved in, Bob more than I was, and with her. But we felt that Trish, rather Liz was sort of dominating the whole thing. And she was kind of, I'm trying just to make this as, you know, because I don't want to discredit her at all. We think the world of her. But she got involved in local politics with the former mayor. And the former mayor was one of these hard knuckle guys. And so, she began to think that she should be hard knuckle, too. So, she, you know, she was following his lead and we felt that, you know, yes, your

issue should be the gay community but why are we following this individual, you know? And there was all kinds of local politics involved. The mayor, Mayor Pawlowski, was involved in one thing and another, playing off one side and another. This was his modus operandi. And he did it, apparently, well enough to -- partly wasn't quite too honest but he did well enough for him. And the people in the gay community, Bob and I, we just felt like we were really shoved out. You know, Liz and Trish were going to run it and that's what they wanted.

So, the Bradbury-Sullivan Center, we now appreciate it and we're glad that it's there but it took us a while to deal with that because, to be quite honest, Trish's -- right, Liz's attitude -- Trish is, like, just off there, she was always very nice, we said hi to her. But times were coming when we wouldn't speak to them. We'd see them in places like the farmer's market and just not talk to them because we felt that what they were doing was politicizing, small "P" politicizing it, turning this into something about politics and the mayor and doing whatever they could to boost up the mayor. And the center's creation, Bradbury-Sullivan Center was a payback to them for having supported the mayor. And that was, like, Bob had some problems with them. He can talk to you about those things if you want to talk to him about them and if he'll talk about them. He may not

because he was very upset at the time.

Bob was working with an organization called HADC. He still is on its board. He resigned but he was a grant writer for them and he was very active, very casually involved with their affordable housing agenda. Mayor Pawlowski had been head of another organization which had rivaled HADC. And so, therefore, Mayor Pawlowski did whatever he could to make HADC embarrassed. And Bob was furious at Pawlowski because of that. And then, of course, Liz Bradbury's [toading?] up with the mayor, you know, it just didn't synch or feel right to us. We thought this was some sort of a political payback. Okay, now Pawlowski's in prison, and so we're vindicated to that extent. But it was a lot of shit, to be quite honest, that we had to go through. And Liz was symbolically -- and, you know, we had such high hopes when she got the ordinance passed that this was going to be a different kind of thing. And it's amazing, when people got around Pawlowski, they became like him. And that was what they wanted to do because they figured they had to do that. These are amateurs playing at politics. And, you know, so they figured they have to be tougher than tough with the way they're playing politics.

So, at any rate, so there was some disagreement, a lot of

disagreement for a time with Liz, personally. Her personality, she has a very huge personality, and that kind of assumed a lot of things from a lot of people. And the people that had been involved in gay things for years who welcomed her, you know, wanted to see her involved, appreciated her involvement basically felt like we were used at that point. And Bob, you know, Bob got really furious one evening. His boss was up for an award for his work with the community and Liz was using all her influence to support somebody else. So, yeah, that's what was going on here. So, a lot of these things are happening and I know that's not really germane, necessarily, to what we're doing here. But that was the remnants of what happened after Le-Hi-Ho, and so --

MF: We just have to pause right now. (break in video)

MF: Okay, I'm back with Frank and we just sort of talked about Le-Hi-Ho and some of the other political organizations in the Lehigh Valley that were working on LGBT issues and some of the tension between different people in the sort of broader Lehigh Valley LGBT movement. I wanted to sort of ask you if you could expand a bit on maybe the kind of Pride scene in the Lehigh Valley because Pride became a major -- you know, Pride of the Greater Lehigh Valley became a major organization.

FW: Right.

MF: Could you share a little bit of your thoughts about that organization?

FW: Well, that organization was a great organization and I have no problem with it at all. It was great. You had those parades, we had those events that focused around Pride. We haven't been to one in a while because, well, we just haven't been. But we felt very much, well, this is the story, my story of Pride, what happened to me involved with Pride.

We were contacted by the Pride board one year, I think it was in 2006, that they wanted to have an event that focused, that honored the grand marshals of the parade. Our friends Paul and Paul had been the grand marshals one year and so they had selected us, Bob and I. And we were thrilled. We were just thrilled. And we appreciated it. Taking this into account, want to say that *The Morning Call* never -- knew we were out, knew we were gay. Never, ever, ever in the years that we had been there had any objections. Matter of fact, they would go to Bob, in particular -- not much me but to Bob, in particular, ask him who in the gay community should we talk to? Who do you think we

should deal with? How do you think we should deal with these things? So, when Pride advertised it, we were pleased. Well, what also happened was this: an editor from *The Los Angeles Times*, a lady named Ardith Hilliard came here. And she had just been named executive editor of the *Call*. And she had her own notions about the role of journalism. And journalists, in her universe, were to be, like, policemen or nuns or priests. You took a vow of journalistic ethics which you did not sully yourself with having opinion. Your opinion was not to be countenanced or whatever you felt about a thing was not to be shared and you should not take a stand on any political issue of the public moment. Well, Bob and I didn't see what we were doing as taking an issue on a political scene. What we were doing is basically supporting this Pride organization and being grand marshalls. Well, I swear, it just, like, blew up.

