

DIANE ELZE INTERVIEW – 6/3/99

This is Madeleine Winter (MW). I am sitting here with Diane Elze and it is June 3, 1999 and we're going to talk about lesbian politics in Maine.

Diane Elze (DE): Okay, and we should note that we are sitting in the kitchen of Sive Neilan, a great lesbian in Maine. (Laughs) Owner of New Leaf Books in Rockport. Do you know that fact?

MW: No, I did not.

DE: Ahh Madeleine, Sive owned New Leaf Books in Rockport for years. I forget how many. And then it moved to Rockland and after a while she sold it. But it was a women's bookstore. It was a gorgeous bookstore. And it was of course the center of much lesbian activity in the midcoast area. So.

MW: I will follow-up on that one.

DE: Yes, an aside to the interview.

MW: Absolutely.

DE: Yeah. So let's see. I was involved in the organizing of *Our Paper*. But Fred Berger spearheaded that. Ah, but there were a number of us who were on that organizing committee. So *Our Paper* and also Maine Lesbian/Gay Political Alliance, the organizing of that. And Maine Lesbian Feminists, that was organized in '76 and that lasted a number of years. And I was also involved in the AIDS Project as a case manager. And, I was also involved in organizing Outright, the Outright group in Portland and did that for a number of years. And I was also involved in the Portland in the Portland women's community. And the newsletter that we had at the time called *The*

Common Scold. And, Take Back the Night, and Wilde/Stein Club when I was a student at the University of Maine in Orono. I was involved in Wilde/Stein Club.

MW: What years were that?

DE: Well I went to Orono in '75 so I probably became involved in the Wilde/Stein Club in '76 and I graduated in '78. So those – from '76-'78. And I was involved with Linda Monco In organizing the greater Bangor Rape Crisis Center. And I also worked with Spruce Run in Bangor.

MW: So are you originally from Maine?

DE: No.

MW: No.

DE: No, I'm originally from Albany, New York. But I moved to Maine in 1972 from Springfield, Massachusetts and I was coming out from '72 to '75 (laughs). It took me a while, yes, yes. So when I was involved in Wilde/Stein Club then I started to help organize the Symposiums. Ah, and I don't remember what year "lesbian" was added to the name of the Symposia. That would be something to track down. Because now it's called the Maine Lesbian/Gay/Bi/Trans Symposium. And for several years even when Maine Lesbian Feminists was a sponsor, it was known as the Maine Gay Symposium. So when MLF – that surprised me. MLF sponsored it – was a co-sponsor in 1977 but it was still called the Maine Gay Symposium. So that surprised me when I realized that because you would have thought we would have gotten "lesbian" into the title.

MW: We can look that up.

DE: Yeah, yeah. And then I was involved, of course, in the theater productions, the famous theater productions of Oklahomo. And ah, though I had a peripheral part in

that, I was the dyke patrol. The dyke patrol had organized for Phyllis Austin's Halloween party in Litchfield, Maine. Nancy Gentile and I got this dyke patrol together. And we composed a song to the tune of Toreador (laughter) and it was great fun. Dyke patrol marched into Phyllis', Phyllis Austin's Halloween party. So then ah, so dyke patrol was invited to have a part in Oklahomo at the Symposium. So that was fun. And then of course Susan Henderson wrote Stargaze and then several of us wrote Gayside Story.

MW: So what's, move back a little bit to the dyke patrol. Now is that for just to have a fun—

DE: Oh yes it was just a fun thing.

MW: It wasn't like a real—

DE: Yeah, it was a fun thing. We only did two appearances. I don't think we ever appeared at a, at a, at a demonstration or an event. We didn't. But we had, of course, army uniforms (laughs) berets. We looked like Che Guevara. We had berets and army uniforms and we had dyke patrol on the back of our shirts. I still have my shirt. Oh damn I should have worn it for the Symposium. But I still have my dyke patrol shirt. So that was fun. So yeah it was just a fun thing, but it made a big impact on the Halloween party.

MW: I'll bet. In Litchfield, Maine.

DE: (laughter) It was fun, yeah.

MW: Can you talk a little bit about the, we were, you were active in the organization of MLF, the beginning of it?

