

Wendy: This is Wendy Chapkis, W E N D Y C H A P K I S. This is an oral history with Dale McCormick on August 20, 2020. And Dale, as I mentioned before, you can stop this interview at any time or refuse to answer any question if you like.

Dale, would you spell your name?

Dale: Yes. Dale, D A L E, McCormick, M C C O R M I C K.

Wendy: Thank you. Okay, so...

Dale: Can I sit back here, or...?

Wendy: You can sit back there.

Dale: It'll pick up?

Wendy: It's really good, it'll be good.

Can you just give me some background information on your early life, your family of origin?

Dale: So I was born in New York City to Kenneth Dale McCormick, which is how I got my name, and Elizabeth Tibbetts. And he had come—you stop me if it's not...

Wendy: This is perfect.

Dale: Okay.

Wendy: Go.

Dale: He had hitchhiked, he was the son of a Methodist minister, and he had hitchhiked from Oregon to New York City to make his fortune as a concert pianist. And not being able to break into the scene, he got a job at the Doubleday book shop in Grand Central Station, underground, I guess. And from there he rose to be the editor-in-chief of Doubleday. It's a real Horatio Alger story.

And somewhere in there met my mother, who was raised in the Bronx, went to Evander Childs High School, which I know... I don't know that I knew that, but I know it from the lesbian home, from Sharon, who... Okay, this, okay, this is, we're cutting to, from when I was nothing to, or one, to now, but who was doing, had films from Ruth Storm, who was the English teacher of my mother in Evander Childs High School, and with whom, my mother and she had an affair for X amount of years, back when my mother, when she was a teacher and my mother was 14 in high school. So this is like, fascinating. And it will come up again [laughs] in the story.

So my mother was either at Bellevue or going into Bellevue in the nurse training. It was during the war, and that's... I don't know how they mey. But anyway, they had my brother and I. I'm oldest, and we're Irish twins. And he...

So then they got divorced when I was, like, one or two. And we moved to...well, we might have moved many other places, but what I remember is 146 West 11th Street between 6th and 7th, half a block from where Grace Paley lived, and I became friends with Nora and Danny, her son and daughter, and later, with Grace and [inaudible]. And that is how, that lifelong friendship with Grace Paley and Nora is how my daughter Paley got her name, because we went through all the first names and the first, the second last name we ever thought of was Paley, and it was perfect.

So while we were living there, and my mother, or my grandmother was about 4 blocks away at 32 Bank Street, and she lived on the second floor, and on the third floor of this brownstone building was Dale Kramer from Sigourney, Iowa. And my mother met him, and they got married. And we moved to Iowa, which is how I got to Iowa [laughs]. And I think my mother did that for somewhat practical reasons. She didn't want us growing up in New York. She wanted...

Well, and it's, it's just that now with the more focus on race, and my focusing on race, there's a little, some contradictions in this story back then, but she sent us to Downtown Community School, which was run by Pete Seeger's mother. Wife! Sorry, wife. Pete Seeger's wife, and Pete Seeger would come and sing to us. Oh, yeah! I remember, "Put your finger in the air, in the air!" he would sing this to us. It was amazing. And she sent us to this instead of to P.S. 41 or whatever was nearby because she wanted to give us a better introduction to race. She, I don't know. She wanted that. That's what she said. That's what I remember. Even though there were probably many more kids of color at P.S. 41, there were lots of kids of color at this school. And one of my best friends, Sandy, was one of them.

So then we moved to little town in Iowa, Sigourney, Iowa, where I was raised up. And so I had this sort of bifurcated childhood. And then from like, we moved when I was seven or eight. And sort of idyllic town, farm town, courthouse in the middle of the square. And then I went to the...

So I grew up, went to high school, went to the University of Iowa, got a good education for \$5,000 [laughs]. Maybe not as good, as Erica was saying, of Bowdoin or... But I got a very good education. And going there was like coming home. It was, there were people like me. Sigourney, there were not many people like me. And I had begun to wonder about myself and...I don't know that I ever said the 'L' word, because this was like 1954 or 5. And...well, no. University of Iowa was 1965. I graduated high school then, and went to the University of Iowa.

But so when we would visit New York... Oh, as I told the story a little bit at that great panel we were on for the gay camp, that I would haunt the bookstore on 8th Street trying to find books about homosexuality. Which of course at that time they

were all prurient and, you know, studies of deviant criminals and stuff. Which I didn't know at the time. But anyway, so...

Wendy: Can I ask, how did you, what made you suspect that you were a homosexual? How did that even occur to you?

Dale: Yeah. That is a...

Wendy: Did you know people who were homosexual?

Dale: Well, my mother did. During the war there were two gay guys, Jimmy and Alvin, took care of her in the same apartment while Daddy was off at war. And she knew—I wonder if she talked about them then. She probably did. She knew a bunch of lesbians, it turns out, who she would come, when we would go to New York, she would visit them. And these were the people that populated some of the stories that she told later on in life. Which, by the way, I have an oral history of this. I have a recording, which Sharon, the minute she heard this, made me...well, Sharon did it, actually, got it preserved in the best way at 45 degrees, you know, by the New England whatever that is. Anyway, so you might be interested in that. But it's very fascinating, about being gay in the '30s, because that's what Mom would talk about.

So...Okay, where are we? I'm telling you, yes! I'm answering your question, sorry.

So... Well, I was different in many ways. I was smarter, and I was, for a while I had an accent—which I lost right away, my mom said. And I was more assertive, I was more...I was just not...I had to really reel myself in to fit in in high school, which I did do. I also had a crush on the minister's daughter. I think that might have been Marty, she was wonderful. That and I had absolutely... Well, it's not true, because I would... This one guy Randy would walk me home, and we would, like, kiss each other on the swing before we'd go, I'd go home. So it's not that I wasn't having sexual feelings towards boys, but I had absolutely no, couldn't even imagine being married. Couldn't even get there.

And then when I got to the University of Iowa, here there were, lots of interesting women, and I was just more interested in the women. And then slowly... I haven't told this story very much, because it's... You could get your psychoanalytical part of your brain analyzing this, but...

So when I was a...it was in 1966, so when my stepfather committed suicide, and I... Okay, there's, from this point there's two—remind me, there's another avenue I have to follow, but right now I'm going to follow the one you're asking about. So I went home, I planned the service with my mother, which was very meaningful, and I found books of poetry, or she had readings that she was thinking about, and one was a book that Ruth Storm had given her. Who I had no idea who that—that's the other avenue. And we had the funeral, I went back to the university to my dorm floor, Kate Daum in Iowa City, and my friends, this

little group of women, decided that I shouldn't be alone. I should sleep with my extra special friend, Cherry. So Cherry and I slept together, and we made love. Well, in this very way of, you know, comforting, getting close, and then realizing that I was very sexually turned on and so was she. So that was fascinating, in the face of death [laughs]. Which, I guess Freud says always happens.

So then you can, if you read Rita Mae Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle*, the story, the depiction of this completely, these two lesbians in love in the middle of a campus completely not cognizant of the reactions of anybody else, that is exactly what it was like [laughs]! And we would have, we would meet up in the stairwell and be having discussions like, "Do you think we're lesbians?" And I said, you know, I'd say, "No, we can't be lesbians because this is so wonderful and so good!" And, you know...

