This is Madeleine Winter (MW) I’m here with Peter Prizer and Stan Fortuna and it’s June 4, 1999.

Hi, my name is ah, Stan Fortuna (SF). Ah, I first (clears throat) excuse me - sinuses. I first moved to ah, Maine to the Portland area ah, in June of 1969. Ah, I grew up in Rochester, New Hampshire. Ah, went to high school there and two weeks after graduation moved here with a man who was older than me. And ah, was very, extremely closeted (clears throat) we were both ah, very closeted at the time, rented a two bedroom apartment in order to make it look like ah, we were just simply roommates and that continued on until maybe 1971. Ah, at that time I’d had no ah, friendships with lesbians. And through a couple of ah, gay male friends I met Susan Breeding and Wendy Ashley. Wendy Ashley is an astrologer and ah she (clears throat) at the time had a relationship with Susan Breeding who worked ah, at Walden Bookstore with Steven Leo. Ah, all of which I mention- their names because they were integral in my own coming out and consciousness raising. At the time however nobody was out to anyone. Susan Breeding simply made an arrangement with Wendy her roommate, the astrologer for me to have my chart read. In the course of my chart being read Wendy revealed the fact that it showed very strongly that I was probably homosexual and ah, the reading sort of went out the window. And at that point we continued to just get to know each other. They came out to me as lesbians and ah, we went from there. Through the course of my knowing them ah, I was in a very unhappy relationship with the man that I originally moved here with. So after two years we ended our relationship and ah, I got an apartment for a couple months and eventually I ended up moving in to Wendy and Susan’s household. They had three children ah, Wendy had three children by her previous marriage and ah, we went through ah, we went through their getting in touch with their feminism. And also at that time they became involved with the Brunswick gay women’s group. Which to my knowledge is the first ah, such group in the state of Maine. And I could stand corrected on that but I believe that that, out of that group and the women that were involved with that came a number of other groups that
were formed around the state. Ah, I also be—became ah, infatuated or ended up involved in a relationship with Steven Leo at that point. And I remember that we would ah, take care of the children, the three children while Wendy and Susan on Friday nights went to their ah, Brunswick gay women’s group meeting. They would come back with various ah, you know ah, stories about what was going on with the group. And through that, through their own consciousness raising they shared that with Steven Leo and myself which I considered to be very fortunate. You know, discuss issues of sexism ah, how men and women relate to each other so on and so forth. We would sit around their kitchen ah, eating popcorn, stoned out of our minds on marijuana which also was my introduction to recreational drugs, at the time. And we would have tremendous fantasies about ah, how a movement would start in Maine you know, what gay liberation, lesbian liberation would be. And out of that ah, just becoming extremely aware of oppression of ah, gay men and lesbians. And ah, and we went from there.

Peter Prizer (PP): Okay, thank you Madeleine. My name is Peter Prizer. I am fifty, God, one years old (chuckles). I came to Maine from Philadelphia when I was 21 and lived in Portland. Ah, worked on the waterfront very closeted. Ah, I knew I’m gay, I knew I was gay like from 12 or 13 but ah. I just led a sort of a single person’s life. Around 1971 and 2 I bumped into some guys who were friendly with Stan and Steven. Ah, casually friendly. And so I, somewhere around '72 living in Portland I started to realize there were other gay men around. And it was mostly all very social and we, we drank a lot (laughs) some of us like me drank too much and that was to be a bane through the years, but that’s happily behind me at this moment. Ah, and I guess I, I always had been, I’d been very political at Penn State and we had done tree-ins. In when they cut trees down and shit like that. Ah, so I, I, I had a very ah, definite liberal political slant which, which ah, I was always interested in it. I had taken political science in the year or two I’d been at college. So, like when I came to Maine that was all just kind of put on the back burner and here I am. But, one evening, correct me Stan here if I’m wrong, first time I met you guys you were doing a, a presentation at Bowdoin College, is that right?
SF: Yes it is.

PP: Otherwise we had not met each other up to that point. And I had heard through someone that, what was the name of the group who was doing it?

SF: It was Lambda of Brunswick.

PP: That had formed at that point and I had heard about it and ah, I thought well Jesus you know, just go and see this. And I remember walking into the auditorium, I forget what year it was, '73 maybe.

SF: Yes, yeah it was '73.

PP: And here are these you know (chuckles) ah, four lesbians and four guys sitting on this, these little chairs if my memory serves me.

SF: Right on the stage.

PP: On the stage. And the audience was not very friendly.

SF: No.

PP: (laughs) They were hostile you know, rich boys I guess or something. And ah, I sat in the audience I, I had a few beers you know myself and, and ah, I decided just to join, to get up and join the group. And it was, it was unstructured enough that there was no, they didn't introduce me (laughter). And ah, that was the beginning. And ah, from that point on it was, I was always involved in, in the whole movement scene and I really enjoyed it you know. It was, it was something that ah, I liked doing. I liked you know being politically active. And ah, that lasted through 1980. And then I said, “that’s
enough.” It’s also, I stopped drinking in ’79 and that was probably not coincidental too. Wanted to simplify my life a little bit so that’s that.

MW: So can either one of you tell me how the Maine Gay Task Force was started and what was the impetus for that?

SF: Ah, just to, to back up a little bit. Ah, what had ended up happing—happening to ah, myself and Steven Leo is ah, we ended up following Susan Breeding and Wendy Ashley to Brunswick. They moved from Portland to Brunswick. Susan I believe worked for Casco Bank at that time in Brunswick and they wanted to be closer rather than doing all of the commuting to the, the Brunswick Gay Women’s Group that they were involved with. So we moved there also and I cannot remember whether the firing of the waitresses at the Stowe House preceded the formation of Lambda but somehow their, I think that, Lambda formed, we formed this gay and lesbian group in Brunswick called Lambda and that had to have been like in seven—I believe in ’73 ah, or ’74 somewhere in there. Probably could research it and, and find out exact dates but. Then there was the firing of the waitresses at the Stowe House so that they could hire male waiters ah, the, the place was ah, bought by a new owner and ah. So the Brunswick Gay Women’s Group was extremely supportive and the other feminist groups ah, in the area at the time of these women. Some of them with children ah, single parent households. Ah, and we got involved also. And so through the course of the summer we picketed the Stowe House. Ah, and eventually the women were hired back. They were paid back wages. Ah, we made and have the agreement, a copy of the agreement that Matthews, the owner of the Stowe House had to sign in order for these women to have it finally settled. They had attorneys ah, they were taking him to court. But they did eventually win but we did spend our summer doing that and we were joined by other gay men and lesbians, feminists ah, you know from around the state because I believe that at that time ah, you know we put word out that we would appreciate their support. So Lambda had formed. When we met Peter at the ah, Bowdoin College speaking engagement we invited him to join us on the stage. Ah, after he had introduced himself that he was from the Gay Rights Organization of Portland which we had never heard of. And it just ah, so
he joined us and we talked with him you know. We thought he was great you know, we were very interested in knowing that you know, who all was involved. But I think that Peter may have at the time been a sort of one person operation, the GRO in Portland. (laughter) And ah, so shortly thereafter the, we found out that there was a gay and lesbian group at the University of Maine called the Wilde-Stein Club. And once that became known and hit the press ah, that they were going to, well the, the conference, the first Maine Gay Symposium was sponsored by Wilde-Stein Club. However before that came about and Susan Henderson probably could give you a lot more information on that. Ah, it was a huge controversy they were, the legislature didn’t want to do any funding for the University of Maine unless they kicked the gay group off campus, which basically you’ll hear I’m sure more about that. That was a huge thing out of that. Steve Bull, Karen Bye, John Frank, Susan Henderson, a number of other people ah, that were involved in that controversy. Steve Bull went on to be interviewed on the Today Show with his parents who were extremely supportive. It was really wonderful to see that. We had never have seen any parents be supportive publicly, openly like that, but if at all possible you should really ah, interview Steve Bull. And if possible Karen Bye, I don’t know they’re in, Steve Bull comes back here for usually a couple of weeks in the summer and his parents live at Cape Porpoise so it’s possible maybe to do an arrangement. But he could really give you a lot of information on the Wilde-Stein Club. He at that time I believe he was considered the president of both the Wilde-Stein Club. Karen Bye I believe is in California. Susan Henderson may know how to get in contact ah, with her. So the, they were sponsoring the Symposium and ah, Lambda, members of Lambda, Peter from Gay Rights Organization went to the Symposium and there we met these other groups. Didn’t realize that there were these other groups from around the state. Ah, and I can’t tell you exactly when those groups started. I remember the names. You know they are listed in the early issues of Maine Gay Task Force. They may have been Gay Support In Action, I’m not sure if they were together as a group at the time but, the publication of the Maine Gay Task Force newsletter chronologically sort of has a whole bunch of information as to the dates that things got started. So out of that we formed.
MW: Excuse me, yes. Could you tell me some of the names of those groups?

SF: Ah, they were Gay Support In Action, Bangor Unitarian Gays, Hancock County Gays.

PP: That was Sturgis… (laughs). Gay Rights Organization Portland.

SF: Right.

PP: Probably three or four—

SF: Wilde-Stein Club, Orono. Lambda, Brunswick. Ah, I'm not, that may be, there may be others but. With the publication sitting here I would you know, research this. But out of that ah, we realized that there were these other groups and, at the Symposium the decision was made that we should get together and I believe that the date was chosen at that time that representatives from these various groups would meet. And out of that ah, we formed what was called the Maine Gay Task Force. We came up with a position paper. Ah, it was very loosely structured and some of us deal better with structure. There was a lot of infighting or you know people disagreeing on you know, how, you know, and what our purpose should be, those kind of things. Ah, but we, we, we knew that we were united just ah, in the fact that you know, Maine needs, certainly needed gay liberation, you know. People needed to become more aware and.

MW: It seems pretty amazing that there were that many groups that early on . . .

PP: We didn't know the state was so. You know the state was big, there were no computers. Ah, and I think what had happened was the, the, the first Gay Symposium at UMO, that had, that had created such a controversy you can't believe it today. And I don't think there's been a controversy in the state similar to that since, where everybody -- The Bangor Daily News stopped printing letters. The paper got so many friggin
letters. And ministers ah, took out full page ads in the, in the papers around the state condemning the conference, perverts you know it's really very intense. Ah, Stan mentioned the leg -- the whole budget for the University of Maine was held up ah, and, and people. Every -- everybody had an opinion, everybody was on the soap box.

SF: They were also calling for ah, not only that the, that the group Wilde-Stein be kicked off campus and not funded but also ah, that the, any of the professors that were in support of the group should also be fired.

PP: It was very you know, you know...

SF: I mean it was very like a lynch mob kind of an atmosphere going on.

PP: But, but it came down ultimately to First Amendment right of assembly. And, when the dust settled that was kind of the, everybody grudgingly you know, the powers that be in the state grudgingly realized that they, that as objectionable as these people are they, they have a right to assemble. And that was kind of the bottom line. And we assembled. And ah, as Stan was mentioning, we got, we got a whole burst of energy from this. This is really a, I mean it had been pulled off, the state was still standing the next day you know. Ah, so we had this energy right? Ah, and that's, a lot of that got funneled into the, what we wanted to have was a state-wide sort of coordinating group. And ah, I think the National Gay Task Force was in a, was, had been founded by then. Which is where we kind of got the idea for the Bangor ... if I'm not mistaken.

SF: Yes, as, as a matter of fact, even some of the big names in the movement at that time came to the Maine Symposium. Now ah, Bruce Foler was I believe was president of the National Gay Task Force. He was there. Morty Manford came to it. I don't know that you will know these names but they were early on. They were there, Morty Manford was involved in Gay Activist Alliance in New York City at the time. Ah, Barbara Giddings I believe came to the first one ah, from the American Library Association. Barbara Giddings was one of, I believe the first lesbians and has written there are, she
has written a couple of books ah, to come out and may have been I believe was involved with Frank Kamany in the Matachine Society. Ah, those were the, some of the first. She may have also been involved with the Daughters of Bilitis in California. Ah, she came. I’m trying to think of some of the other.,

PP: Yeah the, the, the people from New York.

SF: Peter Russo.

PP: Peter Russo who does all the gay cinema you know.

SF: It was amazing.

MW: and has written stuff on film, I believe.

SF: This was, it was nationally. You know letters of support came from around the country. Ah --

MW: That’s incredible

PP: It was really something.

SF: You know, and it was, I forget how many people ah, showed up at the Symposium.

PP: 300.

MW: That’s pretty good.

PP: For a first time.
SF: It was really amazing.

PP: I mean these were threats of you know violence and shit like that.

MW: I've seen some of those, the letters that were written to the Bangor Daily News they're incredibly rabid. People just were off the wall.

PP: The state had seen nothing like this you know and, and, I mean I don't know if the Symposium is still going on but it was like number twenty something.

MW: Twenty-five, I just came back.

SF: Is that right.

PP: The tough times change you know.

