

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

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**INTERVIEW #37
FERAIOS, ANDREW (1962-) AB 1983**

*At U of C: 1980-1984
Interviewed: June 7, 2013
Interviewer: Kelsey Ganser
Transcript by: Lauren Stokes
Length: 2:22:03*

Interview June 7, 2013 in Wieboldt Hall, University of Chicago.

[00:00:00]

AF: One thing that I'm interested in is you know, what was the thinking behind the oral histories.

KG: ...So five years ago they did this with the women's histories, so I think this was sort of like the next project that CSGS [Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality] wanted to do with oral histories. As far as the decision to do queer oral histories, I think that this University doesn't have excellent documentary evidence of queer life at UChicago, so I think, you know, having you guys come in and talk to us has been hugely, hugely helpful, because stuff before like 1990 is harder and harder to find.

AF: Interesting. OK, alright. [KG: Yeah. So.] Well, Scott [Dennis, Interview #38] and I have extremely different perspectives, although we were very good friends, and obviously we still are, but we have completely different... they're complementary, but it's... we'll get to that, I guess.

KG: OK. We can start with that, if you want, unless there's stuff that you feel we should like put groundwork down first.

AF: Well, why don't, do you have questions that, to walk through?

KG: I have a script, usually I follow whatever the direction the narrator's going cause you guys know what's most important in your life history better than I do, probably.

AF: Right, right. OK. Well, I could, I have a pretty good idea of what I wanted to talk about in this interview, so I can... [KG: OK, yeah, start, and if you get tired I'll come up with questions.] OK, and yeah, feel free to interrupt me, too. [KG: OK.] So when I first saw this on the website, you know, I started thinking about my experiences at the University of Chicago, and in particular around being queer.

And I had intended to be bisexual when I came into campus, like I was ready to do that, I changed my name. So my name is Andrew, but in high school I was Andy, so I changed it to Drew as part of like “I’m going to come out,” that was my intent. And I don’t know exactly when I thought that, but it was some time during my senior year of high school, and while I was applying for colleges, I had this kind of traumatic sort of thing happen where I was at my Columbia University interview, my alumni interview, seventeen years old, thinking I’m probably bisexual, whatever, I certainly had been sexually active with men, but wasn’t really solid in terms of my identity. And it was mixed. It wasn’t straightforward, it wasn’t like, you know, I’m only attracted to men, and so because it was more grey there was a genuine sort of “I could be gay, I could be not, I don’t know, you know, to what degree.” I didn’t really have that all figured out yet. [KG: Yeah.] But I definitely thought that coming out as bisexual in college would be preferable to feeling bifurcated the way I had in high school.

So at my University, Columbia University interview, and Columbia was probably one of my top choices for schools, I went to this guy’s house, and his wife came to the door, and had me come in, and I sat in this den of this man’s suburban house, and he comes in, and he’s wearing sweatpants, and I thought “Oh, that’s a little odd.” And I had just had an interview at Yale where, you know, he came to my house, and he was this very sort of, you know, preppy sort of East Coast sort of suited guy, so it was interesting, the contrast, and I thought “Well, how does that reflect on the University, I don’t know, but I’ll go with it,” so during the interview he, he made a comment about gay and lesbian life on campus, and I thought “Does he, can he tell? Is he probing, is he trying to, you know, is he detecting something, you know, would that affect my application kind of thing,” but then I determined he was just being supportive because he used a whole different, all kinds of different affiliations that I might be interested in, and then he started to make provocative gestures, like, you know, like with his pants. [KG: Oh.] And he actually made a very serious pass at me, and I was really upset because it’s like this is my college interview, you know, my God, so he, and I said to him at one point, “Well, you know, I can’t do this,” and he said, “Well, you know, why not?” And I said “Because your wife is in the house, I mean, I can’t do this with you,” and so he had me go to his dental office, because he was a dentist, and I went, because it was my college interview, what was I gonna do? So I didn’t perceive it as a molestation per se, but it was this very uncomfortable kind of experience, and it left me feeling very sour, because you know... and I didn’t get in, I got waitlisted! [KG: Oh my gosh.] So it was even weirder so I felt like, you know, how did that impact it or not, I’m seventeen, too, confused about which way I was gonna go in terms of identity, and then this whole thing happens, so... and this is nineteen seven, this is nineteen eighty. [Laughter]

KG: Yeah, you don’t have any resources then, really at all.

AF: No, not at all! Not in Rochester, New York, let me tell ya. And I didn’t know anybody that was openly gay, so there wasn’t anybody that I could talk to about my experiences, I had, you know, there was just, I had to be silent about it. So when I got waitlisted at Columbia right at like, the same day I got accepted at the University of Chicago, and I thought “Not only do I want to go, but I want to go in June,” so I went summer quarter.

And my intent... [KG: Oh, OK.] But I just wanted to separate myself from high school and from, you know, the homophobia in high school and whatever. I was never identified by my peers as gay, so some people have no choice, you know, they're a butch woman, and at thirteen they start being called lez, they don't even have to come out, you know, they're outed. I didn't have that problem, so... plus I had girlfriends, and I was dating, and you know, that sort of thing. So when I got to campus I was gonna come out as bisexual, and I identified... so let me stop for a minute. This is the kind of stuff you're looking for, right? [KG: Yeah, definitely!] Alright.

So I get to campus, it's June of 1980, and in the, we were in Snell Hall, cause it was summer, and so that's where they put the summer undergrads. [KG: Oh, OK.] And there were these two guys, that were brothers, it turned out that they were brothers, but I identified them as possibly a gay couple, and so I had this moment of "Oh, great!" you know, "I can meet gay people, and now I can start having gay friends, and, you know, I'll be able to figure something out here!" Well, it turned out they were brothers, but one of them was clearly gay, like I identified him right away. He didn't know it, or he wasn't acting on it, and by the time we'd had a conversation about it, within the next, I mean of course when you're an undergrad, you know, five weeks feels like a lifetime, so... [KG: Yeah, and you're best friends already, and...] Yeah. So three, four weeks go by and it's a whole different kind of ballgame. It's like being at summer camp. [KG: Yeah.] And so it turned out that the older brother and I really bonded, and he was like maybe a junior, so he was quite a bit, he was two years older than me, and he was homophobic, so very left-wing politically, but homophobic, which was weird because in 1980 seriously left-wing people weren't necessarily pro-gay, pro-queer. Well, there was no such thing as queer. But, you know, they weren't, at all, I mean, cause you had a strain within Marxism and socialism of really deep homophobia, and so he, so that kind of killed the whole idea of me coming out as bisexual, cause my first encounters with people on campus was, it's no different than high school, it sucks. Plus I still had the ability to kind of mold where I was gonna go because I was sexually active with both men and women at that time.

So the... at some point during that summer he started dating one of the women that I was friends with, and they had a whole relationship and broke up over that summer, I don't know how much time it took, but, probably was only a couple weeks, but it felt again like an eternity. They broke up, and then he and I fooled around, and he went back and told the ex-girlfriend, and everyone who would listen, and kind of painted me like I was the predator, I seduced him, I had done this thing to him. Of course, he's gay now. [Laughter] So he ended up... so that was whatever, it was traumatic, but whatever, but then the girlfriend ended up taking a bunch of pills and we had to take her to emergency, you know, the University of Chicago Medical Center in the middle of the night, and the doctor, the ER doctor asked me, "Well, how many pills did she take?" and I said "I don't know," you know, thinking she needs to get her stomach pumped because she's acting out and she needs to understand there are consequences, that's really what was going through my mind. [Laughter] And she did, and then she proceeded to tell everyone who would listen about me and her ex-boyfriend. [KG: Oh.]

So when I came into the fall semester, I had already had this entire gay scandal around me and I was paranoid but it turned out that I had every reason to be paranoid because I'd run into people and have conversations and get to know people and they'd say "You're the guy!" And they knew the story, and they would name names, and I'd be like "Oh my God, you know, it's a small campus, you know, it was no bigger than my high school class at that time, it was six hundred people, six fifty, whatever, I don't know, but it was, you know, it's different today, but at that time, you know, that's enough where you could literally know everyone in your class.

So for fall semester I ended up at Burton-Judson, and I was a freshman but I was on an upperclassman floor because I'd already had this sort of seniority so I got first pick of where I was gonna live. [KG: Oh yeah, you had like one quarter already.] Exactly. So that's where I met Scott. So Scott and I met, he was on my floor, and he was an openly, he was the first openly gay person that I had ever met, and the other people that we were friends with in fact were staying in a condo with one of these guys during this time while we're here, and before... so Scott, being gay, had a gay social life. So during that first week before classes start when you're moving into your room and you're getting settled, and you're registering, and whatever it is that you do before classes actually start, I was friends with all these straight guys on the floor, and they were all very, "Oh, we have a gay person, we have an openly gay person in the dorm," you know, so I knew before he got here that he was gay, and I knew that they were accepting of it the way that straight men were accepting of it in 1980, which is different than today.

[11:25]

KG: In what sense?

AF: So today, an 18-year-old or a millennial generation guy who's straight can be, like, vocal about his support for gay marriage. [KG: That's true.] Then it meant you didn't make homophobic remarks in front of them. You might have been a little squeamish about what they might be doing behind closed doors, and you might articulate that when they weren't in the room, but in general these guys were accepting of him and considered him a friend. But I could tell that he was other, he was different, and they saw him that way, and so yet again it was this other reason for saying "Shit, I don't want to be a fag, you know, fuck that," you know, "It's too much trouble, I've already had a scandal, you know, I don't even know that I can face being here," because it was so awful to think that my own life story had been put out there by other people and it wasn't mine to manage.

So I settled in to being in the closet, but I was honest with Scott, like I told Scott about my bisexual history, and you know, and we talked a lot about that and he was like "Well, you know Drew, there's a range," you know, and he told me about the Kinsey scale, and about the Stonewall riots...

KG: Oh yeah, I noticed that on your, you're the first person I've had who's put their Kinsey number on the demographic form.

AF: Right! Cause I identify as gay or queer, but I understand that, that my life history isn't, you know, it's not, I'm not a Kinsey 6. So Scott was really supportive, he was openly gay, he was involved with the Gay and Lesbian Alliance at the time, it was called GALA at the time, but it was Gay and Lesbian Alliance. Today the reason you guys have GLBTQ is because the B and the Q part is what would have been me. [KG: Yeah.] And I wasn't, there was no place for me, in my first semester here, my second semester, or quarter, so second quarter, I started to meet some of the openly gay people on campus because I knew Scott, and there was a, there was this sort of us and them, either or, black and white, you know, if you had any inklings towards being gay, you must come out, and you must come out now on our terms. So there was a, I felt like there was, there was a gay fascism, and then I had this sort of discomfort sort of semi-acceptance among these straight friends I had, and I didn't feel comfortable in either place. [KG: Yeah.]

So the gay people, and I remember very distinctly, it might have been not the fall, it might have been the spring of the next year, I don't remember, but I remember very distinctly being in the quads, and walking through, and Scott was with a bunch of gay people, and there was this one little guy, he was literally little, and he was wearing, he used to wear pink Izod shirts, cause this was before polo shirts became popular, so everybody was, preppies wore Izod at the time, and he had his collar up, and lime green pants, and I walked by, and he goes, so that I could hear him, [exaggerated gay lisp] "THCOTTT, when is SHE coming out!" and I thought to myself, "Not while you're walking on this campus," so you know, I really, it was a really, not a good place to be as a bisexual or a questioning person in 1980. And part of it was my unique experience, because Scott's experience was growing up in a college town, figured out he was gay, went to a gay and lesbian student organization at the University of Michigan when he was fifteen! [KG: Wow.] Nothing like that for me, right? I might as well have been living in 1964.

KG: I think that's still pretty odd for kids today. [AF: I think so too!] I didn't do anything when I was fifteen. [Laughter]

[15:10]

AF: But anyway, he taught me a lot, we had a lot of conversations, he allowed me to be who I was, which became a real defining characteristic of what I thought was important when it comes to any kind of queer politics, is being able to understand that there are people who might get married and have children with somebody of the opposite sex who are nevertheless queer, and we just have to accept people, and that that changes over time, and so that became a real defining characteristic of me when I eventually did come out.

So my second year, I moved to Greenwood Hall, which no longer exists, and I met a straight guy, and then he was the first straight guy that I actually told my full story to, and he accepted me as a friend and we still, we're still friends, and I was here in April for a dorm reunion of this dorm that has been demolished, and you know, we came together, you know, so it was, so I have a lot of friends from college. So it turned out fine, by the way, you know. [Laughter] But in college, you know, there were times when I thought I

had to transfer, so third year I ended up living off campus with Steve and I had a girlfriend who knew, I didn't find out until later, my story with these people that summer. [KG: So this really followed you, like a long time.] It followed me through college. [KG: Wow. That's awful, I'm so sorry.] [Laughter] It was unbelievable, it was like the nightmare! It's like, you know, that which I most fear, here it is.

So I graduated early, I graduated in 1983, even though I was class of 84, so by August of... but I stayed on campus, I lived in Hyde Park, and then later I was at the University of Illinois in an Education Master's degree program and I worked with a professor here and we did some studies on gay lesbian issues and so I actually was connected to the University until 86, and I got accepted into a graduate program here, but I went to Cal instead [KG: Oh, OK.], so I came out after my girlfriend and I broke up, which was probably in 1984, and then got involved with the openly gay people on campus at that time, but really kinda after college.

KG: And that's sort of like a generation after your college class, right? [AF: If two years is a generation.] Oh, OK, yeah, so not quite.

