

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

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW #24

FRISCH, HANNAH (1943-) AB 1964, AM 1969 PhD 1976

At U of C: 1960 – 1964, 1968-1976

Interviewed: April 12th, 2013

Interviewer: Lauren Stokes

Transcript by: Molly Liu

Length: 1:05:18

Interview (April 12th, 2013) with Hannah Frisch at her home in Chicago:

[00:00:00]

LS: We like to start these interviews just by asking how you originally found yourself at the University of Chicago.

HF: Well, I was a high school student, and my mother found me this Civil Air Patrol. Sorry, this actually isn't relevant. [laughs] Because she thought I'd like being in it. It's sort of boy and girl scouts for the Air Force, basically a recruiting thing. People are a little bit surprised now. But they have juniors, which are the high school kids, and they have seniors, which are the adults, whose function was to go and look for downed airplanes. So there were pilots in this group and stuff. Long story short, I started dating a pilot who was 25 when I was 16. Yeah. It was a *he*. My parents were not totally comfortable with this, and came up with the perfect bribe, which was, "Oh, you could be an early entrant at the University of Chicago." So I went down and went, "ohh, yes!" And it had the desired effect within less than a year.

LS: So you broke up with the pilot so that you could come to the University of Chicago.

HF: I broke up with him after I'd been there.

LS: Okay. [laughs] Where were you—where did you grow up?

HF: Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

LS: Was it common in your family for people to get college degrees?

HF: Yes. Both my—my father was a doctor and my mother had a college degree.

LS: So I don't know anything about the early entrance program—you entered when you were

16?

HF: 17. Late 17. So you could be—they don't have early entrance anymore? [LS: They might.] But you're a graduate student, right? [LS: Yeah.] They have this deal that goes back to Hutchins, where maybe you didn't have to finish high school, and you could just come.

LS: When you came to Chicago, were your expectations met about the university?

HF: Well, I developed my expectations from one little visit where I went to a seminar, but I think I would say yes. I was with people I was comfortable with, there were interesting classes and interesting people, so I would say yes.

LS: What did you study?

HF: Ultimately I majored in psychology as an undergrad, but we had what was called in that time the general studies requirement. So you had to take everything then. Or you placed out of things.

LS: Were there any courses or professors you particularly remember that inspired you to do psychology?

HF: They didn't inspire me to do psychology. I didn't get inspired by a course, by some graduate students in psychology whom I knew, and being in therapy myself.

LS: Okay. This is between '60 and '64, right? Were you dating at the time?

HF: Mmhm. Not girls. Although... I don't know how old I was, I think I had maybe already graduated. But maybe? I don't know. Sometime around the time I graduated, before or after, maybe it was... I don't remember. But somewhere in the vicinity of '65-ish I had a delightful experiment with the girlfriend of a guy whom I really had a big crush on. She didn't want to continue this experiment. No, I must have been in college because I remember talking to my therapist about it.

LS: What did your therapist say about that?

HF: It was funny! It was totally funny. I said, "Gee, maybe I'm a lesbian," and he's like, "Naah."

LS: "You're not."

HF: That's what he said!

LS: Wow. Isn't that not what you're supposed to do as a therapist?

HF: Well, they didn't know what they were supposed to do back then. This was back in the

dark ages! [laughs] He wasn't horrible about it! I just disagreed. I mean, I was telling him lots about sex with boys, so it was an understandable confusion on his part. [LS: Fair enough.] But it was also a violation of his theoretical orientation, because he was a student of Carl Rogers, where you're not supposed to tell a person what they feel. You listen to them from their own point of view. So it was bad, from that point of view, even if it was sort of understandable.

LS: What kind of political issues were people interested in on campus at that point?

HF: When I was an undergraduate? [LS: Sure.] Well, I wasn't very political when I was an undergraduate. I started out in the campus NAACP. I came from liberal-ish Republican parents. And so when the Congress on Race Equality came in around segregation and university housing, it wasn't that I disagreed about the issue, but they sort of overwhelmed our little group of six with a bunch of New York radicals, and I just sort of felt like, ehh... I just wasn't ready for that yet. So I pulled back and I didn't—I wasn't active politically until sometime after I came back to campus in the humanities.