SF: We also had some fabric, lavender fabric ah, and when we were doing the interview with Annette back, we, we remembered that ah, we took these strips of lavender fabric and made lavender armbands and some people wore them as headbands there. And I mean that was a very radical act just to put that on. Members of the press were asking us, you know what does that mean? What is that all about you know? It, it was just, you know it was a very radical thing and it was extremely liberating to be there with all of those ah, gay people other than in, and previously to that it had been in a dark bar. Bars in which when anybody (phone rings)

MW: Okay.

SF: I think what I was saying was ah, that if it had been, previously it had been that the only place that you would see gay men and ah, lesbians would be in bars. Ah, that were usually dark, somebody constantly checking ah, to see what kind of activity you... In some bars like in Boston at the time ah, in the early seventies, late sixties there was a
bar called the Other Side. They did not play any slow music that, nobody could be touching one another that wa -- and if you did you would asked to leave. And I've been to those bars, I was still underage at the time but ah, was able to get in. And ah, also if anybody came in that they weren’t sure of ah, they constantly carded people, tried to find out if you know, they really were supposed to be in that bar and if the police or anyone under cover that they thought the lights would come on in ah, this and I'm speaking specifically of Roland's Tavern. The lights would all come on, the, the house lights and everyone would have to stop dancing and sit down because it was not, dancing was not allowed. So it was really a great experience to ah, to see all of these people here. And it really sort of like fueled, you know, like Peter said or the energy level you know of wanting to do something. Ah, it was incredible.

MW: That's great.

PP: A lot of it after the Symposium and all of the bull shit that came done, for me anyway, a lot of it seemed almost anti-climatic. It seemed you figure well we can do this, we can go back to you know, we can go back to Portland, we can go back to Brunswick, Bangor and do local grass roots. You know, we wouldn't use the term grass roots but do local stuff you know, but, but, but the important thing was that, that now we knew who was out there. You know, and, and, and had and they were faces and names and we met people that—and we all got along really very well. I mean there was an amazing sense of oppression (laughs) you know that, tends to you know, we didn't have the luxury of, of ah, being picky about other people you know because we were all in it together.

MW: Yeah it must have been an incredible sense of empowerment.

PP: Yeah.

MW: To all of a sudden realize you weren't alone.
SF: That's a good way to put it.

PP: Very, very strong sense of empowerment and, and a sense of a fledgling little community in Maine. As, as, as far flung as it was and remains. You know, it's a big state.

MW: So you started the Task Force out of Symposium and then—

SF: That was, right.

MW: Yeah and the newsletter was started?

SF: Established.

PP: I was in England. You, you would know about the newsletter.

SF: The, the newsletter actually got it's start in Brunswick and I have to say that that was sort of the brainchild of ah, Sandy Swain. Ah, and Miriam Dyak. Ah, Karen Frank ah, myself, Steven Leo, Wendy Ashley, Susan Breeding, Richard Tibow(sp), Tim Bouffard. Ah, there may have been a couple of other--there was so let's see. Karen Bye I'm not sure of whether she was involved in it right at that point. Ah, I'm trying to think of the woman who's in Mexico that changed her name, Ann Garland, ah, were all involved in putting out the first issue. Ah, we typed it on electronic stencils (chuckling) which was really—

PP: Amazing.

SF: --very very tedious on typewriter you know no ribbon, that kind so that it would cut through.

MW: Right I used to do that.
SF: Then put it on a mimeograph machine and, you know ah, and printed it off. And what we did was we went to -- there was a conference going on in Bangor and we tried to get this done so that we could take it there and ah --

MW: What conference would that be?

SF: --hand out ah --

PP: It was a generic sort of human services.

SF: Yes it was a human services conference. And ah, we were invited to go there so we drove all, you know like up to Bangor one, you know night. We had this room -- facilities there. I think that it was actually on the campus at Orono. It was the Maine Conference on Human Services. And they were shocked. Most of the people that were really shocked to see these, you know, gay men and lesbians you know come to this thing and we handed out our publication to those who would take it. And ah, we attempted to distribute it at Roland's Tavern. Ah—

PP: How many were printed up the first issue do you think?

SF: I think we may have printed up like a hundred.

MW: The word attempted intrigues me.

SF: Yeah.

MW: Did you have problems doing that?

SF: Distributing it yes, at Roland's Tavern we did. Ah, Tim Bouffard became involved ah, Tim and Peter I believe were, or it may have been Peter, who actually went there and started handing it out. And the doorman and Roland Labbe ah, you know, wanted
to see what it was and, you know they weren’t familiar with it. We didn’t ask permission (laughter). We went into the bar we just started handing it out.

PP: Yeah that’s very important.

SF: Actually Peter was trying to sell it there.

PP: Really?

SF: Yeah I think it was, selling it and then started giving it out.

PP: Yeah nobody would buy it I suppose.

SF: Right, so we started giving it out (laughter) and they wanted to know who he was and who he was with and ah, and they asked him to stop passing it out. And ah, then they asked him to leave because he continued to pass it out and they asked him to leave and he was handing it to people on the way out. So he related this, of what had happened, he related this to us at a meeting. And initially the publication was, was put out of ah, Brunswick. And the apartment at 7 McKean Street was Miriam Dyak was living there and Karen Frank, Michael Rounds and Bruce. I can’t remember Bruce’s last name. If you can interview Wendy Ashley it would be you know to your benefit ah, but anyway. Ah, so then this was very disruptive to their home life to have this publication (laughter). Now they, they owned the mimeograph machine and we were tied to it so wherever the mimeograph machine you know would go, you know. So now if I’ve got this right we went from McKean Street to Portland.

PP: where though?

SF: I’m trying to think.
PP: Ah, this is quite a while ago you now it's really hard to remember. Ah, it didn't go to the Maine Gay Task Force office. We didn't get that office immediately.

SF: Ah, we may have published like you know, four issues out of that apartment. You know we're taking four months, you know five months, something like that. Ah, eventually it ended up -- Maine Gay Task Force rented an office on Middle Street in Portland.

PP: 193 Middle Street.

SF: Right and it was on, what the fourth floor, third floor?

PP: Third floor next to the MCLU and there was a lawyer's office. They were really cool ah, office rooms. You know, time what is seventy-six or five? And ah, this is a little highlight here a little, little sidebar. Ah, we all chipped in ah, on this floor ah, thirty bucks and we had our names printed on the glass door at the sidewalk. It said Maine Civil Liberties Union ah, Maine Gay Task Force and a lawyers firm and maybe something else. And at the time that was really heady. I mean you know, and the glass door. Well one of the custodians of the building got shit faced one night and walked through the door (laughter) and we had our, so that's, that's the apex of our glory and none of us had any money left to do it. They were lucky to get the glass back in. Well anyway that's just a little. We had a nice little office and a phone. We had a real phone.

SF: Actually the exact date of the opening of the Maine Gay Task Force office was on May 26 of 1975. And, because one of our front page headlines was MGTF opens Portland office and—

PP: and so then we had a little _____ there.
SF: --we staffed it from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. And we had a phone and it was supported by pledges from individuals and sale of the publication. And the publication was ah, produced there for--

PP: At most a year. The rent, I forget what we paid for the room. A hundred and twenty bucks a month or something. It wasn't at the time wasn't -- very, too, too, too outrageous. You'd never rent that today on that address. But ah, I think I was getting unemployment or something so I could live off that you know. And I think, somebody else was too, we always joked that the government was paying us to be activists (laughter). We lied.

SF: Well you had to be looking, actively seeking employment (laughter). I mean you'd have to go to three places a week or something at the time and you know, if you did that and you still didn't find a job you know, then you had this excess amount of time so people would you know, staff the office. It was great. It was a great way to be, you know depending—the unemployment check my, was $76 a week, you know. But still, it gave you free time you know, especially if you weren't looking for work and I wasn't at the time. I was happy to go in the office and do whatever I did.

MW: I'm sorry. I know that the Task Force did some pretty outrageous actions. I've heard both, when I heard you speak at the Matlovich Society you were talking about I think Ogunquit?

PP: Yes.

MW: Some of the, I guess some of the anti-dancing stuff? Could you talk about that a little bit?

PP: Ah, there actually in, in the Maine Ga--Maine Gay Task Force newsletter there is ah, an article that was written specifically about that evening. Ah, and ah, what had happened was there was a gay bar in ah, Wells called the Stage Door. And the Stage
Door burned to the ground which previous to that, there had been a number of fires at gay/lesbian establishments. And, they didn’t know if it was arson, what it was. But the story goes that the owners ah, happened to be this gay man and his lesbian daughter - ran the place. And they were very nice you know. We distributed the newsletter there and it was a great little bar. But when they went to ah, rebuild and applied for the liquor they were refused. Because of course, when they first got the liquor license they weren’t known as a lesbian and gay bar. So once they became known, the Town of Wells refused to issue them a liquor license. In the meantime you know, we were infuriated by that, members of the Maine Gay Task Force. So our feeling was well you know, there are other bars that are - Valerie’s had been listed in Bob Damron’s Gay Guide for years and years as ah, you know, a gay friendly you know bar. But the rou—what went on there was, it was a restaurant like dinner club with dancing. Ah, and gay men would congregate there sort of near closing and make contact you know, eye contact that kind of thing and connect up for the night or whatever. But, there was never any gay men that danced together there. And no women that we knew of. So we figured that what we would do is if we were not going to be allowed to have our bars then we would start going to other bars and see how they liked it if we danced in their bars.

PP: Liberate was the term we used. Really that (laughter). We’d liberate Valerie’s.

SF: Right. So we had maybe I should get—

PP: That’s alright, just do your thing.

SF: --There was, there were a number of us. There may have been as many as between like 11 and 16 ah, gay men and lesbians who went to Valerie’s on a Saturday night. Ah, we went there dressed appropriately to be in that sort of establishment, which was a little upscale. That was important that we not go in jeans.

PP: We never would have gone in there anyway.
SF: So, we sat down and had dinner. And then as the evening wore on, you know, the music started. The, a piano player ah, started and people got up and danced. Well we got up in male/female ah, you know couples dancing and in the middle of the song we changed partners (laughter) so that the women were dancing with the women and the men were dancing with the men (laughs).

MW: That's great.

PP: And at first nobody caught on or maybe they were in shock and didn't realize what was going on. But eventually the owner, and I believe her name was Tiggy. Ah, this woman came over and said that we could not do that there, that gay men were not allowed to dance together. The women, there was no problem but the men were not allowed to dance. Now there really is an account of this in the, in the newsletter that is much more accurate. And coincidentally ah, and of course this would not be able to be used, but the guy who wrote the article and it's not credited to him, that wrote the article in the newsletter about this incident is none other than Steve Irving. The, the brother of John Irving the author.

MW: Oh really (laughter).

PP: A very well written article.

MW: Yeah I'll bet (laughter).

SF: So, anyway, I don't know that you could use that without his permission, he's in Florida. Ah, but she, we sat down the music started again later we did the same thing, we got up and changed partners, danced. She came over again. She's getting somewhat hysterical at this point. And that's not mentioned in the article, but she did, she got very loud, she was extremely upset ah, was yelling, "you're going to ruin my business. You boys, you boys cannot do that here. I've been good to you boys over all
the years. You come here, please don’t do this to me.” She was really becoming hysterical to the point of her husband came over and was pleading with us to, you know, not dance together. So we got them to state on record that it was certainly okay for women to dance together but men were not allowed there to dance together. We went there hoping to be able to -- there were some of us, not all of us -- but there were like five people that were willing to be arrested for same sex dancing. And that was our intent was to get something you know, publicly stated about whether, you know two men or two women could dance in public. So, the next thing we know ah, the music is stopped. They’re refusing now to play any music so that we can’t you know, dance. Ah, I never thought of it, it would have been great just to have danced anyway without music or hum (laughter) or have someone start singing. But we weren’t that quick thinking then. But anyway ah, an Ogunquit police officer arrived and asked us you know, what, you know, was going on. And we explained that ah, you know, basically that we wanted to dance. And ah, and he said that he would hope that we would respect, you know, the rules of that particular ah, establishment, and that if we didn’t cease and desist that, you know, ah, we would be arrested. But the understanding was we would not be arrested for same sex dancing, that was, we had to get that made very clear. It would be being arrested for disturbing the peace. And so we refused to leave the restaurant so reinforcements were called in and they came from all over. They came from Wells, I’m not sure if it was Sanford ah, you know, various places. There may have been eleven cruisers at one point out front. The lights, all the lights going. A crowd was gathering across the street you know, outside what was going on in Ogunquit on a Saturday night at Valerie’s, you know, that they had, you know, all of these police people show up. So Peter was the ah, the last to leave (laughter) and I remember it was very clear they were not going to arrest us for same sex dancing which meant you know, really what is the point we’re, we are certainly making a point here and ah, so we talked to Peter and Peter finally agreed to leave. So no one was arrested and we, we left and we met the next Sunday, the next day, about what we were going to do. It may have been like within a week’s time. And we called for a boycott and a march, a demonstration to be held in the morning at ah, the Wells Town Hall for not giving the Stage Door its liquor license. And then we moved from there in the early afternoon, we
took a lunch break (laughter). We went to Steve Bull's, actually for lunch. And then we went to ah, Valerie's and picketed Valerie's and, for not allowing same sex dancing. And it was the, really the, it was very, we may have, we must have had maybe 15-20 people on the picket line.