AF: Yeah, so these were people that maybe were freshmen, and I knew them, and now they were juniors and seniors, and so like I marched in the Gay Chicago Pride March with them under the University of Chicago banner, in fact one of the things I was going to bring and I didn't, and I can make images and send them, I have, you know, an entire roll of film, literally film, you know, at the time, of a Pride March with people from the University of Chicago. [KG: Oh my gosh, Lauren would cry, I'm sure.] 1985. [KG: Yeah, that would be great.] And I have individual pictures of all of my friends. [KG: That's amazing.] So you know, it was after I graduated, it's on the North Side, but it's still, we marched, and I think we had the Homo shirts, I think we were wearing Homo shirts [KG: Oh, OK], that he's showing her right now. [KG: Oh, so Scott has stuff, too.] Yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

KG: Oh my gosh. Last time we had stuff Lauren said "It's like historical Christmas!" [Laughter] So she's probably just so excited right now.

AF: Oh, you can't imagine, wait til you... she's gonna be giddy when she gets out of the one with him.

KG: I'm excited! I want to see these too.

[18:40]

AF: So the other thing, so being in the closet, for me, you know, the other thing that, and the reason why Wieboldt Hall is funny to me, which I will tell you now [KG: OK], and I bet nobody else has, is that my freshman year I discovered that right behind that staircase, right out here, there was a staircase that went down to a men's room that was a notorious tea room on campus, and I discovered it at one point. [KG: Like on your own?] Yeah. I don't think anybody told me about it, maybe I heard Scott make a reference and then I

went and checked it out, I don't know whether I found it or whether he... did you, have you heard about it?

KG: Yes, I have actually. [AF: Oh, you have, alright, alright. Good, so...] There's actually someone, someone in my class is doing a, like a report on the Wieboldt men's bathroom, interestingly, so... [AF: If he wants to talk to me I'd be happy to talk to him.] Yeah, I'll give him... [AF: Cause I mean, I actually, you know...] frequented the...

AF: I actually met somebody who is a friend of mine today there [KG: Oh, OK. That's great!], and I witnessed things so I had, you know, so that was like, you know, I'm in Burton-Judson, I'm friends with all these straight guys, you know, you know where Wieboldt bathroom is, so like going from Cobb Hall to campus to have lunch, you know, whoosh! There you go. And there would be people lined up on those stairs and then the entire thing would be filled with men. [KG: Wow.] It was incredible, it was like nothing I've ever seen before or seen since, and mostly closeted men, not out men. The out men didn't really do it because of course they all knew each other and it would be, like, embarrassing to be seen going in there, like "What were you doing in there?" you know, that kind of thing. So as a closeted person, you know, those were the people that were going down there and having sex, so, anyway.

KG: Wow. Yeah, I had heard about the Wieboldt bathroom but I hadn't heard any like, you know, descriptions of the activity, just that people knew that it was like a cruising spot, I guess.

AF: Yeah. Yeah. No, it was, it was out of control, and they had to close it, no doubt, but... I mean, I don't really have, I have a couple of very vivid, explicit memories of things that I witnessed, and then meeting this one guy who, he was a freshman when I was a sophomore and so it was definitely open in 81, and we have been friends for thirty-three years, thirty-two years, so, you know.

KG: Yeah, bathrooms, bringing people together.

AF: You know, let's face it, today's closet cases that are doing that are tomorrow's activists.

KG: That's true. [AF: So.] That's great. That's a great story. Did you want to keep going...

AF: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. We can keep going. I'm a little stuck right now, like what else would you want to hear, you wanna go into anything that I mentioned [KG: Yeah, I think...], and I don't care, I'll do full disclosure, I don't give a rat's ass.

KG: OK. Well, I think since we did like your full four years in the past like ten minutes we should probably like go back a little bit.

AF: OK. One thing I'll mention, and if you're interested in this I'll talk about it, but... the lessons that I learned during my time at University of Chicago, when I was at Cal, you know, UC Berkeley, I was the president of the, co-president of the GLBTQ organization

there, and I applied all of the things that I had learned and that I'm talking about, I applied when I did that, so I don't know if that's going to be interesting or not, but I can talk about that too.

[22:12]

KG: Yeah, definitely, we should get to that in the chronological manner probably. So when you got here your first year there was, Scott was already participating in gay life, that was like an established club that was happening.

AF: Yes. Cause he was already a second-year. [KG: Oh, OK.] And apparently he just told me when we were, we just went and did a little tour of Burton-Judson, and he told me, you know, of course we meet these college kids and we realized, you know they were telling us they're graduating and I said to him, after we left I said "You do realize that they were born eight years after we lived there." [Laughter]

KG: Can I ask you what house you were in?

AF: Salisbury.

KG: Oh, OK. I was in Vincent, so I was hoping to claim you as my, like gay ancestors, but...

AF: [Laughter] You know, Vincent was all men then.

KG: Oh really? I didn't know about that.

AF: But I do know somebody who is gay, who's a lawyer that lives in the Bay Area that lived in Vincent.

KG: Great. I can have that guy too. [Laughter] We had a lot of gays my year actually, but that's besides the point. OK, so Scott was a year older than you. [AF: Yes.] I was gonna ask you how everybody knew that he was gay before he came to campus, but he was already there.

AF: Yeah. Because I was told to live in Burton-Judson, someone recommended it maybe, and they said, "You need," oh, I know what it was. So I had met a guy, just a regular friend guy, not anything special, like you know, not sexual, at Snell that summer. Brad was his name. And Brad and I got one of the suites and somehow we were told that that would be a good thing for us and so we did it, and the other thing I wanted was by living on that floor, the floor was co-ed, cause I didn't really want to live on a unisex floor. [KG: Yeah.] You know, I thought it would be better for me. And so we ended up, we were the only freshmen on that floor, so I plugged into a social circle that had developed the year before and was accepted into that social circle, that's how I got, that's why I know Scott so well. So he was on my floor, even though he was a second-year and I was a first year.

KG: Oh, OK. So you were spending a little bit more time with people, like not incoming freshmen but people who were already established.

AF: Right, that's right. [KG: OK.] That's right, and that was a, you know, I mean it was kind of happenstance, it wasn't too planned but it was, it was also helpful because they knew their way around. It was also helpful because that meant that Scott, you know, I had, I had this example of what an out gay person's life was like. [KG: Yeah.] So that was another thing, that, that I had to you know... and then I could also over the course of several quarters, you know, I, you know was, it was really important to be able to talk about what had happened with those people that summer quarter. [KG: Yeah.] And he had not heard about it, but he was the only, he was very, you know, he didn't press me, you know, he accepted it, the story at face value and then he asked me questions and, you know, but pretty much was able to accept me in my grey status, and that was extremely helpful.

KG: And that was not common in the gay community [inaudible]...

AF: Well, I can't say that I tried very hard, you know. But my impression, and my, you know, and some of it is prejudice looking into a social group that is not me, right, so I'm making observations of what I observed their behavior to be, and so what I observed was, you know, this collection of gay men who queened it up considerably and were very flamboyant and were in your face. So it wasn't like we're holding hands on campus and this is my boyfriend, it was more like you know, this sort of, this sort of stuff, with hands waving, and you know, and there was a segregation, so the gay people that were out, it was the same thing when you...

My interpretation of it was, when I was in high school, my suburb started to integrate, and the first time that there were enough black kids to have two lunch tables, they all sat together, and there was pressure on them to do so. And I felt like, I don't want to have to sit at the gay table. I have friends all over campus, I have straight friends, I have women friends, I don't want to feel like my social life is gonna be segregated. And my perception was that to come out meant to de-emphasize the friends that aren't gay and to have to adapt to social norms that I didn't want to adapt to. And so my resistance to it was, had to do a lot with that aspect.

KG: OK. So Scott wasn't behaving like this but this was sort of your perception of other gay people on campus?

AF: Well, when Scott was with them he was one of them, but Scott was versatile, he was, you know, able to, you know, he also had friends that were of different sexual orientations. So he was probably, my perception was that he was an exception to that, you know, that he could, he could, he was versatile, he could, you know, go to the North Side and do whatever gay men do, but then he could also hang out with us too, and so there was... and you know, gay social life was very different from straight social life in the sense that straight social life as a student meant being on campus. Gay social life meant going to the North Side and trying to get into bars or, you know, or other kinds of gay events. So there

was this emphasis on the North Side that the gay people had that the straight people didn't have.

[27:45]

KG: OK. So you were sort of participating in sort of a community culture that was like away from campus a little bit?

AF: I wasn't. But my perception was that that was part of the self-segregation. [KG: Oh, OK.] So we're gay, you know, we bond together, we're only friends with other gay people, gay men, in particular, cause I didn't, I didn't perceive any lesbians at that time. I didn't know anybody that was a lesbian my freshman year and I didn't meet anybody that was a lesbian. So I only knew the gay men, and they were very conscious of me, because some of them had seen me in Wieboldt or whatever. Some of them had seen me, you know, so there was, so those kinds of things were happening.

But my perception was that in order to come out, coming out wasn't just "Hey, I'm gay," "Oh, OK, whatever," move on. It was "I'm gay, and so we used to hang out, but probably now I have to go hang out with these people and I have to be around men that call each other she and, you know, that there were these rules of social engagement that I didn't want to participate in. Some of it was internalized homophobia, some of it was that's just not me, I don't relate to it, and I don't want to be so different with the gay people that I can't continue my relationships as they are with my straight friends.

You know, I wanted continuity, and even today, I mean, one of the things that's interesting about me is that, you know, I live in the Bay Area, but even today among my generation, my age cohort, there's segregation, you know, so gay men on Saturday night hang out with other gay men. You know, they don't hang out with, they don't wanna be the only, you know, they don't wanna be one or two gay people at a party, they wanna be, you know, so even today I see the same dynamic at work. In fact, I would say that there's a generational shift where millennials don't have that same issue. It's much more, to come out does not mean that you have to shed your previous social life. But in a very real sense in 1980, to come out meant to shed your social life, it meant you probably couldn't be friends with people from high school, like literally couldn't be.

I had this experience of my very first best friend on campus summarily rejecting me, so the older brother of this couple, this brothers, you know, he rejected me utterly, and he was my first friend! So it wasn't so much "I have to give up my straight friends" as they may reject me or, although I didn't really want to be friends that would reject me anyway, but you know, I mean, this was a first experience of having that happen. [KG: Yeah.] And then years later, just before he graduated, he came up to me and he says "Can I have a conversation with you?" and I said "OK..." [KG: This is the best friend who had rejected you?] Yeah, the older brother, and he said, "You know, I want to apologize, you know, I realize now that my brother's gay and, you know, you had nothing to do with it, you were just his friend, and, you know, I blamed you for a long time for that and I'm really sorry." You know, so that's kind of good.

KG: Yeah, that's progress, or something. [Laughter] Empathy, maybe? [AF: Exactly!] So it sounds like you are, what we're looking at here is a group of gay people who sort of segregate themselves but also straight people who may reject you so from both sides you're getting kind of a...

AF: Yes. I felt like I was betwixt and between and it wasn't just my indecision about coming out, it was bigger than that, and my, my problem, you know, the, many of these guys that I'm talking about, this group of men that were really out prominently on campus, several of them died of AIDS, so you know, so I didn't get a chance to meet them later in life, you know, and some of them were flamboyant after they came out for a year but then calmed down and, you know, did whatever they were gonna do, but you know, that behavior changed, it was, you know, it was a reaction formation, it was, you know, and I recognize it as such...

And, you know, one of the things that happened to me in high school is I had this friend that I met who was on the wrestling team of a neighboring high school and we used to get together in the fields behind my house and fool around when we were fifteen and sixteen, and for whatever reason I lost touch with him, and then I ran into him when I was a senior in high school and he was this, he was on the wrestling team, so when I ran into him again, he had bleached blonde hair and was wearing like, you know, he had his eyebrows arched and you know, was, saying this sort of "She!" and this kind of stuff, and I thought "If being gay means that, I'm not doing it. That's not me."

And that behavior was the same thing that I recognized in these men. And they were more diverse than I'm making it sound, but this was my perception as a closet case, right? [KG: Right.] So my perception was, you guys are not just in your face politically, which I would have accepted, politically I would have been OK with it, you know, I would have been OK with a shirt that said, you know, "Equality for Gay Men and Lesbians" or something, but it was the, it was the nasty bitchy condescending exclusivity that was, that's what I resented, and identifying me and instead of taking me aside and saying "So, I've seen you at Wieboldt, we both know you're doing this, what's up? You want to talk about it?" You know, but it wasn't like that. It was the same behavior that I had gotten from this Columbia guy. It was, you know, I am an object, either to have sex with or to ridicule, but I'm an object, I'm not a subject.

And I felt like I got that kind of treatment from both sides, and then my straight friends were a refuge, because I hadn't told these guys in this dorm my story and they hadn't heard it. [KG: OK.] In fact, we confirmed that, because the, one of the guys that we're staying with in this condo is one of these guys, and he always wondered, well, "When did you come out and what was that all about? I don't... you know, you were into girls, that's all I remember!" And so Scott and I told him this story last night, and he was dumbfounded, you know, he was like "Wow, I had... I knew something was up with you but I didn't know what it was and I certainly didn't think it was that." So they were, they were better, you know, I liked them although I was being duplicitous to a certain degree. And then of course Scott was the, he was the glue.