LS: So you graduated in '64 and then spent—what did you do immediately after getting your BA?

HF: I went to Harvard Department of Social Relations. After that I spent a summer doing voter registration in Mississippi and Alabama, and then I came back to University of Chicago in humanities because I didn't really feel at home in Cambridge—yeah. And of course by the time I was leaving I felt more at home, but it wasn't—I also wanted to be a part of the Counseling Center, which was Carl Rogers's outpost at the University of Chicago, which was what my therapist was a part of and graduate student role models were part of.

LS: When you came back, you started studying humanities. [HF: Yeah.] Could you talk a little bit about that?

HF: Well, let's see. Was it the first year or the second year? One of those two years... In the first year, somehow, I don't know how, I got into the counseling center's practicum. So while I was studying humanities I was also learning about how to be a therapist prematurely compared to most people. I don't know quite how that happened—I can't remember anymore. So what was it like then? Well, one reason why I came was that I felt like I didn't really get an education. I had spent too much time in psychology courses. So I was doing philosophy and literature. I think—we'd have to look at the history books—but I think at that time there was the issue about the draft ranking and stuff. When I was at Harvard I fell in with a group of people from Berkeley who were all opposed to the war in Vietnam. And I listened. When I came back, I dated a Divinity School student who gave me Bernard Fall's book to read. “Whaa—we wouldn't let them have an election? Well, that's wrong!” [laughs] So I became against the war in the Vietnam. Yes, it was my first year back because I was living in International House. I remember there was a sit-in against the university's giving out class ranks to the draft board. And—we're sort of scheduled to go on until about 9 at night at the rate I'm proceeding. Is this okay? [laughs]

[LS: This is fine, this is fine!] I remember sort of pacing the halls a little bit, saying, “Is it moral for me to be at the sit-in even though I kind of want to do it because it's cool and exciting?” And I decided that it was moral because I believed in what it was for, even if my motives were highly impure. So again, this was a guy.

LS: This was again about a guy.

HF: I was a considerably retarded lesbian for a long, long time! [laughs]

[0:09:39]

LS: So when did you—you had that one experience your senior year, and then your therapist said no, so when did you become aware of—? Because I know you fell in with the Gay Liberation crowd at some point, right? How did that happen?

HF: Well, it wasn't—when I was in high school, I had an interest. I was reading about it. Went to a camp where girls were pairing up with each other but everybody knew that there was something a little bit more serious about me and Nancy. This was very non-sexual. Like, maybe short of a kiss, right? But anyway, I knew there was something about me.

So, how did I fall in with Gay Liberation? Well, I was—I read about it, particularly in WIN Magazine, that was the magazine of the War Resisters' League. There was this guy who was on their staff and was gay and wrote about it. And I felt very strongly about it. That it was very important, what they were doing and stuff. And I was coming from an overall lefty perspective. There was an ad in the newspaper which you've probably heard about, looking for a gay roommate. I think one of my—at that time, as a graduate student, I was starting to see clients, and one of my clients was an activist in the Gay Liberation there. At some point I, in spite of being very nervous about it, I went to a meeting. Because I thought I should.

LS: What was that first meeting like?

HF: Oh, there were about 6 people. I think [redacted] was there in a dress. He has since become straight. [laughs] Couple of people I knew were there—[redacted] and Murray Edelman [Interview #83], and so... It kind of took off for me. I may have been the only woman, probably was at that time. There was [redacted], but she wasn't particularly involved at that point. I remember going downtown to some demonstration, and one of the Gay Liberation leaders told me, “Oh, I thought you were there just because you were a sympathetic straight person.” And because I was the only woman handy, I got asked to speak at the Y, I don't know, soon. What would you—I don't remember the timing, but like two weeks after I had been to the first meeting, something like that. Because I was the only woman there. And I remember the Gay Liberation saying, “Whoa, you are so political,” which I think meant that I was being kind of abstract and rhetorical in my speech. [laughs] In their impression, probably.

LS: When you went to go speak at the Y, what were you speaking about?

HF: I have a flier if you're interested. [LS: I'd love to, yeah.] Sometimes you get the rewards for being a pack rat. They had this program where they felt they ought to learn about Gay Liberation. And maybe we were thinking about asking space for their building, I looked up some notes or something.

