

Steve Born
No codes

First hour: Tracy
Second hour: Alanna

Transcript

Codes

Alanna: Alright, so it is Monday, November 14, 2016. We are in Lewiston, Maine. There are two interviewers. Alanna Larrivee. Alanna is A-l-a-n-n-a, Larrivee is L-a-r-r-i-v-e-e.

Tracy: And Tracy Payne, T-r-a-c-y P-a-y-n-e.

Alanna: Could you say and spell your name?

Steve: I'm Steve Bull. B-u-l-l. Well, Steven with a v.

Alanna: Alright, and uh, if you can say your age, if that's OK.

Steve: I am 64, soon to be 65.

Alanna: So would you like to start us off?

Tracy: Yes, first I want to tell you that you can refuse to answer any questions and any time you want to stop the interview, you can stop it. Uh, let's see, would you like to start with a topic or do you want to do your family background?

Steve: We could do, uh yeah, maybe chronologically start off with the early years.

Tracy: Um, so, um, when and where were you born?

Steve: I was born December 29th, 1951. Um, my parents had a home on Sea Road in Kennebunk, Maine. Um, and that's where I spent the first 13 years of my life. And then we later built a house on on the harbor in Cape Porpoise which is part of Kennebunkport. Um, we just sold that last year, actually. But it was, um, you know, rather idyllic, um, childhood with, um, one wrinkle of being very conscious at a very young age, I was fairly precocious. I guess I still am. Um, that, you know, aware that I was gay and different, which I'm, I kind of tell youth today, it's um, even though there's a lot of abuse with it, um, I think it's, it's been really good for me in so many ways because I never, I knew I was different, I always use the expression, I am, I live in this society but I'm not of it. I don't share its values, the way it, things go on. So even then I had a sense of alienation which made me at a very early age, a very critical thinker. I was not brought up in a religious household. We went to the Unitarian church in Kennebunk, um, with its bell made by Paul Revere and Company. One of those great old white clapboard Unitarian churches. Um, at the age of 13, my parent's attitude was, after you turn that age, it's up to you. You know, whatever you want to do is, um, so we didn't have a particular, I never had that baggage that a lot of my friends did of, um, being raised with a heavy duty religion thing. So, I always liked the fact that, you know, I mean,

Family of origin

a lot of this is, there was a lot of pain being younger, being conscious of it and hiding it and using my sense of humor to divert conversations, and whatever, all these skills that you kind of develop when you're gay and different. But, um, if I can ramble on a little bit, there was a critical week for me when I was young, and it's ironic because when I brought it up to family members later who were shocked when I came out, I said but don't you remember this and that and that and they had no memory of it and I went, you're kidding me [laughs], I've been holding this my whole life. But I was probably 6 or 7 years old when I started kind of messing around with my neighbor who was two years older than me. And, I actually initiated it, um, and it was just kind of, um, mutual masturbation, that sort of thing, not that a lot of kids don't do it, playing doctor or whatever, but it got fairly intense. I mean, we really wanted to get together all the time. We'd go out into the woods, we'd, um, you know, we were like, playing with each other two or three times a week for probably two years.

Then one day we were up in his bedroom and his mother came home from shopping or something and of course it's inevitable it's going to happen at some point. So, she comes into his room and I didn't have time to pull my pants back on so I am sitting on the floor with my lower half underneath the bedspread and she comes over and says, "Steven Bull what have you got under there?" And she throws the thing and, you know, she screams, and she says, "You go home to your mother right now." I can remember this, every detail of this. Um, so I go back to my mother's, to our house next door, I'm lying there watching our black and white RCA TV, an episode of Super Man where he's like seeing through a wall and Lois Lane is tied up in a chair and bust through it. I remember this [laughs] whole thing, waiting for the call. So, then I hear the phone ring, and my mother answers the phone.

She goes, "[Gasp] [gasp!] oh no! Oh!" And my father was a traveling salesman. He was gone 5 days a week so this is like in the middle of the week and, so, then she says, "Well, I'll talk to Floyd when he gets home Friday night." So then I'm like, oh no, what, how is this gonna...and I started thinking, weaving stories of what happened, and this is only the first time or whatever, I don't know. But, being the Unitarian family we were and having a sort of, what I call, a fake democracy, um, where we had round table discussions when something came up for the family to deal with. Well, low and behold, that Sunday was on homosexuality and it wasn't a nice little thing. It was like, watch out for men who are lurking in the bushes across from your school and they want to get you into the car and they do awful things to you. And it was just, you know, it was the attitude of, it was in the late 1950s and that was just kind of what. So, I'm thinking, well that was kind of a general lecture, um, I know why it happened but maybe, maybe I'm gonna skate out of this. So then, afterwards, my brother and I are playing basketball in the driveway and my sister comes out and sits on the wall and says, "You're a queer, Steve." And, she had no memory of this at all. And I was like, oooh there must have been another meeting [laughs] I'm, I was not invited to [laughs]. So, you can imagine that that time then, in quick succession, I was, I think at that point I was like 9 years old, my brother was 13. We had a guest room in the house. My brother was moved out of my room into the guest room. Um, I forget but there were like four or five things that happened. The worst one, was my mother, who I was devoted to and so close to me, shut me off physically. So she started pushing me away because even Doctor Spock and the authorities of the day said it's an overprotective mother. You're smothering him. So, suddenly there was this cold break from my mother which totally um, devastated me. I mean it affected the rest of my life in a lot of ways. So, I kind of went inward. And what I ended up doing was reading. Um, I, um, reading, reading, and reading. Um, I remember the World Book Encyclopedia came out with a new

edition, um, for 1960. This is not long after this, and we ordered it and I would spend my days going to a different world [laughs] and reading. I memorized every state, world capitol, I, you know, I knew the populations of the top ten cities, in order, all this stuff. I became a fanatic. Um, withdrawn. I open, I, I entered a contest at the library for local school children and they had a book worm and every ring was 10 books and they had like 5 rings for the whole winter, thinking, well I got 12, I read 120 books that year and um, I really read 'em too, and some, you know, much beyond my age. But anyway, again, it's like, because of that experience I really grew as a person. I became extremely independent and when I ended up, oh, that's the other thing that happened a few years later. My brother and sister were literally the, those obnoxious, two most popular people in high school. My brother was captain of the basketball team, the football team, homecoming king. My sister was head cheerleader, uh, a majorette, she was prom queen, gorgeous, beautiful young woman. Uh, and my father got a, um, um, a raise and a promotion but it meant we had to move to New Jersey. So they waited a year for my brother to graduate from Kennebunk High School and, of course, I had witnessed their glory years myself, and I was so anxious to be able to go to Kennebunk High School.

But they said, well we can't wait for you. Um, and I immediately thought, oh not for the gay boy, you know. So, I applied to private schools and this is actually in, and they said if you can get a scholarship, we can't afford to send you to a boarding school.

Well, I was pretty determined, all that reading paid off, and I competed for a scholarship at Lawrence Academy in Groton, Massachusetts. And, there were about a 100 kids in the competition and I, I won it. I won a full four-year scholarship.

Um, I actually did my parent's a favor. They had two kids in college by the time I finished and they didn't have to pay a penny for me but it also fed my anger, uh, because my parents didn't come when I got on Cum Laude Society, when there were events in school, which during my years with my brother and sister, they were always there for everything. They didn't go to my graduation. We had phone calls on the weekends and my resentment just built up and built up. I became extremely alienated from my family. Um, and angry. And, in some cases, rightfully so. But it's so amazing, when I came out to them, when I was um, 21 years old, um, they were shocked. And all this stuff, all this crap I had kept [laughs] you know, was like, you know, they had no memory of it at all. And the irony of it is, my parents became active. There was an initial thing um, I, well this, now we dovetail with the Wilde Stein stuff, but um, I had to come out, basically. I, we needed a public spokesperson. No one was willing to do it, so in November 1973, when I was scheduled to be on TV in Bangor, when this whole controversy was blowing up, um, I wrote my parents a letter, um, telling them I was gay, um, and told them I could not handle, um, a phone call. I wanted separate written responses from both of them. Because I wanted to know what each one of them thought. Well, evidently what happened is they, they sent a telegram saying that they loved me but I never got it [laughs]. It just, the irony, they, the mail, it just never got delivered. Um, so I was, you know, waiting and waiting, days and days, and then I called my sister, and I had already talked [???], and, um, she says, oh they, they sent you a telegraph right away. And, I was like, I never got it! And she says, oh no, no! [Laughs] So, anyway, my parents ended up, uh, coming up, um, from New Jersey. I met them at a hotel on Kennebunk Beach, owned by friends of ours who were at the Unitarian church and, of course, knew what was going on because I was in the papers every day. Um, and we spent the weekend talking. Um, um, my father had a little bit of a problem, um, he actually left, my parents each had their own desk in New Jersey and my mother gets up one morning and she has a thing from the

Wall Street Journal, and this is 1973, uh, about electric shock therapy that could cure, um, homosexuality. And, [laughs] I still get [??] about it because she said, well my mother never used foul language very much but she said I tore your father a new asshole because, like, someone's going to touch my child?! You know, but that was, that was just before, this is right on the cusp of the APA just changing um, just their position. Matter of fact, they changed it in a board meeting, I think, in the fall of '73. The general membership met in that next spring in '74 to make it official that it was no longer, uh, what do they call it, [Alanna speaks]. A yeah, yeah, a disorder. Yeah, it's not a disorder. But anyway, so within months my parents were active with the first Chapter of Parents of Gays which is precursor to PFLAG. Um, I've got the, I don't know if you saw it in my papers, I think I have a copy in there, but the first brochure that POG put out, um, has, I think 11 numbers in the country and 2 of them are my parents. [Laughs] One in New Jersey and one in Maine. And, um, it's funny, I, I never, they never really talked about all the calls that they got but I know they did. I know one woman who I'd grown up with, because they generally didn't share this thing, called up the one day I was there, and back home on vacation or something, I answered, and she said, Steve! And she had been brought up with this family by a single mom who, they were the only young women, um, at the beach, locals that wore bikinis. It was always the girls from Montreal that did that. But they were very kind of, you know, what was then called sexually provocative or something and ironically, she hated this, and her mother was really into makeup and bouffant hairdos, and all this stuff, so ironically, the youngest who had been calling my parents and she'd been suicidal and my parents helped her out of that. So after all this crap I'd been holding on to, it ends up my parents were, um, just incredible. [Alanna/Tracy background noise]. So, you ask one question. See, I can go like 20 minutes.

