Joseph Burns Day 1

MARY FOLTZ: My name is Mary Foltz and I'm here with Joseph Burns 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. This project has funding from the Lehigh Valley Engaged Humanities Consortium. We are here with Joseph in his home in Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania. It is October twelfth, two-thousand nineteen. Carol Moeller is our videographer today. Joseph, I want to thank you so much for agreeing to --

JOSEPH BURNS: Thank you.

MF: -- talk with us. And the first thing I want to ask is did you consent to this interview today?

JB: Yes, of course. I did, absolutely.

MF: Wonderful. We're really grateful that you take the time to talk to us. And I want to start by asking you, could you please give me your birth date?

JB: Eight-one-forty. August first, nineteen-forty.

MF: And just to start our conversation today, could you tell us a little bit about your childhood?

JB: Okay. I was born in Butler, Pennsylvania, which is north of Pittsburgh, about thirty miles. And it's a town of about thirty-thousand, I think. Maybe twenty three- thousand at that time. So, it's a medium sized town and it was the county seat. And it was a great life. This was before the Second World War. I was born before the war. Then, I began -- the war years, of course, started in forty-one and we spent our time, a large part of our time outside the city because they were polio summers, okay? So, when the summers came, we went outside the city. We had a piece of property outside the city about eighteen or nineteen miles. We went there and spent our summers as children and took our friends along and really stayed out -- pretty much out of the summer polio season, which was devastating in terms of how many people would get sick. And we never did. But outside of that, it was very happy. That was an extraordinarily happy time to be -- my family was good. Well off enough to be able to afford to stay out there.

My mother -- My father came and went every day, for work. And my mother ultimately became a member of the school

board, which kind of influenced my life a little bit, made me a little, you know, a little more cautious about who I was and what I could do. But really (inaudible) a whole lot but she -- I think my -- between the two of them, my father would be the more nurturing figure, okay, and the person that I really went to for more nurturing. And that was just true of the family. My mother was a good person and really -- but she had her feelings about things, very different, and was not as caring somehow, not able to communicate the same sort of warmth as my dad did. And so, we had a very special relationship he and I and that was very warm and well-remembered. He lived until I was nineteen. Died in 1960.

By that time, I was growing up enough that -- I had come out -- I didn't come out, as a matter of fact. I was hesitant, lonely as a child, lonely through a lot of my childhood, and especially as I became gay. At about thirteen, I think, was my first experience, with a friend. Another person in school, the same age, the same grade of school that I was. Happened in my home. In the basement, there were a pair of, set of bunk beds downstairs, and that's where we had our first encounter. And we went on for probably several months but not longer than that. He was an

individual interesting to me because he had some effeminate characteristics more than I would have and more than typical for men. But he also -- and I saw him a gap of time, okay? Remember, I was thirteen then. We were probably -- I remember knowing him till we graduated school and he was a clerk in a men's store, which -- he was still a clerk in a men's store. That's what he did for his whole existence and retired from there. And I didn't see him again for fifty-five years when we came together for the high school reunion. Went to first high school reunion. I went back, it was fifty-five years. So, it's the same person. Exactly the same person. But he was married all these years, to a woman. Assume had children. Nobody talked about children at the reunion. Surprised the heck out of me. I thought that would be the whole conversation. Not at all. Nobody even talked a word about children. And people were so much the same as they were in high school. Like, the high school president was still in charge of the -- this particular occasion and he -- very much the same. Looked the same, talked the same, was the same. Personality, the same. And it was true of so many people but it was also true of this boy, which I thought was most remarkable that he had not changed in all these years and yet had never probably been gay himself. I just find it

absolutely remarkable that he remained -- maintained marriage and maintained his lifestyle. And after that, there was only one other person.

Then, there was a long period of plight for a long time when I was too shy, too afraid, and too absorbed in the whole business of being gay to reach out. Probably fearful, probably not ever very heterosexual and could -- that was not something I even got to very much at all. I tried.(narrator edit to add: I'm a six on the Kinsey scale, only the same sex experiences my whole life.) Went out on a few dates. But there was not anything that I was really interested in doing, quite honestly. And that -- maintained myself, even through high school and college. I did not have another encounter with anybody. I knew I was gay. Certainly was dealing with the issue myself but I did not reach out to any other gay people and rarely knew any. When I left Butler, finally, at the age of twenty-seven, and this was years later, I still only knew two gay people in Butler. So, it was a lonely life for me there and was very willing to leave and went to Allentown, Bethlehem, really, in '67, and at twenty-seven.

Partly, I had dropped out of college (narrator edit to add:

Moravian College in Bethlehem) and I was going to go back to college (narrator edited to add: Moravian). Well, I went back and I didn't go to college but I did stay in Bethlehem, very happily, and started to come out. And slowly, going to a bar called Rubes. I don't know what Rubes is -- was in existence then, on the corner of Ninth and Hamilton, as I recall. And there was another bar down -- the bus station (narrator edited to add: Sixth and Linden Street) was kind of gay, part-time, on weekends, especially. And as that happened, in '69, somebody bought the bar by the name of Larry Johns. Yes, Larry Johns is his name and he bought that particular bar, called the Rendezvous, then. And it was the bar that was associated with the bus station and it's just a very small bar. I don't think more than fifteen seats in it. And he put a dance floor in back, which was quite exciting for the time. And then, he founded Stonewall, later on. Sold the Rendezvous, although Rendezvous continued for a long time as a bar. And, let me see, so coming out was slow for me. I met a few people prior to Le-Hi-Ho who were -- in that day, there were queen bees, okay? And a queen bee would be a male homosexual who is -- usually a lot of personality and enough to hold other people. And he would create a social circle for himself.

Now, in some times, and this was true almost in every town in America -- probably had a (narrator edited to add: at least one) queen bee who was truly -- dominated that (narrator edited to add: the male gay) society (narrator edited to add: around him). And not a very large circle. There might be just five or six people, it might be fifteen people. Might be a very large group depending on the person himself. But they were very -- they were leaders, they were social leaders. Commanded the social scene and really, there were specific people. They were funny, they were gregarious. They were also extraordinarily sarcastic, sarcasm being the coin of the realm, to a certain degree, because that passed for sophistication. I'm not sure quite what had happened. I always thought sarcasm hurt more than it was good. But it still was the coin of the realm and if you were sarcastic, then you got to be more popular and more -- dominating those people. So, I met a young man who was in his fifties, I had a small coterie of two, three other people, I think, and a home in Bethlehem. A nice little home, quite comfortable. And that was my social set for a while. I met a few people at the bar, older men, specifically. By that time, I was twenty-seven going on thirty. And Le-Hi-Ho was founded when I was twenty-nine.

So, my point was that I went -- being, feeling lonely. I was going to a psychiatrist for a period of time and I would talk to him about how do I get to know people? How do I be social? What do I do? Le-Hi-Ho started in, I think, in May or April of 1969, (narrator edited to add: a month or two before Stonewall) just right after the Stonewall -- and that's important. I'll talk about that. But that was the end of my psychiatry, yeah. That was -- I found what I needed, you know? I really kind of did not bloom but I certainly came out and was willing to come out. (narrator edited to add: I had moved to Bethlehem in 1967, and right after I moved) I had read in the paper, the *Philadelphia* (narrator edited to add: *Inquirer)*-- no, wouldn't have been, 'cause that -- I'm not sure. Would have been the morning paper out of Philadelphia and I don't -- I'm not sure that I remember the name of it anymore. But Barbara Gittings was listed in there and she was my inspiration because I thought if Barbara Gittings could be out like that, and she had been president -- she had been the editor of Ladder and was an activist in Philadelphia. A gay activist, a notable lesbian activist. And I thought, boy, if she could do it, I could do it, too. And so, my opportunity, then, came up pretty quickly after that and I

was very, very happy and it was the first moment I knew I was going to be out. I was not going to be one of the closeted people. But that's -- that was the brief up to that point, okay, if there are any questions about that. Do you have anything to ask me about that? Any illuminations?

