

Norm Costa

SR 4143, Oral History, by Ruben Reynaga & Stephanie Munley
Gay and Lesbian Arch.I.V.es of the Pacific Northwest (GLAPN)

2000 November 13-20



THE OREGON
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
FOUNDED 1898

NORM: Norm Costa

SM: Stephanie Munley

RR: Ruben Reynaga

Transcribed by: Unknown, 2003

Audit/edit by: Name, date

Tape 1, Side 1

2000 November 13

SM: November 13th, 2000.

RR: Ruben Reynaga.

SM: And Stephanie Munley are interviewing...

RR: Our class – the name of...

SM: Gay and Lesbian Arch.I.V.es.

RR: And we're doing an interview, an oral history, with Norm Costa.

NORM: So do you ask questions? Don't you have questions you want to ask of about when and where and what time you want to start this? Or what...

SM: We have questions, but...

RR: We first thought that we should let you speak, and then if we have questions we will ask you.

NORM: Oh. Well, you have to realize that, being that I'm 73, that I've lived a long life and since I've been out since 1947 that there's a lot there. So I don't know if you want to start the oral history when I came to Portland, or the oral history when I came out in California, or what? I mean that's - it's sort of - there's a lot to this and I don't know how many tapes you got. So, I mean, that's why. [Laughs]

SM: I'm thinking, I would like, I think, around Portland so that we can get, like, Portland, you know, history.

NORM: Sure, alright. I came to Portland in 1958 and I had a lover, who I will not mention, because he's still strange in the closet. He's the only lover that still won't talk to me. He changed his hair color three times a week, and this was in 1958 and 1959 and 1960. And felt insecure so he had to wear a great big diamond ring and tipped bartenders copious amounts of money, which I didn't think was necessary. But anyway, we had probably 1958 to, I think, 1966 or 1967 relationship, which is pretty good. And we were in business together.

I moved up here from California. In California I was doing - first thing, I was in California, just to give you background, I was in sales and service with Heister Cooperation. We did canners that canned Chef Boi Ardee, actually cooked the can as it went through this process, because I had a background in mechanical engineering. Then I went to the Collier Carbon and Chemical, and because I had an engineering background. I had rotating shifts and I was supposedly the engineer and a chef. And they had kilns and things.

So I came to Oregon when I met this person. Fell in love and came up here and I started to work for the Heister Corporation. I was going into sales and service for Heisters, so I had to learn how Heisters were put together. So I was on the swing shift driving a Heister around and watching all the component parts being put together, so I could do sales and service. The reason I really left, also had to leave Coulier because I was openly gay, and not that I wore a sign or anything, but people asked, well, why don't you date so and so? People considered me eligible, I guess. Finally I just said, well, I like men. And they'd either cry or fight. And most of the fights I won at that point, I was in good shape. [Laughs] But anyway...

SM: You mean like they would actually, like, they would roust things up?

NORM: Oh, yes, definitely. People felt very strong about this. People felt betrayed about this. People liked me and they always thought of me as a macho man, which I'm not. [Laughs]

SM: Sorry to break it to you guys. [Laughs]

NORM: And so it was hard on them. This is what happened. And so I knew that I was not going to last too long, that's why I didn't. I mean, it'd come out, because I couldn't lie. When I told my family I was gay, they halfway accepted it, because they'd always told me to tell the truth.

I went to work for Heister and I came home once, one evening, and my lover said, "You have to go see the doctor." And I said, now, why do I have to go see the doctor? I'm not sick. And he said, "I am. And you should be." And I said, why's that? And he says, "well, I have gonorrhoea and it's raging. And I just saw the doctor, and he said you have to come in to get tested and you'll have to get shot and things."

So, we had mutual sex, so I certainly was exposed, 'cause we were having sex up to the time he told me. So, I went to the doctor, it was a private physician. And he said, "Well, I want to get these shots." And I said, don't you think you should test me for it first? 'Cause I don't have any symptoms. And he said, "Alright." And so he tested me and it came back negative. He couldn't believe it. He took another test and it came back negative. And he said, "Well, you must have a terrific immune system because you should've had it," [Laughs] and I didn't.

And so with that happening, I told my lover, I says, well, obviously you did not get this from me, so what are you doing? And he says, "Well, I'm lonely at night so I go down to the bars."

RR: What bars were there around at the time that you went to?

NORM: The bars were the Harbor Club and the Tavern. Harbor Club was upstairs and was block off, and I'm trying to think of the cross street. I can't think of it right now. But anyway, the Harbor Club. You walked in the Harbor Club and there's a doorway. There was a long bar and a doorway. You opened the door and closed it. You walked up a steep flight of stairs and then all along the length of the Harbor Club below, was a small bar. And you might've had maybe 10 feet and then the bar and the barstools. That was the liquor bar. And then there was the Tavern, which was a beer bar and people - actually the police never bothered the Harbor Club, he must have paid pretty well, but the Tavern...

SM: Paid the police? Bought them off?

NORM: Yeah. And the Tavern they pulled you off the barstool and roust you once in a while. They weren't friendly.

Dorothy McCullough Lee was the mayor of Portland and she was going to clean Portland up of all vice and everything else. And so that was what was going on. So anyway, that's where he's going and then there was the theatre and...

RR: And what was the name? Tom Kat theatre?

NORM: I can't think of the name of it right now. It will come to me. But it was very popular then. Circle, or something like that. But anyway, that's where everybody met each other and had sex either upstairs or in the bathrooms.

So I asked him, what? You know, he says, "Well I'm lonely." And I said, well, I said, I'm doing this job. And he said, "Well, you should get day work." And I says, well, you're a hairdresser. Maybe I should become a hairdresser. And I was kidding. And he looked at me and says, "You could never be a hairdresser!" And I says, oh yeah? I said I have some money saved up. I'll go to beauty school.

And so, I was not very good at first because it wasn't, I don't know. I just, you know. [Laughs] So anyways, my hands did not work quite well. So I went to Fagan's Beauty School, and so I had a hard time wrapping permanents and things like that. What I did was, at the school, if you were a new student you could do permanents up to \$8, because they were cheap then. And after that, the seniors would have to do any permanents after \$8. So I set up a program there and I kept talking – somebody'd come in for a permanent and I would talk to them into a 10 or \$12 permanent, so I didn't have to do it. So, eventually they caught on. And so, they said, "Now, you really have to do this, Norm, because you're a good salesman but you got to learn how to do it if you're going

to be a hairdresser.” So I said alright, well, then let’s do a program with any student, somebody comes in and asked for \$8 or less permanent and you get them above 10, you give the student a dollar. And they did do that, and so I started a new program there.
[Laughs]

And so I became a hairdresser. My lover was very prominent in hairdressing. Well, sort of, at that time. He was working for somebody else and he didn’t have the acumen to start off on his own. And so I said, well, this is ridiculous, because I work for the one shop in Lake Oswego, and they said, “Well, we’ll never give you more than 55%.” And at that time there wasn’t booth rentals, and so you got a percentage. And I said well, my partner’s getting 65% and I’m sure I that I can bring just as much money in as he can. And they says, no, I’ll never do that. And I said fine, and so I said, if that’s the case we’ll open our own shop.

Soon as I graduated and six months later we opened our own shop. And when we did we were booked three months in advance and had a waiting list and the people working for us were very busy. Women would ask me and I’d say - everybody knew that we were lovers, but they still didn’t believe it ‘cause I didn’t act gay. I just acted the way I am. And I’ve never changed that. I’ve always acted the way I am. They would do that and women would sit at my booth and my station and get their elbows and try to rub my crotch and things like this, because they were a lot of horny ladies out in Lake Oswego. [All laugh] And these - some of them were very prominent and so I never discussed names or anything like that, you know, because there were a lot of really nice people too. But what most of the clientele was executive’s wives and people, or women who were very, very prominent in what they were doing. I was always professional with them, didn’t allow gossip; never gossiped. My partner did, but I didn’t. And the shop was very successful. So I did that.

So we went out to the bars and things like that, and then, as time went on, more bars opened up and met people. When we broke up, in the mid to late 1960s, I met somebody I finally - what happened was I bought a house in Glenmorrie. And he didn't want to buy a house, but I had enough money saved up, I could buy a house. He said, "You buy the house and I'll buy the furniture." So I bought this house and put an addition on it and had a little guesthouse on it. Built it and then, when we split up, and the reason was really dumb. The reason we split up is that he kept calling me Farmer Brown and things like that.

SM: Farmer Brown?

NORM: Yes, because I wore Pendleton shirts.

SM: Was he more urban? [Laughs]

NORM: Yes. He was. He wanted silk suits and things like that, which was fine. I mean, you know. I didn't mind dressing up once in a while going someplace, but what I - I liked to hike and do things like that.

And then the lady we had worked for, her sister and her husband lived up just out of Hood River toward the mountain, and he was, he did the planing in the sawmill. He separated all the lumber and everything. He was rough and ready. The person we worked for's sister, she moved up there and she was part of the old shop. And also she and Richard liked to drink together and do stuff like that and I'd go hike. And I really enjoyed that. I hiked all over the backside of Mount Hood. And saw wild turkeys and things like that. I did a lot of my ecology, went hunting for mushrooms and things.

Finally, I figured that I was sublimating, because I wasn't happy, because he'd always say, well, you know, and want to go to bars and impress the bartenders and things like that. So finally we broke up. Met another - he moved out and he hasn't spoken to me since, and I've tried to be nice and talk to him. And the lover I met then moved up from Cupertino and I knew him when I lived there and knew friends of his.

SM: Cupertino?

NORM: California, near San Jose.

RR: So, were you still working at the same place?

NORM: Oh yeah. I mean, so finally we broke up he said, "Well, I'm going to buy you out." And I said okay, that's fine. I said we'll have the accountant go over the books and whatever it's worth, you can buy me out and, you know, I'll leave.

SM: Was it that easy for you? I mean, it seems like?

NORM: Well, you have your own clientele, so it doesn't make any difference. Your clientele will go with you no matter what. And so, I said okay. Then he said - he changed his mind and said, "No, you buy me out." So I did. So he left. And he still won't speak to me.

It's really strange. He's the only lover I've had that won't speak to me. My last lover, it's just that he was so busy we haven't got time to speak but we, you know. We never had - he's made two appointments to have lunch, or something like that, but his life is chaos as far as doing anything, you know. It's not [that] he dislikes me, it's just that he

does not ever have time to do anything, because he's an audio engineer and he's doing commercials and things now. So.

SM: Have you ever tried to get contact with your first boyfriend, or the one you were in the hairdressing place with?

NORM: Oh, I've tried through the years and he still won't. And in fact when I retired, I got rid of my shops, 'cause the lady raised the rent and I just leased the station and moved and - actually he and somebody else moved in there, my old shop, and he rented it. Now, when I retired completely from hairdressing, which was several years ago, he's still working in the place I used to work with all the people I know, you know. And they say, you know. I won't go there, because he's three years younger but he's never taken care of himself, so he has, oh, a little palsy and things like that. And he doesn't know anything else, that's why he's working. He could retire. But, I don't go in there to see people, because it would be embarrassing to him, because he doesn't, you know. It would upset him. So, I mean, I think you just have to respect people's viewpoints. And it's too bad, you know, that he feels that way. Although, you know come to think of it we really don't have too many things in common, because his life is so narrow. It's, people grow apart. And my next lover, we went out a lot and he was a lot younger than I was, but he was born old, believe me.

SM: [Laughs] I've met people like that, actually.

NORM: He was a nephew of Mark Hatfield. Actually, this was around 1971 we met. The other one didn't last very long, 'cause he really had issues in his personal life and he couldn't solve them. Erick moved in with me and he was a computer programmer at - even then, when computers were just starting, there was only one computer place in Portland, and he worked there, because he had the ability to remember every number

that ever went by him. Total recall on numbers. So with, you know, that type of mind he could program and he was good at it.

So, we had a pretty good relationship. It was on and off. We met a lot of people that were really nice. It was the 1970s and everybody was having sex with everybody else, including us. But it wasn't that we had a group of friends and we all - and it was really strange, because friends had sex with each other then. And that's what we did. We'd have parties and things like that, and we'd mostly stick to our group and nobody - and these were all couples. Now this is strange. [Laughs]

And one is still - has a very responsible job. Has a lover who he's very true to, now. He's been in a long-term relationship with his lover. And he's part of the Rose Court. He was Emperor and also Empress. He was really interesting. He had his first lover when I sold my property in Glenmorrie and moved to Portland, because my niece - in the meantime I got my niece.

She was going to go Haight-Ashbury and my mother called me and said, "You got to take her in." And I said why? "Because your father has a heart condition and it would be very hard on him." My brother had divorced his wife and remarried and my niece came home drunk once and his new wife said, who was very rich, said well, we can't have that and she has to go. And she was 16. So, my mother said she's got to finish school and she's got to do this and my brother had done something in his personal life that really affected my family, as far as money goes. And so they said, "Would you take Kathy on?" And I did. So she showed up in a little M.G. [Morris Garage car] with - she walked in the shop with, you know, all these ladies in Dunthorpe and everything else, everything was...

SM: Dunthorpe, is that like a ritzy area?

NORM: Yeah, Dunthorpe and Lake Oswego. Dunthorpe's more expensive than Lake Oswego. And so, she walked in and she had greasy hair and everything else. [Laughs] And I says, well, hello Kathy. And the clientele looked at me and laughed, you know, and they weren't - they didn't put me down or anything. They just said, "Boy, you've got your hands full!" That's what they said.