Tracy: No, that's great.

Alanna: Do you think maybe we can back up a little bit and do, um, talk a little bit about, um, maybe your experience at Lawrence, or, like your transition to the University of Maine, how, um, the UMaine culture was, and your time in both those schools?

Steve: Well, I went to an all-boys prep school which is pretty frustrating, um, and there was homosexuality going on then and those [??] would simply be expelled and disappear and suddenly they weren't there and it was never talked about but you heard rumors that two guys were caught in the, you know, bathroom of one of the, on a weekend afternoon or something. Um, but on the other hand, it was an incredibly good education. Um, uh, I was dealing, I mean I came from a middle class background.

These people were people that had a lot of money. I mean, Skip Ledkey [spelling?], his father owned Pennzoil, he'd, they'd land a helicopter on campus to take him to Logan for the company jet to take him back for a weekend in Houston, and I'm like, damn! Um, but it also, I mean it was good for me. I had my own checkbook, I had to do my own laundry. I mean, this is segued from my independence I was already developing. Excellent education. I really I got into, um, um, black authors. I was angry. I was, all of us were affected by the Civil Rights movement which was raging at the time and the war in Vietnam which was raging at the time.

I would go into Boston Common to demonstrations with 100,000 people at them with Joan Baez singing or whatever. When I went to my interview at Columbia, when I was a, a junior, um, um, oh gosh, now I'm drawing a blank, um, the author, oh I forget his name, the French author who was very active in the anti-war

movement. It was, uh, Jean Genet giving a speech on the quad and I was just mesmerized. I said, this is where I want to be, demonstrating at college [laughs], you know. Um, so we were all like, um involved with that, um, but I was still like, you know, sympathetic to the Democratic Party, so in Lawrence, uh, Eugene McCarthy was running in '68 and I went door to door because he was the anti-war candidate in very liberal Groton, Massachusetts.

Very wealthy and liberal Groton. So, I was preaching to the choir there. But, um, I have to admit that I, I did start developing, you know, a consciousness around this. You, you watch, you know, police dogs attacking black protesters has a huge effect on you when you're young. And, um, as it should be. And, um, so I got a very good education there. I applied to a bunch of Ivy League schools. I got waiting list at UPenn, Columbia. I got rejected at Harvard which was not a shock. But I got into Johns Hopkins, uh, and I got in with a scholarship to Bowdoin as well but I wanted to get out of Maine. I wanted to be in an urban area because I knew I wanted to find other gay people and actually live a life of some sort. Um, Johns Hopkins is kind of like a southern school in so many ways. Baltimore is interesting and it was good for me to go to what was an incredibly racially segregated city. People had Klan, uh, bumper stickers, and, um, uh, Nazi bumper stickers and you'd literally go, like the Hopkins campus is gated and walled.

Um, gorgeous on the inside but you walk four blocks over and you get to Greenmount Avenue and it turns all black, shabby, row houses and, um, but it was a really good experience for me. I, I was there for two years, um, oh, this was the, so I'm doing the application for Johns Hopkins and unlike other schools, they had this, would you mind having a roommate of a different race? And I was like, well of course not! I'm a yankee, what do you, who are you people? And, so of course, we got, I think the dorm was Hallowell. And it was all the people that checked yes, which weren't a lot it ended up, because Johns Hopkins is mostly populated by doctors' sons from the south. That was where they want to send their kids to college and then to med school. So, I got in the dorm with, I don't know who else was gay because no one was out. But I suspected a few were. Um, all of, every black in my freshman class was in that dorm. And, um, potheads and then this one poor guy, Doug Benning, poor Doug. Doug was a born-again Christian who actually believed that you were supposed to live in the spirit of Jesus and be good to people and turn the other cheek and all this stuff, but he was in this dorm of people [laughter] that, you know, you'd smell pot every time you walked into the place and all the guys were doing black power things and this Doug, Doug with his crew cut and he'd wear a tie and suit every day. Poor Doug. And his roommate was the only other guy who went to Johns Hopkins from, um, Lawrence Academy, Louie, my friend Louie, who I'm still in touch with, who entered a, um, he was actually, in the national office of NORML, the people that want to legalize marijuana. Oh, now it's happening all over the place, but back then it was a big deal, so he was a major pothead but, you know, and so that was his roommate. And so I've always spent a lot of time down there and saw Doug struggling, but you know, to his credit, um, he, he handled it and, it's funny, I can say he never really changed his views or anything but he was like he said he was. He was very tolerant of people that were not like him and he loved everybody, you know, but anyway. I was, that has always struck me. Um, so I had a black roommate, of course. Um, Harold, who I think only lasted there a year or two. Um, but after two years there, um, I wanted out of the south and get closer to home, so I, I, um, I tried to get back into Bowdoin, um, but my grades suffered in, um, in, um, in Baltimore because I was dealing with being gay. I was going out, um, getting picked up. I was a nice looking young man. Um, older men picked me up. There were a couple of men I had affairs with. There was a lawyer in Baltimore who would

buy me things and, um, I'm not embarrassed to say it, [laugh] I was a poor student. Actually, I wasn't a poor student, uh, but uh, uh, I liked the attention, um, that was what was, and being able to touch somebody, and that was nice, but it was, I mean, it's pretty nasty stuff. I mean, I would go to, the only options you had there were like the bus station, x-rated movie theaters, which I went to those all the time. Um, but my, my grades were, I was so consumed with at [???] least, um, not only having sex but having a human connection with somebody. Um, and, um, then I had friends who were down in Washington D.C. at American University in Georgetown. I used to go down there. My weekends would start, like, Thursday morning and I'd get back Tuesday morning [laugh], and I wasn't really going to class. And I, I'd been like, a really top student, you know, my whole life. Uh, so this certainly came to the attention of my parents, um, but um, I ended up, you know, transferring to the University of Maine at Orono and then, everything kind of came together in my life.

Um, then I, um, was part of a collective of people and that really changed everything and, I've, anyway, that was a longer answer again.

Tracy: That's great.

Alanna: So what was campus culture like at UMaine versus Johns Hopkins?

Steve: Well, it's not that I, um, imbibed all that much at Hopkins.

I think, like, I was in the glee club. I was in that, and boy there are there a lot of gay men in that but again, no one was out, but, um. And, um, that was terrific because it was um, we traveled, and, anyway [???] my parents to the, what is it, Saint Pats in New York, the cathedral, and we sang Handel's, The Messiah. And, they were down, and the acoustics are just amazing and you're like, they loved that. But anyway, get back to the University of Maine. I started there in January of '73. Now, I had a couple of friends up there, um, but, you know, Maine, in general, is a pretty conservative place. I have tons of family members graduated from there. My dad did. He was in agriculture. That was the big ag school up there. Um, you know, and it's funny because at the end of the day, we never had any kind of physical attack on us or anything. Um, there was certainly threats, a lot of threats, but the culture there was reflecting what was going on in the country. Um, college campuses then were mostly liberal, liberal places, an oasis, especially in a state like Maine. So, um, I always thought that we kind of had the wind in our sails, um.

Um, you know, not only that but women's groups were starting back then, um, um. There was a very active, um, um, MC, ACLU or MCLU chapter on campus and we worked with them a lot. Um, so in general, when we started to, you know, become active, we had a lot of natural allies there who were kind of counterculture types, or women especially, um, we had a great affinity with a lot of their causes, um, around sexual freedom. Um, and we sometimes developed programs along with them [???]. So, I guess we developed as other people were developing our own culture on campus and we had a very comfortable and fairly large amount of people that were supportive and the more reactionary people were not really organized or felt, they didn't feel very strong on campus. Um, there may be a couple of exceptions, and we kind of, you know, took those people down too. But, um, yeah it was like, when we, one of the things we did, we ran for student senate because we were finding out that, um, we wanted to get on some committees so we could change, I mean, the main thing was getting a speaker on campus. Now, um, they had a thing called the Distinguished Lecture Series, and that was, uh, you know, budgeted by the student senate and it had student

committee and it was, I probably shouldn't use Jeff's full name, but he was a right-winger and, all the people, he'd get like, William Buckley to come and back in those days, arch conservative, and all that stuff, and women's groups, other groups on campus, you know, were frustrated because they couldn't get people that they wanted. So, we asked to have Doctor Howard Brown come up and it got shut down in the committee and then we said, well, um, we're going to run on the student senate and so, we ran probably the first gay slate in the country. I'd never heard of anyone doing it back in '74 when we did it. It was Karen Bye, John Frank, and myself. I think I can remember, I don't even know if we had election stuff but we had like witty things and we were saying, come out, come out and vote, all that kind of stuff.

