

Fall 11-18-2017

## Waitzkin, Rich

Kristen Cates

Emma Donnelly

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/querying\\_ohproject](http://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/querying_ohproject)



Part of the [History of Gender Commons](#), [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Studies Commons](#), [Oral History Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Cates, Kristen and Donnelly, Emma, "Waitzkin, Rich" (2017). *Querying the Past: LGBTQ Maine Oral History Project Collection*. 28.  
[http://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/querying\\_ohproject/28](http://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/querying_ohproject/28)

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Items From the Collection at USM Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Querying the Past: LGBTQ Maine Oral History Project Collection by an authorized administrator of USM Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [jessica.c.hovey@maine.edu](mailto:jessica.c.hovey@maine.edu).

**Interview with Rich Waitzkin, November 18th 2017**  
**Conducted by Kristen Cates and Emma Donnelly**

Emma: Okay so, we're gonna start with the date. It's November 18th and we're in Rich's home. So, um, can you say and spell your name.	Introduction
Rich: Well, I can say it and I can spell it! Um, Rich Waitzkin. W-a-i-t-z-k-i-n.	
Emma: Okay great. And I'm Emma Donnelly. E-m-m-a D-o-n-n-e-l-l-y.	
Kristen: And I'm Kristen Cates. K-r-i-s-t-e-n C-a-t-e-s.	
Emma: Okay and we just want to remind you that you can refuse to answer any of these questions and you can end the interview at any point. And if you want more time after the 90 minutes, we can schedule a follow-up interview with you. And then the last thing before we get started is which pronouns do you prefer to use?	
Rich: He/Him/His.	
Emma: Okay. Alright, so the first question. When and where were you born?	
Rich: Um, I was born in Akron, Ohio in 1948.	Birthplace (Ohio)
Emma: Okay, um so what made you come to Maine?	
Rich: Um, I came to Maine in 1974 as a student teacher. I was in a program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. And one of the interns sites was Kennebunkport. And I thought for 6 months, that would be a nice place to live.	Coming to Maine as a student teacher
Emma: What made you stay?	
Rich: I was offered a job, without filling out an application or anything. And um, I thought for a year I would stay. And Maine's always been very good for me - to me. And, when I got my social work degree, um, in 1982 I thought I would leave. I left for graduate work and thought I would not return, but I did return, and I'm pleased that I did. Did that answer your question?	What made Rich stay in Maine after moving here  Got his masters in social work
Kristen: Yeah! So, how is your family life in Ohio? Like, since you grew up there?	

Rich: How was my family life in Ohio?	
Kristen: Yeah	
Rich: What a great question! Um, I grew up in a supportive community. Although my home life was rather crazy due to a lot of financial crises, um, marital conflict. My parents were well meaning but rather, uh, limited, in terms of their knowledge of the world and how to maneuver the world. So, I guess I would say it was good, or mixed. It was challenging and I couldn't wait to leave Akron, but I only moved 30 miles away to go to school. 30 miles in 1966 felt very different than it does now.	<p>Family life</p> <p>Supportive family</p> <p>Family issues (marriage, money)</p> <p>Wanting to leave Akron to go to school</p>
Emma: Um, so did you come out before, during, or after the AIDS epidemic?	
Rich: I came out in 1976 / 77. Um, I was in my late 20s. It was before the AIDS epidemic.	Coming out before the AIDS epidemic
Emma: So, were you in Maine at that time?	
Rich: I was in Maine. I was um when I came out I was um a classroom teacher and a public school administrator, and there was, it was a very difficult time in the late 1970s. There was an entertainer and beauty queen named Anita Bryant and Anita Bryant was a very homophobic individual who was running a campaign that was an anti-gay campaign. She was a spokesperson for a Florida orange juice and so she was on tv a lot, people loved her, and she was very hateful at the time. And so, as I was coming out, that was going on nationally and it was a rather frightening time for me both being um a person coming out but also an educator at the time.	<p>Coming out</p> <p>Anita Bryant's political affect</p>
Emma: So what, kind of, pushed you to want to come out?	
Rich: Um, living, being an authentic person. Um, not living a secret life. Being able to be honest. Wanting to commit suicide. People come out for lots of different reasons, but usually it's about being able to be who you actually are.	Reasons for coming out
Kristen: Do you think Maine had any influence on your coming out experience?	

<p>Rich: Well, um, Maine did have an influence. There was uh, there were a couple things going on in Portland, and I was living in Kennebunkport mostly at that time and um, there was a newspaper called “Our Paper” and there was another organization, the name of which I’m not remembering right this moment. Um, but there were two men who were very active in, at that time, in seeking um equality and civil rights for the gay community and writing about it. Supporting people. One person’s name was Stan Fortuna and the other was Peter Prizer and they were kind of early movers and shakers in the state, but certainly here. And one very cold, dreary, Saturday afternoon, when I actually thought I might just walk into the ocean, um, I called them, and they encouraged me to come to Portland and talk with me and they probably spent 6 hours with me and so the answer to the question is, the short answer is, yes there were some very good, sincere, caring men and women, who were on the front lines, of um, educating, advocating, and supporting, and that was helpful.</p>	<p>Maine’s influence on coming out</p> <p>“Our Paper”</p> <p>Support from the Portland LGBTQ community in coming out</p>
<p>Emma: Okay, how did your other friends and family support you, or not support you, during this coming out process?</p>	
<p>Rich: Um, everyone was supportive, it was my fear of rejection. Although I didn’t come out in the school setting at all, I left education and thought I was in the closet. My mother had been secretly, somehow my mother knew that I was gay, and she was secretly researching anything about homosexuality she could. She wasn’t talking with my dad about it, but I think he had his own awareness as well and um they opened the door to talking about it because they were living in the San Francisco bay area. They’d gone to an Opera in San Francisco on gay pride parade day and they stayed for the parade, and I don’t think they really went to the Opera because the parade was so much of a drama, kind of a performance art piece. Um and then I got a letter detailing that parade and I thought “if this isn’t the time to come out, I don’t know what is”. And then I have a brother and he was very supportive as well.</p>	<p>Friends and family support in coming out</p> <p>Internalized fear of rejection</p> <p>Mother secretly knew he was gay and was doing research</p> <p>Gay pride in San Francisco</p>
<p>Kristen: Um, do you remember your first like “crush” that like, your first like gay experience I guess?</p>	
<p>Rich: I sure do. Yes. I met Joe um in Ogunquit and um fell in love, uh I thought I came out in my late twenties and I thought that was very old and in the gay community perhaps that was</p>	<p>First gay relationship / gay experience</p>

