

Judith Arendt

2020-07-28

LIZ BRADBURY: I don't think you're having them like that, Judy. Okay. Here we go. Oh, wait, I've got to turn the audio on. I mean, yeah, we all have memory issues. I spend a lot of time saying, "What's the guy's last name?" and I'm just talking about it and I still can't remember. So, I'm going to read you this thing; it says here, With this project (inaudible) LGBTQ community center in the Trexler Library at Muhlenberg College will collaborate on forty years of public health experiences in the Lehigh Valley LGBT community, collecting and curating local LGBT health experiences from HIV/AIDS to COVID-19. My name is Liz Bradbury and I'm here with Judy Arendt to talk to her about her experiences in the Lehigh Valley LGBT community during this time of COVID-19 pandemic as part of the Lehigh Valley LGBT community archive. We're meeting on Zoom, on July 28th, is it?

JUDY ARENDT: Yes, it is.

LB: It's July 28th 2020, and [00:01:00] thank you so much for your willingness to speak to us. To start, can you please state your full name and spell it for me.

JA: Judith L. Arendt. J-U-D-I-T-H, middle initial "L," and last name A-R-E-N-D-T.

LB: And will you please share your birth date.

JA: November 23rd, 1950.

LB: Okay and what town are you in? You're in Allentown, aren't you?

JA: I'm in Allentown.

LB: Because I have to put that on this meta-date sheet. Okay, so do you consent to this interview today?

JA: Yes, I do.

LB: Do you consent to having this interview being transcribed, digitized, and made publicly available online in searchable formats?

JA: Yes.

LB: Do you consent to the LGBT archive using your interview for educational purposes in other formats including films, articles, websites, presentations, and other formats we may not even know about today?

JA: [00:02:00] Yes.

LB: Do you understand that you will have thirty days after the electronic delivery of the transcript to review your interview and identify any parts you'd like to delete and/or withdraw from the project?

JA: Yes.

LB: What is your zip code?

JA: 18102.

LB: What is your age?

JA: Just about seventy.

LB: How do you identify within the LGBT Community? Gay, trans, bi, lesbian?

JA: Lesbian.

LB: Okay, and cisgender? Not transgender?

JA: Not transgender.

LB: I've sent you the questions before and you could talk about anything you want, but we're sort of starting out with everybody to ask them who they are in their house with [00:03:00].

JA: I live alone, but I have a dog, who is my faithful companion.

LB: Have you been quarantining with anybody else so that you get to see people and stuff, or are you pretty much on your own?

JA: No, actually when the quarantine hit, or just when it was announced, I'd been on vacation with a friend and we got home in time for quarantining and she said maybe we should quarantine together since we had already been together. She had just gotten a puppy and wanted help with it. We figured we already had whatever germs we had or viruses we had between us. That would be fine. So pretty much since March I had been living with that friend [00:04:00], but

slowly spending more time at home and now I'm in the process of pretty much moving home and just going up for a day or overnight visits with my friend to help her out.

LB: I see. Well that's a good thing that you didn't have to be all by yourself.

JA: Yeah, I'm not sure how that would've been.

LB: Yeah, it's pretty hard. So, you are retired. You have some other projects that you work on. Have you been working on any of those things or are you just pretty much hanging out, or what do you think?

JA: I thought that over this time period I would do a number of things. I like sewing, and a little bit of kind of rough carpentry woodwork and that kind of thing, and I thought, "Oh this is a great time to work on projects" and what I found was I felt totally unmotivated to do those things. [00:05:00] I was frustrated maybe because I had all the time to do them, but it kind of, I don't want to say paralyzed, but really immobilized me initially that I just felt I had to stay indoors and for a long while I was glued to the TV with all the reports that came in. mostly I was paying attention to the Pennsylvania health reports. I got to a point where they were just too overwhelming, so I had stopped watching those, so I'd sleep more, or discovered

some new programs on television that I don't get at home, that my friend gets.

LB: Well, I have to tell you that [Melinda Kahn?] said to me [00:06:00] that she thought, "This is great because now I have these projects I want to do and I can't go out and stuff," and then she said about two months later she said "Well apparently I really wouldn't do it if I had time. If I really had time, I would do these things" and then she had the time and she still didn't do it and she said, "I'm not beating myself up about it." (inaudible).

JA: Yea, I'm not really. Well, maybe a little bit I'm beating myself up, but I had all this time and I could've done these things, but I didn't. I guess, again as Melinda said, finds out you have the time but you're really not that into them; You weren't that important to me.