MF: I just am excited for you to keep going. You should feel like you can just keep talking in the direction that you want to go. And then, if you exhaust it, then I'll ask a question. I mean, I have so many things that I'm curious about. Why? Why you started Le-Hi-Ho and how it kind of came together, who you were talking with? You know, how did you imagine this organization?

JB: Oh, I left town. When I left home, I was ready, I think. I was ready to go. I was ready to find what I knew was there, okay? I knew that there were, I knew such of a thing -- was gay bar. I had never been in one prior to that. I had had, I think, yeah, and twenty-three, I had another event, another time when I was with somebody. And then, it became a little more natural and I met some more people. Individuals. Typically older. Oh, probably even older than I was and I was already twenty-seven. Now, that's interesting. I came out at that age, too. I decided I was

coming out and so I wrote to my mother first and the rest of the family and said, "I'm gay" and was -- came out, literally, to them and to other people. So, I was working in Bethlehem Steel at that point. And I was able to come out in my work, which -- I was working as a laborer at the open-hearth furnaces and so on at Bethlehem Steel. So, I knew people but it -- again, it was a lonely, lonely existence and I felt that keenly. And I felt very, very lonely. I called it my lonely years, twenty-seven to twenty-nine, between twenty-seven and twenty-nine, when I was able to come out, when I was able to really reach out to other people with Le-Hi-Ho and found my, you know, my niche for myself.

I was very, very happy about that afterwards. Became the first newsletter editor for them. And the first meeting, I think the -- well, we'll talk about that, too. I was -- Le-Hi-Ho was founded through the auspices of Mattachine, New York City. And approximately, I think, February. I don't know the date. And I have the letter and it's in the -- I sent that (inaudible) (narrator edited to add: Mattachine New York sent a letter to all members of correspondents residing in or around the Lehigh Valley and Central Pa) inviting people to -- person who was going to

form a group through the auspices of Mattachine, New York. He was a local, Ron Seeds. And Ron Seeds was also working at Bethlehem Steel. He was more, he was in the office, and I don't know what he did. I think he was probably mid-management somewhere but it would be mid-staff management, I believe, not directly supervising anybody that I'd be aware of. He was approximately my age. I'm not sure where we were. At that time, I was twenty-nine when Le-Hi-Ho was formed.

I met my lover that first meeting and I did not get together with him. But I knew I saw him, knew who he was. Met him again at Christmas time, at New Year's, New Year's Eve, at -- in 1970. New Year's Eve at --in 1970s, '69 into '70. And we were a place called the Coral Reef in the Poconos. Now that's important because among other things, we -- Le-Hi-Ho had -- early fundraising was drag shows. And they were down at the Coral Reef, the Coral Reef being in the Poconos, some distance from where we were. And they were successful. We would have several hundred people and we made three or four hundred dollars out of them, which was a lot of money to us. I mean, we were shoestring budget the whole time, literally. We just never needed, we never lacked for money. If they ever did, they put in the

newsletter, “We need money” and people would contribute and they went on.

But it was still, it was not, never became a greatly funded organization. Just went along, published this newsletter for twenty-five years, there’s been a continuous newsletter. Now, the fact that Le-Hi-Ho was founded -- this is important -- again, it was founded in 1969, April or May. It was through the Mattachine. There was a decision, first, that we had to make about whether we’d go with Mattachine, would become a Mattachine, or we’d become an independent organization. I argued for independent organization and I think that most of us were in favor of that, rather than sending our money away, what little money it was. It would have cost us twenty-five dollars a year, I think, something like that. But was twenty-five dollars is twenty-five dollars back in that day. It was different. That was a sum of money that you didn’t automatically have when you were young. So, we went to stay, but what happened with Le-Hi-Ho was it was formed, therefore, as a social educational organization, okay? And this was what early organizations were. And you talk about homophile organizations? Homophiles stayed in the closet.

If you remember Mattachine, they had this structure -- was such that they had -- the leadership was supposed to be out and leading the organization to be there for the public presence, okay? And they could do all the public things and everybody else could remain in the closet and be spoken for. That did not preclude them being activist people but the Mattachine grew to about four-hundred people, which was, at that time, was quite enormous (narrator edited to add: for a gay organization). Now, they had done that, of course, by maintaining all the names, never letting anybody go. We did the same thing with Le-Hi-Ho and with other organizations later on. We just kept them on the books for ourselves. Kept saying the newsletter's -- so, we claimed them as members, even if they were no longer active, which very typical that they weren't.

Okay, but being social, educational was what Le-Hi-Ho did, okay? They had a social hour after every meeting. I think I talked about, well, I talked about it before we started. There were about thirty people, would go to a meeting. A number of them would be the activists who took (narrator edited to add: active part in) the meeting (narrator edited to add: and in the leadership). And then, they would follow it with a social hour, assigned coffee, assigned

refreshments and coffee, had it every month. And it was very, very popular. That was what people went for, they really -- that social hour was well attended and very important, I think, again because it was, at that time, probably the social alternative to the bars. (narrator edited to add: One was gay only on weekends when you went to the gay bar or habituated a cruising area.) There were virtually no others, and certainly none of that ilk, in which you can get to know people without the bedding, coming off, without that being the focus of conversation. You would talk about all kinds of other things. You would talk more as a normal conversation. I think it was a very important aspect and a very important difference that went down that made that such an important organization. And it waxed and waned. There were sometimes -- were fewer people, more people.

At the beginning, we would all conduct the business together. Well, that was a three-hour meeting if they had to do that kind of thing. And then, we also learned that that was just not successful. That was not what people went for. So, we learned to -- they built a (narrator edited to add: governing) board (narrator edited to add: officers and committee chairs), ultimately, that took care of the

business (narrator edited to add: that was careful to report to the regular member meetings and listen to feedback and suggestions). And there was a -- Ron made himself the -- I forget what it was called (narrator edited to add: executive director I think) but the Mattachine, New York and there's actually the same executive (narrator edited to add: Dick Leisch) executive -- And I don't remember -- executive something or other. Thank you. Okay, so Ron was the executive, meaning that he was responsible for the organization. I once led a fight one time to get the key for the mailbox. Now, the reason I did it was I felt that there were things going to the mailbox that I wanted to know about. I was the newsletter editor and I was really wanting to know about other activities across the horizon (narrator edited to add: in other organizations), which we didn't -- which I was not informed of but Ron was because, at that time especially, when there are other organizations, you sent your newsletter out to everybody else and the other organizations to keep them reminded, that you were both in existence and what you did. So, but Ron said, "Look, I'm --" faced down the board and said, "I'm going to keep the key. I'm going to be here. I'm going to be head of this organization and I will be here tomorrow and when you guys are all gone, I'll be here." He was

almost right. Almost right. He left about ’87, I think, somewhere in the late eighties, I’m thinking, like -- and I don’t know what that story was. By that time, I was gone myself. To finish that story, okay, back with Ron. (narrator edited to add: Ron and his lover moved to Connecticut and donated the early records and papers relating to Le-Hi-Ho to the University of Central Connecticut, that archive is online. To finish that story, they still reside in Connecticut, or did so in 2013. I know that but I never contacted them there.)