And, um, anyway, we, we won, um, easily, and again, it was that coalition of people that knew we were going to fight for women's groups to get things that they wanted too. Um, so we got on the committee and outvoted the guy every time, and right-winger didn't come back on that campus for years. I don't know, so we, uh, that was really useful and it taught us a lesson of, you know, developing, I mean now they have groups, now we're friends of or, what's the term they use for, I don't know, people that are supportive of gay rights, what, [Alanna speaks], the ally, yeah, a lot of groups are like an ally or whatever. So, we started developing that early on and I did that amongst my friends anyway. Um, and, um, so, I don't know. I can start with the Wilde Stein club but that's gonna be long. [Alanna speaks] Um, I mean prior to us, there were scattered groups in Maine. There was Hancock County gays, Sturgis Haskins, you'll come across his name a lot, um, but it was a kind of thing where they met in living rooms and had potlucks, um, and just talked about things. Not really political or taking public stands on anything. So, they were down in Hancock County. Then, in January, I think Sturgis came up, um, maybe he started at University of Maine then. Um, and Gay Support in Action had their first meetings in, like, January of '73. And that's when I arrived at Orono. Um, now that initial group, um, all the women left in May because they were so disgusted with their treatment. I mean, it was still, male chauvinism was just rampant and it gays are just the same as [laugh] you know, with that crap, as well. So, um, anyway, except one woman, Karen Bye. And she stayed with Gay Support in Action and there are minutes, we have minutes from Gay Support in Action at the collection, um, and you'll see in the summer of '73, Karen, who was a student at University of Maine Orono, starts talking about, let's start a group at Orono. And, um, the conservative, male, older, um, said no, we're just trying to get ourself together, that's a bridge too far, and everything, and Karen's saying, no, you're going to find some people that really want to do some stuff and you'll increase your ranks, and it makes sense that we should be on a campus. Um, so, Karen kind of, I, I went to, I got back, oh, that spring, in '73 I was sitting in the dining room, the main cafeteria with friends and Karen Bye walked in. Now, Karen...it was the flannel shirt, jeans, so many keys on, like, a janitor's keys thing. Clang, clang, clang. Like, horn-rimmed glasses, full figured woman, came, like, just marches through. I mean she drew attention. And, my friend Judy said, oh that's the lesbian who's trying to start a group on campus. And I was looking at her and I went, oooh, I like her.

[Excited voice!] It's like, she, she doesn't take any shit. I gotta work with her. So this is like in March or April, and so I was somewhat aware of it, so I was determined when I came back in, um, I came back in late August, early September, to get involved.

And I'd heard about these Gay Support in Action meetings in Bangor so, I don't even think I'd, um, gotten into my apartment yet and I went to a meeting at the Unitarian church in, um, Bangor, of Gay Support in Action, and Karen was there. And the rest is history, because we met and there in the minutes there

too, that eight of us met on campus the following week and while all these older guys were sputtering, what were we doing, and we just, it's funny, when you get into this thing there's a momentum and sometimes people start on the ride and then they go, oooh no, this is, like, too much. And we had a lot of that. Um, so, and I don't mind saying who some of those were but, anyway, um.

Karen was one of the rocks. That would include myself, John Frank, um, Sturgis had his problems. He didn't want to be out.

So, um, he would pull back often times, um, he definitely wasn't going to get on TV. Um, and eventually, you know, well I started going on TV in November, and like I said, Susan started with us the following semester, maybe January or February. But then, bingo, Susan's family was all in Maryland anyway. Um, she and John, and John very reluctantly, more because he didn't like to be a public speaker or anything like that. He was very shy, but he did a few things too. But from, OK, so we met in September. We go to the student senate in October, uh, to get temporary recognition as a student group, [???] meeting goes 'til midnight, we win by, like, one vote but we won. So, um, we submit a budget, you know, constitution, all that stuff. So, that work is ongoing. So, December we announce we're going to have our first dance on campus. Well, um, the Associated Press picked it up, uh, because we understand Greenwich Village, we understand, you know, Los Angeles there are gays, but Orono, Maine, are you kidding me? And, so we had our first dance. The, anyway, it generated a controversy that was probably the biggest issue in the state for six months. It's hard for people to understand that now but it was. Um, multiple, I mean, dozens and dozens of editorials in the Portland Press, in the Bangor Daily News, letters to the editor so much that they just stopped taking them anymore. Um, so the preachers organized. It was, uh, Martin, [mumbles...his name is Martin], Benjamin Bubar, yeah, Maine Christian Civic League. It's still in some...it still exists maybe under a different name, and I think it's still a Bubar, maybe his grandson doing it now. So, there was Bubar, he took out a huge ad in all the state's papers, you know, about there's this dance and this horrible stuff is happening and homosexuals can't reproduce so they must recruit. So, [laughs], um, I tried to do my share of recruiting that night at that dance but, um, we had about 20 people. It was interesting, there was four kids came up from Colby, because this stuff was all around us, I mean, this happened and boom, as soon as the Associated Press said it was a story. Um, and, um, so four, and then, so this is like two weeks later we actually have the dance on campus. Um, and four kids from Colby come up and they go back and start the group there that's still there in some other form, or whatever. I think it was called the Bridge originally, um, it's had a few names over there years. But those, but that's how it happens. So, I went down to Colby and helped them, you know, in some, just sharing our experience. Not that I had all that much wisdom. I was just doing it myself for the first time too. Um, but, so then I think Colby started that following spring. Um, so anyway, now we're in December, so we're pushing the envelope, and like I said, some people are falling back but, you know, Karen and I especially.

Um, so we announce we are going to have a state-wide conference at Orono. Well, they're just really upset about this.

Now we're gonna, they first called it a con, we said we called it a conference at first so you'd have a name for it. So the preachers, who's Bubar, then there's Buddy Franklin, who actually later ran for Governor based on his notoriety from this, Baptist preacher from Bangor who later was, uh, Jerry Falwell had to come and take his place because he had an affair with the church secretary and he got driven out of the, now he's back though, I think I heard. And then, the appropriately named Reverend Gas, who, um, also had a mega church in Bangor. And these people, all these ads, and constant, they both had radio shows that were 24-

7, oh I don't know if they were on that 24-hours, but, they were constantly going. I mean, we were like a gift to them. It was like, then we started getting letters. I got this letter from, this, this chain letter, which I think might be in the collection, of, you can tell they're lovely little old grandmothers on pink, you know, like, may you burn in hell, fagot [laughter], you know, it's like, signed Bertha. [Laughter] You know, it's like, and it's like, damn! [Laughter] And it's like, I'm not turning my back on that old lady. And, uh, so, anyway, so, the University did not want this to happen. And, um, about three years ago, um, uh, I got a very excited call from, uh, or email, from an archivist at the Fogler Library. She'd found a file, the administration file, their side of the story, 500 pages long for that 6-month period. They were frantic. Um, which I love it because it, reading that, kind of saw what they were doing and we were actually pretty right in the tactful moves we made, um, which eventually, you know, threatened suing them and everything, but the, anyway, the Board of Trustees, they knew the writing was on the wall. New Hampshire was going through the same thing. The student group there, um, they did not engender as big of a state-wide controversy, it was more of a legal battle in the courts. But they won a court decision that was huge, uh, for their right to not only be on campus but to have events and have a budget and all, and be a full student group. That, when that writing on the wall, it was the following week, the Board of Trustees met in Orono and said, and they actually didn't mention us in the motion, and that's in the collection too, but they basically quoted from, um, an earlier, during the anti-war demonstrations that were happening on campuses about the right for free speech. So they just used that same motion, saying we reinforce this earlier thing from 1969 or whenever all hell was breaking loose. So, it was actually useful. I mean, that shows you how social struggle of other people can be a benefit to you because a lot of this frontier work has already been done, it's been tested, and you get to be the beneficiary of that. And we were certainly, and in general, I would say the lesbian and gay movement back then, um, was usually benefited by what SDS did, what a lot of these other, the women's groups did, abortion rights, whatever, it all kind of melded together. Um, I always thought it was best put where you could say that, um, democratic rights are indivisible. You can't, like, be for one and not be for the other, and you find that making those allies are invaluable. So, we ended up having the conference, um, we oh, oh they. They went from calling it a conclave of queers, so then we changed it to the Maine Gay Symposium so it would sound very kind of haughty and academic. So, there are actually, I think, about 20 of those. I mean, I left and moved to California in '75 but the first one they, we got to, I got to campus on Friday morning and we had our first event starting Friday evening. Um, there was a hate poem on campus that, you know, like uh, kind of a ratty mimeograph-typed thing that had things about spearing a queer and it, it was threatening, it was life-threatening. Um, and there were, I don't know, a few hundred of them we found. Then, um, there was a banner on the black bear saying fags go home. Um, and then the preachers, Buddy Franklin's group, said they were going to come picket and then we were worried they were going to do more than that, um, if they showed up. They did not show up. Um, we had minimal security but 300 people showed up. And we had numbers then [laughter], and we were fairly good organizers so we figured if any threat came, we'd be able to handle it. But we had the who's who. This was, this is another thing I don't think, I really appreciate this being done because, I've been to, like Equality Maine dinners and stuff, and they talk about the beginning of the movement back [laugh] in the 80's when some of these groups, and I was like, wait a minute, 10 years before that. But no, there's no reason for people to know. Um, and so I feel like I'm