<p>true at the time, I didn't know, I didn't have a large enough gay community to know. But I thought if this young man, who was six years younger than I, was interested in me, then I better go for it. So he was my first crush and my uh partner for four years.</p>	<p>Four year partner, Joe</p>
<p>Kristen: Um, so what was your experience like living in New England during the AIDS epidemic?</p>	
<p>Rich: Um, I was working, I had gone to graduate school, I had left education, gotten a second master's degree in social work um was uh working I was I had returned to Maine I was working as uh the director of social services for a visiting nurses association in York County. And the visiting nurses were front line people with the early cases of HIV. In Portland there was one uh outstanding case. A man who had been an employee at Maine Medical who was diagnosed and in York County there was a man um who had been living in New York City and he returned home to Maine to get cared by, for by, his sister and her husband because he was in york county, our agency was working with that, um that patient and it was a scary time, there was no information nationally, um most of the information that was um coming out about the disease was through an organization in New York City called Gay Men's Health Crisis. Um the protocols for safety were um very frightening um in terms you were supposed to be suited up and gloved and masked and um it was a very frightening time uh privacy issues, medical care issues, um legal issues, even funeral homes were not local funeral homes were refusing to take people who had died uh so it was a very difficult frightening time um as a gay man at the time so I was working and in a very scary setting with a lot of unknowns and as a gay person it was very frightening um so I think New England in general because of Massachusetts was um as much on the forefront as it could be also getting support and info from NYC um Maine was uh I think everyone felt like they were just trying to keep up with new information and new cases of people with HIV.</p>	<p>Experience living and working in New England during the AIDS epidemic</p> <p>Working for a visiting nurses association during the AIDS epidemic as a clinical social worker</p> <p>Outstanding case of a Maine Medical Center employee being diagnosed</p> <p>Information they received about AIDS came from Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York City</p> <p>Funeral homes did not want to take deceased AIDS patients</p> <p>Massachusetts being on the forefront made the culture in Maine more accepting</p>

	Hard to keep up with information
Emma: um what events or situation stuck out to you the most from the AIDS epidemic	
Rich: well the number of deaths of creative, young, people it was um it was a very uh sad and again frightening time because someone would be healthy one month and then two months later they might be dead because there were no screening procedures that were going on by the time people had symptoms and without treatments it was often too late for them uh so the loss of these wonderful young people um was uh perhaps the most difficult part of that what was the question again?	Deaths of young people stuck out prominently
Emma: what event or situation stuck out to you the most?	
Rich: the lack of um governmental support, the minimizing of need, the discrimination, and the uh hearing things like anyone with HIV should be sent to like a concentration camp or uh segregated from the culture uh those kinds of things were pretty hard, pretty difficult.	Lack of governmental support during AIDS crisis
Emma: so like in the form that you filled out for us, you said you provided home health care visits. What kind of care did you provide in those visits?	
Rich: so as a social worker I was mostly providing psychotherapy at home, some of it was case management, directing people to the few services that existed, um educating families and patients, um and then for this particular man it was preparation for death because he was not gonna survive this. I don't remember the medication he was on but everything was experimental at that time, there was no, there wasn't enough data or research to say that if you have this it should be treated in this manner and so death was typically the end result so preparing him for death.	Psychotherapy at home for AIDS patients, preparing some for death
Emma: what kind of emotional toll did that take on you?	
Rich: I lost my hair! Um, it was extremely frightening and stressful and um being in the closet to most patient families um it was living this double life which is not at all unusual for the LGBTQ population but much more so in the mid 80s than currently. Um there was always concern about contagion, and	Emotional toll that the home visits took on Rich

<p>um so this kind of paranoia that I had never had before, because we just didn't know how it was transmitted and even once we knew how it was transmitted we didn't necessarily trust that that research was accurate so even though bodily secretions were thought to be the transmission agent, what did that mean? Did that mean that if some sweaty patient having a glass of water, and you went to refill that glass did that mean you had to wash your hands? So um it was stressful and scary. It was also um a bit enlightening about how people can live through the end of their life with dignity and um how families can although that wasn't necessarily the case for all families, how families can step up and assist, but the environment at that time many people were um let go from their families. Many families didn't wanna have anything to do with their kids who were ill.</p>	<p>Concerns about contagion</p> <p>Feeling enlightened to see family support for AIDS patients</p>
<p>Kristen: um did the AIDS epidemic and your work during it influence your decision to go into the social work field?</p>	<p>Influence the AIDS epidemic had on Rich's social work</p>
<p>Rich: well I was already in social work at the time. It certainly um catapulted me to find out as much information as possible and then to use my educational training to go out and to do trainings and services there wasn't at the time an organized in service training or educational component and so I designed my own curriculum and hit the road and went mostly to mental health agencies um spoke to like the Maine Psychological Association um gathered clinical social workers and private practice and working at agencies and trained them and talked about the issues that were pertinent to these clients or patients and also to subdue their own fears of working with this population. So it did influence me to maximize some sort of my community organization skills and educational background um and then it catapulted me to work with whatever developing organizations were happening that were one organizations was the buddies program to provide just friendly visiting to people who were shut in and ill since before there was a Frannie Peabody um before there was the AIDS project um so I was able to use my social work skills</p>	<p>Already in social work</p> <p>Designed own educational curriculum</p> <p>The AIDS epidemic inspired Rich to strengthen his educational and social work skills</p> <p>Buddies program to provide visits to people who were ill</p> <p>Pre-Frannie Peabody</p>
<p>Emma: do you feel like when you would talk to other clinical social workers and the psychological associations and everyone like do you feel like your talks were effective?</p>	