DE: Yeah, umhum.

MW: The beginning of it and kind of talk about how that came into being and why.

DE: Yeah, well what I remember about it was it was an idea that blossomed at the Symposium that year and there was an organizing meeting. That was in, ah, it would have been the Symposium of '76.

MW: Okay.

DE: And it was, the meeting was held on the last day of the Symposium. I think I missed part of the meeting because I had to leave in order to hitchhike back to Bangor. I was hitching in those days. And ah, and so I believe that there may have been a meeting the month after um, and what I remember about MLF, I mean it was amazing because we would meet in different parts of the state, I believe monthly. We had monthly meetings in a different, at somebody's house. So we were in Sydney and we were in Bar Harbor. I remember the Bar Harbor meeting because Nikki Nickerson cut my hair. And she would come to the meetings and she would always cut people's hair and I had long hair at that time. And she gave me my first dyke haircut at the Bar Harbor meeting.

MW: That's always a memorable moment.

DE: And we met in Farmington. We met in York County in Kennebunk. We met in Portland. We would go all over and have meetings. It was really wonderful. We met in Belfast. Ah, and what else. We formed a political action committee. Kate McQueen was involved at that time. Barbara Robideau was very involved. So we started to have separate political action committee meetings. And I think that the bill that would have come up after '76, after MLF organized, MLF did some work on that civil rights bill I believe along with NOW and the other folks. That was before MLGPA of course. We had Lowie Hayes would often do child care. Lowie Hayes who now works for South End Press in Boston. Lowie was a student at College of the Atlantic. And Lowie was

the big child care person. And we had very ah, we had very many debates about child care because some of us, and Nan Stone remembers this, some of us felt that, that women without children should do the child care at MLF meetings. And give the mothers a break. Well that was not a very popular view. And so (laughs) so Lowie and I offered to do child care but Lowie more than me. And ah, what else do I remember? Actually, another I think turning point in some ways for MLF was the whole issue of recovery and women coming in who were in recovery and being very visible and vocal. And the early MLF meetings – there would be quite a lot of drinking that we saw to. (laughter) Sex, drugs and rock n' roll!

MW: That's right.

DE: It was, and also workshops and political discussions. And, it was really amazing though because, really, it was like the Symposium, women would come from all over to these meetings. We did a newsletter and I know that I, while I was at the University of Maine at Orono, I did the newsletter quite often because I mailed it out from the Student Government office and got caught a couple of times. But it was free postage.

MW: You can't beat that.

DE: Well it wasn't free. It was free for MLF, but not free for the student government. Ah, oh but anyway getting back to the discussions around do we have alcohol at meetings. Do we not have alcohol? What I remember was that I think there was a certain group of women who stopped coming to the meetings because of the no alcohol policy. What I don't remember is if the no alcohol policy was for every meeting or just for particular meetings. I don't remember. And I wonder, has anybody, does anybody had, Jean Sickney in Belfast, does Jean have back issues of the MLF newsletter?

MW: I don't know but I think Nan does.

DE: Does she?

MW: Yeah because she's donating a bunch of stuff.

DE: Oh great.

MW: I'm going to be interviewing both of them.

DE: Yeah, because Jean then did the newsletter for a very long time, a very long time. Ah, it was really, it was remarkable because it really did break the isolation. And I, and I would hitchhike oftentimes to meetings because I was not, I had no car. And sometimes I would get a ride or I'd get a ride home but oftentimes I had to hitchhike. So we would do that. Also Waterville, we met in Waterville. We met – Connie Huntley's, where is Connie Huntley? Connie Huntley was very active in MLF. I met Connie when she was a student at the University of Maine at Orono. She was very active in the movement of women who were receiving AFDC to ah, to not have that count against financial aid. And so she was very politically active. She was in Skowhegan at the time. Connie Huntley may live in Bangor now. And Nadine Loafs, who lives outside of Augusta. Does Nadine live in Mt. Vernon I think with Deb. What's Deb's last name? But anyway Nadine lives I think in the Mt. Vernon or Readfield area. And Nadine had a daughter ah, a young daughter at the time, Justine. And Nadine of course was very involved in the child care discussions. What else? What else? What else?