LS: Oh yeah, there you are! Hannah Frisch, Richard, and Gregory...right after Problem Pregnancy Counseling. There you go! [laughs] So you got involved really quickly, just because there weren't other women around...

HF: Right, right. They'd have various speaking gigs here and there and stuff.

LS: Were there other kinds of—I've heard some of other political actions, actions around books, things like that. Do you remember any that were particularly memorable?

HF: I do. So there's this *Everything You Wanted to Know About Sex But Were Afraid to Ask* book. [LS: Yeah, David Reuben. Right?] I think so. This said some homophobic things. So Murray Edelman and I and several other people went to put stickers on the books in Kroch's & Brentano's, a bookstore downtown. The sticker said, "This book oppresses homosexuals," or something like that, I don't remember. Everyone was making their getaway, and I didn't quite make it, so store security caught me and Murray, at least Murray, came back in because I was caught, and they told us that we had to buy the book or otherwise we'd be arrested. So we bought the books. [laughs] But in the end, there was a happy ending, because an article got into the newspaper about it, which was much more satisfactory than having to stick some stickers on some books.

LS: And owning all the books, right.

HF: We probably should have had a book burning, but nobody remembered to do it.

LS: What do you do with all of them? Who knows? Yeah. Did you—I've also heard of a bisexuality group. [HF: That was me!] That was you. That was you.

HF: Yes, I was the person who started it.

LS: What was your idea behind that?

HF: Well, here I am, going to these gay consciousness group, but I'm sleeping with my boyfriend. So that continued to feel a little weird to me. So talking to Murray—Murray was kind of a mentor—he said, "Well, why don't you start a second group on bisexuality?" I said, "Okay, yeah!" I put up fliers on campus and it was, it turned out to be very successful. People heard good things about it, so people came who weren't bisexual. Jim [Interview #23] came and he never thought he was bisexual. So it was a mix. In fact we had to have two sections of fifteen-ish people or so each.

LS: Did that attract more women as well?

HF: It did. Yeah, it did. Which makes sense, right?

LS: Yeah, yeah. It's interesting that you were going to all these—you were so involved in Gay Liberation, but you say you had a boyfriend—did he have feelings about that?

HF: He was supportive. I think he'd had a gay affair once. I don't think he identified as gay, but he was supportive.

LS: In the bisexuality group, were you starting to think of yourself as bisexual at this point?

HF: Well...yeah, sort of. Obviously I was at most bisexual at that point. But there was this discomfort about it. Because are you calling yourself bisexual because you're embarrassed to call yourself a lesbian? And besides, maybe you're hiding it from yourself or something like that. So I was always uncomfortable about calling myself bisexual.

LS: Were there other people in the group who called themselves bisexual?

HF: Yeah, I think so.

LS: It's just interesting. Bisexual seems to have currency at particular points in the history that we're kind of tracing, then to be something that no one identifies as at other points. It's sort of a strange career as an identifier.

HF: Yeah, right, right. I still have some of the ditto sheets from the bisexuality group. Discussion questions, and maybe a flier. I think there's a flier in there somewhere. But it went on for a while. It had a good run, maybe a year or something.

LS: And you were doing this at the same time that you were training to be a thera—to be a psychologist, right?

HF: Yes. So I had experience doing groups.

LS: Was it helpful?

HF: Yeah. Sure. Because I had confidence that I could lead a group.

LS: Was bisexuality something at all that you were talking about in your psychology training?

HF: Well, let me see. I stayed at the counseling center straight through. It got abolished by the university in '71-ish, and opened in '72 as an independent center in the Hyde Park Bank building. Somewhere along the line, at the Counseling Center, one of my straight colleagues said maybe two years later, “Oh, we should really have a gay therapy program.” And of course I agreed, although it made me very nervous to put my professional life and being gay together. But we did do things like workshops on how therapists should actually be with gay clients and stuff.

[00:20:26]

LS: I actually have a picture with you from that in the Maroon. That's you!

HF: That is me! Oh, I see, this is about—this isn't about gay stuff, this is about the Hyde Park Bank Building and the nine people...

LS: Yeah, I've been looking at all the issues of the Maroon...