<p>Rich: I do. I think many of them would have and did opt out of seeing people with AIDS. And very few of them would do home visits and many of these people were very sick, too sick to go out, to leave their homes. So, while I think it was effective, Um, I'm not sure how many people mmmm, ever actually did direct service to that population</p>	<p>A lot of social workers did not do direct work with AIDS patients</p>
<p>Kristen: what were some of the challenges you faced while advocating for HIV and AIDS testing and healthcare?</p>	
<p>Rich: the stigma and shame of um A. being gay and also getting tested was not something that most gay men wanted to do at the time. Um, so that was very tricky to convince the community that it was important to get tested, it was important to be using safe sex practices, um so in the community that was difficult, um can you say the question one more time?</p>	<p>Challenges faced while advocating for HIV and AIDS testing and health care: stigma, shame, safe sex practices</p>
<p>Kristen: um what were some challenges you faced while advocating for HIV/AIDS testing um and healthcare?</p>	
<p>Rich: well we have to advocate with funeral homes, nothing much was gonna happen, that I hate to use this word, but disposing of an infected body uh was not necessarily going to end their business as a funeral home that there were protocols that they could follow and they could still assist the family, the mourners, um and maybe the biggest issue was about privacy for testing, to ensure privacy and anonymity so that the information wasn't going to be included in medical documents, in physicians offices, it couldn't be read by other people, and the nature the confidential nature of their health status would be exposed so confidentiality um a big deal, educating the community that it was in everybody's best interest to get tested, to practice safe sex, and then working with um organizations or businesses like funeral homes.</p>	<p>Having to advocate with funeral homes</p> <p>Funeral homes anxiety to work with AIDS patients</p> <p>Educating the community was best</p>
<p>Kristen: was that like a big thing? funeral homes trying, worried about their businesses falling apart?</p>	<p>Funeral home's anxiety</p>
<p>Rich: I think anyone that came in contact with anyone with HIV whether they were alive or dead it was a big deal. So police, for police who might um come upon someone that was bleeding it was a big deal what to do. Physicians I think struggled with what does this mean to be giving medical care to someone with this disease I think the answer is it was a challenge for everybody who would have any contact with</p>	<p>Anyone who came in contact with anyone with HIV had anxiety</p> <p>It was a challenge</p>



<p>people with HIV. Homeless shelters, food banks, it was a huge scary issue across the board, culturally.</p>	
<p>Emma: what does it feel like now in 2017 looking back you kind of being on like the front lines like HIV/AIDS like rights and dignity and healthcare and everything like that? Like how does it feel to look back on that and know you were apart of it?</p>	<p>Looking back now in 2017 on being on the front lines of AIDS advocacy</p>
<p>Rich: well that's a really great question. I'm very, I'm very proud to have been on the front lines. I learned a lot about myself and also the importance of advocating for those who can't advocate for themselves because we now have prophylactic medications people can take so that they are not exposed or if they are exposed the virus can be diminished and people who were thought to who were infected 30 years ago are living still there's a certain level now of minimizing it and looking at it as just a sexually transmitted disease like gonorrhea or syphilis or and so I think I'm a bit disappointed 30 years later that there isn't necessarily a real understanding of how traumatic a time it was, how many people died and how our desire to express ourselves sexually could can still be influencing our health, our physical container that we could end up having an infection that would be influencing our life for the rest of our life and the people we wanna be intimate with. So I'm a little disappointed, I'm not sure in a World AIDS Day is coming up on December 1st, I'm not sure what meaning that has any longer certainly for those who have institutional memory and personal memory if they love someone with HIV it has meaning but I'm not sure to the bigger culture it has much meaning. the AIDS quilt which was a remarkable endeavor for people to mourn the loss of loved ones, the scale of that when it was in Washington DC on the grounds of the memorial, huge, and got a lot of publicity. I'm not even sure if it's traveling any longer and to what extent it's being shown so I'm proud and disappointed with like so many things in history it sort of fades to the background and I'm not sure that I know that sexually transmitted diseases are still going on and I know that Frannie Peabody Center is still working diligently to try to prevent the spread of HIV and to support those that have it but a little disappointed.</p>	<p>Very proud to have been a part</p> <p>Disappointment in current attitudes about the AIDS epidemic</p> <p>Concerns about this year's World AIDS Day December 1</p> <p>AIDS quilt</p>
<p>Emma: I think that's what's at least for me that's what's so cool about being a part of this class is that we're talking to people like you and preserving the history like tangibly so that it doesn't fade and hopefully we can prevent more</p>	

<p>disappointment of the fading history but um what was it like to see the Maine Health Foundation if that's I believe that's what it's called develop into now what is called the Frannie Peabody Center</p>	
<p>Rich: well it's, it's mixed for me about, I been, until recently sort of I left my activist self, I was kind of burnt out from being on boards of different organizations and from being on the front lines of many many things and I haven't been all that involved until about 3 years ago with the creation of the Equality Community Center. I think the Portland area and Maine in general has does a terrific job in creating organizations to provide for this population. all nonprofits go through a great deal of growth and the growth usually comes out of pain, it's painful growth because there are a lot of egos and personalities that are involved and a lot men and women who are well intentioned but may not totally understand the magnitude of their how their personalities affect other people, so I think it's been very positive and a ton of work on the part of all of the permutations of how these organizations have changed over the years. Certainly funding has become a lot more complicated over the years, but always this difficult dance of egos and how egos view the mission of the organizations differently. So, I'm not sure that I'm clearly answering your question, it's very complicated and I think it's been complicated. I think there's been terrific care and then the underbelly or the stuff that happens to the organizations and it happens in all organizations not just HIV/AIDS organizations there's a very steep learning and a lot of personality stuff...</p>	<p>Leaving activism for a bit, just recently came back with the development of the Equality Community Center</p> <p>Non-profit growth, personality conflicts in organizing</p> <p>Funding complications</p>
<p>Emma: I can only imagine... how was your experience like with HIV/AIDS organization, healthcare, the epidemic itself, how did it kind of shape your identity as a gay man?</p>	<p>How the HIV/AIDS epidemic shaped Rich's identity as a gay man</p>
<p>Rich: hmmm.. That's a great question! I'm not sure that it's very easily answered.</p>	
<p>Kristen: that's okay!</p>	
<p>Rich: Actually, I have to say it reinforced my vulnerability than I would have liked. That somehow there was always, if it wasn't physical violence, it was health, health scare or health risk. So I think it informed me that you can't really let your guard down and that I would forever have to be kind of hyper-</p>	<p>Reinforced vulnerability</p>