Now among these men there was another guy that I became really good friends with and I'm still friends with although, you know, we go through years without speaking, not, you know... [KG: These men over here are the gay ones, right?] These, right. The gay ones over here. [KG: That won't come up on the transcript if I don't...] Oh yes, no, no, I'm sorry. [KG: That's OK.] So I'm thinking about the quad and I'm thinking of like this collection of eight men, three of whom are now, have passed away from AIDS, one... and then at least Scott and this other guy, his name is Robert, you know, were good friends of mine. And Robert I became friends with separately from Scott. And he was my year and he also was very accepting of who I was, and so individually I think that the gaggle of gay men that were on campus at that time, individually I think those relationships would have been different. But collectively it was very imposing and it wasn't welcoming and I didn't feel reached out to, I felt, like, you know, I felt like I was being given an ultimatum. And so it wasn't ultimately supportive, which is why I think although we can make fun of our alphabet soup, I think that the B and the Q are really important.

[35:26]

KG: Yeah. So you found Scott and Robert who were sort of not, not so polarized [AF: Yeah], did you ever find more people like that as you were here longer or was it sort of the same?

AF: Well, because I had a girlfriend my second and third year, it changed the dynamic. [KG: Oh.] You know, so that I wasn't out meeting individual gay men at that point, I was really meeting, I was hanging out with my best friend who was straight and my girlfriend, and so we were living off campus and we spent all of our time together. So I wasn't, I did meet people, but not, I can't think of any other gay men that I became close to. I mean there were certainly gay men that, I mean, I was the first for several people in the class of 85, I can tell you that. [Laughter] I worked my way through that class! [Laughter] And they're all like...

KG: I'll make sure to ask if I interview someone from 85, do you remember Drew? [AF: Did you ever go back...] [Laughter]

AF: It's true! I'm on Facebook with a bunch of them, you know, and every so often a new one will come up and I'll think "Oh God," you know, "I really was busy, wasn't I?" [Laughter] But I think, you know, when you're twenty, you know, three months is a long time.

KG: Yeah. Definitely... Sorry, I lost my train of thought [AF: It's OK], did you have something to say?

AF: No, not really. [KG: OK.] I mean, you know, there's hundreds of things I could talk about, so... actually, I'm finding that I need you to keep asking me, cause then it gets me onto tangents.

KG: OK. One of the things that I was wondering just to go back even further is why you chose University of Chicago aside from the problems with Columbia, like why you had applied here in the first place.

AF: I applied... oh, that's important, very good question, missy! [KG: Thank you!] Yeah, no, really good, because I wanted a school that didn't have a big football team. [KG: Oh, OK.] I wanted a school that didn't have frats, cause I didn't want oppressive straight male bonding to be the defining characteristic of the social life. And I had been in a high school where academics were not prized. It was the sports teams that were prized, and it was kind of a, it was a middle class high school, suburban, but it was a working class middle class. And so there weren't, you know, it wasn't like everybody was trying to get into Harvard and Yale. It was quite a bit different from that, so I felt really oppressed by the kind of macho sports-based, and then I figured fraternities were part of that, and so I chose, I wanted to choose a school that clearly didn't have that, number one, number two, I chose, I knew that I was probably bisexual or gay and that I knew I needed to be near a big city. And in 1980, you know, one of the things, like... now, when you do these life histories, is it exclusively about U of C... or do people go back?

KG: No, people usually... yeah, people talk about, I mean, especially if it helps explain how they got here, people frequently...

AF: Alright, OK. So my, so I, the first time I had sex was when I was eleven, with another guy my age, but it was... and I didn't know that I was sexually mature, so I found out during it, and I didn't even, and I hadn't even gotten to that part of health education yet, so I didn't know what was happening, so it was a little, that was a little shocking, and I had a panic, like a homosexual panic. Well, I was eleven in 1973, and if you're studying this at all, you know what happened in 1973. They declassified homosexuality...

KG: Oh yes! You're not the first person who's told us about this with U Chicago.

AF: And I didn't know this when I was eleven, but what did I do? I was a proto-University-of-Chicago kid, what did I do, I went to the library, there was no Internet. So I went to the library and my stupid little suburban library, which was actually pretty good, had this hideous psychopathology of homosexuality. So it was all these case histories of, you know, what gay men do, and it was this prescription of, you know, public sex in parks and bathrooms and bookstores and you know, bathhouses. So I learned all of that stuff, all about gay cruising, how to cruise, through these psychopathologies, and I was absolutely horrified and said this cannot be me. And then of course over the next four years I investigated every single one of those aspects, and in Rochester, New York, in the late seventies, that was possible.

So the first time that I had... and then I remember very distinctly, we got Time Magazine, and in 1976 there was a guy, I'm blanking on his name, but he was an openly gay soldier, and he was on the cover of Time Magazine in 1976, and it was the first time that I had seen anything about openly gay people that wasn't, you know, some joke about Rock Hudson or Jim Nabors, you know. So everybody thought they were gay, but it was a, it

was negative, it wasn't positive. And he's a very famous guy, from 1976, can't remember his name and he later died of AIDS in the eighties, but I remember seeing that article and then reading it secretly when my parents weren't around, and then I remember watching the White Night Riots with my father. I was a sophomore in 1978, in high school, and the White Night Riots, you know what those are? [KG: No.] Oh, sorry. [KG: That's OK.] So after Harvey Milk was assassinated and George Moscone was assassinated, when the trial came, and Dan White was, he wasn't acquitted, but he was, you know, he got very light sentence, etcetera [KG: Right, yeah], they had the Dan White Night Riots, and so I was watching, it was like the idea that there were these gay men in San Francisco that would overturn police cars and burn them down and you know, and have a riot, you know, it was this really eye-opening thing, because in 1978 I'm sexually active, but the only thing I know is what came out of that book from 1973 that I had read, and I witnessed it, so it was true. So I'd seen behavior in parks and you know, the local beach, and whatever.

And so the White Night Riots happen, and I'm like, well, I couldn't really go to college in San Francisco. I knew that, it was too far, but I knew it had to be New York, Chicago, Boston. So that was how I started to zero in on the University of Chicago. [KG: OK.] And the University of Chicago found me, so they recruited me, and I got an, you know, a letter from, based upon my ACT scores. And so I hadn't really con... I already had applied to Northwestern, and I thought "Oh, this is interesting," and so I started reading about it, and when I saw that it was, you know, de-emphasized sports, the lack of fraternity as a thing, cause one of the things I had done when I was in high school, you know, visited a bunch of colleges, and we went to, at one point we went to Duke, and I sat down with a bunch of undergrads and I asked them about what it's like to be there and they said "Well, first thing is, you gotta find a frat because, you know, you really have no social life unless you're part of a frat," and I was like "Ix-Nay Duke!" [Laughter] "That is not happening." [KG: Yeah.] So the more I learned about the University of Chicago and the Core, Common Core, and you know, as I read about it I was like "OK, that's where I wanna go." I still would have gone to Columbia, I mean, I would have had a choice between Columbia and University of Chicago, but, you know, obviously the Columbia thing was besmirched and so University of Chicago offered me a fresh start.

[43:20]

KG: Yeah. I just want to make sure I got all those dates. So it was 1973, the end of, like taking it out of the DSM...

AF: Right. Except that I didn't know that, it was the book [KG: Right, you didn't have a new enough DSM.] But you figure in 1973, even if they had taken it out of the DSM, even if they had done that, you figure in 1973 what was in public libraries? [KG: Yeah.] It took a while. It probably was 75 before that stuff started to work its way in.

KG: Yeah, I'm sure. Yeah, so it was the DSM, 1976 the soldier, and 1978 the White, the Dan White riots.

AF: Yes. Leonard Matlovich.

KG: Oh! There we go.

AF: I could Google it to make sure it's the right one.

KG: I can also do that, they pay me to do that stuff.

AF: OK. [Laughter] I'm glad they pay you, that's good.

KG: Yeah, thanks Dean Boyer. So when you got here, was it, was your suspicions about not having sports and not having frats, like did that stuff come true?

AF: It did help. Because they weren't, you know, I met all these really interesting nerd guys, you know, so nerdy straight men were like a good, that was a plus. And they were academic, and they were intellectual, and they cared about ideas and politics and thoughts and you know, this was very different from high school. So I did find, and well, just like that first guy, the older brother that rejected me, that's what we did! You know, I bonded with him. I thought he was going to be my best friend throughout all of college. So I immediately found simpatico with the people here, you know, that wasn't the issue.

KG: Yeah, it was a good, like intellectual match for you?

AF: Oh God. I loved it. Yeah.

KG: What did you do academically here, like...

AF: Economics. And History. [KG: Oh, OK.] I was really an American historian major, I wanted to be a PhD in History for a long time, until I really understood that that meant that I had to read the letters between, you know, a president and his wife during the 1840s and, like, you know, do papers on it, and I thought "Oh my God, I don't think I can do that" [KG: Yeah], so I shied away from it and then also it was the, you know the Reagan recession of 82 was pretty bad, so I started to get worried about career and things like that, and I thought "Well, since I don't think... you know, I can always go into graduate school in history if I want, but if I get the Econ degree I have more choices," and it was the right thing to do. It felt like a sell-out at the time but it was the right thing to do.

KG: Yeah. Did you then, like, follow the Econ degree somewhere?

AF: Nope.

KG: Oh! What did you do at Berkeley then?

AF: I was in a PhD program in developmental psychology. [KG: Oh!] I did an odyssey through the social sciences. So one of the ways that the University of Chicago matched me perfectly and poisoned me, and I don't mean that in a negative way [KG: Right.], was that the horror of academia is that you have to study this incredibly minute subject area,

and that you live within these paradigms, and then you spend the rest of your life arguing with the same forty people, and I thought, well, University of Chicago was, you know, we were interdisciplinary, so there was an emphasis on you know, if you were a sociologist you learned anthropology and you learned economics and you, you know, you cared about these things, you know, and... but if you were a psychologist in a big state psychology program, you only talk about psychology, you don't ever talk about anthropology, you don't ever talk about sociology [KG: Yeah], you don't talk about culture or the way you think of culture is absurd, because it's only within your little paradigms. [KG: Yeah.] And so I found it to be very constraining, and so University of Chicago fit me very well because I was never able to really decide, you know, which of the social sciences I want to commit to.

KG: Yeah, that makes sense as a reason to come here. Definitely. While you were here, did you, did they offer any classes on, like, gender or sexuality?

AF: Not that I remember. I... not that I remember at all.

KG: That's OK. [AF: Yeah.] It might not have existed. Did you have any, like, professors who were mentors to you at all? Or other people who were mentors to you?

AF: Some, some, you know. Not significant, not significant. And you know, and sadly, you know, one of the things that was very special for the gay people that I never participated in was there... you've heard of Roger and Howard Brown. [KG: Yeah.] So they created, there was a campus gay life that they helped create, and I, I'm sad that I missed out on that because I think that had I, had I been embraced a little bit more by some of these gay kids, I might have been able to participate in that myself. But I felt so judged and so excluded and so, you know, you must make a choice and it must be now on our terms that I, I wasn't willing to participate in that. I did go to one of their parties at one point, after, like maybe when I had already graduated or something. But I didn't get that. And for those people that were gay on campus...

Oh, you know, I did bond with Gil Herdt, who was a professor in anthropology, but that was after I graduated. [KG: OK.] And he was a, he was an openly gay professor and we did a study, and I have a publication under, in his book, about, we went to Horizons, which I don't know if it still exists, but Horizons was a gay and lesbian center on the North Side and social services, blah blah blah blah blah, and we interviewed kids that were in a coming out group, and we did life histories just like you're doing of me, which is one of the reasons why I was so excited about this. [KG: Oh!] So we did life histories of these kids and wrote an article called "Widening Circles" that got published. So that was like in... so I went from this closeted, you know, thing, so, you know, by the time I got to 85, 86, I'm not in college anymore, but I'm still active in like campus life, and at one point I TAed a class on sexuality here. [KG: Oh, really?] Yeah.

[49:11]

KG: Do you remember what year that was?

AF: It must have been 86. [KG: OK.] And it was under Gil Herdt.

KG: Was it just like, general, like, sexuality study, or?

AF: It was like... well, he wrote a book called *Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia*, and so it was this sort of cross-cultural study of gender and gender identity and sexual and sexual identity, so we read about the berdache, so Indian, Indian, like they have transgenders, what we would call transgender, in these Indian tribes, Native American tribes, they become like priestesses. And they were able to wear this sort of gender-mixed kind of dress, and they were seen as being high priestesses of some sort.

So you know, we studied stuff like that. And it was... so by that point I wanted to, I really my idea of psychology was to look at developmental psychology and people's identity and I was very interested in the complexity of it, of course, because in my early years coming out there was this black and white world that I perceived [KG: Yeah] and I wanted to help build out the grey so that, you know, we recognize that sexuality is more, it's more, it's more complex than what a modern gay identity circa 1980 afforded you with. And it is today, I think, more, more mixed. Like, today the grey area lives. [KG: Yeah.] It really didn't then.

[50:40]

KG: That's interesting that there wasn't really... it sounds like you don't remember any sexuality classes, but very quickly there was at least one.

AF: Right. Right. And by 86, you know, I think, I think that Rock Hudson coming out with his AIDS diagnosis, I don't know whether he actually did it on purpose or not... you know, that was pivotal, so Gil came here right around that time, and it was basically the anthropology, I believe, I don't even know this for sure, but the way that I remember it is, it was part of, we need to bring in this type of discussion on campus, so it was self-conscious on the University's part at that point. [KG: OK. That's interesting.] But the world changed between 80 and 86. And the other thing that happened was in 1980, you know, this was the end of the seventies. So gay life at that time was very different before AIDS, and it was wild, you know, it really, really, really was *wild*.