MW: What, I mean, you said there were political action groups? What kind of—

DE: Yeah we had a political action committee. So what did we do beside have meetings? (laughs) What did we do? See this is what, I won't remember everything.

MW: That's okay.

DE: I wonder if I have back issues of the newsletter at home that might refresh my memory in some box somewhere. I should look. Because I know that I kept back issues of *The Common Scold* and I donated the extras to the Portland room at the Portland Public Library. (chuckles)

MW: The missing, some missing stuff.

DE: Well what did we do? I think, we worked on the civil rights bill. We probably worked around some reproductive health issues if there was legislation. What else did we do? We probably did workshops at the Symposium. But I can't remember us doing any kind of, I don't remember us doing any kind of civil disobedience action or, or demonstration or anything. Those years would have been what, '76, '77, '78. I was still a student. I'm just thinking out loud right now. And then I moved to Portland. And when I moved to Portland I got a job at the runaway shelter down here for girls, Fair Harbor. So I started to miss some MLF meetings because my work schedule was so crazy. I was working a lot of weekends.

MW: It sounds like also that it was like a support and—

DE: Oh very much a social and support group, very much so. And there were a few of us who wanted MLF to be political, to do some political work. Ah, but that was not a unanimous position. Hundreds of women came through that organization.

MW: That's amazing.

DE: Women would, there would be new women at every monthly meeting from some corner of Maine. Women would use it to, as a way to meet folks when they moved into Maine. They'd use it as a way to figure out whether they wanted to move to Maine. Ah, so it was primarily a social and support network.

MW: So did you have like parties or?

DE: Oh yes, we had parties, we had dances. It was a way for women to connect so that we might get together at some other time. I think that, what was the bar outside of Augusta? It wasn't, what was that bar?

MW: You know I just saw it. A new bar in Augusta.

DE: It might come to me. Well it wasn't, what's the one in downtown Augusta?

MW: Is that PJ's or Papa Joe's?

DE: Papa Joe's, but this was outside of Augusta on the road to, on Route 3. And they started to have ladies nights. And I think that came about because of MLF. Mitzi was very involved with MLF I believe, Mitzi was. Ah—

MW: And you also were involved in MLGPA?

DE: Yes, there were a number of us involved in that. Dale of course and she gave great impetus to that. Richard Steinman was, Barb Wood was. A bunch of folks. Yeah.

MW: And how did that come, come about? I mean what was the impetus to start it?

DE: Well what was um, certainly Dale going to the Democratic National Convention, that was that year wasn't it? And what year was Charlie Howard murdered, it was that year —

MW: It was '83, I believe.

DE: '83. Dale going to the Democratic, being a delegate to the Democratic National Convention. Eric Rofes coming up, I think it was Eric in Boston at the time still, and Eric came up for the Octoberfest that the leather club did, the Harbor Masters. And I

remember didn't we have a meeting at Octoberfest, a workshop on starting a statewide organization. So it was that also. I think it was the culmination of a number of events. And then I remember that we had meetings at Doug Strong's church in Augusta, the Unitarian Universalist Church in Augusta. And I think our early organizing meetings were there. Harold Booth from Augusta was involved I believe, his honey, Dan. When did Harry come into it, was Harry? I don't remember when Harry came into it, Harry Gordon was very key for many years.

MW: I ...

DE: Yes he was.

MW: Oh okay, I'm trying to place him.

DE: Yeah. And he was the secretary of MLGPA I think for a very long time. So I think it was, I think it, it was those events. Ah, Dale going to the Democratic National Committee. Dale talking about the need for a statewide organization, Charlie Howard being murdered and everything that came together around that. Having people mobilized. Ah, and then Octoberfest, Octoberfest I think was a very important event. I know it was significant for me because I think there was this chasm between the leather community and the political community. And Phil Gatal who was the head of Gay Peoples Alliance at the time, Phil was a student at USM. Phil I believe was a friend of John Preston. John Preston of course was in the Harbor Masters and I think to some extent it might have been, he would be I think important to talk to and Phil's in New York. And Barb Wood is still in contact with Phil so Barb knows how to reach Phil. But I think Phil and John's friendship was key in getting that event off the ground. And it was very significant because political people came together with folks who we didn't perceive as political. Ah, but I think that bridging that chasm was very important because certainly the Harbor Masters were a very important source for funds for fundraising, community building and certainly for AIDS activism when HIV hit. Ah, and it was a nice bridge that got built. Um, so after that event I know that one of my tasks for