<p>vigilant in one way or another as a gay person. I wish I could say it made me into this high spirited creative helping person and that's probably true, but I think more to the point of your question for me personally, I think it's more about the hyper vigilance and lurking danger around the danger. You never quite know how safe you are.</p>	<p>Hyper vigilance as a gay person</p>
<p>Kristen: so what was your experience and has been your experience like helping to develop the Equality Community Center</p>	<p>Developing the Equality Community Center</p>
<p>Rich: that's been a wonderful experience and I feel really amazed and it's a bit dream-like that it's actually we're actually manifesting it. So three years ago, this is not a new concept, and it's not something that hasn't been attempted by people over the years, what's typically occurred is that there was always one final step that had to do with funding and location that would prevent other people from being able to manifest it. So I think it was just a confluence of the right time and the right people and maybe community need but three years ago I sat down with one of the gay community's movers and shakers Betsy Smith she was the executive director of Equality Maine for 20 years. I have worked on political campaigns with Betsy 20 years before, and we went out for coffee and I said I had this desire to work toward having a community center. I still thought it was an important venue that we needed to have in the area. She also had been thinking about it recently she had been recently speaking to Ed Gardner, Ed Gardner is a philanthropic, very good hearted man who has a real estate company in the area and so the three of us just began meeting twice a month and exploring ideas, we then brought in an elder law attorney Matt Dubois and then the four of us for about I don't know 18 more months met and thanks to Ed who provided under market value rents for space on congress st. we were able to then know we were able to have space and then we reached out to 13 service organizations LGBTQ service organizations that have existed but have never worked under one roof or collaborated necessarily in an intentional way never probably isn't the right word but in any event 6 of those organizations stepped forward and expressed interest and so we opened the doors August of 2016, yeah, 2016. And we've just celebrated our first sort of anniversary of that. It's again a very difficult process because everyone has an opinion, lots of personalities, we've expanded our exploratory group to now include Dale McCormick and Barb Wood, exceptional women who have</p>	<p>Started recently developing it based off inspiration from other community centers around the country</p> <p>Working with Betsy Smith</p> <p>Working with Ed Gardner</p> <p>Working with Matt Dubois</p>

<p>contributed a great deal over the years to the state and locally. We had almost 700 events in the year of different types at the center and almost 4,000 people attended the activities there, it's pretty amazing what's happening and we have no organizational structure or management of the center and that's what 2018 is essentially. It's about raising some sustained funding for the center itself, hopefully bringing in some level of management to it so that it can be much more than it currently is and we have a dream which is to have a building that includes housing for low income people as well as people that can afford rents in Portland. Some retail, and some spaces for lectures and movies and that kind of thing as well. So we're working on that currently but it's been really a terrific experience. A lot of work. And I'm really hopeful that it will just keep expanding and growing and that more and more people will be able to get something from the groups working at the center.</p>	<p>Working with Dale McCormick and Barb Wood</p> <p>700 events at the ECC, 4,000 people coming through the center</p> <p>ECC goals for 2018</p>
<p>Emma: when you first kind of had this idea of creating the Equality Community Center like what did you think it was going to be and how has that changed since then?</p>	
<p>Rich: well we've been working with the reality that we don't have we know that dreaming is the easy part of this. We could do this, we could do that, we could have that's the easy part. The hard part is living with the realistic capacity that we can't do all of that, so that reality hovers over the excitement of what we could have medical care, we could have meals, we could have AA meetings, and we could have lecture series. We can do all of that at some point but we can't do it right now so tempering the dreaming and being realistic about the fact that we don't have an income stream to support that and that the 6 groups that are working there under one roof and collaborating, they have to be working towards their mission that their individual organization is about. They have to be seeking funds to support their work and so we as an exploratory committee have to fly up above that and look down and go how do we support that and expand that. I think being realistic is maybe the answer to the question. It's a little disappointing we have limitations that we can't just dream about it</p>	<p>Ideas behind the development of the ECC</p> <p>Realities and difficulties of organizing</p>
<p>Kristen: I was just wondering if there was any like event or something that sparked the idea for the Equality Community Center?</p>	<p>What sparked the idea to develop the ECC</p>

<p>Rich: not an event that I can think of, these community centers have existed for almost 30 years or 35 years in LA, New York City, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Ft. Lauderdale has worked for the last 20 years on the creation of what they have which is rather impressive. So it's not a new concept to have sort of one stop shopping for socializing and therapy and healthcare and under one roof and to have like minded people be providing the services and drawing like minded people along the age continuum from youth to elders so it's not a new concept. In Maine we've worked very hard to create protection legislation and luckily we have that in the state, we have, we compared to other states that have certainly they have marriage equality but they don't have protection in employment, public accommodation, etc and because of that the states that don't have protections tend to need these centers a little bit more it seems than in a state where we have those protections but we still have to be decreasing isolation of the population we still have to be bringing people out of the closet into the public and providing services. So there wasn't just one participant. I think we're using models that have existed for quite some time. Those other organizations have worked diligently for 30 years. Now they're building housing. We're trying that very early in our development and that's a rather steep learning curve and we may or may not be able to actually to do that but we're really using already established models.</p>	<p>Community centers have existed prior to this</p> <p>Long term goals for the ECC: housing, medical care, therapy, retail, lecture series</p> <p>Using models that have existed for a long time</p>
---	--