PP: Signs and --

SF: At both places with signs.

PP: It was really very --

SF: And the, the crowd that was gathering was very hostile. Ah, we had police protection and it is a good thing that the police were there because I could see if not, they would have started throwing rocks or bottles at us or whatever, and it was really good to have the police there. And you know, we shouted our, you know our little slogans, you know, here and there. One of the newspapers, the York County Coast Star came out the next day with an article on the, the march and the, the picket. And ah, said that what we were shouting was ah, "stars and stripes forever" (laughter). And we had to call him and ask that that be corrected because what we were actually yelling and screaming was "stars and dykes forever" (laughter). So we got into a very hot conversation with the, with the ah, with the writer of the article I remember.

PP: ....

SF: Oh yes I called him up (laughter) said "how dare you, how dare you. It was stars and dykes, d-y-k-e-s, do you understand." We don't know that we ever saw anything written but he had his consciousness raised a little bit, whatever. But ah, so you know, we did that that one day. And ah, we as a result of that we met with ah, the police chief of Ogunquit. Another time went down for a meeting with him and brought up the issue of harassment of gays on the beaches with ah, arrests that were made of gay men every summer that were cruising the beaches you know, sex in the dunes that sort of
thing that was going on. We understood that ah, that they used young good looking decoys and we considered that to be entrapment.

MW: Sure.

SF: Ah, and we talked about those issues. I don’t know that we ever met with them again but there was a much different atmosphere in Ogunquit for gay men and lesbians there. We felt that we really did some good by doing this.

MW: When was this -- in the mid seventies?

SF: Yes.

MW: Yeah.

SF: It merely ah, it meant, it told them that you know, they had to be much more careful about how they treated the gay community within, within their community. And ah, there were gay bars that came later there. There was Annabell’s in Ogunquit and of course today the, the Stage Door’s there, I mean not the Stage Door but --

PP: The Club.

SF: The Club is there. There was another one at one time.

MW: The Front Porch.

SF: The Front Porch is there, right. So you know, we kind of feel like we did pave the way to make it a little bit open there because ah, even with the controversy going on now today with the, about flying the flags and stuff. You can go to Ogunquit, it’s not a place that I choose to go and have never really for years. I’m not a, particularly a beach
person or a beach community, but what people really need to do there now is just start holding hands and kissing in the streets, I mean to bring it on home you know.

MW:   Yeah.

SF:    Don’t, it’s another thing just don’t push us you know or you, really we’re really letting you, you know live and you know think a certain thing. But you know, because again, a lot of people are tolerant it’s like you know, you can be who you are but I just don’t want to see it and that’s really the last, to me is the final. But anyway that’s getting off the track.

MW:   So how long was the Task Force around and what ended it?

PP:    Well I’ll tell, start on that. We had, we tried to have a, a meeting to push reform --

(END OF SIDE A, TAPE 1)

PP:    --more, further apart. And probably lots of attended. Would you say Stan that’s fair to say? Yeah. Ah, and then there was, and Stan you’ll have to correct me on this but ah, basically the newsletter became more and more of a, of a, of a job, as our task. (chuckles) the Task Force, putting out the newsletter. And, and it, it ah, we obviously printed stuff from all the groups but, it had a, because it was being done in Portland at this point it had a very southern Maine orientation. And ah, ah, to make a long story short ah, it was Stan’s idea to actually change the name to Mainely Gay. And he might, Stan, want to go into the rationale there and I, I, I’m not sure I’d get it right.

SF:    Yeah well the, the Task Force really. I was just looking through some of the copies here because the minutes of the meeting meant there were meetings that occurred and somewhere between ah, what looks to be February of 1976 -- I don’t have the, the March issue here -- but I do have the April issue. There are no minutes to the meeting in April and there are no minutes of the meeting ah, in oh I do have March.
PP: Yup.

SF: There are none in March, none in April. They end in February. So that's kind of means to me that at some point we just stopped meeting there and if, I think that it was for lack of support. People just -- from the various groups weren't showing up and ah, I think that probably all in all people were just simply burned out. Ah, it was not uncommon to be at a meeting for something every night of the week. Ah, and my belief is that people just became burned out. And the intent of Maine Gay Task Force as a group was that it be various groups represented and do activist kinds of things. And when that stopped ah, the feeling was, you know, why continue on with the Maine Gay - the newsletter of the Maine Gay Task Force, that basically the Task Force is defunct. And the people in the Portland area that had been involved in the publication heavily and were talking now at this point, this was Peter Prizer and Susan Henderson ah, and myself.

PP: You.

SF: Although I was more of what was called a shit worker (laughter). I always had a problem with script writing or committing myself, whatever you want to call it, writer's block or whatever. But I knew all-in-all that, you know, the people that were actually, you know ah, that were committed to collate it, to type it, you know that was really, it was you know, right. That was the work and what you then had to do was lean on people to get articles. You know like, you know Peter and Susan would do an editorial that - so we were, we were all very very committed and at one point, actually now I remember - the publication came from ah, Brunswick on McKean Street to ah, State Street, I believe. At one point it was being published out of a, a bedroom on State Street and it was either before or after it went to the ah,

PP: The office.
SF: To the office and then later went to Westminster Avenue to a bedroom out of Westminster Ave. Ah, It was I believe published a couple times ah, out of Bangor.

PP: And one summer it was actually published at the Student Union at the what was then called the Gay Peoples Alliance.

SF: Right.

PP: They took it over for --

SF: Yeah that was another group that formed, the Gay People's Alliance.

PP: They took it over for maybe for even a year. I mean they took the mimeograph, the typewriter, the files, because we were burned out and they wanted to do it. Fine. And then we took it back again and (chuckles) we had a year's vacation.

MW: Right.


SF: I was just going to say so we, we brainstormed and said, do we want to let the publication die? Maybe a Task Force clearly isn't doing the same, you know, ah, activist stuff that it was doing and, you know, we had a commitment basically from that core group of people to keep it going. So we decided to change the name to Mainely Gay. We changed the format from legal size to stapling it and came up, we got a hold of an electronic stencil cutter from the University of Maine which we auctioned. In which we, they were auctioning off and we put in a bid and, and got it. And, we improved the quality of what we thought it looked like and you know, then we became ah, one not so much of activists ourselves but reporting on various stuff. Although we were still doing activist stuff in the south. Ah, southern part of the state.
PP: It, it, it was very much like APEX, you know the, the, the slant. It, it, it was political, it was personal, it was whatever.

MW: Well it certainly was a role model for us.

PP: Oh great, it was fun. It was fun for most, for the most part. I'm sure APEX was. But it wears, wears you down. That, that deadline ah, coming up and god, I mean --

SF: We would take an issue off now and then because we were burned out. We would try to get people more people involved. We were at one point producing 500 copies, and to do that by hand, and some of the issues were 70 pages.

PP: It was like well 16 -16 sheets of legal size printed on both sides. And this is, I mean way before desktop publishing. We had a really nice electric mimeograph that you could really crank right up you know - that thing would spit the copies out. But it would take a whole day.

MW: Sure.

PP: We, we, the covers. And, and we, as we, it was kind of fun and we all learned how to do things as we went along. We learned how to spell (laughter). We learned how to hyphenate words you know at the end of the line. We ah, we learned just all little things that I, I find very satisfying each day. We always were, Stan was, was, was the person behind improving it. And he always was kind of ideas - and we'd all sit around and come up with ideas on how to make it better. And, and we had the, we, we ended up getting the cover printed at some cheap local printer. Because the mimeograph just couldn't do the cover too well. And ah, ah, so it was, it was, it turned into a, a - very labor intensive. And, and we pretty much printed everything ah, that would fit. You know, if we needed more room we'd just print another page.

MW: Right.
PP: And then, oh my god, now we've got a blank, a blank half a page, what are we going to put on that. We, and we, and we, we didn't respect copyrights at all. I remember one time as I was just starting earlier I, I had a subscription to *New Yorker* magazine and it, it arrived in my mailbox three days before newsstand. And I remember cutting out - just as it arrived I was looking for something to fit in the bottom of one of Mainely Gay's little, a little filler drawing - and they had a nice little drawing of something in Maine, a lobster pot or something. I cut it out, put it onto the electronic stencil and it was minutes later the pages finished, we're printing it. We actually stole something out of them and had it in the mail before the other, before their copies got on the stand (laughter) you know. And that always amazed me that no one ever said anything. As you go through the publication you can see, Madeleine, we have Doonesbury. We have *everybody*. And pa -- part of my thinking was you know, we could use a little publicity. If someone wants to sue us you know --

MW: ... to get anything (laughs).

PP: Right, you know, we're just a little queer publication -- you're trying to, you know, give us a hard time -- we, we, we would have loved it. But no one ever did, you know. And ah, ah, so anyway ah. So it's, it's, at some point it, it, it ceased being the official journal of the Maine Gay Task Force activist group and turned into a -- like an APEX -- type, sort of creative, you know, although we were still doing stuff on the side, but we were all getting older too (chuckles).

MW: Yeah. I'd like to hear some more about some of the stuff on the side that you were doing. Like different, I guess, actions.

PP: Oh okay ah -- can you turn it off just for a second. Oh, I'm sorry. Ah, Stan we're just going to, Madeleine asked us about some of the activist stuff we did, you know. And that's besides being, doing Mainely Gay and I'm reminded of just to, to revisit the
Roland’s Tavern thing -- it’s a real quick thing. So ah, we didn’t get very well received in Roland’s Tavern. And, and actually a lot of patrons were a little put out.

MW: Did that ever change?

PP: Yeah the, what happened was it changed in a really interesting way. Ah, we, and maybe you can tell this better than I can, Stan.

SF: Ah, we’ll go back to the point of where Peter left the bar, was asked to leave, was passing out copies of the first issue on the way out the door. We had a meeting -- at that time I may have been ah, staying at Tim Bouffard’s -- and ah, anyway as a result of this Peter related what had happened to him at one of our meetings. Not necessarily at a Maine Gay Task Force meeting but we had meetings in the south, Gay -- GRO would meet you know, people still with Lambda. Ah, and he related what had happened and Tim Bouffard decided to write an article ah, and he was doing this like one would do it as a reporter and going based on you know, what ah, Peter said. The, that particular article was entitled “Fear and Loathing at Roland’s Tavern or How to Beat Yourself and Join the System.”

MW: Oh wow (laughter).

SF: I don’t have, I don’t have that issue here but it was, I believe it’s either in the second or the third issue. Ah, front cover.

MW: Of the newsletter or Mainely Gay?

SF: Of, of, of the, of, of the, the newsletter, yes.

MW: The newsletter that’s what I thought.
SF: Yes, this is early on. Ah, people were questioning who these people were in
town. Yet we had not received a lot of press locally. Ah, you know you would send a
press release out if you were doing something and ah, you know it was up to them
whether they chose to, you know, print it in the paper, the Portland Press Herald or not.
So, the article somehow - Roland Labbe, the owner of Roland's Tavern, got ahold of the
issue and - I forget how they contacted us. I, it may have been that, I think what
happened was Peter and I were in Roland's. We had become also at the time ah,
addicted to pinball machines. And we, one of the doormen or somebody came up to us
while we were at Roland's on a particular night, I can't remember what night, and said
that Roland Labbe would like to meet with you two. He wants to talk to you. So we
were escorted upstairs. There was an apartment up over the bar and ah, Roland went,
he had a copy of the, of that issue --

PP: Fear and Loathing (laughs)

SF: -- of that issue with Tim's article "Fear and Loathing" (laughter) and was
absolutely outraged.

PP: Livid.

SF: He was yelling. He was yelling at the top of his lungs (laughter). Ah, he went
over it point by point by point at, at how upset he was about what was stated about the
bar being dark. You, you'd have to go into reading the article to know exactly - broken
pieces of mirror I mean, the whole thing was criticized for it. The décor, for the broken
toilet in the men's room I believe, you know, to the atmosphere, you know, of being dark
and dingy and the, the ah, whole thing of putting the lights on when you're dancing in
the bar when the police come in or, you know, just all of those things. Ah, well we --
Peter and I -- really listened to what he was saying and ah, and he made some, he was
trying to defend ah, himself. And through the course of this conversation with Roland,
we became aware of how difficult it had been for him to open ah, a gay bar at the time
that he did it which was in 1968. And he made us aware of the -- how the -- the
windows were broken out, the hostility that he had to endure, ah, the, the problem that they had with deliveries of alcohol there because it was when people realized that it was a gay bar. Ah, you know, threats on the phone. All sorts of things that we really had never thought about. That what a radical act. And if you really want to say about, talk about gay liberation or, it was an extremely radical act probably the, the first that I know of in the state of Maine, unless there were other gay bars that we did not know about -- ah, for him to open such a place. And then on a public street for people to actually go into the bar for themselves was a coming out process to even go or be, take the risk of being seen. So we, we listened to what he had to say and ah, we said that you know, that the, the article wasn't signed. He wanted to know. He was adamant about knowing who wrote the article (laughter). And, the article was never attributed. We just simply said -- and at that time there were people that would write articles but you know, other than if they had a column like Peter did or Susan Henderson, Peter had, was the State Street straw and Susan was the Cumberland County curmudgeon. You know that kind of thing ah, you know they weren't attributed particularly to people. And I'm telling you that it was Tim Bouffard who wrote that article and it was Steve Irving who wrote the one on Ogunquit. Ah, and he also owned a German shepherd you know, that was on the picket line. We did have a dog picketing with us also (laughter). So that was Steve Irving's dog.