LB: Wow. I've done a lot of interviews. I've done ten interviews of people who lived through the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and were very involved as activists in the community during the eighties and nineties, and we talked about COVID too. This is, I guess, [00:07:00] my fourteenth interview for COVID-19 and all different kinds of people, and everybody is very, very seriously affected and a lot of people are sort of (inaudible) -- you know they're just getting back. I just thought I'd ask somebody

that we both know to do an interview, and she's retired, and she just said "I can't talk about it. I can't handle it- I'm just surviving." It's not that she was sick or anything like that. It's just too much. It's so much. So I think it's not rare that people are feeling that way.

JA: Yeah.

LB: So are you finding that you are communicating with a lot of people on the phone or using other kinds of video stuff?

JA: Well kind of amazingly my college sorority sisters have [00:08:00] started finding each other and we've been doing some Zoom meetings. In fact, I have one tonight and we've already broken into at least two different groups because of the age difference and time periods from when we were at college, so we're sort of Zoomed in; pardon the pun there. We've narrowed down to the age group, or the people that were around when we were around and split the group in half. That's been kind of interesting. People who went to school here in Pennsylvania and primarily came from Pennsylvania who are now in many parts of the country, and two main topics are grandchildren and COVID. I'd kind of like to move them up out of that, but we haven't gotten there yet. [00:09:00]

LB: Have any of them talked about having it?

JA: None of the sisters have had it, but one there had a grandson who had tested positive, and last week she told us that the preschool where that child was has now shut down because the child's teacher now had it, but the child is fine, that's the good news. One of my sisters who lives in a retirement community in Florida is in some kind of card group and has lost a friend who was in their card group and that person's husband was in the hospital but I don't know yet if he has [00:10] survived or not.

LB: Yeah, Florida is tough. I don't know when we'll be able to go back to Florida. It'll be years.

JA: Yeah, Texas apparently is very tough too. That's where the child that was sick was. That sister's in Texas.

LB: Are you saying that these are sorority sisters from the sorority all over or from your college?

JA: From my college.

LB: Great. How many was it then about?

JA: I don't remember how many were in at any one time when I was in college, but we're only talking about the years from like sixty-eight maybe to seventy-four, seventy-five. Because otherwise we don't really have a personal connection. We wouldn't know each other much beyond that.

LB: Are these people you had talked to more recently?

[00:11:00]

JA: No. I haven't talked to them for a heck of a long time; 50 years.

LB: Yesterday I was talking to a young person about this, which was an interview, and he just graduated and he said that since he's graduated, he had to leave the school and go to a friend's house because his family doesn't support him so he couldn't go home, so he had to go to a friend's house and has been there with the friend and their parents since March. I said, "Boy you're lucky that you have friend that would do this for you" and he said, "Yeah. I'll be indebted for the rest of my life," but he said that he has been able to keep in touch with people that he went to college with. I said, "I have to tell you that the day that I left college and said goodbye to my friends, I didn't see some of those people visually for ten years." My best friend in college, I didn't see her for ten years. [00:12:00] I wrote to her and talked to her over the phone, but I didn't see her. It's kind of a great thing if could get used to talking on Zoom to somebody because truthfully once you leave college it's really different because you were living with those people, you saw them every day, several times a day, had dinner with them, you know? It's really nice to be able for these younger people to have this mechanism so they can sort of see each other for a

while, and actually it is kind of real when you're talking to a person face to face.

JA: Yeah, yeah. Your lives go different ways and we didn't write as often and then it was the annual Christmas card, and then I got really bad about those. I think a year or two after college you saw people because there were a flurry of weddings, [00:13:00], but more than that, like I said, I haven't been in touch or talked to any of them. I found out the sister that I mentioned earlier, who lives in Florida, I knew she and her husband had moved to my home town, because I had lived and worked there for a couple years for my second job after college, and then I moved out here and I was told that they had moved elsewhere, and I didn't know it was just, "Well they had moved to a different place in town," and and they've been in New York this whole time until they recently sold their home and went back to Florida. All those years that I was going down to visit my parents I could've been visiting Barb and Ernie too, and I just didn't know.

LB: I'm dying to ask you about this. When [00:14:00] you look at these people that you haven't seen for fifty years, do you look at them and go, "Oh yeah, I remember them looking like that" or "Oh my gosh," or both?

JA: Some of both. Some of both. A couple I think look just about like they did in college. There are some others. One woman in particular because she had black hair and now she has white hair. So, I think she probably has slimmed down or something since college. Her face is familiar, but not quite the same, but it was great to see her. But some of them look the same.

