

Rene LaChance

SR 11364, Oral History,

By Brontë Olson & Nicole Estey

Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest (GLAPN)

2013 February 26



LACHANCE: Renee LaChance

BO: Brontë Olson

NE: Nicole Estey

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This oral history interview was conducted as part of the Portland State University LGBT History Capstone course, Winter Term 2013, with Instructor Pat Young.

Introduction

This is interview of Renee LaChance was conducted by Brontë Olson and Nicole Estey for the Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest as part of their senior capstone at Portland State University. LaChance worked with the queer newspaper *The Cascade Voice*, first selling advertising and writing and later as the editor for a period of time before founding *Just Out* newspaper with Jay Brown in 1983. The interview covers her involvement in the Gay Pride Festival, AIDS and ACT-UP, and Ballot Measures 9 and 13, as well as her experiences with running *Just Out*, her decision to sell, and her feelings about the path of the paper after its purchase by Marty Davis in 1998. It finishes with words of wisdom offered by LaChance for both the gay community and the general public on life and changing the future.

Session 1
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BO: Today is Tuesday, February 26, 2013. We are at Southeast Grind in Southeast Portland, Oregon. I'm Brontë Olson.

NE: I'm Nicole Estey.

BO: And we're here to interview Renee LaChance, one of the founders of *Just Out* newspaper. So then, if you just want to state your name, age, your date of birth, and how long you've been in Portland.

LACHANCE: I'm Renee LaChance, uh, 53, 8-16-59, and I've lived in Portland all my life.

NE: Um, one of the first questions I have for you today is, um, we know that Jay was one of—is—the founding partner with you. How did you guys meet?

LACHANCE: Well, Jay and I, um, both worked at a newspaper called *The Cascade Voice*, which was the gay paper before *Just Out*, in Portland. And Jay started there as a photographer, and I came in, uh, to sell advertising. And then, after a couple months, I started—I sold advertising and I did some writing—and after a couple months, I became the editor, and Jay was my assistant editor.

NE: Um, what made you decide, or what sparked your interest in starting the newspaper *Just Out* with Jay?

LACHANCE: Well, Jay and I worked at *The Cascade Voice* together for 18 months, and during—towards the end of that time—we both got involved in producing, um, the 1983, uh, Gay Pride Festival down at the Waterfront Park and the march, and that's traditionally done by a volunteer group of people that coordinate the parade and then the rally and festival down at the waterfront afterwards.

So Jay and I started going to meetings about that and, um, participating, and he took on a major role, and I ended up working with one other guy, Bob Weinstein, to produce the festival part at the waterfront. And during the course of that time, it was like, you know, a three to five month process, we, um, there were a lot of community meetings discussing changing the name of the event. It always had been called, "Gay Pride," and women came in and said they wanted it called, "Lesbian and Gay Pride."

So, I think what actually happened was, that was the year before '82 that all those, um, meetings came up where women came to the Pride meetings and wanted to, um, change the name. And it, it was great conflict; the men did not want to add "lesbian."

They said, "Well, you're all gay."

"Well, no, yeah, we're gay, but we want to be—we don't want people to think, when they hear about us, that, that... we're men—we're lesbians! We want lesbians in Gay Pride."

Oh, the fights—just fight, fight, fight, fight, fight.

So the next year then, Jay and I said, "Well, we'll get involved," 'cause it was the first year it was call "Lesbian and Gay Pride."

So through all that, we both got educated on feminism and racism and a lot of issues that, um, we didn't have a lot of experience with. And we would bring these issues to our publisher, the publisher of *The Cascade Voice*, and he would say, "Ah, we're not doing that. Ah, we're not going to write about that. Oh, we're not gonna tell that story. Oh, we're gonna do this instead."

And we got so fed up with his inflexibility to allow us to write about how sexist the gay men were [laughing]—basically that was it—

NE: [laughing] Yeah!

LACHANCE: And how racist the gay men were, and how unwilling they were to look at those issues. Uh, so then one day, Jay and I got so mad at the publisher, Neil Hutchins, that we said—I said to him, "Jay! We can do this! We can start our own paper!"

And he looked at me, and he said, "Well, okay, I'll follow you anywhere."

So, um, that's what we did [Laughing].

NE: That's awesome! That is so cool! [Laughing] Um, what were some of the biggest challenges and obstacles that you guys, um, faced, when getting it, when getting the newspaper off the ground?

LACHANCE: [Clears throat] Well, because we left an established paper that had a good reputation with the bar community and gay-male community in Portland, they hated us [laughing]. And back in 1983, um, that's how gay papers survived—they had the gay bars, and that was about it; they—that's what, where they got their money.

