

*Out/Closeted in the Quadrangles:
A History of LGBTQ Life at the University of Chicago*

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #83

EDELMAN, MURRAY (1943-) PhD '73

At U of C: 1966-1973

Interviewed: 2014 (1 session)

Interviewer: Kris Rosentel

Transcript by: Lauren Stokes

Length: 1 hour 37 minutes 6 seconds

Interview (April 21, 2014) over the telephone

[00:00:00]

[00:00:00 to 00:10:35: Kris and Murray go over the consent form and demographic information.]

KR: So the question we like to start with is how did you end up at the University of Chicago?

ME: OK. So these are open-ended, you don't care how long they go?

KR: Yeah, these are totally open-ended. [ME: OK.] This part's just going to be more of a conversation.

ME: Well, I was in graduate school in mathematical statistics at the University of North Carolina in 1965 and 66, and it was very clear to me that it was not my field. And I had just come out earlier that year, when I was working at the Census Bureau. I had come out in Washington, and so I had a lot of trouble with Chapel Hill because it was a small town, it was 1965, and also I was in the wrong field. They offered me a renewal of my fellowship and I had to let them know by I think April 15th or something, some day in April, and I went into the chair's office and I said that I wasn't going to renew it, and I spoke to the second person in charge and he said "How come?" and I said "Well, it's absolutely clear I don't want to be here," and he said "Well, what are you going to do?" and I said "I don't know." So he scheduled an appointment with the head of the department, and the head of the department, when we talked I told him the same thing and he said, "Well, what interests you?" and I said "Well, I'm a lot more interested in social sciences and psychology," and he said "What's your home?" and I said "Well, my family's in Chicago," and so he said "Well, you know, there's a guy in the University of Chicago, Darrell Bock, who used to teach down here in education," and he probably knows that—Chapel Hill at the time was like the top school in statistics—and he said that "Darrell Bock was certainly aware of the quality of the people here, and I kind of

remember him saying he had an opening, “so he said “Why don’t you call and give me a couple of days and then give him a call, cause I’ll talk to him,” so then I called Darrell Bock and we talked for a while, and he said, well, he was sort of a little evasive, and I go “I passed the deadline,” and he said yes, but he had an opening, and basically he said I could have it if I wanted it. And that’s basically how I got to the University of Chicago, cause he had an opening, and he knew about the field, and he knew about Chapel Hill, and he needed someone with a lot of statistics. And so that led me there. It’s kind of a version of my mother’s “It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.” [Laughs] So it was kind of an interesting way to get to the University, but it worked.

So I started I was in Human Development, and I found, it was an amazing experience for me. I went to the library and I looked up the catalogue for Chicago, and I read about Human Development, and it was exactly what I wanted. It was just astounding to me. It was so perfect for exactly what I wanted. I was really interested in clinical and it had that option and it had all kinds of stuff that I wanted to study. So it was, it was like a miracle. Cause when I was in Chapel Hill it was like the end of the world, I mean I was, I was in this field that I just, you know, I was getting by, I was managing, but it was like, it was really hard, it was all theoretical statistics that were really hard and I was with people that were much sharper than I was in that. I just didn’t like it at all. So anyway, that’s how I got there.

[15:10]

KR: So you mentioned that you came out at Chapel Hill. So can you talk about that and that experience?

ME: No, I didn’t come out in Chapel Hill. I came out in DC. Well, I can tell you some experiences. I mean, I’ve talked about this some in different contexts, at the American Association of Public Opinion Research, at Radical Faerie gatherings, and at other conferences I’ll tell you a couple stories.

When I was in DC I discovered the dirty bookstore, and one in particular around, I think it was like 18th and Columbia, and it was like a big newspaper stand and they had dirty books in the back. I discovered that I was looking at the men a lot more, and then I slowly gravitated towards the Grecian Guild magazines of models. I don’t know if you’ve ever seen them, but it would be a great education for you to actually see some of those things in the 60s. They had boys with jockstraps on posing, you know, they were kind of the pretense of the male nude or the male body, and that was it, there was nothing sexual at all other than that they—no, I don’t think they even touched each other—but, that was still quite a bit in those days. And I discovered there was a guide to bars advertised in one of the magazines. And also at the dirty bookstore I read something by psychoanalyst Irving Bieber, who analyzed like a hundred psychoanalysis patients from their reports from their therapists, and he did a statistical study which basically showed that homosexuals had over-indulgent mothers and absent fathers. Basically it demonstrated psychoanalytic theory. He never really talked about the fact that he interviewed psychoanalysts about their patients, you know, so of course his results confirmed

psychoanalytic theory. But that was the book. You know, it was something to read about, there wasn't much written at the time.

The other, another thing I read was the Kinsey Study, and that was amazing to me, because, I worked at the Census Bureau, that's where I learned survey work. I read about this Kinsey study, and I knew that their methodology was really bad, I remember going to the library and reading about it more, and I knew the methodology was bad, but I mean, they had samples of hundreds of homosexuals, and that was pretty amazing that there were that many, you know, cause I had no idea. I had no idea at all. And so that really impacted me a lot.

At some point I decided to explore more and thought about that guide to the bars, which I suspected were gay. I was really scared about having the guide mailed to my home because I had straight roommates, and then I discovered that the book was published in DC, so I actually went to the office and bought the guide, and found a bar. And that's kind of how I discovered gay life and gay men.