<p>Emma: where would you like to see, er what would you like to see change, like on a state level in Maine? What kind of improvements do you think the state of Maine could use?</p>	<p>Desires for changes/improvements on the state level in Maine</p>
<p>Rich: For this population?</p>	
<p>Emma: Yeah</p>	
<p>Rich: I think there's gotta be more, um uh, I'm concerned about rural Maine. It's kinda easy to provide services in one of the urban areas- and I said kind of; that isn't easy either. But the concentration of people living in say, Portland, or Lewiston/Auburn, or Bangor, that's a little bit easier. What gets tricky is - are the people that are living in really rural, small towns who need the services. And I'm not exactly sure how that, um, gets done. I don't know if that's through</p>	<p>Provide services to rural Maine</p> <p>Urban areas have it "kind of" easier</p>

<p>providing transportation to urban centers. I know the rural health organizations, um, work very hard to try to get health care, dental care, immunizations, I mean to rural - to the rural folks. And when we live in the urban places in Portland we forget that there are people with transportation stuck in beautiful places in the state but they, but getting to a dentist, getting medical care, uh, socializing with another gay person, you know is not easy to do. So I guess if there was something that could happen statewide it would be how to get satellite centers or caseworkers or more people reaching out to those folks in the rural communities. And funding is always part of the issue; who's going to do it and how's it going to get funded. So...and youth! I don't know how homeless youth, um, there ought to be - it would be lovely to have a statewide effort to prevent homeless youth but also how to help homeless youth wherever they are, uh, again the urban centers attract homeless youth because they have more services and the sense of whoever you are is fine so all the questioning youth - youth that are transitioning - have to really move far from home and even then become homeless on the streets of Portland or Bangor or Auburn. So...I think youth and overall statewide youth effort would be great.</p>	<p>Possibly provide transportation from rural areas</p> <p>People in rural parts of Maine are unable to have vital resources to their physical and mental health</p> <p>Satellite centers or caseworkers in rural communities</p> <p>Homeless youth</p> <p>Overall statewide youth effort would be good</p>
<p>Kristen: So what has been your most rewarding experience in regards to your LGBTQ work and activism?</p>	<p>Most rewarding experience</p>
<p>Rich: I don't think there is one. I wish it were that simple but it's not for me to come up with one.</p>	
<p>Kristen: You can name a few!</p>	
<p>Rich: I think it's been rewarding to know that I was able to help around HIV education at a time before there was something formalized, and that no one stopped me. If I wanted to work hard and I wanted to hit the road and I wanted to use my time to do it - it was okay to do. Um, so again I think it was a certain time in history and a certain</p>	<p>Able to be on the frontlines of HIV education in Maine</p>

<p>need during that time that allowed some of us who had the skills to contribute, to contribute and now there are much more guidelines and restrictions who can do that kind of stuff. So I think um the educational work that I did around HIV, um, I'm a clinical social worker in private practice so I am pleased with my professional work, uh with the LGBTQ population over the years. And then I guess the third thing would be the, um, the creation of the Equality Community Center and just in it's early life in that center. So I think those three things probably would speak to what I'm pleased with.</p>	<p>Ability to contribute</p> <p>Happy with clinical social work</p> <p>Happy with creation of the equality community center</p>
<p>Emma: What are your goals moving forward? Like, do you have anything that you would like to accomplish in the future?</p>	<p>Goals moving forward</p>
<p>Rich: Are you talking about, um, with the LGBT community - LGBTQ community or?</p>	

<p>Emma: Yeah</p>	
<p>Rich: I mean, hmm, well I'm gonna be involved with the community center, um, at least through the next phase, whatever that's going to look like; whatever the strengthening and solidification of systems, so that it is a sustainable center. Um, I want to be working in my therapy practice for as long as I can. Uh, but other than that, I'm not-I'm not sure. I'll have to think into that question, that's a- that's a hefty question...yeah.</p>	<p>Continued involvement with Equality Community Center</p> <p>Continue with social work</p>
<p>Kristen: So I know you were living in Maine in the 80s, so do you remember the Charlie Howard situation?</p>	<p>Charlie Howard</p>
<p>Rich: Um, of course I remember Charlie Howard's death; shocking, very disturbing, very enlightening. Um, Howard- Charlie Howard's death was not unlike Matthew Shepard's death, but when we hear about the name Matthew Shepard, everyone shakes their heads and knows about Matthew Shepard it seems. The culture seems to have somehow registered the death of Matthew Shepard differently than- than Charlie Howard, certainly differently than the trans people that</p>	<p>Death was shocking yet enlightening</p> <p>More people know Matthew Shepard than Charlie Howard</p>

<p>are killed on a regular basis. So, I do remember it and uh, still view it as quite a tragedy. I'm not sure that it woke up the people of Maine enough perhaps, although I think it might of um, see...I could be wrong about the dates of Charlie's death but it was part of the HIV/AIDS scare - the same time I believe. There were other things going on that might of diluted the magnitude of what the outcome of that death might have been. But there were some groups that evolved from that and overall state legislation. I think it became clear that discrimination was and the fear of loss of life and the actual loss of life was possible so, I think it was helpful in that way. But it was pretty sad. Pretty devastating.</p>	<p>Thought of differently</p> <p>Didn't wake Maine up enough</p> <p>Other events diluted Howard's death</p>
<p>Emma: How has the Portland or Southern Maine queer community grown or changed throughout your time here?</p>	<p>Change in Southern Maine's queer community</p>
<p>Rich: Well, um, one way would be uh last year's, um, last June's pride festival and parade. Um, the early days of the pride parade, it was like a 20 minute parade and this was almost an hour and a half of people, lots of people who were in parade not to mention a lot of people observing the parade. Um, I think around 13,000 people were estimated to be at the park, um, never would of happened in 1970s or 80s, that was just not - just wasn't on the screen for that, that has changed a lot. Of course the desire for celebration is-is very popular. So that's-that's a pretty dramatic impact. I think the beauty of what is happening now in the queer community and the questioning community and the trans community is a direct outgrowth of all of the work that happened over the years and the protective rights legislation that Maine has is allowing younger people to be able to do that. I think that people really had to be in the closet where I'm uh, younger people's uh - when I'm saying younger people I'm talking about high school kids who were questioning their sexuality in ways that - that was not even possible when I was a high schooler. So I think that's really very powerful and I think the numbers are very - I think they're very high. Much higher than reported for this non-binary, fluid</p>	<p>June 2017 Portland Pride's historical attendance (13,000 people)</p> <p>Desire for celebration</p>