So, um, there were a few professionals who advertised in that pap—in *The Cascade Voice*—and they came and started advertising in *Just Out*, like—some of these businesses still exist today, it just amazes me—Escential Oils on southeast Hawthorne was one of our first advertisers, Bridgetown Realty was one of our first advertisers, and so gay professionals started putting their money in with us.

But it was a challenge to develop that, because it was so different than the usual business model for a gay paper. And plus, we just had to deal with all that hostility from those sexist, racist gay men! No [laughing].

NE: [Laughing] So much hatred...

LACHANCE: So much hatred.

NE: ... So little time!

LACHANCE: It, it, you know, it was really stupid, 'cause we were all in the same fight.

NE: Mm-mm.

LACHANCE: And then it kind of all changed when, um, you know, H, HIV/AIDS became so, such a plague within our community, that the men had to start realizing that, um, they—they started working on their shit, basically [laughing].

NE: Yeah, they finally realized that, uh, 'We're all in this together! We're fighting for the same thing!'

LACHANCE: Right.

NE: 'C'mon, people!

LACHANCE: Right.

NE: So... well that's awesome. Okay.

BO, NE: Um...

BO: So just on the topic of advertising, um, we heard and we read that, uh, *Just Out* was one of the first queer newspapers to, um, receive funding and to publish advertisements for non-queer or non-gay businesses. Um, so what was your experience with that, or what made you decide to do that?

LACHANCE: Well, necessity. I mean, to survive we had to do that, because we didn't have the traditional support of the bars—of the gay bars—and, um, so we already had gay professionals advertising with us, and um, probably a year after we started publishing, we hired a straight white man to be our advertising director, and he came from the Business Journal where he had sold advertising.

And he said, "Hey, let's go after..." the reason we hired him was he said, "Hey! Let's go after everybody! Why—everybody should be advertising in this paper. The, the, the readers are loyal—they're dedicated. They're, they're really supportive of the advertising, and the advertisers will get a good bang for their buck," and he could sell that.

And I said, "Great. Let's do it."

So that's what we did. He went out after them, and since he was straight, and white, and a male, he got in doors that little, short, stubby Renee and tall, arrogant, rat-ear, irrational Jay couldn't get into [laughing]. So...

BO, NE: [Laughing].

BO: Um, and then, what are some memories you have from working with *Just Out* that you're most fond of, or accomplishments that you're most proud of?

LACHANCE: Well, our first issue I was extremely proud of. And then our first year, we won a national, uh, gay-press award for best designed newspaper. That was... pretty... awesome. And then, one of the coolest things we did was coordinate a, um, billboard on northeast—actually it would have been north Broadway, right by the Memorial Coliseum—that said, “Come out, come out, whoever you are!”

And we got a bunch of, uh, people to help pay for the billboard, and we put their logos on it, and it was advertising, um, I think it was advertising Pride—or no!—it was advertising the first national Coming Out Day. That was it. So, um, that was awesome.

And it got, you know, defaced right away, and they had to replace it about eight times, and [chuckling]—

BO: Wow.

LACHANCE: But that was awesome. It was the first time that had ever been done.

NE: That's really cool.

BO: That's probably a really cool feeling [laughing] to, like...

LACHANCE: Yeah.

BO: ... have that up there.

LACHANCE: Yeah. And then, another thing was, um, *Just Out* was the first gay paper to get credentialed at the national, uh, president, you know, democratic convention where they nominate their presidential candidate. And, um, that was a pretty awesome thing. That was 1988. Now, I bet we all—they all—get to go.

BO: [Laughing.] Um, and then, what made you decide to sell *Just Out* in 1998?

LACHANCE: Well, I had been doing it for over fifteen years and, um, I had lost one editor—well, I had actually lost three editors.[Pause, tearing up]That will make me cry. So I lost Jay in 1990, and I lost Phillip in '91—'92—and I lost Ariel Waterwoman in '95. And I just couldn't do it again. [Pause] Not that anybody was dying [laughing].

I just, you know, I had survived, um, the AIDS plague, I had survived Ballot Measure 9 and Ballot Measure 13, and you know, it takes a lot of your spunk—it takes a lot of your spirit to keep fighting the same battle over and over.

BO: Um, how do you feel about the direction the newspaper has gone since you sold it?

LACHANCE: Um, I really thought that—I mean, I'm not going to fault or judge or, um, [pause] let's see, how can I be positive? I thought Marty Davis would get the same education from the community that I did, and become as good of a publisher and editor as I was, and she didn't. And the community didn't, didn't whip her butt like they did me; I don't know why.