And so anyways, I told her alright, here's the rules: you can do anything you want, but if you embarrass me to my clientele, you're out of here. It's my business; my home. So I said if you want to go to school and everything else and just relax and, you know, not do so much pot and things like that, we're going to be alright. And she did. I mean, she really felt that I wasn't - that she could still be a kid and still be responsible. So she met this guy and she had friends. I think after the second year she was there I gave a large Christmas party, and my living room was what, 20 by 30.

SM: Feet?

NORM: Yes, with a ceiling that went up 18 feet, and so I had a big Christmas tree. I made a lot of money, I mean really did. And so I had a big Christmas tree and one of my people working for me was dating a newscaster who later became mayor of Seattle. And we had a grand piano in there. So he played the piano and had songs and it was pretty posh cocktail party. But I mean, I did things like that, and so she's now living in California and she has a Masters in Art Education and teaches. And I've also disowned her, so. Figure that one out.

SM: How long did she live with you, then?

NORM: Several years, but she got her college in California. She got through high school and then she didn't want to go to college. And I says alright, you go to college, go to beauty school but you should go to college, 'cause I went to college and so she did. And she went to beauty school and started and she did not want to work and this is after she was there several years, you know, from 16, 17, 18 she graduated, so she went there about three years. And so, then she was unhappy and my lover at that time was unhappy, and so that's when I sold and moved to Portland Center.

And then when we moved to Portland Center, I said, okay, now, you have to start paying. You're working. You have to start paying some rent. Not a lot, but you have to pay part of the rent, because it's being responsible. "I'm not going to do that."

And then my lover at the time says, "Well, she shouldn't either, and I've been" – he'd bought food and things like that and he didn't pay rent, this particular lover. So they decided they was going to run away. And they left. This lover and...

SM: Your partner?

COSTA: Well, not as in a relationship. [SM laughs] They just went to California. And so one of his friends, who was a friend of my mother's, and everything, one of Phil's friends was a male prostitute. A professional male prostitute, not one you'd see on the street corners. He had a three story flat building, three flats, off of Haight-Ashbury up and towards one of the parks, Buena Vista Park.

SM: And that is in?

NORM: San Francisco, yeah. So he did very well for himself as a male prostitute. He met my mother who'd happened to be a Christian Science practitioner. And she became,

she didn't charge him anything, but she became his sounding board. So anyway, when they left they went down to see Roy, the prostitute. Who - well I liked Roy. I didn't care if he's a prostitute ,you know.

And so anyways they went down there and I called my father and mother and I said, well, you know, I'm sorry this is what happened. And my father got very upset. He felt that she didn't treat me right, and so he called her up there and said, "Alright. You can either come home. Now. Or I'll never speak to you again in my life, and neither will your grandmother." And she came home and went to school and got her Masters.

But that isn't the reason I disowned her, that wouldn't bother me. The reason I went and disowned her was when my mother, after I split up with Erick after several years, quite a few years, I met somebody else and we went - always took friends down to California and, you know, I'd visit my family. I was very loyal that way, because my family was totally accepting. When I - after Erick had left and now he's living with one of Portland's premier artists and still is. They have an antique shop out in Sellwood. Someday I'll show you pictures. I have pictures of all this stuff.

Anyway, so, the lover I had after Erick was a florist and he was - and when my mother came up to visit she said, after my father had died, she said that she wanted to come up and live with me. I says that's fine, I am living in Portland Center you know, you want to get another place in Portland Center and live near me? She says, "No. I want you to find a house or two houses," because my brother, my mother and father owned me some money and so they wanted to pay me back. And she said, "The best way I can pay you back is live either with you or near you in this property we buy. And we'll do it in survivorship." And in survivorship means whoever dies first automatically the property goes to the other person without any taxes, anything else, just automatic; very legal.

So she wanted to do that and so I looked at property outside of Lake Oswego and Kruseway, and there's two houses but, you know, it was really dull and she wouldn't like it. Finally we ended up in Chehalem Mountain out of Newberg and it was two levels. It was probably just under 4,000 feet with 2,000 feet in every level of the house. Upstairs, it was two bedrooms, the master and another one, and a full bath, living room, dining room, and kitchen. And downstairs was the same thing; smaller kitchen. And so, we bought that together.

SM: Let's refresh, it's your parents?

NORM: My mother.

SM: And she's a Christian Science.

NORM: Practitioner. And so this lover, oh yeah, really insisted on that. And so when my lover and I - he wanted to live in bars because he was Irish. And I, you know, which is just fine, but I couldn't do that. I got tired of that. So we were the Knights of Malta and I'll go into that to. When this is going on, why, I didn't speak to my niece or nephews, because my mother was living there, she...

[End of Tape 1, Side 1]

Tape 1, Side 2
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NORM: [I shouldn't go on so long about why I disowned my niece.] Very simple. When I had my mother, after she's there a few years, I noticed, every time my nieces and my nephew came, it'd cost her \$1,000. They would charge her, actually, to come. They'd have to pay all their expenses. They missed work, they'd have to pay it, and my brother did the same thing to her. And so I - when my mother died, the residue went half to my brother, half to myself and my - I had all the family furnishings that were some back to 400 years. And my niece came three days after she died and came up and she wanted to put her name on all the stuff, so she'd get it. And I told her that because of my brother's situation, where he lost all the money and put, you know, and I had to help out, that all those were actually tangible assets that were given to me and I have it documented; papers saying that they were given to me. So.

SM: She?

NORM: Wanted whatever. She wanted everything.

SM: She wanted everything and she also had to be paid to come up?

NORM: Yeah, to visit my mother, [when] my mother's alive. That's why I disowned her. And I still get calls from them. I say, no, I'm not interested. Because it really hurt me that they'd do that, you know. I thought that was, you know. [Laughs]

So anyway, my mother, even though she was a Christian Science practitioner, was really an unusual woman, because she - I got involved with this one lover with sort of a Leather-Levi stage of life in the 1970s. And I was part of the Knights of Malta, which was a motorcycle group. Then there were more bars, and Darcelle's had started, and there was

The Other Inn, which was besides Tavern, and then Dahl and Penny's had opened up, which was a big gay bar with drag shows in it. Knights of Malta and The Other Inn were rather lively and a lot of leather.

So, Mama Bernice, who was pretty famous in Portland, would come out when we did a party for all the Leather people. So she was there and she and my mother actually got along quite well, but they were from two entirely different worlds, because my mother graduated from Oregon Agricultural College where she met my father with a degree in Professional Home Economics in 1924. And she went to the University of Women's Club and she could meet, oh, 150 people at a tea or something and remember every one and know something personal about them.

SM: Your mom was like this? She just...

NORM: Yeah, in fact when I was young, in grammar school, they wanted her to be Dean of Women at the University of Pacific. So my father and she had a talk and they discussed everything and he said, "You want me to give up grape farming and ranching and stay home, because we have two lively boys, so somebody has to be here." And so they made an arrangement, where she could – that was when she became a Christian Science practitioner, so she could have her practitioner hours when we were in school, and that's how they worked it. They always had conclusions like that, and it was very difficult for my brother and I, because we could never get in trouble because we always agreed outwardly, whether they agreed inwardly or not.

RR: Does she [someone in a photograph] teach at C.C.C. [Clackamas Community College]?

NORM: No, this is Kristan Aspen and she's running the Lesbian Community Project.

RR: Oh I see, she reminds me of a teacher I had [at C.C.C.]

NORM: Yes, these are pictures are all mixed up. And this young man, he's the one that had his sculpture was in the bathhouse.

RR: What bathhouse?

NORM: The bathhouse. He was in Club Baths.

RR: Aero-vapors?

NORM: No, Club Baths, the one that was on 9th street. He was John Richen's lover. John Richen did a bronze sculpture of him in this fountain. It was actually a very accurate sculpture.

SM: Is it still, I mean?

NORM: It's in the owner's house now. He moved it out of the baths into his house.
So.,,

[Phone rings]

SM: You want to get that?

[Tape stops]

NORM: The only time I ever went to a bathhouse was a tour of - the first time I went was when John Richen did the sculpture of his lover and I went there and had a private tour of that bathhouse.

The second time I went to a bathhouse was my lover and I were out drinking, and this is the lover who liked to go to the bars. I think at three in the morning we decided we were too drunk to drive from Portland to Yamhill County and we went to the bath, we went to Club Portland and rented a room and just slept in it.

The third time I went to a bathhouse, I was trying to raise funds for Gay City, which was well, Gay Life they call it now isn't? And raise funds for Gay Life. The funds were contingent on doing the program at Panorama and when they didn't do the program at Panorama they didn't want to give the money, so they didn't. But I went to the Club Portland, Club Baths, where it is now, same place, and Dick Lawson, who is the owner, I've known for years. I took - and Dick had arranged to take the money, and we didn't use the money. But anyway he had just started putting in the downstairs, which is called Unzipped, which is a male sex club.

RR: From my perspective, there's a difference between a sex club and a bathhouse.

NORM: Well, the bathhouse is upstairs. The sex club is downstairs. And the sex club is, people go there strictly to have, without the rooms or anything else, to have sex with other men absolutely out in the open. They have - so I toured this sex club...

SM: So you can see somebody else having sex?

NORM: Oh yeah. And so, they had a walkway where you could look down and they had these booths all open with holes in them so people could think they were in a rest stop and have...

RR: Glory holes? [Laughs]

NORM: Glory holes, and have sex. And so I was going to with Richard and Dick and he says, "So, what do you think of this, Norm?" I says that's interesting, and he says. "Well, if you have any ideas?" I was sort of off the wall at times, so I just said well, yeah. You can put a camera up one of these, 'cause these people all obviously don't care if anybody sees them or not and they must be extroverts, so put a camera above there and put it on the internet and charge. He says, "Norm that's a great idea!" And I was kidding. And so I said whatever you do, don't give me credit for it, please. [SM laughs] Because, you know, I work at Yamhill County and I am in charge of prevention at Yamhill County.

SM: When was this? How long ago was this?

NORM: Well, this was last year.

SM: Recent stuff.

NORM: Yeah. Yeah. So, [Laughs] sometimes you have to be careful what you say, because people take you seriously.

SM: Yeah, he could have taken that idea ran with it and made a lot of money.

NORM: He might have. I don't know. I have no idea. I've never been back in. Fortunately, I've always had, mostly most of my life, I was very fortunate, I've always had

lovers and in long term relationships. I can't go, personally, I mean a lot of people do and this is great. I personally cannot go into and meet somebody and have anonymous sex. I just can't do that. It's not my nature. And a lot of people do and I think that's great if they want to. But also, being on the Sexual Minority Roundtable, I'm still working trying to get an ordinance put in that if people get caught doing that, in public sex, where you can see them doing it, that we're going to do is diversion programs that they'll pay for, that they'll have to take courses in hepatitis A, B, and C, blood borne pathogens, H.I.V. [Human Immunodeficiency Virus], and S.T.D.s [Sexually Transmitted Diseases].

SM: Courses that prevent...

NORM: Professional courses, they'll have to finish those courses and pay for them.

SM: So, they know how they can be transmitted?

NORM: Right, so because most of these people - we've done license plates and I worked with North Precinct on this. And these are married people with kids. And so, they're in - they're closeted people that like sex with men. I don't know if they are gay or bisexual, whatever they are, but they - I want them to know what they can take home to their families, because a lot of this, like genital warts and things like that and chlamydia, you don't have to have sex to get it; you just rub against somebody and you can get it. So a condom isn't going to stop that. And so this is why I want to do that.

SM: And North Precinct is a part of...

NORM: Portland Police Department. Yeah, North Precinct is St. Johns and it's Peninsula Park out there. I think that's the name of it, I know that's one the parks out there. Hunter's Point, is it Hunter's Point? No that's San Francisco. I get them confused.

RR: I know the Portland Police were discussing some areas where there is public sex.

NORM: Oh yeah, in Washington Park.

RR: There are some other areas.

NORM: Right, Right. What the Sexual Minority Roundtable is trying to do is figure out - they come to us in the matter of community policing, and so as a community we're trying to figure out ways we can actually help prevent some of this stuff, because I don't care if you're gay or straight or what, you don't want to see other people having sex unless, you know.

SM: That's it.

NORM: [All laugh] There's some sex you know you're not interested in, you know. I don't want to see that, I don't want to discuss it, or something else.

SM: It's all subjective, you know.

NORM: Right. And so you shouldn't put whatever you're doing in the public eye, I mean, you know. To me, it makes sense that you shouldn't. [Laughs] So, people do that and I think it - I've always thought that consenting adults, as long as they're consenting. If you're an adult and you want to - and the other person is attracted to you and you're attracted to them and you agree to do something then, it's all right. There's nothing wrong with that, as long as it's, age of consent is there and everything else, because when I teach in detention I always say, especially because these are 11 to 17 year olds that you should - and I don't know if they're straight or gay or what. Although, one class I

had six kids, boys that, actually, I knew were hustling on the streets of Portland just to make extra money. I don't know what they were.

SM: How old were the kids, do you know?

NORM: 14 and they were selling their bodies for money.

SM: Is that how they – wait, I mean, how did they end up in detention?