HF: That's funny! Can I look at that?

LS: You can have that copy, if you like. That's interesting, so--[HF: Jim Bond was the guy who proposed the gay therapy program.] Jim Bond. Were there any problems with—did anybody object to it? No, it was very well-received. So your fears about bringing the two together...

HF: Well, my fears were not in my immediate counseling center, but over my larger career.

LS: Okay, okay. Did that ever—

HF: Did that ever materialize? Well, you get very sheltered from that. Like, somebody gossips about you and decides not to go to you as a client, but you don't know about it. So I never ran into anything.

LS: So it doesn't really cause problems for you in your professional, in your training career path. To go back to Gay Liberation and that community, and the bisexuality group, do you remember whether there were—was it just students?

HF: No, people came from off-campus.

LS: From across Hyde Park?

HF: I think maybe people came from the North Side too. I'm not positive, but I think so. Certainly not everybody was university-affiliated. I think this woman I can think of particularly lived north.

LS: Did you spend time in different parts of Chicago at—was kind of gay/lesbian stuff very centered in Hyde Park at that point?

HF: Well, yes and no. I mean, certainly U of C Gay Liberation was where I spent most of my time. It was the only organization I ever became much of a leader in. There was a lot of stuff going on, of course. There were gay pride parades. And there was a Chicago Lesbian Liberation monthly meeting. Which I would go to.

LS: What was Chicago Lesbian Liberation like at that point?

HF: Well, it was big. It had over...maybe 40 people? It was multiracial. I mean, so I knew those people, but they were in another neighborhood.

LS: Was U of C Liberation multiracial?

HF: A little bit. Not much.

LS: So there were just a few African-Americans who'd come.

HF: Yeah, a few. Not much.

LS: Not hugely.

HF: They didn't typically—they'd move on.

LS: And I know you mentioned you were coming from a pretty left perspective. Was it a pretty left group generally?

HF: Yes, I think that's fair to say. The guys had a study group on feminist readings. Jim was in, did he mention it? [LS: No.] He was. But anyway, they were reading and talking about it.

LS: The guys would all just get together and read stuff? [HF: Yeah!] Huh.

HF: Yeah, feminism was the ideology justifying gay liberation, so of course they were interested.

LS: So were you involved in that study group at all?

HF: No. I don't know if it was just a guy's group by design or by happenstance. But I wasn't, for whatever reason.

LS: You're mentioning about, what was it, Southside Women's Liberation? [HF: Yeah.] When were you involved with that?

HF: Well, it must have been in the early '70s, because I know we organized a joint teach-in with Gay Liberation about sexism. Did anybody mention that? [LS: I don't think so.] It was a one-shot weekend. It was a bigish deal. Martha Shelley came in from New York to speak and we were registered student organizations, so we had some funds and things. When I was peddling through my folders, I ran into this letter from Skip Landt, the director of Student Activities, saying, "Well, the last time we had a dance it didn't work out so well, we had so many people from off-campus. So you can have a dance, but only under these conditions. I thought that was pretty funny! He was probably embarrassed, Skip... So, do you want me to tell you some other stuff that I remember?"

LS: Yeah! Anything that you remember.

HF: Jim was involved in this, but he forgot to tell you. I remember, because I asked him. Somewhere in there in the early '70s, there was a U of C student who was African-American, and a bunch of the guys went to this bar, which Jim remembers was called PQs. The more that I think about it, the more I think that's right. So there was a practice then, which wasn't so unusual, about asking African-Americans for five IDs. Like, most people can't produce five IDs. [LS: I don't think I could!] So it was a subtle method of keeping black people out of the bar. We got word of this, and I remember sitting around in the Blue Gargoyle, which you've probably heard of, with one of the other, more lefty people in the group. He said, "This was terrible! We should have a picket." And so we did.