BO: [Chuckling]

LACHANCE: I think maybe I was younger. I mean, when I started *Just Out*, I was only 23.

BO: Oh, really?

LACHANCE: Yeah. [Laughing] But um, you know, she kept it going almost another fifteen—yeah—she kept it going another thirteen years and then she, um, sold it to, uh, another publisher that's been run—publishing it for nine months and just announced yesterday they're stopping publication. So it's a [pause] second death.

BO: Oh, no. Do they have, like, a set date for when they're gonna...

LACHANCE: Oh, I think they've stopped.

BO: Oh, they just...

LACHANCE: I think they, I think February might have been their last issue.

BO: Oh, wow. How does that feel [awkward chuckling]?

LACHANCE: Pretty crappy [laughing].

BO: [Laughing] Yeah?

LACHANCE: But I kind of feel like, um, you know, it was the long—one of the longest lived publications in the United States, and um, it was just time.

Jay used to always say, um, when the *Oregonian* started printing our news there wouldn't be a need for *Just Out*, and we see gay stories in the mainstream press all the time now. It's not unusual anymore. And it's even gay people telling, you know, gay reporters telling those stories within that mainstream, so.

We have Rachel Maddow, we have, um, gay reporters on the *Oregonian*—at the *Oregonian*—other national papers, and we have the internet, I mean we, it's just not necessary anymore. Kinda sad, but.

BO: Um, what was one of the biggest scandals, um, like, behind the scenes, that you experienced when, um, while running the paper?

LACHANCE: You know, there were a lot. Um...

NE: The most memorable—we'll just go with that one [laughing].

LACHANCE: I might have to tell you two, though, because...

NE: That—we have plenty of time.

LACHANCE: Okay.

NE: You totally can [laughing].

LACHANCE: Um, well one was, um, I guess it was the early '80s, and there was a—in Gresham—there was a city commissioner named Gordon Shadburn, or no, he lived in Gresham, but he was a Multnomah County commissioner. And he was always going after the gay community, trying to enact laws to, to keep us down, you know, to

discriminate against us, to, to, to legalize discrimination, and he was just horrible. And, um, you know, he fought equal rights for gay people, he fought anything about gay people. He wanted to throw us all in jail.

And his aide was named Richard Levy, and Richard was a real estate, later, became a real estate broker, but while he was working with Gordon Shadburn, he discovered that Gordon was having some [pause] man-love on the side.

BO: [Giggling]

LACHANCE: And we were just a new paper, and we thought, ugh, we couldn't take that on, but we got all the information, and all the names, and all the doc—you know—we did all of our research and got the whole story, and then gave it to *Willamette Week* [laughing], who could take the pressure. And so they exposed this about Gordon Shadburn [giggling] and then ran him out of office [laughing].

BO: Wow.

NE: Oh, goodness. Hey! [Laughing]

LACHANCE: That was really juicy [laughing].

And, uh, so Richard Levy told our reporter, uh, Bill McCrey was the guy who broke the story, and it was very exciting, 'cause we were like, "Oh!" You know, we had so many talks, just like, "Gosh, we really want to be the ones to break this."

And I mean, if the internet had existed then it would have been easier, 'cause you just kind of put that kind of stuff out, but you know, back then, you had to have all your ducks in a row, and you had to have your facts and figures, and if you didn't, you could

get sued, and um, so we thought, “Well, we’ll just give it to *Willamette Week*, ‘cause they can—they have the lawyers—they can afford it.”

But that was juicy.

And I thought, you know, and ever since then, it seems like the ones who are most outspoken against us have turned out to have that little skeleton in their...

NE: Mm-hm.

LACHANCE: ...closet. But... So.

BO: Um...

LACHANCE: Yeah, and I always think about Lon Nabaum from Ballot Measure 9. Boy we wanted—oh—well, we almost got Scott Lively, who was Lon Nabaum’s right-hand guy, and right now, Scott Lively is promoting, uh, in Uganda, he’s the one—one of the four or five guys over there—trying to, um, get the Ugandan government—I don’t know why they chose Uganda—to outlaw homosexuality.

And we, we came this close to finding—we, we knew he was having sex with men, but we—we came this close to having someone go on record about it, and then they moved him out of state.

NE: Aw.

BO, LACHANCE: [Laughing]

NE: Well, um, going back to what you were talking about, um, with working through the AIDS, uh, and all the, all the ballots, um, what was your experience? Like, how did, how did you feel, like, working for the newspaper during those huge movements of the time?

