

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

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**INTERVIEW #40
MASON, PEGGY (1960 -) FACULTY**

At U of C: 1992 - present

Interviewed: June 25th, 2013

Interviewer: Molly Liu

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Interview (June 25th, 2013) with Peggy Mason at the University of Chicago:

[00:00:00]

ML: If you could start off by telling us how you came to the University of Chicago?

PM: I was a post-doc in San Francisco. I was looking for a job. I definitely wanted to run my own lab. Applied for a bunch of jobs. I was offered one at a very good university, and I went to visit it. It was in a small town in the middle of nowhere. And I actually felt physically ill, thinking about taking that job. All my bosses, my mentors, thought I should take that job because “don't look a gift horse in the mouth,” that type of thing. But it just wasn't right for me. It was just too suffocatingly small. I came here and I totally loved the atmosphere. And then they thankfully offered me the job, and I took it.

ML: You mention San Francisco. Had you been in big cities your entire life beforehand?

PM: Yeah. I grew up in Washington, DC. I spent nine years, undergraduate and graduate, in Boston, then it was San Francisco. I actually grew up in the suburbs. I went to school in the city. I went to private school in the city. And growing up, I felt like suburbs were death. I thought they were cultural death. So I just wanted to get into the city, and I've been in the city ever since. Actually, I'm now in the country. I've returned to the outer suburbs, and I don't think it's death right now.

ML: So you commute to Hyde Park then?

PM: Yeah.

ML: Sorry, this is random, but did you happen to work in UCSF? Who did you work with?

PM: I worked with Howard Fields.

ML: Oh cool! I worked in the Jan lab last summer, so I have found memories of UCSF...

ML: How was the change, going from San Francisco to Chicago? What about the atmosphere of this place do you enjoy?

PM: I enjoy the...well. So it does actually relate to being a lesbian. When I was in graduate school, I was...I don't know who the hell I thought I was keeping this secret from, but I was not out. Whatever. And that was very unpleasant. And I vowed that I wouldn't do that again, I didn't want to do that again. When I made the clean—when I graduated and made a clean break and went to San Francisco, I was sort of aggressively out. But when I came to Chicago, I had lost—I had been in San Francisco for six years, very comfortable, blah blah blah, and I came down a notch to more where I am now, which is not aggressively out, but just out. So clearly so that I feel like I stop any... I stop anyone from treating me any differently or badly before it happens, because they know, because it's obvious. And that has kind of worked for me. And so when I got here, I was pleased that it worked. People just didn't really care who I was. They cared about my ideas, and I like that you can be as weird or as normal or as mainstream or as non-conformist, it doesn't really matter who you are, what matters is your intellectual output.

That real focus on intellectual output and the complete disregard for personal stuff is very appealing to me. That's number one. And number two is, within the intellectual sphere, you can go anywhere in this university and find someone who knows more than you do. I like that. I like a bigger pond. I like a lot of smart people, a lot of interesting people. If I wanted to find something out from someone, no one would not open the door to me. Let me say that positively: everyone opened the door to me. So I like that. And I actually like the fact that this is an integrated campus. So there's humanities and social sciences and physical sciences, biological sciences—all here. I love art, I love literature, I love things beyond science as well, and I like that this campus has that in spades. So, that's what I like about the U of C.

ML: You mention being—like, not really being—making it obvious to people that you're out before they even try anything on you. What are the ways that you make this obvious, do you think?

PM: I feel very unapologetic. That's one reason. I think that 50, 60% of people, even at that time, and probably a larger percentage now, can take one look at me and realize that I'm a lesbian. And I talk about my partner in a completely even way. That's kind of the way it goes. I can't even remember the last time I had to say to someone, "I'm a lesbian." It just doesn't happen.

ML: You mention not being out in graduate school. Were you out in undergrad? Can you take me through the process?