This is a little story I tell, it really gives you a sense of the time and what it was like. So I think I probably, I eventually went home with someone, I went to two or three bars and I eventually went home with someone, and I think I came, like really quick, before I got my clothes off, and left because I was kind of embarrassed and everything. That was like my first time, I mean, we talked about, I was thinking of moving into an apartment like his, that was the pretext, cause this was the 60s and it was a whole other world. So I went to the same bar and I discovered that there were after-hour parties, because in Washington at that time they had blue laws and they closed, the bars closed at midnight, so we went to, there were parties you went to, they would charge for the party... so I went to one, and that was pretty amazing, I went in and there were a lot of gay men and they were dancing and I remember, and I saw some women, and I saw men dancing, and I remember very vividly that I saw two guys dancing that I was attracted to both of them, and they seemed really into each other, and that was like the first time I'd ever seen men dancing or being affectionate, really, with each other. And I know I got incredibly turned on, and it was like I could just, I mean, as I talk about it, I could feel the juices in my body just kind of like, you know, like this major high experience, where I could see, "Oh, that's what that thing's about." Here I'd been dancing with women and didn't get any kind of rush or anything, and I could just feel it from them, and it was like, that was what dancing was like, that's what affection looks like... a lot of synapses just didn't come together until then. They came together at that point.

As I was kind of absorbing all that, there was some very attractive guy who got up on the stairs and said "I want your attention," and we all looked at him, and then he said "You're all under arrest." And suddenly there were these plain-clothes attractive guys at all the exits, and they proceeded to move us all into a paddy wagon. So that was pretty freaky for me. I saw some women and I thought of going up to them and saying I was with them, and I was just too scared to say anything. Later I realized they were drag queens, but at the time I had never seen a drag queen, so... anyway, so I went into the paddy wagon and they had three or four wagons, you know, I had no idea, and I was one

very scared boy, I mean, I had just, what was I, 20? 19? This was like February of 65, or March, it might have been March, yeah, it was probably March or April 65, maybe March, so I was like 21 and a half, I was in my first year of actual work for the government. I had signed something then at the time saying that I wasn't homosexual because the government asked those questions as a condition of working for the government, so I had signed something saying I wasn't homosexual, which was true, I guess, at the time I wasn't so to speak, but I had signed that and here I was in the paddy wagon going to jail, and it was pretty scary.

And during that time I, you know, I didn't have any connection with any of the people, I remember just kind of being there alone and kind of shivering a little bit, and I started humming that song "We Shall Overcome" kind of went through my mind, and I sort of felt that connection with the civil rights issues and I started humming it and then singing it very softly and then everybody in the paddy wagon sang it. That was pretty cool, and that was a little bit of comfort, although, you know, I mean it wasn't a lot. Certainly comfort. And also I think it shows the connection, that I felt that connection pretty clearly right then, and that I think informed a lot of my political work. Anyway, so then we were booked, and they ended up, they just booked us for disorderly conduct, they didn't do anything about the fact there was a party that was gay or any of that stuff. And we had to pay like twenty-five dollars and that was it. So I paid it, and there was one guy who I helped, I think he needed a little money and I helped him there, I found him really attractive of course, and I ended up going home with him, and I took him home, and then I remember seeing him naked for the first time, seeing him naked, you know, we spent the night, and that was the first time I had been with a naked man, and it was quite a something. And so I went through quite a major thing in that one—less than twenty-four—about twelve hours. I went through a pretty major shift. So that was my coming out story, those experiences, and then after that it was more experiences and more kind of fitting things together.

A lot of it was making connections, like "Oh! So I was spending this time fantasizing about boys at school, oh, I was having these wet dreams, oh, I was having this discharge that I didn't understand, cause I didn't really understand my sexuality. It wasn't, in the 60s, the early 60s; it was not something you talked about very much. It's so different today. But I had no sense, it was like all of a sudden all these kinds of things were coming together and I just kind of developed this sense in myself that I had been lied to my whole life and that—yeah, that I had been lied to and just wasn't gonna take what people told me at face value anymore. That was a basic decision I made during that period.

And it took a while to figure it all out, you know, it's like you get little memories and glimpses and then later on you get other glimpses, you know, it's kind of like when someone dies—I don't know if you've experienced that yet, but when someone close dies it's like it takes a long time to adjust to them being gone because you're still in the same habits, and that's what it was for me, just the adjustment, it was like, it was really quite something, and then trying to find someone and to experience intimacy with a man was really, I mean, it's not easy to begin with, but it was really hard in those days because

people were so closed and so afraid. The main outlets were bars and tearooms and the parks, you know, that was it that was how you met other gay men. So anyway, that's my coming out story.

[28:00]

KR: So then when you got to Chicago, what did you get involved with in the city and at the University?

ME: Well, I was really turned on to Human Development, I was really turned on to it, and I worked really hard cause I didn't have a lot of the skills you need, like in terms of writing, you know, like answering open-ended questions and writing papers, I just, I was not very good at that. I was very good at math and logic and that kind of stuff, so I had to work really hard that way. Just reading and really being able to work with theories and all that kind of stuff was difficult. But I liked it, I liked it a lot.

I had a teacher, Marlene Dixon, who was a radical sociologist, I took something else from her cause I liked her, and I learned a lot of stuff that really helped me in my life, a lot of Marx, Durkheim, and then George Herbert Mead, I don't, did you ever study him? I don't think... [KR: Yeah.] Oh, you know Mead? George Herbert Mead? [KR: Yeah, I read something recently.] That's great! Well, he affected me a lot, cause his theory really fit what I was going through, cause he talked a lot about how, you know, our brains have, we get all this information, but it's really through language that we understand, and language that gives us some understanding of what we're experiencing, and language controls a lot of what we experience, so there are a lot of things we don't have words for but then they're not really there, or they're experienced in a very different kind of way, and that really described a lot about sexuality for me, because in my first twenty years, I was having all these experiences, but they weren't coming together, and I wasn't all that conscious of them, because I didn't have words for them, they didn't fit into my sense of who I was or anything else, but looking back I could see where I had a lot of, they were very strong experiences, you know, like being in the locker room looking at boys and all kinds of things like that. Having fantasies around it, I just, all these things happened, but I just didn't, I didn't remember them that well until later, and they didn't make sense until later. So anyway, that meant a lot that was important for me.