LACHANCE: Well, the first time I heard anything about what became—came to be called—AIDS, it was like, um, 1981, 1982, and I was working at *The Cascade Voice*. And as the editor, I would be pulling faxes off the machine of news—no, we didn't have the internet, remember, we got fax, and we got pieces of paper sent over a telephone line—and uh, I got this fax from, the San Fr—like, I think it was the San Francisco Health Authority—and they'd said men needed to start wearing condoms, and having safe sex, and that there was this disease going around called corpuses sarcoma, which was a really rare cancer, and they were starting to call it 'the gay cancer', 'cause all these gay men were showing up with it, and that this was gonna be, um, a plague.

And I read that, and I was like, "Pfft. What is this? This cannot be true. What are they saying?" And I showed it around the office.

Everybody's like, "No, this, this can't be true. What is this?"

And I said, "They gotta be blowing this out of proportion; this just can't happen."

And they were just, they were saying, you know, "Men are dying, and more are gonna die, and the more who get it will die," and it was just this—just went on and on and I couldn't believe it. I just couldn't and wouldn't believe it.

And um, everything that was in that press release came true. And it was shocking.

BO: Wow.

LACHANCE: And you know, it took years, but um, it, it was just horrible. So every—it was like—every third gay man you knew was sick, and, or, and dying and during the first three or four years of that epidemic, um, the men were ostracized from their families, and so their friends would pick up the slack for care-giving, and for some reason, of course, women had a natural tendency for care-giving, so we helped.

The lesbian community came to their aid and developed care programs, you know, where, and I, I mean we, and you know, lesbians still do this [laughing]. If somebody gets hurt, it's like we pull together ten or fifteen people and we all get together and are part of their care and, you know, if somebody's in the hospital we'll always have somebody—the lobbyist—in their room.

You know, I mean these men needed, they were in hospices, or hospices wouldn't take them because everyone was afraid of getting it themselves, so they had to deal with incredible stigmatatio—er—st—incredible stigma of having the disease and not, and there not being any real education about it, because the federal government took so long—it took them three or four years into the epidemic—before they, um, acknowledged it as even a problem, or eh, eh, eh before they even put the Centers for Disease Control onto it. I mean, it was just, it was under Ronald Regan, and um, it was just horrible.

So men had to deal with the stigma of having the disease, and then, you know, going in to a hospital situation where, because people didn't know any better, they'd wear gloves and gowns and masks and alienate them even more, and, and so, um, and then these men would just wither away—these young, vital, vibrant men just would... just deflate and become skeletons, and then die. It was just horrible. Just horrible. And every third person you knew, that was happening to, or you knew somebody it was happening to, and you just dreaded, you know, every day coming in to see who had died, or who was sick, or who was what.

And at that time, I didn't do any, um, of the care-giving. I mean, I didn't get involved in any of those networks. Um, and then as, as the pandemic, um—I'm gonna call it a lot of different names 'cause they called it all these different names—as the pandemic continued, the community started, you know, some drugs came out that kept men alive longer, and so, but, but, the FDA wasn't—the Federal Drug Association—wasn't getting drugs through fast enough, so this, this faction tore, the other communities start getting torn apart once again where this, this grass-roots faction wanted to, to, to to, um protest, and push, and be disruptive, and do civil disobedience, and this other faction wanted to play by all the rules and do everything through politics and the legislature and um, work their way through congressmen and, and uh, I had always been a bit of a rebel, so of course I sided with the rebels.

And they, they were called ACT-UP. And they would have, um, rallies, and we, so I went to every—in Portland—I went to every rally; I was there at every demonstration, and um, and I think eventually they really were the ones that made change happen because they were in people's faces. They weren't, um, they brought a lot of education to it. And didn't get a lot of the credit they deserve.

But especially when the two movies came out this year, uh, one was *We Were There* or *We Are Here*, or. And it was done by a Portland film-maker. About, um, AIDS in San Francisco. And it was more about the care-giving and the illness and how it affected the community.

NE: Mm-hm.

LACHANCE: And then, uh, there's one about ACT-UP, called *How to Survive a Plague*, and it's all about their demonstrations, mostly from, uh, New York and

Washington D.C., although they were going around every—they were happening everywhere. And um, it really—those two movies tell both sides pretty well.

Um, so there was, you know, a full page in the paper every issue about new drugs, new studies, and then people just started focusing on how, how you could take care of yourself and be healthy, um, through this until, you know, they finally, they were finally able to do a drug combination that has kept men—you know—people alive since then. But that didn't come out until the early nineties.

NE: Well, we still got some time left, um, and a couple questions that just kind of came to [chuckling]. Um, one of them is, uh, who is, uh, your, uh, I guess, like, gay or lesbian, like, icon? Like, do you have one that you have always loved, you wanted to, like, who you idolized?