And so, he led the organization, did most of the business and really, and conducted most of the meetings. We did get a president. We named ourselves Le-Hi-Ho ultimately. Was a while there -- we wrote some bylaws. Bylaws are a piece of shit. Never do it. It just takes -- big waste of time because you never -- you don’t pay -- little attention to the bylaws after they’re written. And they can take up a great deal of time. But finally, they give us a name, which came out to be Le-Hi-Homophile Organization and we shortened that to Le-Hi-Ho. And I remember who did it. That’s neither here nor there. There was a person involved with the organization who was a rare book seller. Interesting man. He served that and he was a person who did

not like conflict at all, so he didn't even like the meetings. He felt the conflict was too strong for him. Was a very gentle man. Very gentle person. But he came up with the name, ultimately. Good friend and a good person. Older. Again, older than myself, even at that point. Le-Hi-Ho was distinguished by being a little bit older. Generally, the membership would be in their twenties to thirties. And that's a little unusual for gay organizations of any ilk, to not be much younger and much more college age or whatever.

These were young men who were starting their careers, typically. And again, that's who came. And sometimes from a distance. We had people coming from Wilkes-Barre, people coming from that area, and around, around, around (narrator edited to add: Bucks County to Kutztown, Quakertown, and Milton, PA). There were a few interesting people that might have belonged at one point or another. There was a fellow name of Paul. What was the last name? Oo, can I -- forgive myself. (inaudible), he was a -- Phil Andros, which if you know Phil Andros was a pornographic writer. But he was, yeah, that's what it was. And he -- but by then, he'd been retired from that. He was no longer writing the books but he was living in the Poconos with his lover and was one of

the interesting characters we once knew at Le-Hi-Ho that were associated with -- and he died, I think, not very long after that, I believe of AIDS, but I'm not sure of that. There were no other famous people, particularly, that I can think of. And Phil was very modest. Paul was very modest. Told us that but he never claimed -- and I was probably -- I was one of the few who would recognize him from pornography. I used to go to New York City and pick up the stuff in Times Square. So, of course, yes, I knew what Paul -- Phil Andros. That was exciting and he was a major author.

When I came out in Pennsylvania, I had been to college in Pennsylvania. I had been to college in Bethlehem. And I went there-forth to college, universities -- one university, Lehigh. And then, there are four colleges, I believe: Moravian, Muhlenberg, Lafayette, and -- Cedar Crest(narrator edited to add: at that time a girls' college, Lafayette was exclusively male). And there was also a Catholic school, St. Catherine, St. Catherine, Saint Frances de Sales. And there was even, actually -- there was a Baptist school that nobody knows about -- was in existence (narrator edited to add: hidden off of Union Boulevard; maybe within Allentown city limits). Not quite

unknown but it was a college, probably a junior college, but I never knew which one. I used to know its location and I used to observe it. My point was that I went to the colleges, I went to the universities, and I went to the libraries, particularly, that were -- that I could find, okay? And I was not much, I was not a great, I was not at that point much of a scholar. But I could not find in any of those libraries anything in the card catalog under homosexuality. There was zero works, okay? And what I could find one time was a book I -- it's written by a psychiatrist, I believe, in association with, well, very famous Midwest -- doesn't matter now (narrator edited to add: Mayo Clinic).

At any rate, there was one blurb about homosexuality, short paragraph thing. Two paragraphs, perhaps. And there was a book in Le-Hi-Ho by Derek Phillips, Philip Derek? What was his name? He was one of the very few novelists at that time who was actually publishing books that were gay specific. His last name was Derek and now I can't remember his first name, most regrettably. There was supposedly a copy of that in Lehigh, Lehigh University. It was not on the shelves, I can tell you that. And that was typical. That's what I found is there was very, very little, and not in, not in,

not in. I was actually, with a very good book shop because I'd been a student and liked the Moravian Bookshop a great deal. It was a wonderful resource. They thought I was a student. I had been there so often, been there for years. I don't know how they thought I was a student after I was there fifteen years I was associated with them. But they were -- I knew people there and they were my sources.

And so, I got a lot of books. I developed a nice library for myself, about one-hundred and fifty books by the time Le-Hi-Ho opened up. And there were not very many books at that time. You have to remember that *Psychopathia Homosexualis* was still in existence, okay? Now, 1874, it was written. This was a textbook for gay people! Come on! I mean, this is bad stuff. And it was all case histories, that sort of thing, and very -- people like Bergler -- Bieber were writing at that time. I don't know if you've ever read Bieber. Irving Bieber was, oh, he was -- terrible man. Wrote a book in 1952. I got a copy of it, was, like, the thirteenth edition. That's how bad it was. I mean, it was all that was available and it was -- he was the one who said, you know, he equated us with -- homosexuals are criminals, teachers were criminals, they all have the same personality. They're all psychopaths. It's all psychopaths.

Well, that taught me, that's -- I wasn't. I mean, that was my beginning of my liberation, was knowing who I was not. I was not that person. Nobody I knew was that person. Nobody I knew was of that ilk. But he was just devastating and everything he had to say was very, very negative and he had all his cases and all this stuff and illustrations. But it was a paperback book and the thirteenth edition. And that's just sick when you think about it. Still makes me sick when I think about it because that was really -- that and Bergler, Edmund Bergler or was it Edmund Bergler? I think that was the name -- was all I could find. And these were the books that were coming out then. These were the authorities -- were trying to find out why am I homosexual? Was a big question. Screw the question, you know? I learned quickly to forget that, that just that was irrelevant. I am. But it was -- intellectual journey through that.

And then, I got, like, *The Homosexual in America*. Loved Donald Cory. I was just grossly a fan of this man who would -- in '50, I think, perhaps, in the time of the McCarthy era, wrote this book called *Homosexual in America*, which was probably the first apologist for homosexual -- and he was a -- he himself was a married man. He was a member of Mattachine. And I wrote to Mattachine a fan letter, as a

matter of fact, and said, “I really appreciate the fact that you’ve done this. This is extraordinary and what a brave and courageous and wonderful” -- they wrote back and said, “He’s out of the organization. We kicked him out.” (laughs)

So, the story about him is, and I find this out later, he was a sociologist who wanted to use the organization for research and to make himself a famous researcher, to promote himself. And Lehigh -- and they turned him down on it. They would not support that. And he wrote -- he tried to become leader of the organization, tried to become the executive director, and that’s when they threw him out. His name was -- I want to know, ’cause this is important. He still wrote that -- hate senior moments like this. I’ll think of it and I will add that back (narrator edited to add: Edward Segarin, sociology professor at New York University, self proclaimed expert on “sexual deviants”). But he believed that men were afraid of women, that's why they became homosexual. And this was Ralph Ellard Ellis if you remember the name, was a psychiatrist which was -- this was his whole thing. And he said that that was his -- it was his thesis, that people are homosexual because they’re afraid of women. He spoke at Le-Hi-Ho one time, which was

not a time I was -- by that time, I had acquired a lover and was not directly involved with Le-Hi-Ho, or not very much, so I didn't know he was there. And I was quite surprised because -- but he came and spoke to the organization. Matter of fact, it's in the newsletters. I was actually quite shocked because I wouldn't have had him. He was really -- and he had a major following. But he also wasn't as tough on it. He wasn't just condemning homosexuals as Bieber and Berger and the other people had been. So, I had a library. I did a lot, well, as much research as I could.

I find out about Evelyn Hooker, obviously, Ford and Beach, who was the sociologist who made it clear -- the cross-cultural studies and cross species studies. John Money, his sexual studies. And began to learn that there was a whole modern view emerging. Now, I think that that's very important, intellectually, okay? The intellectual beginnings of this were interesting because there were very few authors prior to this who were doing anything on sex at all, okay? And especially when they were across studies or other cultures. For instance, Richard Burton, a very, very famous author, very famous traveler in the East who had written a lot of cross-cultural studies and a lot of

cross-cultural things about the (narrator edited to add: about homosexual Asia-- and that whole Eastern culture, late nineteen and early twentieth century, I believe) -- and that whole Eastern culture. You can think of -- who? Carpenter, John Carpenter. And it was John Carpenter in England, did that -- wonderful books. André Gide wrote a book called *Corydon*. Was very famous homosexual. He also happened to be a pedophile, regrettably. Went to Algiers. But he wrote about it. He wrote -- One of the books that I found for the library was his diaries, his journals. Journals they were called in that day and he'd written about -- they were continued in four volumes. And I had the slightly abbreviated paperback edition but it was good enough and certainly told me a lot about -- and he was world famous at that point and he was an authority -- if you remember, Leo Tolstoy, after *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*, became such a famous author and became the voice of peace and this world known, world renowned moralist. And that's the role that Gide filled. He became in -- writing a book called *The Immoralist*, among other things. He became that kind of authority figure and was very much highly regarded despite being gay. *Corydon* was published and when he published it, he only did twelve copies, so that never did get out until after he was dead. Then there were -- a

number or others published.