So there was a while period of time, maybe five, six...until the second wave of the Women's Movement sort of got within my circle, milieu, notice area, that was very difficult. My mother read a letter that Cherry had written me and sent me to a psychiatrist for a year of trying to go straight, you know. Until EqualityMaine did the conversion therapy bill, I hadn't really revisited that to realize I had conversion therapy. It didn't work, and there weren't any electrodes, but it was, it was a real hard year, because you're basically fighting... And I, and my mother was from nursing and the Western model, and I respected her immensely and science immensely, and it's like little Dayday versus the whole entire, the church, the state, the medical, that's hard.

So finally, I'll tell you, here's how I got out of that: So this, you know, psychiatrist at the University of Iowa Hospital steepling his fingers and listening. After about a year of this, I finally asked him a question. I said, "Do you think that one or two slips on the road towards heterosexuality would be okay?" He said, "Yeah, that would be okay." And I said, "Goodbye. [laughs] I'm out of here." It was just the loophole that I needed to, so...

Wendy: Can I ask, did you, were you genuinely hoping you could stop having feelings for women, become properly heterosexual?

Dale: Well, I... Well, genuinely? That's a strong word. I would say I was really trying. You know, your mother who you love and respect gives you this big lecture, and says, which I did not know then that she has this whole lesbian past, "You'll never be happy. You will not be happy. This is a terrible life. I know lesbians." You know, because I knew that. You know, she's from New York. Not as if there's no lesbians in Iowa, but [laughs]. Which there were, and she knew them. So I...she scared me.

Wendy: But you still didn't know anything about her life?

Dale: And I only had... Oh no, no, no, no. No. Bad mark on Mom that she did not say that. Would have undercut her argument a little bit. But... Oh, back to the

genuine. You know, I had only had one relationship which was cut short by my mother. So yeah, you know. I tried. But my heart wasn't in it. So I don't know what to say with the word "genuine." I think you could say I tried, like, 75%. I'm more a spectrum thinker, that's the way I describe things.

Okay, so...

Wendy: So how did you find out about your mother's lesbian past?

Dale: Ah! Okay. That's a good question. How did I find out? Well, it was years later. We were both living in Iowa City. She had learned to accept me. She claims, and it was probably around this time, the coming together, where she stopped worrying that I wasn't going to be happy and went from needing me to see a psychiatrist to being supportive. And what changed, she says, was that she saw I had friends, I had—the Iowa City lesbian feminist community is famous. We had, I had, we had institutions, which I was a part of creating and helping. And we had a community. We had, I had friends. I had lovers. What's to worry about? Oh, I was an apprenticed carpenter, I had a good job. I had a job that paid so well even at half union scale that I paid off my truck in a year! And supported all these women in the women's collective that I was living in. It was, this was like at five dollars an hour. Anyway...

So at some point she told me about Ruth Storm. I'll think about this. I'll let, I'll go, it'll come back. I've learned that different doors have to open slowly, come to the center.

Wendy: Before she told you, you had said no to conversion therapy and then pick up your life again at that moment.

Dale: So I was in, I was in college. I was probably, after a year I was probably a junior. And I was very involved with the politics. Well, both of us. She was a, my mother was a draft counselor and so was I. And she got into it to help try to keep my brother out of the Army, from going to Vietnam. And I was a member of Resist. I also, interestingly, was always trying to get into SDS. Or into—SDS is, you know, not, like, Robert [inaudible] a membership, you sign up. It was like, I couldn't—think of a little circle of people and I'm on the outside, jumping up and down, trying to see into the middle. It was, you know, they were not, they were not very feminist. And I was a growing feminist, probably. That only took an instant, to hear the word to know my worldview was that.

So then came the bombing of Cambodia and Laos, the mining of Cambodia, and I basically, me and 12 other people shut down the University of Iowa. And then almost [laughs], in so doing almost failed to graduate, but I did. And so the war...

So the war was going on, and there was, and my... So my mother and I, and she was growing to be a member of the women's community in the second wave of the Women's Movement, and... I'll tell you this one story since it's academic and you'll like this. So I was also getting a teaching certificate, because I started out in

pre-med, but I couldn't, I somehow along the way, I'll save that, decided, "No." So [laughs] I had 20 hours of organic chemistry, you know, what kind of a degree was I going to get? So I got an American Studies degree, which is very eclectic. And a teaching certificate. So I went off to Davenport High School to teach, and [laughs] it was the war, remember. So this wonderful—I forget the name of the newspaper at the University of Northern Iowa—reprinted the dialogue between the judge, I forget his name, of the Chicago Seven, and, you know, Bobby Seale, and it was just horrendous. So I got, like, 30 of these papers, and I passed them out to my class, because I wanted them to see this. Well, oh my God! Oh, I got ushered out of Davenport High School pretty fast.

And so...there you go. Almost failed, maybe did fail. But intervening was the US government to the rescue! Bombed Cambodia, we had to shut down the school, all the grades got pass/fail or something, I don't know. I managed to graduate [laughs]. So now I'm being, that's not fair to say about—the bombing of Cambodia was awful, but with a little bit of gallows humor, I've learned to see it.

So meanwhile, you know, the Women's Movement is, like, parallel growing over here, the second wave of the Women's Movement. And she's a part of that, and so we were once again on the same track. And at some point we had a conversation in which she said, in which she copped to her big omission when she found out that I was a lesbian by reading my letters, which was not okay, either. So not a stellar period in my mother's life. And so I was with an English teacher then, and as she said to me, you know, "You should do an oral history of these stories your mother is telling." Because once you opened her up, she's telling with this great Bronx accent all about telling my grandmother, her mother, you know, "Give me a nickel so I can go take the subway down to the Village." And, "Oh, dear, I don't think you should go." "No, I'm going!" I mean, she was like [laughs].

Anyway, so that was really wonderful, to have my mother. And for the rest of her life, supportive of me and my, the women I was involved with, the long relationships. I remember her telling me when Betsy and I, Betsy Sweet and I got together, that I should think about settling down. You know, like a father-daughter, mother-daughter talk. You know, which I didn't have very many of in my life. But I remember that one.

So there you go.

Wendy: So tell me a little about your coming out process. You sort of jumped from therapy to, you know, being involved with an English teacher. Was there a process for you of telling people besides people like your mother...

Dale: Or besides the *Rubyfruit Jungle* story where everybody knew but we thought we were being private, but everybody knew? Well, that's... I don't think I was ever very in, ever. And that came up when I ran for the Maine Senate. I really don't have a memory of having to come out to very many people. And as a candidate,

actually, I was blessed, because all these other candidates, it's a whole deal. And we actually—well, I'm not answering your question, that's not fair.

Wendy: You are! You are. Answer it however works for you.

Dale: Okay, well I might get back to what you want me to go back. I remember we, when I ran for the Senate...

Wendy: In Maine?

Dale: In Maine. We had to—yeah, oh, right. I came to Maine in 1980. Well, and before that I... Okay, I'll start a little bit earlier, because you'll like this.