LACHANCE: Uh, well, I think, um, [pause] it would be Harvey Milk, the San Francisco city council man who was assassinated in, gosh, was it 1980-81? He was the first one who I heard say, uh, pretty much, "Come out, come out, whoever you are," and that being out was the most important thing you could do and the most radical act you could commit. So that was...

NE: Yeah.

LACHANCE: ...kind of Jay and I's founding principle of, um, wanting to create a space and, and give people information so that they could come out—give them the support. And teach people that that's really the most important thing to do, and that proved to be very, very true. And to not just be a one-issue community, you know, um, and Harvey Milk espoused this as well. That every community has every other community with in it, so you just can't be talking about gay rights—you need to be talking about the rights of the people of color, and rights of the mobility challenged, and the rights of

immigrants, and that, that any right or cause would affect someone within the gay community, 'cause gay people are everywhere, and um, if you expected their support, you needed to support them, and I think we all learned that through Ballot Measure 9.

NE: Oh, yeah. I, I love Harvey Milk, he, uh, I've seen, where, uh, I've seen his movie, the movie that they made with him—about him—and the documentary.

LACHANCE: Mm-hm.

NE: So I, I definitely agree. Harvey Milk is amazing.

LACHANCE: Yeah.

NE: He still baffles me with what he did. All the time. Um...

LACHANCE: Yeah.

NE: So I guess we have a little more ti—we [laughing] we have...

LACHANCE: Well, I, uh, I have more stories—if you don't have another question, though.

NE: Yeah, uh...

BO, NE: Well...

NE: Oh, Do you want to ask her? Go ahead. Go ahead

BO: Okay, well we heard from, um, some fellow classmates who interviewed Rupert Scott that you guys knew him, or that you knew him and that, um...

LACHANCE: Rupert—Scott is his partner.

BO: Oh, Rupert and Scott. Sorry [laughing]...

NE, LACHANCE: [Laughing]

BO: And that, uh, he told some stories about how you guys know each other, so we were just wo—wondering if you had any funny or interesting stories that you would like to share with us about them.

LACHANCE: About Rupert?

BO: Or Scott, or...

LACHANCE: Well Sco—uh, I don't know if Scott was interviewed. Um, well, Scott and I are in business together now. We do, um, Kitty Moshpit Productions. And uh, Rupert—when Jay and I wanted to start *Just Out*, the second person we told was Rupert Kinnard, because he was a graphic designer, and we wanted the paper to look nice; we wanted a nice graphic design.

And we told him what we were doing and he was like, “Oh sure, yeah, yeah, come to me when you're ready.”

Yeah, he was very, uh, disbelieving of our ability to accomplish it. So then, like two months later, I said, “Okay we're ready to go—we got our phone, we got our office, la la la.”

And he was like, “What?” [Laughing]

I was like, “Yeah, come on we need a cover, we need a design. Let’s go! Let’s go!”
[Laughing]

And he was like, “All right.”

He didn’t believe it, but we made it happen. He tells that story a lot.

All: [Laughing]

LACHANCE: Yeah, sure ya are, sure.

BO, NE: [Laughing]

NE: Well, and I mean, that’s all the questions that we had, but I mean, feel free—we still got, we got time so feel free to give...

LACHANCE: Ah, let me tell you another story.

NE: ...to give us some juicy details.

BO, NE: [Laughing]

LACHANCE: Um, so in our—one of the problems that came up in our quest to get mainstream advertisers, um, was, we had, the Peoples Food Co-op and the Food Front Co-op advertising with us, and Food Front, in their ad, put a bunch of logos of products that they sold, and one of the logos was for Alpenrose Dairy. And uh, I, you know, I grew

up in Portland, and Alpenrose Dairy has been pretty prominent in my life, and I, that made me really happy to see that logo in there. And then, um—this will probably make me cry too—[crying] so then Food Front got a letter from Alpenrose Dairy telling them that they couldn't run their logo in our newspaper, and that it was a cease-and-desist letter.

[Crying] And Food Front said, "Psh. Screw that, we're not gonna carry Alpenrose products," and they kicked out all the products, Alpenrose products, out of their store and they got Peoples Food Co-op to do the same thing. And there was no Natures, or New Seasons, or Whole Foods at this time, so um, I mean it, and then there was just, it just launched a big boycott within the community against the products.

And um, there was, um, a woman named Ann Sheppard who ran Parents and Friends of Lesbian and Gays. She was a native Portlander who had three kids, and one of her daughters was a lesbian, and so she wrote to Alpenrose Dairy, "Well, it must have your milk that made my children gay because I gave it to all of them..." [Laughing] "...And if you don't get off this, uh get rid of this attitude of yours we're really gonna go after you!" [Laughing].