<p>acceptance. Um, and that is a tremendous change; there isn't the pigeonholing along with the expectations and the expectations of certain role behavior. Um, very different and very um- actually for my generation it's a little hard to understand, because we grew up with a very strong binary: you're either this or this, you're either going to do this or this, you're either going to look like this or this and that's all been blown out of the water. Very different, very exciting, um, and a little difficult for my generation to fully wrap their heads around; you opened our, um, interview with uh asking me what pronouns I'd want to be used. That was never an option to have other pronouns or to decide one day these were the pronouns you'd want to be used or referred to with and the next day change your mind. So that's tremendous change in a very positive direction, I think.</p>	<p>Growth of queer community</p> <p>Younger generations able to question more freely</p> <p>Non-binary/fluid acceptance</p> <p>Grew up with a strong binary</p> <p>Hard for older generations to understand</p> <p>Pronouns</p>
<p>Emma: Yeah, can you elaborate a little bit on what you mean by, like, your generation having these like expectations, like, you know you come out as a gay man and the society has these expectations of what you're gonna be like?</p>	<p>Elaborate on generational expectations</p>
<p>Rich: Well, I think the society had expectations that you were going to be straight. First off, [laughter] so then to come out and be gay would mean you weren't meeting the standard heterosexual, uh, expectation. Um, and then there are levels of expectations that it's okay to be a gay person, just don't talk about it, don't expose me to your lifestyle, quote on quote. Basically, you should stay in the closet, um, and the expectations that you were supposed to still get educated, you were still supposed to be in a relationship, you were still supposed to have kids, and the co-conflict of all that because we weren't raised as gay kids, we were raised as straight kids...</p>	<p>Expectations that you would be straight or heterosexual</p> <p>expectations</p>

Emma: Yeah	
Rich:...with the same expectations that well you're just going to do what other straight people have always done. And so you basically have to create your own, and i think what's happened since the 1960's, certainly is that you create your own path which may resemble some days the old framework, then the other day resemble something new and very different. Um, is this making any sense?	Expectation that you have to do what other people do
Emma and Kristen: Yeah!	
Rich: The idea of, uh, being gay and having children, if you didn't come into a relationship with children from a heterosexual relationship, that was-that was not a possibility for a gay couple to adopt or have their own biological children.	Having or not having children while gay
Emma: Mmm, the expectation that every gay couple does want to have children	

Rich: That's right.	
Emma: Yeah, did you have anyone when you were like uh growing up or questioning or anything, um, did you have anyone close to you that, um, was gay and resembled like a kind of life you might of wanted to live?	Any role models while growing up?
Rich: No. Um, turns out um my father's brother was gay. Um, so and was um discharged from the military because he was gay.	Uncle was gay and discharged from the military for it
Emma: Wow	
Rich: And that was a family secret. Um, so he would have been the closest person to me. There were two women that I went to college with and these women after c- we stayed quite close after graduating from college and these two women, um, came out as lesbians and-and/or bisexual um they were models for me. Um, they were also very much part of the feminist movement and very political and they again modeled for me, uh, and enlightened me as a male about ... a lot of things [laughter]. So I'm grateful for them, um, other than that, no one that I'm aware of that stands out as someone I was always - kind of as a touchstone or someone that I could compare myself to; no, but it always felt much more like a-a solitary walk and exploration, um that way.	Family secret  Two friends in college who were queer  Friends were apart of the feminist movement and helped him

	Coming out/being gay was a solitary walk
Emma: So, you said you went to UMass Amherst, right? Did you go there for undergrad?	
Rich: No, I went to Case Western Reserve in Cleveland for undergrad. I went to UMass Amherst for my master's in education.	Case Western Reserve for undergrad  Umass Amherst for Master's
Emma: Okay, so what was- was there any kind of queer community during your undergrad experience?	Was there queer community during undergrad
Rich: During my undergrad experience, there probably was. It was in Cleveland. Cleveland was a-sort of largest city in Ohio, I think. And, um, it's also where my Uncle, I came to find out, went every weekend to the gay bars in Cleveland so [laughter]. There was a lot going on, um, at college and in Cleveland. However, I was depressed, I was working full time, going to school and very repressed sexually. So, I assume there were people having a great time exploring and I was just doing the next right thing one day at a time with trying to get my studies done and study for exams and turn my papers in and work.	Uncle went to gay bars in Cleveland  Depressed Working full time Sexually repressed
Emma: What about at UMass? I know, like, um the feminist movement and the lesbian movement must of been huge with Smith, Mt. Holyoke and everything but, so what was that area like for you?	Queer community for Rich at UMass
Rich: Same as undergrad.	
Emma: Oh, okay.	
Rich: Um, it actually was the same for me. I was sort of asleep. I remember that was when I started actually questioning my sexuality. Because I had had girlfriends and I had been sexual with these girlfriends, um, through college. Um, but I carried my repressed sexuality to Amherst and um, I remember going to the public library in Amherst to look up homosexuality and what was called then the card catalog. I don't know if you've ever seen them but libraries- in order to find a book in the library, you went to these narrow drawers with alphabetical listing of every book that was in the library and	Felt asleep at UMass  Had girlfriends, was sexual with them  Went to library to look up homosexuality