During the time I, she was fired by the department of sociology, we thought cause she was, cause of her politics, they claimed she wasn't a good scholar, and there was a big sit-in on campus around it, which I was involved with peripherally, I didn't go to it, but I knew a lot of the people and there was a really active debate in my department because there were some really brilliant, or really intelligent members of the student body that were really into the sit-in and were part of it. So that whole discussion radicalized me a lot, it really helped, I mean, I already had this distrust around, just from having come out... I had a lot of better understanding of it from Mead and then from Marx, cause she put Marx and Mead together. Mead was all about the self and all about how we understand ourselves, and Marx was all about consciousness and about how society controls your consciousness and stuff like that, how we fit into the system and etcetera,

etcetera, so it all kind of worked. I didn't feel a pull to the sit-in because, I think partly because I was gay, I didn't feel enough of me was there, cause I was still in the closet, cause that's the way you were, I mean, there wasn't an option, I mean, that's the way you were, and so anyway, so that's a little bit of how I got radicalized, so to speak.

The other thing at the University, I gave a talk actually [coughs] Excuse me, I'll be back in a minute...

[32:50 to 34:05: pause in the conversation]

ME: So, I was saying, I gave a talk, I showed a picture of Wieboldt Hall and what I pointed out was that was the gay community center in the 60s when I was at Chicago. Basically there's a bathroom in the basement of Wieboldt Hall, and that was where gay men met each other and it was, you know, there was a downstairs basement, it was in the basement, there was a bathroom and so there were two or three people down there, sometimes someone would wait upstairs and kind of look around, and that's where you, we had sex. It's not like it was much of a community, I mean, I did meet one person there, and it's not like we became friends, but we went to his place and then I got to meet his mother and stuff like that.

But that was one of the main social outlets. And the other was, there was a couple Howard and Roger, and they had a party every few months, and I got invited to that eventually, and that was nice, and that was sort of an opportunity to meet other gays in the area.

So one of the things I did was I had, I guess partly with that underlying thing about being told lies, and like I said, that was something I really believed prior to coming to Chicago, and I think of the... I'm not sure exactly when it was, it might have been in the summer of 66 before I went to Chicago, or it might have been the following summer, I think it was then, I got some friends from DC together and we went and played volleyball and had a picnic together, and the idea was just to create something outside of a bar or a party where gay men could do something. And that was pretty much unheard of at the time, and you know, I got a friend who was behind the idea, and maybe there were twenty of us, and people were a little uptight about it, you know, we said we were bachelors and stuff like that. And it was pretty neat to be doing stuff that wasn't the usual, you know, to be outside and to just play. And everyone was very careful about touching and stuff like that, but there was that part of me that wanted something more.

And at the University, I believe it was, this is something if you ever want to verify you can probably do, I don't know exactly, but in I think it was 67, it might have been 68, I put an ad in the Maroon and I said something about gay men meeting each other in Pierce Coffee shop and I gave a date, and my fantasy was that I would give a date and time and people could kind of find each other with our eyes and stuff like that. It was just a way to meet in some other way. I think I said like this Tuesday or something like that, and then they didn't run the ad. Then, like about two months later they ran the ad, and I didn't even know they had run it, cause I had stopped looking for it. And then after that there

was an ad being run by someone wanting to meet the guy that put the ad in, and it turned out that was David Goldman [Interview #1], so I eventually met him, and he had met two or three other people from his ad, so we met once or twice, and that was kind of neat but we didn't, we never really went any farther with it, but you know, it was like a start. And so that's kind of how things started there.

Then in about, I think it was like September or October of 1969 I went to Howard and Roger's party and I met Henry Wiemhoff there, and Henry, I had met Henry once before, you know, just socially we'd met, and he said that he wanted to show me something, he said he had something that he thought I'd be really interested in, and it was that he told me about the Village Voice and about the Stonewall in New York, and he said "I knew you tried something once before, and so I thought you might be interested in doing something with me," it turned out he was only a block away from me, so later sometime that week I visited him and he showed me all the stuff he was collecting, including about Stonewall, I read all about that, and then he showed me some women's liberation stuff, and there was a bunch of things, I mean, he was collecting and I was just blown away from it, and so we agreed pretty quick we wanted to do something and we decided we'd put an ad in the Chicago Maroon since that was a pathway that I had opened up, cause it turns out that they had to have some kind of board meetings to decide whether to put the word gay in the ad. [KR: Oh.] Or something like that, but that was the problem, I mean, they had to go through some sort of procedure, that's why the ad took so long, but once they got through it then we could do it, you know. So I think we decided, we planned a meeting a couple of weeks later we ran the ad and it said something like "Tired of the Hassle?" and then something about a meeting to talk about gay organizing or something like that. I don't remember the exact words but that should be available somewhere, and then we had a meeting at his place, the middle of December 1969. I invited David Goldman and he invited a couple of his friends and then two or three people came from the ad, and so there were about eight of us, and that was our first meeting. Then we went home for Christmas and then we started in January again, so. Do you want me to just keep talking, or do you have questions?

KR: Yeah, this is great.

[41:25]

ME: OK. Alright... well, why don't you ask a question. It would be nice to know you're there. [Laughter]

KR: OK, yeah. I'm just interested... were there any specific events in those early years pre-Stonewall that caught your attention on campus or in the city?

ME: Any gay events, you mean gay-related events? [KR: Yeah.] No... I pretty much told you, I mean, it was Howard and Roger's parties. I mean, I went to parties on the North Side, but they were just, you know, cocktail parties where you drink and in some cases had sex. I didn't get arrested in Chicago but my partner at the time, he was arrested in a bathhouse with my ID, but that wasn't a big deal. But a couple of years earlier they had done, the

police had raided a bathhouse and put all the names in the Chicago Tribune. A lot of people's careers and lives were destroyed. So that was in the back of our mind, there was the whole riot at the Chicago convention in 1968, that was in the back of our minds. This wasn't gay related, this was just the effect of Chicago police, you know, that was very clearly there. I mean, there was a lot of repression, you know, that was there when we decided to meet, there was definite fear there, you know, and some of these people at our first meeting we counted going around the block about six times before they came in to make sure there was nothing around. But there was nothing pre-political that I could say, that inspired it, my inspiration came from the sit-in, came from the radical politics of the day, the success of civil rights, these were all, you know, and at that time there was a real healthy questioning of society and there was certainly a lot of support for that kind of questioning. Not like today, you know.