And gay men at that time and lesbians at that time—it was true in the late eighties as well—but one of the things I know that Scott's talking about is that the gay men and the lesbians on campus in 1980 were separate and the lesbians were going through a much more political understanding of their lives, the gay men were in a much more social understanding of their lives, and this is true today to a certain extent, but at least today you see, you know, middle class gay white men who are gonna give money and do stuff for gay marriage. But in 1980 it wasn't political. It was about, it was about partying, you know, more, and the social more. And it wasn't in your face politically, it was in your face in these social cultural, like, manifestations. And... yeah, I'm broadly generalizing, I realize, and I'm also not on the inside, I was a little bit on the outside looking in even

though I was also participating, so I had a unique perspective [KG: Yeah.], you know, and so if I were looking at a 360 of what was going on at that time I'd have to consider more, so... I don't know where I was kinda going with that, a little bit...

KG: That's OK. You said though that you didn't know a lot of lesbians at the time, right?

AF: No, I did not. [KG: OK.] But I later found out that one of the reasons why I didn't was because the Gay and Lesbian Alliance on campus at that time was very separate. So there were different days where the women had the office on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and the gay men had it on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and whatever. So it was like "We will not be together." [KG: Right.] And I only know that because they told me that, I didn't see it firsthand. And there was a woman my year who later came out, and so, and she lives in the Bay Area although I'm not really friends with her anymore, but I knew, you know, I watched her go through a coming out process and so then she was an out lesbian by the time we graduated.

KG: OK, so there were lesbians, they just weren't, like, running with the circle of gay men that you were...

AF: No. They were not, they were not. [KG: OK.] Because they were perceived as frivolous and apolitical and, you know, and to a certain extent that was a fair assessment. You know, they were also products of, you know, of the society at that time, which meant that they were men, and they were socialized as men. No matter how many times they called each other she, they still had many sexist ideas, you know. So I think that was part of what the women saw in them. And it's part of what I saw in them. [KG: Yeah.] Because one of the problems that I had coming out was that, well, I have deep, intimate relationships with women, I don't want that to stop, and I also cared greatly about women's rights. So that made me a little bit different too, cause the gay men at that time didn't give a rat's ass from my perspective. Scott did, you know, but not, I would hear them say things, well, just the way that they talked to each other was sexist, you know, it's manifestations of sexism, you know, and I found drag to be sexist, you know, because it was mocking women, it wasn't embracing women, it wasn't empowering women. In my view, you know, at that time.

KG: Yeah. Did you know people who did drag or participated in [AF: I just knew that they would...] the scene at all?

AF: No, I just knew that they were doing it and you know, they'd come... no, I didn't.

[55:05]

KG: OK. That's fine. Oh God, what question did we start with? I'm not really sure. That's fine.

AF: That's alright. [Laughter] Is this a fun interview for you?

KG: Oh yeah, I'm having a great time. I hope you're enjoying it. [Laughter] I love people who have good stories.

AF: Well, not only do I have good stories, but it's like, I'm gonna just put it on the table, you know. Why not?

KG: Oh yeah, yeah... you're making my job very easy. [Laughter] So did you come out to other people aside from Scott, or was it mitigating the story that you had to...

AF: Slowly and progressively, yes. Slowly and progressively. Slowly, I mean, you know, let's face it, freshman to, it's two years, it's not that much time. You know? But, you know, from the perspective of being that age, slowly. So my freshman year... well, the big, the big watershed was when I told Steve, who was my friend, my best friend, I regard him as my best friend from college. Straight guy, second year, met him in the dorm at Greenwood, we lived together the third year, and after telling him my full life story and the grey area concept, you know, we both said "Well, you know, you probably, given this bullshit you've had to go through, it's probably worth seeing if you can actually have a relationship with a woman."

And when I was with Aggie it became apparent that yeah, I can, but I can't be monogamous. So either I become one of these men that I had met all through high school, these married men that have sex with boys on the side, or I come out. And so after we broke up it became, I had one, there was one other woman that I tried to date, but she wasn't really... she really, really cared about me but she didn't want to date me. And so once that happened it was all over. I came out very quickly, in like, you know, in like [snaps fingers] in a snap.

KG: Yeah. And this is like the end of your second year?

AF: No. No, no. [KG: Oh, OK.] I dated Aggie in my third year [KG: OK] and it was somewhere in 1984 after actual graduation. [KG: Oh, OK.] So it was during 1984 and I was still living on-campus, well, off-campus, but I was living in Hyde Park and then I got a job working at the Chicago International Film Festival which Scott, that's where Scott was, and so we both worked there together, and at that point I was out. [KG: OK.] So 84, which would have made me twenty-two.

KG: Yeah, OK. Yeah, so you were already done with school [AF: Yeah], but you were twenty-two and you had finished a year early, and... OK, I just wanted to make sure the chronology was correct.

AF: Yeah. And then in 84 I started to volunteer as an AIDS support buddy, and I went through a training, you know, like a Shanti training style training on the North Side and I was living on the North Side by that point in the, in Lakeview. And that, you know, sort of... the advent of AIDS really changed everything because it made gay men who had not been political, political. And then I could relate to them. Cause I was political. [Laughter] So one of the problems I always had was the other gay men weren't as political as I was.

You know, they were, they were, you know, all about their white male privilege, and I saw that in them and didn't like it and didn't relate to it. And so had I, had that been more co-gendered and had I met some of the women, that might have been different for me, if I had met lesbians, because we were more, we had a different view of some of these things. But AIDS radicalized a lot of gay men. And so all of a sudden gay men became political and it wasn't just about the party. It wasn't just about fashionable jeans. It wasn't just about having sex. And when that happened I felt a hundred times more comfortable with these gay circles. Because now I could meet other political gay men, and that, that really helped a great deal, and then when I went into graduate school in 85, and then in 86 when I was doing that work with Gil Herdt here, you know, I was doing so out of a political perspective, you know, as a political gay person.

And then later, you know, the research that we did with these kids at Horizon helped also... you know, one of the things we did that was really cool is we had everybody fill out a chart, and it was your identity, your sexual history, your current sexual behavior, your social behavior, your emotional connection, and there were other dimensions. And I can't remember the name of the guy that created this in my, I think it was a male psychologist. But it was the Kinsey Scale, 0 to 6, but with all of those dimensions [KG: Oh, OK] and you plot yourself on it, and it changed everything. Because nobody is a six. Nobody is a zero. You know, straight men that are kind of misogynistic tend to be socially connected to other men [KG: Yeah], you know? So, and gay men often have very close intimate relationships with women, straight women or lesbians. So when you look at yourself that way it's like "OK, I am choosing to identify as gay and my behavior is gay, but I'm much more complex than a binary identity." And so that was part of, you know, obviously you can see where, I mean, I mean I'm reconstructing my narrative in such a way where it all makes sense, you know, and I'm not meandering, because of course I know how that turned out. [KG: Yeah.] But a lot of what I went through in my college years, I actually was fortified by the research that we did because these kids were complex! [KG: Yeah.] None of them were, very few of them were black and white.

And what I came to understand is that in the coming out process there are, now today you have eight-year-olds and thirteen-year-olds that declare that they're gay to their parents long before they've ever had sex. That didn't happen back then. But you also have people who can't get through conventional high school without being identified as queer by their peers. [KG: Yeah.] And it's their behavior, it's their, you know, their perceived effeminacy, it's whatever it is, and... and then there are people that don't get identified. And then there are people that are like me, who sort of have a legitimate grey area, you know, and obviously when I was in this legitimate grey area, there was, there was social pressure, if you... if you do live in a grey area, there's social pressure on heterosexist norms. Clearly. [KG: Yeah.] So you push that and you try to do that because you are capable of that, but in my life, most, a lot of gay men, at least half of gay men, it just wasn't an option for them to be with a woman, A, or B, they were identified by their peers long before they realized that they were gay or that what was going on with them was gay, or queer, whatever word you want to use.

KG: Yeah. So it sounds like these, like this involvement you had with the kids who were coming out and also the class that you TAed with Gil, Gil Herdt, both of those things were, like, pretty well tailored to what you sort of needed at the time.

[1:02:50]

AF: Yeah. [KG: OK.] Yeah, and I also, because I was so unhappy with how I was received, you know, one of the things that really bothered me about my high school years is that, you know, I had sex with probably eight men that should have been put in jail. [Laughter] Let's face it!

KG: Yeah, that's a thing to be bothered about, I would say.

AF: Now, now, I was looking for it [KG: OK], you know, I was overly sexualized as a kid, by... but it was overly sexualized by another peer, so it wasn't like I was molested. [KG: Right.] It's not like I have, I don't have a narrative of, you know, I'm a survivor of incest or molestation, I don't have that at all. You know, I was basically initiated into gay sexual behavior long before I was ready to handle it. And because I knew, because I had carnal knowledge, if you will, I knew where to get it, I started to learn where to get it, and so I wasn't psychologically ready to be doing it, but I was doing it. And not one of those men during those times, cause they were all adults, none of those men ever said "So, how are you doing with all this?" No one ever did. It was all about using it as, I was an object. [KG: Yeah.] And so one of the things that became really important to me after I came out was people that are in the closet, people that identify as bisexual who may be on a coming out path or maybe not, people who are young, [Door opens, AF: Hello!, door closes], people who are young, need and deserve the more experienced, mature person to take the high road. And so I've been very committed to that for the rest of my, my days, you know, up til now.

KG: Yeah. As like, sort of like a mentorship?

AF: Yeah. So I have mentored, you know, dozens of people through their coming-out process, like dozens. And they find me, and I find them, and you know. Because I'm in that, I still relate to the grey area, you know? Even though I identify as gay or queer—I like queer better than gay, actually, I say gay but I like queer better, it just wasn't my word when I came, you know [KG: Yeah.], in the eighties, it was more of a nineties word, so. But I, you know, I think that, that, we, that gay men have a responsibility, and none of those men that I had sex with at that time felt a responsibility. None of them did.

[1:05:20]

KG: Yeah, I've... I've heard something similar from someone else I interviewed who was here in the early eighties, that, you know, like the need for mentorship, and that wasn't there.

AF: It wasn't there. Roger and Howard provided it, but you had to be out to experience it, you know, they weren't [KG: Right], they weren't prowling around campus meeting closet

cases. [KG: Right] And you know, you couldn't expect them to, but you know, there wasn't, there wasn't a good way for people that were able to exist in the grey area to be able to learn anything that was positive.

KG: You mentioned that you were really interested in politics and political activism. Did you participate in, like, political organizations while you were here? [AF: Some.] Any that were, like, important or interesting or...

AF: Well one time we... there's a picture in the Maroon somewhere, we, they did some dedication—maybe? I don't remember if it was the dedication—of the statue for the first nuclear test.

KG: Oh, uh-huh. The one that's over by the Reg?

AF: Yeah, yeah. I don't remember why they were doing it, but there was something over there, so I organized a demonstration and we had, we were on the front page of the Maroon and I remember Daria, who lived in one of the dorms near me, she was one of these straight girls that has lots of gay friends, so Daria had this big sign that, you know, it said "No Bombs for Bonzo," you know, Reagan, right? [KG: Yeah.] I have to remember to root you in some of these references.

KG: Yeah, I wasn't alive then! [Laughter]

AF: Right, right, there is that! [Laughter]

KG: So that was...

AF: So that was like 81, maybe. And then I was somewhat involved with the College Democrats and then SDS, not SDS, what was it called? Oh, it was the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, D-SOC. [KG: OK.] But my first political activity was a protest against the draft when I was a freshman, cause Carter reinstated the draft registration, and that was a big deal. [KG: Yeah.] So, but... and there were people that were older, that were maybe like fifth-year seniors that organized that, and I went to a couple meetings and... but it was more armchair political.

KG: OK. Did you participate in any other organizations that weren't necessarily political while you were here?

AF: Not really. [KG: OK.] No, I was really much more, you know, my friends. Like I built my own social circle that I liked that I mean, remarkably, think about it, I was at a dorm reunion in April with my best friend, I'm here now with two other friends, next year my, cause I should be class of 84, there's another guy that I'm, Robert, who's one of the gay people that I mentioned earlier, you know, I'm trying to get him to do the same thing we did, which is to get a condo together so that we have common space, we're not in separate hotel rooms. [KG: Yeah.] You know, it's really fun. [KG: Yeah.] So I mean, I have like... and then there's Aggie, you know, my ex-girlfriend, that I'm still friends with,

and there's you know, this guy Adam that's a gay, he was a gay man, I met him in Wieboldt who I'm friends with, who lives in the city still, so I mean, I have like, I have like twelve friends that I'm in contact with, like, you know, thirty years later. [KG: Yeah.] So that's what I spent my time doing.

KG: That's so sweet. [AF: Isn't it?] Yeah. So it sounds like your community was like definitely centered on like the Hyde Park campus rather than like the North Side or something else.

AF: Yes, yes. [KG: OK.] Yeah, because I, I mean, I wanted to be on campus, and the North Side gay men... I didn't relate to them any more than I related to the high school guys that I hated, you know, it was like, you care about different things. [Pencil drops, KG: That's OK, I didn't need that. I'll get it later.] You know? And then the other thing that I remember was when I first went to a gay bar when I was about twenty-one and actually, this is thirty years ago, but I actually had men say to me "You're not *Jewish*, are you?" And I thought... [laughter] "Midwestern asshole, get out of my face." You know, and, and I'm not, even, but I was so offended by it that, cause it was clear that he wanted me not to be, you know? [KG: That's such a weird thing to say...] Isn't it? [KG: Yeah.]