LB: It's pretty interesting that that can happen too. That you can see somebody and recognize them. When I went to my fortieth high school reunion, I saw people I hadn't seen since high school, and I recognized them immediately. There was [00:15:00] no hesitation to see who the people were. I (inaudible) more woman than men because I think the men changed more in some ways; losing all their hair, gaining a whole lot. They really look differently. If you recognize somebody that always had flaming red hair and now he has no hair, and so it's harder to recognize in a lot of ways. Of course, now we all have gray hair and it's a different story. Although lots of people don't. I have a friend from high school who'd say that the only people who have gray hair that are our age are lesbians.

JA: Okay. Well.

LB: You think that's true?

JA: Not totally, but --

LB: You think there are people that have gray hair that are not lesbians?

JA: Yeah.

LB: Okay good. I'm just checking.

JA: My sister-in-law for one, who has given up the bottle of hair color [00:16:00], but she turned gray when she was in her very early twenties, so she dyed her hair for fifty years and finally decided, no, she wasn't going to do it anymore. One of the women that's a sorority sister that I've seen on Zoom it's like, I sort of see her there, but her hair is styled differently, but it's gray.

LB: I see. Maybe it changes after you get to be a little bit older, but I have to say that when she said that to me I was in my 50s, and she and I were the same age, and I had to really think of somebody that I knew that had gray hair that wasn't -- Of course, most of the people I know are lesbians. I know some lesbians who have dyed their hair, but I couldn't think of anybody that had gray hair, with the exception of my sister, who [00:17:00] wasn't a dyke. So, there you go. What do you know? Okay, so what's your biggest concern during the pandemic, and we're also asking what's your biggest concern for the LGBT community. I know we have some circumstances that we have to be worried about for LGBT people, and just generally, what do you think?

JA: I think for our community is that, the isolation is harder because there may be people that you're not out to or that you'd want to be out to and they haven't accepted you. It's harder and seeing pictures on an electronic screen isn't the same as being able to see your friend and get a hug that [00:18:00] I think a lot of straight people are in relationships and are perhaps not living alone. When you're alone that long, I think it's difficult. My niece was visiting. She's been out a couple times since COVID started and I guess this is her second time down and the first time she came down she had counted how many days it had been since she had had a hug from a human being and we trusted each other enough that we could hug. I hadn't been totally quarantined at that point, but she had and so to be able to give and get a hug was a big deal. So I worry about the people that perhaps live alone [00:19:00] and don't have a chance for that connection and again I just have a sense that a lot of our LGBT folks are a little more isolated than the straight folks because we are after all these years still not accepted for who we are.

LB: And your niece is part of the LGBT community too.

JA: She is, but she is such a very different generation and she has more straight friends than LGBT friends, and so she seems to move back and forth with no problem. Again, she

Facetimes with people and Zooms with other groups of people and that sort of thing. She doesn't feel that many of the same [00:20] things I have. When I told her about this interview, she didn't get why it would even be important. I was like, "oh Heather who are you? How can you be my niece and a lesbian and not get any of this?!"

LB: Well it's not only that. I mean, you know if you look at the flu epidemic of 1918, which I like to talk about all the time, as you know, which was one hundred and two years ago, at that time not only did people not have the ability to even really call people on the phone, and most people didn't have a telephone in those days, that they did want people to quarantine there was no exchange of information and there was actually a Sedition Act because we were at war so you weren't allowed to talk about illness. You weren't allowed to say, "in America people are dying from this disease" even though there are huge numbers of people dying of disease. So we're in a situation [00:21:00] where we can share an enormous amount of information and yet talking from people's personal point of view; it is actually fascinating to hear the thirteen different people that I've spoken to or fourteen different people I've spoken to today who are vastly different: twenty-two year old people, people in their seventies, people who are in

households with people in their nineties, people who are working every day and have to work every day because they're workers, people who are medical professionals. The really interesting thing is, I mean, when I interviewed all the AIDS guys, our AIDS people, all of those people, none of them knew anyone who was sick (inaudible) die. The first person I talked to I made an effort to talk to a lot of people of color because all of the people in the AIDS interview had been white so I wanted to talk to people of color with regard to the COVID. The first person [00:22:00] I spoke to said, "Yeah, eight family members have had it and three of them have died"; the first thing he said. And he said, "I couldn't go to them, I couldn't go to the funeral, I couldn't go to be with my family, I couldn't comfort my mom, I couldn't do any of these things and they died of COVID." Then I talked to [Lou James?], the funeral director, and he was saying that his intake, his business per month, had tripled, and they were all COVID deaths. Really interesting stuff, you know? So, I was talking about the circumstances of the schools because he was a teacher for so long. He was talking about things that people don't think about in schools, but in Allentown there's no air conditioning in a lot of the elementary schools, so what they do is they take all the kids

[00:23:00] who are in the rooms that don't have air conditioning and they put them in the big auditoriums where there's air conditioning. If in September they're all back to school, they won't be able to do that because they cram them into this air conditioned space and they can't do that, so what are they going to do? Make some kids sit in 95-degree temperature? That has to do with the socioeconomic circumstance compared to say Parkland where the whole building is completely air conditioned all the way through, so it's an interesting document that we can have that people can say, "Oh, I hadn't even thought about it." I hadn't thought about that and somebody looking at this thirty years from now could say, "Well why didn't they all just stay home you know? Why wouldn't they just send them to school and they could social distance them in school?" Well they didn't have a place to send them really. So that was pretty interesting.