MW:    Talk about diversity. (laughter)

SF:    So we -- out of this incredible thing, you know, we Peter and I, were able to --

PP:    Reach an agreement.

SF:    Reach an agreement.

PP:    -- with Roland Labbe, an understanding.
SF: Right and you know, there would be no retraction you know, of the article. Ah, but out of this came him buying 25 copies of the publication to be distributed freely to his patrons and for him to advertise in the publication.

MW: That’s great, wow.

SF: We were very up front with him and ah, we were very uptight about taking ads, especially from bars. Because we knew that other -- like Gay Community News in Boston you know, other publications around, were kind of beholden to the bars because they could hurt them if they pulled the advertising, if they didn’t like what they had to say about them. But here we had probably had one of the worst articles that you could imagine about a bar and as a result it was just the opposite. They bought advertising space and bought 25 copies each time. It was the, was the end result.

PP: At 50 cents a copy, they bought 25. Tim, I believe actually designed a very nice quarter page--

SF: Yes.

PP: --display ad for Roland’s.

SF: For Roland’s so.

PP: And, and the irony of it all was -- pardon me for interrupting you -- was it launched a very happy relationship. And, and virtually Roland’s Tavern, later the Phoenix which he owned, took out a full page cover ad, rear cover ad, that paid for the publication for years to come.

MW: Wow.
PP: And ah, their, their, their ad actually kept us in stencils, kept us in, in ink, postage, paper. And it was really very amazing so it, it all worked out for the best. And we had a nice relationship there you could always --

SF: Yes. And never once did they ever attempt to say, well we didn't like what you wrote or, you know, or threaten in any way to pull their advertising or, or do anything like that at all. And what's really interesting here, and this is some of the behind the scenes kind of, you know, I want Peter to, you know, get into it. I left after four years, I moved to Colorado. And I initially set up the advertising with, with Roland's Tavern and with the Phoenix and I later on designed some of their ads for them.

PP: A real good job.

SF: And pretty much had the publication solvent so that it could you know, continue to publish without have, a lot of you know, financial problems. In the time that I left, another guy became involved with the publication. Ah, what name was he using at that time.

PP: Ted.

SF: Yes, Ted.

PP: I think it's Ted Bone.

SF: But he was using a --

PP: Yeah, Ted and more ...

SF: Right, right, because it's in the letter that I, that I, he was using, his, Peter could tell you about him. But anyway, he offended Roland Labbe so much over something that they pulled their ads from the publication.
MW: Oh, no.

SF: So, and Peter can tell you about that because I wasn’t here for it. But I cam -- what, as a result though of whatever happened with Ted and Roland Labbe, I came back for a visit from Colorado and spoke with Roland Labbe and got their advertising back (laughter) to the publication.

PP: And we, we kind of reined Ted in a little bit too. He was pretty outrageous. He was angry, he was ang -- you know there was a lot of anger.

SF: And I don’t know what the issue, can you --

PP: I can’t remember.

SF: Can you remember what the issue was?

PP: I can’t. Who knows. Ah, Ted, Ted was very abrasive to just about any, any entity - put it that way. But, you know he was willing to help. He was very smart and, and wrote very well. And ah, he, he worked for the publication maybe a couple issues. But in those couple issues (laughs) we had, we, we, we, started hearing from people. You know he was, he was, I wouldn’t even say radical he was just ah, he had a hard time making his point without offending people. You know what I mean?

MW: Yes, yes.

PP: I, I’m sure you may have encountered articles, when you were doing APEX you think, oh my god. But you understand what he’s trying to say here but, he had to piss everybody off and you know, to say it. And some people just have to do that it’s part of their nature but ah. Something else that just, I know you asked what we did on the side you know, ah --
SF: We advertised you, know, Mainely Gay. Remember with the Portland Press Herald we had that, they refused to accept the advertising. We went with a display copy you know, to put in the Sunday paper --

PP: What year was that?

SF: -- for advertising for the publication.

PP: Seventy-seven or six?

SF: Yes, it had to have been before I left for Colorado.

PP: Seventy-six I think it was.

SF: Yeah.

PP: We wanted to put an ad in the paper.

SF: Right. It was, wasn't it, it was Maine Gay Task Force newsletter, though, it wasn't Mainely Gay.

PP: Right.

SF: So ah, they were still doing the activist stuff going on and. So we went in to ah, their advertising place on the first floor down in the Old Port. And ah, gave them the display copy, told them you know, we wanted it in the Sunday paper. I forget how much the charge was for it. We paid for it. And wrote a check from Maine Gay Task Force account for it. Just, just opening account at a bank in that name believe me was an activist kind of thing (laughter) to seriously. Steven Leo was the one that held it. But
anyway that's getting off the track here, but just little things like that were really you know --

PP: Being listed in the phone book.

SF: So we left, and not more than two hours later we got a call that ah, they couldn't, that they weren't to put the ad in, that we needed to go down to the Press Herald to see so and so. And ah, so Peter and I went down, discussed again whether we should change our clothes or dress differently. I had black military boots you know, combat boots on and, I always wore like black tee shirts with a military satchel. Of course my hair was to my shoulders at that time (laughter) and ah, you know Peter always had converse sneakers, filthy ones with ah, they were always white, terribly filthy with two different colored socks on -- checkered socks. And the question really was you know, we were always playing a balancing act between do we want to look who we think that they want us to look like in order to get what we want or do we want to really just be ourselves and say, screw you, you know, you're going to take us as we are kind of thing. You know it was, anyway so we went there as we were. We were escorted to the top of the building at the Press Herald. You could look out over the city, you know, there were, you could see there were big glass doors with balconies that you could see out of and we sat in these two chairs with three men in business suits (laughter) that were up there. And ah --

PP: One was the publisher.

SF: That's right. We, we had to bring three copies, three different copies of the publication with us. And, we had to give those to them so that they were able to look through them. Their question was whether it was pornographic.

MW: Right.
SF: And ah, we assured them that it wasn’t. And we sat and we talked about them
and they said ah, in the course of the conversation, we are probably not going to accept
your ad for publication because we do, we have no interest in setting a precedent. And
we, very quickly said, you excuse us but didn’t you accept a full page ad during the
University of Maine, the Wilde-Stein Club controversy going on? You accepted a full
page ad from Franklin.

PP: Reverend Buddy Herman Franklin.

SF: Right, about condemning homosexuality. Now you clearly you know, and that
was our point, accepted an ad that was an advertisement, you know, dealing with this
subject you know. And this is, you already set the precedent by accepting the ad. So
they hemmed and hawed about that. They said that they would make a decision. They
needed to look the publication over. They would get back to us. Well two weeks later
they called and they accepted the ad.


SF: That was, you know, just that in, in and of itself was really, you know it seemed
so small it took such a short amount of time to go there and talk to them ah, but yet it, it
really was. It was a, a very radical, you know, just trying to get advertising in a straight
publication. Ah, and then later we did protests that were coordinated across the United
States with Gay Media Action over a Marcus Welby episode. There was a Police
Woman episode about lesbians who were killing ah, killing ah, nursing home ah,
residents in order to get their money (laughter). Ah, and you know we got a hold -- what
was really incredible because we are everywhere -- we had a hold of, we got a hold of
the original scripts for these programs, unedited scripts that we were actually -- you
know, camera pans down to the steering wheel of the car (laughter) shows, shows ah,
ah, woman’s black leather glove ah, gripping the steering wheel while the conversation
goes on in the car about their disposing of the body of the woman they you, know, just
murdered you know the --
MW: That's incredible.

SF: And the Marcus Welby episode you know the opening shot was ah, this 14-year-old male student is waking up in his bed, you know, from this nightmare and looks down at the sheets and they're bloody sheets from being raped by his science teacher, high school science teacher. You know that kind of, that kind of stuff. So we actually ah, met -- ABC was ah, broadcasting the Police Woman episode I believe.

PP: Marcus Welby too.

SF: Did they both, was it both ABC, Marcus Welby and? I could swear one was the -- but anyway again if you get a hold of the publications and read through them they were reported on.

MW: Yeah, I thought Marcus that you got a disclaimer right?

PP: Disclaimer.

SF: Yes we did.

MW: Like the Police Woman one it was too late, because you found out about it too late.

PP: I think --

SF: Ah, no they just refused to budge. They refused to budge.

PP: That was NBC, yeah. And they refused to budge.
SF: Yeah, NBC wouldn't. ABC did. They, Steven Leo wrote the disclaimer. The following program is being protested by, you know --

PP: Maine Gay Task Force.

SF: Maine Gay Task Force because it enforces, reinforces stereotypical images of you know, gays, you know, dadatida. But again that's printed in the publication, what it had said I don't remember now.

PP: We were in Dunkin Donuts and he wrote it out on a, on a napkin (laughter)

SF: In Congress Square. Dunkin Donuts at Congress Square is where he wrote it. They, and they agreed that they would run it and as far as I know we were the only group that was successful in the United States at getting a disclaimer.

MW: Wow. That's incredible.

SF: We wanted them not to air it at all.

MW: Right.

SF: And their whole thing was, how can you, their point was well how can you tell us not to air that, that's censorship. Aren't you in agreement, you know, with, you know, and we said you know, there are times when the contents of something are so horrendous it isn't an issue of censorship you are in fact are contributing to, you know, violence that could possibly be done towards gays for reinforcing stereotypes you know, that is just unacceptable. That, so that was our argument. But they did run it. And actually I think one of, some other station in the United States used the same, used what we did.

PP: Yes they did that's right they used something --
SF: There may have been one other. I know that in New York City the station was threatened with bombing.

PP: A group in upstate New York ah, Madeleine, a group in upstate New York I believe called us up and said, this station in you know, Jamestown or something, said they'll run a disclaimer but they didn't know what to write.

SF: Yeah.

PP: So we read over the phone what we had, what Steven had come up with you know. So they used that. But Stan's right -- I mean it was, it was ah, they did, they didn't get one in Boston you know. It was, so we felt like that was a little, that was a real victory and they ran it I believe three times.

SF: Yes.

PP: They ran it at the beginning of the show.

SF: Right.

PP: At the middle, it was an hour show and at the end. Ah, and ah, ah, that was, that was, that was a great example of, of, of, a lot of, of what we did was reactionary and that. I mean we heard about something weird coming down and, and --

SF: Right.

PP: --organized against it.

SF: We would you know, we would make phone calls. I mean just even on our in -- on our own with someone you know. I remember the, what's the ah, the guy, there was
a, some guy that wrote a book ah, on business or something from Connecticut and it's very bizarre. Usually most authors you know if it says the town that they live in, if you call directory assistance you can’t get their phone number. We got this guy’s phone number. He, he ah, we were living in Gorham out here at the time. But he had written in this book -- and I cannot remember the name of it - that one should never go into business with a homosexual (laughter) knowingly because they would not only attempt to seduce you, but also rob you.

MW: I see...

SF: So (laughs) we, we called his - he lives like in Westport, Connecticut - called him up on the phone and said how dare you, you know, and ah, you know, write something like that. How do you feel that you can you know, what can you base that on? And he said well, he knew of somebody - but you’re saying that, you’re saying that all homosexuals would attempt to do this, don’t you understand you know, what you -- he was apologetic but said that he would re-read the section of it and then decide whether or not a disclaimer had to go onto the book that, you know, what one, you know, he never did though as it turned out. But those kinds of little, little things that we you know, we’d call people on.

PP: And that’s, as the years went on and, and I’m sure a lot of Sturgis’s material addressed this. We started getting more politically active. And --

MW: You mean like in electoral politics?

PP: Right, you know, and we got the first, the first ah, gay rights bill. And ah, at the time everybody was perfectly happy with the word “gay” you know. And ah, you know times change and, and now it’s, it’s more, it’s more descriptive more inclusive ah, but at the time you know the Maine Gay Task Force. Everybody was happy with the name. Everybody was happy with Mainely Gay you know, so I'll just throw that out. Ah, so as I say the first gay rights bill that’s what it was called. That will be 1419, I think that was
1976. Ah, that's a whole nother thing going on. Ah, but something, and, and this is all in the, in the regular press very well ah, written up. But one thing we did, early on which was a first in the country, was we got the Maine democratic party to, to pass an anti-discrimination plank at their convention. And that caused, not quite the stir as the Gay Symposium, but it was right up there.