But then what I realized is that, well, guess what, people who come to Chicago who are gay who come here because they're gay, where do they come from? Columbus, Ohio, Cleveland, Indianapolis, Dubuque, that's where they come from. [KG: Wisconsin.] Right! You know, so you end up with, you know, these men who came here because they're gay, but they still have all these crappy Midwestern ideas. [KG: Yeah.] About race, and about gender, and about other things. So that's why I went to the West Coast. [Laughter] Yeah, it was a choice between University of Chicago and University of California, Berkeley, and I was like, soon as I figured out San Francisco was across a bridge from Berkeley, it's like, please.

[1:10:27]

KG: Yeah. We can, we can talk about stuff you did after graduation if you want. [AF: OK.] We talked about the stuff you did at Horizons and with Gil Herdt a little bit [AF: Yup.] and you talked about being in the psychology program at Berkeley [AF: Yup.], is there anything else you want to add to that?

AF: Sure. Well, first there was the Horizons thing that we did, which was to interview kids in their coming-out process. [KG: Right.] And what I loved about our approach was that we, we were really interested in these grey areas, you know, so it was like taking the oppression that I felt my first year and turning it upside down. It was really great. And the group that we were with, guess what? One of them lives a mile from me in Oakland and works with me now, and I've been friends with her for thirty years, the other one, Adam, who lives in the city here, is the guy that I met in Wieboldt, he was the other interviewer, so, I mean, I had this collection of friends from the University of Chicago that have been consistent...

And then, so then, but the other really seminal thing that I did was the PWA, Person living With AIDS support thing. [KG: Right.] That was really big for me. [KG: Yeah.] Because it was, it was a program, I mean, it was a pretty well defined program, several weekends training, you know, psychosocial issues, etcetera, and then, you know, you get assigned somebody that's got AIDS. [KG: Yeah.] So it was you know, kind of a, it was really deep. You know? And there was a time, you know, in the eighties, when I was, I mean, granted, I was twenty-two, but, you know, I thought that they were gonna quarantine gay people, like there was a real chance that something like that could have happened, and in fact California voted on it. [KG: Really?] You know, quarantining people with HIV, not gay, but HIV. [KG: I didn't know about that.] Yeah, in the eighties, there were several times, it was, there was some hideous, evil senator, state senator that tried to have HIV-positive individuals quarantined, and there were, I think it was voted on two or three times. So there was a really, you know, it was like you, as a gay person you had to be political, it changed everything. [KG: Yeah.] And Reagan, what's really interesting about Reagan is that in the, in the thirty-five years since Reagan I've softened because, you know, in comparison to people like Michelle Bachmann or the current crop of people in Congress, Reagan looks moderate, you know? Reagan looks good. Reagan looks like, well he was the last of the reason... you know, he and George Bush Senior were the last of the reasonable Republicans, that's how it looks today [KG: Yeah] but only because of retrospect. [KG: Yeah]

Because recently I was watching a movie, really good movie if you haven't seen it, *Before Stonewall* and then *After Stonewall*. They're documentaries. Have you seen them both? [KG: No.] Oh, they're awesome. [KG: OK.] You can get them on Netflix. [KG: Oh, great!] So *Before Stonewall* and *After Stonewall*, and *Before Stonewall* is up through the riots, the Stonewall riots, and then *After Stonewall* is after the Stonewall riots and some of the same people are interviewed in both. [KG: Oh.] And the people that are interviewed are truly the figures of gay and lesbian history. And so you see Harry Hay, you know, interviewed, you know who that is?

KG: I know that I read something about him but now I don't remember, cause...

AF: [Laughter] That's alright, I know that I'm embarrassing you, don't worry. I'm really knowledgeable about this stuff, so... but you know, it's good, but before... I would definitely watch both of those. [KG: Yeah, definitely.] And... why did I bring that up?

KG: We were talking about Reagan as the last reasonable...

AF: Oh, Reagan! Yeah. So one of the things that happens in *After Stonewall* is they have some clips about Reagan talking about gay people, and they're just the most homophobic, horrible things you can possibly imagine, and it's like "No wonder I hated him! Of course I hated him, he was an ass!" [KG: Yeah.] You know, but only because the ones today are so much worse that you can think that, but Reagan also was a, you know, and his response to AIDS and his lack of response was a really radicalizing force for gay men and so it helped bring the gay community closer to where I was. [KG: Yeah.] Because I saw things through political eyes even before I came out. Mostly on the basis of race, that was

my particular issue that I was, I cared about, and so it was natural when I came out to, you know, “I’m gay,” so you know, obviously you wanna support your own rights. [KG: Right.]

And so when I got to Cal, there was absolutely no energy at the student GALA, the student organization, it was horrifying. I was so appalled. And one of the things about, you know, I came to Cal thinking I was gonna meet the most interesting, progressive gay people I would ever meet in my life, right? [KG: Yeah.] That was what I thought, and I went to the first meeting and there were like twelve undergraduates and I was, or it was like *eight* undergraduates, and so I was a graduate student [KG: Yeah] and I spoke up and by the end of the second meeting they elected me co-president. [KG: Wow!] Cause I was, you know, I knew what... I was just more mature, you know? [KG: Yeah.] And so we, I said, you know, and I don’t know whether it was already set up this way or if we forced it, but I said I would do it if and only if I had a lesbian co-president. I wouldn’t do it just as the president. [KG: Yeah.] And so there was a woman that was elected co-president with me, and we tried to create—I’m doing the thing with my fingers again—so two circles where there was an overlap, and I said what we need to do is we need to create women-only space, we need to create men-only space, and the women-only space, of course, what did it turn into, it was like a circle talk, you know, where people sit for an hour and they have a discussion about their lives and their issues. What did the gay men want? They wanted a coffee hour where they could meet each other. Right? So I said, you know, and so these kids were, you know, “But we wanna do something political!” I’m like “You can’t do anything political with twelve people!” [Laughter] You know? You’re alienating everybody on campus, the only way that we can do this is we have to bring them in, and then we raise their political consciousness, and then you can do political action. [KG: Yeah.] But if they don’t see each other as anything more than the next sexual partner, they’re not gonna be political! So they, that was what got them. [Laughter]

So we started having these coffee hours, because I knew that GALA had very popular coffee hours that, for the gay men. [KG: Right.] And then the women group did the, their circles. And then we had joint meetings where we talked about what we were gonna do because we had a budget and we had an office and we staffed it and then we also in Sproul Plaza, which is like the quad, sort of, they have political, ever since the Free Speech Movement, they have student organizations can leaflet between twelve and two, or something. [KG: Oh.] You know, so you can do political work. [KG: Right.] And so the most important thing to me was manning that table, you know, peopling that, staffing that table. [KG: Right.] And we made sure that it was a man and a woman, not every time, but we did this best we could, but it got the men and the women to know each other, and then because I, I was more adept at understanding the women’s perspective, you know, I played broker, you know. So the women would just be, sometimes they were like “Drew, why are they so frivolous? Why are they so... they’re ridiculous! Why are they so...” I’m like “I know, I know, you know, we’re gonna help them.” You know, and then I remember very distinctly this one guy saying to me “But why won’t they shave under their arms?” and I said “Marty, do you ever expect to be naked with a woman,” “Well, no,” and I said “Why do you care? It’s not yours to think about!” And I’m like “Let them be!” [KG: Yeah.] “Don’t... you don’t have to understand it, it’s not your challenge!” So we

would... so we ended up, it was really a remarkable thing, because we got some momentum and we started having dances that were actually popular. [KG: Oh!] And so we would get like a hundred and fifty, two hundred people at dances and so the dances were co-sexual, the coffee hours were mostly men but women, we didn't dissuade anybody from coming, but we knew that they would end up being mostly for the guys. [KG: Right.] And then we started a group called Lavender Grads, so we had a special graduate student area of this.

And then we all built it up towards an awareness week, and the awareness week was, I mean, we did amazing things, we had Holly Near come and play music for, during the, we had a big rally in Sproul Plaza, and we had Holly Near come, we had Harry Hay come and do a talk about the Radical Fairies, we had... I can't remember who else we had come but it was like we had this litany of famous Bay Area gay people who came and, you know, did talks, and you know, at one point I had this woman come to me, you know, come into a meeting and be outraged because we didn't have any bisexual activities, and I said "We don't have anybody that's openly bisexual who has asked to do anything, so will you set up something?" and she's like "Oh, OK... I'll do it!" and she did. And so we, you know, so what I was trying to do, what I wanted to do is build a community that was supportive, that was the contrast to what happened in 1980 with me. [KG: Right.] And, you know, what's, what was really gratifying is that years later I've had people come up to me and say, you know "I came out because of you."

KG: You really have counseled everyone through their coming out...

AF: I have! [Laughter] I have! So that was really, I really felt like it was a, you know, I turned the sort of negative experience that I had freshman year at Chicago into something very positive, that wasn't just positive for me, but that was positive for other people as well. And we got to a point where we were truly a community on that campus and it meant that you had dozens and dozens and dozens and dozens of friends, and they were co-sexual. So you had women friends and you, the communities didn't merge completely, because they have, they had different purposes, and they had different needs, and yet we became friends together, and I don't think that that had happened... it's not usual that that happens in those kinds of environments. So we were very proud of that, you know, in particular.

KG: Yeah, that's great! And that, could you tell me one more time what year that was?

AF: Sure, sure! I started in the fall of 87, so this would have been 87-88.

[1:21:32]

KG: OK. Well, I'm probably gonna ask you some of the wrapping up questions, if that's OK. [AF: Sure!] Let's see. So has your perception of your time at U Chicago changed? I know that you just said that you've like used it to build other things, so I don't know, has that opinion evolved at all?

AF: I'm bummed out that I graduated early. I should have stayed another year, even if I'd had too many credits. You know, I didn't appreciate how great it was. I also think that, you know, I had gone through some pretty traumatic stuff my freshman year and it's, I would have done better academically, not that I, I mean, I did fine, but I didn't, you know, it's not like I would have gone to medical school or law school, not that I cared, but, you know, and I got into Cal graduate school, so it's, I mean, I didn't do badly [KG: Yeah] but I think I would have been more focused on my academics if I had found a more supportive community. [KG: Right.] And I didn't. And, so, you know, but I loved college, and I mean, how can I not, when you can rattle off, I can rattle off ten people that I've had a conversation with in the last month, that I went to college with, thirty years ago.

KG: Yeah. It sounds like you built, like a really strong social circle.

AF: I really did. [Laughter] And it was different, too, because it wasn't one. You know, I had... nobody from that summer semester, that summer quarter, nobody, I didn't remain friends with any of them. I could have, but it was obviously traumatic. [KG: Yeah.] From freshman year, Scott, Larry, who I'm staying with, and then Robert, who's a gay man, one of the, one of those guys over here in that area.

KG: I think I may have interviewed...

AF: Robert [redacted]?

KG: Nope. Different Robert, sorry.

AF: OK. Oh well. Bob Devendorf? [KG: Yeah, that one.] I know Bob. [KG: Yeah.] I know Bob!

KG: Yeah, he was my first interview. [Interview #4]

AF: How funny! [KG: Yeah.] Of course I know him.

KG: I thought you would know him because you're pretty close in the time that you were here [AF: Yeah], and I wasn't sure if that was the Robert that you were talking about.

AF: No. He, Robert Devendorf was younger than me. [KG: Oh, OK.] A year or two younger.

KG: Yeah, I think he was 82, 85 or something like that.

AF: Yeah, and so he was one of those guys that, well by the time I came out, he was a junior or a senior, you know, or maybe he... I don't know, I don't remember exactly right [KG: Right], but he was younger than me, so that 84, after I graduated, I knew him then.

KG: I didn't want to like out him in the middle of the interview [AF: That's alright], but since you know who he is...

AF: I know who he is. [KG: Yeah, OK.] And then Robert [redacted] is my friend that I'm, you know, I've been, he actually lived in the Bay Area for a number of years and then moved back to New York, so we actually were, you know, since college we lived in the same city together. [KG: Right.] But that was my freshman year. Then my second year it was my best, who I consider my best friend from college, who I didn't even know those first two years, so it's like I had a series of different social circles that overlapped and evolved during the time I was here. But it was, it's remarkable, and I've come to appreciate that more after having come back to the, the Greenwood reunion.

KG: One of the other things that I like to, that we like to ask is how you perceive the differences between your generation and generations that have come after.

AF: Oh yeah, love to talk about this. It's my favorite topic of all.

KG: I'll set you free.

AF: Except for World War Two. I'm really into World War Two. But that's a whole different story.

KG: You can talk to me about that afterwards.

AF: OK, I'm just kidding. [Laughter]

KG: This isn't my main area of history.

AF: I have obsessions, I have intellectual obsessions I go through in life, you know, and so... yeah, no, I actually, there are things about my generation that I don't like, and I'm gonna make it explicitly political for you. [KG: OK.] So I recently saw on Facebook, you know, some, it was about the youth vote, and it was an article about how, how many people in the millennial generation voted for Obama. And...