JA: I think it'll be interesting to see in [00:24:00] September what really happens with school districts. I had seen that Allentown had said they were going to be not in school until 2021, and Bethlehem has now announced that they're going to do a blended program where kids come two days a week, so there's only half the number in the classroom at any given time, but that means they can't get through as

much material and there's still the kids who need all day child care because of parents working and they need someone to help their child with things that come through when they do their online education. There are still families without computers, or families with multiple children and only one computer. [00:25:00] There's the risk to teachers. It's a risk to kids to kids. My personal feeling is why would we risk any child's life by sending them back to school? But that's me. I have friends who, unfortunately, believe that it's better to do something for our economy than worry about a few thousand deaths and some of those were about to be dropped as friend on Facebook. I've known this man 40 years since I've been living in Lehigh Valley, and I personally just can't handle that. Of course, having stayed with [Jill?] (inaudible) how many years, she's got a lot of opinions and she can see both sides of it. She's glad she is not still teaching but she's also glad she's not somebody who has to make the decision.

LB: Well your background is working with youths. Think about how this has affected kids with regards to camps.

JA: Oh my gosh. I've been in touch with those who are still directing.

LB: Well talk about what you did so people would know that.

JA: I was summer camp director and director of after programs for Girl Scouts for twenty-six years. At least twenty-five years , I lost count, and of course summer camps and sleep away camps, kids are living in close quarters even though their supposed to have their heads six feet apart. We know in the middle of the night they have all their heads together and they're still talking, [00:27:00] but for kids who already have been four months without any kind of social activity and socialization, the ability to go to a summer camp and interact with other kids your age or younger or older, just the pure benefits of being outside in the natural world. Children aren't having that, and I know there are some state camps that did open and once they opened their governors said, "No. No more. No more summer camps." I normally volunteer for a program in Massachusetts. It's a camp for children whose parents have been incarcerated and we only operate for a week, but it's a pretty intense week. We use a YMCA facility. They were willing to let us come until the governor said no summer camp operation in Massachusetts, [00:28:00] but I had already made the decision because of my age and the potential exposure, that I was not going to be able to go and be on staff this year. It's a tremendous loss for the kids who have that opportunity to go to camp and now

couldn't. I am aware that the local girl scout counselor is doing a virtual camp. I'm not really sure how it works, but that's what we're also doing with the kids from Cape Cod; we're having virtual camp coming up in a couple of weeks now.

LB: People don't understand who haven't had that experience how incredibly life changing camp can be especially for (inaudible) kids who have never had (inaudible).

JA: It's just a whole different - you know it's usually a little more slowed down. It's a chance where kids still get to play. It's a chance where kids to start learning a sense of responsibility [00:29:00]. They're given responsibilities at camp. They work as a team to do a lot of things so there's a lot of team-building and friend-making and it never amazes me anymore the number of young folks who were campers who came back on camp staff who now, as adults, still get together. I was invited to a picnic one day where it was a bunch of women who had worked at camp and their children all came along and the kids didn't know each other at all when they arrived. They play with very little adult direction. They all got along. It was just amazing thinking every parent should go be a summer camp counselor before they have kids. Some will

choose to have no kids and in this case, you know, they went ahead and had great kids [00:30:00].

LB: You can really understand the concept. When you're talking about camps where particularly people are coming from lots of different places and then coming into the camp they have that close proximity and then they go back out to their far away areas, as opposed to just one city or something, but they might be coming from all over the states and now they've infected the entire state because there'd be one person. It's sort of like the kids going home from college thing, which really spreads stuff around, I think.

JA: That potential is very scary just like my friend with teaching, I'm very happy I didn't have to make the decision whether or not the camp opened or had the responsibility to make the decision to have the camp open and then have one kid, even just one person [00:31:00], get so sick that they died.

LB: Yeah. Actually, I think that this illness, depending on people who get it seriously, some people have no symptoms, but people who get it seriously maybe that's not as many children, but some children have died. There was a toddler that died. I know somebody who had it who we both know and she said to me it is soul crushing. She had like PTSD from it. I said, "do you want to do an interview?" She said,

"I can't talk about it. It was too much. I can't talk about it." She said you can't imagine what it was like. She had to make up her mind to not die every day, and she had an over one hundred two-degree temperature for two weeks non-stop [00:32:00]. It was about one hundred and three.