NORM: Well, I don't know what - I don't ask. But they were in detention, but not for that. But this was part of their lives. I had one young Hispanic youth that told me about, you know, we talked about sharing needles and all this stuff, and he said, "Oh yeah, we go out there and there'd be 15 to 18 of us in this house and all shooting up," with the same needle. And, you know, this goes on. Mostly is, what we're concerned now is we having a lot of meth out there and a lot of these people are using meth. And so we talked about meth in class and how addictive it is, because it's so pure and all, so. Along with everything else. Basically the class is really discussing, not issues, but how they can be safe and how hard it is to be safe. And some take charge of their lives. It's important.

Let's see, now, I think I'll go back to when I was living - when I moved out of Portland Center and leased a place, a duplex, on Condor Street, which is just below the med school. And that was when...

RR: O.H.S.U. [Oregon Health Science University]?

NORM: This was the 1970s. 1972 I moved in there. This is when people started coming out, more people were coming out in Portland and this was – there's some pictures there, a group of us that were always together doing stuff and everything else.

RR: What was the political climate during that time? Was it more that people were willing to come out, or?

NORM: People were more willing to come out. We had Second Foundation was going then, in Portland, which was one of the first gay rights organizations. I think that was a time that our Senator just got elected, Wyden.

SM: He's liberal, right?

NORM: Well yeah, he was liberal. At that time, he was liberal, but he's changed too, because he embraced the gay community. I went out to Albina in North Portland, where it's totally black, and walked, I don't know how many square blocks, went to every door for Ron Wyden and said would you please vote for this man. And a lot of them said, "You're the first white man that's ever come to asked us to vote for anything." I didn't tell them I was gay of course, but it wouldn't – I don't know how that would've [affected things.] I have no idea. But anyway, he got elected.

SM: That's amazing that you did that, though.

NORM: He got elected. Oh, I was - I'm crazy. But... [Laughs]

SM: You say it so nonchalantly, like it's no big - "I walked" – I mean, that's pretty cool.

RR: Is that for State Senator?

NORM: United States Senator, right. And then he said he was going to do all these things. He got to Washington and never did anything. So we were mad at him, at that time.

SM: Was he promising things about gay rights?

NORM: Oh yeah, of course, yeah. And so, we did all these things, you see, and nothing happened. But you see he's changed, too. Now he's really fighting for gay rights for us. So, he couldn't make change while he was doing this, but he made change later. So, you know, it's just so - I could have sympathy for Chief Kroecker because maybe he's changed too, I don't know, you see. But it works both ways. People do what they want to do when they're going to do it.

So anyway, all this was going on in the early 1970s. So this group of people - and I had broken up with Erick and I started going with Don. So I moved from one side of the duplex to the other side, because the owner decided she wanted to move some - she got married and moved in with her new husband. And she was Polly Pacific. She did cooking for Portland General Electric, which had a cooking school. The neighbor across the street was Katie [Loughten?] Henley, Katie [Loughten?] was the food writer for [*The Oregon Journal*] and she wrote cookbooks and I have one signed by her. And she also ghostwrote *Joy of Cooking*, James Beard, and Julia Child's book.

SM: No way.

NORM: Yes, and she was a ghostwriter for both of those. She put everything together. She had 5,000 volumes in her home across the street where I lived. We used to cook together. That was one of my hobbies, is cooking.

So anyway, I gave this dinner and so I was really into it and did, you know, beef Wellington with people's name on the dough and things like that. So anyway, I had this dinner with this new lover I had, Don, and his friends. And then I had my friends come to dinner too. Two of my friends, Harold and his lover, came, Mark. And Harold's black. And this was then just when the working class - because Don's friends were all working class people; they were bakers, construction workers, and things like that. I always liked everybody. I didn't care, you know, backgrounds didn't mean - as long as they were nice people.

So anyway, I had this big dinner and, you know, 12 people at the table, and some of Don's friends were sitting at the end of the table, and starting dinner, and everything else was fine. Just started doing dessert and one of them made a racist remark. And I was shocked, because colors never made any difference to me. So anyway, he made this remark. And I just sort of looked at this person for a minute. And then I got up, walked to the end of the table where he was and said, you can either apologize or walk out that door. And if you don't walk out that door, I'll throw you out that window, and believe me, I can do it. He left. Two of them left.

And I thought about that, after this had happened. It was - because this had never happened before in the community, with the drag community and all of us, but this was where we were getting people who were not educated into the mainstream gay community. And a lot of this happened, I mean, there's still people who are very racist and so forth in the gay community, which some people want to deny, but it's true. They are. And they just have to be educated. So anyway, I guess I just started educating early, so. [Laughs]

RR: During the 1960s or 1970s in Portland was there something like the South where restrooms were saying "White Only" or "Colored"?

NORM: It was, I think we might have been a little past that, but in the 1960s we had people - the black community stayed pretty much within the black community. They had after hour places and you were welcome. They had jazz clubs after hours and you were welcome. But you didn't see them come up to Southwest.

RR: They were segregated?

NORM: It was self-imposed segregation, that it was just an unwritten rule. Then as things happened, whites started changing. Because my father and I disagreed on a lot of things, because when I was growing up, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was President and he couldn't say Roosevelt without saying goddamn Roosevelt. We disagreed on a lot of things, totally. But I know that after I moved to Oregon and was working, and even with Richard with being as flamboyant as he was in the 1960s, I went home about something and my brother was doing something where my father was and I was. And my brother made a remark to me that was not nice, you know, about my sexual orientation. And my father just looked over to him and said, "You know, you might be tough but your brother's already beaten you up once." And he said, "You make another remark and I'm going to beat you up."

SM: Your dad said that?

NORM: Yeah, to my brother.

SM: And even though your dad, like...

NORM: He'd changed, you see. He'd changed, you know, and he'd just changed. And it was really strange, because I know that I always knew I was gay, that's why my

folks - my brother was wild and I was gay. [SM laughs] They sent him to San Rafael Military Academy and they sent me to Roswell New Mexico Military Institute, because they thought I'd stop being gay. And I wasn't acting gay, but they just knew I was gay, because at 12 I liked boys.

SM: Did you ever have one of those moments? Those "I'm gay, mom and dad" moments?

NORM: No, I just knew I liked it and I knew it was different and I was alone and didn't know anybody. Nothing was ever printed about it then, or anything else. I just knew that I liked men, you know. And fortunately, my first year roommate at military school was gay. We had sex. [Laughs] So, it didn't work that way.

But also, I didn't like - I went out for wrestling and track and I excelled in both. So, I was in pretty good shape and our instructor there was an army instructor, 'cause most people went on into the war from there, World War II. I was his assistant instructor, I helped him. And so, my brother was always macho; an inch bigger than I was, and in shape. He was champion - he was in Denver and there's two Air Force bases in Denver during the war, and he was champion, middleweight champion of both bases. And he came home, and we were both home at Christmas and he started shoving me around, which he always had done. And my mother said, "Well, you know, you shouldn't do that to your brother, because he's had a lot of training now," and 'cause my mother and I kept up, you know.

And my brother says, "Oh yeah? I can knock him down anytime!"

And my mother says, "You can't do that in this house."

And he says, “Well, I’m in the Army and I’m a bombardier and I can do anything I want and if I want to knock him down I’ll knock him.”

And my mother says, “I don’t think you should try that.” And my brother just got upset, because she was taking my side and I wasn’t saying anything. So he took a swing at me. And he was pretty fast, but it never connected and he ended up in the floor and I only wrenched his arm; I didn’t break anything, which I could’ve done. And that changed the dynamics of my brother and I, totally.

SM: What was his chip on it? What was his - why was he - was it, like, normal sibling - but it sounds like more than normal sibling rivalry.

NORM: I think he was afraid of his own sexual orientation, because he had a beautiful voice, he was an accomplished pianist. I mean, he could - he listened to Tchaikovsky’s *Piano Concerto in B Flat Major* once and he’d sit down just about perfectly. He had this beautiful voice, he had all this talent and he was afraid of it. Totally afraid of it.

And my mother really got, “Whoops!” [laughs] The other was when I was with a lover who was, I think it was when I first came up with Richard, who was so flamboyant. And my brother was saying something, you know, about manhood, and my mother just looked at him and said, “Well, you know, Howard,” that’s his name. She says, “Howard, you know what? Your brother might be different, but he’s more of a man than you’ll ever be.” And that crushed him. So, [All laugh] I mean, these dynamics in family are really very interesting.

I don’t know. At times I really think I’m my worst enemy, because I really, sort of, think now: should I do this? Am I going beyond the ability to do something right, as in the

Peter principle, and going beyond the ability - do I have the ability, without a background in government and everything, to go ahead and get involved as a chair, you know, one of the leaders of Pride and the Sexual Minority Roundtable, and things like that, and actually make a difference to the community. 'Cause the community - actually a lot of people like Mame, says, "Oh, I'll say a prayer for you, because you're doing what nobody else does for this community."

Katie Potter, whose dad was Chief Potter, who did a lot for gay rights, at one of the Chief's forum not too long ago, before all this other stuff, came up and she says, "Norm, I want to thank you, because, you know, you're the first person that has responsibly taken this on to bring the community in and let them see that somebody's responsible from the gay community, and not just yell at things. And yet, you make a change and difference."

So I think that - and mainly I do this because I'm retired and I need something to do. I mean, you know. [Laughs] So I just go ahead and do it and hope for the best.

SM: I don't know. I just don't want to say that you - it's got to be - it sounds like there's something in you like a you got a spirit that's, you know, I mean.

NORM: Well, this - I think basically one of the reasons is being out for so long, and I did take a lot of crap. And I don't to go into that, because I always feel, in adversity you can turn it into something positive, one way or the other.

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

Tape 2, Side 1
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NORM: Everybody, and this is something that I think people have to understand is that everybody has something to offer. I don't care who they are or what their background is. That everybody has something to offer in life and to make life better. And if you can do that, it's really amazing. Because, like, the other day - I deliver food to people living with AIDS [Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome] once a week out in Yamhill County. I started that program when I was on the advisory board of the H.I.V. Day Center. And this person is - he got AIDS, because he was in prison. I don't - I think he got AIDS because he's developmentally disabled and didn't know how to fight off these people. And he's probably in his late 30s or 40s now and we can't put him on any medication, because he can't be compliant. It was just...

SM: What do you mean he can't be compliant? He won't...

NORM: He doesn't have the wherewithal in his mind to take the medication. So, I mean he gets along, he works for several people and he gets disability now; we've got him on full S.S. [Social Security]. But he doesn't reach that far. So he got a ticket because he gets into pot and booze. He doesn't hurt anybody, he doesn't harm anybody. Normally he gets very agitated, because it's part of - it's one of the symptomatic things when you have AIDS, is that he's got thrush, he's got bacterial infection, and we notice that he starts yelling once in a while and talking to himself, and just these things.

So, we've managed to get him an apartment and have an attorney in the neighborhood pays his bills and things like that, handles his money, does it out to him, and all this stuff. And it was amazing because he only will talk to Carol Hansen, who is our H.I.V. nurse, and myself. It appears he really will have a conversation to understand

with. And he's getting more and more paranoid all the time, because it's part of the dementia that goes with the disease. And I think, last week when I was talking to him, he was really concerned and went into, in his own terms, the three people he works for and wanted [them] to know he was so tired and hot and how he could keep up and be responsible in keeping up his job and, you know. And so, in his own way, where society has totally thrown these people away, he was trying to be responsible. And I think sometimes you don't see that in people. It's just one of those things where yet, he is really trying to be responsible in his life. And so it makes what I do worthwhile, because somebody's being responsible.

SM: It sounds - I wasn't clear if he was - he's got a kind of dementia so as for as his capabilities to work he's probably...

NORM: He never has had that capability, because he can't think through things.

SM: Okay, and that's kind of what you meant by, like, the...

NORM: Right, right. He got involved in some drugs and things, not on his own, got led astray, got in the Oregon Pen system, probably got raped, and raped, and raped and that's how he got AIDS. So, through no fault of his own. I really don't know what his orientation is, I have no idea.

But I mean you do that. And other people, you'd come and you try to help and you do things like that, and every once in a while, you're successful. And then it makes it all worthwhile, you know. Then you feel good about what you're doing. And sometimes, I mean, when this latest thing came up with Chief Kroeker, the nicest - the easiest thing I could've done was start, you know, disparaging him, but I did not do that, because I didn't have any grounds to disparage him. I was hurt by the remarks, because any time

somebody says remarks like that, you're hurt, but I hadn't seen anything that he had done or anything else that affected the sexual minority community. In fact, we have made, you know, great strides with - in a collaboration with the police department. And I had people, who were very prominent, saying, well, he's got to go. But I have other people who, like [Kathleen] Saadat, who's very responsible, say no. We should judge people like you'd want to be judged yourself. And so, you get into all these things. So, anyway it makes you makes you look inward and this is something I've done.

I know once - when I was on the H.I.V. Title One Council that gives all the money for people living with AIDS in the metro area. And I was on the council and somebody was - we had a workgroup and most of the workgroup was people living with AIDS and there's really some responsible that made quite a difference on that workgroup that are now dead. And really great, great people who really made a difference with other people living with AIDS. So they really worked hard on this and they brought it to council and everybody ripped it to pieces.

SM: Who?