I'm gonna stop that for a minute and I'm gonna take you back to 1983. [KG: OK.] So in 1983 Jane Byrne was mayor, I guess, of Chicago and there was a three-way race between Harold Washington, Jane Byrne and Richie Daley who eventually became the mayor for, you know, three decades or something. And because it was a three-way race, Harold Washington, who was the first black mayor of Chicago, won. And I was really into him. He was my congressman from Hyde Park, and so Aggie, who had grown up in Chicago, was like "Oh, he'll never be able to win," and I convinced her that she needed to vote for Harold Washington. So we all voted for Harold Washington. In fact, it was, that's why I registered in—no I must have registered—yeah, I registered in Illinois for the first time for that election, cause I had been registered as an absentee from New York. [KG: Oh, OK.] And it was the Obama, nobody talks about this anywhere, this is probably one of those things that I probably shouldn't tell you cause I should write a book about it, but Harold Washington's coalition is the Obama coalition of today. I'm getting goosebumps, it's so true. So if you were white and liberal in 1983, you wore a Harold Washington blue button on your coat, and you had a connection with Latin folks—we call them Latin in

California, by the way, not Hispanics, but—Latinos, and African-Americans, and there, I don't think there were appreciable Asians, but, or gay, and he was very pro-gay. So that coalition, which is the Obama coalition, came together and made him the Democratic nominee. And there was a counter—I'm going to call it counter-revolution, but that's extreme—there was this response of the white Democrats, the white racist working class Democrats of Chicago, to rally behind one of the aldermen who was gonna run on the Republican ticket, and for the first time since the New Deal a Republican got like 47 percent of the vote. And I think that Harold Washington won 53 to 47, not too different from what Obama did, by the way, in terms of percent. And it was the only time except for the Obama election of 08 when you had this palpable feeling that something new had happened. And it was black people and gay people and Latinos and white liberals coming together around a candidate who happened to be African-American, but essentially it was important that he was African-American because it empowered people that had not been empowered before. [KG: Right.]

And I remember walking around with my button, and I remember walking by a construction site, who presumably they were union members, these white guys, and I, and they said to me, you know, "You gonna vote for that nigger faggot?" And I'm like, you know, and I said "Damn straight!" And it was this really powerful moment that Chicago came together and elected its first black mayor, and he was reviled and hated in the same ways that Obama is today, which is why I know that the reason why he's reviled and hated is because he's black. Because I watched it happen in Chicago, which is a predominantly Democratic city. Now Chicago's come a long way in thirty years, but at that time that's the way it was. [KG: Right.] So I feel as a person who came of age in the early 80s like a forerunner of today's millennials. So I feel like, you know, we paved the way for that to happen later. [Laughter/sob] I'm getting emotional!

[1:30:08]

And so when I was in high school, I dated a Puerto Rican girl and I remember in 1978 the Springboks, who were the South African rugby team, came to Rochester, New York, and it was my first political demonstration ever, that they should not have a right to come to the United States and perform because they represented apartheid. And that was long before the campus demonstrations in the 80s, you know, so I was always very much about racial equality. So this experience with Harold Washington in this election was really... it gave people hope. It gave people the idea that we could change things, and it paved the way for what would ultimately become the Obama coalition.

But much like the Baby Boomers, and I consider myself not a Baby Boomer, they messed around with the date. I was born in 62, in some places I'm considered a Baby Boomer, in other places I'm considered tail end, sometimes Gen X [KG: Yeah], sometimes I'm other, you know, like "You're the In-Betweeners," but what was different for us in my generation was we didn't get cheap college, we didn't get cheap apartments, we didn't get plentiful jobs. We were after all that, and so we had an experience that was much more like the Generation X group. But I grew up after the Civil Rights Act, I grew up, you know, when I was in junior high school you took Home Ec and Industrial Arts, you know,

there was no gender... [KG: Yeah] Women, girls wore pants, you know, people four years older than me, girls didn't get to wear pants until they were seventeen! It was bizarre. [KG: Yeah.] Camille, who was a good friend of mine that was in that Horizons reviewing group, she's a little older than me and she said that she was fourteen before they let them wear pants, even in Rochester, New York. Well, she wasn't in Rochester, but upstate New York in the middle of the winter, girls would have to wear a skirt over their pants so that they could be worn. [KG: Wow.] Absurd gender crap. [KG: Yeah.] You know?

So I feel like my generation, you know, so the baby boomers think of themselves as liberals, the liberal ones think of themselves as liberal, but that generation, which is now sixty-plus, voted for McCain, and voted for Romney. [KG: Right.] So they're not really liberal. There was a small group that was very liberal. But they were not the dominant force. My generation, I recently saw this data that said, we voted for Reagan. Young people voted for Reagan. Not so much in 1980, cause we voted, cause there was a third party candidate that a lot of young liberals voted for. John Anderson. Scott voted for John Anderson I remember. I voted for Carter. But in 84, my generation voted for Reagan. So I was like this, you know, anachronistic liberal in this sea of red, you know, Republican red. And as a, you know, forming gay identity in this time of the beginning of AIDS, you know, that part, that added to my previously political identity. So one of the... and then what's happened in my generation is, although we started out being big Reagan-Bush supporters, when Clinton became president we kind of switched. And my fifty-year-olds, which is what I am, we split 50-50 between Obama and McCain. [KG: OK.] And then below me, or younger than me, they voted for Obama. Older than me they voted for McCain.

And so one of the things that's interesting is that my politics when it comes to race, gender, stuff like that, is more similar to the Millennials of today than my own generation. So I find, like that guy who tried to come onto me in a bar and said—it was more than once, it was at least twice—you know, “Are you Jewish? You're not Jewish, are you?” Like, that kind of behavior, you know, that was just, you couldn't offend me any more than to say something racist to me. And one of the things that I adore about your generation is the fact that because there are so many mixed-race people and because you don't have a binary racial environment... so when I was a kid, it was binary, it was black or white. There were some Puerto Ricans, there were a couple of Vietnamese that had started to come through, but you know, especially in upstate New York it was black or white. So because you have a, you know, multi-poled racial environment plus you have mixed-race and for your generation it... from my perspective it looks like race is no longer an issue. Now are there racist people? Of course there are, you know, but in comparison I feel like your generation reflects the dream that we had when Harold Washington became mayor. And I feel like, you know, it's like, and then you look at the way that straight kids that are under 35 see gay marriage, or, you know, medical marijuana or the social issues, you know, it's like even if you're an Evangelical Christian you're more likely, if you're under 35, to be for gay marriage, you know? So I feel like there's this, I just, I'm, I just am floored by how wonderful it's going to be in ten years when you know, we've kind of progressed through this process of watching the generation that resisted civil rights die away.

[1:36:00]

KG: [Laughter] That was a really serious answer to this question.

AF: Yeah! No, I'm very serious, and I think, you know, I mean there's more to it because I didn't even touch on the gay stuff. So one of the things that I think is tremendously wonderful at this point, I have a lot of interaction for various reasons with men that are younger than me and you know, one of the things that I've noticed is that a typical twenty-eight year old today doesn't have to segregate socially. [KG: That's true.] You keep your straight friends. Your straight friends are like "Oh, OK, whatever. Cool." Move on. They don't have to adopt the same extreme flamboyance that the kids of my generation did. It's just, they're just themselves, so if they're bro and dude and whatever, that's what they are, they don't have to change, they don't have to shed that, because it's not an affectation, it's their generation! And I think that that means that, you know, there is a de-emphasis on traditional coming out and more of an emphasis on expression of who you are. And you know, and I don't mean to paint like it's utopia, right? I don't mean to say that it is, and I'm sure it's not, but I feel like there's more choices that people have.

There is one thing that I would caution against, though, which is, you know, one of these weird, you know, sort of, kind of, what do you call it... outlier ideas, which is, there's a danger in gay marriage. Now gay marriage has to be legal and it has to be absolutely, it absolutely must happen. But one of the things that I don't want to see happen is that part of being queer means you're queer. And it might mean that you have a relationship with two people simultaneously or three people or that you have serial monogamy or that you don't have relationships or that you have anonymous sex or that... and that freedom is at risk because now we get to be just like straight people and be forced into this model of heterosexual marriage. Well what if you don't want to have kids, do you really have to be married for thirty years, really, truly? You know, so I fear, I fear that, but at the same time I think that the generation under 35 is much more freed up than the generations that came before. And part of what I like about it is that because I feel like I was at the forefront of some of that stuff, that watching what's happening is like what we wanted, you know, in so many ways that it feels like, well, I don't, I'm not committed to it being my way, I just want it to be greater freedom of expression, and I feel like that really is happening.

So of the young men that I know, or that I've met recently in the last couple years, there isn't the kind of, you know, like in San Francisco thirty or twenty, twenty-five years ago, there were bars you'd go to where it was only gay white men. In California, like, there's something wrong with this picture, right? And then you'd have other clubs that were multicultural, and I think that, you know, my generation of gay men was much more comfortable with other gay white men, and I think that now that's not the case, and I think that the other thing that's happening is that the Kinsey 2s and 3s and the Kinsey 4s and 5s are finding themselves in a place where they can express that grey area world that they live in, or that is their truth, in a way that does not get compromised, in a way that is maybe not supported fully, but at least there's room for expression, and so some of the things that I had to put up with, I don't think that people have to put up with today.

[1:40:15]

KG: Yeah, I think that's, I think that's a pretty good, comprehensive answer.

AF: [Laughter] It's probably more than you expected, but you know, that's alright.

KG: It's good. We touched briefly on why you agreed to be interviewed for the project. [AF: Sure, sure.] Do you want to reiterate that or expand on it at all?

AF: Absolutely, sure. Well, you know, obviously I have a lot to say. [Laughter] You know, and I think that, you know, what I want, I mean my, I mean, you know, I did this very self-consciously because, you know, I figured that there, you know... well, the weird thing about being 22 in 1982 is that there are probably people that came out in their forties and fifties, you know, so there's probably people still coming out of my age cohort. But there was the one... you were either out in college or you weren't. And I didn't want only the out people to be heard. Cause I think that there was another story there and you know, it's like whenever you do surveys of gay people or queer people, you're only getting the people that are willing to identify. [KG: Right.] And so I mean, obviously I'm identified now, but because that voice was suppressed in various ways both internally and from outside of myself, I wanted to have that be expressed.

I also wanted to call attention to the fact that there was a subterranean sexual world on campus, and I think that that's really important and you know, one of the, you know, as we get more sanitized, where, you know, it's like "The ultimate goal of my life is to meet the man of my dreams and have a china set and go to a gay marriage where we can have a giant gay wedding cake and we can live happily ever after with our two Korean children that we've adopted," it's like, you know what, the world's more complex than that, and I want to make sure that that is said. [KG: Yeah.] You know, because I think that, you know, we're in danger, especially gay white men, because, you know, gay white men don't really have to confront very much in their lives in terms of privilege, and so they tend to be more conservative. And I think that the constraint that I fear now for people is that if you're not married, if you're not partnered, if you're not... that, you know, there isn't room for that expression. And I'm not partnered, and I'm not married, and when someone says gay marriage to me personally, my first thought is prenuptial agreement, you know, I don't have any illusions that marriage is so great because I'm fifty years old and I've watched people go through horrible marriages and get divorced and lose everything in the process. So I don't have this happy illusion about how wonderful marriage is. [Laughter] Although my parents had a great marriage, but nevertheless, you know, I think that... so I see that, you know, that the danger right now is that we let gay marriage become the be-all, end-all of existence and that if you don't have that, there's something wrong with you. Much like in 1980 you were either out and gay and calling each other "She" and "Bitch" or you were in the closet having sex in bathrooms, you know, you really didn't have a choice to do anything else. [KG: Right.] And so you know, that's kind of, part of the reason I wanted my voice to be said, because I knew that I was the kind of person that

was actually going to put that on the table, and that, as I've said before, I don't give a rat's ass, you know, I think it's important. You know, I don't need to sanitize anything.

KG: Yeah. [Laughter] That's great.

AF: And I'd be happy to talk to this guy that's doing research.

KG: Yeah, if you don't mind I'll give him your e-mail address [AF: I would love to. Love to.] and I think he'll be, like, thrilled about it. He e-mailed the facilities manager recently to see if he could, like, go down there and look at it. [Laughter]

AF: That's funny.

KG: Yeah, he's so sweet, he's just like... I think he's a first year, he's just a little freshman. Is there anything else you want to say as we're sort of wrapping up here?

AF: You know, we should probably keep talking for a while because Mr. Dennis... oh, Mr. Dennis, upstairs, you know, once those lips get flapping they keep going, and he has a lot to say, so, you know, I don't have anything to do until he's done! [Laughter] But I mean, you know, there's more we can talk about, I'm sure [KG: OK!], so what, well, you know, of all the things I've talked about, you know, why don't you, I'll interview you back a little. [KG: OK.] What thing did I say to you that was most, like, surprising, or different from what other people have said, and then maybe we can talk about that a little more.

KG: Well, I think yours is sort of the first perspective that I've had of somebody who wasn't, somebody of like... OK, so we have, we have respondents who are like only a few years out of college, and they're kind of more like what you're saying where they're in the... they're identifying as bi or queer, and they're not, you know, very cliquy with other gay people, and like that's a thing that we can do now, but I think for, you know, people who are older than that by, I mean, more than like five or six years, it's pretty surprising to hear someone who wasn't like very very involved in gay life, to... [AF: Good.] Yeah.

[1:45:30]

AF: Good. Because that's why I wanted to get interviewed. [KG: Yeah.] You know, that really was it. So maybe, well, we'll focus on what that was like for me. So you know, that, that first summer, I really, I was really disillusioned when I first got here. Not with the University, cause you know, I had these two weird tensions about coming here. One tension was, for the first time in my life I was with my people. [Laughter] Like, you know, I am the quintessential University of Chicago student, you know. I watch documentaries for fun, you know? [KG: Yeah.] I mean, I am that person, you know, I mean, I work at a bank, which you'd never be able to tell by looking at me, but I work at a bank and I'm the vice-president of a project management office, you know, I have this downtown... which is kind of great because in downtown San Francisco you can be me and have a job like that, you know, it's kinda cool. [KG: Yeah.] But that's part of moving to the Bay Area,

you know, cause I wanted that freedom, you know, I'd been striving for being able to have freedom of expression in various ways my whole life on some level.