JA: Was she hospitalized?

LB: Finally, ultimately, yeah, and they had to a lot of work to get her temperature down. She said she was so weak that she has a bathroom off her bedroom and she had to crawl to it to go to the bathroom and she said she was living with other people, other family members, and really had she been alone, and not had the ability to get to the hospital, because she couldn't have made that decision on her own necessarily, she would've died. I know two people that had very serious issues. It was just the question of having the resources around them to be able to keep them. Had they not had those resources, they would've died. Had they not been able to get [00:33:00] somebody to talk them into the hospital, not be able to take them to the hospital, they'd have been alone, and I think that's what happened in New York. A lot of those many, many people who were so sick and who died in their homes, they were just so sick and they didn't have anybody that was checking on them.

Lou James kind of said that too, the funeral director. He said that people died. It sort of whipped through the nursing homes and killed everybody that was so at risk and then the fourth month the number went way down. It's sort of frightening. You think, "Okay, it got everybody" and then --

JA: Yeah. That was just what was going through my mind, "well they got all the ones that were so vulnerable."

LB: Or in places where they weren't taking precautions and then they started to, and I think that was something too
(inaudible) [00:34:00].

JA: My mom died about three years ago and Dad had died earlier; he's been dead about seven years I guess now. And I'm thankful that they're not here to have had to go through this. I mean certainly they were around when had the polio issues and my father and mother both had friends who had polio and didn't die, but it certainly affected them the rest of their lives. Things like that, but this is so vast that as much as I hated to see both of them linger in a condition that they were not happy with or in my mom's case that she didn't even know how bad she was, I'm glad that they didn't have to go through this [00:35:00].

LB: And you wouldn't have been able to take care of them either so there's that whole thing because you know when

somebody's in a nursing home -- I mean my mother was in a nursing home, and my father was in the hospital, he's in an assisted living facility, him as an example, I was seeing him every day, always visiting.

JA: That's how I was with my mother.

LB: And if you can't, suddenly, my friend [Gene Rubin?], who I think you've met, she's in a nursing home in Silver Spring, Maryland and I'd stop being able to reach her. I couldn't talk to her. She's lost her memory so she can't really talk to me, but I had to call her brother who's about five years younger than she is so he's still very old. I said, "Well how is she." He said "I don't know I still can't go see her. I haven't been able to see her for five months," so nobody knows how she is. She can't talk. I don't know. I could call the nursing home and ask, "How is she?" [00:36:00] but that's it. She hasn't seen anyone she knows in five months and she really can't communicate very well so maybe, you know, she could talk to him on the phone. I don't think she would know. She can't hear very well. I mean it's just an awful situation to think that people have to go alone. It's bad for them and it's bad for the person who -- and I held my dad's hand when he was taking his last breath. Well I always have that. I was there. I did what I was supposed to do. It's terrible to think that you

wouldn't be able to do that for the person that you care about.

JA: Mom was to the point she didn't think I was her daughter, but she knew that I was somebody who came to see her. So even by bringing [Herby?] along and giving her something to laugh at [00:37:00] and he'd get up on her lap and shed fall asleep petting him I knew that she got comfort even though she didn't know that she had a daughter or that I was her daughter because the last she had remembered of her daughter and son were that they were little children. We were all grown up.

LB: I know what you mean well; I've had that too. Are you staying in or are you going to stores or stuff?

JA: I do go to stores. I was at Walmart today. I sometimes go to Home Depot. The two that I get to. But I mask and disinfect my hands. As soon as I get in the car, I have disinfectant and have wipes that I use on my hands and then [00:38:00] on everything like the steering wheel. I disinfect before I head home. I usually wash my hands. When I get home, I wash them with soap really good. And I get very angry when I see people not wearing masks or who are wearing them incorrectly.

LB: Was everybody wearing them at Walmart?

JA: Today they were, yes. Not everybody wearing them correctly. There are still those that don't think their nose needs to be covered and I try to avoid them as much as possible. I'll go down a different aisle or wait until they've moved on from an area. I think I'm seeing a little more masking than I had been.

LB: I just read in the New York Times today; I posted the article that said that contrary to what a lot of the information had been up until now [00:39:00] that wearing a mask really does protect you much more than one thinks. Much more than we have all thought. That it protects you pretty significantly too and it's the amount of particles of the disease that you get into your nose or airways or whatever. So if you have a smaller amount you're not going to get as sick. So if you're wearing a mask, even though you'd be getting some amount in the air because you have to breathe, it will lessen the amount that you will actually ingest. So Trish, we haven't been out hardly at all. We went to the doctor's yesterday, like a skin doctor, so we had a little check-up thing. That's pretty much all we've been out to together because she's so at risk, I just don't want to take any chances with her.