And so we took some real chances, I mean, I look back and I, you know, I'm astounded at what I did. I really risked my career big-time, and it's hard to see that today, but at the time, I mean the thing is that some of the people in the group came out a little earlier, like a week earlier than me or two weeks earlier and for them they were sort of hangers-on in Hyde Park, they weren't even in school, like Henry had done a couple of years in school and then he was kind of hanging on and staying in Hyde Park and there were some people like that. I was the only grad student, and you know, as a grad student you're going to be known in your profession so when I came out, I was pretty much letting people know in my field that I was gay. It didn't necessarily mean that I was gonna rub it in their face, but I would be known as being gay, and that's not... I mean there were people that were talked about, but no one that was openly gay, so I was taking a pretty big chance because it's like, you know when people make hiring decisions, there's all kinds of factors that go into that, so even though there might not be a lot of hostility, there certainly could have been any amount that would limit my hiring possibility. And then being political, and outwardly political, all these things were like major things that could easily have affected my career, let alone other issues of being out in Chicago and what could happen from that. And then also my parents lived about a mile and a half away, so I had a lot of different things I was juggling at the time, but it just felt really right. I look back, you know, I made some really big moves, and part of it might have been that part of me that saw social change happening really quickly and another part was just really believing in it and believing that it was who I was and that it was society's problem and fault, you know, and that I had to do my part.

You know, it's hard to go back but it's the kind of thing that you do when you're more your age than when you're my age, you know, my age you look at "Well, I've gone this far, and if I screw up I don't have a lot of recovery chances," whereas there, yeah, if I make a mistake, I'm young, you know, whatever, and you don't know better, I think. [Laughter] I don't know, there's something really great about that... but anyway, it was a lot of risk, really big risk. Really big risk. That people today don't realize, I mean, for everybody coming out is a big issue, or pretty much everybody, although less so, of course, but you know, it's a big issue in terms of your friends, will they accept you, and all that. We were taking that chance but then a whole other level of it, like what is gonna

happen, you know, what if there isn't a movement, what if no one else follows us, what if we're just left out alone like this... but we did, so we did it, you know?

[47:50]

KR: So what did Gay Lib first do in the very early... [ME: I didn't understand the question?] What did Gay Lib do in the very early years?

ME: Gay Lib? It's interesting you're using that phrase, cause we used that, but in other cities it was called GLF, but we called it Gay Lib. [KR: Yeah, I've interviewed some other people.] Yeah, you're right. So what did we do?

KR: Yeah, like what did you first start to do in organizing and finding people, in sort of the very early stages.

ME: One of the earliest things was, there was a picketing of Boys in the Band. I know Henry felt really strongly about that and we handed out leaflets down there. I don't know if I, I may have been at that, I don't remember. There was a demonstration on April 15, 1970 that this woman, Margaret Olin, contacted me last month, when she actually contacted me I don't know, but I met her last month, and she had a whole bunch of pictures from that demonstration, and I would recommend you talk to her, or somebody talk to her.

KR: What's her name? Let me check...

ME: Margaret Olin, O-L-I-N. I can send you her e-mail if you want it.

KR: OK, that would be great, yeah.

ME: She had amazing pictures, and it was quite a bounty for me, cause I didn't remember the demonstration. I thought she was referring to something else. Then I remembered it, and then as I started really looking carefully at the pictures I saw someone who looked like me, and it had my glasses and everything else, and then I realized it was me, and it was not only me, but I was speaking at it, with a megaphone. [Laughter] And that was really weird. It was weird to have not remembered it, but so that was one of the early things, that was in April. The major event on campus was the dance in Pierce Tower, which you've probably heard about before. [KR: Yeah.]

I think the main thing we did is that we existed. I remember, like Wednesday night was drop-in night at Henry's, and people would be dropping in from all over the city and just talking to us, it was really amazing. That was one of those magical periods in my life in that I really kind of understood what charisma was about, cause it was like just by the way Henry and I and some of us had it together, it was resonating with people. They would come, and people would come one or two or three times, and they would be making changes in their life, they would be coming out, they would just think of themselves really differently. I mean, we really stood against all the beliefs that everybody had been told, you know? And just the fact that there were some of us that

were alive and we were having different... we told people about friends that we told, and the way they reacted, and a lot of things like that, and all that kind of really changed a lot of people. At that point I got really interested in holding these consciousness raising groups, and I did some work with that. That was a women's liberation idea but it really fit very well with what we were doing. These would be small, we would call them support groups, getting gay people just to be out, and experiencing a different way of being with each other. And I think that's a lot of the stuff we did. I'm trying to remember the order of things...

So what had happened is that our meetings kept growing, so by February and March they were getting pretty big, and there were people that initially came from Northwestern, Bill Dry, Duncan Early, and they started a group at Northwestern fairly soon after that. Some people started a group at the Circle campus. There were some people who started something at Wisconsin. We were like the feeder group, we were like the first in the Midwest, and so people came with us and then they just took it to other places. So that's what we did, and then the group got bigger and bigger and went to, and then a North Side group formed, so Henry and I started going there more and our U of C group did less for a while..

But then there was, I think it was May of that year, there was some whole political thing going on with the University, and the Panthers, and I don't remember exactly the details, the students had decreed Ida Noyes Hall to be Fred Hampton Hall or something like that, and we had a dance there, a Gay Liberation dance, and a bunch of us, including myself, went in drag, and that was quite an experience. [Laughs] I saw some of my fellow graduate students there and that was kind of weird.

So that grew, and then I helped on the first gay pride in 1970. We marched around Bughouse Square and there were like 150 people there. So are you focused mainly on the University, or do you want, how much, where do you want to go, cause I, you know, I'm just kind of skimming.