like the Ghost of Christmas Past sometimes when I go to these meetings. It's like, uh, actually, you know, we did this and we did, I don't know. But anyway, just getting it on record is extremely, um, gratifying, and I'm still planning on writing something but, eh, I don't know if I have the patience for it. But, um, but the collections have a lot of stuff including Karen Bye, again, she was so meticulous. We did clippings then because we were getting all this press so, you know, 40 years later, I get, she was living in Fresno, California and she sent me these yellowed clippings with old scotch tape falling off, but meticulously, Portland Press Herald, the date, you know, page 1 of 3, and on the back, you know. But they're in such delicate shape. They're at the collection but they haven't been processed yet. But that will, I can't wait, that's what I'm going to base a book on. I really need, because I can remember actually a lot more than, I mean, things remind me of things as they go along, but, um, to have everything down there, and it was, I mean, it was this high, and that was just basically a 6-month period but, um, we were one of the battleground states in early gay liberation. So, everyone came to this conference we had, the symposium. Um, Vito Russo, who, um, did the book, *The Celluloid Closet*, um, and he had the rough cut, um, of film of, um, gays in Hollywood which later came out as a film, um, but we got to see it before it was even released on Friday night and Vito, Vito was there introducing us to it and talking all about his research and all this stuff right when he was doing all that. Morty Manford, who is a Stonewall veteran, who is president of the Gay Activist Alliance. There was a new group starting in New York called the National Gay Task Force with Doctor Bruce Fuller, Doctor Howard Brown, who we did get up eventually when we won the senate seat and got him, then we got him up here. And, um, and his papers are at the New York City Public Library but he had been the health commissioner for the Lindsay Administration for Mayor Lindsay in New York in the 1960s and he actually left the position because he was about to be exposed for being gay. Um, but later he did come out. It made national news, front page of the New York Times. And, Howard only lived, I think only, I knew him a year and a half before he died. I stayed at his brownstone in New York when I went down for a, to speak at a conference down there in the fall of '74. Um, but, um, you know Howard, Howard had a speaking engagement in Overland [??] that weekend so he couldn't come for the weekend conference but he came Wednesday night and gave a talk. Um, which was terrific. It's funny, in his papers, um, in New York, um, there was a letter about his trip up here, and he had been active in the Civil Rights Movement, going down to Mississippi during, like, Freedom Summer, and stuff. So, he said, I hadn't felt like this, flying into Bangor, since I flew into Mississippi in 1962. Because all the stuff was like, you know, we told people if they were coming up in cars, to go male/female in the front, male/female in the back, and not to engage people. I mean, we weren't overly paranoid [laugh] but we also knew that that weekend, it's funny, we got 300 people, and we were on the front page of Bangor Daily News and on page 6 or something, because republicans were meeting for, it was a bi-election year or whatever, in 1974. They were meeting in Bangor at the same time and it was called "the other convention in town" because, you know, it was like, you're nothing compared to what's going on, and it was all happening in Orono. Uh, but anyway, it was very successful. We had a bunch of workshops. My whole family was there including the family dog, Jacque, a poodle. Now my brother came up from Arkansas and he was dressed like Arkansas students did in the '70s. He had multicolored pants and like, uh, paisley with, I don't know, it's just like outrageous and a white belt and white shoes. And it's like, they never got it down there even during the hip '60s. So, anyway, he, so he's out, and we're all there, and he's out, uh, walking the poodle on the quad with

that outfit and the sequin little leash for the Jacque. [Laugh] And so, the cat calls start from all the frats in the dorms. They're screaming at him, you know, all this stuff, and it really shook him, but ever since then, he'll tell that story. He says, I knew what it felt like then. He, no, he felt he was going to be attacked for just the way he looked and assumptions people made. Um, but anyway, and um, so it was very successful and then from that, so all these other groups, um, were there, and there had been groups in Portland. Stan Fortuna would be terrific to talk about, in Brunswick and Portland, he and Stephen Leo, who, uh Stephen Leo is in Lowell, he's another good guy, um, to talk to, but Stan can fill you in on those people. But, they had been starting in Portland and had done some, you know, some political stuff themselves like shooting off letters for, you know, about bad radio shows or TV shows or particular people that were anti-gay and stuff. Um, but when they came up to Orono for the conference then we really started. So we said, OK, we gotta start a state-wide organization so we started Maine Gay Task Force named after the National Gay Task Force but we had little knowledge of what that was, then they had just started. I mean, this is interesting because the Gay Community News in Boston, you know, was the main newspaper, um, for years in New England.

They had only just started then. We were really early for, especially in Maine. It was surprising that, you know, it was happening in Maine. But again, in history, if you get a determined group of people and, you know, it changes everything. Um, so, in May we started the Maine Gay Task Force, the conference had been in April, I mean, things just moved so fast. We, um, the Democratic Party Convention was meeting in Bangor in April, I mean no, in May. So we went to that. That was just hilarious.

And, um, we got a gay rights plank passed, working with Gerry Talbot, who's still alive, who's the representative, just got elected as the first African American representative, another issue about, I learned that from Gerry very early, about Democratic rights.

He, he had no business tying himself to the most unpopular cause in the state when it was raging and, but it was a principle to him.

I've always, I told, his daughter, Rachel, is on one of the boards I'm on at USM, and I told her, you don't understand, what that meant to us. Um, so he guided us through the convention. We got, the plank was only the second one in the country, of any political party to take a position. Oregon had done it, I think earlier, like a few weeks before or something, and then Maine.

Um, so, I mean, it's still just a plank in the Democratic Party, I mean they didn't, they didn't do diddly squat about it but, anyway, but um, but it was on record. Um, and then, within the year, Gerry helped us get, um, all those sexual acts taken off the criminal code because they were re-looking at it. Some of these statutes are from the 1840s and we had all, all of it taken off. Uh, sodomy, and, um, everything was just taken off the books. Um, um, I mean, that was unheard of. I don't know how many states, we might have been the first, I don't know. I never really researched that. Um, and in August of '74 we started a state-wide newsletter, um, and, um, that went on for a number of years, again, long after I left Maine. Um, and it was like a collective organizer for us because, you know, getting the word out, different events, we'd reprint things from national, um, you know, news that was going on. Um, there was this horrible fire in New Orleans where, was it the upstairs, I forget, anyway, all these gay people were burned alive, um, and the incredible thing of parents not claiming the bodies because it was a gay bar. Um, so we were a part of a national fundraising thing to raise money to have funerals and to get caskets, and uh, I mean, just to think you had to do that. But, um, anyway, so, and we also started, you know, we heard from prisoners in Thomaston when there was a prison that was there, and we, um, started working with some people there and dealing with warden of changing some of the

rules they had there. Um, we went to, the busing crisis was raging in Boston. We went down and we were a part of a gay contingent against racism and that, and we did actually, we got involved with the Stowe House in Brunswick which, here it's a thing, um, they had all these older waitresses that had been there forever, decades. I've actually never been to the place outside of picketing in front of it. Um, and they fired them all and they got, ironically, probably a lot of gay, young, it was back, they wanted to get young, handsome gay men and, like a uplift instead of a...the food never changed but they wanted the appearance of being much more high-end. So we, ironic..., so we're the ones protesting, defending these women who had been working there 20-25 years, um, and we brought [???] about that and that wasn't necessarily a gay issue at all but it was about women's rights and that, you know, you're gonna respect these workers that had been there, you know, their whole lives. So, if even when you go through the newsletter, there's stuff about the war, civil rights, there's a bunch of stuff, and it's, um, more radical than I've seen in the gay movement and, of course, like I've mentioned, I eventually became a Marxist anyway because it was the only way I could explain the world of why things were happening the way they were and whose interest they served. But, um, I'll stop there for a question.

Tracy: Well, I just want to say, it just seems like it took off. It was a whirlwind and you got involved in so many things that you probably didn't even think you were going to get involved in when it began. Um, what do you think separated you from the people who backed out? I mean, I know you had Karen, who you...

Steve: Yeah, and that was important because we were very close-knit. Um, oh, I can't talk about too much of this stuff. But, um, Karen, John, and Sturgis all died consecutive years, recently. Um, John being the last, two years ago, and, I was equally shocked at each. It was just really, it was like a punch to the stomach. John, especially. We were always incredibly close. We actually roomed together for a year at Orono, but even, he'd been, like, Karen had been in Fresno for years, and then, and actually she'd, when I went to California she followed me a few months later, stayed with me a few nights and headed up to Fresno when I was going to a radical law school called Peoples College of Law in Los Angeles. And, um, John ended up settling in San Francisco, Oakland, I used to see him a lot when I was living in Los Angeles. Um, but they both came back to Maine, when they got older, just a few years ago, and Karen had just gotten back. She was supposed to speak with me up at Orono on the 40th Anniversary of Wilde Stein and she wasn't feeling well and she died a few weeks later. I was just like, no. That's not possible. And then, um, and Sturgis had been the year before, um, and then John was the year after. So, um, anyway, it reminded me about how close we were because I felt like something was missing in the world. Now even though Karen and I weren't in touch that much, it was like a baptism by fire and the depth and the substance of what we had, if she walked in the room we'd just get back to talking like we did because we had this shared experience that you just don't have. Um, but, I mean, the, I understood, especially back then, it was very hard to make that decision to come out. I mean, once I had come out to my family, what else was there? I mean, I did some stupid things.

Um, I was so angry, all these letters coming in to the Bangor Daily News, so, I wrote what probably, I don't know it, what that letter, I hope it's in those clippings, um, to the Bangor Daily News, um, defending myself and our group or whatever, and signed it Steve Bull, 451 French Street, Bangor, Maine. Why would I ever do

that? But see, I was like, fearless at that point and angry. Um, so I'm, I'm on the sun porch which was not heated, I had a space heater, linoleum floor, just a mattress on the floor. I actually had a hair dryer I used to take to [laughs] warm up the bed before I, and I, and anyway. So, I'm lying in bed when I hear this phit, phit, phit, and then BBs rolling around the linoleum floor [laughs] and, I was like, damn! Someone's shooting at me! So, um, what's interesting, my mom's cousin, Lewellyn Spencer, lived down the street with his wife, Kay, and, you know, I mean, they knew what was going on. I mean, we didn't really talk about it that much but, so, I walked down there the next day and I said, you know, um, I got shot at last night, I think, but just BB guns, but still.

Don't want that. And, I'm looking at the shots and I'm looking out across the street and I'm thinking it might be one of those two houses over there. And she says, oh, we know exactly who it is.

That little guy, some 14-year-old kid who's, like, always making trouble and everything. And, of a family of fundamentalist Christians, so I'm sure he heard the talk and he saw the, whatever. Put two and two together and so I was target practice.