But when I first got here, I had this really weird tension of, you know, I was looking for intellectual connection and I was looking for coming out as bi. I wanted both. [KG: Yeah.] I got one. I got the intellectual. Didn't get the bi. Well, I got it, and it backfired horribly, you know, as you know. And a lot of, you know, and I think I also was bothered by the fact that I had never met somebody who was left-wing that was anti-gay, so that was bothersome [KG: Yeah] because it's like "Oh, well I always thought that that was because people were conservative or Christian or whatever," but now I figured out that there was this strain of left-wing politics that at that time was anti-gay. Now, you know, people that sell socialist workers papers on the corner, you know, it's all about gay marriage, and you know, whatever and it's like "OK, well, you guys weren't saying that thirty years ago, I remember." But anyway, you know, you've come around, and that's good. And so the thrill of having age peers that were intellectually interested, since that had never really... I mean, I had individual friends in high school and junior high, but they were the few and far between that I found. [KG: Right.] They weren't in my school, even... so my mother used to send me to these, like, Rochester museum things where I would meet kids and, like we'd go to an archeology dig for two weeks, you know, and then I met somebody that went to a different high school, you know, there, but in my high school not so much. [KG: Right.] Excuse me. And so the... it was, so it wasn't like I thought "Oh my God, it's University of Chicago that's wrong," it was more like "Is there any place that would be OK and accepting of bi." [KG: Right.] You know, and I didn't know about Vassar and Oberlin at the time but you know, I think...

KG: Oh, was that like a better place to be then?

AF: Well, like, Vassar had really out people, and... yeah, I think so. [KG: OK.] So at that time, in 1980, there were small liberal arts colleges that used to be women colleges that were now co-ed where they were like sixty, seventy percent female and thirty percent male where there was lots, and lots, and lots of openly gay stuff going on. And so I think that when I was in that age group... but those places weren't near big cities. [KG: Right.] So my thought, but I wanted to be anonymous, I wasn't looking for out gay campus life per se, I was afraid of being identified. So in a big urban area, which is something that gay men had been doing since the late 19th century, you know, that anonymity that Chicago afforded me was what drove me here, and... and I think that, that because I found this intellectual community that I did relate to, it took some of the edge off of not being able to come out and be bi. And it wasn't like I was losing something, I had never been out with that, so it didn't really matter. [KG: Yeah.]

And then it turned out that one of the guys in my dorm that summer was a very openly gay man, but I didn't know it, and I didn't, I didn't get to be friends with, he was older, he was a senior or something, and so he didn't pay attention to the freshmen, but if, you know, if I had been able to have a conversation with him and had become friends with him that might have changed things too. Because he might have been a way for me to connect with the openly gay people in the fall in a much more positive way than

happened. [KG: Yeah.] Because my relationship with Scott was in the dorm, it was, you know, part of the dorm life, not, I wasn't going off to the North Side with him [KG: Right] and certainly wasn't going to a gay lesbian, you know, alliance, GALA, it was called GALA at the time [KG: Right], I wasn't going to those and wouldn't. So the, and then after the whole thing happened with the girlfriend going to the hospital and all that, you know, I didn't want any part of it. So I was very happy, you know, Larry last night, the straight guy that we're staying with, you know, he, he was like "But why didn't you tell me? You know, you could have told me, you know." I was like "I wanted to be not that. I wanted to be given a chance to just be me again."

KG: Yeah. It sounded like you had very little information, very little control over your information in the very beginning [AF: Right], which is...

AF: Yes, and that was the traumatic piece, which is probably very unique to me, you know, that was just really strange that things happened the way they did, and I liked these, you know, sophomore straight guys in this dorm, I really liked them a lot, and so it was really easy for me to just be with them because we had lots to talk about and I could sort of avoid the topic myself, so I didn't have to confront it, and so they gave me a kind of, you know, an illusion of freedom [KG: Right] because I could just be with them as Drew, not as Drew who's in the closet who knows about these, you know, weird bathrooms where orgies are taking place on campus and, you know, is being, you know, vilified by these openly gay men, you know, and...

But I would say that progressively during my time except for that first year, after that, you know, I was on a coming out process. And you know when I look back on it I realize that, you know, with each successive quarter, you know, the circle of people that knew my story or who I was or what my identity was grew. And then I, you know, and then there was a period where I had openly gay friends but who weren't part of that flamboyant scene, you know, but we were all semi-closeted, and but we were living sort of both ways, you know, so we had some friends we were out to, some friends we were not out to [KG: Yeah], and so I had a group of friends like that for a while and then gradually each of us came out and, you know, if you've got a partner then it's easier to be out in some ways because it's like "Well, I've got a partner now, you know, I'm living with him," you know, it's like you know, you don't, you're not gonna hide that, and, and I found that, that for me what was most important was, you know, I had that one friend that rejected me that summer, the brother, so when my friend Steve, I talked to him about it my second year and he was cool with it, that was, it kind of reversed that trend, so I made, so I went through this whole year between that happening and meeting Steve where it was like, well, could I ever really be out and have a life that didn't mean self-segregating into a gay community or could I have my own life and be me, and then Steve was like the, the cornerstone of being able to do that.

And so once I, once I discussed it with him, of course then I had a girlfriend for a while. But I had a girlfriend and I was, I was kind of out as a bisexual by then, you know, in kind of this soft way, not in a political way, not in a in-your-face kind of way, but there was an acknowledgement and Aggie knew that I had had sex with men before so it wasn't

like I had hid that from her. [KG: Right.] But when I knew that I couldn't be monogamous is what really [snaps fingers] you know, twisted, put me over the edge. That was when I, I really felt like I needed to come out.

[1:54:04]

KG: Yeah. How did you meet Steve and Aggie?

AF: Steve was in my dorm in Greenwood.

KG: Oh, OK, right, that's right.

AF: And Aggie was friends with a guy who was openly gay, that I was friends with, but I was not out to. [KG: Oh.] So he introduced me to her, and it was in the Reg's—does Regenstein still have a café?

KG: They moved it upstairs, but yeah.

AF: It was on the A level at that time.

KG: Yeah, it was there when I started and they did renovations. It's a lot nicer now. [Laughter]

AF: I bet. It was, it was a hole, you know.

KG: Yeah. I was amazed that they kept it like that as long as they did, given how many people live in the Regenstein. [Laughter]

AF: So I met her there. In Regenstein café. So he was, [KG: Romantic.] yeah, you know. [Laughter] It's so U of C, right? [KG: Yeah.] So yeah, so we had a lot of fun, you know, and, you know, I had a very wild, you know, time with her, you know, and it was, and I, I mean, there's no way to look at my life when I was at the University of Chicago other than to use the word bisexual, which is why I put that 4.5 thing there. [KG: Yeah.] So no matter what my identity might be, my behavior was seriously bisexual.

[1:55:12]

KG: Yeah, I think that I'm happy to have this perspective, the bisexual perspective, I think that's sort of lacking.

AF: Yeah, even though now, you know, I'm a gay man, you know, I, I mean, I'm not having, I haven't dated women in twenty-five years, so.

KG: Right. That doesn't really de-legitimize your...

AF: Exactly, exactly. And that's the thing that, you know, that no longer happens in queer circles, is that you don't have to de-legitimize those things. [KG: Right.] It's like "Oh,

well I was going out with her, but I was really this gay person that was in the closet,” it’s like “Well no, it was more complex than that,” actually... and we also, I mean the funny thing, you hear these stories about, you know, University of Chicago, and no one ever gets laid, whatever, it’s like, well, that was not the case [KG: Yeah], you know, we were, I was very sexually active during those years, and to the point where we had, you know, women and two men together kind of thing, like it was...

So I had a different experience than a lot of the gay men that you’re probably interviewing. [KG: Yeah.] I’m glad, I’m glad that I did that then, I mean, I would have done it anyway, because of the Horizons experience, it’s like “Hello, I was a social scientist,” you know, I’m gonna participate in anything I can contribute to when it comes to those kinds of things [KG: Yeah], and if this is part of a permanent archive about gay life in the 20th century, you know, I’m really into that [KG: Yeah], so that’s how I see it.

[1:56:35]

KG: Yeah, this... I think this is a great interview, personally. [Laughter] Oh... what else should I ask you about?

AF: Any other aspect that we want to kind of delve into, cause I mean, you know, I’ve kinda given you the overview but there’s, you know, of course there’s things I’m not talking about that I’ve probably, if prompted I would do.

KG: I mean... man, we’ve like, we’ve really been all over the map here.

AF: I know. [Laughter] But I’ll go into another thing that was very important to me. So as I’ve mentioned, you know, my perspective is political, pretty political. [KG: Right.] And what Scott did is he helped me understand the gay issues through the eyes of politics. So he told me about the Stonewall riots, and Gay Liberation, and as, you know, one of the things that’s very strange to me now to think about is 1980 was eleven years after the Stonewall riots. [KG: Yeah, that’s insane.] Right? I mean, because, you know, I was seven when they happened, but, you know, only in retrospect from your age at fifty can you think of that, it’s like, but 1980 was, it might as well have been a hundred years after the Stonewall riots from our perspective.

But you can see that my coming out story was reflective of pre-Stonewall gay life, you know, all the cruising stuff, the psychopathologies, all of that stuff was a pre-Stonewall model of coming out, whereas like Scott, going to a college gay group when he was in high school, that’s a post-Stonewall coming out. [KG: Yeah, definitely.] You know, very different. So he gave me all of the socialization, you know, taught me about what a pink triangle was, and there was no rainbow flag at that time, but it was a pink triangle, that was the big political symbol. And Lambda, the Lambda, you know [KG: Yeah], he also taught me that, and helped me understand what lesbian separatists were like and what that meant and why they were, you know, why that was in existence and so I had this understanding of gay history through him that helped me start to see myself, it’s like “Oh, right, I’m part of an oppressed group.” Like, you know, I’m really interested in these

kinds of issues for other people, but I really need to be into it for myself, and so it helped me see things through that prism, so my coming out was better that way than through other means.

KG: Yeah. Was Scott your main connection to gay history? [AF: Yes.] Did you research that stuff on your own a lot?

AF: Later, later. [KG: OK.] Much later. Well, by the time I got to 1986 I was like, I went through an obsessive period where, you know, I read everything I possibly could. [KG: Yeah.] But again, *Before Stonewall* came out in the mid-80s, really, really, it's the perfect overview and it's actual interviews with people that shaped gay history. So that's something, you know, to do, and then *After Stonewall* is similar. But what's really interesting is that some of the same people are interviewed. And then there's another one that came out called *Word is Out*. And that came out in 77, and I remember seeing that, maybe on campus at U of C, maybe, I don't remember when or where or how [KG: Yeah], but I know I saw it, because I saw it on TV during Pride Week a year, couple years ago, or maybe, I don't remember, it was on TV, and I watched it, and it was like "Oh, I think I've seen this," you know, so I think I saw it at one point, but *Word is Out* was in the late 70s and it was interviews with gay people, some of whom are interviewed also in *Before Stonewall* or *After Stonewall*, so if you see them together it's a trip. And then when you, then later when you learn more about gay history and who those people were, it's an even bigger trip, so it's a miracle that those movies were produced. *Times of Harvey Milk* documentary that won the Oscar is good too. [KG: Yeah.] Those are really the, that really helped me come out, because then I could see things through a political view, and... cause the, it wasn't gonna be enough for me just around dating, or, you know, going to the North Side and partying, that wasn't gonna do it for me, you know, this is what did it for me, was being able to see things through that light and understand the history that came before. [KG: Right.]

What made coming out for me particularly difficult was that my father was a, like a refugee from World War Two, and had lived under Nazi occupation and then Communist civil war, and he came to this country and identified very strongly with the anti-Communist movement. And so he was very conservative, and... I took a black girl to the junior prom, of course, and that, he flipped out, it was really, it was really traumatic, and so once I went through that experience with him, I thought, "Well, I can never come out to them!" And I didn't come out to them until I was about thirty, even though I was very political and I was doing all this stuff on campus and I had been in the newspaper and I'd had, you know, I'd been on TV, you know, and yet I never came out to them until I was about thirty, and... but, but that really inhibited me too. Because I knew that I had this hurdle. And over the years he mellowed out politically [KG: Oh] a little bit, I mean, he never was less conservative, but when the Soviet Union fell, you know, he felt better.

[2:02:15]

KG: What country was he from?

AF: Greece.

KG: Oh, OK. [AF: Yeah.] I study Russia [AF: Oh!] and the Soviet Union as my actual field of study. [AF: Oh, really?] Yeah. [AF: Oh, interesting. Oh, my God.] But this is just like my passion project that they pay me for, luckily. [Laughter]

AF: Are you a senior?

KG: Yeah. I just finished my last final!

AF: Yay! [Claps]

KG: Yeah, so hopefully they'll let me leave here.

AF: What comes next?

KG: Oh God, I don't know. My girlfriend and I are moving in together. [AF: Here in Chicago?] Yeah, we're moving to Logan Square. And I'll get a job, I guess... it's a tough market. [AF: I know.] But I have this job for the summer, which is great. [AF: Good.] Yeah, so, I'll just keep looking for the summer probably.