KR: I mean, mostly on the University stuff, but I'll ask a little bit later about after you left the University and other things as well to get an idea of how this kind of fits into your life.

ME: Alright. You can also read up, I mean, I've got a bio on the Internet in the Gay Lib Hall of Fame and you should read that [KR: OK], you know about that, don't you, the Hall of Fame? [KR: Mm-hmm.] Yeah, just look up my name there. There might be stuff on Gay Lib, I don't know, but there's quite a lot. Alright. So what else do you want to know?

[56:00]

KR: So what kind of pushback did you get from the University at any points or from the city, or...

ME: Well, one of the pushbacks was we... well, I remember that Skip Landt was the person in charge of doing groups, and one of the pushbacks was that they took away our ability to have a dance on campus, and that was after the Woodward Hall Dance where there were I think around twelve hundred people, and they claimed that there were a lot of non-University people, lot of people not from the neighborhood, and so they said that we couldn't have any more dances. So that was pushback, and then when I described the thing at Ida Noyes, part of what made that more revolutionary was that it was a Gay Liberation Dance and we weren't allowed to have dances. So that was another aspect of it. I don't know if we were registered on campus, but I think we were. I know we applied for that, I think we did have that. But that was the main pushback, was not being able to have dances.

KR: What about from other students or anything like that, any harassment?

ME: Well, you know, it depends what you mean by harassment. Let me, I'll tell you a story. When did it happen? Let's see, this would be like June '71, maybe May '71, this was— did you interview Kevin Burke, or did someone? [Interview #20] Someone must have by now. [KR: I think so, yeah. I didn't, but.] OK. Hold on one second. Well anyway, he came to a Gay Liberation meeting in November '70, '71... wait a minute, this is hard, cause it's hard to keep dates straight, yeah, so it would be November 1970, and we became lovers actually for quite a few years, but I remember, you know, like in May of 1971, we were on the quadrangle near University and we were like, we just went there to study together, it was one of those really nice spring days in Chicago which there were not very many, but it was a beautiful day, and we were just kind of reading together, and then we kind of laid down next to each other, and you know, had our arms around each other and stuff like that, and we kind of dozed off, and I heard some sounds, and it kind of woke me up, and I just kind of looked around a little bit and I saw feet nearby, a few pairs of feet and I kind of looked up a little more and I saw there were a bunch of people around and I woke Kevin up and we just sort of stood up and we just sat up and looked, and there were like about twelve students or fourteen students in a circle looking at us, and we just looked back, you know, kind of like "And what are you looking at?" And they kind of looked away and left, and they just kind of slowly left. And that to me kind of really symbolizes kind of what we were getting. I mean, it was like we, up until then, Kevin and I, when we'd walk on the street, we would, we might hold hands, and we were always doing it more as a political act than anything else. And then at that time when we were in the quad it was this beautiful day and here we were feeling stuff emotionally and we kind of let our guards down and we just had this really neat moment, and lo and behold there were all these people looking at us. Like we were weirdos.

So that was kind of harassment in that we were, the University generally was pretty liberal,; no one beat us up or anything like that, that I know of, but that was always there, that kind of harassment was always there, that it was harassment of not acknowledging us, and looking at us kind of funny. So that's to answer your question. The other thing is when you look at the pictures from Margaret, you'll see, this was a demonstration downtown in Grant Park, and you can look at the faces of people, I mean, they're just

stunned looking at us. [Laughter] They're just like really stunned, this was April 1970, it gives you the sense of what it was like.

[01:02:05]

KR: So are there any other like, demonstrations or things that you remember that were particularly significant? I know you covered a lot of stuff. [ME: Any demonstrations?] Yeah, or like major...

ME: Oh yeah, there's a lot. What else? There was 1971, this was January 71, this was written up in the Chicago Maroon, I was, and it was also, well, I'll tell you the whole thing I guess. I was, I went downtown with some of the guys, and by this time the North Side group, they became Chicago Gay Liberation and then they split into Chicago Gay Liberation and Chicago Gay Alliance, and the more conservative members were going to this taping of the Howard Miller Show, because Dr. David Reuben was giving the, was the guest. I had read his book, I had seen his book, have you ever seen it? It's called "Everything You Wanted to Know about Sex but were Afraid to Ask." [KR: I think so, yeah. I think I've heard of it at least.] OK, well, there was some really awful stuff about homosexuality in it, and for me that was really inflaming because it reminded me of what I looked at in the 60s when I came out, and this was stuff that was pretty popular, and he had gotten a lot of coverage with it and it was all really awful, really bad stuff.

So he's being interviewed, so they had gotten the word around and a bunch of us went down to ask him questions, and it was a taping, so we went down, and you know, our goal was to confront him somewhat, you know. So they sat us down for the taping and they said "Well, we're not going to take any questions about homosexuality," and we said "Why," and they said "Well, because this section has gotten out of hand, it's only a small portion of the book and we don't want to cover it, and we'll just take it out of the taping," so that was kind of where we were at. So we sat through of it, some of it, and there were breaks in between the taped sections, so at one point we got together and I said "You know, this is really silly, there's not a lot of point, why don't we at least go up to the stage and just talk to him and make him talk to us, I mean, even if they don't show it at least he knows we're there. And then we'll leave!" And so people said, "OK, let's do that." So we, on my cue we all stood up and we were going to go towards the stage. However, I was the only—I stood up, and one other person stood up, and the ushers, or whatever they were, started going after me. So I started, I ran around, I ran around the studio, and they chased me around the studio, and I was shouting things, and then they grabbed me and they threw me out of the studio, and that was that, and then I was waiting for the other people to come out, to leave to protest, and then they didn't! They waited until the whole thing was over, and then I talked to them and I said "Well, why didn't you come out," and they said, "Well, we thought it was a bad idea," and I said "Well, why didn't you tell me that when I suggested it?" And they said, "Well, we were kind of afraid to," didn't want to appear weak, and stuff. So that was that, and they thought it was a really dumb thing I did, and I was lucky not to be arrested and all that.