I happen to have, was fortunate enough to find a copy of it (narrator edited to add: to find a paperback copy of it in the sixties). His thesis talked about a male's beauty and the males -- and how beautiful males were and they were dominant. And you find beautiful birds, okay? Cardinals, for instance, the cardinal family, the male is the red cardinal. The females are the brown cardinals. The females also lead. They go first, then the male follows when it's safe. But they also were in, (clears throat) I'm sorry, in nature, were very often the more beautiful of the species, the more resplendent of the species to get -- and they were the ones that the females were attracted to. Remember that they, you know, that they did perform the dances or whatever. They had the plumage, the right plumage and the right light and look to be -- send their genes, partly because of the (inaudible) and he -- so that's what he emphasized. Interesting thesis. Also, back -- interesting to me, when you talk about early homosexuality, and this was back in -- the term was not (inaudible) until eighteen-something, seventeen-something, eighteen, I think. At any rate, it was not a term. And before that, they were called inverts, intermediates, third sex. All-important

concepts.

And they used to talk about the important contribution that these particular people made, okay, that they could make the society that I've always kind of believed in.

I've always thought that homosexuals had a special mission, had a special something, that we understood differently than the dominant culture did, the dominant heterosexual culture did. We weren't as marriage-oriented, for instance. We were freer in our associations and -- but I think now, as we've gone on, I think that what we were looking for is what is now emerging, which is that wonderful fluidity, that you could be anything, okay? That you could be male, female, without limits, without labels, without anything to identify with, that -- and yet, that fluidity, this makes you go all over so that you are all of those things, happily. I was not. I was a male homosexual and I, at my point, when I came out, was binary choice, okay? You were gay or you were straight. I chose gay, absolutely. I wanted to be that and I also emphasized my maleness, as opposed to anything, and really was not happy with the social sets in which the guys would call each other Mary. That made me uncomfortable because I thought that's kind of denial of who we are.

And it really is -- it so often was biting and so often was a putdown or an insult and sarcasm, that sarcasm that I talked about, was so much part of the humor. And that was a part of the humor, too. You had parties, drag shows, and what you did, okay, you -- everybody -- where you went into drag. I never did again. And it just wasn't me. But I think, too, that I really feel that I should have had -- I already knew growing up, when I was asking myself these questions, that there's a large part, a large component of me is feminine as other people would understand it. Not a sports person. A person who liked more concerts, liked music, who liked more things that might be softer and less hard and less harsh. And my brothers were athletic, I was not. And I felt that difference. So, I kind of still -- I wish I had developed that more and been more open to developing it, that I would be a different person. And now I don't understand, it's very difficult for me to understand young homosexuals because they are so fluid and they are so -- can make that change and identify with it in a way we couldn't. Homose-- To me, bisexuality was almost an excuse. But again, it never was. There are true bisexuals. I have learned that over the years, too, and accept that. But now, there's something more than that.

There's this wonderful fluidity of being whatever you want to be and expressing it all. And I think, especially, Adrian does a terrific job and the Lehigh Valley is doing a terrific job of emphasizing that particular aspect of things. I look at the programs and what I get are everything is very much oriented to the trans community, a lot of it is. You're doing a lot of trans (inaudible) so many of the programs emphasize that as opposed to, okay, a more strictly male homosexuality. Come back to Le-Hi-Ho again for one second. This was a very male organization. There were no women, okay? There was one woman who was directly involved in Le-Hi-Ho in the first 10 years. Her name was Lou Augustine. Lou Augustine became a member of the governor of Pennsylvania, the Governor's Council on Sexual Minorities. She was appointed to that. She lived in Reading. And she come up to groups. She came up to Le-Hi-Ho periodically through all those years. And she was almost the only one who did. And I used to fight Le-Hi-Ho because after -- and in those first ten years, I began to change. There were so many feminists, and met Dixie (narrator edited to add: President of Pennsylvania NOW, a good friend and mentor), and so on, so I was really trying to get them to understand that they don't have women, that they need to

look at this because -- for many, many reasons. I thought that, for instance, NOW was our model -- except that the feminist movement was so broad (narrator edited to add: NOW should have been a major model for a gay - at least one gay organization that organized associate local, state, and national chapters).

And that's for many issues, from childcare to pay, to just everything was so different for them. Men would -- And men didn't pay attention. They did not support that. They didn't support the abortion rights, which they wouldn't do -- they wouldn't come out and say, Le-Hi-Ho -- and I tried to get them to do this. Would not adopt a resolution in favor of abortion or anything else, anything to do with feminism. They just simply wouldn't do it. And I wasn't disappointed and I understood because -- but they were a conservative organization. Again, they were founded two months before the Stonewall, it made them very different. They were social, educational, homophile. No organizations after the Stonewall or after -- yes, after Stonewall, I went to a conference in October of that year, '69. It was last meeting of ECHO, East Coast Homophile Organizations. There were several organizations involved. Le-Hi-Ho was new but so were a whole lot of other things, like HI,

Homophiles of -- where? I don't remember. There was a group in -- Barbara Giddings was in charge of a group in Philadelphia. Mark Segal had just founded Gay, I think -- the GAA, yes. Thank you. And so, I think there were quite a number of organizations. I recall there were thirteen organizations, almost all of them new.

Now, the question, of course, with the old guard was shall we seat these people? Can we believe them? You know, they're new, they're young, they're radical about -- and they were, for instance, Foster Gunnison was himself an organization. Foster Gunnison, his whole job and his whole organization was, himself, keeping all the archives of all the earlier groups. And so, he built up a tremendous library and a very important library in New England of all those early newsletters and whatever was new and all the records of those (narrator edited to add: LGBT) groups. He tried to maintain some semblance of it. But that was an organization, okay. Mattachine in New York was Dick Leisch, who I went to see one time. When I came out, I went to New York. I had been to see a program, I think, in '63 that showed -- that talked about Mattachine and showed the door of the organization, which was somewhere in the Village at that point, as I recall, a glass door. I'll never forget

that (narrator edited to add: I was so impressed that people could probably see inside through the glass door). And so, I really, that was one of the first things with them, when I came out, and I couldn't go to school the next day. I went to the library and I looked up (narrator edited to add: the address of) Mattachine.

MF: Do you want to stop?

JB: It was important to me. And I went there, went to see him in New York. Went to the Mattachine office and walked in and just introduced myself. I was so happy. Went to Philadelphia. At that time, Janus Society was in existence and one called the Homosexual Law Reform Society. Both happened to be the same address in what turned out to be Polak (narrator edited to add: Clark Polak)-- why can't I remember their first names? I can remember his last name but I can't remember his first name -- was -- published the Janus Society newsletter called *Drum*. And he also ran a pornography shop -- is what he did. I think was easier as a business or whatever. That's -- When I went to the address, went upstairs to the second floor, met the secretary. He was not in. Dammit, his name just crossed my name again. I mean, he was not there but clearly there was pornography

all over. You know, the shelves in back were -- and that was what he did was supply -- pornography supplier. I don't know if that was his main job. He was well known and he did -- *Drum* was unusual, a little bit pornographic in terms of the newsletter. And I had a copy for years and didn't realize that I -- and I probably turned it into the projects here at the Dickinson when I realized that it was, in fact, the newsletter of the organization. But it had pictures of -- posed pictures back in that day. It's what you did, the posing straps and that sort of thing were de rigueur. You do nothing naked. That wouldn't have been possible but as much naked -- as close you could get.