So I referenced that Iowa City lesbian feminist community was incredibly vibrant, and we had, we had a whole little thriving sub-town inside the town. We had Iowa City Women's Press, we had *Ain't I a Woman?*, underground lesbian feminist newspaper that I was on the collective. We had two women's collectives, living collectives. We had Grace & Ruby's Restaurant. We had a bookstore. There was a food co-op, of course—friendly, but not ours. There was, we started the rape crisis line, we started the free medical clinic, we demonstrated. I remember demonstrating in—I think we sat in somewhere. We took over a building for the Women's Center. The WRAC, the Women's Resource and Action Center at the University of Iowa, which is still going strong today. So we, you know... Oh! We had a softball team, of course. We had a flag football team. We had, I mean, you know. We had, oh, at the Unitarian Church we had dances, we had plays. Someone wrote a lesbian feminist interpretation of *The Taming of The Shrew*, which is hard to do. And I played Petruchio. I have pictures of this, which we put on in the basement of the Unitarian-Universalist Church in Iowa City. Without them, we would have had no, nothing. Everything happened at this church. And Meg Christian came there, and all the Olivia people, so, you know, lots... So there was this whole supportive environment.

So I really, I might have had to come out to some old friends. Like, you know, in New York, like Anne Blackman, my friend, who's here, actually. I probably had to come out to her. That kind of thing. Years later, though. Not at the time, probably. You know how you reconnect with old friends.

But we did, like when I ran for the state Senate in Maine, we had to plan the campaign around the homophobic campaign which it proved to be true would be run against me. So we had to think about that. And the way we did that, just since I'm on the subject, was to, I went to 7,000 doors. The whole thing was me going to as many doors as possible and meeting people so that when they did say, "She's a horrible lesbian, why are you even thinking about voting for her?" they will have met me, would have met me, and they, the negative campaign would have less of an impact. And that proved to be true. I won by half a percent. It was very close. 50.05 or 50.5, maybe it was a landslide of 50.5. But anyway...

Wendy: Were you worried about them talking about you being a lesbian when you decided...what year was this, first of all?

Dale: 1990.

Wendy: Were you worried about them pulling up this issue? Did you go in thinking, "Yes, this is going to be a part of the campaign?"

Dale: Yeah, well, I mean, we knew that, because...we knew that. But I don't know that I... And we were planning for it, so that gave me some, you know...it's nothing like a good plan to make you feel safe. But I don't know that I was ready for... I mean, they did some research. They pulled up... I have a clear memory of going to a candidates' night in Winthrop and sitting on the stage and seeing... Outside, seeing this guy opening up a copy of *Ain't I a Woman?* from Iowa City, you know. And I knew he would pull up, I mean, we were quite radical back then, and that was not playing. The '60s, people seem to forget about it after was over. Anyway, so, you know... And then they did that again, they went on the radio. I remember Frank O'Hara called me up one day—so this must have been the era of cell phones—and said, "Quick! Go over to the radio station on Maple Avenue in—" I can't remember what it's called, it was local to Augusta area, "because they've got this guy on, and he's got, you know, the same newspaper and he's bringing up all the radical past from the Vietnam War days." And so I did! And I went on and there they were, and it became a three-way conversation, at least. And so... Either that or...I can't, you know, things fade. That is my memory, but it could have been that I got interviewed, you know, a half hour later. But it was, we were right on top of it. Thus I won by 0.5%.

Wendy: Were you the first out person who had run for public office and won? Do you know?

Dale: No, Barb had.

Wendy: Oh, Barb had already...

Dale: Here in Portland. But this was not in Portland. This was all around Augusta, but not Augusta, so Wayne, Winthrop, Gardiner, West Gardiner, all the way over the Whitefield, across the river, Pittston, Farmingdale. So...but not Hallowell. There was no little nugget of progressive... But Readfield, Readfield is pretty, Readfield and Hallowell, as far as I can see, are the most progressive places in the state. But anyway...

Wendy: Can I ask, why did you win then? How did you win?

Dale: Because we ran a brilliant campaign. No, really. And there's an editorial in the—which I have up, actually, I framed it—in the *KJ* that said, "The best campaign for governor this year was run by McCormick for Senate." And it's true, if we'd have just inflated it a little bit. We had, like, you know, 40, 60 regular volunteers. We invented—before they even had campaign software, we invented a way of

keeping track of all the doors that I went to, notes that I took, and we sent a letter, we sent, like, 7,000 letters the Friday before the election, handwritten by me, noting our conversations and asking, "Please don't forget to vote, and I'd appreciate your support." And that got to be so hard to keep up with, because I was doing such a good job. I was a good, I'm a good candidate, a team player. My job was to go door-to-door and that's what I did. And every single day, every single day for six months. It was grueling, it was unbelievable. And I, meanwhile, while I was going door to door, and...I want to tell you this story, because this, you'll, this fits right into your questions.

But I, I'm driving back from one of my favorite places. I really got to like it, I'd take a little soymilk and I'd go from like, four until eight. And in my bike, and I'd drive my bike. I'd put my bike in my truck, named Tony, and I'd take... No, my bike was named Tony... Oh, I'm forgetting the name of my truck. A Dodge truck, it was a wonderful truck.

Anyway, so I'm coming back from Whitefield, I think, and I'm driving along back to Monmouth, where I lived. 126. And I knew that they had 20 people were writing, you know, were doing these, that we called the follow-up, the follow-up notes that they were, they had a spaghetti thing, and they were, you know, eating and licking and writing, and there were some people who were good at one thing and another. And I'm driving along, and I'd had a good day going door to door. I met some really great people, which was just the best part of it. And all of a sudden in my, through my head went, "You know, you would be a great candidate if you weren't a lesbian." And I said, "Whoa!" [inaudible] "Whoa, that's internalized homophobia." And I just had to sit with that for a little while. I still sit with it.

So that's just a little snippet of that campaign. Oh, and then importantly, here's another funny story if you want a funny story. Funny but significant. So I was running against Norm Weymouth, who had been a teacher in Gardiner for years. And Gardiner and Winthrop were the big towns. You had to win Gardiner and Winthrop. And so, and he had a brother named Chester.

Oh! And guess who was the campaign manager? It was Gordon Smith's brother who was head of SAM for a while, and now in the *KJ*, anyway, writes this—I'm friends with him now. But he came up later and told me, "You know, I apologize. I'm really sorry about the campaign I ran against you back then."

And basically it was just Leviticus this and letters to the editor, you know, Sodom and Gomorra, it was just gay baiting the whole way until finally in the fall, Chester Weymouth wrote a letter to the *KJ* that was a summary of all that. I mean, people were following these letters. It was, people have saved them. So I'll cut to the chase. So Sodom and Gomorra, Leviticus this, but by this time it's the fall, right? It's like, maybe October. And they are consternated that I am in the race. I mean, I have to stand up to do this because this is the way I tell the story, but... So they're like Rumpelstiltskin, you know, they're going "Ugh! How! What!

She's a lesbian!" That's basically what he said in this letter. "She's a lesbian! What are you doing, people? She has not endured the pain and agony of childbirth." That was, he said that. "How can you elect her?" And everybody, all the women in the district wrote back and said, "And he has endured the pain and agony of childbirth?" Oh, it was a turning point. It was. And then people would say, write letters in saying how conservative I was for riding my bike instead of wasting gas, and anyway [laughs]. That was, it was quite an event.

Wendy: So...