<p>went through those little index cards and I remember feeling very closest like 'don't look anybody, I'm looking up homosexuality'. I didn't know what that word meant in relation to me - that's how repressed I was. SO that was up until about the age of 26 or so. So, I imagine people were having a great time in Northampton, and in Springfield, and in Connecticut. And uh, and in Amherst. But that wasn't my experience.</p>	<p>Scared of other people looking Very closeted</p>
<p>1:02 Emma: Did you find any sort of comfort in going to the library and reading about homosexuality? Or was it just kind of like-like anxiety ridden and like 'i hope nobody is looking at me' type.</p>	<p>Anxiety ridden or did the library answer questions?</p>
<p>Rich: It was anxiety ridden and it was also clarifying because I could finally go "ooooohhhh...i get it. this is what this is about." [laughter]. So, I was able to take-the labeling helped me um and it made me feel part of something bigger than me. I didn't know how I was going to find all those other people but it did cut down on my sense of, um, i really am a Martian from outer space and there are no other Martians, uh, locally. It wasn't until the summer after that that I was in San Francisco for a month or something and that's where, uh, a couple of people I met, that's when I really began to feel like um I was finally toward being in sync with myself. Um cause I had-cause I had not experienced that up until that time um, hanging-you know being in stores or restaurants or streets where there were other people like me. So, San Francisco offered that and later living in Boston offered that.</p>	<p>Both anxiety ridden and clarifying</p> <p>Didn't feel different or foreign Felt like he belonged somewhere</p> <p>Lived in San Francisco for about a month</p> <p>Began to become in sync with self in SF</p> <p>Both San Francisco and Boston offered that</p>
<p>Emma: What was the queer community like in Boston during that time?</p>	

Rich: What was that?	
Emma: What was the queer community like in Boston during the time you lived there?	
Rich: Oh, it was very-so I was in Boston in 1980 to 82 and it was very active. Um, I participated in a gay men's social group, I was living in the South End which was being gentrified at the time and it was filled with gay men...	<p>Boston's queer life was very active Participated in a gay men's social group</p> <p>South end was being gentrified</p>
Emma: Yeah	

Rich: Um, uh I was uh one of my internships for uh graduate school was with counseling services. It was a LGBTQ counseling services right downtown, um there were a lot of bars, there was a lot of dancing, there was the gay parade. So it was a very active and lively community, um, I also was in grad school like you're experiencing so you can only take so much time to play [laughter] but um, pretty active. And again I finally felt like I was-I wasn't the Martian.	<p>Internships was with LGBTQ counseling services</p> <p>Didn't have much time to have fun because of grad school</p>
Emma: Yeah	
Rich: Um...	
Emma: So if you had such a great time in Boston what made you come back here?	Why come to Maine?
Rich: Well that's a good question [laughter] because I thought I'd live in Boston, um, because I had a hard time finding a job as a f-just graduating from social work school, even though I had another Master's degree and I had been an administrator in a public school and teaching experience and all that, um I was a little too over-qualified for some jobs...	<p>Thought he'd stay in Boston</p> <p>Had trouble finding a job</p> <p>Previous jobs</p>
Emma: Interesting...	

<p>Rich: And, um uh, so I had a hard time uh finding employment in the greater Boston area and the one place that was excited to have me was back here in Maine at the Visiting Nurse Association and they were able to-they could see that the educational background that I had and the social work background might be a good fit for the programming that they were wanting to have in the direct services they were wanting to have. But your question uh has echoed [laughter] through my life that would-what if I had just spent another six months looking for jobs in Boston? What would of happened? Well, I didn't have any money [laughter] to-it didn't feel like I had the luxury...</p>	<p>Found a job at the Visiting Nurse Association in Maine</p> <p>A good fit for the job</p> <p>Wonders what would have happened if stayed in Boston</p>
<p>Emma: Right...</p>	
<p>Rich: You know, this was the job with a salary and with some benefits and I had been in Maine, I just didn't think I was going to return to Maine.</p>	
<p>Emma: I think it's interesting when I ask people that question because I grew up in the Boston area and people always ask me what brought me here. So I like hearing other people's stories about that because like Boston is great but there is something about being here that's so different. Um..</p>	
<p>Rich: Yup, I've always found Maine to feel very uh e-everything is fairly accessible; if you want to talk to a state senator or a representative or a city council person or someone from the police department or it doesn't really matter they're fairly easy to get at compared to larger urban centers. Um, it has felt pretty safe um, safety feels a bit-at least in Southern Coastal Maine feels safe. It's beautiful, um but perhaps if I had gotten a job, I would of stayed and my life would have been totally different.</p>	<p>Maine is fairly accessible</p> <p>Easy to talk to those in political power</p> <p>Easier to access than bigger cities</p> <p>Southern Maine feels safe</p>
<p>Emma: Right</p>	
<p>Kristen: Was the gay life in Portland similar to Boston for you? Or was it different, I guess... or more like closeted</p>	<p>Portland vs Boston gay life</p>

<p>Rich: It was different for me, and I'll tell you why and um you might think this is really silly because as I'm saying it I sort of do now, I didn't living it; when I was 28, I was already bald. And while bald is sort of cool now, [laughter] it wasn't back then. Long hair for men was a big deal. And so, if you're bald in Maine, you could-there was not the physical attractiveness but in Boston and New York, that didn't matter. And so when you ask your question, it reminds me that the difference for me was I could be out socializing in Portland and not many people would be very interested in me. I could be out socializing in Boston and a number of people would be interested in me. And I've always had a bee that it was physically I looked older than I was at the time. And buzzcuts were not the thing then. [laughter] So, um, and uh-the other thing with Boston that there wa-there was just more variety; there were different kinds of bars for different populations. And there were women's bars, there were men's bars, there were leather bars, and there were bars for older people, and dancing or talking. That wasn't so much the case here. There were many fewer bars and I think usually only one place to dance, if I'm remembering correctly. There was just like one bar, one place that was a dance place, and then a couple quieter places.</p>	<p>Boston life was different</p> <p>Being bald was not attractive to men in Maine</p> <p>Men were not as interest in Rich in Portland as they were in Boston</p> <p>More bars in Boston, more variety</p>
<p>Emma: How has-how do you think the bar scene now compares to how it was, like in the 80s...in Portland?</p>	<p>Bar scene in the 80s versus now</p>
<p>Rich: Well I don't think there are any-well, we don't have really- think maybe there's one place that's considered...Flask might be considered a gay bar now. And I think that's the only one actually, I could be wrong. Um, there's been a dilution or a, um, homogeneity that's occurred even in Ogunquit, where gays and straights seem to being hanging out much more than ever before. So the idea of there just being one gay bar destination- I don't think that's happening quite the way it used to. Um, it's sad that in Portland, we've lost Styxx...</p>	<p>Flask</p> <p>Gay and straight people now going to the same bars</p>

Emma: Yeah...	
Rich: And um, so I think there's just Flask as a bar and I'm assuming people go to the Asylum and other places; Bubba's...	
Emma: Yeah...	
Rich: ...other places to dance. But it isn't just LGBT, it's everybody.	