But, um, anyway, my, well it's from my parent's cousin but I always call them Aunt Kay and Lewellyn. They marched over there and Kay, like, with her arms set, and um, well at least I heard about this later, I wasn't there for it. Um, and like, wagging her finger, and she says, anything happens to my nephew, you know, you're gonna pay. So, it stopped. It stopped. Um, but, anyway, I mean once you got into it, and it's funny, you don't feel like you're, you're feeling like there's a draw to it that, I mean, once you start doing it, you just kind of have to complete the task, you know. And then something new came along and, like, like the University of Maine had a thing on their application, have you ever had homosexual tendencies? Of course, everyone says no, regardless. But still, it was the principle, it was on there.

So, another member, Sharon Brown, and I go into this guy's office, he's an ex-Marine, had been like in the mission of Bay of Pigs in Cuba. Just a right-wing asshole. And, um, we go in and his first question, I mean here it was Sharon. Which one of you is Steve Bull. I was like, oh really? You're gonna go there? And then we just kind of, well, we're not going to have a conversation. We said basically either you take this off the application or we're going to get the Maine Civil Liberties Union to sue you. Um, and this is being taken off the books all around the country. Well, he, all flustered and blustered, and that's, I think, in some of the administration files, and they backed off immediately. And, um, they never published another application with that question on it which I think was a service to everyone. Um, but anyway, I mean, it's hard to tell everything but we had blow by blow stuff all the time. I think I tried to hit the highlights, but getting organized state-wide and having the newsletter, um, and uh, having the conferences and all the people that came from around the country, it was kind of like a battleground then. It's like, something flared up and troops came in from all over and it was very gratifying and we really benefited from that. Um, and I met all these cool people and, um, I spoke at, um, the Gay Academic Union. Um, which I, I don't think that exists anymore. There's so many organizations from back then that don't exist anymore, but they had a national conference around Thanksgiving time, so I was a keynote speaker at that in, you know, uh, 1974. Then the next year I came back and did a workshop on student organizing, and they flew me from Los Angeles! I was like, damn, that's cool.

And, I stayed with friends in New York. And, then, but, so I'm doing this thing with this guy, Corey, I forget Corey's last name.

But they were, he was at the University of Kentucky and they had [microphone dropped]. Corey Judkins, sorry about that folks.

And, um, and they were in a huge fight with the administration down there and it, we, you know, it was a little bit different in Kentucky, but, um. Anyway, Corey and I had this workshop so, we

had like, 10 or 12 people there and everything. Well, down the hall my parents are doing a workshop on parents of gays and I'm like, we wound up early and I walk down there. I can't even get near the, there were people in the corridor looking in. That was so, that was so, incredible to have parents at any of these things. So, that was, that was the fall of 1975. So, they were like, rock stars! It's like, mom there are some guys in this room you could introduce me to [laughter], it's like. Can I pick out a few? [01:00:05] She says, 'Oh, I'm sorry, I'm too busy talking.' But it's like, *whiny voice* "Mom!" But, um, yeah. Amazing.

Alanna: That's so amazing.

Steve: Yeah. But people, it's amazing, under the circumstances, I mean, people change. I mean, there was a core of us that were not, and then like, you'll get the same sense from, I mean Stan is a force to be reckoned with. *laughs* And he actually helped me find this house, he was really involved with this, and he and Andy live in Windham, but there were, and I look at those two, Mariah, Susan Breeding, she was, she's a tough, accomplished woman. She's, um, I think she's done counseling in San Francisco for 25 years. But, um, it was a remarkable group of people, certain circumstances, and I think that the fact that we were together gave us a collective strength that was much more than our individual strength. And, we did have the wind in our sails. After you win a few times, you know, you feel like you're on a roll, and we were, and we rolled over some people. That poor guy on that distinguished lecture series committee, he just never saw us coming, and suddenly, he was a lone voice in the wilderness. He had been so used to having his way, and winning the student senate, and I mean, I think we probably did contribute to a change in the culture on campus as well. I mean, we got, a 24-hour hotline, we got, and we were involved in, you know, getting the counseling center to, well they were already doing some rape counseling and stuff, but we did a lot, a lot of stuff that we did in conjunction with the women's groups there, and we got new program put in, we never really got to curriculum all that much, I mean, I was only there 2 years, and that's kind of a longer-term thing, you have to get professors and stuff, but we were looking at it, I mean, we were hoping to, we had a library, we got our own office, which a lot of student groups didn't have, but we insisted on it, because, well, we're getting calls from Europe, we need to *laughs* you know, we need it, I'm sorry, we've got Senator Muskie's on the line, what am I gonna do if I don't have a phone? And this was, actually, that's the end of the point, this was all before cell phones, emails, this, John and I would hitchhike when the Maine Gay Task Force started, we decided, to be fair, to have a month, it was, we met every month, once, like, Bangor/Orono area, and then down in Portland. There was nothing going on in Lewiston. And, um, so John and I would hitchhike down, I mean, sometimes I had a car, sometimes I didn't, but, you know, and it was just phone calls, and writing letters, and we still got it done. Yeah.

Tracy: I noticed that when I was reading the newsletter, a lot

of typing.

Steve: Oh yeah, on stencils with a mimeograph machine with a crank, uh-huh, ink on your hands.

Alanna: So I guess, looking back at Wilde-Stein Club now, what do you see, I guess, when you're in the moment and all the organizing is taking place, I guess now, 40 years later, what do you see as some of the biggest accomplishments of the group, or biggest impacts you think that the group had?

Steve: Well, I think that, just in a broader sense, it was really the time that there was a state-wide conversation about homosexuality. And that really comes through. There was a, there were two professors at Orono, I think in sociology, who wrote an academic paper about the controversy, it's, I don't know, about 40, 50 pages long, or something, for a conference. And in it, they list the amounts of letters to the editor, which was in the hundreds, the editorials, the all this stuff in the state, and they only wrote this paper because the state was mesmerized by it, maybe only for 6 months, but that's how things happen, but boy, did that open a lot of conversations, and getting some of these 'firsts' done, especially getting all that stuff off the criminal code, was less work for people later. Now, part of my motivation for doing this is, and I am kind of on a campaign, that's why I got involved, was to bring this to the current generation, just understand, it didn't start with, who did they honor the other night? Oh, Mary Banauto, who's done all this wonderful work and argued before the Supreme Court, and there were organizations involved with that which, I don't know because it was long after I left, but, from the 80s, the Human Rights Campaign, all these things, but I would like to have, not necessarily recognition, but understanding of what came before it. And we were basically in the aftermath of Stonewall, I mean, I just reconnected today with a guy who was at Stonewall who I knew back in the gay left in Los Angeles, and it's, I'm still seeking out some of those people occasionally, but it's, so, I'd like some recognition, I guess, in a way, of the concrete work that we did, and some of that still stands, in terms of the criminal code, and like, the employment application, and I've probably forgotten half the things we did. I mean, there were these television shows that were on, Marcus Welby, MD had this show about a young boy being molested by a camp counselor, or something, whatever. And I was like, oh, you have a depiction of a gay man, finally, on TV, and he's a child molester, thank you very much. So there's a national campaign on that that everyone was involved with, and that's not, you know, these stories can be told in different states, in different places, and we exchanged subscriptions with new groups that were starting, like, in Mississippi, god forbid I be in Mississippi doing this. But you know, there's a national campaign about this Marcus Welby, and he was like, the guy from Father Knows Best, I mean, the perfect family, you know. And we, uniquely, in Maine, we were the only one in the country to get a

disclaimer across the bottom of it, during, I think when it came back from every commercial, something, which is unheard of. But, and there's also, I mean, we had fun, we did a fruit cake sale, for, it was a fundraiser, just to make fun of ourselves, and we sold tons of fruitcakes, in Susan Henderson's kitchen in Bangor, tiny little things, they were so cute. And, but we had a lot of fun, and we had, just, I mean, okay, the Marcus Welby thing, so we're getting interviewed by, I think it was, maybe ABC, so the local ABC affiliate, and so it's, I had done the last three or something, so Susan and John go in, and you go out to the studio, which was out in the middle of a cornfield, or something, outside of Bangor with this big, you know, antenna that goes up into the sky, and it's the middle of winter, it's like, February, snow all over the place, so they go in, and I have a single picket sign, and I'm at the end of the road on this farm road, with a sign like 'Down with Marcus Welby' or something, whatever, and they're going in to do the interview. And so the traffic goes by and people slow down and it's getting, it's dark already, and you know, was like, what does that sign say, there are no streetlights. Finally, this old couple comes driving along, this woman, says, 'Honey, you look cold. You need to come inside. You need something? And, what's that Marcus Welby stuff about?' And I'm like, 'Oh, I'm okay, I'm good, go ahead.' You know, but it's like, you get in these situations and then one time, I went, I went to the, actually, I think it was the same TV station the first time I was on there, and they sent me to, it wasn't like a blue room, but it's just, it's obviously, like, the coffee place where they had coffee. But, person after person would come in and like, get water, and look at me, and then go out *laughs* and, it's like, I think the whole staff came in there at one point or another for the 13 minutes I was there before I had to go on the air, but, we were like a curiosity, it's like, people in Maine, it's like, you didn't, supposedly people would say they never met a gay person before, well, no, they're in your family, and, your cousin, this person and that person, the person who waits on you at Hannafords, and you know, whatever, but, so in that way, I think we had a huge effect, and we also defeated all the Fundamentalists, we got the laws taken off, we were able to hold our conference, it was a hugely successful, we did not back off, we got the university to change their position, you know, I went back for the 40th, you know, anniversary and the administration's all like, 'Oh, [???' well, you weren't always like that, it's like, you should take a look at your own files, you know? But, and then, you know, even the politicians were weighing in there, I mean, those old-timers saying we shouldn't get student recognition, it was a different time. But I have a sense of accomplishment, as all the people from then should, and I'm just sorry, I mean, part of my motivation for writing something, which I will get to, is, you know, to honor the memory of them, you know, Sturgis, Karen, and John, after, I had a thing at my sister's in Kennebunkport and, to raise some money for a Wilde-Stein founders fund at USM to help fund a student for cataloguing stuff, and that's what we did that day, so, there were like 20 of

us, but I got to talk, and everyone got to talk about Karen and John, especially, and that was nice, but people have to understand that, I mean, especially Karen, she was a lone person there for a while, and when I saw her walking through that cafeteria, I said, this woman's courageous, how could I go wrong, you know, working with her? I'm sure other people were thinking other things, but, she was just like, and she grew up on an island, off the coast, oh God, I always, her mom was the, Stone something... what was the name of that town?