Our Paper was I did a, I think it was a two part, two seri—two part interview with members of the Harbor Masters because I had had all different kinds of notions about the leather community. Assumptions that I was making. And, and I remember walking into Butch and Ralph's apartment and going up the stairs, and of course wondering, wondering what I would see when I got to the top of the stairs, if I'd see this dungeon-like place with leather harnesses everywhere etc. etc. And I will never forget that Ralph was in the kitchen making wedding cakes (laughs) so I thought, oh this is important, Elze (laughter). Oh dear, so I interviewed him, I interviewed Ralph, Butch and Toy, Steve. Steve, what was Steve's last name, he was the first man, I think, in Maine _____ to die from AIDS related complications. So he went back to Syracuse to do that. Um, so that, so those are I think some of things that got MLGPA off the ground. And, [pause] and I think, I think what helped make MLGPA so successful was Dale's brilliant leadership. She was a brilliant leader. She was. Ah, and then of course there were a lot of committed folks. But she really had a vision for coalition building.

MW: Yeah, I mean I don't know this chronologically, that doesn't really matter, then you were involved with the AIDS Project?

DE: Yeah, when did I go to work for the AIDS Project, yes? Well, I organized, oh there was that committee for the protection of Gay and Lesbian Youth. I have to go back to Outright to figure this out because I applied when Gary Anderson was the director of the AIDS Project, I applied for a case manager job and didn't get it. Um, but so I said to myself, okay well if I don't get that job, I'll organize the youth group. Ah, and so that would have been yes, 1987. Because that was also the year, 1987 was my very queer year because I was organizing Outright. I was also working, I had a part time job working for the Maine Association for Handicapped Persons editing their, being the editor of their newspaper. So I was working with Kathy McGinnis. And ah, and then also we were organizing for the march on Washington. And so um, so I did a big piece of that getting the buses together etc. to go to the march on Washington. There were a few of us who worked on that. And, and then I participated in the civil disobedience action at the Supreme Court. Ah, and what else was happening that year? There was

a lot going on that year. So ah, so I got a hold of Charles Dwyer and Tom Haggerty and Andre, what was Andre's last name, it was, Tom's boyfriend at the time. And so we started to meet regularly to organize the youth group. And, and we had our first meeting, it would have been I think in October of '87. Ah, so then I must have gone to work for the AIDS Project in '88 or '89. Bob Mitchell was the executive director and he hired me.

MW: _____ (laughter)

DE: Ah, we just did not know how sick Bob was at the time. It was very unfortunate, yeah.

MW: Was he the one that was removed from his position?

DE: Bob was the one, no, Bob was the one who resigned. He was hired apparently, [pause] he had been at what, the Maine Mental Health Foundation and there was reason to believe, I forget all the details, but there was reason to believe that he had embezzled money. Well the AIDS Project hired him. So did the board check his references? Who knows? Ah, and, and there was reason to believe that he embezzled money at the AIDS Project and there was also reason to believe that he was using drugs. And then also using drugs with clients at the AIDS Project. But then he went off to Hawaii. He resigned and went off to Hawaii with his boyfriend who he had do, who he had hired to do accounting work (laughs) at the AIDS Project. It was messy! And I think he had, came back, I don't know what, I, I don't know what happened after that because I think I had moved. I moved in '92 to go to school. So, yeah so he did not have a good history, but he got away with a whole lot. Now how does that happen?

MW: Yeah.

DE: Ah, yeah. So I worked at the AIDS Project and I really, I loved my work at the AIDS Project because I got to do a lot of what I was really interested in, social work, also community education. Ah, and public demonstrations (laughs) yeah.

MW: Do you want to talk a little bit about some of those?

DE: Oh that? Well the big one, and I just, it's hard for me to believe that there was such an uproar among some folk about it. But I think that's where our internalized homophobia comes in. I think that is all about internalized homophobia and thinking that we can assimilate. Because when it comes down to it I don't think we can totally assimilate. And if we think that we can we're fooling ourselves. And I don't even think that that should be the goal.