PM: I came out at, I don't know, something around age 20, age 21, something around there. So that was in the middle of my undergraduate career. Leaving the closet is a process. I came out, I realized that I was a lesbian, I told my parents, and then I started to tell friends. But

I didn't—I did not—well. Remember, this was a long time ago. This was 1981, 2, 3. Would this news have been well-received in general? Not so much. It wasn't particularly well-received by my mother at the time. So I just didn't take those next steps of coming out. I kept it very private. I kept it to myself, my friends, and my family. By the end of graduate school, the toll that being in the closet had taken was no longer acceptable—was clear, and no longer acceptable. I was very aggressive about it when I went to do a post-doc.

ML: Like aggressive in what way? Like, “Hi, I'm Peggy, I'm a lesbian”? [laughs]

PM: Basically. I said to Howard, “You know I'm a lesbian, if you have a problem with that it's not going to work,” some crazy thing like that. And Howard really didn't care. He was living in San Francisco for a long time. He seriously didn't care. And then I lived in San Francisco. That's different—back then, it's more like somewhere else today.

ML: I've heard that San Francisco has changed a lot over the past couple of years.

PM: Well, I don't know what it was like now, but back then, it was just an open environment, kind of like Chicago is today. It wasn't like Chicago in 1983, it was San Francisco. There was a huge gay presence. It wasn't a weird anomaly or anything.

ML: You've mentioned the atmosphere at UChicago. But what's the atmosphere in Chicago in general? You compare it to San Francisco in the '80s, which is interesting.

PM: Well, when we first got here, it was really, really different. Now I'm much less—I have friends, but they're much less restricted to the lesbian community. Back then, we went from the lesbian community in San Francisco to the lesbian community in Chicago, and it was really, really different. The lesbian community in San Francisco in the early '80s was very activist, very radical, very political group. And here, not so much. Not so much at all! Just wasn't. Yeah, I don't know how much you...well. So we would call ourselves lesbians or dykes. The women that we met here in Chicago in the early '80s—we got here in '92. The women that we met even in the early '90s were gay women. Very different. Not political. Just really different.

ML: It's funny how that's signified just by turning from “lesbians/dykes” to “gay women.”

PM: Yeah. I mean, that has meaning to me. I don't know how much meaning that has to you or to whoever is going to listen to this tape. It has—I see a difference between homosexual, gay, lesbian, and dyke. And queer now. I wouldn't call myself queer, but I understand today, it's a little bit more of a thing. Younger people might call themselves queer instead of lesbian or a dyke. Whatever.

ML: Can you talk about the meanings that those different words have for you?

PM: Well, I'm a lesbian/dyke. [laughs] That's who I am. And to me, that means that my image of myself is who I am, but it's also rooted in a history and a politics.

ML: Whereas a word like queer, for example, since it's more recent—

PM: I think it's rooted in a history and a politics, it's just a different history and politics than what I'm rooted in. It's the history and politics of the '90s and '00s, I guess, maybe the late '80s. But I came out in the early '80s. So the '80s is really my root time.

ML: When you came here in 1992, were there already domestic partnership benefits?

PM: That was actually—that's a really interesting point. I arrived immediately after they had just won it...Stuart [Michaels, Interview #33] and Melissa Roderick were really, really active in getting that to happen, and it happened. They had formed this group which was like the Lesbian, Gay—maybe bisexual was in there I have no idea—Faculty and Staff Group, something like that? I don't remember what the name of the group was. I was somehow—somehow I managed to get invited into that. I went to a few meetings, and the first meeting was like, we got it! Fabulous! Celebration! And then the next few meetings were, well, what are we going to do now? And it fizzled. Because there wasn't really any project. But the fact that we got—that I walked into a situation where we had domestic partnership, and still to this day the best private domestic partnership available in the country—it is a complete domestic partnership that U of C gives—that just had mountains of meaning to me.

ML: Can you talk about the meaning that it had? Or it—just meant a lot.

PM: Well, it meant all the world to me. It meant that my partner could be on my medical insurance. And it meant that UC bought into my relationship as much as it legally could. So, yeah.

ML: Since there wasn't—do you think are any other projects for gays and lesbians on campus? You mention that the thing kind of fizzled after a few meetings.

PM: Yeah, I—today? What would be a project?

ML: Or any time in the time that you've been here.