Alanna: Stonington?

Steve: Stonington. She grew up in Stonington. And her mom was the postmistress for the one little post office they had there. It's so funny, because sometimes, after the conference I did a speaking tour of campuses around the state. So I go to Farmington, this guy gets up and says, 'You're one of those people from New York City, aren't you? You're not from Maine.' And it's like, we were so Maine. *laughs* I mean, my dad's folks were potato farmers in Aroostook since the late 1700s, my mom grew up in Orono, it's just like, we were Maine, but people could not wrap their brains around you could grow up in Maine and be gay, at least back then. Thank goodness. So, I was at this talk I gave at Portland Public Library a few years ago, that it kinda ended the night, that the preacher said that Portland would become a mecca for homosexuals if this kept up, and everything, and I was there, this was a Pride Week event, and I said 'Well, I was here this week, during pride, and I gotta tell you, if we had anything to do with that, you're welcome.' *laughs* And it really was, Roland's was the only bar in the state for a long time, people would come down from Presque Isle, from all over, for the weekend just to be in a gay bar, and see other gay people. They had a off and on switch for the light, when you were dancing in the back, so when the cops came in you had to grab a lesbian and dance with a lesbian. Anyway, it's such a different time. But, you know, for all the ups and downs, boy, we, it just, you just knew you were part of this little community, we're a little community, and it was great to meet the people from Portland and we felt even stronger, and then all these national people coming in, and you really had a sense, you could do almost anything, and as a young person, to feel that you can actually see you're making changes in the world, and they're concrete, you never forget that. And like I said earlier, I mean, with the Trump election, things come and go. And thankfully, we're seeing a lot of organizing on the streets around it, hopefully it's gonna be cohesive organizing and effective, not just scattered anger, but, you know, things will change and things will swing back, hopefully. But, it takes people getting involved and doing something. That's a conscious factor in history and that's the people that push the work forward.

Tracy: And you're a role model.

Steve: What?

Tracy: And you're a role model.

Steve: Oh, well, I don't know about that. But if so, my family wouldn't agree with that. But all these people, I mean, really, I'm so sad that, I mean, John and Karen would have been very reluctant about doing something like this, I was always the talker, the guy with the press and everything else, but, they all had their own powerful stories. I mean, John was fresh out of the army, you know, he has stories from, you know, being gay in the army, well, he did.

Alanna: Well, it sounds like it's going to be a great book, when it does...

Steve: I don't know about that, either. But I wanna get stuff down because, I think, uniquely, I'm the only one left to tell it, I mean, the, most of the Portland people are still around, but they were not up at Wilde-Stein for the blow-by-blow. Stan came to the 40th anniversary thing in Orono, and he spoke from the floor, and he says 'Yeah, we thought you guys were rockstars.' And, in some ways, just, you know, you get that much press, and it's like, you know, suddenly, but we weren't, kinds, kids from Maine, just caught in an awkward situation.

Tracy: I wanted to ask you about the People's College.

Steve: Yeah.

Tracy: I read a little bit about it, and it sounds like a interesting college, I like it. So, what did you learn there, and what did you do with that knowledge, once you came back?

Steve: It's funny, at Wilde-Stein, this was a national story, so we get this letter from a guy named Frans Martin, who's at the gay caucus at Peoples College of Law in Los Angeles. Ironically, Frans was from Maine originally. I think he grew up in Livermore Falls, something like that. So I get this letter, and, you know, I think he sent, like, an application, too, and I was like, 'Hmmm.' 'Cause I, and it read real radical, and I'd already started to develop, like, an interest in Marxism then, we actually had a thing where, it was, the only Left group in Maine at the time was called the International Socialists, and they had a guy who worked at the state mental hospital in Bangor, and he had approached us about providing security for the Symposium, because all this stuff was possibly gonna be attacked. So I took it to our group, and this is how people separate, too. So Sturgis and some of the other guys, were like, older grad students, and they were much more conservative, and so we had a vote. I think it was Karen, John, and I *laughs* and eight other people against having Socialists, and I was like, and it's interesting, the rationale: we're in enough trouble now, if they paint us as Reds, and it's like, and I said, and I remember saying during the discussion, I said, it's just, I have just the opposite. We're so unpopular,

we're being gone after, and if these people want to sew their lot with us, and defend us, like Gerry Talbot's been helping us, I'm gonna say no because they're Communists? People, when people take action during times like this, that's when it matters, and they're, you know. But we still lost the vote. But anyway, it intrigued me and I said, oh, these people don't even know us just saying, yeah homosexuality, there's nothing wrong with being homosexual, and all that stuff, and I said, well, you know, [??] start looking at the world that way. So it was very attractive to me, and I kind of wanted to get out of Maine and see what else there was, I was meeting all these people from all these other places. I head there, Peoples College of Law, it's all they said it was, I mean, it was a swamp of all, people from all different leftist groups. I had to learn so much, Trotsky, and Stalin, and everything else. And it was fascinating to me, and then I did study a little bit of law while I was there, but, so, we get there, and I'm in the gay caucus, first year, there was a group called the Venseranus [?] Brigade that sent very good work, they sent their supporters of the Cuban Revolution, they sent students, would go there and work on a sugar crop for a month, to bring in the crop. But, they, and I knew of people, and actually, Step May [?], who was in the caucus at PCLA had gone to Cuba, and had seen that the Venseranus Brigade did not want gays to go to Cuba because they had a reactionary position like most Stalinists did on gay oppression. So they secretly met with gay Cubans at the time. And there was also stuff being put out, a guy named Keith Birch wrote a pamphlet about gays in Cuba, there's all this, so we had this huge controversy, 'cause they wanted to have Venseranus come, Brigade, use our facilities for a fundraiser, without charging them, because we, and our point was, well, not charging them is kind of politically supporting them, and we can't do that, 'cause they won't allow openly gay people on their trips, and, but, it was, anyway, so it was another meeting that went 'til like, midnight, at the governor's council, 'cause we were like, we were all, I was on the governor's council, and I think then, too, and we lost the vote by like, one or two votes or something, but so, even there, it was like, a baptism around how do Marxists deal with the whole question of homosexual oppression. And then, you know, eventually, at that meeting, people came from what was called the Lavender and Red Union, which was a gay-communist collective, and that, I eventually joined, and then we eventually fused with a Trotskyist group, the Spartacist League, which I'm still a supporter of today, no longer a member, but I read the paper and I do work. Actually, I'm working on getting labor support in the US for the South African students that are on strike right now and they're being shot at by the government and, jailed, and I've worked on a number of defense cases, Mumia Abu-Jamal, who's, was, on death row, we were really the first group that took up his case. I used to visit Black Panthers in jail in California where a lot of them were in jail. We've done abortion clinic defense, we've done immigrant defense, in LA, especially, but there's always something *laughs*, there's plenty of work to do, you've got to, sometimes you've got to

pick your best shots, I guess.

Alanna: I feel like that inter-group co-organizing, coalition-building, from Orono transitions very nicely when you got to Peoples College, and now you're defending all kinds of people.

Steve: Oh yeah, no, my world is just opening up, and it's been a great journey that way. See, I have, you know, gripes about, I mean, like, the gay marriage stuff, of course I'm for gay marriage. But recently, I just, I'm turning 65 next month, I'm dealing my, insurance, retired from AT&T, that's going away, so I'm HIV positive, I have been for 30-some-odd-years. I have two meds that are now considered tier-5 meds, equivalent of what people are taking for MS or some other serious diseases. Well, my payment was gonna go from \$40 a month under the AT&T plan, now they throw us to the market, and the best I could find was \$900 a month for two meds, so I pop \$100 worth of pills every day, which I didn't know. So suddenly, I'm in panic mode, and I'm saying, well, why isn't this, why haven't I really heard about this? *laughs* I mean, I'm pretty active, but why hasn't there been huge, and, but, evidently, there has been, but it just hasn't, the last few years, all the money's gone to gay marriage, these propositions. And I had worries about that, and that AIDS is over, it's a manageable disease, but how manageable is it if you can't have meds? And if you can't afford meds, then you have to choose food over meds. So I just, you know, sent some emails out, SAGE is a group here in the state that deal with gay elders, so I said, listen, I found this program, which is under the Ryan White Act, now, whether it's going to be funded at the same levels under Trump is a real good question, but, for now, they have a ADAP program - AIDS drug assistance program, out of Augusta, I drove up there, you get me started on something and I *laughs* I met the one, they have a staff of one woman, 0.8, Lynn, Lynn and her other person is on disability leave or medical leave or something right now, so she is the sole point of contact for this whole program for the entire state of Maine. 'Cause LePage won't support something like that, so she's, I think she's probably, she's only contracted, she's contracted to do this work, probably by the feds and not by the state. And they're gonna pay for my entire prescription cost. Now, when I was, I was sending emails to SAGE, SAGE, they weren't aware of this program. When I asked them first for help, and they didn't really have an answer, and I said, well, I'll go on a little campaign here to get out the news on this, and I said, so, when I went up to talk to Lynn and get the application, I said, by the way, how would you like to do a public talk about this? 'Cause I could arrange it, I mean, I can organize something like that. So I offered it to Doug, we could start out with something here in my living room, but if they've got a bunch of people in their newsletter, and they get, you know, a bunch of people that are getting, turning 65 and going from private insurance to this, or, you know, that's a huge deal. And I never knew it really existed like that until it affected me personally

laughs and that motivates me.