Dale: So I won by running a really great... But I mean, Barb Wood, people from here would come and volunteer. Barb...people still. Oh! Another way. I had raised... This was the biggest race, the most expensive race ran for the state legislature until, of course, modern day. I mean, \$60,000 is what it took, and we raised that much. I would, I would walk into rooms and people would hand me money without me asking. We didn't ask until I, we had like, 5 or \$10,000. It was a famous race, and it was, you know, David and Goliath. Oh, and it was the lesbian feminist versus the point person for the Christian Civic League. I forgot to tell you that. He was right in with those guys, so it was, you know, good reading I guess for everybody in the district.

But anyway, that's, so that's how we won.

Wendy: May I ask you what prompted you to want to run for this race?

Dale: Yes. That's another good story. Well, because of the Casey decision, really. I... So Shirley Chisholm, did I tell the Shirley Chisholm story? I did.

Wendy: Not here, you told it...

Dale: Well, so try not to be bored [laughs].

Wendy: Oh, please. Tell that story, it's a good one.

Dale: Yeah, it's a good story. So I had helped to bring Shirley Chisholm to Maine in this day called Winning with Women, I think it was called. It was at Bates College theater, lots of workshops encouraging women to think about running for office. And women, in case you didn't know, take a lot of encouraging and support, and I was one of them. And time, lead-up time to get over all the internalized sexism that we all have.

So she came and she gave a barn-burner of a speech, and there were 350 women there, and she shook her finger at us and she said, "Women have to put aside their petty reluctances and run for office." And that is a direct quote. I have always remembered that, it like, seared itself on my heart. And that was sometime in the late '80s. And then when the Casey decision of the U.S. Supreme Court, which basically lobbed the issue of choice to state legislatures all over the country saying that, "You guys decide what you're going to do." I decide my internalized

homophobia was a petty reluctance. I really did. And that I was living in a senate district of a guy who was terrible on everything. He voted against the clean water stuff, to cleaning up the Kennebec. He voted against...were we doing the? Yeah, we were doing the bill. Voted against civil rights, of course. So that's how, that's why. Because it had to be done. And you might ask, why did you start in the senate? Well, it was because it had to be done, and there was... I forget who was in the other seat, but he was a badnik. No, that's not fair. He was a guy, but he had really terrible politics.

Wendy: So you were in office. What did you do during your time in office?

Dale: I worked the most on healthcare reform. Which, fascinatingly enough, which didn't pass my notice, back in the day when I was at *Ain't I a Woman?* one issue has on the front page, I think, a list of our demands, and one of them was free healthcare. I mean, it never changes. And we're still working on it.

But I'm smart enough to know it's not free now. Well, I think we knew that, too, we just didn't get into that deep as we are now. So Representative Charlene Rydell and I, which you might remember her, we created, wrote the Family Security Act. Seventy pages. A brilliant, it still would work for Maine. It's a cross between managed care and single payer. It's a compromise. And so I worked really hard on that. I worked—of course, we didn't pass that, right? McKernan was opposed.

And worked on the civil rights bill, worked on and succeeded after three years of the nurses in advanced practice bill. That was the most fun. In other words, we gave nurses, nurse practitioners independent practice. And working with that coterie of nurse practitioners was just the most fun. It was really great.

And I, you know what I found out, though? I have, I don't know that I was... I don't think I was as good a senator as I am an advocate. It's very easy to be an advocate. Well, I'm sure that's not true for everybody. For me, it's like one speed: forward. And to be a senator, you have to schmooze and go out to smokey places and drink with the boys. And at that point, before Chellie and Sharon Treat got to the Senate, it was just me. And they had a big label, you know, stamped on my back: the lesbian [laughs]. So it was probably, in my own defense, was probably a little hard to get over all their preconceived notions. And there were, I was continually bumping into unwritten rules, because they didn't bother to tell me. You know, it was classic, actually.

So.. But, you know, I did really work. I did really move us forward on healthcare, even though the time wasn't quite right, the way you move forward on any issue. And on civil rights.

Wendy: Can you talk a little about the civil rights bill?

Dale: Yeah. I just wanted to tell you a story about that. So every two years... Oh, yeah, I have several stories to tell about that, actually.

Every two years, you know, we'd put in the... "We" being the MGLPA, Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance, which is now EqualityMaine. And basically, the bill was every year to amend the Human Rights Act to make it include sexual orientation, which made it illegal to fire, evict, deny public accommodation or credit to anyone based on their sexual orientation. And we tried, we did all kinds of... Well this, was this before I was on? Oh, I'm getting mixed up. Yeah, I am getting mixed up.

Well, see, I was sort of... At that time, MLGPA had no staff, and the President and the Board were the staff. And I, living in—I don't know where I was. Gardiner, Hallowell, somewhere, different places—was near. So I was, like, the lobbyist, or our representative at the State House. And I can remember in the early days, when I was President of MLGPA, we created a big lobbying campaign for years.

We did several things. We did with Richard, with Professor Richard Steinman, and this is in the archives, a survey, I guess it's a survey, a poll, a survey of gay people about what their life was like, what's going on with them. And of course it's not, half the state was not out, 75% was not out, so we just, it wasn't scientifically dispersed, right? Just whoever we could get to... But it was, because it had Richard and a friend of his at the University of Pennsylvania who was a statistician, it was very, very kosher-ly compiled and the results were figured out in a very scientific way. And we put it all on one page and we put it out.

So that was, and it was a revelation even to me. And you know what was the most? So we asked the obvious questions, "Have you ever been denied an apartment? Have you ever been fired or denied a job?" And we had all the percentage of that. But the most fascinating—because, of course, it was lots of people—but the most fascinating was the demographics, I thought. And the one that sticks out without seeing it in front of me is, "When did you first know you were gay?" And for men, 12. 12! Which, to me, was very important about the issue at that time was, "Well you guys just decide you're gay! You don't..." And, you know, the legislators didn't want to hear anything, because one, they didn't have any gay people in their district, which somebody really told me once, and two—the majority leader, I think, told me—and two, it's a choice. So that was important. And for women it was older, it was more reflective of my time. But I was just, I was just bowled over by that.

So and then the other thing we did was Adopt a Legislator. We organized the state, all the MGLPA membership to where they took one legislator and said... I thought that was brilliant. I don't, well, who knows? We didn't pass it. We were laboring the vineyard for many years. But all of this had to have helped.

And then with PFLAG's help, we did—Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays—we did breakfasts. The way to a legislator's heart is through his or her stomach. And we would have a gay person, an out person, speaking. Rita Clifford came to a lot of them and spoke about being a teacher, but that was very risky.

She was very courageous to do that. Paula Aboud in the same way, spoke about being in the closet as a teacher. We'd have a person of faith, and we'd have homemade scones by Effie Pentlarge or somebody else from PFLAG, and we'd just talk. A psychologist, too. So we, this took a lot of organizing. And we [inaudible] had many of them. So we did that.

And then we'd organize the hearing on the bill. That was...that's like, I liken it to the lineup in a baseball game. You know, the lead-off hitter, lead off with the Bishop, Carolyn Chute came, I remember she was our clean-up batter once, she was, gave unbelievable testimony. So that's sort of... And we'd inch forward, maybe. Oh! A couple of stories.