SF: Yeah, they had these speakers on the floor that you know, ranting and raving about these perverts and --

PP: I, the, the, I have or somewhere in, in my trash bags I have the front page of the Maine Sunday Telegram because the convention ended the day before the Saturday evening when they passed the gay rights plank. And, and it said, it was, it had turned into such a big issue. The headline was really big and it merely said Convention ah, Okays Amnesty for Vietnam or Gay Rights something. And, and it was big and it was a real big deal and ah, ah, I mean a lot of the more conservative democrats couldn't run away from it fast enough. And ah, but it, so the point was as, as the movement matured other people came along who would pub -- with, with different skills and ah, we got in, we got into the political thing. Ah, ah, I guess by my, my, I started to, to, do less and less and just focus on Mainely Gay. Finally in, in winter '79, '80 I said, I just figured this is enough, I've had enough you know. And at that point, it was me and Susan doing it. But it was just basically I have to say it's basically me writing you know, doing all the editing and getting, you know, handling everything. Susan had a full time job at this point. She really didn't have the time. And when it came time to put the publication together physically she'll work as Stan mentioned. Then I'd try and round up maybe four or five - mostly women -- we'd come in and we'd all do it. And mail it and address it. It was all by hand (laughs) it was all very labor intensive. And that was it. And then we, we put the issue to bed and that was the end of that. But the interesting thing was at that point ah, the movement had matured enough on its own all around us and all across the country as well as across the state, this is my opinion. And people like Diane Elsey, you know ah, they had, they were right there, do you know what I mean. And so it was kind of interesting. It, it was very nice to be able to sit back.
MW: Pass the torch...

PP: Pass the torch, sit back. You know people with real energy now you know and ah, ah, very focused. We were, we prided ourselves ah, on, on ah, not being very structured. And, and we were very inclusive. This is both the publication and, and the, the movement. You know Stan mentioned, you know, the march against racism in Boston. We were allied with other groups. You know, prison reform ah.

SF: Um, we met with members of the bar here over ...

PP: They were actually, there's a group in Maine [unintelligible] we were (laughter) and one was called SCAR, I think it was the Statewide Coalition for something and, they were very radical. We were, we were very radical but ah, one of the anomalies of, of, of, of the movement in Maine in the early years was we were very radical compared to the rest of the movement. And we were all, always being, always catching flack from people in the cities who thought we were too radical. You know and we pure, we were puritan too we, we, we didn't place sex ads you know. Ah, we, a lot of that's because we, consider ourselves pro-feminist we thought that was --

SF: Right, there was even a question about printing ads for drag balls because they were offensive to women. We, there were a number of women that were involved that were offended by men dressing up as women. You know that oppressive clothing kind of issue you know, all of that, you know. One of the other things that I, before we close this down here is that ah, Maine had a number of firsts of stuff that had been, were going on here -- the disclaimer for the Marcus Welby episode -- but ah they, the one thing that Peter and I got involved with also and we headed up a fundraiser ah, ah, was for the Carol Whitehead ah, defense fund because she was out as a lesbian and was, her husband was trying to get her children from her because she was a lesbian. And very radical at the time but she got, retained custody of her children as a lesbian with and the kicker here was that most cases before that was that the lesbian lover was not
allowed in the household or to be anywhere near the children. And this was one of the first in the country where there was no stipulation like that whatsoever. You know which was really.

PP: Yeah that, that case created a little bit of stir in, in the Portland area. Ah, there was even an editorial in the Press Herald ah, cautioning the Maine Gay Task Force, which was at that point me and Stan, you know, against pushing this too hard or some other shit you know.

SF: Because we went to the trial you know. We would go to the court rooms, you know. And we went for other things to show support to the, to the SCAR, you know the prison rights reform group that was here ah, over someone that was, you know. I can’t remember who exactly it was but there was somebody that was, had bombed planes or something done something in Boston or, or something that was being tried here or something for, but anyway we went to various things like this just to --

PP: We had a really big picture --

SF: --get behind.

PP: --I mean just, we were not you know, gay rights. I mean that was our, definitely our, our bread and butter. But we also understood there were economic, there was economic depression going on. There was a, you know, poor people were being screwed, people of color blah, blah blah. You know and so, we, and of course that diluted the message probably. But that was, we were willing, you know, we were willing to do that.

SF: We, there were also like some of the behind the things. Like we would go to meetings you know like for Maine Gay Task Force when all of the groups early on were participating. And ah, you know, it depends on who wants to go. And read this stuff once it’s in the archives but. It was difficult as a male to call other men under sexism
ah, with calling, men calling each other “she” and “girl” and all of that stuff, very low consciousness you know ah, at that time. And Peter and I and like Steven Leo and others sort of became outcasts within the group of gay men because of not being able to relate on the same level with that kind of stuff when it would go on. Ah, and even in the bars, when we would go to Roland’s and once they knew that we were both gay activists he was somewhat shunned because at that time people believed you know, that it was like airing your dirty laundry in public. You know you just didn’t do it. You just, just toe the line and keep quiet about it and --

PP: Don’t rock the boat.

SF: --people will accept you. Don’t rock the boat kind of thing you know.

MW: Yeah I think there’s still kind of that dichotomy between activism which is normal too, kind of attitude.

PP: Yeah that will probably never change. There will always be people, but another thing too the, we, we, had, we did have a point of view. As I was saying we tangled with a lot of, of out of state ah, entities. We had a running feud with the editor of the Advocate. What was that about real quickly?

MW: I read in Susan’s --

PP: Yeah it’s in this --

MW: --article about that the other day.

SF: They were having a conference. They were holding a conference. And they were inviting various gay activist groups, their presidents or members to this. But they didn’t invite any of the grass roots people. So we spoke to David Goodstein on the phone --
PP: Stan called him up and (laughter)

MW: I love it.

PP: We had a huge phone bill

MW: I'll bet.

SF: And we called him and asked him you know, what this was and how dare they. Well they said you know, his whole thing was they were looking for, you know, like National Gay Task Force, you know larger groups with more money that could afford, you know, to go there and make donations and da ta da. And ah, you know again we ca -- we were, you know in, involved with the rights of poor people. Do you know what I mean? It was like you know, how can you do this you know. This is, this is about, you know, brainstorming you know, various ways with ah, dealing with liberation and stuff and you're talking about, you know, people who live in big cities, you know. And groups that have tremendous funding or something and, you know, that...

MW: Now is that the same Advocate that is the magazine today?

SF/PP: Yeah.

SF: Yeah, it is.

PP: We actually have a letter or two from him that was written for the newsletter ah,

SF: Explaining yeah.

PP: Explaining and --
SF: Defending his position.

PP: But we, we also got a lot of letters for our work because we had a, as Stan mentioned earlier, we had a lot of exchanges. I was frankly personally interested well, I wanted to see what they were doing. So if they were willing to send us one I was willing to send them one, you know. And ah, it almost got out of hand but it was, it was an interesting thing. Ah, this was back in the mid seventies. For instance, you know, the news would get, it would take about six months but a newsletter could actually be recycled around the country and be reprinted, we’d reprint it from GCN, Gay Community News. Somebody getting our publication, then would credit us. Because we, we’d say Gay Community News, but they would leave that off and say it came from Mainely Gay. And it, and so, you know, eight months later we’d be reading some publication out of Oklahoma, the Yellow Brick Road, out of Kansas, the Yellow Brick Road was the publication in Kansas. Very cute, very little though. Something that happened a year ago and it would say Mainely Gay is the news service.

SF: We were upset with The Advocate. Ah, because they, they sort of had national news coverage. And all of these things would be going on in Maine and you’d pick up a copy of the publication and ah, there would be nothing about what was going on in Maine and we, we didn’t, we didn’t understand, you know, how, because they had like an east coast reporter you know ah, of these various things going on. And their whole thing was, well you should send a press release or whatever. We sent them the publication, it was no different then them being able to read you know, what was going on. And then they stopped, well no they did for a number of years they sent it. But they had like the sex ads were huge, the advertising. The pink pages they called it. The pink pages they called it. The separated it, made it in two sections so that you could buy it without the pink pages and then they, of course, came out with a separate publication called Advocate Men which was, you know, similar to this but only ah, it had all of the ads and then it became ah, just regular news publication after ...
MW: Is he still involved with this?

SF: No he, he died ah, a number of years ago. And ah, now I must say I think it's probably one of the best publications on the market.

MW: It's funny like because I just subscribed to an offer. And then I start reading all this stuff, oh what have I subscribed to (laughs).

PP: Oh they've come a long way.

SF: No, they really have (laughter). They have really come a long way.

PP: ... what I'm urging ...

SF: Yeah who knows, yeah.

MW: Well that had something to do with it.

PP: I mean they, they, they started out, I believe the Advocate started out in LA as something like this. Four sheets stapled together, put out by the local group.

SF: That would be a collector's item.

MW: I've got like the newsprint ones.

PP: Oh really?

MW: Yeah there's like four or five of it.

PP: Wow.
MW: From Sturgis. He is an amazing archivist himself, so.

PP: Yeah it's ah, we were always getting, the mailbox was always jammed with stuff you can imagine. And ah, ah --

SF: Now let's --

PP: Press releases...

SF: Let's mention some of the bizarre things also.

MW: Oh good (laughs).

SF: We had our post office box ah, at the Downtown Station. And ah, in Portland. And, we went there to pick up the mail. Either Peter would pick up the mail or I would, you know we both had keys to the mailbox. And ah, there was a card in the box that said that there was a package, of course, that they couldn't fit in. And so anyway, they hand me this box. And I get it back to the Task Force, we were on Middle Street still the office was still open at that time. And we put the box down and all of a sudden you could hear a ticking.

MW: Oh my god. (laughter)

SF: I'm serious, ticking. And it was so bizarre because we di --

(END OF SIDE B, TAPE 1)

SF: So anyway we, we hear this ticking. And the decision is whether to open it up you know, call the police or, you know. I don't know why, but we decided that we would open it up so --
PP: We were curious.

SF: --we, we cut it open and thought, you know, who could send something with ticking like that, you know, through. So (chuckles) inside this box - it's totally bizarre -- is an alarm clock and a vibrator (laughter)

PP: A pink vibrator.

SF: A pink vibrator and a shirt in a plastic bag.

PP: A men's dress shirt.

SF: A man, a men’s dress shirt still in its plastic wrapper, brand new. No return address, absolutely nothing. And we still to this day have no idea who mailed it. I still have the shirt (laughter). We can donate the shirt.

MW: Oh that’s funny -- oh, that’s so weird...

SF: I don’t know what happened to the vibrator (laughter) or the alarm clock.

PP: Right, I mean who knows. One of the, one of you know, and I'm sure one of the early, early, early meetings of the Task Force, it was probably discussed at great length, whether or not, because people could not always afford $3.00 a year for the subscription--

SF: Right.

PP: --that we accept barter. I think we did.

SF: And we did. We did barter for ads also.
PP: Yeah ah, if you wanted to send us you know, a dildo and a shirt and clock we probably put you on the subscription list, but we needed an address you know.

MW: (laughs) that would help. Do you think it might, somebody trying to be --

SF: We have no idea whether it was an act of hostility towards us or-

MW: Yeah, that's so weird.

SF: You know or, or what. But it was, it was bizarre. And so, and just little things that pop up here that we had a man come into the office, Peter and I. By the way we, it was one large room, right? We had a small room but we originally had to get rid of it because they rented it. You know we could, couldn't afford the other little office that we were connected to so, they closed, locked the doors. We were in one large room. Our desks, which came from ah --

PP: I donated them.

SF: You know, Peter donated the desks. They came from Chimney Point, I guess from, you know.

PP: Family summer place.

SF: Right. We painted everything lavender (laughter) in the office. The desks were lavender, the chairs were lavender, you know. But anyway, we're sitting there at our lavender desks one day and in walks this, this man, this white haired, elderly man. He must have been probably in his mid seventies and he came in and said, you know "was this Maine Gay Task Force." And we said that it was and we got up and shook hands, introduced ourselves and he sat down. Peter's at one desk, I'm at the other and this guy's sitting in between the two. And ah, Peter said I think like, you know what can we do, you know, for you. And he goes well, he goes, "I just wanted to say" he said, ah,
“come in and meet you people. I think you’re doing wonderful things”, something to that affect. I can’t remember exactly but, he said that he, his wife had died --

PP: Just died.

SF: --a year before and he had gone through the appropriate year of mourning and now -- his children were all grown and moved away -- and he was now going to be homosexual (laughter). His true self that he had kept hidden away all of these years --

PP: That’s something.

SF: --and he said, he said “my children are now”, you know “they have their own children. I don’t owe them anything and my wife”, you know, “is departed and”, you know, “and I’ve grieved for over a year and now I’m going to be myself.”

MW: Oh my god, isn’t that wonderful.

SF: (laughter) It was some -- and at that point he --

MW: Put an ad in and make a public statement.

SF: --he proceeded and he wanted to know if he could give us a kiss.