Tracy: What about people who don't have insurance like you, they're maybe, a waiter, and they're young, can they...?

Steve: Oh, yes, yeah, they can use, yeah, absolutely, this applies to people who can't afford drugs for HIV, and you don't have to have AIDS, I mean, I never was diagnosed with AIDS, I've just been HIV positive. But yeah, but whether, I think they gave out \$800,000 last year. I was shocked.

Alanna: I had no idea.

Steve: Yeah, I know. And it's not like I'm around young people that are HIV positive, but I hope they know about this, and I hope it stays on the same funding levels, but I guess my point was like, there's been a little bit of a backlash within kind of like, within, you know, what goes for the LGBT movement, that maybe too many resources, or like, if you go to someone and say, well, I already gave to EqualityMaine for the proposition, or whatever, I mean, that's hard to deal with, it's like, I've given to my gay cause this year, whatever, and I said, but, we got people that aren't getting meds, where does that rank in whether you get married or not? *laughs* I mean, to me, it's like, you know, well, I don't know. I don't have to get married if someone, you know, needs some drugs.

Alanna: The whole thing about resource allocation within organizations, just seems like that ties so deeply to Marxist values of who is this organization benefitting? What are their interests? That's so interesting.

Steve: Well, that's the other thing, as a Marxist, I mean, the pharmaceuticals, I mean, they say, we're covering all the money that we put into the research and you know that they did that probably the first year they charged, I mean, it's like the EpiPen thing. And then I got online, and I find out that ActUp, I mean, I had friends, you know, that's the other thing. We didn't even talk about AIDS, oh man. That was like, one of my exes, Mark, was really active with ActUp, he died of AIDS. I found out, looking, that there was like a demonstration at Hillary's campaign office this past summer in Philadelphia, about some promises she had made about going after the pharmaceuticals then she backed off, and that's the whole thing about the lack of enthusiasm for Hillary, which I totally understand, 'cause like, she'll say one thing to one person and then she gets to a board room and she's all nice, anyway. But I never liked her anyway. But, anyway. But, anyway, yeah, the pharmaceuticals are just, but that's the thing that, see, that's the thing that doesn't make sense to me. I mean, that's why I go back to the thing, like, I'm here from Mars, I don't understand the society in which I live and all these crap attitudes people have, I don't understand it, so, why do you go with a system that profit is the number one motive and not what people need? Why wouldn't, like, housing, food, and education be, like, basic things that a state would take

care of? Why is it that, the Soviets, after they took power, originally, before Stalin came to power, when they were, didn't have a penny in their pocket, gave free health care, and abortions for women if they wanted it, they repealed all laws against homosexuality, even though there was no gay movement in 1917 in Russia, but as Marxists they said, the government has no business dictating what people do in their bedroom. It's just a basic, you know, like, none of your damn business *laughs*. It's like, so, I, you know, when I came across people like that, that shared a worldview, this whole thing of being part of a collective, you know, mind just got bigger and bigger as I got, which just emboldened me more, which is just a big mistake. *laughs* But, yeah, it's like, once, and I appreciate you bringing up that era of my life, 'cause that's, you know, the vast majority of my life, I mean, I became a Marxist in 1977, so, but it was like, this wonderful three years, and I moved so much, and read so much, and experienced so much, that I just, you know, I changed, I got a hell of a lot more confident, and learned so much more about you know, the legal stuff I haven't really done much with, except, I'll tell you, so, you know, I have a friend in, well, I had to change this, because on next Monday, on the 21st, I'm, my friend of mine has a court appearance, he was arrested by the Lynn police for a probation violation because, but he had never received the letter for it because he had changed addresses, and then the cops, you know, claim he resisted arrest, which is just not him, and the police report is really crappy, the lawyer said, 'Oh, this looks like a lie.' And, so anyway, I got involved with it, he called me from jail, and I'll go down and be a character witness for him, or just support him, or something. Then I'm doing this work on the South Africa stuff, and, you know, I tend not to do, like, individual things, it's more like if there's a broader question going on, see, a lot of the people here had illusions in Mandela and the African National Congress, who still runs the country, but, we kinda call it Neo-Apartheid, they're still going after demonstrations, there's a certain, they call it the gravy train in South Africa, a certain layer of Black officials are doing quite well, but the people in Soweto and other places, there's just still the same bullshit *laughs*. It's just, now you have black police shooting at you instead of *laughs* but, but it's hard to garner protest things because a lot of the unions I'm going to are supporters, you know, I think Mandela was a godney and see can do no wrong, and I said, well, they just teargas these people and caused a spinal injury to this young woman who was just asking for a free education. Is that workin' for you? But, still, anyway.

Alanna: Just the, always applying a critical eye to...

Steve: Yeah, yeah. It's funny, you develop it, and it's invaluable. This has gone on so much longer than you expected.

Tracy: I just wanted to touch on one more thing, if we have a chance. HIV and AIDS, do you want to talk about that any?

Steve: Yeah, I mean, I have tons of stories, but, it's, here you go, it was the Reagan years. Probably something like we're about to go into. Reagan was a staunch reactionary, didn't even use the word AIDS for years. Have you ever, I recommend *As the Band Played On* by Randy Schultz, who was a reporter in San Francisco. I lived through that, it was absolutely frightening, my address books from those days just have names crossed out. Half the people I've mentioned died of AIDS. Morty Manford died of AIDS, Bruce Foler died of AIDS, Vito Russo died of AIDS, exes, just, people. I mean, I lived in Boston, New York, Los Angeles, I had the perfect profile. And sure enough, I went to first get tested in 1987 and I was positive. Luckily I'm a freak, as, as I am in many things, it even goes to my body. My family, I can trace my family to Bubonic Plague survivors, and the last plague in London in the 1600s, there's a PBS program on this, I have a genetic defect they think of people who survived the plague, they were trying to explain why this guy in San Francisco who practiced the same sex as all of his friends never acquired the virus. They bombarded his blood with it, it would never take. So, I'm, I don't have two copies of that genetic defect, I just have one, so I can get the virus, but it's very difficult for it to reproduce. So I was never even on meds, for, until 4 years ago when I had heart surgery, and my HIV doctor said, 'Once you're off, I want you to have a zero load' I always had a small, very small load, but he said he wanted me to have a zero viral load, and I agreed, reluctantly after three rounds of fighting on this. Well, now you get to know me a little bit, that was gonna happen. And I said, but, once you get on these, I don't think you're supposed to get off them, and I've done quite well, thank you, for all these years. Then he gave me the killer argument, he said, Steve, if you're my brother, I'd insist on it. *laughs* So I went on them, and then I get this news about \$900 a month and I said, god damn it, I was right! Damn it! *laughs* And it's like, why didn't I fight, and I did, I went to three appointments before I said, all right, I'll do it. But, but it's just, it's just amazing, it's just, it just warred through, especially the urban male population, and it was amazing how so often it was lesbian nurses who were on the front lines. *laughs* But, really, it was true, I knew several. And, but I went to so many, you know, it's ironic, I'm a smoker and I never smoked when I was young. I, actually, I haven't told this, I don't think I've told this to anybody. I came back one year smoking. And my family was just like [??] and I never really thought much about it, I just, I took it up late, I was in my late 30s, and then I started to think about when I first started, and I was like, oh, I know. So I was going to all these funerals, friends, and acquaintances, and inevitably there'd be a party afterwards at someone's house, or you just stay at the house, and it was weird because you were feeling horrible, but you were with the people you wanted to be with. And it was incredibly emotional. Every time, 'cause we couldn't just talk about this person, or we're talking about this person that's in the hospital now, and it's, and getting groceries, and it's like, you're so involved with it,

and everyone was smoking, and I just started smoking. And it's so ironic that, and then I think there was also an attitude like 'fuck, we're all gonna die.' It's like, just smoke. *laughs* Read the warning and then, still smoke, you know? And, so, and I think for so many years it was like, it's so strange to say, but when I really thought about it, it was a source of comfort for me. 'Cause I think about all the people I lost, and you know, being with people in the aftermath of it, you just never, I mean, it's still fresh to me now. It's, since, and the early-late 80s/early 90s was the worst and then they started to get, you know, some of the drugs that made a difference. But, but really, back then, if you ever see anybody with kaposi sarcoma, with stuff all over their bodies, and people didn't want to touch you, you'd call an ambulance and they wouldn't... Then I did, so I did, you know, I was always, you know, in the party and doing party work, but I also did extra work *laughs* So I got involved with the Minority AIDS Project in Los Angeles, which is in South Central Los Angeles, you know, mostly black and latino clients, so I was in the buddy system, so I had a buddy, and then I realized, you stupid fool, you know, I lost all my buddies, so you get attached intensely to this person, you're getting them groceries, you're taking them to doctor's appointments, amongst everything else you're doing, and I picked up Peter from the AIDS ward of the county in Los Angeles, which is something out of 18th century prisons. You go in and it's just a cold, open, room, which, is just like a prison, and I picked up Peter, he called me at work and said he was ready to go, and I left work early, picked him up, and we had to pick up prescriptions for him on the way home, which we did. And he's telling me stories, he's crying, and he's telling me stories about his first blue Mustang, he had when he was living in Arizona as a 16 year old, and how he'd fix it all up and everything, and he kept looking at the pills and everything, so, I get back to his place, and I hadn't been in it for like a month before he went into the hospital, and some time before that he'd always met me downstairs to go grocery shopping. I go in, and it's a hellhole. And I go into the bathroom, and there's human feces in the bathtub because the toilet had stopped working and it had overflowed. Took tissue paper all in the, he had been shitting in the bathtub before he went into the hospital. And I was like, okay. I clear off a place on the bed, say, Peter, okay, I'll call my folks that, AIDS people, we'll get a cleaner in here tomorrow, I'll be back at 8AM, we can all, we can deal with this and get this done. I come back the next morning, he doesn't answer the door, he took all the pills the night before. And I found him dead in the bed. And it was just, he wanted, he was sharing those last memories with me about his Mustang, I don't know, and it was just, I should have seen it coming, and I didn't. And it's weird because I was like, oh, we can do this, and so, this woman comes to, who's gonna help me clean, and I had already called the police, and then, of course, they all have gloves on. I mean, I had to tell them. I felt terrible. 'Cause now, not only was he dead, but he was someone you couldn't touch. You don't... I don't know. That's an unusual story, but anyway, everyone's got their own

stories from that time and it just stays with you.