NE: Good for her! I am so proud [laughing].

LACHANCE: [Laughing] So there was a long boycott, and um, you know, restaurants and stores and people, you know, people wrote letters—I mean, I don't think Alpenrose had any idea about the backlash. I don't know if you followed what happened with Sweetness Bakery out in Gresham?

BO: Oh, yeah.

NE: Mm-hm.

LACHANCE: Yeah, well, it was much like that, except it, they got it from all sides, and so after about nine months of that they finally relinquished and, and bought an ad themselves in the paper [laughing]...

BO, NE: [Laughing]

LACHANCE: ... to apologize, but it just, you know, it broke my heart at the time. It was like, how can you not want your product associated with us? How terrible is that? We're not bad people.

BO: Yeah, that's why I was so amazed by the, what happened with the Sweetness Bakery. It's just astounding that...

LACHANCE: Yeah.

NE: Yeah, I found out later that, um, they do sell to, you know, anybody and everybody—like gay couples and everything. It was, the problem was, is, um, apparently, this is just rumored as far as I know, they didn't want to make a cake to encourage gay marriage.

LACHANCE: Mm-hm.

NE: I don't know if that's true or not, um...

LACHANCE: It is really, it is true. He was, he said that.

NE: Okay. Well...

LACHANCE: [Laughing]

NE: ...that's horrible. Horrible.

LACHANCE: So um, one of the other things that happened was, um, well, I thought you should hear how we got the name for the paper.

BO: Oh, yes!

NE: Mm-hm.

LACHANCE: Um, so Jay and I were conceiving our plan, breaking away from *The Cascade Voice* and starting *Just Out*, and, uh, at the time, I had this little black and white curly dog that followed me everywhere. And Jay and I and my dog, Punky, were at, we went down to waterfro—it was, like, August, so we're, it was a nice sunny day, we're hanging out on the grass at Waterfront Park. Jay has his *Roget's Thesaurus*, and we're trying to think of a name.

And I said, "Well, let's look up 'out.'"

And so he looks up 'out' and starts reading, "Something, something, just out, something, something..."

I went, "Wait!"

He went, "Yeah!" [Laughing]

And next thing we know, that was it [laughing].

BO, LACHANCE: [Laughing]

NE: That's awesome [laughing].

LACHANCE: I still have the thesaurus. [Pause, clears throat] And there was a, uh, there was a woman named Phyllis Martin who was, um, very anti-gay and worked against us all the time. And it turned out that she had a son who was gay, who was a Drag Queen at Darcelle XV's...

NE: [Whispering] Oh, I love that place.

LACHANCE: ...and um, [clears throat] she would go around and steal our papers and throw them away. And so we, we put out a "wanted" poster [laughing] and people would call us when they saw her, and we would run down, and Jay was a photographer so he got a couple pictures of her doing it. And we were able to sue her and get her to stop.

All: [Laughing]

NE: Oh my goodness!

LACHANCE: She was just, she was just evil. And... just evil. And just really misguided.

NE: So how do you feel about Darcelle's? Like, I, personally I've been there once for my 21st...

LACHANCE: [Laughing]

NE: ...and loved it.

LACHANCE: [Laughing]

NE: Totally fun. Wanting to go again. Like, how, what was, what was your guy—like, yours and Jay’s feelings about...

LACHANCE: Well...

NE: ...drag queens back then?

LACHANCE: Well, right, yeah, that was one of our problems. I mean, um, we had these über feminists saying, um, drag queens were misogynists and that their acts were sexist, and we would have the, the, the queens saying, “No, we’re just impersonating women; we’re just, we’re really honoring them,” and, um, it was a very, it was very difficult to stay in the middle of that and not, and not go one side or the other.

Um, but now—and I don’t know if it’s just ‘cause I’ve gotten older—uh, uh, it doesn’t bother me anymore. Although, there was that recent incident where, uh, they were bringing a Drag Queen in blackface to a bar, and, and the community, um, got up in arms about that. Shirley Q. Liquor, was gonna perform at the Eagle Tavern on North Lombard, and that was way over the line. It was misogynist and racist. Well, she got banned [laughing]...

NE: [Whispering] I’d say so.

LACHANCE: ...but that’s where we experienced most of our sexism and racism was within those communities, but I think those communities have grown up too.