AF: So he was Greek and my grandfather had come to the United States and became a citizen because he got drafted into World War One, and just as he got to France the armistice was declared and so he never actually fought [KG: Oh], but he became a citizen. Went back to Greece after the depression and they lived under German occupation, pretty deep, you know, whole story there, and then he lived under, then there was a Communist civil war. And what I've learned, part of my World War... this is the root of my World War Two obsession, cause after my father died I got really interested in learning more about survivors and things like that which I won't go into on the tape, but, but part of what happened, this is something I've learned since, and part of my obsession with World War Two, is that if you were an occupied person, the ideology of Nazi Germany permeated you. So Jews are Bolsheviks, for example, is directly out of the Nazi playbook. Homosexuals and Jews, somehow they're linked... well, where, how? You know? But they're linked for Nazi Germany. Certainly African-Americans, although there weren't enough living in Europe to make it an issue, you know, he had an agenda for them too. [KG: Right.] Slavs. And if you were Greek, you had issues with Slavs, and so, you know, he's doing your bidding on some level [KG: Yeah], you know, sort of. So my father really absorbed some of these ideas that there was something sinister about Jews because they were Bolsheviks, there's something wrong with homosexuals and somehow they're all related. Very subtle, not quite as horrible as Nazism, but, you know, that, that's where I cut my teeth politically is that when I was eleven, you know, I started to fight back, because he, and I think part of it was, I mean, OK, so this is kind of, this gets back to the interview, this is interesting. I'm just realizing this. I kind of know this, but I don't know if I've articulated it before.

So when I'm eleven I go to this thing, read about homosexuality. Well, I already knew what my father thought about homosexuality, right? [KG: Right.] So I'm like "If I'm this, and this is a horrible thing, I can't be that, but yet, I might be, and my father really has a condemnation of it." So it's inconceivable as an eleven year old to think that I would ever be out to my father. [KG: Right.] Not that I knew what coming out meant, but, you know, it was inconceivable that this could be revealed. And... my political war with my father started when I was about eleven. So I was concerned about some of the racial things I was hearing him say, which he had protected me from, you know, for the first ten years I never heard him say anything, and then I became aware, because I was always told, you know, "We came to the United States for freedom. We came here for democracy. We came here because it was the best country in the world." Well, in 1972 and 3 there were race riots, why are there race riots if that's the case? So I would challenge him. Plus I have this idea that maybe I have a problem, maybe I'm queer or gay or homosexual. [KG: Right.] So he has an agenda against various groups, one of which is homosexuals. So I then identified with these oppressed groups because I felt like I had something in common, you know, and if he felt that way about them, then how's he gonna feel about me? So my tension with him started to build as I was, you know, off having, you know, surreptitious sex as a thirteen and fourteen year old, you know, cruising or whatever, you know, I'd come home, and I'd have this tremendous guilt, and yet then I would be angry at him and I'd lash out at him politically because I knew what he thought, and so there was this whole dynamic that took place when I was in junior high and high school related to being queer. [KG: Yeah.] And it was politicized because of who my father was.

And then I'd built my political identity in opposition to this, because, you know, and then I remember one time I was, I had already come here, and was home for Christmas or something, and he was just exasperated, and he goes "How, how could you have turned out to be a liberal? How?" And I said "You." And he goes "What do you mean me?" and I said "You told me that this country was the freest, most fair, most democratic country in the world. I want it to be that." And he goes, "Oh shit, I made you a liberal." [Laughter] So it was, by that point, we were beginning to, like, open up our relationship more [KG: Yeah] but it was really, you know, it was that.

And then later when I had my World War Two obsession and I started to realize that some of these little -isms that he had were part of this... you know, they were Nazi, you know, they were inspired by, you know, and they permeated the culture in ways that you probably didn't even realize that you were parroting something that was Nazi, if you were a villager in some village in Greece without radio and without TV, there was no TV, you know [KG: Yeah], it's like how, you know? But you would hear things, you know, and so I don't, of course I can't ask him about this now, but the linkage between, you know, gypsies, Jews, homosexuals, Communists, you know, that was the laundry list of people, and the disabled, although my father never talked about the disabled, but those, that's what the Nazis went after. [KG: Right.] And so piecing it together later I realized that, you know, and I know now that, you know, while my father, my father's family was terrorized by the Communists, but the government of Greece after World War Two, after Nazi occupation, was monarcho-fascist, they were bad, you know, and they did bad stuff too, and if you, depending upon who turned you in to which side, you thought the other

side was bad. But it happened to both sides. [KG: Yeah.] And you know, of course as a thirteen-year-old coming from, you know, this traumatized sort of survivor of World War Two thing, you know, he couldn't possibly think that there might be another side to the story, you know, and his whole reaction to the war and to anybody that criticized the United States was in that line.

So in the 70s, in the late 70s when I got really worked up about apartheid, he, you know, basically said to me "The blacks of South Africa have it better than any other blacks in Africa. They should be happy that they live in South Africa." That was his attitude, you know, so, you know, and then I would, you know, we would have these blood-curdling screaming Greek drama, you know, fights that would go on for hours until somebody ended up storming upstairs and slamming the door, usually me, you know, but that was, that was the, you know, that's what made the challenge of coming out as a gay person all the more difficult because despite the fact that I could fight with him politically, to then be identified as gay to him, I didn't know what would happen. [KG: Yeah.] I thought maybe they, I didn't know whether I'd be cut off, like from being part of the family. I really didn't know. It turned out to be fine, but, you know, it wasn't without its... but I waited a long time, too.

[2:10:50]

KG: Yeah. You said thirty, right?

AF: I was thirty when I came out to my parents. So that's long after, I mean, I had already had my, I had, it was five years after I was the president of the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Alliance at Cal and you know, I was, it was really, I waited a long time. It was very difficult to come out to them. And then what was really sad about it, it was horrifying, was that my mother was crushed. Not because I was gay, but because she thought we were so close. But I tried to explain to her I didn't want to put her in a position... he'd already told me what he thought about gay people! I didn't want to put my mother in a position where, you know, she knew something and he didn't. And I thought it would strain their marriage, I was protecting her, you know, from that, or at least I felt like I was. But it was really harder on her. He, you know, expected the worst, you know, he thought I was gonna probably, you know, convert to Judaism and be homosexual and a Communist or something, I don't know what he thought.

KG: And become a gypsy?

AF: Yeah, you know. It's like whatever, you know, he was, for him it was like you know... [Laughter] It was traumatic for him.

KG: Yeah. But he dealt with it?

AF: Yeah! Oh, being gay? [KG: Yeah.] Like I don't know what he really *thought* thought, you know, he never... but once I took him out, you know, he accepted it pretty quickly. [KG: Oh.] And then by the time, like, my mom died in 2002 and he used to come visit me for

two weeks at a time maybe twice a year and so he met all my friends and, you know, so he was, I mean my friends are, you know, kind of more reflective of the millennial generation than they are of my generation... so it's, you know, the United Nations. You know, the woman I live with is half-black and half-Japanese, so he got to experience my multicultural existence and liked it, he really embraced it and they *loved* him, which is really ironic considering what my, junior high perception of him was, you know...

But in the end, you know, it's like the night he died, he died in my house and... it was like three days before Thanksgiving, I had him come out for Thanksgiving and I came home from work and his suitcase was there and he was on the couch and he was breathing but it was really not OK. There was something wrong and I couldn't wake him up, and I watched him die and I gave him CPR and I couldn't revive him and the remarkable thing when it comes to this politics and race and my whole life is that I texted one of my friends from work and she happened to be having dinner with a woman that was on my team, that reports to me, one of my people, and they're both black, and then my roommate's black, right? And then one of my best friends from work found out and he's Latino and so my father as he's dead on my floor, the people that are mourning him are the very people that he had some pretty terrible views of most of his life. And so the contrast between who he was but how he manifested that with other people and how they loved him, and they *loved* him, you know, they were crying, you know. It was like my friend Chelle told me, she's like "You know, he's the father I never had." You know? And so it was a pretty remarkable experience to have that happen, so when you, when you look at it all from the time I was eleven and I go through this terrible struggle about homosexuality and my father's politics to the way it ended, it's like there's a... poetic story, a narrative, that is pretty remarkable.

KG: Yeah, that's amazing. [pause] How are we gonna top it?

AF: [Laughter] Does he have anything else up his sleeve? [KG: Yeah.] I don't know. I don't know. [Laughter]

KG: Man, maybe we should just talk about World War Two.

AF: I know. We can go there now, if you want to turn that off. I mean, you don't wanna record that probably.

KG: No.

AF: I don't... is there anything else you wanna ask me?

KG: I don't think so, I mean, man... I've racked my brain as best as I can at this point in the finals week [laughter] and I can't think of anything at the moment.

AF: Well, when we get the transcript, you know, if there's any... I'll read through it, and we can talk about it more, and we can fill in blanks. [KG: Yeah, definitely.] And the other thing that you guys should do, really, is you should take Scott's and mine and read them

and see if you have follow-up questions for both of us. [KG: Yeah.] Because our stories are like this. [KG: Yeah.] You know.

KG: Yeah, definitely, I can compare notes with Lauren and...

[2:15:46]

AF: Oh, and I do remember, you know, that one of the things that he's gonna talk about is, is the banner, the Encourage Homosexuality banner.

KG: Oh. I've heard, I've heard talk of this but I don't know very much about it.

AF: He was behind it.

KG: So can you explain the situation to me?

AF: Sure. Sure. So the story goes like this, and this is through Scott's eyes, I wasn't privy to it. [KG: OK.] But there was in 1980 they created, there was a t-shirt that was popular on campus, and it said "Ho-Ho. The University of Chicago is funnier than you think." And it was a picture of a gargoyle laughing.

KG: Lauren found that in the archive last summer, so... she was very, we were very excited about it.

AF: Yes. And there was a group at Woodward Court that was selling them for their dorm, you know, for their house. And so Scott one night was manning the phone at GALA, you know, so that when people call in who have issues about coming out or whatever there's somebody there. He took the t-shirt and he sketched out a parody of it, "Ho-Mo. The University of Chicago is gayer than you think." And he has a shirt that he's showing her right now. And they published it and they sold it and people had it and the Ho-Ho people got furious and threatened to sue them.

And so there was this big brouhaha about it, and so they went and consulted their own lawyers who said, "Excuse me, this is parody, it's first amendment, they can't mess with you. They can sue you for harassment, you know, there's other stuff they can sue you for, but not for," I mean, but you know, and then the University told them, "One half of the University can't sue the other half. We're not, you know, it's not gonna happen." So the, that week was prospective student week in November of 80, and there was an article in the Maroon that said "The University of Chicago may be gayer than you think."

KG: Yes, I actually just looked at that! It's in the office. And Scott wrote it, right?

AF: I don't know that he wrote it...

KG: OK. Maybe it was someone else.

AF: I don't know if he wrote it, but they, in 1980 during Prospective Student Week they pulled the Maroons from all the prospective student packets because of that article. [KG: Oh.] So GALA protested and said that it was censorship, and the administration at the time said, "Well, we might as well hang a banner from Harper Library that says 'Encourage Homosexuality.'" And so they took it as a challenge, and a year later they created this giant, you know, Encourage Homosexuality thing and hung it from Harper. And Scott told the story last night. It is truly the most remarkable story I have ever heard in my life, to the point where, one of the guys was a Radical Fairy, and he collected weird shit, so... at one point they get to this door that they needed to open to be able to go out and do this and there was no doorknob, and they could see the, you know, there was air coming through the hole [KG: Right], so it was like something was missing. So the guy said "Wait! I have a doorknob!" [Laughter] and went rummaging through his ridiculous fairy backpack, back... or whatever, backpack, whatever he had, some, you know, thing. [KG: Yeah.] And put the doorknob in and it magically opened. And everybody was like [gasp] and he said "Fairy magic!"

KG: Oh my god.

AF: And then they had trouble getting the rope over one of the spires so frickin' Scott goes out there, and he's like clutching the thing and grabs the rope, and you know... so we're telling him, like, so he was all worried about being expelled and I'm like "But you didn't worry about dying!" [KG: Yeah!]

So Robert [redacted], who is not the guy you interviewed, said to me "Let's walk this way..." and so he's like "Oh, look at that!" and so he actually pointed it out to me. [KG: That's amazing.] So I remember it. I remember it. Isn't that wild?

KG: So it was on Harper, right? And how big was it?

AF: Huge. Like big enough to read from the ground, like "OK, there you go."

KG: We should have a memorial, like a yearly memorial "Encourage Homosexuality" sign or something. [Laughter] Maybe for graduation. They can't expel me now, right?

AF: No, they really can't.

KG: That's a great story, though.

AF: It's an awesome story.

KG: I look forward to seeing this transcript.

AF: So I definitely, one of the things about Scott is that I knew a lot of these things going on with GALA, now he didn't tell me about the banner, because they were very secretive about that [KG: Yeah], but I knew what GALA did, I knew what kinds of things were going on, he would tell me about it, and so I got it one step removed. So despite the fact

that I didn't participate in it, I was part of a circle, like if you think about dropping a pebble into a pond, I was one of the echoes, you know? And that's one of the things that I, that was the model that I thought about when I was doing the co-presidency at Cal, was, you know, you don't know who you're affecting. You don't know. And the key is that you want to do it in as many different ways as possible so that you cover as much ground as possible, and you will never know the impact of what you have done. You know. It's the same thing with what you're doing here.

KG: Yeah, I hope so.

AF: You know, because this is research for the future someday, you know. You figure people that are being born right now will grow up with gay marriage as a norm, not as a political aspiration.

KG: Yeah. What a strange world... I'm gonna turn this off and just talk to you a while, if that's OK.

AF: Sure!

[2:22:03]

End of Interview