JA: I had one medical appointment with my family doctor [00:40:00] a couple months ago and it was a FaceTime

meeting. She scheduled the next appointment, which was early this month, as a face to face appointment in her office and at the time I said only if I think things have lessened enough that its safe for me to come in and I was pretty impressed they had it that you call from the car and if there is room in there waiting room they take you in and it took a little while because they had to disinfect the room that I was going to be seen in and that sort of thing. So I was comfortable with that. I also from time to time talk to a therapist and those have been FaceTime meetings and work out pretty good. I like to be able to see the person [00:41:00] who's talking to me rather than just a phone conversation.

LB: Sure. Or a mask.

JA: Well yeah, that too. You can't read any facial expressions. There are very few when they're wearing the mask.

LB: True. We've both been to the doctor. She went to the dentist by herself. I think we went to the doctor two or three times and the doctor offices are really careful. We just went to the skin doctor up in Glory Station and it was sort of eerie because in the waiting room they'd taken all the chairs and just piled them up really. The chairs were piled on top of each other. She couldn't sit down. They

really don't want people sitting in the waiting room. We were the only ones in the waiting room. We just stood there waiting to go to the doctor, and we both had to see them. I don't think they would've let us in if we hadn't been [00:42:00] married because we both wanted to see the doctor and it was okay with them, but otherwise they said no we had to have a different meeting, but we said no she had to see the doctor today and he was ok with that only because we were quarantined together we weren't going to cause anybody harm, but that seemed to work out okay. I was talking to somebody yesterday who she and her wife are watching every -- they found one hundred twenty-five lesbian movies rated from zero to one hundred twenty-five, and then they cut up all the things and they picked one to watch and she said, "Some of these movies are the worst movies I've ever seen in my life. They're terrible."

JA: I didn't know there were that many. Wow.

LB: Well, I mean we know of ones too. They said they are movies that are lesbian movies. [00:43:00] Whoever made these movies have no idea about lesbians. I mean they're not porno movies and even if they were they had no idea. So I'm just asking you if you've been doing any queer activities? (inaudible) lesbianesque?

JA: Let's see. Queer activities. I have some friends who are lesbians that I've gone kayaking with. That's it.

LB: And you've done that since the virus?

JA: Yeah. Because I go during the week when it's not crowded so there's no contact with other people and you know I have a mask with me if I need to put it on to get a boat in the water and when I get out.

LB: Where did you go?

JA: Leaser Lake. It's in Lehigh County.

LB: Yeah. I've been there.

JA: (inaudible) I guess, area. What I did choose to watch that I'd seen most of it before, but I was watching with my friend, [Jill?], and you've seen it too, *Grace and Frankie*. There's a semi-queer movie.

LB: Some queer stuff going on there. It's pretty fun to watch.

JA: It is. It was great comic relief.

LB: It was, it was. People our age or older just loved it. Jane Fonda, 80 years old. How cool is that?

JA: Absolutely cool.

LB: It was really terrific. And Lilly, whom we've met. We like Lilly.

JA: Yeah. It's a great program and, [00:45:00] again, a lot of laughs.

LB: It's a little depressing, but I really loved that the show didn't end with them dying. You know? Nobody died. No main character died in it.

JA: I haven't seen the end of the series.

LB: Well I'm telling you that now so you don't have to worry about it. It's really nice that that doesn't happen and they did it certainly did that very consciously. You don't want to bring everybody like, "Life is tough and then you die." It isn't like that. They don't die and they're still around. So has it been useful during the pandemic to see Dr. Rachel Levine, our wonderful secretary of health?

JA: As much as a lot of the news she was delivering was bad news, I did find that because I knew she had been a doctor around here in our area [00:46:00] and I know she's a transgender individual. I just had a lot of faith in her and felt a distant connect to our governor who I also have great faith in. So yes, I think I felt that they were two individuals who really cared about the health of the citizens of this state and they're putting that ahead of anything else, any special interests. Then every once in a while, you hear that the governor allowed some business to be open and they were some that he knew. I don't want to hear that political side of it. Maybe my head's in the sand, but most of what I heard negative came from once

friends who are republicans. So [00:47:00] that was kind of reassuring that the right people were on the job there.