NE: So what are your feelings, um, now that it's not just, like, you know, the gays and lesbians, but it's, like, L-G-B-T-Q? Like how, like what—I, I know that's, like, a huge controversy between, um, gays and lesbians with, like, the transgenders and all that, like, how do, how do you, what are your personal feelings about them, like, about their, the transgender or the queer communities?

LACHANCE: Well, remember I got politicized—first got politicized—around the issue of adding the word “lesbian” to “Gay Pride.”

NE: Mm-hm.

LACHANCE: So adding all these other alphabet letters to it, um, you know, seemed inevitable. Um, Jay and I finally just started saying, using the word ‘queer,’ which back in the late 80’s was not, uh, embraced, let’s say [laughing]. And we took a lot of flack for it, but we were just like, “Gee, we’re just tired of writing L-G-B-T—can’t we just say queer? We’re just all queer.”

And now, you know, 20 years later...

BO: [Laughing] That’s what everybody uses now.

LACHANCE: ... it’s the common term. Mm-hm

BO: [Laughing] Yeah.

LACHANCE: [Laughing]

NE: Uh, what do you think is, was, like, between LGBTQ, like the, is there, like, one that, like, the gays and lesbians don't like the most? Like bisexuals or transgender, like they, do you find the most problems with them not liking?

LACHANCE: I think we're all trying to get along. Just let people be whoever they are and embrace all the spectrum.

BO: Isn't, wasn't that a...

LACHANCE: Um...

BO: ...big part of—oops, sorry.

LACHANCE: No, go ahead.

BO: A big part of, like, changing to, to just using 'queer,' was that, like, we're all humans, and we're all, like, trying to make it work, so...

LACHANCE: Mm-hm.

BO: ...can't we just all be friends [laughing]?

LACHANCE: Yeah. Yes, I think so. Um, but I think that, traditionally, bisexuals have gotten the worst rep, because um, peop—I think some people think, you know, pick one or the other, and even now I, I just think there's a lot more acceptance of all of that. I think there's more acceptance within the gay community—within the queer community—of all those factions, just as there's more acceptance of those factions within the mainstream community. So I think we've evolved just like the others, community has

evolved, and um, I'm not sure the other community's as caught up as we are, but I see it happening. Um, for sure. [Laughing]

[Sigh] But it is, it is exhausting, you know, educating yourself all the time.

NE: Yeah.

LACHANCE: [Laughing]

BO: Actually, that's what, we had a question in our class about, um, Measure 9 and whether or not we thought something like that could still happen today. What do you think? Do you think it's possible that...

LACHANCE: Absolutely.

BO: ...a measure like that would come out?

LACHANCE: Absolutely.

BO: Or if it would be directed towards the same group of people or maybe a different group?

LACHANCE: I think it absolutely could happen again. It might not happen in Oregon again, but I can see it happening in, um, I mean look at the things against women, I mean, my, uh, and immigrants. Those laws in Arizona against undocumented people, and um, the stuff against abortions rights that's happening, and I could easily see it. It might not be gay people but, I think it'll be women. Psh.

All: [Laughing]

LACHANCE: Damn.

BO: We just can't win!

All: [Laughing]

NE: We're screwed for all eternity.

LACHANCE: We still don't have equal rights. Come on!

All: [Laughter].

LACHANCE: Well, if we would all just get it together.

NE: Yeah.

LACHANCE: I was involved last week in that, uh, billion, onebillionrising.org...

NE: Oh, mm-hm.

LACHANCE: ...One Billion Rising event, and I really had hoped that it really would spark women to rise up against this war against us.

BO: How did it turn out?

LACHANCE: We're still waiting.

BO, LACHANCE: [Laughter]

BO: Still holding hope.

LACHANCE: Well, you know I went down there with—I got a bunch of people to come with me, and we were there and we were in the march and, and uh, you know, about three blocks into the march I’m going, “Ugh. How many times are we gonna do this? This is the same march we did in the 70s, and it’s, nothing has changed, and we’re still saying the same stupid things! We haven’t changed our slogans.”

And we saw Jake’s Grill, and it was happy hour, and I said, “Psh, let’s go get drunk.” [Laughing].

BO: [Laughing] When, when all else fails, get drunk!

LACHANCE: Nah, I said, “Let’s go get a drink.”
But we, we only had one.

BO: [Laughing] That’s alright; you need one.

BO, LACHANCE: [Laughing]

LACHANCE: But it really was, it was like, we’re surrounded! I’m surrounded by all these people, the same people I see at all the marches for 20 years, and we’re fighting the same thing, and saying the same stupid slogans, and I just couldn’t take it one more minute.

NE: So if you...

LACHANCE: So...that’s why we don’t have our rights.

All: [Laughing]

BO: We should upgrade our slogans.