So I go home, and at this time, this was the next, the following year, so Henry and I were living together cause we had decided after, in the summer of 1970 he was living in one spot, I was—well, I'll tell you all this later—anyway, so I went home to Henry, and Henry said he was very excited for me, you know, said "This is great that you did it," and he picked up my spirits and said "Why don't you call Jon and Abra tomorrow," they were left-leaning gossip columnists, and "You know, let people know that something happened." So I did that, I got up the next morning around ten or something and called them and I talked to someone there, and this person said, "Well, did you see the newspaper yet?" This was the Chicago Daily News, and this was in the, in the early 70s we had four newspapers, four daily newspapers, and the Daily News was an evening newspaper. And the person said "You're on the front page." And so I got it, and there I was on the front page, and what had happened is, Howard Miller, who was a smart person with publicity, made this into a whole big thing how this gay activist tried to kill David Reuben, and he called all these press people and showed them the tape, and they used that tape to promo his show all day. So I was like a, I became kind of a hero, at least for a short time, and I was this guy who tried to threaten, I threatened David Reuben, etcetera. So that was an example. That was one of the things I was involved in.

[1:08:10]

KR: So looking back on your time there, what do you think has changed since? I mean, I'm sure a lot. [ME: What has changed?] Yeah.

ME: Well, you know, it's hard for me to tell. I mean, I've been back a few times. I haven't really stayed there. I mean, you've got this... there's all kinds of ways it's changed.

KR: What about on a national level, too, about what's been going on, that you've seen in discourse and stuff?

ME: Well, there's a big change, I feel... just on the streets. It's just so much easier to be physical with another man. It just feels so much more accepted. You see other people in the neighborhood holding hands with other men, women have always done it but even more so now, but for men it's just been much easier, you don't get the kind of attitude that we did. I mean, I've had times, like when I moved to New York, I was with my partner, we would, one time we would be yelled at, you know, as "Fag!" One time we had stuff thrown at us, things like that, and I don't have that anymore. I don't have those experiences. I mean, it's still, you know, there's still neighborhoods I wouldn't hold hands, but there's a whole big section of the city where I feel very comfortable now. And that's pretty wonderful. There's all kinds of ways things have changed. [KR: Yeah.] The way we are, you know. Friends, things like that.

[1:09:50]

KR: So can you talk a little bit about after you left the University, where you went, what you did?

ME: Well actually there's one other thing, I don't know how much of a record, I'm not sure what this is, so I mean, if you're talking about events at the University, the other, another event was in, I think it was '72, early '72, where we protested at the Quad Club. There was a guy running for governor, Tom Foran, and a group of us went there to ask him questions. We did that, and then we were surrounded by these really big guys who were, they looked like bouncers or something like that, and they said "You have to leave," and so we grouped together, and we all agreed that we should leave, cause we didn't go there with any reason, we didn't expect a problem, we had gone there cause it was the Quad Club and we thought it was University property, so we thought we were pretty safe, and this guy, Tom Foran had made some really anti-gay statements, he was the prosecutor for the Conspiracy Seven and made a comment that we had lost our children to the freaking fag revolution. So anyway, so they surrounded us, and asked us to leave, so we went out, and I said, "Let's just chant on the way out," and so we did that, and then they attacked us. They attacked me cause I was the leader of it, especially, and they pushed me through the doors, and they were really rough on me, and then as we got outside I saw that there was a police wagon. They put handcuffs on me, and four of us were put in a paddy wagon and we were booked, and the irony is we were booked for resisting arrest even though they never identified themselves as police. So that happened on the campus, I think, I don't know the exact date, but that's a record. So I think those are the major things campus-related. [KR: And were things with the police...] I mean, I have other stories about Chicago, but that's campus-related. Yeah?

KR: Was there a different feeling with how the police interacted with things that happened on campus versus elsewhere? Did you generally feel safer doing things on campus?

ME: Yeah, we never, they never hassled us. We never had problems with the campus police over anything, so... we always figured it was cause we were students and they were the campus, cause we were very afraid of the Chicago police just from their reputation.

KR: Yeah, I'm just thinking about even now there's a huge difference between, you know, the school police versus the Chicago police and how it interacts with people, so I would imagine that would have had a big effect.

ME: Yeah. And in fact even when the North Side group wanted to have a dance after we couldn't do ours on campus anymore, they had one in the Chicago Coliseum, and we all met together, our lawyer had gathered us together a few hours before the dance telling us she had gotten word that the vice squad was gonna arrest everybody at the dance. So that gives you an idea of what Chicago was like.

[01:13:40]

KR: So can you talk about some of those demonstrations and big, memorable events in Chicago? [ME: The Chicago events, you mean in Chicago?] Yeah, in Chicago.

ME: Well, that one was probably the most memorable, is that we were, there was a group of about twenty-five of us from all parts of the city, and she was going on about the Vice Squad, and we all knew about the Vice Squad. They had gotten a really bad reputation for really awful stuff. And we had visions of people being really hurt and everything, and she had us go around the room and everybody said to go ahead with the dance, and so we did, and then that night she told us that the Vice Squad had backed off and that they weren't going to do anything. So we went ahead, we had the dance that night, and from then on... dancing was a great thing in Chicago because none of the bars had dancing, so dancing was this difficult thing that was like an act of freedom, and it just fit so well with what gay liberation was about. So that was like, that's why, one reason the dancing thing was such a big deal, the one at Pierce Tower was the first dance that men could dance in somewhat publicly. [KR: Yeah.] And that's why Woodward Court was so big, so this was really a big issue.