[0:16:45]

PM: I'm happy with—it worked for me. I'm basically happy. Yeah. I don't need anything else from the university. The other thing is, I'm very happy to be a resource for the students. And that's one of the sort of—one of the motivations beneath the surface for being very clearly out. If I can be of any help to students or whoever, then I want to be known, I want people to realize that there are a few folks that have walked that path.

ML: Have you been involved in any of the student mentoring stuff or the student, the LGBT stuff on campus?

- PM: The LGBT stuff, no. No. I'm very active in teaching. I have a great lab. I'm very serious about the students in my lab. Very into mentoring. Not through that though.
- ML: I think I know one of the students in your lab... He was a friend of one of my friends, since they went to India together. He's cool dude. He speaks very highly of working in this lab... Can you talk about—you've been here for a while.
- PM: 21 years.
- ML: 21 years. Have you seen any changes in the student body? The students who have come into your lab or who you've taught.
- PM: Well, bizarrely enough, the students which I have the most contact with are medical students. I've had contact with undergraduate students mostly through my lab. I've taught limitedly in the college. Although I've always enjoyed teaching in the college. I've taught quite a bit in the graduate school, although less—not recently. And I've had graduate students through the years. Differences in the students? I don't know. I would say that Pritzker and the college clearly are doing things very, very well. The students are amazing. They're smart, and they're a delight. I just—I think that those two units have done particularly well.
- ML: Can you speak to the gay, or the LGBTQ presence in the medical school here? I've talked to a few alumni.
- PM: There's always a few. They're sometimes—sometimes they make a connection with me. Sometimes they make a connection that's—and I don't realize until later that they're gay or lesbian. And some of them make an explicit connection to me. I've been to a few events. There is a gay and lesbian medical students and physicians group. It used to meet... I don't know. For a few years I used to know the person that was running it, so I would go because he would tell me when it was and I would go. I kind of go if I know about it, if I'm asked to and I can. Yeah. I don't know. What else are you interested—I have no real formal connection to that organization. Or to the students that happen to be gay. Sometimes I know that they are and sometimes I don't know that they are. In fact, recently, I found out someone I've known—a student I've known for years is a lesbian. And I had no clue. I thought about it later—is it because I have no gaydar? And actually, I think it's because I don't. It doesn't matter to me. If it matters to them and they want to talk to me, that's fine. But I'm not going to treat anyone differently because they are or aren't gay. So it actually doesn't matter to me.
- ML: I mean, it goes back to what you were saying about the U of C before, right? You connect to people on an intellectual—not necessarily based on sexuality.
- PM: Right. Right. I don't think I want it to matter to me. So if it's blatantly obvious and it's in my face, I'm going to know. But I really don't care. It's not going to change how I treat somebody, any more than I'd want it to change how they treat me.

ML: This goes back to way before, but when you were in San Francisco, you said that you were involved in a more political, activist-y type of group. Can you talk about what that was like? What sort of politics did you involve yourselves in?

PM: I mean, I honestly—I've never actually done anything. Maybe when I was in college, and a little bit in graduate school. I've done very little activism myself. It's just mostly that when I was in San Francisco, all of our friends had the same politics as us, and some of them were actually doing stuff and being activists. Not so much me, not so much my partner. But it was definitely an understood background. The history, politics, and activism associated with being lesbian. We weren't going to be Republican lesbians, okay? That wasn't a possibility in our world. Whereas you come to Chicago, that's a possibility. That's the difference.

ML: Where have you lived in Chicago? Or outside of Chicago, now.

PM: We started in Hyde Park. We went to East Rogers Park, a half a block from the lake. That was nice, except that the commute was making me insane. [ML: That's like two hours or something, right? Or like one hour.] No, it's half an hour in the morning and shoot your brains out in the evening. I just couldn't take it. We lived there for three and a half, four years. Then we moved back to Hyde Park. Spent, sort of, at that time we had a house in Michigan, and we had this kind of dual life. I was commuting to Michigan on the weekends. And then I wrote a book. To finish the book, I ended up going to Michigan for six months. That was very nice. To be in the country and live with my girlfriend at the same time, instead of commuting back and forth. I'm not big on driving. Yuck. Yuck on driving. So when I finished the book, I realized, "Oh, shit. I have to go back to work. I'm going to go back to Hyde Park and she's going to be in Michigan and we're going to have weekend thing again?" I didn't like that idea, so we came up with the plan to live in the country in a place where I could commute to work without driving. So we found this unbelievably ideal place that's seven minutes from the Metra station but is total country. So that's what we did.