We got a group together and went up to the North Side and brought our picket signs and stuff. One thing I remember was that I was never too fond of left sectarian groups, but the Workers' World people came in with signs, and they didn't do anything besides be helpful. Unlike other left sectarian groups, which try to take over and stuff like that. So I've always had a good feeling about Workers' World. So we were out there picketing. I'm sort of the leader of this, or at least the co-leader with Mike, the other guy. I think, okay, so I've been on lots of pickets. So I know how to do all that, and I know how to make signs, but what do we do now? We're just out here picketing. Jim McDaniel came to the rescue! He and someone else became a negotiating team and they went in and talked to the bar, and the bar promised not to do it again, so we could be satisfied and go home. I heard later that the black guy who had been discriminated against was uncomfortable with the whole thing. We didn't use his name publicly, but he didn't like being the center of fuss like that. You can imagine why someone might feel like that. The next day, after this successful picket, I'm in my apartment on 52nd and Dorchester, and these two human right cops from the city come. They're burly African-American guys. And they're asking me about what happened and they're very confused. There was discrimination in this bar, like, discrimination against women? I'm explaining to them what it was, and meanwhile, I learn—or maybe I'm aware of during the time? There's a cockroach coming down the wall. [laughs] Not a particularly unusual thing to happen in a Hyde Park apartment. Anyway, that's one story. Let's see, what else?

[00:29:58]

LS: Were you—

HF: Oh yes, the Kevin Burke thing. [Interview #20] Yes. Yes. So we were—there was a Gay Liberation event. There were some workshops and stuff. We were over in the Reynolds Club doing something. Someone came in and said, "Tom Foran's on campus!" And people knew who Tom Foran was. So we went over there. I think there were eight of us there, who went over to protest. We came to the Quad Club where he was speaking. Some of the eight people started yelling at him. I think they were calling him "fag-basher," Kevin Burke probably remembers better than that. Four of us got arrested, and I was too inhibited to be yelling at the top of my lungs in the Quad Club, so I didn't get arrested, I

felt a little embarrassed about this, and the police were hauling these guys off. Kevin has reminded me since that police brutality seemed like a real possibility. I remember following Kevin and the cops into an alley and standing there and staring at them in an “I’m watching you” kind of thing. I don’t know, maybe you weren’t the person to interview Kevin.

LS: I was, actually. He did talk about that.

HF: And I remember going to Jimmy’s to get bail money, but the University got to it before I did. The University bailed them out. Jimmy’s, they would cash a check for you. So we were going to go bail him out. But it wasn’t necessary.

LS: The University got to it first. Were there any other women involved in these overtly political actions? It’s weird, when I’ve been doing research on it, it just seems so manly. It’s so...

HF: Well, let me think. Do I remember any? There was a woman named [redacted], who was black. [redacted] I remember going on—I think it was a peace march, but there was a Gay Liberation contingent, and we were walking together. I remember holding hands with her, even though we weren’t, you know. And kind of wincing, because all my straight lefty friends were there and seeing this. This is pretty early on. So that was one political thing that Alison was in. Were there other lesbians in the PK thing? PQ, PK?

LS: Was there overlap between the other kind of feminist groups on campus and Gay Liberation?

HF: The teach-in.

LS: Yeah, the teach-in on sexism that you guys did.

HF: I imagine there were others. We had a gay and women’s dance at the teach-in, so that was a—and there were women’s dances at that time. I think we had a gay women’s dance at the Blue Gargoyle. I think we for a while had a gay women’s coffeehouse, and maybe there was dancing. We brought in the Family of Women, who were a group from the North Side.

LS: Yeah, I saw reviews of the Family of Women coming to the Blue Gargoyle and Lavender Woman.

HF: Cool, cool.

LS: That sounded like fun. Would there be a lot of people come to those things? I see references to them, but I don’t know much exactly what it was like to [be one?].

HF: I don’t know if I can picture one. At that time I had tried to organize an over-30s group, because they were women who were not—I think I was over 30 myself by that time.

Over 30.

LS: I think I remember seeing ad for Southside's Women's—[HF: Gay women's!]
—yeah, gay women's groups, in parenthesis. Was it a popular group? Did you find a lot of over-30s?

HF: Yeah. There—no, it was smallish. Eight, ten. Some of the people came to the coffeehouse. I remember the coffeehouses having tables and there being, oh, I don't know, twenty people there. It wasn't this mob scene where there's a dance floor you can hardly move on.

LS: What was the Southside Over 30s Women's Group like? How often did you meet?