Clark Polak, I believe. Clark Polak, I believe, was his name. Joined their West Coast organization. I would join ONE which to me was (inaudible) which was -- I think one in San Francisco, one in Los Angeles. ONE was an educational organization, did meetings, did presentations constantly to the public. Le-Hi-Ho was distinguished for that. They had a wonderful speakers' bureau. I was not a member of it. They didn't -- I don't, I did not -- I wasn't Ron's favorite person and, but as there -- was really very much in charge of that. Did a wonderful job. Presentations all over the

Valley, very, very active, and through all the schools, the high schools, the colleges. Was a very main function, as well as the social organization, which we talked about. They also were very supportive about other things but they didn't -- they were not supportive about women. They wouldn't do the women's rights. They weren't really big on women's rights, although ERA was becoming stronger and stronger through NOW and NOW is very, very powerful organization in Pennsylvania. And Ellie Smeal was president, national president, and come from here.

Gloria -- not Steinem but Gloria -- what was her name? Sackman-Reed. Gloria Sackman-Reed was the president then, followed by Dixie after that. And Dixie held the organization in -- held the conference in Philadelphia. And, I'm sorry, in Allentown (narrator edited to add: in Allentown in December 1977 at the Americus Hotel on the corner of Sixth and Hamilton Streets. And then, she became state president for a two year term). And then, she became president that year, but did the conference -- she was self-nominated or nominated to become the president -- Pennsylvania NOW. And that was '87, I believe, '86, '87, because in '87, we were supposed to have a conference in

‘86, in ‘87, early ‘87. (Narrator edited to add: And that was ‘77, because in ‘78 we - the Pennsylvania Rural Gay Caucus of which I was then a co-chair with Mary Nancarrow, another woman who became State President of NOW in 1984 - was supposed to have a statewide GAY conference in early ‘78). We never did. And I’ll tell you, that’s another story, but -- and a later administration. But stay with Le-Hi-Ho for the moment. So, Le-Hi-Ho was very definitely male, strongly male. And I think that later, they did change but it was not until after I had left. I left in ‘83 to go to Chicago to live with my lover. And lived with him for ten years there, then another ten years in Phila-- in Houston. And then, we got divorced. His choice. I came back here to live with my sister and -- in two-thousand. Had been together, been with Doug for eighteen years at the time he wanted the divorce. We stayed together for another year and a half just in order to sell the house, prepare the house, and so on, for sale. And I wanted to celebrate the coming of the new century with him, the millennial -- I wanted to do that. And really, it was a little bit of an anti-climax in the end. Not sorry that I did it, though. He was a good man and I was very much in love at that point but it just didn’t work out. And they were my feelings, not his. Okay, Le-Hi-Ho.

MF: May I ask --

JB: And what else can I say about that I could, yeah, (inaudible)

MF: Well, I'm curious about your role as the newsletter organizer for Le-Hi-Ho.

JB: Okay.

MF: So, my questions are, you know, what in particular did you want to publish in the newsletter? Did you publish on politics or was it --

JB: Okay.

MF: -- more social?

JB: I did -- it wasn't politics. I was strongly informational and, a matter of fact, got into trouble for it. I was writing as much -- I was doing all this scholarship on the side. And so, I was making what I called reviews of these books. They weren't reviews of these books. They were

really giving you -- since you aren't going to read the book, this is what the book said. And these are important ideas, okay? This man is representing, for instance -- the writer, one from a man by the name of Wainwright Churchill -- wrote a book on -- and it's one that's gotten lost that I very -- don't understand why it did -- on the pro-gay cultures in the past. And so, he emphasized Greece as homo-positive, positive as opposed to negative, and the Roman culture as being more positive than negative and other cultures being more positive than negative. And he talked about them quite specifically, in quite a great, celebrated depth.

And so, I would write that in the newspaper, wanting you to know that this is what -- this saves you. This is saving your ass, okay? Very, very important piece of writing, this thing is. And so, I did it that way. Barbara Gittings wrote a letter and said, you know, "That's not a review." And Ron Seed wrote a letter and said, "You aren't writing reviews?. You're fired." So, I was fired. And that was about a year and a half later, year and a half or two. There was a person who -- the gentleman who started the newsletter was a guy who owned -- the real bookseller was throwing an advertisement, I think, after the first reading. So, I say,

"We're going to have a second meeting." So, he wrote a newsletter for it. Well, that was the beginning of the newsletter and I took over the next one as being the newsletter editor because I wanted to do that. I thought it was a good fit for me. And I did things my own way. There was a little bit of humor that I wrote. I'm not funny. Believe me, it was a terrible piece. It was a lousy idea. And it really was a kind of a bit of a campy persona, which I am not and couldn't really play well. But that was that.

And so, my emphasis was trying to be on educational (narrator edited to add: articles and news) -- and telling them about what was going on, okay? And I think that at some -- what I thought was positive about newsletters that I liked was that, okay? And other newsletters were done -- for instance, there was -- when Gays United of Lancaster's college, U.L., was founded, they formed -- they did a newsletter that became the Pennsylvania -- not rural but what do they call it? (narrator edited to add: It was called The GAY ERA.) Damn. I'll have to think of that again later, too, because that was an important contribution. It was to, like, by the Boston *Gay News*. Talks about all the other organizations. Talked about what was going on, what was important, what were the leading causes, what -- and

so, politically, if you were an activist, that's what you read because it really gave it to you in a way that *The Advocate* was not doing and it was much more social, much broader, and a lot more advertising in terms -- and a lot of beautiful boys, that sort of thing. And kind of light on good material. Now, it had not always been that way.

I remember when Lehigh -- *The Advocate*, firstly when it started, and reading it -- I was subscribing at that point -- like, I was a member of those organizations remotely because I couldn't -- that was my way of participating. All I could do to support them was to join and pay attention. And one was giving me good information, *Advocate* was giving me good information. And much as I could participate, they were. So, I thought that was a very, very important part of it. I found -- I just donated, I think I've said that, all those books for the library of Le-Hi-Ho, to start the library at Le-Hi-Ho. Mattachine donated their extra books, okay? And if you went to Mattachine, the forepart of -- you walked in, there were stacks of books there. Not very many. It wasn't -- maybe four or five depths but that was the largest collection that I ever saw and knew of. And my one-hundred fifty books, I thought, was quite extraordinary for the time because there were so few still being written.

You know, openly -- books that were not people who -- there were some English books. They were hard to find and I tried to find everything I could find. I mean, I would go to books on the margin, okay, that were being dumped onto the market because they weren't any good, going to a special seller. And you'd go there and find books by English authors about -- writing about people who were gay. Was wonderful to me *Psychopathia Homosexualis* and plays. Very little of that.

Le-Hi-Ho often went to plays in New York. Went to see *Puppy Dog Tails*, went to see -- what was the, shit, *Boys in the Band*, was, of course, new then. *The Homoerotic Opera*. Thomas Mann, *A Night in Venice*? Is that -- I think it was called? Went to see that. And so, they went often. But that was the beginning. They were Off-Broadway. Very little mainstream stuff. We did show, incidentally -- one of the first mainstream movies was, damn. Sorry, why can't I think of the name of it? (narrator edited to add: The movie was titled "A Very Natural Thing") We had a meeting and we're meeting at that point at the Unitarian Church in Bethlehem, which is up in Fountain Hill, way up in the hill. Yeah, that was -- went there. They were good friends of ours. And so, it was early when we were looking for a place to meet

and they did, I think, about three or four or five months into the organization. And it was all those years until we left, which would have been -- I think ’83, I think is when the center started that Le-Hi-Ho moved out of there and met at the center --

MF: The Lam--

JB: -- was also there. They have their meetings at the center, as well.