NORM: The council did, and these are members of the council. All the effort they'd put in for this effort they put together was responsible, and for some reason the council, they just decided they didn't like it. So I spoke up and I just said, well, you know, this is - I don't understand this, because the work that people put into this, it was asked of them, they followed the guidelines and it was - what they have come back to the council with was really a good thing for the council to do. And so, I don't understand why you decided you just didn't like it, or what? And, you know, I think that we should all think why we're here at this council. And those of you, have been very vocal, I want you to look inward and what your motives are. I really want you to do that, because I don't understand them.

Two people resigned that evening from there. So sometimes you have to be careful what you say. But I wasn't sorry they resigned [Laughs]. So sometimes I could be - and when I do things like that I really feel bad about it afterwards, because, you know, maybe you shouldn't but...

SM: Did you feel bad about saying that?

NORM: Yeah, but it's the truth. I would've said it anyway, and if the same circumstances had it again, I would've said it. But I always feel very bad about saying things that disturb people, for some reason. But I can't help myself so I'm going to say 'em anyway. So, it's just.

RR: I know that the big issue is about AIDS. Can you explain when it came up and how you all reacted to it...

NORM: The first time was 1972 or 1973. I had friends in Seattle, a couple, and one of them had just come back from San Francisco visiting friends, it was 1973, and he said these things are happening and we don't know why. And they didn't know what it was or anything else. And then a lot of people I know started dying.

RR: Did they know what they were dying from?

NORM: I would say they didn't know what they were dying of, but 1974 and 1975 people really - that's when they said it was a gay disease. And they didn't know what or why and it just kept escalating.

SM: It wasn't really political at that time? 'Cause, you know, Reagan came in after that...

NORM: Well yeah, well I mean not 1970s, I mean 1980s. It was 1982 rather. Excuse me. It was 1983 when they came back from San Francisco and said that. And 1984 is when they really discovered it was, you know, something they couldn't control or treat. 1985 when people started dying. 1986, in through there, a lot of people, like, I knew a professor from University of Portland, his lover had died and he worked up in the med school, [O.H.S.U.] up there, and I think he was second in charge of hiring everyone up there. And he and his lover had gone to the baths, and they loved each other, totally, but the sex they went to the baths and had public sex. And they kept getting, you know, various S.T.D.s and then getting all these shots for them, you know, and they've proven now that lowered people's immune capability, so they couldn't do that, you know.

So the water's caught up with me, so I have to go again. I'm sorry. Usually, I don't have to do this, but I've been drinking an awful a lot of water. [Laughs]

SM: We'll be happy to...

[Tape stops]

NORM: She cares. She cares. She cares.

SM: With charts and maps.

NORM: Yeah, I actually called her up before the day before, when I was polling community about what they thought about Chief Kroecker. And I actually had a long conversation with her about it and then told her, approximately, what I was going to say and she thought that was very appropriate. But I talked to a lot of people about that, just to do that. Back to the AIDS stuff.

SM: Wherever you want to go.

NORM: Well no, no, that's fine we can talk about - it was really funny. A lot of my friends didn't get it, because, fortunately, they were in long term relationships and that is probably, I think, put - and I think that a lot of people who've been, that I know, that are still alive from all that who lived pretty monogamous lives, never did get it. So it's really difficult, because a lot of people I know are on their fourth year of protease inhibitors, which they call Harc, which is they take combination therapy, which is to keep people alive and it's, a lot of them are not, it's not working and others it is. Some people are very unusual and they just keep going, but others it's not working. And we've got three clients that stopped taking all medications.

SM: It's personal choice? Is it?

NORM: It's a personal choice. And I know one is getting very emotional. He was emotional to begin with, but his dementia's increasing and he's going to see a psychologist, but his dementia is really increasing. It's sort of hard. They make statements they don't mean and things like that. You just have to understand that it's not personal. Even though, it might be aimed at you. You might take it personally. You have to realize, this is just not personal. Because working with people and everything else and, you know, seeing - I got on Title One, in the inception of it in 1984.

SM: Which is Title One?

NORM: Title One is Ryan White Title One CARE [Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency] Act and Portland qualified as a metropolitan area with a lot of AIDS cases. So we get extra money for different services for that. When we started that, I got on the Title One Council, mainly because I was living in Yamhill County and they needed a

representative. Even though, when I moved to Portland in 1985, 'cause I still worked out there in the Health Department while I represented it, nobody else would come in so I requested Yamhill County.

SM: You worked in Portland in the Health Department?

NORM: No, I worked in Yamhill County at the Health Department and I still do that two days a week. It helps pay for my activism. [Laughs]

SM: That's a statement.

NORM: So, but it's really, really difficult, 'cause it's just a lot of people out there who are getting sick. And there's other people who have had this for a long time and aren't. But I think it's the genetic structure that's good. I think maybe, at one time, when I was between lovers, I could've easily been exposed to H.I.V., but I might be of that European descent that never gets anything either, because I should've had gonorrhea and I never did. So I don't know. I have no idea. But I know that my relationships have always been, for the most part, pretty monogamous.

I've been so busy. Actually, when I moved to Portland in 1985, I moved to Portland so I could find a lover. 'Cause I've always had been in relationships. Well, I got so busy doing what I'm doing, I don't have time to find a lover and if I had a lover he'd probably kick me out because I'm so busy doing the activism, because I don't think you can do both.

Because Lori Buckwalter, who is a transsexual, who put in - who was instrumental in getting transsexuals the same rights that the other sexual minority community has in Portland, spent so much time with activism putting this through, that her family life really

suffered with her lover and her children. So she actually stepped aside and stepped out of everything. And she was a co-chair of the Sexual Minority Roundtable with me. And we talked about it when she just quit and I just said, well, if I was in a relationship I don't think my relationship would ever last if I spent this much time with my activism.

And it's true. It has a life of its own and you have to follow up on it and agrees with me. I mean, if it didn't agree with me I wouldn't be doing it. But so, you know, I think it'd be really hard having a relationship and doing this, unless I found somebody else just as driven as I was. [All laugh] Then it would be fine, you see. But I don't know. I might find somebody but I mean - and I'm probably too fussy, you know. I know this, so. [Laughs]

Actually, when I joined Pride, I walked into a Pride meeting and somebody said, you know, you should join this organization. So I went to a meeting and they said, well why do you - and I says, well, it seems very interesting and I think culture needs to celebrate its culture and this what I see Pride as doing; it's a celebration of our culture. And then they said, "What do you do?" And so, I rattled off all the things I was doing and they just sort of looked at me. [Laughs] So they were intimidated. Actually I didn't mean to intimidate them, but, I mean, but I just said what I was doing at that point in time. So it did intimidate them, in a sense. I don't mean to intimidate people, but if I want to do something I do it with passion. So I guess I'm a little too passionate, but anyway. [Laughs]

SM: Yeah, I have to say when I first, kind of, heard what you were doing, I was, kind of, a little, whoa.

NORM: Well, no, people misunderstand me a lot of times, because my persona is very direct and I have low patience, I admit, for some things and so I, you know, I'm never innocent. [Laughs] So maybe I project people, you know, because when I first came out in the 1940s, I'd go into a bar and because everyone is so closeted and just my personal

demeanor, I wasn't trying to do anything but everybody thought I was the police, you know. [Laughs]

SM: "That man's suspicious over there!"

NORM: "What's he doing in here?" [SM & NORM laugh]

RR: We were actually reading some literature on that and the military would actually have...

SM: Squads. Squads go out to night clubs...

RR: Well, no, not that. But they would have people that entrap others, but they weren't considered gay, the people that actually volunteered...

NORM: Right. To get them into a sex act.

RR: It was more of a passive versus aggressive. Where the passive one...

NORM: The police did that too. They would troll, and what troll means is they would hang their dicks out, trying to get somebody to latch on to them and then they'd arrest them. And when people first started coming out, even in the 1960s, 1970s, people would always accuse somebody else to protect themselves. They would out their friends to protect themselves from being out.

RR: A Y.M.C.A. [Young Men's Christian Association] scandal. It was actually Scott Concord, was talking about a scandal at the Y.M.C.A. that occurred and a whole bunch of

prominent male lawyers and doctors, they were all outed by one person and their lives were destroyed.

SM: What was interesting was there wasn't a lot of accusation towards the person who outed them as far as - so he didn't have an accusative tongue, well, like, this is what he did in order to basically survive...

NORM: Right. And things have changed, because when I first came out, the year I came out I was 20 years old, going to college. It came out to, you know, more than my folks. My friends all left me, but the people who were gay that I knew - because everybody knew who was gay. In Lodi, California, our population really wasn't big, you know, 20,000; maybe the surrounding area put some more on there. But eight of my friends committed suicide that year because of pressures put on them because they were gay. Not - it was their family saying you have to do this. You have to get married. You have to do this. You have to start a family. You're going to take over the business. You're going to do this. You're going to do that. You can't - you know, they didn't say that, but this what is expected of them. It was expected to get married and start a family and do this. And I could not do this. I mean, I knew it was a lie and I could not live a lie. But friends didn't know that, so they took a way out. They just couldn't live their life that way. And they couldn't see any hope, being a gay person, because it was so unacceptable.

SM: Has the truth now been, since, known by the family...

NORM: Yeah, yeah, I think the families knew it, but it still happens. I mean, three or four years ago, we had a young woman - maybe it's three years ago; four now. I don't know. She committed suicide, because one of the young groups that we're helping for prevention, we had a pizza party at the Health Department afterhours. People'd come in

for counseling and for testing, because they're really at risk. The young lesbian and gay community were in with the street community and they were all using crank and everything else, and they were high risk. So we got them in for a pizza party and had them come in and gave them pizza and drew blood; the nurse, Carol, and I did. And we talked about stuff and just, you know, very - not what I did at detention, but talked about safe sex and everything and, you know, then came back for results. They were all really nice, but, you know, we told them how to get high, you know. This and that and everything else.

And one of the young women, who was trying to get off drugs, was going with a young woman who was 15 and they decided they were in love. Her mother was a very staunch Catholic and the father was too, but not as much as the mother and the grandmother. She tried to tell her parents, her mother, that she was in love and her mother told her she would see her in Purgatory before she'd ever accept it and she went and blew her head off.

And so through that suicide we formed the Counterbalance, which is a gay and lesbian group in McMinville and sometimes we had as high as 20 youth coming on a Thursday night. So we had community leaders do that. So this was really sad, but we wanted something positive to happen. And this is still going. And it's successful and we fight for money for them, and things like that. I pretty much leave hands-off on them. Every once in a while I go talk to them, but I'm more like a mentor to them and advisor than anything else. So if they were to have serious problems about something they'll call me. But, I mean that's where I work with youth. I mean, that's the only way you can work with youth, 'cause I believe peer education is the best way to go than anything, because people learn from their peers rather than from somebody else coming in.

RR: I just talked to Mame, he mentioned Mayor Dorothy [McCullough Lee] wanted to get rid of all the vices in Portland. Was there some form of backlash going against the gay community? Or, if there was one...

NORM: There was. I mean, the police didn't like gay community you know, they'd roust them and everything else, because they were ignorant. They just didn't know better and you know. It's better than San Francisco, because I told Captain Kauffman, who's in charge of training for the Police Bureau about in the 1950s in San Francisco. If you walked on the streets and the cops thought you were gay they'd make you give them blow jobs, you know, whether you wanted to or not. And so, I was talking to Captain Kauffman about that. He says, "Oh yeah. They did the same thing to women." You know, prostitutes.

SM: It just wasn't logical, just irrational; they would just do it out of - to show power? It had nothing to do with...

NORM: Yeah, sex. It was a power trip, you know. And that certainly doesn't happen in Portland. Not now. It might've then.

RR: What do you think brought about that change?

NORM: I think it's people educate people and people get to know people. You get involved with a group of people and you're responsible and then they get over who you are and they start learning what you are and when they do that, they accept you. Recently, when I did the last sexual minority meeting, when I did the results of the poll and everything else, several people came up to me and talked to me, from different communities, privately, saying, you know, we really respect you and like you and we know you have to say what you're going to say. We disagree with you, because, you

know, we think [Kroeker] should stay and everything else. But they came up to me privately told me that before they said it, because they respected me and that's the way you make change.

SM: That's how you broke through a contentious issue.

NORM: Well no, and I didn't put it in a contentious way. I was very factual in the way I presented the material, because, you know, you tell somebody 85% of your community wants you out of there, and at that time, they did, but that was the morning he released the tapes where he said he was going to not tolerate any this or this or that. He was a little slow in saying it. He should've said it before, I agree, but he did say it and, subsequently, I think he's serious about it. And I said so, publicly, because you can't build community if you're going to be adversarial. I mean, you just can't do it. But, still you have to walk that fine line of being responsible too. [Laughs]

So you, know, it's really unusual about all this and how things are - how people in our community are perceived and people like one of my friends, Bob Jackson, who died last year. He really held Metropolitan Community Church together. From start to finish, he's always been there and always was nice to people, kept peace when there was disharmony. He was a peacemaker and he was - me, you know, I sort get in the middle of things and sometimes I didn't like the way the church was going and I told them so.

[End of Tape 2, Side 1]

Tape 2, Side 2
2000 November 13

SM: He works with the activist?