HF: Well, I don't...I don't think I went that often. I think I convened it and sort of got busy. They were mostly off-campus. There was a lesbian couple that lived on 50th and Dorchester who were in it. And so I didn't know much more about it than that. And I may have been the youngest person in it, so you may not find out much more about it ever! I don't even remember—it was someone named Maureen? I don't remember more about it than that.

[0:36:15 – 0:41:15: HF makes a cup of tea, gives LS a folder of memorabilia]

LS: This is amazing!

HF: There's a ton of stuff—I'm a big pack rat.

LS: Wow. That's so—historians love pack rats!

HF: Of course, of course! I knew that someday historians would want this.

LS: Oh my goodness, yeah. I love this bisexual—this kind of bisexuality position paper too, about—

HF: I suspect I wrote that. I don't know, but I suspect.

LS: “If a psychiatrist were writing about me, he might say, 'Ms. Frisch experiences little satisfaction from lesbian relationships.' I like that!

HF: So I must have wrote that!

LS: It must have been you! This stuff is amazing! I'll have to look at it more. Goodness, it's been—like I've said, I've been kind of the archival person, so I've been going through everything at the Reg, and then I went up to Northwestern. Northwestern has more stuff about the U of C Gay Liberation than U of C does. [HF: That's funny!] I think they have some librarians who are very active.

HF: And I discovered some correspondence between me and Northwestern.

LS: You've sent them stuff, I've seen it! And I was in the Chicago History Museum archives and stuff like this. Did you—you said that you had gotten busy. I'm curious about what you felt about your psychology training in all this too. How was that going? Did you find that work fulfilling? Because you were still doing that.

HF: Yeah! Yeah. I can remember there were time periods where I thought, mm, maybe I should be a community organizer. But basically I found it quite fulfilling all the way along. I hear from my clients all about their horrible jobs and things like that. Thank god I've landed in the sweet spot.

LS: What do you like best about it?

HF: Well, people are just really interesting to talk to. They share this open, nice side of themselves. I mean, it doesn't hurt that you get to set your own hours. Like, I don't want to work before 11 in the morning. [laughs] But on the other hand, I have to work a lot of hours weekday evenings. I was with the counseling center until '96. [LS: Which was in the Hyde Park Bank building.] Well, it moved at least twice. Stayed in the neighborhood, had a downtown office. [LS: You lived in Hyde Park ever since.] Yeah. Ever since the '60s.

LS: Ever since the '60s. I guess there's just this one little—that interlude in Cambridge.

HF: I came from the suburbs of Milwaukee and I thought I had died and went to heaven.

LS: You've been—where were we temporally? I guess early '70s, women's stuff, gay stuff... We've been talking about bisexuality, and kind of, was there a moment when you moved into a lesbian identity fully?

HF: Well, I had a detour. I started living with this guy in the late '70s. I think we were living together in '79. We were together for 7 years. And so I said, “Well, maybe I'm not.” And then the last... I started seeing my current partner while I was still seeing him, which he knew about, and caused a little bit of conflict, to say the least. Eventually he wandered off with someone else. So Kathleen and I have been together ever since. Since '83.

LS: Where did you meet Kathleen?

HF: Initially, I met her—she was a member of the Industrial Workers of the World. I was a member of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union. Those groups had a connection, and I was dating a guy from Industrial Workers of the World, so I met her, I think I heard her perform in a band, and then I met her at a party. She was in a feminist study group, and...god, it must have been, I must have gotten my time confused. Because I remember I bought a large jug of wine to drown our sorrows when Reagan got elected. That was obviously 1980. But I guess I met her in that study group and it went on for a while, and I sort of pursued her. And then we lived happily ever after.

LS: You lived happily ever after! Were you—because it sounds like you were involved—can you talk about the Chicago Women's Liberation Union a little bit? What were they involved in? Were they women's issues more generally? Were they concerned with lesbianism?

HF: Yes. Both. I think I first got hooked up with them through a different South Side women's group. I think it was a rap group, consciousness-raising group, something like that. Probably connected through—have you ever heard of Changes? [LS: No.] Have you ever heard of Gene Gendlin? [LS: No.] He was a professor at the University for a long time. I had a class with him in '64. He was my dissertation advisor in the '70s and stayed around. But after Kent State, people were saying, I've got to do something. This was... '74, I think? A lot of people who were close to him founded something called Changes which was originally conceptualized as a hotline for people who needed to talk. It involved a lot of training and how to listen... So anyway, this women's group was kind of an offshoot of Changes, and so we joined the Chicago Women's Liberation Union as a group. There's a whole history of the women's union's page online.