PP: You left the office under some pretence. That’s -- leaving me alone. So this guy, I’ve got to tell you, I mean, bless his heart. You know, if Hollywood wanted to, to show you a 78 year old ah, farmer just getting off a John Deere, this was it. I mean he had on the you know --

SF: I think he did have coveralls.
PP: Coveralls, I mean it was very, it was really, I have yet no -- we thought he was in the wrong office when he first walked in we thought, there's nobody on this floor, honey, that you want to see (laughter) you know. MCLU -- you probably don't want to see, do you know what I mean? And then when Stan stepped out of the office he came up to me and give me the biggest, biggest kiss right on my lips. I was shocked. (laughter) Tall, he was about six foot three and he just hugged me. It was very sweet, you know, I mean, I mean you know.

SF: Yeah that was nice and you know I mean he wasn't pushed away, rejected or anything.

PP: Oh no.

SF: I mean it was just you know, and we told him that the office was there you know. And ah, you know.

PP: I think he actually took out a subscription to the publication.

SF: Yes.

PP: And he lived in Saco or somewhere ah. So we always had people coming in. I had several good friends who to this day, who walked in off the street -- they saw you know, they saw the name on the door and they found their way up the stairs and.

SF: Yeah we even got involved somewhat with the, you know, the minister of I think the Deering Congrega-- (laughs) Congregational Church and turned out that they were both bisexual, he and his wife, and sort of were, met some other people that were involved with the Task Force and I think the church ended up kicking them out (laughter) when this all came out. But it's interesting the impact that we had because this was so revolutionary, it was so different, you know, for people to actually, you know, be able to see other people. For the most part, just claiming that you were lesbian or
homosexual and being out publicly, a lot of people would just come to see what you looked like.

MW: Yeah, yeah.

SF: They, they, you know, they didn’t really, they just thought, you know, and we, we would go to places and we would plan in advance who, I was usually the hostile one.

PP: The bad cop.

SF: Right, the bad cop, good cop. Steven Leo was the sweet intellectual.

PP: Yeah.

SF: Peter would be the political you know, leftist (laughter), and, you know, Wendy Ashley, you know, would be you know, the astrologer I mean it -- Susan Breeding you know, this -- Susan was a big woman. I mean she was tall, I mean she was someone to be reckoned with.

PP: She was physically impressive.

SF: Yes, she really was physically impressive. So they were able to see all of these different types ah, people.

MW: And none of you had three heads.

SF: Right.

PP: None had three heads. We were, well we didn’t get into and so on in the publication, we all, we did tel-- television stuff you know.
SF: Right.

PP: Public interest shows, radio.

SF: Yeah.

PP: Susan Breeding went to Channel 6 with a tee shirt that said "Killer Dyke" on the front.

SF: Yes, yes and they would not film her below the head. (laughter)

PP: She was the only one that, all you see ______

SF: That was Steven Bull, Wendy Ashley, Susan Breeding, I think Deborah Johnson was there and myself. We only had two men really at that time that were willing to come out on television. Ah, and ah, it really, it was amazing that she wore that shirt that said "Killer Dyke" on it.

MW: That was the seventies.

PP: That was the seventies. Then there was an Easter radio program, I wasn’t on that, but was listening to it, had somebody from the group ah, said something really very funny, had to do with Christ and Easter (laughter). I forgot what it was. Then I knew we were making progress you know.

SF: We did radio. We were on BLM. Ah, we were --

MW: Oh I read about that, yeah.
SF: We also, we did the, the dances ah, in, at -- Lambda did the dances in Brunswick at the Unitarian Universalist Church. We put those on the, advertised those on the ah, hot ah, you know Top 40 radio station which --

MW: Really?

PP: We actually got a lot of stations to air...

SF: We were kind of uptight about, you know, that. And one night -- and I've got to tell you this was really really impressive -- right after that ad went on that station, I think it was a station in Bath or something. Ah, it was a Friday night, the dance was going on and a gathering, a crowd of young like toughs, teenagers were gathering across the street you know in Brunswick from the church. And Peter Prizer and Karen Frank both -- somebody had thrown something at the steps of the church, a tire or something -- (laughter) a tire, whatever was handy out of their car, you know. There was this tire thrown, you know, at the steps of the church. So Karen Frank and Peter went over to talk to them. I mean I remember my heart was in my throat. I mean I was so, I didn't know if they were going to be totally just beaten up right then. And one didn't always want to call the police immediately you know. Ah, and they went over there. And they must have talked to them maybe like fifteen or twenty minutes or something like that. And the next thing you know they all peacefully got in their cars and they drove away. They left.

MW: What is the magic words you used (laughs)?

PP: Karen was very good.

SF: Yeah I, I don't know what was said. I would love to if you could ever you know - but they just got in their cars and drove away and they never came back. Ah, and that, that was really, you know, those are, that's another thing, you know, then you know, there were some controversial things that never made it into the publication either that
went on within the group. And that, we had, we had to be so politically correct. And you know be, you know ah, aware of women’s issues, you know, for the most part the men that were involved, you know, we would hear this all the time and ah, and most of us started out with lesbian feminists as our friends ah, anyway. But the dances ended and Lambda kind of ended because of an incident that took place ah, at one dance. I wasn’t there at that dance and ah, people would probably tell you I’m sure at the time, I was somewhat of a control freak,

PP: Somewhat?

SF: you know. It was like ah, you know the music that was being played, and I don’t know if we want to mention names here or--

PP: Probably best you don’t -- it doesn’t matter.

SF: Well anyway, there was a one of the, one of the guys ah, that brought the music and had the sound system at the church with the speakers out in a big room playing the music, ah, played Under My Thumb. And another one that would then really that we had a hot issue over was Brown Sugar, another one, song. And those just like really weren’t politically correct to be playing to a, a group (laughter) half of the people in there as being lesbian feminists - Under My Thumb. (laughter) So I only heard this second hand but apparently what happened, one of the lesbians - and it may have been a black lesbian - went into the kitchen and demanded that they stop playing that particular song. And the person that had, was playing the records said, made some comment about ah, that they were going to play it and they, you know, you, you couldn’t tell them that they couldn’t and she said oh yes I can. There was another lesbian feminist there who then showed up and then you know, what is this shit playing here. And they grabbed the record. So as you can imagine the scratch (laughter) onto the dance. And ah, the, got, the escalated the yelling, escalated this un-- this person that was playing the records did not, was very young and didn’t have the same sort of consciousness as an older
brother. And made what would have maybe been considered some sort of a racist comment.

MW: Oh god.

SF: The next thing you know, he’s marching out of there with his sound system (laughter) there is no sound system. And there, the, one of the men in protest of all of this going on took all of his clothes off so he’s all (laughter) totally, totally nude.

PP: I forgot about that.

SF: Yes, and ah, and that ended the dances.

MW: I imagine.

PP: Right.

SF: There weren’t anymore after that. And Lambda, I don’t think, ever met again as a group (laughter). But it was due to stop anyway because we’d been, we at that point wasn’t really political anymore it was basically a social, just did social ah, gatherings and stuff. Maine Gay Task Force did fundraising events like we would rent the place that used to be Horsefeathers in Portland on the first floor. What was the it, the Oasis?

PP: The Oasis. It was called.

SF: We would rent it like on a Sunday night you know and hold fundraisers, the publication would, or for a defense fund or different things that were going on …

PP: We came on pretty strong I mean we, I mean, one year there’s nothing, seventy-two or three. Suddenly, you know, we’re all doing all this shit you know what I mean.
SF: Yeah.

PP: And ah.

SF: And sometimes we created the news just to have something (laughter) to, do you know what I mean? To write about. You know 'cause it was, you know it was that balancing act between being activists. And we sent out a postcard survey asking about ah, whether employers discriminated against ah, gay employ-- as if they're going to say yes. We did get some responses.

PP: Oh yes, ah, they did--

SF: We sent to like a hundred businesses in Maine, the postcard survey, that kind of thing. Which was unheard of, imagine you know, getting a, you know a letter. But the advertising and you know, fundraising that we did allowed us to buy the post cards with the postage, that kind of thing, and we'd would just come up these you know, these ideas. We tried, we tried to, you know, we a resource ah, center for like if you were gay and you wanted to go to a doctor and come out to your doctor or go to a lawyer you know, somebody. We had like seven lawyers ah, in the Portland area that were willing to represent us.

MW: That's great.

SF: Ah, just what else, you know.

MW: Ah just, I remember reading the Tom Maxwell thing.

SF: Yes, yes.

MW: Whatever happened to that?
SF: Tom, Tom was then, Peter and I initially basically got (laughter) involved in the Tom Maxwell case

PP: You’re the one that made the case.

SF: Well, it came to our attention. Tom was somebody who ah, got involved with GRO - originally contacted the Gay Rights Organization of Portland -- and became involved with Maine Gay Task Force. And ah, Tom initially kept at us to meet with the Portland Police Department because of harassment of gays at Deering Oaks. And ah, his, I mean for years Deering Oaks was a cruising spot, during the day, at night, whenever. And previously to Deering Oaks ah, the cruising spot had been --

PP: Pleasant Street.

SF: Pleasant Street ah, and at one time, where Katahdin Restaurant is now, that parking lot across the street from them was the Greyhound Bus Station. So that whole block from Spring and Pleasant around the Greek Church there was the cruising zone. The cars would circle there all night long, picking up hustlers, prostitutes, you know, and up one block, of course, was the, the ah, Dunkin Donuts where the prostitutes hung out on Deering Street. So that was a really like seedy section of town. So they cleaned that area up and everyone went to Deering Oaks. And

PP: --right.

SF: So Tom had been harassed at Deering Oaks by the police and Tom also had a criminal record in that he had been accused ah, of having sex with a minor. He was like I think sixteen and the minor was fourteen or fifteen at the time. Ah, later, much later the criminal code was passed that the age changed for that. But ah, so he had been in jail at one point and then you know, was on probation with, was on probation but out. And the police in Portland knew him well because of his history. Ah, and he, he grew up in the Grant Street, I believe, section of town and his family still lives there. But
anyway, Tom, because of his involvement with the Gay Liberation Movement he wrote a letter to Governor--

PP: Curtis.

SF: Curtis, asking for a pardon. Explaining in detail that the age difference between him and this consenting, consenting kid that he had had sex with should not be held against him dada ti da. And simply was asking for a pardon. He didn't get the pardon. Okay, he then in turn wrote a letter, another letter to Governor Curtis telling him to the effect that if he ever saw him on the street in Portland he'd kill him (laughter). Now a secret indictment was handed down. The grand jury handed down an indictment and Tom was arrested for threatening the life of the governor (laughter) okay. He's this little red headed guy you know, and ah, I don't know if he graduated from high school or not but--

PP: Triple Scorpio.

SF: Right and ah, so anyway the next thing you know we get a call that Tom is in jail in Thomaston. And not only is he in jail, but he's in solitary confinement. (laughter) Now, you know, we, we knew Tom from his coming to the meetings and we really thought that the guy is harmless, you know he was angry, he was upset dada dadi da. And anybody in their right mind, it's so foolish we thought you know to send the letter. You know it's just you know, a threat but they could have had the police take him aside and say, hey we're aware of your threat you know dadadada. But arresting him and all of this, we thought they had gone too far. We were concerned about his ah, legal representation. So we, he had a court appointed attorney and we found out who that was. And somewhere in the, in the newsletter ah, the, the attorney's name is probably mentioned there and the events that went on. Ah, we started collecting money for his defense. Ah, and so we got the attorney on the phone. He was at a party (laughter). No, he was going to a party. He couldn't deal with this, he said I have a party, I'm, an engagement that I'm going to (laughter). And I said, we realize that you're court
appointed (I called him). And ah, but that you realize that you have ah, this kid who is in solitary confinement. We want to know why he’s in solitary confinement. We want to know if he’s being discriminated against because he’s openly gay, you know. And ah, he tried to tell us it was for his own protection, you know, and we said you know, that’s bull shit. You can give him a cell without another inmate in the cell with him you know, that’s - put him, put him in solitary confinement, that’s crap. We really, let me tell you, it was really hostile on the phone with this guy. We realize that you’re getting paid by -- you know, as soon as we can you’re going to be replaced, you know. Your name will be put in the publication as far as representing him, you know. We want him out of solitary confinement and you need to get him out of there. You know, I said you need to realize that, you know, the Maine, who the Maine Gay Task Force is and we are behind him and we are going to be, you know, looking at everything you do or do not do in his defense here. So the, he got it. He, whatever he did he made some phone calls and got Tom out of solitary confinement. So we went to Thomaston. We went and visited ah, Tom. And we wrote letters to the Governor Curtis you know, to who, whoever you know, was involved with it. And Tom finally got out of jail. And you know, they realized you know, that they didn’t take it as seriously or whatever but that’s what happened to Tom.

MW: So it was dropped basically?

SF: Yes, yeah. But it was really a, you know, it was, it was the subject of the Maine Gay Task Force meetings. You know the minutes of the meetings contained you know, money that had been raised. You know, phone calls that had been made, letters that had been written. Ah, you know it was our, you know we didn’t, it’s not like having you know, being able to get on-line and spread the word very quickly you know. So we, a lot of phone calls, a lot of bills with phones you know.