LB: At the very, very least, and we've gotten much more than that from this leadership, we actually knew the truth and there are states where they just literally won't tell anybody that loads of people are dying and huge numbers of people -- Florida was burying the information and it's one of the reasons why -- You know, Trish's niece really (inaudible) thinks that. She said I don't know anybody. (inaudible) she knows people. She's in her seventies. She's older than Trish and she said you know of course she knows people who've had this and died. She hasn't seen anybody. (inaudible). They're not telling. Nobody is talking about it and they're not allowed to talk about it. It's like that thing that Trump said he wanted all the states to report to him rather than the CDC. [00:48:00] Why would people do that?

JA: The rest of my family is in Montana, and my democratic brother had to register as Republican if he wants any voice at all in any primary election. But I have a great-niece whose health is rather fragile; it's the twin that was born and had a stroke and a bad heart and that kind of stuff, and my sister-in-law seems to have some health weaknesses relative to respiratory system so they've been very careful

all through this and it's been very hard. They still as grandparents hadn't touched their grandchildren in five months [00:49:00], but that's because the father who lives elsewhere, but has the kids every weekend, doesn't believe in all the precautions so it's been difficult for them. I usually go out there for a week every summer and it's hard that I'm not going to get to see them in person and give them hugs and spoil them as much as I can do on one visit a year or two visits a year. We've also done an Easter brunch by Zoom. We do communicate, but it's hard. There are a lot of people out there that don't believe what's going on and they don't mask and they're just going to and nobody is going to make them mask [00:50:00].

LB: So what's your biggest frustration during this time?

JA: People that don't believe it's real.

LB: Right. Okay. What's your littlest frustration that's bothering you like I'll tell you an example: It's driving Trish crazy that she can't shop for her own food. It's just driving her nuts.

JA: Yeah, I imagine that would.

LB: Or your biggest frustration.

JA: I don't know that I've got one of those little tiny ones. I guess part of my frustration is I found that I get frustrated more easily. I get angry easier. I used to be

a person with a lot of patience, and I find I'm losing my patience, even with my niece this weekend [00:51:00]. She was doing stuff to help me, but she was wearing me out, but she didn't necessarily need me to help her, but I just couldn't do. The heat is affecting me worse this year and so I do worry, like when I've been affected by the heat in a bad way. Is it just the heat? Is it my age? Or am I getting sick? You know, I don't know which it is. I tried to do grocery shopping online and maybe it was too early in the game, but I couldn't get the groceries I needed so that's why I started going to the store so I could at least get what I needed.

LB: Yeah, yeah. It's really tough. I think another thing that's worrying me, and it's hard for young people to understand this, but I'm afraid I'm never going to stop [00:52:00] feeling the way I feel even if things get better. Even if the politics change. Even if, you know, I'm just frustrated, angry, and afraid. I think it's very hard to feel like, "Oh well if we just have an election and somebody else everything will be okay."

JA: No. How we felt eight months ago, we will never feel that as our normal again, I believe. And then to have other things superimposed on this. The situation involving the wrongful death of persons of color. I mean the whole Black

Lives Matter movement is certainly way over (inaudible). I went through some of that stuff in the sixties [00:53:00], but I was pretty naive to it. I thought I was pretty savvy until I started really listening and things that some friends have posted. To know that as open as I think I am to people from anywhere I just didn't really know and understand the history of how bad this still is, and then I'm mad at myself that I didn't know more, but like I said, that's superimposed on worrying about physical health.

LB: I was just listening to the black caucus in the legislature and Adrian Shanker, who's the executive director of our community center, in case anybody doesn't know, that it was one of the people who testified. There were four people who were asked to testify. Three leaders of black community organization in Allentown [00:54:00] and then LGBT organization that's based in Allentown and they have this young person who was talking, she's a student at Allen School. She said that because they have police in the school, in effect, and she said it very articulately, but what she said in effect was that kids that do childish things get arrested by the police and have a record because of pushing somebody into a locker or something, and she gave the example there was a kid who was burping and apparently he was burping really loud and it was irritating

people and it sort of escalated to the point where he ended up getting arrested and he had to go to jail, and he has a record because of burping.

JA: Oh my god [00:55:00].

LB: And she was saying it's because they have real police. These are police officers, and they're supposed to be resource officers, so people get sent to them if they've done something bad, but that's the way they deal with things and it's disproportionate, and they don't have police in Parkland High School, which is predominantly white so this never happens to anybody in Parkland High School no matter what they do, it never happens to somebody in Parkland High School, but it happens apparently to someone in Allen High School almost every day, and that's predominantly --

JA: You know, I think back to what I can remember, my days in high school 50 plus years ago and there were some kids that were just jerks but they weren't mean, they weren't doing things that were illegal. They were goofballs, and [00:56:00] some of those goofballs ended up being public school teachers or lawyers.

LB: Right or police officers.

JA: They were still in their phases of growing up. I did go to an integrated high school and the ones I'm thinking that

mostly were jerks were white kids, but now I kind of wonder how poorly the black kids were treated and I just never caught on.