So after that, I don't know quite what happened with the South Side women's group. In the Chicago Women's Liberation Union I was part of a group that was attempting to connect with working class women. That work group included women who had been in the women's union longer and were more politically sophisticated than I. We did our outreach through sports. We had a little newspaper we did called the *Secret Storm*, which apparently is also the name of a soap opera.

LS: Yeah, I've come across issues of *Secret Storm*.

HF: No kidding! What an archivist. At any rate, so I was there when—and there was a lesbian group named Blazing Star, which I was not a part of until the women's union dissolved and Blazing Star became a chapter of the New American Movement.

LS: That does ring a bell. What was the New American Movement's...?

HF: They were a democratic socialist movement.

LS: And Blazing Star was a lesbian...

HF: Socialist feminist group. As you probably know, the women's unions all got destroyed, ostensibly by the RCP—sorry, the Revolutionary Communists' Party. But someone mentioned last weekend that it was probably CoIntelPro, that it probably wasn't just the RCP. Because the same thing happened all over the country. So NAM, that's kind of where socialist feminism went.

LS: Was Blazing Star very active?

HF: Yeah. We had a newspaper. You must have seen—[LS: Yeah, I've seen that too.] What else did we do besides the newspaper? I'm sure we did other things. I'd have to go into the

other file to tell you, I don't know what else we did. I know we were a part of NAM. But specifically I can't recall.

LS: It's interesting too that you say that this whole time when sometimes dating men and sometimes dating women. In these lesbian groups, was that ever a source of conflict or tension with your fellow lesbian organizers?

HF: Well...

LS: I identify as bisexual, but very involved with this stuff. So I'm so interested to know other people's experiences.

HF: Nobody was nasty to me. And I think I remember talking to someone and asking her advice, and she said, you know, just follow your nose. I think that it was kind of—it wasn't directly at me personally, probably they said stuff about me behind my back. And in a way, dating women is a bit of an exaggeration. Like I had a couple of forays into sleeping with women that didn't work out very well, and nothing lasted until Kathleen. So it was—it was weird. The *Windy City Times* did this whole series online, did you know about that? [LS: Yeah.] If you google me, you'll know more about my sexual history than you want to know, probably.

[0:53:55]

LS: And then you had a lot of these good gay male friends, right? [HF: Yeah. Yeah. Who are still my—] Who are still your friends, right. You're still in contact with a lot of people, I guess.

HF: In a way, I guess. Jim McDaniel is the one who's kept a lot of these contacts together. There's a guy who I was close to named [redacted], who was at the Counseling Center. Do you know that name? [LS: It does sound familiar.] He was in the bisexuality group and he's in New Jersey now. But he's a very close friend and I'm still in touch with him and some people who were close to him. But a lot of people—I would have lost touch with Kevin Burke, probably, if it hadn't been for Jim. Another friend named [redacted] who was a graduate student. And there's a law school student named [redacted]. I guess actually if you want to talk to him, you should probably not just call him. You should probably get me to call him. So I wouldn't just try to Google him to find him, I would go through me or Jim.

LS: Yeah. I know you have to approach different people you pick differently. Goodness, what else...? Is there something I'm forgetting to ask about that seems relevant?

HF: Well, are there other things that you've heard from other people in UC Liberation that might jog my memory?

LS: The books...was there a hotline for Gay Liberation? Did you ever work on that hotline?

HF: No. I must have, but I don't remember. It seems like I must have, but I don't remember.

LS: Because it seems like you would have been good at talking to people.

HF: Not extensively, obviously.

LS: Dances, for sure. As you kind of—you've been in Hyde Park the whole time. Have you continued to be in touch with university gay or women's groups?

HF: Not really. [LS: Not really.] Have I kept in touch with any of them at all? No.

LS: So your activism is really a move towards Chicago's Women's Liberation Union and then Blazing Star.