LACHANCE: Right. We need new slogans.

BO, LACHANCE: [Laughter]

NE: So if you could go to, like, any age group from, like, elementary school to, like, now, um, what is one piece of advice that you would give [pause] anybody, if they're, for, you know, standing up for what they believe in, or going for, you know, something that's kind of, you know, to change what, how people feel about the LGBTQ community? Like, what's the biggest advice you'd give somebody?

LACHANCE: Well, let's see, within the gay community, I would say, "Come out, come out, whoever you are, and just be honest about who you are with everyone. And that the suffering is in the resistance to that."

And if it's people, just anybody, my newest bits of advice are, "Life isn't fair, but you can be."

[Pause] And if everybody just operated with that philosophy, I think the world would be a better place. And fair doesn't necessarily mean equal, which I think is what gets, uh, uh, I think men have a hard time giving women equal rights, because they don't think it's fair, 'cause, for, in order, in order, in order for women to be equal to men, they have to be chosen over a man and that could come, gets into this equal versus fair mentality. It's fair that a woman gets chosen over a man. It may not be equal, but it's fair. I don't know if that makes since.

NE: It does.

BO: I think so.

BO, NE: [Laughing]

LACHANCE: [Clears throat] Well, I, um, I met a part—I have a partner for, we’ve been together 16 years, and she had two grown children who now have grandchildren, so I got to be a grandma without ever being a mother, Yay!

And that’s the, um, and watching them, um, just gives me hope, because um, like, my youngest grandson, he’s six, and he talks about a girl in his class—I think her name is, it’s some real frilly name like, you know, Charlotte, or um, I don’t know, Sarasota, I don’t know, it’s some really femme name—and she always dresses like a boy and he uses, he interchanges the pronoun when he talks about her, he says, “Well, you know Charlotte; he’s a tom boy and she likes to wear...” in the same sentence he used the, two different pronouns to describe her, “and she’s, and he’s the principles daughter.”

BO, LACHANCE: [Laughing].

LACHANCE: I’m going, “Hayden, that is so cool! I would like to meet her.”
[Laughing]

Just that freedom and that, uh, you know, and he, and he likes to play dress up and have fun and impersonate Lady Gaga, and sing Adele, and he’s very cute.

NE: That’s awesome.

LACHANCE: But just that acceptance within, but then I don't think it's just because his grandparents, I mean, he's got two grandmas. But I, I think it's also, you know, that's just the way the world is—it's changing. The, those gender roles are becoming less rigid, and um, that this girl can dress as a boy or a girl at anytime—or both at the same time—and people use the same pro-, you know, diff-, both pronouns for her, and that's okay, then...

NE: Mm-hm.

LACHANCE: ...we're on our way.

NE: Well, thank you so much for taking time to let us ask you awesome, and slightly ridiculous, questions...

BO, LACHANCE: [Laughing]

NE: ...and, uh, inspiring, not only myself and Brontë, but also future generations who are gonna be able to listen to this. Like, I...

LACHANCE: [Laughing] They'll go, "Who is that crazy woman?"

NE: Like, I, after we read *Just Out* magazine in—or newspaper—in class, and I'm, every time I read it, I'm, I'm like, "Why isn't this still here? I'm fascinated! What is this? Like, I am in love."

Just with the stories, and like, the, we saw one—the name, like the homosexual names or something. It's, uh, they had, like, different names like, Chicken Pox or Chicken Soup or something like that. I saw that and I was like, "Yes!"

LACHANCE: [Laughing]

BO: Chicken Dinner.

NE: Yes, Chicken Dinner, that's what it was. I'm like, "Yes! This is, like, my favorite thing ever."

LACHANCE: [Laughing]

NE: I took a picture of it sent and it to all my friends and my mom, and we all loved it.

BO: Yeah, it really is amazing, and thank you so much for taking the time to talk with us.

LACHANCE: Well, thanks for recording this and um, making it available, and I'm proud to be a part of it. Especially this day after the death of it, uh, once again [laughing]. But...well, well, if you guys have any other questions while you're, you know, you, you want clarity or anything while you're transcribing, let me know.

NE: We will. Also...

LACHANCE: Or if you didn't hear something, let me know.

NE: We will. Also, I, I have to double check, but I believe, um, not, I, because I know GLAPN gets one, um, but I think, you, uh [pause], we can probably, I think you get a copy or something...

[Inaudible]

[End of Session 1]

[End of Interview]

Keywords

Just Out

AIDS

Renee LaChance

Jay Brown

Measure 9

Alpenrose Dairy

Advice

Act Up

Queer

Rights

Cascade Voice.