NORM: Right. Very, very. But the thing is that everybody's welcome there, but they do talk about other people's religions and I don't believe in that, because they say, you know, all are welcome, and I think they mean that. But when you, well, say they shouldn't do this, because this is – and we're the only ones that do this. Well, that's a lie, because there's a lot of other congregations that are very open to gay people; they're affirming congregations. That's not really the point, is that you really have to be accepting of everything and you can't put - just because you might profess to be a Christian or a Buddhist or something like that, you have to show respect to everybody else. And I think this is something that I really - to me, that when you go out into communities and start doing this, you have to respect everybody's viewpoint, whatever they're going to -.

And Bob really did that. He respected everybody's viewpoint, he kept that going. So I would talk to him and I told him, you know, as one time to Bob I says, well, I'm agnostic, I don't believe in anything. That bothered Bob; really bothered him. So I said, you know, it's not anything. He says, "No, Norm, you shouldn't feel that way." And so we would talk and so I became his sort of like - and Bob was older than I am. I sort of became his guru, in a sense, because I knew Bob's life away from the Church, besides in the Church. Because he did *Eight Lively Arts* for Channel 8 and he promoted a lot of gay artists and so forth. When John Richen was first doing sculpture, Bob put him on there and really helped him out. He reviewed all the plays in the State of Oregon and did output at Drammys, they called them, for the state. He did that.

But he got sick, and so on and so forth. He had a house over, out here in Southwest and he decided he wanted to put a yard in - he had a yard. He wanted to - he had fountains and things and he had this fishpond he put in and the raccoons were getting into it. So he says, "Norm, I can't handle this. They're tearing up everything!" And I says, alright I'll put an electric fence up for you. But I can't put it around the pond because people get shocked. But I can put it on the fence and put a ground wire under it, so if they came over the fence they won't do this.

And in the meantime he'd gone to the hospital and come back and so forth, and he had the first signs of heart problems. He was just getting old. And he drank. He did a lot of drinking. He wasn't a drunk, but he drank. And so, I said, Bob, if you'd keep off the cholesterol and do a little less of that, you could probably live pretty well.

And so I went over there and he said, "Something's wrong with the fence." So I went over to see him, and he had some friends over and so on, checking it out and everything. He goes, "Oh, I'm going to get some food. You want something?" And I said, well, no, Bob. And so he went to Fred Meyer and got all this fried stuff and corn dogs and things like that. But he was happy doing what he was doing, you know. [SM laughs] So you're not going to tell somebody to lay off the vodka and do this other stuff if you're happy.

But he did more to keep that place together than anybody, because nobody - he didn't care who they were, he administered to them. He didn't care. Then he went to Peace House, which is a Metanoia Peace House, I don't know if you are familiar with that. But Pat Schwiebert and her husband run it. It's part of the Methodist Ministry and she's the one that did all that stuff over Southeast about the Church and the food; feeding the homeless. That's her. Pat does that. You know, Pat's really strong about that.

I know, a couple of years ago, Bob went there, because he died there, because she wants to care for people who die, if she likes them. And so Bob went to Peace House to die. So he was there. And I know about two years ago or something like that, or three years ago, I had an incident where I got dizzy and disoriented, and so I called my doctor and they sent an ambulance and took me to St. Vincent's. Spent all this money on every test in the world, they did; [MRIs] [Magnetic Resonance Imaging] and everything else. And it was four years ago, five. And couldn't figure it out and they said, "Well, you're healthy." But Pat found out that I had this and just cursed me, because I didn't tell her so she'd come and take care of me, move me into Peace House, but I wasn't ready. There was nothing wrong [Laughs]. It was environmental allergies, actually. Supposedly, I don't know, but for 73, I'm supposedly very healthy they say. [Laughs] So anyway...

SM: Just go with it.

NORM: Yeah, you know. So anyway, Bob was over there and I'd talk to Bob and he was reminiscing, then he started feeling sorry for himself. I said Bob, are you feeling sorry for yourself? And he looked at me and said, "Well, maybe." I said, well, that isn't what you told me all these years. I said, you know, you've made a big difference with a lot of people and if you feel like going, you should go. But if you don't, well, start fighting. But don't feel sorry for yourself. And he perked up then. [Laughs]

SM: They were fighting words. Just kidding.

NORM: When I quit hairdressing, I still cut his hair. Most of my clientele was women and, you know, I didn't do very many men, but, so anyway, I always cut his hair, and he paid me. But anyway so he's over at Peace House, he was up there and so I called Pat and I says, well, Pat what can I do for Bob? I say he's got a lot of company but I came

everyday anyway, you know, I was his friend. So she says, "Well, can you but his hair Norm?" And I says sure I can, so I cut his hair.

And he says, "Well, I want to pay you." I says no, this one is on the house. He says, "Why?" I said it's a bon voyage for you, Bob. He says, "Don't be that way." And I says no, I'm not being morbid. I'm just being very truthful. And I said, you know, you're taking all this medication and you wouldn't be here unless you were thinking about doing something or the doctors told you that you didn't have long to go. And I said I'm not being - trying to put it down. I'm just being very truthful with you and, you know, I said we've always been - we've always had this so we can say anything to each other and you know that I'm not being irresponsible saying this to you. He says, "Well, you don't change, do you?" I said no. [Laughs]

They had this big party on a Saturday for Bob at Peace House. Everybody was supposed to come and bring something, a big pot luck, and Peace House was big. And so Bob sat up in the middle of this great big great room they have; it's enormous. And people came and spoke and so forth and you know. I knew he liked bread pudding, so I don't cook too much but, anyway, I made him bread pudding. So I gave him some bread pudding and it was pretty good, so he ate that. Then he went off his meds on his own and he died. He died Tuesday morning and I called over there and they said he just passed on. So I went over, immediately.

The Church was there and the pastor was there and part of the board of directors was there. And I says now what are you going to do about Bob? What are you going to do about the memorial service? And Roy said, "Well, you know, I've only been here three years, so I don't know. We'll do something." I said, well, don't you want people he worked with and knew him out in the larger community to come and say something? "Oh, well, I

guess it'd be nice." And I said, well, I think that would be very nice and also that's what Bob would want. And I said, so, if you don't mind, I'll do that. And he said, "Well, alright."

So I had Professor Frank Nelson, who's head of Philosophy at Linfield, he was a friend of mine and also a friend of Bob's and he was on all these Drammy things with Bob and his wife through the years. And his wife had just died and Bob was sick as a dog, two weeks earlier, he'd gone out for the wife's memorial service in McMinnville and they were close. And the other person was the *Golden Years* radio show at P.B.S. [Public Broadcasting Service] that Bob helped start and read a lot on it. And the man from P.B.S. - and actually, they were the speakers at his memorial service and they did a wonderful job. They brought aspects of Bob's life in there that - everybody at the Church knew him and missed him and they were grieving, because there was a void there that couldn't be filled, because he nourished them and they could talk to him and he seemingly knew the right thing to say and spiritually, he helped them. So I felt it was best to bring some other aspect of his life into the Church for these other speakers. And it helped, and they did a wonderful job of memorializing Bob at his memorial service.

SM: Who was saying - who were you talking to when you had the conversation about bringing other aspects to the memorial? Or was that Pat?

NORM: The senior pastor, Ray Cole, and the board members. Not Pat, 'cause Pat was on my side.

SM: Okay. What was their hesitancy? Or was there any hesitancy?

NORM: I don't think they knew what to do. They really didn't know what he did, which was the dumbest thing I ever heard of. How could they have somebody that was so important to them and integral to the life of that body, the Church, and not know what

he did all his life besides the church stuff? You know, just to me, it was – anyway, I won't go into that. [SM laughs]

Well, you know, this is what I say, there's overlying layers of everybody in their personality and whatever they do, you know, and you have to look for those things and know what they do and care enough to see and make sure that somebody, if they really put a lot of effort into something, aren't left behind and not forgotten. And, you know, this is what he would've wanted.

I had a hard time working with the Church on Pride. And this can be public too. People won't like it, but it'll be public. I had talked to, and we had - when I got on the Pride Board we had a memorial service on the Waterfront. We made a service Christian service in the morning and so first year I had Roy do it and then the second year it was at Pioneer Courthouse Square. We had a service but it rained on them. And so when I was working, trying to get that part of it done I said don't you want to do the service at Waterfront Park? "Oh, no. It rained." I said, well, the board wants somebody to do a service there and he says, "Well, no. It rains. Maybe you can find another building someplace and I'll do it there; that's bigger than here." And I said, no, it has to be at the Waterfront.

I took it back to the board. I said, well, he really doesn't want to do it, and it should be at the Waterfront, so let me contact the affirming congregations and see if they want to do it. So I just put the call in, and I said if you do want to do it, let me know, 'cause I have to notify somebody else. Well they put it out on email to everybody. So he called me, "What are you doing!" I said, wait, what? "Why aren't you calling me on it?" And I said, well, went to the board, you said you didn't want to do it, and so they had volunteered to do it. I said they were just offered not - they were just discussion and they decided they were going to do it, but the board thinks that they should do it. And, you

know what? I agree with the board, because you didn't want to do it. So he didn't do it and so we had somebody else do it.

And then the first year, and then Potter's House did it, or somebody did it and then Stake Pointed, I think it was – no, it was the first year was God Connection did it, second year - and the affirming congregation decided who's going to do it. It was out of Pride's hands, totally. So the second year Potter's House did it and this year - I don't know when, I guess Potter's House did it.

And then this year, because one of the people at Church was very active in their church came and volunteered a lot for us, really volunteered. And the Church had been making progress in doing the right thing, so I says take them out of affirming congregations and put them someplace in the first 15 people, 'cause everybody wants to be in the first 15. And we did. So I called the Church and said this is the reason why you're there. You took over Esther's Pantry, because [Rose] Court didn't want to do it anymore and you also, Rich [Givens?], who is a member of the Church, has really been actively volunteering for Pride and so if you acknowledge him as why we got in this place.

Well, they didn't acknowledge Rich. They didn't pay too much attention to the CARE team and a few other things and so I got P.O.'d [pissed off], to put it bluntly. And so they also informed me that their 25th anniversary was coming up this year. I recommended - I said, well, they haven't followed through. They didn't do this. They didn't do that. I think it'll be a cold someplace if they're not in the back of the parade this year. And I got word back to them with that and probably, I think - I made a suggestion to the board and I don't know what they're going to do about it, 'cause it's policy, but some of the board has agreed with me that B.R.O. [Basic Rights Oregon] has done a lot for the

community and they should be Grand Marshall this year, instead of M.C.C. [Metropolitan Community Church].

SM: B.R.O.?

NORM: Basic Rights Oregon, No on 9. And sometimes everybody knows these decisions, and sometimes people's feelings are hurt and sometimes they're not and people might understand and they might not understand. And sometimes when you're in a position where you are active in an organization, they do listen to you and sometimes you wonder if you're making the right decision, but I'll stand behind them and I'll stand behind them publicly. And that's the difference between me and a lot of people, because when you talk to me and really say what do you think, I'll tell you exactly what I think and why [Laughs]. So I think I won't try to get into any more trouble. That's enough for today. [Laughs].

SM: That was kind of a climactic point...

NORM: And I do, this is true, I really do. I say what I think. So. [Laughs]

[End of Tape 2, Side 2]

Tape 3, Side 1
2000 November 20

NORM: That's fine. And as I said before, I want to clarify something, because in the last tape I talked about Revered Cole at M.C.C. and I sounded a little – I was negative about that and I wanted to explain why I was negative, and that is because a year and a half ago he tried to disband the Sexual Minority Roundtable. He said there wasn't a need for it. Assistant Chief [Perez?], who just came on, and myself both felt that was a grave mistake even to think about that, because people wouldn't have a voice. And with No on 9, this gives a voice to go the Chief's Forum and tell how we felt about it. And then with the current things going on with our present Chief of Police, Mark Kroeker, if we didn't have the forum, a lot of this, people would not have a place for their voice to be heard and hearing both sides of the issue.

RR: I understood that he wanted [Kroeker] completely removed or he was advocating...

NORM: Yes, [Cole] was advocating that [Kroeker] had to be out of there and everything, because he implied that he was a reborn Christian. Well, if he understood that, he'd also understand that he has changed. So why can't the chief of police change? And that was, to me - I don't think we went into this last week. Did we go in about the Kroeker thing?

RR: No.

NORM: So we'll go into the Kroeker thing. And actually, when I first heard it, I was really upset because any time people say bad things about you, you get upset. And he

said bad things, but the things he said, he had said a long time ago. And I really believe people can change.

At first I tried to stay very neutral. I polled the community and everybody I talked to had said, well, actually, 86% said that he should go. 10% said we're undecided so see what happens. 4% wanted to keep him. Now this was a very vocal community I heard, at first. And then I started going out and talking to people on the Rose Court, people who were involved with Lesbian Community Project for many, many years, who were very responsible with their endeavors what they did and what they do in the community. And they reach out in the community, and they said, well, that he hasn't done anything wrong here.

And with the Police Bureau, I have been working with the Police Bureau for the last four years, and everything from the patrol person to the sergeants to the lieutenants to the captains to the commanders of the precincts to assistant chiefs and the chief and the head of Police Union - and I had actually, this last year at Pride, when we had the street preachers come on our area, I truly felt that if we didn't do something or couldn't tell the community that we're going to do something positive, there would've been a riot. And I'm sure that would've happened. And because of our involvement with the Roundtable, because of its existence, because of being responsible, and dealing with our community and the police department, we got the city attorney down there on his day off, we had a sergeant from the central precinct to come down, and we all talked. And the three of us formed a situation where we could remove these people without affecting their First Amendment rights and incrementally moved them off. Also we were planning to have an ordinance put in place, before Pride was coming here, that also would affect anybody that leases the park from the city of Portland that gets a permit and they can actually remove these people; and not stop what they're saying, but that you have leased

this park and they cannot do any type of disturbance that would disrupt your event, and so they can be removed on those grounds.