So Jerry Connolly—and I'm getting mixed up, Wendy, about whether it was before I was in the Senate or not. I hope that's okay. I think this might have been before I was in the Senate. Jerry Connolly came to me and said, "You know, I think, I think we could move ahead if we slim down the bill and had it just be employment and housing," or something. And, oh, that was hard. I had to make that decision. And so I said yes to that. And I think that year, we didn't win that year, but we got more people. And I think that might have been part of the avenue to the Catholic Church. Because somewhere in there, the Catholic Church started not opposing the bill and actually, I think then, came to supporting it. I could be wrong.

Wendy: When I moved to Maine, they were actively opposed, I think, to...

Dale: Yeah, and what year was...?

Wendy: 1995.

Dale: '95.

Wendy: Because it was right when all of the...

Dale: Okay, then I was, then...

Wendy: I think. I mean, I could be wrong about that.

Dale: Then I was wrong about that. But you know what? I do remember. It probably was the same year that... And Jerry Connolly coming from...not Jerry Connolly. You know. Not... His cousin.

Wendy: [inaudible]

Dale: Larry Connolly! Larry Connolly was, yes, very good, important to get that right. Jerry Connolly always supported the bill, but Larry Connolly really, he was a sponsor many years. He really was active. There's a story about how when he was in the hospital, I think with a heart attack or something, he said, "What's

happening with the bill?!” You know, he’s on the table, “Tell them, tell them this!” [laughs] He was amazing.

So he concocted this idea of dropping off and just doing employment. And I think we got the Catholic Church more that particular year, and here’s why I remember that, is because Dick Harrison, who was the head of Lambda Nord up in Aroostook Country said to me—and was on the Board of MLGPA and very active in all of this—said, “Dale, the support of the Catholic Church. That statement is worth more than passing the bill.” Maybe he didn’t say passing the bill, but was worth more in terms of, you know, I can imagine it, in terms of the internalized homophobia of all the gay people everywhere in the state of influencing neighbors and friends. It was, I’ll always remember when he said that. It really was an epiphany.

So we sort of went along like that. And I remember this guy from Lewiston, Chip, I think it was Chip Morrison, who might have been—I could be getting him mixed up with somebody else, but he was the majority leader, and he said to me, you know, this is after [laughs] you gotta see, this is a sort of Sisyphean task of pushing this boulder up this hill for 20, 30 years, right? And he finally said somewhere in the ’90s, or maybe the early 2000s, “You know, Dale, this is going to be the kind of bill that just stays in one place. Every time you put it in, maybe you’ll gain a vote, or maybe you’ll gain the House, or maybe go back, but then all of a sudden, one year, it’s going to pass.”

And he was absolutely right. That’s exactly what happened. So we went from barnyard language in the house to the point where Speaker had to shut down and clear the grade school kids out of the gallery because of—what was his name? Tubby...Tubby Lafferts, somebody from York County, the language he was using to describe gay people and lesbians. He cleared the House, John Martin did.

And from that we went to when it passed, which I think was in 2004 or something? Yeah. We can look that up. Because I was in the Speaker’s office then, that night. We went to a six-hour debate because everyone wanted to be on the record. They were not arguing, they were not saying barnyard language. They wanted to be on the record as supporting this bill, and then it passed overwhelmingly. It was unbelievable.

And in the midst there, you know, it had finally, one year it passed the Senate and failed the House. Then it would pass the House and fail the Senate. And one year, and this, and I—okay, now I am in the Senate. It passed both and McKernan vetoed it. And it was one of the few times I ever cried in the Senate. There’s no crying in the Senate [laughs] but I did. And so if I was in the Senate, that was in, you know, somewhere between, probably ’94 or something, or ’95.

Wendy: So you ran for office first in ’90 and then you got reelected a couple of times.

Dale: Two times, yeah. I served three terms. And in that, you know, I think I was the sponsor one year. But then people, again, we kept trying things. They wanted Joel Abramson to be the sponsor because he wasn't gay and he could bring some Republicans, and so I said okay. And we did, you know, every single way. That's how we won marriage, too. We got more and more people.

But I remember the very last... I was the sponsor this time. I guess Joel might have died by that time. But I was the sponsor, and Georgette Berube, a senator from Lewiston, was very, quite conservative—nice, but conservative—was nibbling around the edges of a constitutional amendment against marriage. And—the state constitutional amendment. And I could be wrong about that, but at least it was a bill to do that, or it was a bill. It was something. It was bad. And I could see, I could see that marriage was an even bigger benefit. All the rights, the thousand rights of marriage, an even bigger benefit to our community than anti-discrimination was. Both are important, but...

And so I made a deal with her. I said, "I will not introduce the civil rights bill if you do not introduce." And that might have been another time I cried. That was hard. And I think it was the right thing to do, actually. Because all the states that did have state constitutional amendments had a hard time. Well, who knows if it was the right thing to do [laughs]. I felt it was the right thing to do, so... Compromise is if you believe it's moved you forward a little bit, and not compromised your principles, so I must have felt that way.

Wendy: So you leave the Senate after your term, so it must have been '96, right?

Dale: Mhm.

Wendy: But you don't leave politics at that point. So can you talk about what happened?

Dale: Right. I ran for the, for Congress in the first district. And I ran against Tom Allen for the primary, he was running. And that was another close race, and he won. But we were very, we ran a good primary. People in, you know, Barney Frank and people in Washington still remember me fondly, and I'm sure him fondly, but I'm not him so I don't know what they're saying to him. But they say to me, "We're just so indebted to you both for running a positive primary." Because when he won, he then was unscarred and beat Jim Longley.

But I... Pat Altman, I remember, said, "You should run for State Treasurer!" I said, "Oh. Well, okay. I'll think about that." So I did, and won by one vote. But those races are all very close. And I think I got the better of... So Tom Allen went down to Washington to have to deal with Newt Gingrich and be in the minority, if you'll remember that whole milieu. And I got to go and be one of 50. He's one of 496, however many. I can never keep track of that. And I got to be one of 50 state treasurers, and I actually did a lot of... I had lots of people, like Betsy told me, "Ah, you know, I've been supportive of all your little things here, but I don't see how you're going to do anything progressive as state treasurer."

Well, I figured out how to do it. And we, six of us state treasurers formed the Investor Network on Climate Change, on Climate Risk, I think, which is still happening today. We did a lot of good things. A lot on climate change and risk, trying to move the SEC. We wanted the SEC to require, like it requires in their M&A report, which is management and something, that they require from big corporations and people who are listed in the stock exchange that they describe how they're handling risks, and we wanted them to include climate risk.

Well, ten years after—people should just listen to me the first time I suggest something! Ten years after, SEC, I remember seeing it in the paper. SEC said, “Yep, we're going to include climate risk in there.” [laughs] Oh, it's tough being ahead of your time.

Wendy: Was the Exxon-Mobil campaign part of this?

Dale: Yes! I was just going to say that. So there's this great little group of radical nuns and priests, and SEIU. So people... And my friend, Sister Pat Daley, was one of them. And they would go every year down to Dallas to the symphony hall and present. And she, and Sister Pat Daley, she did this for lots of corporations with shareholder activity, you know, action, trying to get GE to clean up the Hudson River, and, you know, all kinds of things.