MF: The Lambda Center.

JB: And stopped going to the church.

MF: Okay.

JB: Okay? As far as I know.

MF: Can I ask, before you moved to the Lambda Center, what was it like for Le-Hi-Ho and just to be out in Bethlehem as a city. Like, what was it like at Bethlehem Steel --

JB: I didn’t have --

MF: -- to be out?

J**B:** -- any problem with it. I wasn't extraordinarily social. I mean, I kept with some gay people. Remember, at that time, you had -- Friday night was your gay -- okay, Friday, Saturdays was your gay time. And so, that was, it was kind of what you did, okay? You'd live the much more limited life Monday through Friday. Weekends, then you went somewhere to be gay, maybe in town, maybe elsewhere. I went to a lot of gay bars elsewhere just to see what they were. And because (inaudible) and I wanted to know about them and I put that in the newsletters, too. It was a lot of that sort of thing -- gay guides were very important. Also, talking about the electoral development, I think that we don't realize how much *Sexology* magazine had to do with publishing the early arguments about gays -- were done in that particular method -- medium before they were done elsewhere and before there were more academic studies by Money and Hooker and so on and Ford and Beach, before those books came out, they were largely arguing in *Sexology* over the fact that homosexuals -- how they were acceptable and a natural part of sexuality.

MF: And that's a magazine?

JB: That would be important. Sorry?

MF: Was that a magazine or you just --

JB: Yes.

MF: -- mean the discipline?

JB: Short magazine. Small one.

MF: Oh, really?

JB: It was almost a 'zine size. And it was pretty informal. It certainly was not a rigorous journal by any means. *Ladder* was the first lesbian journal, *ONE,* for -- a publication called *ONE,* which was probably the first serious journal of any sort. *Christopher Street* came out, ultimately. That was a literary magazine, the first one. The New York -- Craig Rodwell opened Oscar Wilde Bookshop in the Village. I went to see that. That was interesting. I went, that was right after Stonewall. And Stonewall was very exciting for me. I knew about what had happened and within a month or so, I

think I'd gotten to -- I think Craig opened this bookstore and I went to the bookstore. I'm now thirty years old and the kids in there -- and this is when kids -- if you were over thirty, you were not to be trusted anymore. You were over the hill. And so, the kids in there were looking at me very peculiarly and really making comments about Mattachine and how ill they were for being against -- not as out, okay, as we are. They aren't as free, they aren't doing this whole youth thing.

And remember, when Stonewall happened, the first thing that happened was you got this wonderful GSG, Gay Liberation Front's organization. Very, very leftist. Very leftist. And, like, remember Harry Hay, founder of the Mattachine was a communist. These guys were leftists of that ilk. Not into communism, particularly, but very leftist in New York, well known. Lots of books, you know (inaudible) sort of book. They were quite exciting people when we met them at that -- yeah, met them in Philadelphia at the ECHO meeting. They were -- exciting group of people. But there were three or four organizations that -- I remember there were -- Columbia University, there was New York City University, there was just every kind of school you could imagine. The state university as opposed to the city university. And

they represented -- they bloomed. Like, Philadelphia had one or several and Gay Liberation Front's were much more oriented to being political in a broad sense. You were supporting the lettuce -- the Chavez and the agriculturists and the leftists all over the world, were -- your concern -- the Chicago Seven, the, you know, the twelve, the elevens or whatever. Their protests -- were the kind of things that you were supposed to be active in. That was not pleasing to a lot of the membership, so that they started GAAs as opposed to that -- Gay Activist Alliance, which said, "We are gay, we're going to pay attention to gay causes and not pay attention to these other causes or not support them."

And that was a big thing at that ECHO meeting. There was a huge fight. Frank Cannaday was the president of the organization, president of that particular meeting at that time. And he presided over the meeting and when there was this old guard and the new guard, the old guard and the new people, these new radicals coming in. It was a kind of battle, a very big battle about getting seated in the first place and then the battle was over what to do about the Day of Remembrance. You remember the Day of Remembrance -- was held at the Liberty -- the Statue of Liberty on the Fourth

of July and that was Frank Cannaday's, that was his -- his the deal. The first organization (inaudible) in '64 and marched in Washington with the picket line. Famous picture of Barbara Gittings -- is very prominent in that set and -- but he was in charge of that particular meeting and had presided over this battle royale. And again, the issue that they were fighting about was, well, among other things -- I remember that there was somebody in that organization that was talking about Barbara Gittings as a baby killer, you know? So, at that time, they were not as unified on abortion as we got to be, by no means. There was a terrible battle over that and horrible things happened as a result of this terrible argument going on between the baby killers and the right to lifers. And the other thing that happened was the -- coming out, okay? This is when the GFL in New York was -- very important for -- they went over and took a firehouse, took over, literally, just -- and at that time, you could -- walked in and just took over, literally. And they -- an abandoned firehouse. They took it over and it became quite a major organization.

They were doing dances of about five-hundred people and they were really(inaudible) super, super exciting. And so, they really lit up New York, completely, and in a way --

but also, as these GSAs were -- GFLs founded on all kinds of campuses everywhere. Every campus would have a GFL. There was a group in Kutztown, as a matter of fact. A young fellow that came to Le-Hi-Ho, Frederick Reed. And Fred Reed was -- became vice president of Le-Hi-Ho. And he was also president of (inaudible) about five members, I think, in Kutztown University at that time. He was a student. And then, sadly, he went to the University of Pittsburgh as a graduate student and died -- I don't know how he died. I don't know the circumstances. I've always been suspicious because he fell off a tower. And one of the towers in Pittsburgh was famous for having these -- their first dormitories were twin towers, okay? Dormitory towers. And he died -- jumping, you know, falling off of that. And who knows? Fred would have been out, he would have been -- outspoken person. Very forthright. He also went to the first Christopher Street Parade and I met him there and he and I and my lover and a woman went in the first parade together. Very happy circumstance.

Barry (narrator edited to add: Loveland, Chair of the Central PA LGBT History Project in Harrisburg) says that there are pictures of me there. No, I knew that there were.

I was pictured -- the week, next week, I'm pictured in *The Advocate* -- my sign is pictured in *The Advocate*. (narrator edited to add: I was pictured the week after the Stonewall memorial parade I'm pictured in The Advocate -- my Le Hi Ho sign is pictured in The Advocate the first week of July 1970.) I'm sitting there -- but the picture's taken with my back to the camera, so no way -- you can see my bald spot. That's how I can -- recognize my lover and you can recognize Fred Reed, who was standing there with me. Was an amazing time. That's a different story, and inspiring, inspiring, inspiring moment, that first march but -- and so, (inaudible) for years and found out from Ron that he had died (inaudible) -- at the university. (narrator edited to add: I should mention too that Fred Reed too volunteered to serve in New York on the original Parade committee on behalf of Le Hi Ho. I don't know how or if he got to meetings in New York.

I got lost in the ECHO story because I wanted to commemorate that at the ECHO meeting was the place where the Stonewall Marches In June originated as a replacement of the Day of Remembrance, JULY 4th in Philadelphia, Stonewall was in the last week of June,1969.

The weekend Echo meeting ended Saturday in a near riot over the disagreements heretofore mentioned. So on Sunday

morning the New Yorkers (I think it was the students from Columbia made a proposal that there be a Christopher Street Memorial Parade on the last weekend Sunday in June, forget the Day of Remembrance. There would be NO dress code, anybody and everybody could participate, and we would Celebrate more than Protest. That is the true story of Echo and the Stonewall parades. There are a lot more details about how the students plotted the alternative to the day of Remembrance in the hotel on Saturday night, Im pretty sure it was a woman who originated the idea but I was not at the same hotel. That parade in New York was perhaps the most memorable day of my life.)