So I feel two things, that the Sexual Minority Roundtable, this never would have happened without that. And if Chief Kroeker had been really not caring about us, he wouldn't have marched in the parade, which he asked to do, and we certainly couldn't have got a city attorney on his day off down at Pride. And we did both. And we were successful in what we were doing. And we had the best newspaper coverage of a Pride event that we've ever had and it was all very positive; nothing negative in that coverage whatsoever. And that was what our goal was, is to have a Pride event that was without a blemish, and we did that. And with [Measure] 9 coming up, I think that was very successful for us to do that.

So our community really pulled together. And actually it was enough responsible people that we didn't engage the street preachers and violence, because they had video cameras and if we had've, that would have aired all over the state. And it might have made that difference, where, we won by 4% and it might've changed that 4%. So we have to be responsible. So this is a venue through what we're responsible.

When we had the former campaigns, I was living in Yamhill County and I was active in them and the one before this one we were more organized. It was a real organizing project. And we actually had dinner parties, spoke to groups of 10 to 12 people in the community, all over the county that wanted to hear our point of view. I talked to the Sociology Luncheon Club at Linfield [University] and actually got about 80 students to register to vote. I was in the recording business years ago and so when I talked to the students at Linfield, I talked about how this affected [me] as a gay person and my partner when we had this recording company, where we had really worked with

all venues from Nirvana to Sound Garden to Neil Young to movie people where we did sound scores with Seattle Symphony.

And because - think about this, especially like when we did Black Flag, if somebody could come in say, you can't say who's got the 10 and a half, even though it was a female bass guitar player you couldn't say that. And so if you say that we are restricted because of our orientation, you're taking one right away from a select group of people. You could be next. It could affect your music, your speech, it could affect a lot of things. It had a very good response by putting it in the broad picture. And not just saying - like some people go out and say, "Poor me." Well you can't do that because nobody's going to say - well that's too bad, if you think poor me. It doesn't work that way. You have to put things in a perspective that affects the other person and that way it does work.

And then afterwards, the Rural Organizing Project, one of the persons that, actually when we had a little trouble with our Pride Board, said we were so bad - they were No on 13 and they weren't out then, and they would do stuff behind the scenes but they wouldn't. And so afterwards, apparently, they said they did a lot for No on 13. They really didn't. But what bothered me about this person was, as soon as this was over they came to the different groups in the rural counties and the coastal counties and tried to get all of us to actually go out and picket the farmers, because of the farm workers. Now, I'm not saying that's good, I'm not saying that's bad, what the issues were with the farmworkers, but it wasn't a gay and lesbian issue and it lost all the support that R.O.P. [Rural Organizing Project] had in several counties. I would say Polk, Yamhill, Lincoln, Clatsop, and going the other way toward Medford, because people just didn't want to hear that. They wanted to hear - they didn't want to go out and picket somebody they didn't know. And they felt there might be a reason for this, but to take the passion that people had for these measures against us and say now go out and support farmworkers. And that's [what] Ecumenical Ministries did and other people did. That's great but when

you try to get the gay community to do something that isn't gay, usually you find [Laughs] they don't want to do it. And so, it really hurt their cause.

SM: What group was this?

NORM: The Rural Organizing Project. And Marcy Westerling is one of the secretaries of the Co-Chair of Coalition Against Hate Crimes, which I belong to.

SM: And that kind of ties together because they tried to get you guys...

NORM: The gay community in the rural area to go out and picket other people, but it had nothing to do with gay issues.

SM: And this is in the midst of when we are trying to get Measure 9.

NORM: No, this was right after Measure 13 and so when they tried to organize for [Measure] 9 they didn't have the support from those communities. The communities still voted against [Measure] 9, by the way, but they didn't do it because of the Rural Organizing Project. Just trying to put how you can really, not - the wrong way to do politics with the gay community. They lost the rural gay community, because they don't like that. [Laughs]

So, and that's not saying that the cause they wanted was good or bad, but I'm saying that if you're working with the gay community on a gay cause, stick to that gay cause. And if you want other people, get people whose interest is in to support farm workers and their conditions, and things like that and that is very fair. And there's a lot of people who want to do that, but you have to choose who you're going to do this,

because it really hurt, in some ways, because of the lack of communication that followed after [Measure] 13.

On [Measure] 9 everybody got very organized. They did benefits; they did a lot things. I think that everybody that tried to do this - there's a lot of support. The Coalition Against Hate Crimes, I think there's only two gay people on there, myself and Marcy Westerling, that's out. And they voted - anybody that didn't work for a government agency that - you can't say what they're doing. Everybody voted to support No on 9 on that coalition. So I felt that everybody tried to do it.

The only mistake I think somebody made was the Democratic Party asked leaders of the gay community to meet with them and to energize them to support Gore and Lieberman, which probably was a given that most of them would anyway. But the thing that was wrong, which I talked to Basic Rights Oregon about, was - and they were very embarrassed about this. We all went to this meeting and it was a union organizer and he talked like he would talk to various working union members, like sod carriers, and it wasn't very well received because we just looked at him and said where you coming from? You know, nobody said anything; we were pleasant but, I mean, he certainly underestimated the intellect of who he was talking to. And I talked to Marissa afterwards and I said, Marissa what did you think of that guy? She said "Uh oh." [Laughs] So I, you know. Aside from that, everybody did something.

A Lot of people, who really couldn't put a lot of money out, did a lot of things. I know that Misha, [Rose] Empress XXXVIII, actually, Misha didn't have a lot of money. So I asked Misha what she wanted to do. Noah Knight asked me if I knew of somebody that could help do the auction at Wieden & Kennedy and they wanted a drag queen to help. And I says sure, I can get Misha to do that. And they said, well, what we really want - and I says here's Misha's email.

Except what happened was Misha said [to me], “Well you’ll have to go with me, because I don’t want to get dressed up and drive down there.” [SM laughs] So, I had to pick up Misha, and Misha was late. So I was driving along and Misha was putting on her nails in my car, from Northwest 22nd to down where Wieden and Kennedy is, in Pearl District. It was very interesting because Misha got there and did a wonderful job. [Laughs] So I sat for the auction, saw a lot of people I knew. So I went and networked a lot.

SM: What kind of auction was it?

NORM: The auction was actually - what people would do, they would bid on the commercials that were during the radio station. And so they’d bid to help pay - the commercial was already there, what they did, they just helped pay for those commercials; the airtime for the commercials. And so, they’d show the commercial and then you’d bid on what show you wanted it on.

SM: And this is No on 9.

NORM: No on 9, all the commercials for that. Every commercial you saw, we saw and people bid on them, you know, and they’d bid up to several thousand dollars to help pay to put that commercial on the air. For airtime.

SM: What people were coming to the auction? Or, people who were interested, I guess.

NORM: Well, people who had money and who were interested, you know. And I saw people that - a lot of straight people were there, very supportive. I saw one person who helped with the fundraising for the H.I.V. Day Center for Ecumenical Ministries, when

I was on the advisory board, and she was very good about that. So she went there, and friends, and they spent money. A lot of people. But you had to be pretty wealthy to go ahead and spend thousands of dollars on a commercial, you know. And I mean they had money to do it anyway, but this was just a thing for people to get together and they served wine and hors d'oeuvres and kept the wine flowing and all that stuff. It was very interesting.

SM: So, is someone from Friends, which is? Is that something I should know about, but I don't, did you say someone - what organizations came, or what people from different communities?

NORM: H.I.C. [Housing Investment Committee?] people were there and there were people - it was mostly people who had pretty deep pockets. You know, several thousand dollars, you know.

SM: The reason why I ask is because I'm trying to figure out what makes the "gay community" and what kind of people are...

NORM: And this - there were a lot of gay people there and people that I knew but there were also friends of gay people there and people that support gay rights. And anytime you see a group like that, you will see, like, last night at Darcelle's. We had several people [who] were straight people from the Jewish community who, because Darcelle had supported the arts, they came to support Darcelle on his 70th Birthday. You see, so this is - there's always a certain amount of crossover anytime you do anything in entertainment or things like that. If you are well-known in the community, people want to talk to you. Especially if they're political, they want to talk to you because they feel you can reach out and get more people.

And what I've found is, on the Kroeker situation, that a lot of what we discussed there, that a lot of people have listened to the activists who really, some of them are extremely sincere and they really are pushing what they're trying to do. And they will use any platform for a bully pulpit. And so something like this will come along, and at the last Roundtable meeting people were doing that from the transsexual community. And because they say, you know, this police department is this and this, well, this police department is doing diversity training to all the police on trans issues. That never happened before. We're doing in-service training on trans issues. We're doing a lot of other things; the mayor is signing a proclamation very soon on this. This isn't new. [Lori] Buckwalter's worked on this for years to get this to happen.

To say that, and so then when a person who wants more rights and wants to be accepted, and I can understand that. But when they attack the people who are helping them do it, I don't understand that. And actually they are, in essence - because whether you like it, you have to respect the office, and it's like the Presidency; even though we might have a President who we might not like and totally disagree with, we still have to respect the office of the Presidency because that's how our nation works. Because we are a nation of laws and if we don't have those laws we'd be out of luck. So whether we like it or not, we have to follow the rule of society and that's all rules of society is, that the majority of the society has to put something in that we have to follow. Now if we don't like it, we have to change their minds, so our thoughts and our voices are the majority of the people. I think that's really important. Sometimes we have to look at that. People don't want to, because it's sort of like looking at the truth. Because if we don't work within the parameters of our society, you can't make any changes that are going to last. You might make a change that will last for a short time but then something will negate that and you've lost it, so you can't do that. So, that's some of my political views. [Laughs]

SM: I think that's true you got to work with the...

NORM: You do, and you have to work with everybody and the thing is that you also have to realize that everybody has something to offer, regardless of their position in society, their economic position, their gender, their color, anything else; you have to ignore those. To be successful today, you have to be colorblind, you have to be gender-blind, and you have to be economic-blind, if you're actually going to go out and assemble some type of support for whatever cause you're trying to do because - and you can talk to people and - especially, recently when I was on the Blue Ribbon Panel, talking to various people on the panel, because the first meeting I was sitting between Ben Canada, the Superintendent of Schools, and Bishop Dart, who's the leading African American religious leader in the black community, and I wondered how they would accept me as a gay man, because - when they put me down as Pride Northwest but basically I was there because I was co-chair of the Sexual Minority Roundtable. So they'd ask say, I'm Norm Costa co-chair of the Sexual Minority Roundtable and member of the Chief's Forum.

And it's better to identify yourself in a public forum, where I don't go out and talking to somebody and say, "Oh, I'm gay," you know. I don't do that. I let them find out for themselves. It's better; you get more things done if you do it that way. But anyway, in a public forum I always identify like that, so there isn't any question about who I am, where I'm from or who I'm representing. And I've found that in the ensuing conversations we had and things we're doing at the Chief's Forum that we came together and actually we formed an alliance, the three of us did, on a certain issue.

SM: This is the Blue Ribbon?

NORM: Yes, on racial profiling.

SM: Can you talk a little about that? Or [to RR] do you know about that?

RR: I read in the newspaper, actually, they were trying to find out if the police - actually they're going to do the study -

NORM: Right. They are actually going to do - it's finalized now, and what they're going to do is on any stops they are going to have to say why they stopped, and the race, and everything else; what happened because of the stop and if anything came of it. And so if you have a lot of stops of a person of color and they can figure out if nothing comes of it, they're profiling. And we're going to revisit this every quarter, the panel is, and we're going to look at the figures and people are going to be held accountable. Because the word's out in the community who the people are on the panel, we're on television this morning. Everybody knows who we are, our names are there and that's who you contact. And if somebody feels that they have been improperly stopped they call a member of the panel. And then the panel comes up and says, "Alright, they made this complaint. What came of this complaint? How is it addressed and what happened?" And so we're starting from the top down, in this case. So that's what the Blue Ribbon Panel's about.

SM: And so how long has it been around, do you know?

NORM: The Blue Ribbon Panel was started last May and just ended. It was started because the Police Bureau and the mayor, they had nationally, this had happened the State Police had started it. The Justice Department was interested in it. So we got the community and a lot of the Hispanic and black community are involved. For some reason somebody said something at one of our public Roundtable meetings that they thought that gays were being stopped, because of rainbows and everything, so they thought they could be profiling and because of that I got stuck with it. [Laughs]

I shouldn't say that, because, actually, I've really met a lot people in our black community who I really like and have found mutual respect with. That's going to help because they're going to - it changes their mind about sexual orientation. So they actually will change their Abstinence Only policy when it comes to AIDS education, I hope. So. [Laughs]

So, you see, anytime you interact with anybody in anything - and this is why I love to get on these things and do, and talk to people, because anytime you do that they come away with a different view of what they think sexual orientation is, because they think either that all doing this, or all doing that, and I'm just myself so I don't have to put on any airs. I'm not trying to hide anything and I'm just as comfortable talking to Misha in full drag as I am, in any way shape or form, as I'm talking to anybody, or a transsexual that really looks really bad, and you know, in appearance, because if they really can't help themselves, but some transsexuals or transgendered persons, cross-dressers, sometimes, no matter how much they do, it looks like a very poor job of make-up; they still look like the gender they're trying not to be.