ML: How have you liked living in all of these different places?

PM: I've liked it. I've like them all. They were all great places. The one I liked—I liked the place, but I hated the commute when we lived in Rogers Park.

ML: What is it like in Rogers Park? I've never actually been that far north.

PM: It's nice. It's fancy. Different, North Side. Now I never go there. It was fine. It was fine but I didn't like the commute. It wasn't going to work for me. But I'm not—each of the places we've lived has played a role in the next place we lived. We wouldn't have gone to where we've gone if we hadn't taken all the steps we had, so I don't actually regret anything. I'm glad I am where I am now.

ML: So you've talked about this a little bit before, but what are the functions that you have as faculty here? Like, what classes do you teach?

[0:27:57]

PM: I teach the medical students. I teach medical neurobiology. It's a six-week course. Six weeks and then the final. I teach the whole thing by myself, which is just a bizarre amount of hours. It's...what is it? Ten hours of lecture a week, plus another ten hours of lab a week. [ML: Oh wow.] So it kind of takes those six weeks of my life. For reasons that are very unclear to me, I very much enjoy it. For reasons that are very unclear to me. I very much enjoy the medical students. And so—whatever. This past January I taught Paris neurobiology, neurobiology in Paris. That was a blast. We had 10 undergraduates. It was a total blast. For reasons outside my control, and reasons unclear to me, we are not being renewed. So we will not do that next year, because we are not being asked to do it next year. Although I would do it again. [ML: That is really too bad.] It's too bad. And then I give lectures here and there in various courses, here and there. All undergraduate courses. So I probably give another four or five lectures.

ML: And your lab works in rat empathy and pain, right?

PM: That is right. Rat empathy.

ML: Why are you interested in that research?

PM: I started my career—until about '08, my career was completely focused on the cellular mechanisms of pain modulation, which is essentially how morphine works and what natural circumstances would engage morphine-like activities in the brain. And then the reason why I got into empathy is because a graduate student, Inbal Ben-Ami Bartal, who's the first author on our paper about this, approached me to do a collaboration. She was a graduate student in Jean Decety's lab, and she decided that she wanted to look at the biological basis of empathy. Can't really not so much in humans, to look at rats. Jean doesn't, he doesn't really study—he studies humans, he does not study rats. So they wanted to hook up with somebody who studies rats. Luckily, they chose me, and that's how I got into it! And it's just been a blast. It's been a career-altering blast.

ML: It's a cool transition! Going from pain to feeling somebody else's pain.

PM: Right. That is exactly how the transition—that was the mechanism of the transition. The contagion of pain and the emotional contagion of pain. But what we're doing has never involved pain. Our empathy model has—there's no pain involved. No noxious stimulation.

ML: How do you study empathy in rats?

PM: Well... [32:03 – 34:39: PM and ML talk about rat empathy research]

ML: Do you think that your personal identity has influenced your work in any way? Do you see those two meshing, the personal and the professional, for you?

PM: Not really. You kind of... As far as the scientific results, I have results that I'm happy that that's the result. I have results where I'm not so happy that's the result. When I studied pain modulation, I didn't really care what the result was. This stuff is a little bit more translatable. Or it's harder to ignore the connections to human society. There are obvious, if unwritten, implications. And some of the implications I'm happier about than others. But that won't—that can't influence what we find. [ML: That would be bad science.] It would be very, very bad. So, whatever, it's fine. Experiments are experiments. They're experiments because we don't know the answer. If you only want to accept one answer, then don't do the experiment. On the other hand, who I am definitely impacts how I interact with people, and my views about students and my views about teaching, and all that.

ML: How did you become interested in biology?

PM: Always was interested. From the get go.

ML: Did you know from the beginning?