So in the North Side group we talked about doing it at the bars, and you know, by then I was getting kind of Marxist more, and I knew there was a socialist guy who was behind it too, we proposed that we picket the most popular gay bar, and picket them to have dancing there. That bar was called the Normandy, it was on Rush Street. So we had a picket, we did it for a few nights, and it was quite amazing that, probably it was the most effective picket in history, cause what happened is we had the picket, and totally no one came to the bar cause they were afraid of being seen by the police, by the press and everything else, so we emptied out the bar completely, and then it was emptied out every night we were there, and the bar worked it out with the mafia or whoever they needed to, and they had dancing from then on. So that was a really major thing which in retrospect was probably not the sharpest move politically because, you know, some people knew we had brought dancing but it happened so quick that people, you know, just a month or two later people were saying "Well, that was really nice of the bar owners to give us dancing now." They didn't realize that it was something that we had done. [KR: Yeah.] You know, if I'd done my druthers I would have continued to have dances and make money from those. [Laughter] But that's, you know, we moved too quickly in those days.

So that was something, another was Gay Pride Day in June 71, I was on the organizing committee of that, and I remember, you know, marching along on Clark Street and at one point looking back, and it was like amazing how long it was. That was quite a wonderful feeling. And I spoke at that parade too, that was pretty cool. So yeah, that was pretty cool. What else... I think those were the main Chicago things.

[01:17:30]

KR: So what about when you left Chicago? Where did you go and work and do?

ME: Well, I went to San Francisco. I kind of made a deal with myself, I was very... what happened was in like 19... well, I need to fill this out a little bit, so my partner and I broke up and one of the reasons we broke up was, this was in, well, this happened in 69, this is I guess early 70, one of the first actions we did in January, I think, was that we were on the student-run radio station, and they were interviewing a few Gay

Liberation people, and I was, I told him I was gonna do it, and he was really upset, and I said "Well, I'm not going to use my name," and he said "Yeah, but someone could recognize your voice," and I said "Well, you know, if they recognize my voice they recognize my voice," you know? And he said "Well, I... that's just wrong," and he was really scared about it, he said if I go ahead with it he was going to leave me. So I thought about it, and I thought, "Well, I gotta do this," so I did it, and he didn't leave, but that was a pretty clear turning point and over the next few months here I was, I had decided I was going to be political, and he was being scared of it all and ended up drinking a lot, and eventually by May of whatever the time was, we didn't renew the lease and we went separate ways, and I ended up moving in with Henry and we decided that we would devote the next year to University of Chicago Gay Lib and we were gonna try to be more of a center for it. We found a place on Harper Street.

So anyway, so I did that, and then moved somewhere else after that, and where I'm getting to is that I was at this point in some time like 71 or early 72 and I felt kind of stuck. I had done all the research for my dissertation. It wasn't done. I worked with my partner, who was finishing his, we had collected data together, but we were going to write them separately, and I was just kind of stuck. My friend Bill Dry, who I mentioned before, told me, well, I sat down with him, and I said, "You know, I'm almost there, but I don't believe in it anymore, you know, I mean why do I want to do academics? Why do I want to do clinical therapy when Gay Liberation is so powerful?" And yet the Chicago Gay Liberation group had pretty much fallen apart. And so I was kind of in this really stuck kind of depressed kind of place and he, he said that "Murray, you should just finish your dissertation, get it over with, and you know, it's one of those things, if you don't do it, for the next ten years you're going to be thinking about it all the time, and questioning whether you should do it. Just get it done and move on." And so I made this deal with myself that I would spend the rest of the year finishing my dissertation, and I would take the next year off, instead of just goofing off in Chicago and dragging it out. So I did that, and Kevin and I moved to California, and we ended up in San Francisco. He wanted LA, I wanted San Francisco, and I kind of won, and so we lived together in San Francisco, we got involved there with more radical politics.

We were involved in a group called Bay Area Gay Liberation. Kevin and I and a couple of other people started a newspaper, it was a catalog, it was called Lavender U, so it was kind of an extension of our academic background. The idea of Lavender U was very similar to what dancing was, it was to create alternatives for gays and lesbians that were outside of the bars and outside of just sex. And so we started this catalog and people would list classes, we would distribute the catalog at all the bars, people would list things and then people would come. So someone started a group called Lavender U Joggers, and that became the Front Runners, which has kind of morphed over the years, it became Lavender Joggers, got bigger and bigger, then they changed the name to Front Runners, and it started going all over the country. We did other things. Lavender U was, the first of a lot of different things started there.

I also got involved with Bay Area Gay Liberation. Also I met Arthur Evans there, who was in San Francisco, and he was doing research about witchcraft, and I was, when I

went to San Francisco, I started doing a little therapy although I was never licensed, but I had studied at the U of C with Gene Gendlin, who was really a sharp guy, and I had done a clinical practicum, so I had some experience with therapy, and so I led the therapy groups, I used Lavender U to advertise them. And then with Arthur we talked a lot about spirituality, and he was, Arthur was a major activist in New York in the Gay Activist Alliance and early GLF, so we had a lot in common, and he was doing this research which kind of really opened my eyes to spirituality. I told you earlier on when I did the, when I was coming out that I didn't believe what, you know, one of the lessons was not believing what people tell me, or what society told me. And you know, San Francisco I was doing acid, marijuana, and talking with Arthur, and I was like "Well, I can't believe what they're saying about God," and so I started really looking what that meant and what that experience was like. And I used to some extent some of the lessons I got from university about George Herbert Mead, Marx, and just the whole idea about how society... how society works through us to limit our experience, and how experiences that we may call spiritual or religious are in certain cases channeled into certain ways, channeled into things that serve the economic and cultural system. And so with the kind of openness of San Francisco and the sort of left over hippie movement I started questioning, my questioning became much wider than just around sexuality. And my questioning around gay became a lot wider than just sexuality.

So Arthur's research was pretty relevant, we started a group called the Faerie Circle in 1975. We did a lot of rituals and a lot of things like that, and I also, one of them we did at a bathhouse, and that was pretty stunning to me cause again the same theme of doing things out of the mainstream, doing things that were more than sexual, and just exploring a lot of new ways to be. And so I started leading groups into bathhouses. I created evenings, a different kind of a bath. I talked to the owners of one of the bathhouses and they allowed me to do it as a benefit, so I did a bunch of them as benefits. And then I ended up going to New York for a job in 79, and Harry Hay contacted me and I went to the first Faerie Gathering. He contacted me cause of all my work and stuff like that. So Arthur and I in effect started the Faeries, but our, what happened is Harry Hay kind of reimagined it as Radical Faeries and kind of took the credit for it in a sense. But that was one of the offshoots, one of the things that I did... and I think that's about it.