RR: What do you think most of the support for gay rights or people rights or civil rights comes from?

[End of Tape 3, Side 1]

Tape 3, Side 2
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SM: I think that is where they need to concentrate more, because it seems like all the support for all these Measure 9s, Measure 13s...

NORM: Comes from - yes. Anything for social justice comes from metropolitan area. As soon as you get in a rural area you don't have any support for social justice, because people are narrow minded and that's why people live out there - some of them, not all of them. I don't know, maybe I'm the exception.

When I took - when I retired, I moved to McMinnville and I was very bored and so I started volunteering and then pretty soon I was doing AIDS education. My background was in mechanical engineering and hairdressing and I was good at both. [Laughs] Here's when I retired I had been very successful in the hair business and fairly successful in the music business in the last years in my life. So I retired and I was used to dealing with people, high profile people with strong personalities, and suddenly I was in this retirement community and I says what am I doing? I have nothing to do. So I started volunteering at the health department doing education and things like that, and pretty soon they said, well, we want to hire you. And I said, well, I'm certainly not going to do it for the money because they don't pay anything. But anyway. So I said, alright. So I was probably hired as the first openly gay employee in Yamhill County, which is very conservative.

SM: How was that?

NORM: I never had a problem. I never - everybody knew who I was. I mean, I never had a problem. My commissioners ignored me [Laughs] but I never embarrassed my program manager. I never embarrassed the county administrator. And I started programs.

Actually, I'm highly respected out there as a gay man. But it took a lot of doing, to do what I could do in that.

And, you know, we had gay groups out there. Because it was so oppressive, the first group we had were all addicted to crank and methamphetamines and pot and what else; everything, you know. And their behavior was such that some of the lesbians were sleeping with the street kids just for attention. And they were lesbians and they were sleeping with straight guys just to get attention. And, they were doing all these things. And they were really open sexually. They were - it's interesting, because there were bisexuals in high school at a young age, there were some straight youth that would try gay sex just to see what it was like, not think anything about it, you know, about it at all.

Then we had a suicide and so we got the community involved and we got people in the community to come together and form this group of people and out of that group came Counterbalance, which is the gay group out there. And they meet and sometimes they have as high as 20 people meeting every Thursday. It's still going and they're getting their 501(c)(3) and I think their getting another grant. Susie's putting in a grant for \$15,000 for research and education here for them. And as things have gotten better and they've had more support, we have all these high-risk youth turn into low-risk youth. And so most of my work I do there, I go and talk about self-esteem issues, I talk about what to do career-wise, how to - what to do with your activism and things like that; to being responsible in what you're doing in your life. And most of my prevention efforts are in detention.

You never know what orientation is there because, you know, nobody's going to out themselves. So I don't know. I mean, it's, to me, it's really hard for that. But even two years ago in a parking lot in one of the grocery stores I saw several Hispanic youths who

were practically in full drag, the makeup and everything else. You know, so I mean this happens. I mean, you just don't know.

SM: Where was that at? Is that...

NORM: This was in McMinnville. It's somewhat underground, but it isn't underground, I mean, you know.

RR: I think it also has to do maybe with, what was that ghetto - no not the ghetto look but the people wear makeup...

SM: Gothic.

RR: Yeah gothic look, also, too. I think it's that people are crossing the lines, not because it's a gay thing it's more like a culture thing...

NORM: Well, that's true but these were definitely gay, I guarantee you that, these were two young very gay men.

SM: That is really cool to see out in the country where - I mean, McMinnville is not really country but it is out - it's kind of a small town and it is good because country places seem really unsafe a lot of times...

NORM: Well, it depends where you are and what you're doing. You're probably safer in a parking lot than you'd be in high school. You could never do that in that high school without getting beat up and that is truthful; that's true. Newberg High School actually did an AIDS thing recently, which I was really surprised, but they still aren't very good on human rights issues, you know. They have a very bad reputation.

RR: They say that politics make strange bedfellows, what is the strangest group that you ever worked with that you thought you'd never end up working with? Especially, like, this Measure 9 came got defeated we had the Teachers Union working against it, you had all these...

NORM: Right. I don't know. I don't think I've had a strange group that I considered strange. I mean nothing seems to bother me. I mean, I've seen some very unusual people in my life. And I do know that the only thing that I know is that, the Christian Right, the people who are really on that fringe edge, there's nothing that you can do to change their mind; the street preachers that are really fanatical from that view, there's nothing you can do to change their minds. They're actually fanatics in what they're doing and they're so focused on what they're doing just to even dialogue with them actually gives them power. And so if you even dialogue with them, you give them power, so I don't. I don't dialogue with somebody who comes up to me thumping the Bible.

RR: I think that the O.C.A. [Oregon Citizens Alliance] would have a lot less impact if the church leaders would actually stand up against them and say, disassociate themselves from them, which they haven't done a lot.

NORM: No. A lot of the rural churches have not taken a stand, even the ones that are very gay positive have not taken a stand. And I think it boils down to they don't want to offend anybody. And to me, for - to have principles of being the same to all people, that seems very strange. You know, to me, it's if you don't stand up for your principles, you're not very strong. And so you can stand up and be counted.

It's like on the Coalition Against Hate Crimes, there are certain things we might disagree on but everybody feels that any type of bias should be addressed immediately

and you don't - and even though people have different viewpoints. And I know that people from the Church of Scientology are very prominent in the Coalition Against Hate Crimes. And just talking to them, and they're real aggressive at times, but I don't have a problem with them and I would have no problem going up - and there was a benefit there and I would've actually, for the Coalition, I would've gone to it. It wouldn't bother me in the least to go up there. And I have friends who would never go there, they're afraid of them. They're afraid that - and I don't think you have to be afraid of anything if you're centered. You know?

I mean, you don't have to shut everything off you can be open to anything and you have to realize, I think, that nothing's perfect. And no one religion's perfect and people who don't have any religion, there's nothing wrong with them either. It's just whatever a person truly believes in, they should believe in. I mean, that's their course in life. And who's to say whose course is better? I mean, nobody's been there and back that I know of, you could prove. And that's what I tell people when they start talking about things like that. And I said, well, that's really interesting, but tell me when you start walking on water, let me watch you, and then I might believe you. But until you do so, I think we're going to be on divergent grounds. I mean, we're not going to be looking the same way until you can actually prove that, because you can't -.

It's so easy to do things and I know that when I get really focused on something and I think about it, and I really mulled about when all this came up with right after [Measure] 9 with Chief Kroeker. And I was listening to his remarks, what he said a long time ago, I was really offended by that. But also I know a lot of people who, including my own father, who really said he accepted me when I first came out and really didn't. But when he did, I knew he did. So he changed. And I think anybody can change. And how are they ever going to change if you don't interact with them?

I don't know. Sometimes I get - anybody that gets in this trying to change viewpoints, you get very passionate about that, but in your passion you have to be very careful that you weigh everything you do. And when you're doing something like this, careful what you say and what you do. And even, you know, even though I disagree with Reverend Cole, I still had to say those things, because I said those things, not to personally knock him, but for a person who's leading, supposedly, the gay church of Portland I really think he has made some bad moves, politically, in what he has done. And he has - and outside of his church, he doesn't have much respect as far as being a political leader for that reason. Because you can't tear down the building blocks that's going to make your community stronger. So, I don't know.

So, what else you want to talk about? I think we ran out of that one. [All laugh]

RR: I don't know. I was thinking maybe since we had some of the Oregon stuff we could go back; rewind. Did we talk about, like, you mentioned that you were arrested? You spent some time in jail?

NORM: Yeah, I spent time in - I was arrested in 19 - I was a little [high?] in college. [Laughs] Well, actually, let's see, I was arrested in 1951. So I started at University of Pacific in 1947 and then I went to Menlo during the summer.

SM: Is University of Pacific in Washington?

NORM: No, no. California. It used to be Pacific University; used to be College of Pacific, now it's University of the Pacific in Stockton, California.

SM: Okay, I just thought there's one in Washington that is really conservative and...

NORM: Yeah. No, no this was a state college and I was going there on the G. I. Bill. So I started there in 1947, 1948. 1949, I had stayed down there when I had the accident, I think, and I was out with some people who were with a friend of mine and we were taking two people out that were, sort of, what we called trade in those days, but they really were just coming out. We then, what you did, because you didn't want to do anything, you got very drunk before you did anything. We were drinking beer and we were headed back from Stockton to Lodi. I was going fairly fast, probably 60, 65 [miles per hour] on a very dark road that was a state highway. A Jeep without tail lights pulled in the passing lane in front of me and I could not stop. It was going slow. So the driver was killed.

His wife - he worked for the county government in the courthouse. [Laughs] And my father was - and they were all Democrats, and my father was a very strong Republican, in fact he was head of the Northern California Republican Party. What they did is they had the family attorney defend me who dealt in leases and things like that and set up cooperative winery that my father started and things like that. I don't think I could have won anyway. In fact, I just said I wanted to plead guilty and they wouldn't let me do that. So they sent me to prison for four years. I was in my early 20s. So I went to San Quentin and indoctrination.

My brother, who was very happy to see me go to prison for some reason, said, "Well, you made your bed, you lie in it." That was his attitude. He didn't like my gayness. He couldn't come to terms with it.

So anyway I went there, and in San Quentin you went to this counseling and guidance center and they decided where to put you. And so I went to this counseling and I was feeling so sorry for myself at the time. And so this counselor said, "Well, you know, you're now felons and so people won't like you because you're a felon, but," he

said, "what if you were a felon, homosexual, and black? You wouldn't have a ghost of a chance in hell of ever getting a job or doing anything." Well, I only hit two of those, you see, because I wasn't black.

SM: [Laughs] That's strange. I mean...

NORM: And, you know, when I first got there in the indoctrination set, there's a special cell block for that, and I saw one Hispanic guy raping another Hispanic guy up there. Really raping him, you know. This was going on, you know, quite common. It still goes on in all prisons, by the way.

So they were going to transfer me to Chino and just before they transferred me to Chino, they found out I was gay. Because I didn't act gay, so they didn't think I was gay, but they did find out I was gay, because I was gay. They called me in and they said, "Norm, we don't know what to do with you." And I says what do you mean you don't know? I says I'm in prison [Laughs] I'm going to serve my time. And he said, "Well, we don't know what to do with you because you are a homosexual." And I said yeah? "Well, you don't act like one." And I says, well, I still am. He says, "Well, you've behaved." And I says why shouldn't I behave? And I said I think it's a good idea that I do behave here, thinking of the consequences.

So he said, "Usually we send all the gay people to Soledad and it's a medium security prison, but, you know, we segregate all the gay people. But you don't act gay and you've behaved, so do you want to go to Chino?" And I said well, what would be the chances of being paroled? And he says, "Well, you'd probably parole more sooner out at Chino than you would at Soledad." So I went to Chino and I got paroled in two years.

And it was interesting, because I got paroled to Anaheim, California and I got a job right away, because I qualified in my two years, because I went back to college after that, for the [Door?] Corporation, making stuff, because they didn't want me, you know, you shouldn't go, back to college yet. So anyway, I went ahead and worked there. Anyway, I was paroled to, not to a parole officer, but the Department of Employment got me this job and so he was going to be my liaison for the job. So anyway, I had a little apartment and they said if I behaved I could get a car and drive again. So I was going to go to work for this place. And I started work for this place but, the man - and I was fairly young yet, you know, my 20s. The guy from the Department of Employment was married, had two children, boys 11 and 13, and he wanted me to have sex with him, whether I wanted to or not. He told me that. Or else he was going to turn me in and send me back.

So, I called my parole officer and told him. [SM laughs] I said I'm being set up. So they wanted to wire it and take his pants off and I said I'm not going to do that. They wanted to make, you know, me have sex with him and I wouldn't do that. I said I wouldn't have sex with him. That's why I called you, because I wouldn't have sex with him. I said having sex with somebody else in this state's illegal. And it was. And I said why should I break the law? You ask me to break the law. I won't break the law. I will get him to say he wants me to take my pants off, but I won't take my pants off.

SM: So they had you bugged?

NORM: Yeah, yeah. I had wires.

SM: Was that scary?

NORM: Yeah, oh yeah. So anyway they caught him. I don't know what they did with him. I transferred out there to another job. Then I ended up - what did I end up doing? I

ended up going to San Jose and I went to work [furbishing?] and then I went to San Jose State, and then I ended up in San Francisco and did finished up not quite with a degree at University of San Francisco. So that was my time in prison. So that was interesting.

I met a lot of people. Met a male model and he was pictured in nudie magazines he was very beautiful, my age, blond, gorgeous and he wanted to have sex with me and wanted me to go out and be paroled out with him. And I wouldn't have sex with him. That made him mad. I said I don't trust you. I said, you know, you're in the business. And I said, you know, the sex business. That's fine. I don't mind you being in the sex business, but I don't want to be in the sex business. And he wanted me to be in the sex business. He says, "You can do well," you know, "You can make movies." [Laughs]

SM: You didn't want to do that.