PM: So I grew up in the DC area and my mother sent me to the Smithsonian at an absurdly young age. And she kept on sending me to these classes. I remember I took oceanography and I thought, uh, okay. I wasn't really jazzed. Then I took taxidermy. I loved it. I was skinning animals at 6 or 7, and I was teaching taxidermy by age 11 or so.

ML: A different kind of stuffed animal than most kids play with.

PM: Yeah. And I worked there all through high school—I worked in the Smithsonian natural history museum. In those days, this is the mid to late '70s, taxonomy was the thing. There was no molecular genetics. Or it had not met taxonomy or evolution at that point. I like doing taxidermy. I liked learning about the animals and evolution. I didn't particularly like the scientific questions of taxonomy or ecology. When I went off to college I initially thought that I would do ecology and evolution, because that was kind of what I had been exposed to and also I was a Stephen Jay Gould devotee. I read his column in Natural History every week. So that's what I thought I wanted to do. But I kind of realized that the intellectual questions there were not that appealing to me. And so when I thought about it, I want to go into science, never wanted to go into medicine—I get queasy around sick people. So then I thought, what would I want to study? Of ecology, the thing I liked best was ethology, animal behavior. The science underneath that, what produces behavior, is neurobiology. And that's why I chose neurobiology.

ML: Did you go into the study of pain immediately? What did you work in before?

PM: When I was an undergraduate, I worked in John Dowling's lab in Harvard. We studied the retina. That was fantastic. The retina is an amazing system, and I learned a ton about it, and I also could do intracellular recordings as an undergraduate. That was fantastic. But I was pretty sure I didn't want to do that for my career. So when I went to graduate school,

I rotated through a bunch—I rotated through a few labs. But the pain thing really engaged me from the start. I wanted something that was a little bit more—a little bit less abstract, a little bit more—I could talk about it at a party. Somebody's not going to have a blank look.

ML: Like, “What's a retina?” whereas everyone's like, “Pain!”

PM: “Why would you study that,” right. I didn't want a blank look. And I liked that pain—I could talk about pain in a way that I could explain it to other people. So that's what I wanted.

[0:41:00]

ML: Do you think campus community has changed over the past 20 years that you've been here? Either with regard to LGBTQ stuff, or more generally.

PM: I'm not...I'm just not in the mix for LGBTQ stuff. I'm not. I just don't know how it's changed or not changed. Yeah. I just... There are remarkably few visible gays and lesbians. Yet at the same time, it's remarkably un-impactful that there are so few. I've never felt like—I've never felt like my being a lesbian has made any difference. In strong contrast, I think that sexism is alive and well. So if I had to rate obstacles, I would rate being a lesbian basically a 0, or a 1, out of 100. I would rate being a woman way way higher. Way way higher.

ML: There are so few professors—are you the only...? You and Vicky Prince...

PM: I'm not the only—no, no, there are quite a few. Full professors in biological sciences? Probably 25 of us.

ML: Oh, that's great!

PM: No, there are plenty. The obstacles that women faculty face, the obstacles that women students... Not the obstacles, but situations that women students face, and that women faculty face I think are significant. And that hasn't changed.

ML: It's weird that that intellectual-first atmosphere that you mention, how it seems to work for homosexual stuff, but not necessarily for issues of sex and gender.

PM: It's very complicated. And I don't—there's clearly not an easy way out, because there's mostly, 90-95% of the people around here are well-intentioned. It's not like there are some departments that are happy with not having women. This division is not particularly happy. I don't think the provost is particularly happy with the obstacles that remain. At the same time, it's unbelievably difficult to make a culture change. It takes change at so many—on so many fronts. Just hasn't happened. In my opinion.

ML: What are some of the obstacles that you're thinking about?

PM: There's no significant role for a person saying, "I don't want to hire a woman." There's no significant role. In fact, women are being promoted just fine. By everything that we can tell, at not different rates than men. So there are two issues that are facing women academically, here and many to most institutions in the United States. One is the initial hiring. Whereas 50% of the students in the biological sciences, roughly 50%, are women, the applicant pool for an assistant professorship is not 50% women. It's more like 30, 25. So we've got this leaky pipeline, which probably has—is the result of several causes. None particularly easy to fix. The second obstacle that I think women face in academia is not being promoted, not even being promoted to full professor, does happen. The obstacle is being put into leadership positions, meaningful leadership positions. That has not happened.