MF: May I ask -- there's this really interesting way that in the stories that you're telling, Le-Hi-Ho is moving all around the region. Members are going to Philadelphia, you're going to New York City, you're in contact with these major --

JB: I was.

MF: -- organizations, yeah.

JB: So, I was because I wanted to be, okay? And I wrote that. And, you know, I wrote about the Stonewall and the meeting and the conflict that was taking place between the old guard and the new guard, which is the homophile organizations and this new group that wants to be out and political and it wants to be very forward and right in your face, confronting. And I wasn't sure. I really had to take a stand, oh, and my stand was I prefer to be out. That was clear. And Ron did not at that time. I remember I put his name in the first newsletter and he protested. Now, he didn't stay that way. I mean, Ron became much more public over this period of time, of necessity. And his lover certainly did because of us speaking and so on.

But at that time, he was protesting it and that would have been -- that more typically Mattachine -- as I said, Mattachine was supposed to be the leadership was out and everybody else wasn't. The only person ever (inaudible) that was Frank Cannaday and he would insist on it. The stories were funny because Frank always tells it that I was the only person who was out. They said, "We never knew that." It wasn't us. We always thought we were out, we always thought we were doing things under our own name. And Frank said, "No, we all had nicknames." (laughs) Wasn't

true. Was true in Mattachine in New York. The very famous person at Mattachine New York outside of Dick Leisch was the executive director, was a lawyer by the name of -- was great. Austin Wade. That just has marble halls behind it. Austin was, in fact -- and he was -- his name was Arthur Kennedy and he was a professor at Princeton Law. And he was the legal counsel for Mattachine Society but known as Austin Wade and he was more known widely through that.

And I was a great admirer of Austin Wade because he was the only -- he was the most powerful figure anybody knew and there were no lawyers, no doctors, nobody of any name or of any profession out at that point. So, what was her name? Was a Puerto Rican woman who was the secretary and she was as famous as anybody else because she was such a mother to everybody and a wonderful person. I've forgotten her name now, unfortunately. But Austin Wade was one of those people -- was a big figure in my mind. And, as I said, I find out later what his name was and he was a member of the Pennsylvania Council on Sexual Minorities, from New Jersey. But he was an invited member of the organization. Very distinguished man. Now, you ask me, why did I do that?

MF: Yeah.

JB: I just did it and the Le-Hi-Ho, two things happened. There was an organization that started in '75. This is five, this is six years later, in Reading, okay? Came to Le-Hi-Ho and said, "We're starting, need your advice." I went down and stayed with them, literally, for a long time. That organization that we started was called -- at that time, there was movement to start this Pennsylvania Council on Sexual Minorities. (narrator edited to add: long time as an activist in that and other rural organizations, which brings me to "The Rural Gay Caucus" that became the "umbrella" organization of all the rural (those or gay organizations cited outside of Pittsburgh and Philadelphia)gay organizations in Pennsylvania, i.e. We considered ourselves to represent their interests. The Caucus first convened during the time when the Pennsylvania Council on Sexual Minorities.)There was a group that met in Harrisburg, conceiving this idea, making it up with Governor Shapp's approval. Governor Shapp was a wonderful, wonderful leader and a man of -- that's a whole chapter in itself. It's a very interesting story. As a part of that, well, they did a conference in Harrisburg to introduce the idea of the council and to generate with them on the community enthusiasm for it. And it got some people to --

members of the council.

And that happened in ‘75. In ‘74, December ‘74, the Reading group was founded, on Christmas -- New Year’s Day, matter of fact, of ‘75. I think that’s correct. But they came to us and I went down and that’s how I became involved. But through that conference, they started a group called the Caucus -- in order to get more representatives from Philadelphia and Pittsburgh to equalize -- Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and then the rest of the state, okay, so that there were three bodies. Philadelphia has seven, Pittsburgh had five, I think, and we had three. Well, that was not enough for the rest of the state combined. So, we caucused to get more people and call ourselves (inaudible) Gay Caucus. This was interagency organization. So, we then founded -- we met the organization of Gays United of Lancaster, Reading was just beginning. Le-Hi-Ho was a major member and I went and represented Le-Hi-Ho at this new group called the Caucus and it became a separate organization, a state organization, worked for state causes, worked on the state level, wanted to be an interagency kind of thing. So, I was the liaison for that. (narrator edited to add: I was the liaison between LE HI HO and the Caucus organization as well as an elected co-chair

with Mary Nancoarrow of the Rural Caucus.) And Le-Hi-Ho chose not to be involved. I could do the involvement but they were not directly involved. No, they did play a major part later on, a very important part, but they chose not to be active in it (narrator edited to add: in the Caucus), okay, I'm just pointing it out.

MF: Why not?

JB: It's because they were a different organization. They were not politically oriented as such. Now, they didn't ignore it but they weren't about to invest in it, okay? [01:17:00] Like, they wouldn't invest in women. They just wouldn't do it. That wasn't their thing. Was okay. I mean, I got along with them but I didn't feel that it would've been better had they done one of the things that -- Reading was very much oriented, was very open, about half and half. Was half men and half women. Five, six men, five or six women. Every meeting, okay? (narrator edited to add: Reading was a great supporter of the Caucus. There were some thirteen gay "rural" Organizations in Pennsylvania (not all continuously active at the same time) -- Gays United in Lancaster, (GUL). Reading (GCS", Gay Switch Board in Harrisburg, Dignity of Harrisburg, Citizens Concerned for a Better

Community (CCBC) in Allentown, Penn State University, Shippensburg, Indiana University in Pennsylvania, Homophiles of Williamsport (HOW), Scranton to name some I remember off the top of my head. Caucus membership was strictly individual, no organization appointed or named representatives to the Caucus. The Caucus had co-chairs: one gay male and one woman co-chair in almost everything we did, state wide conferences and lobbying efforts.)The Caucus had co-chairs in everything we did. We have co-chairs of the Caucus got there every meeting, every committee we had, push at everything because we wanted to be equal. Equality was very, very important to us and equality with men and women was very, very important.

And then, again, the ERA was a major issue at that point, so -- Reading was famous that way, Lancaster was very much that way. Very much oriented to having as many women represented -- but female representation they could get and had generated. And most organizations were. Le-Hi-Ho was the exception, had always been the exception. Again, it was an older organization. They had it as a different substantiality. They were okay without -- didn't need to be something different. Very happy with what they were and did a wonderful job, I thought. I mean, they were so important

in terms of the people's lives that were there, okay? And I always say that people come with agenda, okay? They come to your organization with an agenda, something that they need. And mostly, it's just to be known (narrator edited to add: recognized as people, important as individuals), just to tell you that I'm gay and be accepted. And that's the importance of the organization.

If you could shine a love on somebody, that's liberation. That is, in fact, liberation. That's what it's all about, is just that little bit of love and they just bloom. They become these wonderful flowers. And it happened to me, it happens every -- to all those people. And, like, an organization -- let's take Homophiles of Williamsport. Three years they exist as two hundred people and six different counties came to that organization. The important thing was that they had a group talk afterwards, okay, that people came to be able to say -- express their concerns, have their questions, get their information, got their agenda taken care of. That was the important part of the group and outside of that, it probably didn't make a -- it did. It made some wonderful -- some contributions. And it tried to be political but it wasn't so much -- its real satisfaction, it was the same as Le-Hi-Ho. It was a

homophile organization. It was founded as homophile organization they said. So, social education was what they thought they thought they were doing but they did much more than that. But there were younger members much more oriented to being out and active in a way that Le-Hi-Ho just wasn't. You could belong -- a very satisfactory life with Le-Hi-Ho, be an active member in Le-Hi-Ho.