[ME addition: The Radical Faeries are going very strong today. They are in most cities and there are five sanctuaries. Harry did a good job of taking credit as the founder of the Faeries and claimed that he didn't know about the group that Arthur and I started. Arthur and he published some strong letters to each other in White Crane – a magazine of gay spirituality. In the last 15 years, I got back into the Faeries and have gone to gatherings and told my stories about the founding of the Faeries.

More recently Don Kilhefner wrote in The Gay and Lesbian Review about the founding of the Radical Faeries and told of conversations with Harry. It turns out that they wanted to call themselves the Faeries, but couldn't be cause our group had that name, so they ended up with Radical Faeries – because it was different.]

The other thing I did, I would, my job, my career is in survey research and I was involved in the exit poll, I helped start the exit poll and managed it for quite a while, so I was able to get a gay question on the exit poll, and so from 1992 through the current, we have a history of gay voting, which is the longest string of anything gay-related, or certainly that has anything of gay people. So that's pretty much most of the stuff I've done.

[01:27:24]

KR: So how did you end up in New York? When did you move?

ME: Well... job-wise, I was, last I told you I was in DC working for the Census Bureau in the 60s. A man I worked there with, Warren Butkowski, moved to CBS News in New York, and he got me to follow him in like 67. I went there for the summers and then I became really useful for them, really helpful for them, so they hired me as a consultant. So I was in effect, I had this extra income while I was at the University of Chicago, and then in 73 when I moved to the West Coast I kept my consulting with CBS, so I was able to do that, and I went through, did all my political and other work, and would come to New York and work for two or three weeks at a shot. In 78 my political group had kind of fallen apart cause that's kind of the way things were in those days, things would rise and fall. Now things stay a lot, I mean, now they go on, they're like real institutions, but then great ideas would come, people would do them, and then they'd fall off. So anyway, so at that point in 79 Warren had a real crisis and he offered me a full-time job, it sounded really good, the job was for a year and a half, I did it and I liked it, and he liked me, and so I just kept doing it, and I'm still in New York. And I've been through a lot of permutations with that job. I became full time, then there became a pool, I worked my way up, had some major kind of issues, in the year 2000 we polled, I was in charge of operations for all of the networks and we had called Gore the winner in Florida, and that was embarrassing, and I ended up being, speaking in front of a Congressional Committee in February of 2001, and anyway, so I've got a fairly, somewhat visible but never super-visible career, and I was president of AAPOR, which is the American Association on Public Opinion Research. So I've kind of kept my academic interests, but I've never... like I taught at Columbia, and then I worked at Rutgers for about a year and a half, on survey research. So I've kept my academic connection but not really in any really deep way.

KR: And when you moved to New York did you get involved with any gay groups or anything there?

ME: Well, I went to the first couple of, first few ACT UP meetings, I went to the first ACT UP demonstration, and I went to different things with ACT UP, but I was kind of really spent from my ten, twelve years, or ten years I guess, of political organizing, and I didn't, I kind of was more on the sidelines, I did do, I worked for GMHC as a therapist for a while. But I never gave myself to it to nearly the extent that I did in the 70s.

KR: What about like gay social things in New York? [ME: Pardon?] Gay social things in New York, did you meet other gay people who you became friends with through different things?

ME: How did I meet other gay people? [KR: Yeah! Like not on the activism level, but were you involved in any gay social things?] I was involved in a group called Gay Male S&M Activists, that was a group that was into S&M, kink, stuff like that, we had a lot of programs and education and demonstrations and things. I met people that way. And I went to bars. And then, as the Internet was, you know, it took a while for the Internet to come, but there were bulletin boards and all kinds of ways like that to meet people, and I used those.

KR: So what about, has anything happened sort of recently that's of note around gay things, for you personally or politically? [ME: As what? Say that again?] Has anything happened recently that are of note around gay things, like whether it's personal or political or?

ME: Sorry, I have to go again—wait a second, and hold that question.

[1:32:50 to 1:34:00: pause]

KR: So I was just asking about recent things that had happened. Can you talk about the past few years?

ME: Recent things, gay-related? [KR: Yeah, or notable things in your life in general.] Well, I think certainly the whole change around marriage is pretty amazing. I thought... I've certainly enjoyed watching that, it's pretty exciting, I mean, in terms of my lifetime it's pretty amazing, and you know, it feels amazing to have contributed like I did. It's not like I'm not, you know, it's like no one ever gave me awards or anything like that, you know, like today you'd get more awarded, or at least a lot of people do, but it's knowing that I was part of this, that I took some really big chances and saw stuff way ahead of time, you know, and really stepped into it, that feels great.

I've, at the Faeries I've been to, I don't know what you know about them, but there's a lot of gatherings in different places, and I've spoken at different times and told some history and stuff, and it's always really a neat experience to find younger guys and women that are interested in history. I started kind of a gay group in AAPOR. It's a sort of unofficial group, we call ourselves GAYPOR and we go out on Friday night at the conference. And I've given talks, like I started, I'm doing a panel at the current AAPOR, this is in Anaheim, the American Association of Public Opinion Research, and we're doing a panel there about just the changes, and I'm planning to do more of a personal history, showing the changes in the public opinion data when I talk. So those are things I'm doing.

KR: Well, I don't think I have any other questions, but if you have anything you want to add, feel free.

ME: No, I feel pretty spent. If you want to call and ask more I can do that, but I feel pretty tired. [Laughs]

KR: Yeah, I think this is really good. Thank you so much for talking to me. I learned a lot, it was great.

ME: Alright! Well, I look forward to reading it at some point. Good luck with it.

[01:37:06]

End of Interview