NORM: No, I didn't want to do that. That wasn't what I wanted to do so I didn't do that. It was interesting. I saw some old magazines once a long time ago and there he was, all oiled up [All laugh]. He was looking good. But anyway I met somebody when I got out of the service and we went to San Jose State together and then we broke up. Then I moved to San Francisco for a while and I eventually ended up back here in Oregon.

SM: The time that you had that you were in the military and in prison seems like that would be terrifying, just absolutely.

NORM: It was. It was terrifying but I just got through it. I said I'm going to get through this and I did.

RR: I talked to Mame last Thursday and I was talking to him - he's a native to Oregon, he's been here a while. And I was talking to him about during the 1950s about what type of environment there was. I think during the late 1940s and early 1950 there was a particular mayor, Dorothy...

NORM: McCullough Lee. Yes, she hated us.

RR: Yeah, she wanted to get rid of all vices in Portland...

NORM: Every one. Every kind of vice there was. [RR laughs] I know she pulled people out of bars and things like that...

RR: He also mentioned that during that time there was some Mafia, sort of like some Mafia essence during that time in Portland, where there was forced prostitution and that she, he mentioned that she would literally raid these bars take out the slot machines and dump them in the river.

SM: [Laughs] She was just on a rampage.

RR: Well she was just determined. She lost her second bid, though, for mayor.

NORM: Right. She wanted to do everything. She wanted to close down all the bars. She didn't want people to drink. She didn't want them to have sex. She didn't want them to do anything. Period.

RR: She was a very involved woman and actually, there's another girl, one of the other students in our class, her name is - Was it Eastman? They were doing - that [Lee] was actually involved in an organization where we had a partner who was African American,

they were very close and so there was some kind of relationship going on there. So she was doing research on that and she was kind of trying to figure out what was going on. So I don't know if she was - I don't know. [Laughs] It was so interesting I saw her on Friday, but I thought this mayor was kind of interesting that she was she really did a lot of things. When she was in the obituary that was all they mentioned. She tried to clean up Portland.

NORM: Oh yes, that was her - but you never know where people's motives are. You know look at Mary Baker Eddy. She was a prostitute and yet she founded the Christian Science religion. [Laughs]

SM: I didn't know that. [Laughs] That's good. It's good to keep that, just how much - I mean, I think I'm really learning, kind of from you, just how much you have to keep in mind change and that there's just differences, I mean...

NORM: Well, you know, there's differences in everybody and, you know. No matter who it is or what it is. And, a lot of people become very pious and there's a lot of good that comes out of anything and everything. University of Portland, there's a lot of good that comes out of University of Portland, yet it's a Catholic University. I know some very responsible people out there, who I dearly like, and who are straight, like one priest who does all the social stuff with all the students and he was on EMO [Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon] Board with me at the Day Center. And yet, you know, if you want to knock him you could say look at the Inquisition and look at all the priests that joined the Church so they wouldn't have to say why they weren't married, you know. And look at how many priests who've died of AIDS. They don't tell you that; lots.

RR: Well, I think that the Church, especially Catholic Church, just hides a lot of things.

NORM: Oh sure, they always have. But, I mean, all churches do. I know a lot of conservative churches where you have to really be careful because they'll play with your children in the wrong way. You know? [Laughs] Yeah, so, but also they do a lot of good and so there's always that balance there. So you can't - I just, you just have to [ignore] - I think you have to...

[End of Tape 3, Side 2]

Tape 4, Side 1
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NORM: At least to some people it would be controversial.

SM: Yeah, but you kind of, like, sometimes you try to – I, as a person, try to say things that aren't - I don't want to offend people. But then I just end up without saying anything.
[Laughs]

NORM: Well, no, but, I mean, you have to realize that if somebody listens to this, and they might not agree with it, but at least they'll think about it. And think about their motivations, you know, and think about looking within. And that's what really gets people. When you get them, actually, to look inward and see what their motivations really are. That's the true test, 'cause, usually, it scares people when they do that. It's really hard for them to actually do a self-assessment. A real personal - without anybody else doing that. I mean, just within yourself. Doing your own self-assessment with what your motives are and what really do you want out of this or are you self-serving?

RR: Isn't that a little - there's some people who, maybe - the thing about self-serving is that a lot of people will do things that, maybe, from the outside it looks like it's not self-serving but you never know what that motivations and intentions - I think it's okay as long as somebody is doing it, maybe, for if it - if they do something overall that is good for everybody and with some intention that, maybe, for some self-gain, I think it's okay. Because I don't think those are separate, honestly...

NORM: Right. Well, and you do have to realize that the most successful men in the world are kinky. Look at our President. [RR & SM laugh] Yeah, I'm serious! That goes along with it, 'cause people who are really driven and are really successful have to be a little crazy.

And you can't lose your sense of humor, because when I got all this stuff together for Darcelle, to get the police chief there and all that stuff, so, you know, the chief could see the other side of our society. It was Darcelle's 70th birthday. I also gave Darcelle a card from Pride. I gave Darcelle a card from me. And I gave Darcelle a gift and told Darcelle not to open it in front of the press, because I gave Darcelle a big black dildo. It was bigger than my fist. [SM laughs] Nobody could possibly use it. And I put a very nice lavender condom on it. And my note said, you know, when I turned 70, I felt this was very satisfying, to have it around. And so anyway that's what Darcelle got for her birthday. So you have to have a sense of humor you know.

RR: Well, I think even - I don't want to say that while you might have your own sense of humor. I think other people do, too.

NORM: Oh! Of course they do.

RR: But you know they, you know, what do they give them? Like a pocket pussy or something like that. [All laugh] My brother, like, wanted when he turned 18, or something, I got him that for as a joke because...

NORM: Well, sure. Humor's great and you can't lose that, you know, you have to keep your humor up. You have look at things in a funny way. You can be serious too, but there's times when humor works better than passion. And you have to just know. And, you know, as long as you don't set yourself up, because if you set yourself up that you know it all and this is the only way to do things, why, you're certainly going to trip over and fall over in a pile of shit. It happens.

RR: What do you think of this registration city ordinance? Is it just...

NORM: It makes people feel good.

RR: And that's it. [Laughs] There isn't any bite to it?

NORM; That's all it does. No, it doesn't do any good. I mean, most businesses that give domestic partnerships agree to give domestic partnerships. They'll take your word for it if you're living with somebody and they're the same household. They might want to see your driver's license or something. What we need is - I think it's good, in a sense, because if you do have a domestic partnership, if your will is contested or something like that, it's going to help you. And you can take a document like that to a hospital and say I want to see my lover, and they have to let you in. And it'd be hard without that document, even though there are forms you can sign saying that but a lot of people forget to do those forms. So I don't know whether that's good or if it does any good to have that. I don't know.

RR: Do you think domestic partnership had to do with a lot less couples setting up sort of a union without being married?

NORM: Well, yeah. Because a lot of people really want more to recognize as a formal union, rather than just "we choose to live together." It just depends on their personalities. I've known people who have lived together for years and never gone through any kind of a union, straight people. And, they certainly aren't going to do it. It's just how you feel. With our Judeo-Christian background in this country, you're living in sin unless you are having some sort of arrangement be with somebody. So, I guess these people don't want to live in sin. But I think sex is better when you're living in sin, so I don't know. Figure it out. You know. [Laughs] Sex is much more attractive if you're living in sin for most people, if you were truthful. So I don't know.

RR: What do you think are some major issues that the gay community is going to face coming in this new century?

NORM: Probably the more we evolve in society, people will think that we're going to lose who we are in the culture that we have. And so that's why you're doing what you're doing: is to preserve a part of the culture of what has gone on.

And I do think that that, actually, with the Pride Celebrations and things like that, we'll be celebrating our culture once a year. And that's our day to walk and say we're happy who we are, because we are set apart from the rest of the community. We are. Because we're different. We're different because we like the same. I think more and more people are understanding that and so we're going to see more and more acceptance of it, because more and more of us are out, and once people are out, they get to know you and they like you and say well, gee, they're good neighbors. They're nice people. They're dependable, or something. And they relate to you as such. And so you blend into the community you want to live in. And you're accepted.

You don't become homogenized; you don't disappear into that, at all. But still when you do it, then there's a day to be who you are, culturally, and so we are evolving from an orientation culture to, actually, not a racial culture, but a culture that is indeed different than the rest of the heterosexual culture. So the queer culture is emerging. And the queer culture is going to just jump over into everything else as society progresses in its understanding of all people. And so as society progresses in understanding us, then there's no cross to bear about because we're different in their eyes, or anything like that. And that's when we need an event to celebrate our culture. Like suddenly the American Indians are doing this, the black community is doing this, Hispanic community is doing

this; they're celebrating their culture, which they should do. Everybody's culture is really important.

And so, this is what's going to happen. The gay community is going to start celebrating its culture. And that's what the Pride event is going to be. Some time just to get out and say this is our day, this is who we are. And you see that more and more. We have a long way to go before this happens, believe me. But still, it is happening.

I've seen a lot in my lifetime of more and more people being accepted. I find that I'm just as well accepted in the gay community as the straight community, as a gay man, for the most part. And even from people who don't quite understand who and what we are, I can interact with them. At least get them, they don't have the barrier and they don't have the fear of what I'm going to do next. Am I going to follow them in the bathroom and rip their clothes off? You know. No, I'm not. But, you know, they might think that. Somehow you have to put them at ease so, you know, you're not. And so it becomes an art of communication and so that they feel comfortable.

And you have to do that with - when I talk with gay youth that know I'm gay. When I talk to them, I'm very careful how I approach it so that they won't feel, especially young gay males, so they won't feel uncomfortable that - because a lot of young gay males have been, you know, approached by older men [who] definitely only wanted one thing out of it. [Laughs] And that makes them uncomfortable because that isn't what they want. I mean, they want somebody, you know, that in their perception is, like, their own age or some screen idol or [Laughs] something of their imaginations, that they're attracted to. So you have to put people at ease and make them comfortable and know that that isn't what your agenda is. You become pretty good at that.

I mean, I can get trust in my detention youth. They'll actually pay attention to me and trust me. And they don't trust anybody with authority. I actually get them into dialogue and they do trust me because instead of - once you get the trust of a group, as the group changes, why, the rest of them trust you.

I've even had one person who got into a class from Grand Ronde and he got in there because of alcoholism, because his mother had gone through three boyfriends in a year and he just turned to alcohol. And he was bright, young man without any future. He was in one of my classes on H.I.V. education and more like self-esteem. And he started to challenge me a little bit and the other youths in the class said, "That's Norm. You don't do that with Norm." Which really sort of makes me [Laughs] - that they would actually come to my defense and say no, he's not the man. He's not here for that. And that's what they were trying to tell him, which -.

It's because you developed this; you developed a trust with people where that my only message to them is that I just want to protect you from health things. And you can do this, if you think about it, and the rest of it I don't care about. I do scare them. I tell them what the price of the condom is in the State Penitentiary. It's \$35 and it's contraband, so they start thinking about that, you know. And I say you are young meat, just think when you get there. They don't give you chastity belts. [Laughs] So, I mean, they do think about career choices that way. And, I said I'm talking about this not to scare you, but I said that public health is prevention and this is preventing violence to your body. So, I said this can be something that can happen to you if you keep on with this career. And, it's true. It is. And they take it very seriously. They know I'm not kidding.

In a regular penitentiary. Now, minimum security, like Chino, things don't happen like that. But in the Oregon State Penitentiary, the ratio of guards to prisoners isn't that great, so there's always a time when you're out of sight. And most younger men that

aren't really capable of handling themselves get raped, you know, either by other people or by gangs. It goes on in every prison in the United States, except fewer aren't giving out condoms now, because they've been sued and lost the lawsuits, because people have gone in there H.I.V. negative and come out H.I.V. positive and they've complained about being raped. So now they give out condoms. I don't think that helps the rapes any, but at least people won't get infected. If people use condoms.

SM: God. That's reality.

NORM: Yeah. It's actually a reality check that life has its other moments. And I got through all that for the simple reason that I've always been aware of my surroundings and I can talk if I have to. And, also I developed an attitude. And if you have really a strong attitude, people don't tend to mess with you. And that's something that I developed and it's a presence and if you keep that presence even though -.

In the music business when we had a lot of things in Old Town, when drug trade was just going crazy down there in the 1980s, [I] never had any problem because you carry yourself with a presence and they don't want to mess with you because they're not sure of the consequences. So you develop that. You develop a presence that says, you know - you change that as you go. So you can develop a presence where you're friendly and open and people want to talk you. Or you can develop a presence that says "You better watch out. Don't get near me or in my face." You can do that. I guess, if you're gay you can act real well, so. [All laugh]

I think a lot of it is just being aware of who you are, what you are, and really focusing on the message you want to get across, no matter who you're talking to. And you can do that. It's really easy to do that, if you think about it.

Actually, in the last few years, I think about the Peter principle, because supposedly, on the Blue Ribbon Panel, the chief's forum, and other things that I've gone to and been active and been participating in, people had a lot of credentials in a lot of things. So I wondered what I could offer with my background and actually I had a lot to offer, which really surprised me. And I think that people sell themselves short because any life experience you have can be very valuable when you're interacting with other people. And you don't have a lot of life experience, just some life experience, because if you do, you can bring that up and listen and participate and be part of what changes the laws in our society. This is the society that we have to live in, so rather than fight it, let's change it.

[End of Tape 4, Side 1]

[End of Interview]