There were wonderful people involved with that, a whole board full of people and that -- oh, they, just -- Bob Steelman, Helmuth Baerwald, oh, obviously Ron and our first president was Al Ravert. Second was -- oh, the person from Wilkes-Barre. Came to the meeting, said -- again, Le-Hi-Ho had that kind of draw, okay? People would come from distance to be there because it was a working organization. Staying in existence gives you a good reputation, just -- people know when you're going to meet and you're going to meet next week or next month, too. Made a big difference. And so, a lot of people came from elsewhere to be at Le-Hi-Ho. Was true everywhere. All those organizations, -- homophile, as I said, there's homophile -- in that little group (inaudible) and knew that they had two-hundred members and they had the membership list. I don't have the membership list. That wasn't my thing. That was Ron's

thing. He was the one who was keeping track of all the members and who was involved and who wasn't and where they were from. Garth Watkins was the second president.

MF: Well, we're about at an hour-and-a-half and that's when we like to stop. And so, maybe, can I ask one more question and then we'll --

JB: Sure.

MF: So, I just want to ask that -- you know, for you, personally, what kind of impact do you think Le-Hi-Ho had on Bethlehem, on the Lehigh Valley, and just on the region, more broadly?

JB: Okay, ask me again.

MF: What kind of impact did Le-Hi-Ho have on Bethlehem, on the Lehigh Valley?

JB: Okay, I --

MF: What's its legacy?

JB: -- said that the educational thing was very important. Okay, you're reaching out to high school students, to college students, giving them good information on a regular basis. They were invited back to class after they started, then they would be invited back again the next year. That was a very, very important function. They were out to the degree that they advertised constantly in the newspaper. They (narrator edited to add: Le-Hi-Ho)were open to everybody that would come (narrator edited to add: but you did have to be over eighteen, the only restriction I remember.) There was one time -- there was a meeting in which they -- a person appeared with a fifteen-year-old. Scared the hell out of that meeting. You got very, really scared men who were suddenly sitting with a fifteen-year-old person, realizing that this guy can get us all in big, big, big doo-doo. The next meeting, they voted out, they voted the person who brought him out. You cannot be a member anymore and we will not support NAMBLA, okay? Not support the North American Boy Association , which is -- I supported -- I thought that that is dangerous to all of us. And, as an activist, I always limited myself to not being in the presence of young men, okay?

Younger men that I knew weren't of any -- of a certain age

or even they looked like they were a certain age because I was not going to risk what I would've risked. And my reputation was everybody's reputation. I was the leader. I would have been known -- if I had been arrested, it would have been bad news and I didn't want that. So, that -- one thing that happened, that they -- was another organization -- they were just conservative. There was an underground newspaper at that time. They would not support the underground newspaper but [inaudible] the underground newspaper supported them quite openly in their publication. They wouldn't support them. Now, Dixie White spoke among other people. I was program chair for a while and so I invited a lot of people that I wanted them (narrator edited to add: Le-Hi-Ho members)to know, to make this networking business. So, she knew what else is around and I invited a lot of women and, again, tried to make them more comfortable. And this organization did not work for me, okay? I was gone in '83, when I went, and by then, there'd only been one other woman who had ever really showed any interest and she was a radical and secretly not very interested in them.

She was -- always thought they were not -- she was far more radical than that -- member of the women's commission, as

well as the lesbian -- Governor's Council on Sexual Minorities. Professor out of Shippensburg. And Mary Anne Caroll is -- was my co-chair in the Caucus. We were Caucus co-chairs together and she became president of NOW, later on, after the ERA had -- after '83. I think '84 is when she became president. And the ERA, closest possibility in '83, as I recall. They had to have it ratified by then and there was no chance. I forget -- well, I lost my train of thought. Okay, but then, you asked was it very -- powerfully important to the Lehigh Valley because it was that represent-- it was that presence and really did a lot of things in support of that.

MF: I want to say, on behalf of Carol and myself, we have been so delighted to talk with you today. Thank you so much!

JB: My pleasure.

MF: And maybe you'll give us -- opportunity to talk with you again sometime in the future.

JB: I'll tell you what: there's another organization that founded in '87. We founded in Allentown with the Allentown -- so, we call ourselves Citizens Concerned for Better

Community. The reason we did that, there was -- it was a professor at Lehigh, professor at Muhlenberg, Frank -- I'll think of his name after awhile. It's not important or anything but -- who, as soon as we announced that we were going to try for gay rights in Allentown -- organizing organization called Citizens -- COD, Citizens for Decency, something like that. COD, I don't remember how that worked. And he and I and -- so, I called, I wanted us to be the matching -- we found that since we knew he was -- founded -- and we founded right away. Is that right? I think we founded right away, when -- as soon as we knew about him. And then, we, he and I, were kind of competing. Got in the newsletter a lot and there was probably Valley Monthly Magazine published (inaudible) on us. That was a different time, as well. And, again, it's Lehigh Valley. And it was unsuccessful. Ultimately, what happened with that, we went for two years. We became -- found the organization, ultimately we started the Gay Line, and I had a lot to do with that. And mostly happened -- is in my apartment, as a matter of fact. I was the -- people came to my apartment and answered the -- and worked the telephone there. Started in '80. (narrator edited to add: We had a hell of a good time : demonstrated at City Hall, spoke to City Council and the Human Relations Commission, got in the newspapers a

lot, and [01:28:00] into a then local interest magazine called magazine called the Valley Monthly. Frank appeared in that issue of the magazine in front of wall of books, exactly as I knew he would. I donned a dark hoodie and did my bearded best to look like a monk or poet, Thomas Merton perhaps. And it was unsuccessful. Ultimately, what happened with COD I don't now, but CCBC lasted to for two years meeting with permission at Confront. With its last gasp, CCBC ended with the founding of Gay Line, an information and referral service and suicide prevention hotline that began on New Year's Eve 1980, and ran for about two years. I had a lot to do with that. Gay line co volunteers came to a spare room in my apartment that could be reached by the fire escape, so Gay Line line remained separate, as a matter of fact.)

MF: Okay.

JB: And that was '78 to '80. So, we stayed open till then, to found Le-Hi-Ho -- or to found Gay Line. And there were events involved. A good time. We had a lot of fun playing with that whole idea. And we knew we weren't going to be successful. And that was pretty much against -- and it was unfair because they simply claimed that homosexuality was

on the books, was still illegal, and therefore you couldn't have rights and they couldn't go further than the state permitted, which the state organization -- didn't recognize gay rights. So, they wouldn't either.

(narrator edited to add: And there were other events involved with CCBC, the first gay rights march in Allentown(twenty-one people marched down Hamilton street, and a rally followed in what is now Joe Dadonna Park. We had a lot of fun [01:29:00] playing with that whole idea. And we knew we weren't going to be successful. And that was pretty much against us -- and it was unfair because the City Solicitor claimed that homosexual acts were still illegal in Pennsylvania, therefore you couldn't have rights protecting illegal acts AND the city couldn't go further in their human rights ordinance than the state permitted -- the state Human Relations Commission act did not recognize gay rights, so Allentown would not either. But in reality the state collected stories of true stories of anti-LGBT discrimination against the day a state ordinance might include LGBT protections in housing, employment, and public services. The last sentence was because of the Pennsylvania Governor's Council on Sexual Minorities was active well in to the eighties when it began the very

important work of informing state government about the AIDS CRISIS that began in nineteen eighty one and two. Our women returned to join the gay movement in the Aids Crisis, literally saving our asses and our lives while gay men fought for their lives and government ignored us. Our women are still with us, partners and equals in every way. We need the Equal Rights Amendment for all men and women, and Black Lives Matter. These causes too are gay liberation.

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