HF: Yeah, I've kind of drifted out of...I've drifted more into other things.

LS: Have any of them been particularly Hyde Park-based?

HF: Hyde Park-based? Not many. There was a brief flurry of trying to save Harper Court, that was Hyde Park-based. You know Harper Court? The university was going to tear it down. They have torn it down. But there was a time before they tore it down that people were trying to get them to stop. I was involved in that. But mostly I've been involved in more city-wide things.

LS: Has your perception of the '60s and '70s changed over the years, and your experiences in them?

HF: Hm. For instance...?

LS: For instance, I've talked to some people who said they felt very strongly about something while they were in college here or graduate school here, and looking back, they don't understand how they ever felt passionately about that thing.

HF: No, I don't think so. I feel like Gay Liberation is basically in pretty good hands. They don't need me. They're doing fine. I think once I raised some money in recent years for the California Proposition to keep gay teachers out of the schools, but that was more recent.

LS: We also like to ask, what do you think has changed between then and now.

HF: Well, they say that there are more people who have been involved in demonstrations and pickets now than then. Which surprised me to hear that. But I suppose that the '60s as we can see it was a relatively narrow group of people. I mean, if you count the civil rights movement as the '60s, and people usually don't, that might make it different. So I don't know how that's true. Because surely there must have been more people involved in civil rights demonstrations, but maybe not, maybe they were small.

- LS: You said you spent one summer registering the vote in Mississippi, right? Did you ever take civil rights-type actions after that? Or is that the one that stands out the most?
- HF: That one certainly stands out the most. Yeah, that stands out the most. I remember being here in the summer and there being stuff about Black Power—oh yeah, I remember now. Martin Luther King came to Chicago, and there were marches in Marquette Park, which many of my NAM friends didn't approve of, they thought it was dividing the working class. But I and my guy friend went. They threw stones at us. I think some people got seriously hurt. We didn't. And I spent a couple of days being afraid of white people. [laughs] But I got over it.
- LS: Kevin Burke mentioned at one point that Gay Liberation had done coalition work with the Black Panther party? And that there was some crazy coalitions going on at some points. Do you remember any of that?
- HF: I remember that Huey Newton wrote this article, which you've probably seen. No? It was something like, the gays are the most radical of all, something like that. So it was a very positive article, coming from the Panthers. Actually, there was the murder of Fred Hampton, and I think—I don't know if there were demonstrations. If there were, I certainly was in them. I remember working to get Ed Hanrahan the State's Attorney at the time, out of office electorally. Jim was a Republican—at that time, no longer—and it was the one time that we were on the same side. [laughs] It was Ogilvie who ran against Hanrahan. What do I...? So I think that kind of thing is sort of blurry in my mind, like I probably did, but it isn't too memorable if you just show up at a demonstration.
- LS: Fair enough. Because you showed up at a lot of them.
- HF: Yeah, I showed up at a lot of them. Most of them are not too memorable. So I don't know much about the practical coordination between Panthers and Gay Liberation. It's an interesting question. You would think that there would be some. The Panthers were decimated by the time of the Harold Washington campaign. So what would we have worked on? But there was stuff.
- LS: I'll have to keep on plugging away at the archives.
- HF: What were the Panthers doing? They had this breakfast program...
- LS: And if I can ask, one more...What do you think things have changed in your professional life as a psychologist? How do psychologists see gay and lesbian issues today as opposed to how they did in the 1970s?
- HF: Night and day. Like, my ignorant therapist was a liberal, and he probably didn't think that being gay was a mental illness. Or, I would have never gotten that far, but he certainly didn't think that you should tell that to people. He didn't think that gay people should be talked out of it, he just didn't think that I belonged in the category. So the Counseling

Center was always very liberal, and as I learned later, there were people on the staff who were gay who I didn't realize were gay until years later. But you know, anyway, the professionals just totally came around.

LS: Shifted. I can't think of any more questions.

HF: Sure. I can't think of any more big deal things either.

LS: We like to close with why did you decide to be interviewed for this project.

HF: I was asked.

LS: I like to hear that! [laughs]

HF: No, it seems like a good thing.

LS: All right. Then thank you!

HF: Didn't take until 9pm after all!

[01:05:18]

End of Interview