This Ardith Hilliard just began -- she [attached?], established an ethics policy and if you didn't follow her ethics policy, she was going to accuse you of being, you know, something less than an ethical journalist. Well, Bob wasn't at the paper at the time. He'd already left. I was there and I could tell there was a movement afoot to get rid of a lot of the older people, a movement that was coming out of Chicago, and that they were looking for ways to get rid of people who were not young, let's

put it that way. And it would probably end up costing them money or something like that was going on. Well, so, I knew of this. And they had a meeting for us and they got us all together and they basically told us that we had to, we should accept a buyout from them. And I said, "I can't. I can't do that. I'm sorry, I can't do that." So, ever after that, my bosses tried to embarrass me, to belittle me, to do whatever they could to make sure that I quit. And I refused to do it.

Well, I think they hooked into this ethics policy to use as something that they could work on me with. And so, when it was said I was going to be in the parade, she forbid it. She said, "No, you're not going to be in that parade. You're not going to be in that parade. You can't be in that parade. It's unethical, taking a stand on a public issue, stand on gay marriage," which was kind of crazy, first of all. This had nothing to do with gay marriage to us, it had -- being honored by the gay community for our relationship. That was all. As a matter of fact, as Bob will tell you, he and I were probably people who were skeptical of the idea of marriage as marriage. We would say things, we had long discussions with Paul and Paul at their dinner table about it. You know, gay people should have something. Straight people should have marriage and that's fine and it works for them, okay. But gay people should go beyond that and do something

that's a separate kind of thing for gays, you know, that -- it reflects gay life differently than straight people's lives. And that's what we thought. Well, Ardith Hilliard had a certain view of the world and so she wasn't going to accept that. And so, bingo, she basically said, "You're not going to be in the parade. You're not going to be in the parade. You're not going to be in the parade." I said to her, "Ardith, this is about my rights, my rights as a person. Why can't you see this?" And I couldn't understand why she couldn't see this. I mean, she was supposedly an enlightened liberal person from Los Angeles. Oh, and so she just pressed and pressed and pressed. And finally, we just had to say, "That's it. I'm going to be in the parade." And she was yelling at me and browbeating me. Finally, one day, I left the *Call*. I left the *Call.* I packed up my things, I walked out, early in the morning, before anybody else was there, and I said, "Goodbye, *Morning Call*," and I walked out the door and brought my stuff home. And I said, "I'm going to be in the parade." This was a Friday, the parade was the next day.

I'm lying on a massage table and the phone rings. And I think I left a number where I would be if she had any questions. Well, she exploded at me. "You're not going to that parade! You're not going to the parade! If you go in that parade, you're fired! You're fired! You're not going to be in that parade!" And I

said, “Ardith, I think we’re beyond it at this point.” So, I ran out of that place and she was browbeating me and browbeating me. “You’ll lose your job, you’ll lose your job! If you’re in that parade, you’ll lose your job!” And it’s, like, I was horrified. And so, finally, I thought, well, this is the first time I heard why they’re doing this to me. So, I just was horrified by the whole thing. And so, that day, the next day, Bob and I got in the car and we drove off and I lost my job. But Ardith Hilliard ended up getting involved in a huge lawsuit. We sued her because she defamed me, which is one of the things that journalism, you’re not supposed to do. She basically used an article to call me unethical. The article wasn’t about the parade. Didn’t mention parade. The article didn’t come out about the parade. It came out about Frank Whelan’s being unethical. And this is a no-no. You can’t do this, you know? So, and they used to give libels -- and so, they libeled me. And the word got out about this and our attorney, Rick Orloski, went after them and eventually, after much carrying on, they were finally -- Rick said, “Okay, I want you, under oath, under oath, under oath and in court to explain what exactly you were doing to Frank Whelan. What exactly were you doing?” And then, they pulled off, away from it.

Later on, a woman who was going through a similar thing, was not

gay, who was a very, extremely straight woman, she sued the *Call*. And I was called in to give a deposition about her by my lawyer, who was Orloski, in front of *The Morning Call*'s lawyer, a man named Malcolm Gross. And, yeah, his protégé at the time, a young woman lawyer who was handling this thing. And finally, at the end of this, Orloski pulls out and says, "I have here a document from Susan Hunt. Susan Hunt had been the editor before Ardith Hilliard and Susan Hunt says that this whole thing was cooked up in Chicago to get rid of people who were of a certain age, fifty-five and up. I've got the document." And I've got a document upstairs, too, by the way, and a copy, I got a copy of the deposition. And I just couldn't believe it. And this young lady who was a very talented lawyer, she was, like, (gasps) just crashed. She couldn't -- it really, you know, this whole world crashed that day. But I was so glad and so pleased that I was vindicated. And then, through this whole thing, people stopped me and asked me how I was doing, was everything okay? The community responded to me, not her, not to Ardith Hilliard. They responded to me. So, I ended up -- there on that table is the picture that got us into trouble, picture of Bob and I together. And that appeared in *The Morning Call*. And that was what caused all this brouhaha and me losing my job.

MF: Yeah.

FW: Okay?

MF: Well, we're about ninety minutes, so --

FW: Okay.

MF: -- I think this might be a good place to stop.

FW: Cool.

END OF VIDEO FILE