MW: Right.

DE: So, so yeah, I mean Jasper Wyman of course sends out these hateful letters to his membership saying that we deserve AIDS and then he wants to walk in the AIDS Walk?

MW: So what was that about?

DE: Give me a break. Well, I think he was trying to (sighs) to present a good public face and, see I think that's the wedge stuff. I think it's a good example of how the right wing tries to put wedges between ah, between members of the gay and lesbian community. So in this regard it was trying to put a wedge between some of us. Other times the right wing will put a wedge, will try to put a wedge between black folks and gay folks. Well this was a wedge between gay and lesbian folks and gay and lesbian folks. So he wants to be a good guy and walk in the AIDS Walk to show that he's concerned about AIDS and HIV when we know what he sends out in his mailings. So it is a lie, it is a sham, it won't work. And so some of us organized to target him during that walk. And we got criticized ah, for doing that. And, and I believe that there may

have been a member of the board who thought I should be fired from the AIDS Project. Majorie was the director at that time. Um, but we really have to, I think we have to call a lie a lie. And his presence there was a lie and it was there to drive a wedge between members of the gay and lesbian community. And if any gay or lesbian person at that time anyway – I don't know what Jasper's doing now – but if they thought for a second that that was for our benefit, that his presence was for the benefit of people with AIDS, they were fools. They were just kidding themselves. Um, so that was what that was about. Oh then, Toby Simon, Toby organized this group. What were we called? The hags but it was the something hags. Oh, it might come to me.

MW: I have seen some pictures.

DE: Yeah.

MW: But I can't remember either what the group was called.

DE: Yeah, oh I might remember and I probably have some photographs at home. But we were a little, we were a little street theater group and ah, oh and when Louis Sullivan, when Louis Sullivan came and spoke ah, we did a little demonstration outside at City Hall. And we also went to and participated in Kennebunkport the year that Act Up went to do a demonstration in Kennebunkport around George Bush.

MW: That was a major, major event.

DE: Yeah, that was – and so the hags went there. But I'm forgetting our full name isn't that awful. I still have my douche bag. (laughter) We had, we would wear these douche bags (laughter) and we'd have red water ah, we used food coloring to spill blood you know. Oh, we also participated, I think there was a demonstration for reproductive freedom in Monument Square. So we participated in that. Ah I'll remember the name. It will come to me.

MW: I can also look it up.

DE: Yeah. And ah, and what else, what else about the AIDS Project. You know we had a hard time, it was a struggling organization in many ways. But that's all been documented, apparently. Though it's a very sort of a, it's a, it's the gentle version (laughs).

MW: That's what I've heard.

DE: I think. I mean the book has a lot of good facts in it but I think it is the gentle version you know.

MW: Yeah _____ community and similar terms.

DE: Yeah, yeah. You know what else is really important I think speaking of John Holverson and what John has done over the years and I think of Myles Wrightmeyer. Ah, the first ah, there was a small committee of men, Gary Anderson, well I think it was the folks that may have started the AIDS Project.

MW: That was the Gay Men's Health Group or something like that?

DE: Yes, yes – the Gay Man's Health Committee and they went into Deering Oaks Park and did those very first, the very first outreach education I think to men who were having sex with men in Deering Oaks Park. There may have been, I believe there was an article about it in one of the first issues of *Our Paper*.

MW: Right, that's what I thought.

DE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I think, well I think one of the sad things is that there is no statewide newspaper right now. I think *Our Paper* was so important.

MW: um hum, absolutely.

DE: It was such, I think it was a wonderful newspaper. I think for a period of years we tried to do investigative reporting, we tried to dig deep on issues, we tried to have a lot of political content and of course other content too. I think it was a great newspaper. And I think it's very sad that there isn't, that we're seeing gay and lesbian newspapers go by the wayside and being replaced by these glossy, glitzy magazines.

MW: Yeah I agree totally.

DE: Yeah. So—

MW: So and I know that you were also very instrumental in starting Outright in Portland.

DE: Yeah.