So they would go down, and one year they wanted my colleague, Denise Napier of Connecticut, who was a very powerful state treasurer. Controls everything, huge, you know, single, the single fiduciary of the pension fund, you know, whereas I was just one of nine or something. So she couldn't go, so they said, “Well, Dale, would you go?” And I said, “Sure.” So I went down, and Bob Monks, Sr. from here, who's a wonderful guy, I love him, he was part of that. So there's this group. And he's a Republican, right? And he, but he hates, he thinks shareholders have one day to be listened to, and Lee Raymond, who was the infamous chair of Exxon-Mobil, would cut off his microphone when Bob was giving his very educated impression of what, how Exxon-Mobil could be run better.

And so I go down to Dallas, and there's the radical nuns. They were wonderful. They always had, they always stay in this one place, and they always had pizza before we had this little meeting to plan out. And so we're planning out, and there's the place for shareholder resolutions, which is easy. That's when the shareholders talk. But the first two things are—on a meeting like this—are something, and then oh, the audit report.

And so Bob Monks, who's a great thinker, said, “I think we should not just be focused on the shareholder resolution part. We should say something in the auditor section. And Dale, you should say it.” [laughs] I remember, he said, I go [coughing noise]. I was down there for a pretty face! I was down there because I actually am a shareholder, I was representing the shares that we had in not just the pension fund, but in a couple of funds in the Treasurer's Office. So I said,

“Okay.” You know, because I’m a team player, I already told you that. And so, “What kind of things do you want me to say?”

So I got up there and it’s very intimidating. And he was there, and he had his finger on the red button to cut you off, and he said, so my question was, “I would like to know if you could please tell me how you are reserving for the risk of climate change? How much and how?” And he said, “Irrelevant and immaterial.” And actually, Bob wrote this up and I have it somewhere, it was in the Dallas news the next day, this little interchange we had. And Bob wrote it up in a book he wrote.

But, so he made, Lee Raymond made everybody laugh at me somehow. You know, like [laughs]. A silly little question. Something like that, and everybody tittered. And so I, then I was ad libbing, you know, I had done my line. So I said, “You know, I don’t think it is a laughing matter when the Treasurer of the State of Maine asks about the risk of climate change and how you’re reserving.” And so then he answered it, and he said it was, and he used particular words that allow him to not have to deal with it. Like, it was immaterial and something. So Bob Monks thought I had walked on water. He just was delighted by this. Where did I pull this out of? I have no idea, but I had this little interchange with Lee Raymond. And so we’ve been pals ever since. Well, we were sort of pals before that, but... It was, it was one of my finest hours to be truthful. You know, you rarely get to be at the right place at the right time to make a difference, and I got to do it. And so...

Wendy: It sounds like you’ve done that, actually, a few times in your life.

Dale: That is true. Well, you know, and I think it’s the...that is true. There’s lots of firsts. Like the first carpenter.

Wendy: I actually wanted to talk about that! So switching gears to employment now, so you go to college, but you don’t become a doctor, you don’t become a teacher, you become a carpenter. How did that happen?

Dale: [laughs] Yes, yes. That’s why it’s never good to ask me how, what kind of path should I take if I want to be a teacher. I... To me, what happened was I was a little boat on the water of the Vietnam War and the second wave of the Women’s Movement, and I was being tossed and...

So... I got through college, like I told you, barely [laughs]. And I was living in one of the women’s collectives on Governor Street in Iowa City, and my friend Linda brought in a clipping and laid it in front of me one day in the living room, and it said, “The International Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners will be accepting apprentices next Thursday.” And she said, “Dale, you should do this. You know how to use tools.” Oh, I forgot to tell you, back in Downtown Community School, remember back? They didn’t believe in teaching kids how to read until fourth grade. They believed that kids should do what they liked doing.

And what I liked doing, [laughs] I didn't like reading, I literally went to Iowa illiterate. I could not read. And that's in the third grade. But I did know how to use tools, because I would go to the shop class. I knew how, I made a little boat, I... Wendy, I never have, in my memory—and I'm 73—a time when I did not know how to use tools. And for a woman of my generation, that's quite something to say. I've always been handy.

So she said, she was referring to that, because she knew that, "You should go apply." So I applied, and I, we used my name. Because I knew, I knew they, you know, I was a girl. They weren't going to let a girl in. And this was a heavy construction local, like, not building houses, but building, like, the university buildings. Big buildings. Poured concrete and stuff like that.

So I... So my friend Hal... I filled it out, and there was also a section on this, you know, well, one, have you ever...no, I had that. I don't know if they asked me if I had ever been a communist, but I had to swear to that once I got in the union. I do, so I can't remember if it was written or sworn to. But there was a question, "Have you ever been arrested?"

Oh, I forgot to tell you. So I'd been arrested during the war in Vietnam for...which actually was a very important part of my education, because I had read all these books. There's wonderful books, *Clergy and Laity Concerned with the War*, you know, the Nuremberg Trials, Gandhi, Thoreau, I read all that and I decided that I could not not be heard. The place for a just woman in an unjust society is jail. So I sat down in front of a door when the Dow recruiter was there, there was big demonstrations everywhere, you know. I saw down, I was there for probably ten seconds and the police whipped me away and arrested me.

So we had to get, you know, I had to explain that away. So Hal went down with my application and said to the business agent, said, "Here we go." And he said, and he slurred across the pronouns. And he said, he pointed to the question about the arrest, and he said, "Do you think, how much trouble is this arrest going to be?" It was for disorderly conduct. They did not arrest me for moral, taking a moral position on the war [laughs], they arrested me for disorderly conduct. That was a real comedown.

But so he pointed, he said, "Does this matter? This disorderly?" He said, the business agent said, "No, no all the boys go get drunk on Saturday night and they, that doesn't matter." So then we had them. Because if they wanted to say, well, it was because...if they wanted to deny me, they couldn't deny me on that. And other than that, they couldn't deny me.

So then I went down and I took my application the next day, and oh, it was funny. He, his name was Tom, the business agent, and he did a double take that lasted, like, five minutes. I said, "Here's my application." And he looked at me and he said, "This is for your husband, right?" And I said, "No, no, it's for me." And he

looked at again and he said, “This is for, this is your brother here, Dale. This is a boy’s name.” And I say, “No, that’s me.” I might even have shown him my ID.

And so then he did this double take, and he walked back over to the filing cabinet, he leaned on it for a minute, he walked back, he said to me, “Well, you’re from the government, aren’t you?” [laughs] I, he said, “Well, they made a mistake. They should have sent a Black woman.” [laughs] And at that point, I said, “Look, this is me, I want to be a carpenter. Here’s my application.” It was amazing. So they took, they must have interviewed, like, 10 or 11, 15 people, and they took one apprentice, and it was me.

I guess sometimes they take lots of apprentices, but it was a recession or something. So that’s, it was feminism is the answer to your question, because what the Women’s Movement, what we were doing was sort of stretching the envelope of what women could be. And so applying to be an apprentice was doing that. So I did.