ML: I noticed that when you talk about your own association with LGBTQ stuff, you pretty much talk about lesbians and women as opposed to gay men or other letters in that long acronym. Do you think that there is separation—can you talk about separations between lesbians and gays, or like other groups that are attempted to be united underneath that banner?

PM: Oh, lesbians and gay men have completely different histories. When I came out, gay men were not—they were completely apolitical. They were just having a good time. For the most part. There was always a political wing, but the bulk of the gay male community was not political until AIDS happened, and that politicized them in the mid-'80s. I was there in San Francisco when it politicized them. But it's a really different thing to be politicized by AIDS versus being politicized by essentially sexism, which is what the lesbian community was. I think there is a gay male and lesbian union, but it is... It covers historical, political, and social differences. You know, through the years, my partner and I have had gay male friends, and that's been fine, but it's not a big thing for me. I don't—I just don't see that as the same.

ML: You're right that the histories are totally different.

PM: Totally different. And what do I know about—I don't know about bisexual at all, don't know about that at all. And transgender, again, a really different row to hoe. It's a really different row to hoe. I have great sympathy for that community. I would not pretend to understand even the beginning of those challenges.

ML: What was it like to be in San Francisco when the AIDS epidemic hit?

PM: We always knew people that were in some preparatory state of dying, of death. So I think for about ten years, we always knew somebody that was going to die, imminently. We thought that by 1988, '89, something, we thought that was the normal course of events, and that it would be true for the rest of our lives. It is no longer true. It stopped being true sometime in the '90s.

ML: When the medicines came out for it? Or the treatments? Or was it just that the first wave

of infections was over?

PM: I don't know. There was nothing back then. We didn't have HIV, we didn't have anything.

ML: How did it effect the lesbian community? Obviously it had a huge effect on the gay male...

PM: Well, there's a huge portion of the lesbian community that made AIDS their work. There was—and I think it increased the communication between gays and lesbians, which had not really been there before AIDS. But you have to understand, I came out just as GRID was first described. Gay-Related ImmunoDeficiency.

ML: Oh, right. I forgot that was the name before.

PM: Right? So I went to graduate school in '83, I think the first cases were in '82, '81, something like that.

[0:51:57]

ML: So, how did you meet your partner? You've been with her for a long time, it seems like.

PM: How did I meet her? I was a graduate student, and my advisor sent me to a conference in Vancouver, Canada. And the conference was, it was a good conference, then it was over, and I had some extra days there, so I went to look around. And I was supposed go off on this boat tour, and I get seasick, so at the last minute, I don't know, something in me made me not go on this boat tour. With the others from the conference. And I just walked into Vancouver, and I walked into this store, and I saw her. And I couldn't get her out of my head, and I walked back in two hours later, and basically picked her up.

ML: Wow! That's an amazing story!

PM: Yeah, we won't go into too many details. But yes. It was—yeah, I was in a strange city, and really, what the hell, what's the worst that could happen, she could say no. And no one would know.

ML: And since grad school too! That's amazing!

PM: We met in '86. The year I graduated grad school was '87. We met the year before.

ML: Congratulations! 27 years, that is?

PM: '86...27, yep. In a couple of weeks.

ML: Since gay marriage is kind of on the cusp of being passed, is that like a goal for you and your partner? Do you want to get married?

PM: We are married. We got married. She's Canadian, so we got married in Ucluelet, which is on Vancouver Island. We got married on our 20th anniversary. So we're legally married. At some point I assume that the United States and Illinois will recognize that. It could have happened. Who knows.

ML: What's it been like to see this progress towards—or this change towards getting gay marriage, being able to serve in the military?