MW: How did that come about?

DE: Well again it came about because there was the committee, committee for the protection of gay and lesbian youth. A committee that was mostly professional. Conrad Wertz was on it. Oh, I have the list at home. A lot of folks Tony Scutcie, was on it. Ah, who was the teacher in Madison, ah, David, yeah I can see his, his face but who was involved in that, that court case with Dale. David ah, was it David? Was his name David? Oh, I have that all, I still have that file. And, and so, so that group and so I got involved in that group. Joanie Forester was involved and ah, and that group was mostly doing education around the state and doing some conferences. And there was nothing for gay and lesbian youth. So when I didn't get, so it was really a process of what better time to do it when I didn't get the job at the AIDS Project. I was working part time and I thought this, who else, who else? I mean I had a history in adolescent services. I worked for Fair Harbor for years ah, and also I, when I worked at Ingraham Volunteers I

developed the hotline for, the peer run hotline, for adolescents there, DIAL KIDS. So I thought you know who else? What better person really. Ah, and so ah, I called Charlie Dwyer and Tom Haggerty and we started to meet regularly and plan. We thought, my thought was that if the planning is, if our process is good the young people will come. They are out there. And it was ah, and so we had a good planning process I think. Um, we had to find a place to meet, that was a bit of a challenge. The YWCA denied us which was very disappointing to me because I had worked at the Y for years and I had been on the board for several years. And it was fear. It was fear and homophobia. Though the board I think, there were a number of board members who were all for it. But the executive director at the time who was not Nancy Connolly, Cynthia Baldwin ah, came down hard against it. So that was too bad because it would have been great for young people to be able to say, I'm going to the Y mom (laughs). And so our first meeting, so we planned it very carefully. Planning, planning planning, planning and our first meeting was at the end of October in '87 I believe. And we had what – four to six young people. Next time we met we had double that probably, next time we bet, we met we probably quadrupled it. It went up very fast, the numbers went up very fast. We met in the dance studio of Portland West Neighborhood on Brackett Street in the building that the Good Day Market was in. And we had a couple meetings up there and then Jerry Marks, who ran the youth programs at the Preble Street chapel, Jerry said yes, you could meet here. So we met in the basement of the Preble Street chapel for many years. Uh, and it was wonderful and then what we also did a lot of was education around the state. We had this wonderful – well and it, and Outright is still of course doing it – we trained young people to be speakers and we went to many schools, many conferences. There was a real hunger for that information. I think we expected it to be much rockier than it was. And Charlie Dwyer and I stomped the pavement and we'd go and meet with these youth organizations and youth professionals. And we also immediately joined up with the Cumberland County Child Abuse and Neglect Council, Lucky Hollander. She always had, Lucky always had an adolescent services coalition. So we joined it immediately and she was very supportive. She was very key. And ah, and we did a lot of education. And it was not as rocky as we would, as we expected which was a really nice lesson. There were so many people out there who would say to

us, oh we know that we have these kids and we just don't know how to help them. So they were very hungry for the information. And then the rest is history. Kathy Kidman has just been a star. What an organization builder she is, she, that is her forte. So she's really been able to build that organization brilliantly, brilliantly, brilliantly, brilliantly. Ah, I don't know what else.

MW: Were you involved at all with Act Up?

DE: Yes! (laughs) Well, I was involved in starting the first Act Up. Then there was this other Act Up.

MW: Yeah, tell me about that would you please?

DE: We'll see what can I remember.

MW: I mean all I know is that Dennis Lyons was vilified and I don't even know what the story—

DE: Well he was in the other Act Up.

MW: Right.

DE: Yeah.

MW: Yeah and, because I had a lot of friends who were in the second Act Up, like Bee Bell and those folks.

DE: Yeah, Bee yeah.

MW: So I never knew really what the split was about.

DE: Well I don't think I did either because I was gone by that time. My, my foray into Act Up was very brief. Jim, what's Jim's last name.

MW: Jim Wise.

DE: Jim Wise, yes. Ah, Jim was involved, I was involved, oh gosh oh, ho see I have such a bad memory lately. All I have in my brain is my dissertation.

MW: Yeah well that's understandable.