PP: And it’s not cheap either. I mean back then you know, you paid dearly for, yeah Ma Bell that was it.
SF: So we did get ah, him some legal representation other than that guy, I forgot who it, it may have been Ron Cole I'm not sure.

MW: I read it. I don't remember the name but I know it started with an S.

SF: Okay, I can't remember.

PP: But, but, yeah. That was, that was, a sort of a typical side excursion that we would be involved in and--

SF: And then we had more controversy with, with Tom and we, we'll finish this up in regard to him. Ah, we, Tom, as a member of Maine Gay Task Force, met with Channel 13, got a reporter, got a reporter to go with him to Deering Oaks.

MW: Oh my god.

SF: And they filmed him at Deering Oaks while they interviewed him about harassment of gays at Deering Oaks. And he was use-- he used Maine Gay Task Force you know, as representing Maine Gay Task Force, which was not okay with us. We got a phone call because we knew Dave Silverbrand at Channel 13, who happened to be the ex-husband of Lois Reckitt.

MW: Oh really.

PP: Small world.

SF: So, Lois and Dave had been to our place on State Street for dinner and she was in the closet back then, all she did was sit in a meeting and crochet or knit or whatever it was at the time and said very, very little. How did we know that she was this, you know closeted lesbian at the time. She was married to Dave Silverbrand. So, but anyway, I thought -- isn't that funny, I thought that Dave was probably the gay one if anybody was
(laughter). And it turned out he was a conservative republican. (laughter) But anyway ah, so Dave called us and said that they had this footage and we went down, Peter and I went down to Channel 13. And they showed us, they were good enough to show us the footage. And we said we will not, he can't do this, he can't go there stating that he's representing the Maine Gay Task Force and doing this. This is not how we operate. This would have come up in a meeting, we would have voted on this you know, all of this stuff. And so ah, he, they didn't air it.

PP:  And Tom was really pissed.

SF:  And Tom was outraged, really really upset. He called us a bunch of names, you have no real interest in liberation. But what I will say to give Tom credit. He did spur us to meet with the Portland Police Department and we did meet with them and we brought up the issue. They had their, their police psychologist was there, the chief of police was there, two or three other officers. They had no liaison to the gay community at that point, they had nothing like that. And I can't remember in, somewhere in the publication it says who the chief of police was at the time.

PP:  McLaren.

SF:  Was it? It was McLaren.

PP:  McLaren was his name. He was a good guy. He was, he was the first of the modern you know, had gone to college type you know, politician police chief of Portland.

SF:  So, you know, and we - there were lesbians there Susan Breeding was there, Wendy Ashley was there. I think Deborah Johnson was there. You were there, I was there. Steven Leo may have been there.

PP:  And Tom.
SF: Tom Maxwell I believe was there with us. And we went over the history of the cruising areas of Portland, and how they needed to understand that in a society that was so oppressive that people had to get married, felt that they had to get married to hide their sexuality -- to play that game and have it manifest itself in other areas like in cruising for quick sex, that kind of thing. Because the majority and the statistics are still the same that the majority of men that are out there cruising are married, passing as heterosexual men. And ah, that they needed to understand that regardless of where they closed it down in one area, it was going to spring up in another area. And that in, in essence was what had happened. Now you can be you know, intelligent about it and treat it maturely, you know, without ah, you know, being abusive to people and try to understand what's going on, the psychology of it. And they were being asked to, to look at it from that perspective that that's what we were doing there. We kind of made arrangements to meet with them again and it fell apart. We just, we never did. There were people that were opposed to meeting with the police department at all. They didn't, they did not want anything to do with the police department in a sense that we don't want you knowing who we are, what we look like or anything. You know, we were very paranoid about our subscription list. It never stayed in the office. It always left -- when we left the subscription list would leave with us. It was always kept at somebody's home because we were afraid of the office being broken into and it being either stolen or you know, just getting information on people. That kind of thing.

PP: And we kept _____, but we never knowingly experienced any stuff like that, you know, any.

SF: The phone line being tapped or anything and we were concerned as to whether that might, you know.

PP: We were, I mean well we weren't like, and we weren't blowing up airplanes and shit like that. We were, we were a thorn in the sides of a lot of, of, of ah, institutions but ah you know. Yeah it, it's, I don't know. It was, do you have other questions?
MW: Well how, okay, how long did the Mainely Gay newspaper run and when did it actually end?

SF: Seven years about, wasn't it?

PP: Well was--

SF: It started.

PP: --fall of seventy-four.

SF: Right.

PP: And I think the last issue is dated January/February or February/March or something 1980. And ah, ah, I think I -- at that point it was just, it was just me doing it pretty much. Ah, ah, and I had just run out of steam. So that was the end of that. We, we, we, I don't know, I can't remember if it says, if it says in the last issue that is was the last issue -- it may not. I would have thought I might have sent out a mimeographed letter saying "so long folks". I, I don't know ah, but we had money. I mean the, the ads -- Stan set up a very nice ad system. I mean so we, we were fortunate in that we were, usually ah, always able to cover our expenses. We, we, we didn't never, we never were grandiose you know. Ah, and we kept it as, as cheaply run as possible. And we had a little pledge system. Ah, Steven Bull's parents I think pledged $50 or whatever which was a lot, then a lot of money. You know, it was six cents to mail a letter back then. Ah, but you know like I mentioned earlier, you know ah. I didn't know who was going to replace us but I knew they were out there, you know. And ah, ah, I think the, at the, when Mainely Gay folded ah, shut down in early eighty there was no other publication in Maine. I think, no this is something, for someone else to look into but, the next one that comes long do you --

MW: I think it was Our Paper in eighty-three.
PP:  *Our Paper* in eighty-three, that's right.

MW:  __________. The next configuration.

PP:  Yeah, oh my god yes, Jesus that's right.

MW:  The next configuration.

PP:  Yeah.

SF:  We should, we should backtrack a little bit. I just thought of something else that we did that was very, very radical at the time and paid the price you know, for it. Ah, the, and that was, we, in 1976 ah, the freedom train was--

PP:  Oh that's right!

SF:  --touring the United States and it was coming to Portland. So Dale Talbot, Susan Breeding and myself went to see it in New Hampshire like two days before.

PP:  That was it's first stop, Manchester.

SF:  We drove to Manchester and, to go on it. To actually go on it and then come back and give a report to the group on what it was about. And ah, we waited in line in Manchester, finally got on it. There were conveyor belts that moved you through the cars of the train. And, there was literally nothing on the black movement on, in, in the country, slavery. There was nothing on women's, really the women's movement of anything, certainly not on the gay movement. You know, we didn't; expect that. But it was just like, you know it was sponsored by Pepsi Cola you know, the big company names. It was big business.
PP: It was a real train.

MW: Well who was on it?

PP: Yeah.

SF: It was movie memorabilia. We had you know the red shoes from you know, ah, you know the Wizard of Oz (laughter). You know it was, you know, it was just a bunch of historically, you know. But I mean it didn’t really, it didn’t really show the oppression that the Native Americans had endured. And those are the kind of things that we were looking at. Freedom, like it was like -- and the flyer there may -- if we can find the original flyer, we picketed it when it arrived in Portland. We decided that we would picket it. And Miriam Dyak wrote, wrote a scathing thing you know, who’s freedom is it anyway or something.

PP: Where are American Indians on this train, where are, you know...

SF: Where are all of these groups, you know. Where are they represented? What are we talking about freedom here? So we went. We had our own train. We actually (laughter) we got our own train as a matter of fact (laughter) people from SCAR got involved, poor people ah—there was a ...

PP: Cardboard boxes.

SF: ______ group that were painted.

PP: They got on the train it was so funny. (laughter)

SF: Yeah and ah, we went and we had our train going down, not you know, and we handed out these flyers. Susan Breeding, remember, attempted to give this woman a flyer and she tried to put her cigarette out on Susan’s hand.
MW: Oh my god.

SF: We were called communists. We were, you know, like they had no i-- I, I couldn't understand it, you know, if they had read the flyer. And they thought that we were being unpatriotic is where they were coming from. And these are, we're talking a line that stretched down on--

PP: Commercial Street.

SF: --Commercial Street to get on this. I mean there was like a two or three hour wait for all these people in line. And that was really a radical act to go there and protest something like the freedom train in seventy-six.

PP: We ah, and, and typical to the, to the Maine movement, we involved other groups. You know, we had like - and that was good because they, they brought energy you know and, I think a prisoner reform group followed the train. You know but people had placards you know, saying "where are gay people on this train?" It was parked right on Commercial Street where the new bridge is.

[LOOKING AT PHOTO ALBUM]

SF: That's the kind of thing that, as far as that was our train.

MW: Oh that's great.

SF: Yeah in seventy-six. And this was ah, in Boston. We always took our banners and went to the marches in Boston or New York, you know those kinds of things.
PP: And ah, the funny part was ah, the picketing of the freedom train got picked up by the New York Times and printed as a news article. You know, in Portland, Maine and the train got picketed everywhere else. (laughter)

MW: You guys are just terrible. “Maine Gay Task Force, as Maine goes.”

SF: Peter carried a sign “up against the lavender wall macho heterosexist pigs” (laughter). This is Susan Henderson, that’s me.

MW: That’s you?

PP: This is me, here, yes.

SF: And that’s me in that picture.

MW: That’s you? Oh my god.

PP: We were, we were in our early twenties, you know. We had energy.


MW: That’s Tim?

SF: Yup. He practiced with the printer blowing his picture up with his viewer and making it, enlarging it. But that is the banner also and that banner’s on -- Susan has them and is supposed to be bringing to put with the other stuff. Those were the kinds of things that you know. Let me see if there’s another one. Oh, let’s explain one more controversy also that didn’t make it in the publication either.
MW: Okay, so close this for a minute?

SF: Yeah sure.

MW: All right.

SF: Ah, maybe some of the Symposium people this would be funny for them. The third Symposium ah, was held at Payson Smith Hall at UMPG. Steven Leo and myself, when we were going to USM, formed Gay Peoples Alliance. Part of the reason, motivation for even going there was in order to form a group (laughter). The Symposiums had been held in the northern part of the state and we knew that if we formed a group there that we could actually sponsor it down here. So we did that. Now, we met at the offices ah, on Bedford Street, Gay Peoples Alliance. And ah, various, you know, people that were involved with the Maine Gay Task Force at the time met there. But it was a Gay Peoples Alliance meeting. And it, we wanted to do a poster for the Symposium. And we, this artist, a local artist named Frank Vance ah, came to the meeting and, he's a photographer also, and he was going to take a picture of us, so we called the meeting for a location in Portland and he was going to do like a black and white poster with advertising the Symposium. And so we met that morning and there were 24 of us. Some of us were involved as activists and some of the people in the photograph were not, that appeared there. It was basically, we just wanted a, a bunch of people you know to advertise that were willing to have their picture taken and then posted up all over the state. So, the pictures were taken. A number of them were taken, it's important that -- one of the pictures, he didn't want any of us to smile in the picture. He wanted no smiles whatsoever and I remember people standing, you know there that morning we were saying gee you know, that, why are we not smiling here. This is supposed to be a celebration event you know. And --

PP: He asked people.
SF: --so anyway we did what he asked. We did what he asked and nobody smiled. And, so he took the picture. He met with us like maybe a week later after he had developed the photos and he met ah, with a bunch of us at Gay Peoples Alliance and we all looked at the photos. And by vote, we agreed on which photo was going to used in the poster. He tried to make a case for the one with no smiles in it because artistically it worked out the best for the poster. We very adamantly were opposed to the one with no smiles because we said that, you know, we wanted this, people to think that they were coming to something that, you know, was really nice and, and people wanted to look happy and you know proud, you know. Not sullen or downcast or anything. So, when he left there we all voted and we agreed on one photo in particular where we had smiles and, on our faces, and that's what was going to be used. The, the -- it was probably two weeks later that ah, the poster was, the posters, two packages of them. There were a hundred posters. Two packages of like fifty each, were left at the door to the Gay Peoples office before the meeting. And, so we got the poster and it, it, I was going by there to pick something up and it was told - he may have called and said that they were going to be left there. So I opened up the package and looked and here was the picture with no smiles.

MW: Oh no.

SF: That's what he did. Well I made, I had to make some phone calls. Ah, part of me wanted to just say to hell with it, you know let's just distribute them and start putting them up you know. It, we really liked the poster but we did not -- we really felt taken advantage of you know. It was always very hard for us to come to any decision regarding anything and we, we tried to do it as democratically as possible and do a vote, the majority rules you know. Robert's Rules of Order in a meeting that we had so people weren't yelling stuff, you know, out all the time. So anyway, it was impor-- it was really important to be part of the process and to have what we decided. So I called Susan Breeding and I called Wendy Ashley, I called some of the other people in the photo. We called an emergency meeting, because we had to make a decision, you know. They had to, you know either we were going to use this or we weren't. So we
met and ah, we decided that it was going to have to be to a vote whether we used the photo or not. And the artist, Frank Vance, came to the meeting and since it was going to be a vote, different sides tried to stack the meeting with people in order to make the vote go one way or the other. Now, we realized after that -- I chaired the meeting ah, there were people, because no one had signed press rel-- you know, a release form. Not press release but just a, a release form you know, to have their photo used -- there were key people that threatened to sue the group and him as the artist if the photo was used at all. And that settled it right there. You know, it just was not going to go anywhere, regardless of what the vote, you know. You got there and realized that half of the people that were showing up didn’t even belong there. But this is the poster, which was supposed to have been destroyed.