Oh, and there was two other reasons I think I got it. There were two evolved men on the Joint—who interviewed me was the Joint, three employers, and three union members. And two of the union members, one was a beekeeper who gave honey to the co-op, and the other was Lee Dewey who was the husband of the amazing Dr. Dewey, the head of the University of Iowa Student Health Service, and my doctor, actually, when I was there. And so he was married, he was a carpenter married to a doctor, and I think he had clearly worked through some things, and the two of them, I bet, stuck up for me.

Wendy: So what was the experience, were you the only woman?

Dale: Oh, yeah.

Wendy: What was the experience like?

Dale: It was grueling. It was just grueling. It was, at first it was physically grueling, a shock to my body. And I think they tried to make me quit. They put me sawing 2 x 12s all day long. 2 x 12s are heavy, like, you know, joists 14, 16 feet long, and taking them putting them on a radial arm saw, sawing, and taking them and putting them on a pile.

But once I got, you know, my body got used to that, it was more... Well, after that, then we entered a period of nobody would hire me. I was, so my first two years of apprenticeship, I bet I worked two months, three months, four months. Nobody would hire me. And I’d keep, I had to work at Henry’s Hamburgers for, you know, I forget what minimum wage was. Fifty cents or a dollar fifty, one of the two. And then they put me on the university buildings, finally. And I think it was actually because of affirmative action, because it was a big company with federal money that needed, from Minneapolis, who probably had to make a report.

And so then things went along until...fine, I have many great memories, until I knew something, until my fourth year. And when I started to know something, meaning I was more of a threat, I think. I would say, "Well, that's not square," or, "Why don't we do this?" And then I started getting harassed by these three, I call them my arch prick rivals. They're three brothers, actually. And laborers—I don't think one was a carpenter, I think they were all labor. And that's a whole other story you may not want to hear, but it culminated one day in them, they would put dirty objects, you know, pornographic or pornographic-like objects in my lunch box, or pinups where I'd hang my hat and coat. This was winter, and so we were in a little warm-up shack in the middle of the big post office mail room, you know.

And so I would complain to the foreman, and I would complain to the, I, you know, I said, and they would just say, "Boys will be boys. They're just, they want to just get to you." I said, "Well, they're getting to me." And so then the last straw, this one night at 4:30 when we quit, there was something, and I took down the pinup, I went to the superintendent's trailer, which was off the job, and I said, and he looked at me and he said, "Oh, you got another dirty picture, huh?" I said, "Yes!" I said, "You've got to stop this." But I was barely under control, I pretty much lost—as you will see the rest of this story—I had lost it. And so he said, "Well, boys will be boys. Can't do anything."

And so I took, I marched back to the, I took out my hammer from my tool belt. I marched back to the... Maybe I didn't. So that would have been quite something if I had taken out my hammer that early. But anyway, I marched back to the warm-up shed and I found one of the arch prick rivals and I took him by the scruff of the neck. He's like, up here, right? Six feet tall. And I said, "Who's been putting those dirty pictures where I, you know, in the warm-up shack?" And he says, "Oh, oh, I don't know, I don't know." You know, he's like, you know.

And I let him go and I continued to march to the warm-up shack, and I opened the door, and I said, "Okay!" I did have my hammer out by this time, and everybody's lunch box was lined up on the bench right there and I'm over here, next to the bench. And I said, "Who's been putting all those dirty objects? Who's been doing this?" And they go, "Oh, I don't know, I don't know." And I said, I took my hammer and I said, "Well, this shit has got to stop." And I took my hammer and I smashed it down through one of the lunch boxes, and this, of course, was the era of Thermos bottles, of glass. So they went pshhhh! You know, pfft.

And I, by that time I had run out of threats [laughs]. I mean, yeah, as if I could threaten my way to a solution of this. And so I put my tools away and I marched down to the City Hall, and it was almost 5:00. And I went into the human, human resources, or...anyway, like the EEOC, but it was local, and there was only one secretary there. Nobody was there. And I said, "Well, I haven't been discriminated. I got the job and everything. But they're, here's what they're, they're putting dirty pictures up and they're, you know, writing things on the

bathroom, and they're doing..." And she said, "They can't do that! You sign here and here and here!" And she gave me the federal form and the state form and, you know, EEO, equal opportunity [laughs].

So I did. And, you know, the federal one was backed up for five years, and the state one was backed up for two years. And so the local one was the one that got to it first, and they found probable cause that I had been discriminated against and harassed. And what that did for me was allow me to finish my apprenticeship, because I had gotten to this level of anger and agita that... So this, so after that happened, I, my image of how it went was, I was in this beautiful glassy bubble surrounded by the protection of the laws of Iowa City, Maine, Iowa, and the United States, and it drove them nuts. I would just prance around. And then the harassment stopped from, "Gee, I wish I could get the city to pay for my lawyer!" [laughs] I'd just pull my hard hat down over my eyes and I'd say, "Yeah. Pretty good deal, huh?" And I got through the rest of my apprenticeship that way. Nobody touched me.

So I always tell people, use the laws that women fought and died for. And Black people and others, but in this case, it was sexual harassment.

Wendy: So when you moved to Maine, you moved to Maine as a carpenter?

Dale: Yes, actually. I had written *Against the Grain*, a carpentry manual for women, which was published by the Iowa City Women's Press, and they had said, "We're going to do a skill series, Dale. Barb's going to do *The Greasy Thumb* on auto mechanics, and we want you to do the carpentry one." I said, "Okay." [laughs] So I took a year and wrote that and did the illustrations of that. And so... What was your question?

Wendy: I forgot that you had written a book!

Dale: Oh, right!

Wendy: If you wanna...

Dale: Yeah, but you asked some...

Wendy: About moving to Maine.

Dale: Oh, yeah! Oh, well, so because the book opened, books open doors for you. And I didn't know that, but... So Charlie Wing at Cornerstones called me up and said, "We'd like you to do a house building for women's course." Which is quite famous for, it's still famous in certain circles, from like, 1978, I don't know, '77, I don't know if it was... must have been '78 to, you know, early '80s, somewhere in there.

I would come to Maine and stay in Brunswick and teach this class, which was all women. It was great. And we would basically teach people who didn't know how

to build houses how to build houses. And then after I did that for a while they offered me the head of hands-on education, which is, then I would teach everybody who didn't know how to build houses how to build houses. And that was fun, it was a great job.

Wendy: And you moved...

Dale: I moved, yes, in 1980.

Wendy: Okay, so how, I know you also started, I believe, Women's Unlimited?

Dale: Yeah.

Wendy: So can you talk about the history of that and how that...

Dale: So I was at Cornerstones one day...this is my memory of it. Jane Gilbert who was at the Department of Transportation in affirmative action, she came and she said, "A group of us," meaning Women's Legislative Agenda Coalition people, so, you know, the labor training people, and the DHS training people, and the Women Working Community, and all these women's groups, WIC, had created a pilot program, had funded—oh, the DOT was funding it. Probably Jane said, "I'll fund this if you'll put your imprimatur on it."

So it was the Mother Trucker, what became known as the Mother Trucker Program for AFDC women to get their Class II driver's license. And I was, Jane wanted to hire me to do it. So I did it. And it was wonderful. It was like, six months. We created the curriculum. And then what happened—and Jane and I got, and the DOT was very much a part of it, hands-on, and hired some of the women, and something like, I don't know, I bet there was, to begin with, 15 to 20 women, and three-quarters of them got their Class II license. Including me! I decided I should do it, too.