DE: But what did we do? We did a, we had, Larry Dansinger come, uh – we had this happen in Augusta and Larry did a civil disobedience workshop with us and we sponsored that. There were quite a few people there. And um, we did a demonstration outside the Bureau of Health. That was I believe our first demonstration and that was when Peaches worked at the Bureau of Health. So it was great. So Peaches on her blinds had put all across her blinds at each level she'd put Act Up, Act Up, Act Up. So when she closed her blinds (laughs) there it was, it was great. And, but I think, and then we had, I think we, the first, the first one, the first Act Up group um, I think our proudest moment, and it was our, oh our second I think and last action ah, at least with that Act Up. Ah, was doing a hit on Joe Brennan's campaign headquarters. And we got it together very quickly. I remember John Preston was there, Jim Wise was there, a bunch of folks. And it was loud. And the press came. And Joe Brennan's campaign was shocked. They did not expect it. And because Joe Brennan had come out that weekend, I think, in the newspaper saying that, oh he didn't really think there was a need for a gay and lesbian civil rights bill. And so we hit on them. And, Frank O'Hara came to the next MLGPA meeting which I think may have been that following weekend. So this all happened very quickly and Frank was shocked. And I'll never forget Sive, what Sive said to him. Because Sive was a big supporter, has been a big supporter of Joe Brennan's. And ah, and Sive was so powerful at that meeting. Ah—

MW: And she was the president of MLGPA then right?

DE: No, she wasn't president at the time. What year was that? (laughs) I was wearing too many hats, I know. Either Dale, either Dale or myself was the president. Maybe, maybe Dale was still the president. Gosh, you know I have to look at a calendar, I just don't know. It depends on what year this was, I forget what year this was. And, and it's probably all documented in *Our Paper*, hopefully (laughs). But Sive looked at Frank and said, and Sive of course has been one of those folks who's been involved in many different causes around healthcare, Central American, human rights in Central America, US out of Central America, all those things that Joe Brennan cared about. And she said to Frank, she listed these things. You know, we care, you know Joe Brennan cares about healthcare and about (END OF SIDE A)

DE: And US involvement in Nicaragua, and all these things that Sive had been active in also. And she said to Frank, what about our lives, Frank? What about my life? It was very powerful. And, Joe Brennan changed his position. At some point later just the way you know, Jim Tierney did. Ah, they realized that they needed us. So, now I think that Jim, probably Jim was involved in the second resurrection of Act Up because Jim was very committed to Act Up. I think I stopped after that, it might have been a time thing, I just was—

MW: Yeah Tess Ouellette and C.T. Butler were involved in that sort of thing?

DE: Oh, C.T. right, yeah.

MW: I've seen a picture of C.T. being dragged off by the police.

DE: Yes C.T. and Tess, yes, yes. What was the, oh and Toby Simon too. Toby who worked at the AIDS Project was very involved with—

MW: Yeah, she got attacked too for something—

DE: --Act Up. Yeah. Well see and this isn't, this is something Madeleine—you know I guess yes, I think Dennis was very divisive, very divisive. And I think that one of the issues, [pause] one of the issues that our community I think needs to face is what do we do when someone is so destructive and divisive and they might be that way because A) there's some pathology there, or B) they're an FBI plant. And, and Phyllis, my partner went to hear Margaret Randall speak and Margaret Randall was saying, (noise) that's the bird clock (laughs). Margaret Randall was saying that in some—she was talking about women's communities and how you can track people going, some folks going from one women's community to another and what they weave is destruction in their wake. Ah, and, and why wouldn't that be the case within the gay and lesbian community? Grassroots organizing that could be very effective, coalition building that could be very effective, why wouldn't the FBI send a destructive saboteur into our midst who is presenting themselves as a gay man or as a lesbian. And I just think we need to do something about the destructive, divisive folks and we haven't quite figured it out because we work so hard in trying to, sometimes include everybody and da da da da da and yes we should. We should give people some chances. But, if there is a clear pattern there of not being helpful then I think we have to start thinking about something else. And, and I'm not aware that the FBI has, has gone through any kind of transformation (laughter) about their fundamental purpose.

MW: Right.

DE: You know. So—it's just a thought (laughter).