LB: I would assume that you didn't have police officers in the school taking the place of the vice principal disciplinarian.

JA: No we didn't.

LB: And that some kid unless they had committed a crime that was really a rampant crime in the school [00:57:00], but apparently this happens to kids and the way this young woman was describing very well she said we don't want police in the school. They are creating crime out of things that are not crimes. I think that's a very good point and that's one of the defunding things they're talking about. They want to defund things; stop spending government funds, our tax dollars, to place police officers in the school. Spend our tax dollars to put social workers and therapists and guidance counselors in the school.

JA: Yeah. I wish people all really understood what the defunding cry is about because far too many people including part of Trump's current campaign against Biden is pretty much that [00:58:00] you defund the police so there's nobody there to answer the call and that's not at

all what the defund police statement means. There's another one on top of all the worry about COVID.

LB: There was one of these things on the police thing that I saw today on C-SPAN, which was that in rural communities many people who are the most negative about this defunding police attitude are in the suburbs and rural communities and those suburbs and rural communities have already defunded their police. Many of them don't have any police force and they (inaudible) state police. They don't pay any taxes to their police. They don't have police in their schools. They don't have police at all. They have defunded the police [00:59:00], and they certainly don't have police running youth programs because that's one of the things that they pointed out is that police run youth programs. Well they're not trained to run youth programs. It's not appropriate.

JA: Well there are a lot of communities that have police athletic leagues that ran swimming programs and sports programs for kids.

LB: Yeah, but what they were saying was that we don't really need to do that. If we're going to spend tax dollars, they should be spent on people who know how to work with kids and it's not necessary for us to do that, it doesn't turn out to really work in terms of those and Adrian actually

talked about that. He talked about the DARE program, which is a drug program and it's statically proven to completely -- it doesn't work, and we spend our tax dollars on it. It's run by police and they're not the right people. It's a bad model. It doesn't work so that's one of the things that they're saying too that the police run DARE programs in the high schools and it's a waste of money. It doesn't work. It doesn't help anything. It causes adversarial attitude between youth and police that's even higher than [01:00:00] it would be.

JA: Oh gosh.

LB: So it's significant to point out. It's actually very interesting to watch and it wasn't very long (inaudible). So, let's see. How worried are you about getting this thing?

JA: Pretty worried. I try to balance the going out shopping and make sure that's okay. Do what I do okay. I don't like feeling like [01:01:00] I'm so isolated in one place. I do like to get out and see people or see things and this has curtailed that a lot. Every time I go decide I'm going shopping, I know I'm taking a chance of getting an infection. I don't want to die at this point of my life.

LB: It's such a horrible thing too. Even the whole thing is if you get sick, you could be making medical professionals

sick so the people who aren't wearing masks and stuff they're like, "Okay if I get sick, I get sick," but what if you make a doctor sick and then they can't treat people or help or they die. You know lots of medical professionals have died [01:02:00], so why do you feel justified? It's not that they're coming to treat you, they're risking their lives to treat you and that's very concerning.

JA: Yeah, I've got these few friends who think it's all kind of made up sort of disease and it's not nearly as bad as it's said to be, but they've got grandchildren and great nieces and nephews also. I don't get why they aren't worried, just even if they don't believe it, but realize there's a small chance that they could make someone sick. Like why would you do that? And just like you indicated earlier, you've seen more research that the mask is really helpful, so what's the big deal with the little inconveniences of a mask compared to either getting this disease [01:03:00] that could kill you or at least certainly make you very ill or that you would infect somebody else whether it be an elderly parent or somebody young or your spouse. I don't know.

LB: It's really tough.

JA: So, you know, I've got my fabric masks that I've made or purchased and on top of that I keep a box of paper masks in

the car in case I forget one of those. I wish I knew what the right thing was to say to somebody who refuses to wear a mask. They have it on to get into the store because there's somebody checking. They come into the store and as soon as they get into the store they pull down under their chin, which my favorite thing is that I think they're to get a facelift or something. Like without being really adversarial [01:04:00], I don't have the words to say, "You're being a jackass." That's what I want to say to them. That frustrates me.

LB: Well I think we covered everything on all the sheets there, but let me just ask you one more thing and that is if we're sort of imaging that maybe thirty years in the future somebody will look at this video; what do you want to tell those people thirty years from now?

JA: Be your real self and don't give up. It's not all about money.

LB: Well that's good. That's what I want to hear. It's been great to talk to you.

JA: (inaudible).

LB: (inaudible).

LB: (inaudible) I'm going to turn this off so that we can chat a little bit afterwards, but thank you very much, Judy, for talking to me.

JA: Certainly.

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