So then what happened was, people didn't stop calling and, you know, wanting. When the funding was done, the program was done. So Jane and I said, "You know, I think we should do, we should form a program." Which was Women Unlimited. And we, it was very interesting. We were so collegial and trusting of each other. Nobody would ever act this way now, they would want to have signed everything before. But I would, I remember even starting a year of Women Unlimited and getting a month or two into it before Jane had gotten, secured the funding from Federal Highway. But it was wonderful to work that way. And, you know, no "gotcha!" It was a perfect public-private partnership is what it was.

And government is its most effective, I think, when it partners with nonprofits or community-based organizations or NGOs, because government can only do a policy, which has no emotion and no heart, it just is there. But the, when you get or fund or help a nonprofit or an NGO who has passion for desegregating the economy based on sex or economic equity for women, then you get, then things start to move. That's my theory.

So we did that for years, and lots of women—like, hundreds of women—got good-paying trade and technical jobs. And there weren't any, there wasn't any comparison, like it didn't keep track of the wages of the women I was placing in jobs compared to what DHHS or Labor was, which was, you know, hair stylists and CNA, nurses and CNAs. So I had to invent it. I had to create my own little statistics, and we beat them by, of course, two, three dollars an hour, you know. Anyway...so that's how.

Wendy: What were the years for Women's Unlimited?

Dale: Oh, well, it's like 20, 28 years. Like, so 1987, we started at CMVTI in a little corner, a little cubbyhole, and to when, unfortunately, the employees embezzled and killed it. And I just went to the trial just last January, I think. So I would say until, like, around 2015 or something like that. Yeah...

Wendy: Well, we are running out of time, but I wanted to ask...

Dale: Yes, is your little device...

Wendy: ...what you're doing now?

Dale: So now, yes, so... From being a State Treasurer, I went to Maine Housing. I was appointed by Governor Baldacci, and I really loved that. That was, we did really good work. We got green building standards and contractor standards to try to not have the, to have the people were getting big money, right? Big money from the government, our taxpayer dollars at work, not to misclassify workers or require them to have worker's comp, you know, all good kinds of things like that. But it seems that Governor LePage did not, and Poliquin...what was his first name? He's so easily forgettable. Anyway, let's not remember.

They, Poliquin, they witch hunted me out of state government, basically. And Poliquin did it in order to get elected to the Second District. It was so clear. He started making accusations. It's so easy to make accusations. It was, remember, it was the Great Recession, and so things were hard. And the only thing that was keeping the construction industry, the real estate and construction, was the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which Maine Housing had a huge job doing several programs, weatherization and the low-income housing tax credit, which the feds were keeping—we basically kept that industry alive. And it was all with historic buildings, which of course cost more to rehab. So he started flinging around, "Oh, you know, how can you have an affordable apartment if it cost \$300,000 to build it?" And on its face, that's a very good question. But it's, mostly by... Nothing had changed, except that they were all historic buildings, there were other regulations, you had to, you know...

Anyway, so then I'm, so I'm an urban farmer. I have a vineyard of eight grape plants, and which I've made wine three years, and one year it was good. Some of it was good. And I have peach trees and pear trees, blueberry. Which is basically

getting back to my raising sheep in high school, and I do have a whole farmer thing going.

And then I'm on the Equality Community Center board, which takes a lot of time, and I'm on the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation board, which I really like a lot, because we're really deep diving into equity, and redoing all our policies so that we're more equitable. Oh! And in music. I'm playing my cello in three groups, including the Portland Community Orchestra. And the UCCCOO, which actually you've never heard of, but it stands for the Unitarian Universalist Community Church—which is the one in Augusta—Occasional Orchestra. Which is not occasional anymore, because it was, it's ten years old, ten, eleven years old. And I play the cello. And...

Wendy: Are you doing community theater?

Dale: I was! I was doing, like... Why, did you ever go to Monmouth?

Wendy: Yeah!

Dale: *The Pirates of Penzance* or something?

Wendy: Exactly!

Dale: Did you get to hear, see the one where I got to be a policeman?

Wendy: I think I did!

Dale: That was, that was the pinnacle of my career [laughs]. Because there were, it was, like, instead of a member of the chorus, we were, there were five of us policemen or something. Anyway, it was, I loved doing Gilbert & Sullivan, it was a dream. So I did that for ten years. Yeah, that was wonderful.

Wendy: Well, is there anything I didn't ask you about that you would want to add to this?

Dale: Well, only when you ask what I've done. The other thing is the kids, raising kids and putting them through college, which they now are all through college. Just, Dani and Thea just graduated this year, but they didn't get to graduate. I mean, they didn't get to have the ceremony. So that's a whole job, too, being a co-parent to those kids.

But I'm sure I'll think of something, but we certainly have covered [laughs]. It's sort of fun, you know, going over your life.

Wendy: You've had quite a life.

Dale: Yes, I have. I've had a good life.

Wendy: Is there anything you want people in future years to take from this? Especially anything you would like to tell them, either about your life or about what they might think about their lives?

Dale: Well just, I always, giving advice always sounds, you know, top-down. But I think one of the lessons of looking at my life is being able to be flexible, and be the little boat that gets rocked wherever, and then grow where you're planted. Actually, that is one of my philosophies. Well, I think it's one of my philosophies, because I've had to be [laughs]. Oh, I'm over here now, alright! Well, I'll work on climate change, and that.

And you've got to be assertive. You've got to be, you've got to stick up for yourself, and also the... My whole apprenticeship, which I could tell stories forever on, but what I really learned there was there's no such thing as a silly question, and you've got to ask it. Because I was the girl, right? There was all this little class for four years of boys and one girl, and they would laugh. They laughed at me the whole time. I would ask a question and they'd say, "Oh, McCormick doesn't know what a joiner is!" You know, they would, you know, and then at the end of these four years, we had an apprenticeship contest, and I beat them. They were not listening. They didn't know how to lay out a bottom plate, they didn't know how to lay out a stair stringer. Only two of us did out of all those guys. So what's the lesson there? Always ask your questions. Because guess what? Somebody else doesn't know, either. They are waiting for you to ask it.

So...

Wendy: Anything for young queer people who might be listening to this? I mean, those are good lessons for young queer people, too, but...

Dale: Yes, no, they are. Yes, that's true. Well, it's so much, I feel like they're ahead of me in many cases. Things have changed, thank God, so much from my day to now. I just love it. I love being around young queer people, like the Gay Camp is just the most fun for me. And I'm always so, I'm always so surprised and just filled up that they like it, too. They like talking to us veterans. There's a lesson in there somewhere. And like, remember when Andy said, "Dale, you were born cool." I said something like, "Being gay wasn't cool back when I..." and he wrote in the chat, "Dale, you were born cool!" I mean, that, I'm still surfing on that wave! So that was like, a month ago or something. It was such a wonderful thing.

Wendy: Well, thank you, and thank you for doing this outside in the midst of the COVID quarantine pandemic.

Dale: Oh, no, I love, I'm trying to figure out what I'm going to do during the winter, because... You know what I've decided? I think we all have to invest in some warmer clothes. No, really.

Wendy: I think on that note... [laughs]

Dale:

Yeah...