MW: Just because you're being paranoid doesn't mean that somebody isn't out to get you right?

DE: Yeah really. And sometimes Phyllis will say, "Well, you know are they an FBI plant." And I'll say "Oh Phyllis, oh Phyllis."

MW: Yeah you don't—

DE: Well really when you think about it. I mean you don't want to start pointing fingers and accusing people, but the destructive behavior needs to be addressed somehow and it needs to stop. Because we spend far too much time on it that we could be spending organizing and raising money and doing all those other things we have to do. Ah, so I don't know.

MW: Yeah. So um, so how do you view kind of your whole Maine experience? I mean is that you know, fairly positive or?

DE: Oh yeah, yeah. Oh I do. I feel very positive about my Maine experience and I miss Maine. I was hoping to come back. It didn't quite work out that way but that's all right. I'll come back hopefully at some point. But no I feel very positive about it. I think that one of my strengths is maybe in starting things. And the brilliant organizational builders like Kathy Kidman can build those organizations. Ah, and so Maine provided me with a lot of opportunities to start things. And ah, and I think the stuff that I helped start was very important stuff. So I feel very positive about that. And, I do think, I know that some folks don't agree with this and we certainly have had lapses, it hasn't always been the case, but overall I think men and women in Maine have worked together quite a bit, more so than in other parts of the country. When I look and see how segregated the St. Louis community is, segregated by gender and segregated by race. Um, now probably if Maine had more people of color we would be more segregated by race because white folks just are still pretty clueless even though we're trying.

MW: (laughs) Don't you think that the reason that people work fairly well together—

DE: That it's rural.

MW: Rural and it's small and we need each other.

DE: Yes, absolutely, exactly. And I think that is the reason. That we're rural, we're small and yeah. And we've needed each other for the Symposium, for ah, the Maine Lesbian Gay Political Alliance. Probably for the Maine Rural Network. And I also think that we were blessed with some very conscious men. When I think about John Frank and Ken Mellensen who were very involved in early Wilde/Stein or Gay Peoples Alliance and Symposia. John Frank and Ken Mellensen, Tony Norton, Miles Wrightmeyer.

MW: Yeah you've just got an award from MLGPA.

DE: Yes, finally. He should get a lifetime achievement award. You know Miles was our choreographer for *Gayside Story*.

MW: Oh that's great.

DE: He was and Tony Norton, who of course is dead now, was our director. But those were very progressive men and very forward thinking, very feminist. So we were blessed with men like that. Ah, and, and so I think we have had a history. Now of course Maine Lesbian Feminist was more of a separatist organization and some of us, and there were separatist women involved in MLF as there were separatist women in the lesbian community. Ah, women living in ah, in different points on the separatist continuum and so that meant our need to, and some of us were involved in MLF who were not separatist, who were ah, involved with men in other organizations. Ah, but that filled the need for women-only space. Oh yes, now Maine we, we certainly had discussions about women-only space and it's been controversial at times. It has been controversial at some of the Symposiums. We have had to fight for women-only space. We have had to evict men from workshops. We have all of that history, still, of course. Ah, just as other places did. But overall I think that being a rural state men and women have worked together quite frequently, more so than in other parts of the country. Ah—

MW: Did you know any of the folks from Maine Gay Task Force?

DE: Yes, well Peter Prizer, Susan Henderson. Who played Farley Faggot? I was trying to remember his name. Frank, I believe Frank somebody, friend of Susan Henderson's ah, played Farley Faggot. And, oh that was a wonderful newsletter that Susan and Peter, I think it was primarily Susan and Peter that they put out.

MW: Yeah, and Stan Fortuna.

DE: Oh yes, Stan Fortuna.

MW: And ...

DE: Who?

MW: Tim Bouffard, did you know him?

DE: Tim Bouffard, gosh I don't remember Tim.

MW: He did some of the art work.

DE: Yeah, but I remember meeting Stan later. Yeah.

MW: Yeah, I'm actually, I'm interviewing him and Peter tomorrow.

DE: Oh great. What's Peter doing now?

MW: Um, when we're done here.

DE: Oh we can turn off when we talk about Peter (laughs) (END OF TAPE)