PM: Gay marriage is—okay, so while I'm all in favor of gay marriage, I'm not sure it's the political issue I would have chosen to push. In fact, it's not the political issue I would have chosen to push. It's kind of like gays in the military. Would I have chosen to push that over job discrimination? No, not so much. But once it achieves some visibility, of course I'm going to be for gay marriage. Yeah. What it's been like—I watched the mainstream gay organizations pick these two fights. Gays in the military, and gay marriage. [ML: Which are both kind of super conservative fights, right?] Yeah. I think they are. They are homosexual fights. Homosexual women or gay women fights. They're not the fights I would have chosen. They're just not. But I'm not fighting, so I don't get a say! And my goal is not to be—although I guess I am, I'm a suburban married woman. I, yeah, that's a little frightening. My goal is not to be like every heterosexual couple, that's just not my goal.

ML: How do you feel about the increasing normalization of homosexuality?

PM: It's fine. It's fine. Yeah. What I don't like is if that comes at the price of marginalizing a group of extreme expressions of being gay or lesbian or whatever. Same thing, I'm also Jewish. There's ways in which you—there's pressure to present yourself to the outside world within a comfortable, conformist, “I'm just like you, except I'm blank.” And that's okay, but I'm not comfortable with leaving behind people who are not just like you. That is not—I think that's the downside to current fashion that everybody's just the same.

ML: Do you know—do you hang out with the other gay and lesbian faculty on campus? What happened after everything dissolved after domestic partnerships?

PM: No. As I've grown older, I have found that it's important to find friends. What their sexual preference is, what their religion is, what their race is, is way less important than whether they're simpatico good friends. More so than any time in my life, I have a mixed group of friends.

ML: Looking back, or I guess looking right now, what role has the University of Chicago played in the narrative of your life?

PM: Oh, huge. They've paid me for 21 years. They've allowed me to do something I actually, if I had the resources, would do for free. It's fantastic. This is a good life, it's a good job.

ML: Do you think your experience is pretty typical for LGBTQ faculty here?

PM: No clue. I suspect not. Like I was just saying, I don't think we're a uniform group.

ML: Do you think that the movement loses something from shoving all these different people with different histories into the LGBTQ banner?

PM: I can't say because I have never really engaged with that, besides the occasional reception or evening social that I've been invited to. I have not engaged with that. So I have no clue. I guess you could say that I'm not in that community.

ML: I mean, you are...

PM: I am and I'm not.

ML: That's kind of all the questions that I can think of. So we're always looking for memorabilia or other people that you think we might want to talk to. Can you think of anything you have, or any people for us to interview?

PM: The people I know... Melissa Roderick. You should talk to Gil Herdt, even though he's in San Francisco. He moved to San Francisco. I don't—is this all faculty? [ML: Oh no, we're doing students.] Oh, so talk to some medical students. Actually, one of the people to talk to, to get an avenue into the gay and lesbian presence in the medical school, is Nathan West. And you can tell him that I gave you his name. [interview #42]

ML: Is he involved in admissions, or—?

PM: He's a particularly out medical student, who has actually done some great work in the medical school on attitudes, just changing a few easy processes that are easy to change and will make a difference for people coming in who may not be heterosexual.

ML: Right. That's really great. I've actually been put in charge of interviewing people from the medical school because I'm a bio major, but I've only interviewed two alumni and I'm not sure how to find the rest of them, so thank you so much.

PM: So I can actually—there are others, and I can ask them if they're comfortable. Nathan, I know I don't have to ask him, but others, I can ask them whether they're comfortable with me giving you their names, and if they are, I can give you their names.

ML: Yeah, that would be really wonderful, actually!

PM: Yeah. Another person is Elizabeth Davenport, who's Dean of the Rock [Rockefeller Memorial Chapel]. And comes from England so has a slightly different perspective. Oh, another person is Phillippe Tapon. [Interview #17] He's actually now, I believe, a resident, but he graduated from Pritzker a while ago. Again, tell him I sent you. He's a psychiatry resident.

ML: Hopefully I'll be able to interview him. I know that residents are incredibly busy.

PM: Yeah, I don't know where he's at.

ML: But we'll track him down. Is there anything else that you want to tell us?

PM: I think that does it.

ML: Sure. Thank you so much for being interviewed!

[1:04:16]

End of Interview