Alanna: There are just so many, the breadth and the width of all the stories.

Steve: Yeah. It's just, and James, James Harp, he was, oh, that was, Peter was white, Polish descent. James is black. James Harp sang in the choir of the most progressive black church, the first AME church of Los Angeles. Well, none of the choir was coming to help him get his groceries or doctor's appointments, it was me. I could not believe, 'cause they're like, a progressive church, you know? But when it comes to being close to person or holding them or anything, and, anyway, I was with my lover, Boyd, at the time, and he, his family lived in that area, he was black, from, he had family down by where James lived. So it was Christmas Day, and so he was going over to their place, and then I was, anyway, we were gonna hook up later, and I was gonna go over there for dinner, and I get to James' place and he doesn't answer the door, he doesn't answer the door. And I'm like, wait a minute, I was gonna pick him up, we were gonna do some, I mean, it's Christmas Day and we were gonna do something, I forget. So I'm like, looking in the window, and he's on the floor. So I break into the house, he's still conscious and everything, so I, and he's actually more than conscious, he was like, 'Well, I just didn't feel like, I felt dizzy, so I couldn't get up.' So I help him up, and get him some water, and so, seems like, and I said, 'Well, we're going to the hospital.' And it's like, so I take him into the hospital, and it's Christmas Day, my birthday was, is, December 29, and he had trouble breathing, though. And it's weird, we had this thing outside, I said 'Get into the wheelchair so we can really show them that you're really sick.' Well, he didn't have to, he really was sick, I didn't know it then, it was like he seemed fine after the dizziness left, and he was walking and everything, I said, 'Just get in the wheelchair.' So I got him in there, and, so I can leave my car double-parked here, too. *laughs* So I get him in there, and then, so he's having trouble breathing and I'm, you know, calling the doctor, and, but I'm not, I have no standing, I'm not family, that's another thing that just, [??] the people that care about you can't be in the hospital room, so it was like, we're dealing with all that kind of shit, too. Anyway, I go back on my birthday, and his bed's empty, and he had died the night before. It was just like, well, no, but it's just like, thing's that, I mean, here and I thought I had the, I mean, I have a few other stories, but, but anyway, but for you to go through this stuff, I mean, we were in our 30s, you know? You know? It's just like, you're not supposed to, it's kind of like a war, you know? I guess, you know, you're all off at war together, and someone falls next to you. I mean, I get that, why people come back with such trauma, that life is so fragile, that it can just be gone, you know, one single shot and the guy doesn't have his head on his shoulders anymore, I get that. Do you have any ears left? Have I talked them off?

Tracy: We've got ears.

Alanna: We have ears for days *laughs*

Steve: And it's hard, I mean, I really do have to write something, 'cause, I mean, I can just, there's just so much. But it's, all those years. All those memories.

Alanna: If it's something you're interested in, too, I know Wendy was saying that we could always do a follow-up later on, if you wanted to.

Steve: Oh, it's fine with me. I got plenty of stuff. I've been...

Alanna: I know we would both love to do that.

Steve: You know, it's funny, I did all this defense work in Los Angeles, and a lot of it was going to liberal types and everything, so I have a list of the people I met, 'cause I'd go to, you get to know me a little bit, so I'm, I'm outrageous sometimes, but I just went to, oh, I'm sorry, I'm gonna knock that over. But I, you know, we, I would go to like, the ACLU would have this annual dinner, you know. And all the who's who of Hollywood would be there, and I knew, you kinda know over the years who are progressive and [??] on issues, so I'd go there with packets, and I might be out in the parking lot, I mean, and Burt Lancaster walks by, and I'm like, 'Mr. Lancaster!' And I have a pitch, you know, and everything, so I have a list of like, you know, Bonnie Raitt, and like, you know, like people that, you know, some people that you wouldn't even think were kind of left-thinking, but Morgan Fairchild, who I sat in her limousine watching a Celtics game, and she ended up being a Celtics fan, you know, it's like, she was at a fundraiser for a Central American thing, and I was like, hadn't, but it was really, sometimes I rewind this stuff and it's like, how did that ever happen? But, you know, I had this thing I had to do and, you know, and why not? You know, you hear that person's gonna be there, why not go? I had trouble getting to Muhammad Ali, though, but I got that close, I shook his hand, but, he had people he had to deal with.

Tracy: Exciting.

Alanna: It looks like we're getting...

Steve: Yeah, you should be out of tape by now.

Alanna: Getting on about an hour and 46 minutes.

Steve: Yeah, that's, that's plenty.

Alanna: So we were wondering if this would be a good time to wrap it up, some concluding thoughts.

Steve: Yeah, we should. Yeah.

Alanna: *To Tracy* Were there any things you jotted down that you wanted to return to?

Tracy: I don't think so. I mean, I did earlier, but then we went way beyond past that.

Steve: Yeah, I really wanted to concentrate on the first two years, 'cause there's, there's so much stuff there, and that's kind of what I'm on a campaign to get out about. But, I'll always think of things I didn't think of, I think you got kind of a, a sense, and, you know, it was...

Alanna: Those definitely seem like [???] years.

Steve: Yeah, it's just, it's just amazing that it seems like it's not part of the current consciousness that people, I was kind of surprised with that, and it wasn't like, an ego thing, it was just kind of like, you really, you never heard about this? But then I think, you know, it's been 40 years, it's like, why would they hear about what happened in 1973, 1974? But back then, we thought he had like, stamped the, I mean, it's still, I mean, my hometown, it's like, you know *laughs* you know, everyone, they remember everything about that. But, it's funny, because I was a Best Man at a wedding that year before I came out, for a guy who's like a Republican legislator now, and it's like, yeah, little did you know. But we still, we're still friends, even though we totally disagree on politics. But, yeah.

Tracy: There's so much I could ask about, like more about your family, I would want to know more about that dynamic, and more about people who, after you came out, how they reacted to you, if people left you, people came closer, you know, so much we could talk about.

Steve: Yeah. Both, both, both things, and that's what happens. That's the other thing I tell young people, too, it's like, that's what you want, it's a sorting-out process, they're doing you such a favor, really, I know. It's just, it's just, it was so painful and scary in some ways, but it sure worked out, it's just kinda like, oh good, I'm glad, I never kind of liked that person anyway *laughs* now I have a really good reason not to like them.

Alanna: That could be a kind of consciousness-raising.

Steve: Absolutely, no, it is, I mean, you end up being, oh, gee, I'm surrounded by people that are cool with me, those are the people I want to hang with *laughs* it's like, you know, it really is. Yeah. There's something about being tested, and testing other people, and that's all part of that process, and people, I know it's so scary when you're young, even nowadays, you know, if you're in a small town, and, I really think the transgender thing is the next, transgender folks, it's like, they're catching hell, and that really worries me about Trump, that they're gonna be, I hope not open attacks, but it

sounds like there already have been bullying, and you know, you're gonna get yours, and that sort of thing, and I have no doubt. I didn't think Trump, by himself, as a president, was gonna be able to achieve his agenda, but I think he's unleashed some of the worst *laughs* folks in this country, that they've gotten a green light that it's okay to hate these people, and why the hell, and well, what happened at his rallies? People getting punched, and whatever, and left to their own devices, that worries me.

Tracy: On the 60 Minutes interview the other night, all he said was 'stop it.'

Steve: Oh, I saw that, I did see that. Stop it. You know. Great authority.

Alanna: It just seems like it will just be a time for community-building even more, just keeping each other close and on-the-ground organizing.

Steve: Oh yeah, no, I've seen a lot of ideas on social media about having an app for, you know, safe places, or you know, people that you can contact you might not know, like calling Uber or something, but calling a person who's LGBT-friendly to, who's in the neighborhood to come stand with you, I've seen a lot of stuff on like, just when something happens in public, to stand with the person that's being attacked, it's a simple statement, you know, shoulder to shoulder, maybe other people will join you and the people will back off. I've always thought that, I mean, it's true, I mean, that's why I was always pro-union, this whole idea of being a collective, you know, we had a situation, I think it was in Chicago, where a black union member moved to a white neighborhood, and that can be a very sexually, uh, racially-segregated city. So there were like, a cross burned in his yard, or something, so what they did, the union got a defense squad, fully armed, right in that place, and just surrounded his home, with a union sign on it, so whoever it was in that neighborhood, knew that behind this black man was an integrated union of 2,000 people that would be on there *laughs* so they did that for, 3 nights, I think, 24/7, then left, without anything being said, and it stopped. *laughs* That's collective power. That's like, behind this individual, are a bunch of other people that are organized who work together, who know each other, and you deal with him, you're gonna deal with those other 2,000 at the same time. Then the cowards backed, they're all cowards anyway, they backed down. Anyway, I'll stop preaching. *laughs*