PP: So, to wrap it up. We decided we wouldn’t use the poster. He said he would pay for the cost of having them all printed. We asked him, we, we said that we needed them destroyed. I mean at this point it was just you know, personalities running amok over principles. And ah, so he huffed out and his friend huffed out, we huffed out. And, and for years and years there was this, people weren’t speaking to each other (laughter) and there may be bad blood to this day. You know ah, I’m sure the photographer has, has nothing nice to say even to this day. Ah, and a few of the copies did surface. I have one out in Arizona, I’m going to get it framed. But it’s really, you know it, it’s a good metaphor.

PP: Freda you know. (??)

SF: Okay so ah, anyway this is the poster and ah, I stole three of them. Because we refused to pay for them, which meant that the artist -- they were still his and he had to destroy them. The stipulation was that he destroy all of them.

PP: He agreed to that too right?

SF: Yes, he did agree to that. Now, I took three of them and I gave one to Peter, one
to Susan and, and kept mine, lost mine somewhere in the shuffle. And then I bumped into somebody who knew the artist, Frank. And he said, "oh yeah" he said, "I remember I saw that, the, the ah, picture of all of you for the Maine Gay Task Force you know the Symposium." And I said "really," I said do me a favor and ask Frank if he still has any of them. And he said, oh I know he does, he said ... (laughter)

MW: He never destroyed them!

PP: I mean I wouldn't have either you know.

SF: So he gave me ten of them. So I mean and what's really interesting is that it was never used but yet there's a bunch of the people that were really involved at the time that did, that, that, even exist after it was supposed to have been destroyed.

PP: Yeah, yeah one of those should go into the archives.

MW: I'd love to borrow one to show it to Naomi.

SF: Yes, what I was going to suggest is why not give one to Tim. I don't think that Tim has one and he might be surprised ah, to see it.

MW: Yeah, great yeah.

PP: Yeah those are, yeah that's very cool. Actually I, I want to get mine framed. I just found this shop in Bisbee.

SF: Yeah I have one framed also that ah, it's just not on the wall because there's always painting here but ah. But that is, that's a really, you know. We could name, we could name as many of these people are you wanted as a guide to you know, what these, who the people were, what they looked like at the time.
MW: Sure, yeah I’d love a list.

SF: Yeah there should be, yeah left to right. And --

MW: I can’t believe that’s you.

SF: Some of the people I don’t know, I’m not sure who they are.

MW: Now are you in that also?

PP: Oh yeah.

SF: Yes.

MW: Where?

SF: Yup, I’m right there next to Gail in the front.

PP: I think there’s a dog in there too if I’m not mistaken.

SF: Yup, I’m right here.

MW: Oh yes there’s a dog right next to you, right next to Gail. (laughter)

SF: Yes.

PP: That’s her dog.

SF: That’s Gail’s dog yeah, yeah.

PP: She was very friendly.
SF: Now they could manipulate this and lighten it up you know.

MW: Right but that's fabulous -- what a record.

PP: That was taken right off of Spring Street where ah--

SF: Right across the street over here with Three Dollar Dewey's.

PP: Across from the Underground.

SF: Isn't it? Oh yes, it is, of course.

PP: Across from the Underground. They were just about to tear this building down.

MW: Oh, where that big parking lot is now?

SF: Which was Rumors at the time.

PP: No, we know where the, do you know where that fourth, the First Portland Square -- the Peoples Bank? That was built right where that is.

SF: On that lot, yeah.

PP: It was like a Sunday.

SF: Yes. That's the wall he liked.

PP: It, it was a Sun-- the guy was a real artist. I mean you know, the spacing.

MW: Yeah that's a fabulous photograph.
SF: Richard Steinman of course was the speaker if you read what the, who the guest speakers were.

PP: Ah, it was, I mean, everyone agreed that that was probably the most artistic shot. But Jesus, you know, we didn’t want to look like really you know, the only thing missing were the guns (laughter). It’s not the message to attract people. In 1976 you know, this was, we needed

(END OF SIDE A, TAPE 2)

MW: This leader’s so long.

SF: That’s because the, regarding like the Maine Gay Task Force banner, you know. Ah, I don’t know that we want to donate that right at this time. Ah, to it, you know. It certainly shows in photos. There are other photos you know that we could look at, you know, reproduce, have enlarged somewhat. Ah, there, you know, may be photos of other people. I, I don’t know like really what you want. Ah, as far as you know, donations along with the, you know the, the written stuff. But ah, there are little things here and there.

MW: Photographs definitely. We have a big collection of those already.

SF: Cool.

MW: There’s all the stuff from Our Paper.

SF: Right.

MW: Stuff like this would be fabulous.
SF: Right. See what, what I'd like to do is have that scanned and then enlarged it like that. And then ah, you know keep the original kind of thing.

MW: This is great.

SF: But I don't know that we have any pictures of the freedom train itself. It seems to me there was one picture where it showed the expanse of people on the street. Robert was there taking pictures.

PP: I bet Robert ...

SF: Robert may have other pictures of that.

PP: Is Dale the blood haired guy?

SF: Yes, Dale.

PP: He had a sign. I mean he, he was a big guy, hard to miss. And he was carrying a placard on po-- post that said, “where are gays on this train?”. I mean in big letters and I mean god, he's walking around it's night time. It's in a seedy part of town. You know, you've got this crowd that's in a not happy mood because they've been standing there for an hour and a half, the kids are anxious. Do you know what I mean? And I, I have nothing but admiration for ah, people who were actually down there.

SF: But the flyer was written so well.

PP: Yeah.

MW: Yeah I hope you can find one.
PP: I think, I think there were some flyers, Madeleine, in garbage bags of stuff, you know.

SF: I'm not sure -- I'm hoping we find you know, that kind of thing. Those are the kind of things that ah, you know, because there have been only like you know, a hundred that were printed up, you know, run off you know, very very quickly. You know it was gotten together, sometimes I mean, we would write stuff on trash bags. And all kinds of stuff. But.

MW: So, just to kind of wind things up, is there anything else that you'd like to add or anything that comes to mind that you might like to include for this record?

SF: The only thing that I would ah -- literally at the time when we became in ah, involved we would just eat, breathe and sleep movement. Every -- there wasn't like one waking hour that wasn't somehow consumed with what were we going to do next or how were we going to do it or who was going to be involved. Ah, you know the, the households that we lived in -- we would arrange our living situations like Peter ah, you know with after we met him, you know, became involved to the point of where he moved from Cape Elizabeth to the same apartment building that ah, Robert and I lived in. He and Susan Henderson lived on the floor above. We would constantly have dinner. It, I mean it was, the topic of conversation, continually. Robert bought a house on Westminster Avenue, it was a double decker. You know, he and I moved upstairs. Peter and Susan moved in on the first floor. Susan then ended up buying the house. The publication was published from there. Ah, when Susan Breeding and Wendy Ashley moved to Brunswick you know, a, a bunch of gay men followed them there and became involved and started the Lambda group. It was, it was really such a con--sense of community ah, ah, you know that, you know. I cannot now -- it was so important, even though my involvement at the time was only like four intensive years and then burning out and then coming back periodically from Colorado and being involved with the publication again while it was still going on. Contributing to a couple of issues or be taking the load off Susan and Peter you know, to do a couple more issues
and then going back to Colorado or California. It's such a still so, it, it changed me. And really had such an impact on who I am today. Ah, and, you know, my, my outlook on life and really who, literally who I've become and, and really my value system and what's important to me in my relationships with people, were really based on -- you know. And it doesn't matter whether Peter's living in Arizona or I don't have a week to week ex-- you know knowledge of what's happening in Susan Henderson's life. There is such a strong bond and connection there that nothing will ever change that. It, I could go a year without see-- seeing Susan Henderson, but yet when I see her it's like a year has not gone by. You know, the same with Peter or even Wendy Ashley who lives out on the island, who I rarely see now it's -- the connection is just so strong. Ah, because you know there was tremendous risk-taking. Ah, and when you participate that, in that with somebody and they are your support system for, you know, validating, you know who we are and continuing to go on because, you know, the powers that be were, you know, so heavily against all of us at that time. Ah, you know but yet believing at your very core that what you were doing was really white, right and was valuable not only to you but to also other people was really tremendously ah, liberating.

PP: Yeah.

MW: Peter, ________?

PP: I was yeah, I, I would certainly echo (laughter) you know. Ah, I mean the temptation is to get dewy eyed but that's very true, you know and, and ah, ah friendship, it's beyond friendships. You know relationships that, that began you know back in the early seventies in this, in this activist stew ah, of course we all felt we were in it together you know. Ah, I, I got the best friendships of my life out of it -- so far, you know. And ah, ah, like Stan said you know we, we've all gotten into some sort of lifestyle subsequent to, you know, the seventies that we're talking -- we're talking about the seventies. And ah, but you know ah, like, like, you know one of Lincoln's famous quotes, the mystic course of, of history were re-said. They never go away you know and ah, oh, you know, the next time we all get together will probably be at somebody's
funeral, you know. And whether they’re being cremated and being scattered or whatever into the ground. You know all have a tear and, and we’ll all, we’ll sincerely mean that the tear will be met you know. Because we, we all think back over all those years when we were, you know, doing what we did and ah, ah, at the time, we just -- we never thought about the future. You know, we never thought we’d be sitting around -- this is, I mean we would have had a good laugh to think that we’d be sitting around 25 years later, you know, reminiscing. We really truly believed that what we were doing ah, just was just part of we, we was so much a part of our lives that we couldn’t imagin-- I mean I couldn’t imagine it ever having any historical interest. You know I knew, I knew we were making history but that wasn’t we, we, that was obvious to see but you know there weren’t too many queers running around prior to us. But ah, it’s, it’s, it’s changed my life and I’m very hap-- I’m very happy with my value system today, I take wherever I go and, and, much of it was formed from these women that Stan met and Steven met and then I met Stan and Steven and it all sort of filtered in and ah, you know I, I don’t think, I don’t think we, I think for some, I don’t think we’ve really changed our views a lot over the years. I mean we’ve just gotten older. That happens right, a day at a day. But you know -- but anyway, that’s the end of that.

MW: Yeah, what I find really interesting too is you know we’ve all been fighting so hard for our freedom and, and to get out of oppression and yet being oppressed group, you build these bonds with people because you have to, to survive. And so even though things are better in the wider world, somewhat, I generally feel a sense of loss almost for times when you know, we were all you know, talking to each other and working to get here, you know.

PP: Right, yeah. The temptation is to say the good old days. But in many ways they were, you know. Ah, you know, and, and so it’s, I appreciate the opportunity and I’m sure Stan, you know, all of us appreciate the opportunity to be able to you know think out loud about what it was like and it was a, you know it was, it was the beginning of a, of a, it was the fledging beginning of the, of the community and there’s no role model,
you know. Ah, and we, we'd and that was very liberating, you know, to be able to do what we thought was what was best.

SF: And, also and, in closing, one of the reasons why we have all of this stuff in garbage bags is because it's been, it was so important and it's so hard to throw it out.

MW: Oh yeah, I'm so glad you didn't.

SF: We discussed many times over the years you know, what are we going to do with this? You know, we heard there was an archive in New York, we didn't know if they'd accept stuff from Maine. You know, we said then, you know, Maine needs something but, you know, but is it going to be something that, you know, Peter and I discussed this last evening. Would it be something that you know for a couple of years people were hot on and then it sorts of gets buried? You know like it was in the trash bags you know in a closet or in someone's basement. Is that what will the archives, what will happen to it there? So you know, we are, we're concerned you know as we started out by asking questions about who has access to it, you know, what will happen to the stuff as time goes on because ah, I, I know now that it is of historical significance ah.

MW: And that's taken very seriously at the library now. I mean this is an __________ thing.

SF: A lot of people have thought that the first paper was Our Paper and that previous to that there was no gay movement really, you know in the, in the state. And ah, and, you know even with ah, the Symposium going you know on in its 25th. You know I wonder the people, are there any of the people that were originally involved in the first ones involved? Do they really know, you know, the history of the, the, the birth of the first Symposium was the Wilde-Stein Club was just, you know, just and it you know, whether there was an appreciation you know for that, you know, that struggle that went on there for it because, that kind of thing.
MW:  Well thank you both I really appreciate your time.

SF:  You’re welcome, thank you.

PP:  You’re welcome thank you, thank you Madeleine.

(END OF TAPE 2)