Emma: Flask actually isn't even officially a gay bar. Like it is, socially everyone kind of knows it is but it isn't officially a gay bar....	
Kristen: They don't title themselves as that	
Emma: yeah, and there's Blackstone's but that's really only for older men...	
Rich: Oh yup, Blackstone's...	
Emma: And I think that's it.	
Rich: Yep, I think-I think you're probably right.	
Emma: Yeah.	
Rich: And in Ogunquit there was The Front Porch which still exists but it used to be almost entirely gay, um, not so much anymore. And Main street and I think that might be it for Ogunquit. There was a place called The Club, um. So in general, the positive part of the LGBTQ community being included in the culture at large, more accepted, um for people that wanna go out for an evening, I don't think the vision is as quite as much as it used to be. Uh, perhaps. But again, this is Southern Coastal Maine, I don't know-I-I don't know how it feels to be a gay person going into a bar in Northern Maine.	The Front Porch in Ogunquit
Emma: Right...yeah so has this interview lead you to any new thoughts or insights on your life or your experience?	Any new thoughts or insight after interview
Rich: Um, well talking and uh being a therapist-talking always has a way of kind of shocking the central nervous system and 'ohhh right!' I'm hearing these words come out of my mouth so it sits in a different place inside, kind of gets shuffled around like doing house cleaning or something. [laughter] Um, so I guess it's helpful for me to hear how things have changed and for me to verbalize um my contributions	Stirring thoughts around...feels good



<p>over you know three or four decades...that feels good. Um, I'm also just sitting and thinking how wonderful an oral history record is, that somebody is going to listen to this and they're either gonna poo-poo it, they're going to turn it off, they're going to puke [laughter], whatever they're are going to do, at least there is an opportunity for somebody to hear something that pertains to their life in someway or edifies them in some way. And that's all good so...</p>	<p>Helpful to hear things verbalized and how they've changed or helped</p>
<p>Kristen: I think like the preserving memories is really special. Yeah</p>	
<p>Rich: Yeah, I think you are right.</p>	
<p>Emma: yeah, Kristen and I were talking, um before just talking about the possibilities of how this was going to go and we were both like 'well he's a therapist so maybe he'll enjoy being the one who get's to talk.' [laughter]. And not ask the questions.</p>	
<p>Rich: Right, thank you so much for that. Do I have to pay you? [laughter]</p>	
<p>Emma: Yeah, there's a \$20 co-pay [laughter]</p>	
<p>Kristen: Is there anything else that we didn't get to that you wanted to talk about?</p>	
<p>Rich: I don't think so. I think your questions are really swell and how's it for you?</p>	
<p>Kristen: I think it's really good, yeah.</p>	
<p>Emma: Yeah we had this option to like- so we filled out a similar form that you did to-uh ask like what we wanted to talk about. And, um, Wendy and the research assistant matched us with someone so we could talk about what like we all were on the same page about what interests us the most and you know, I got the paperback that we got matched with you and I was looking at the stuff you wanted to talk about and we checked off all the same stuff.</p>	
<p>Kristen: Yeah....</p>	
<p>Rich: Oh really?</p>	
<p>Emma: Yeah, like everything single thing match-for-match. I don't know about Kristen, but that's how it was for me and I looked at that and was</p>	

like 'this is going to be so cool!' Like I'm involved with Frannie Peabody now	
Rich: Oh yeah?	
Emma: ...and I'm involved with the queer community now and everything so like, you have the history behind what I'm experiencing now. Which is like, really cool for me.	
Rich: Cool...that's great...	
Emma: Yeah	
Rich: And same for you?	
Kristen: Yeah, um it was-I just-I expected-I was really paranoid things were going to go wrong or questions would l-I would run out of questions, but it felt like it went so smoothly. And I learned so much that I just didn't know. Which is just a nice experience to be informed and have the chance	
Rich: Cool. Yeah.	
Emma: And there's always like stuff you read about like the experiences people have in San Francisco, like that's where a lot of documentaries take place and you know stuff like that. So to also learn about like where we live and what happened in Maine and how it's been from then to now is like so much cooler than you know...I've never been to San Francisco, I have no idea what's going on there like stories there are obviously powerful but it's not the same.	
Rich: Right! Right, very different	
Emma: Yeah.	
Rich: Um, one of the things we didn't talk about was that I sat on Olympia Snow's husband governor Mckernan in the late 80's I was on an advisory board for the governor	Advisory board for Governor McKernan in late 80s
Emma: Wow	
Rich: And I only did it for a year because I couldn't stand it [laughter] but there was actual advisory group to the governor so that if legislation needed to occur, so there was a group of us that were working in the field that would go to Augusta once a month and that has dissipated. There's no longer an advisory on HIV/AIDS to the governor	Didn't like it

	Went to Augusta once a month to help legislation
Emma: Not with this governor	
Rich: Even though he was a Republican and even though he vetoed one of the first pieces of legislation about gay marriage, I think or gay..gay marriage? I can't remember. It was not gay marriage, It was um about gay-gay protective rights. Um, at least he had this advisory council.	Advisory council for gay protective rights
Kristen & Emma: Thank you so much.	
Emma: Oh also um if possible if we could get a picture of you...	
Rich: Sure...	