

Interview with Dennis E. Miller

**Interviewed by Scott Paulsen
University of Minnesota**

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at Mr. Miller's home
Minneapolis, Minnesota**

SP: This is an interview with Dennis Miller and we're talking about the gay community.

Dennis, I want to ask you some questions about where you came from. Where did you grow up?

DM: In Dallas, Texas during the 1950's and the 1960's. I was there when President Kennedy was assassinated in 1963.

SP: What did your parents do?

DM: My father was a blue collar labor worker in the airline industry and my mother data office work. She always worked even as a child growing up, so she was a working woman before a working woman became kind of common.

SP: So you grew up in Texas?

DM: Yes.

SP: Can you tell me when you came out?

DM: After leaving Texas, I came to the University of Minnesota, in the fall of 1969 and I really started coming out once I left my family home during my first year of college. Until then I never dated in high school. I didn't have much of a sexual identity. I knew there was something different but I wasn't quite sure what it was and I certainly was not acting out any gay behavior. That really didn't happen until I came here to college.

SP: So can you tell me something about that development? When did you start to recognize that you had an identity?

DM: Oh, I think as soon as I left my family home and came here and had an opportunity to start making friends and defining who I was rather than defining myself in the context of a

family. So really, on campus, at that time, which was a very exciting time because it was still during the middle of the war in Vietnam and there was a tremendous movement on college campuses with the anti-war movement and there was a lot of talk about civil rights. Martin Luther King had only been killed the year before and women strikes during that period of course Stonewall happened in 1969 also and so there began to be a little bit of coverage in the mainstream media of gay issues and the fact that there were gay people around.

SP: You came here in what?

DM: September 1969.

SP: 1969, ok. I want to ask you a little more about coming out. After you realized yourself that you were gay, were there other people who you could trust and talk to about this?

DM: Not within my family. I began to make a few friends as I came out. It really was entirely a peer kind of situation and quite frankly usually happened in the context of people with whom you had a sexual relationship. After the initial sexual expression, you developed a friendship. So it was really -- it really was a time when you slept with someone and then you became friends so you found out who they were afterwards.

SP: So would you describe that as being part of the gay life at that time?

DM: Yes, I would. I think there was a very common experience. I don't think that's very healthy but I think it was common development. Sure.

SP: When did you establish that identity, a public identity?

DM: Probably not until 1972, about three years after I came here and until that, it was just something I was thinking about in watching and observing and really there wasn't during 1969, there really wasn't much of an actual gay movement here and what there was, was really pretty limited to the University with the FREE organization and I never went to any of their meetings. But I had read about them and I knew they were there and then Jack Baker ran for Student Body President. So, in a very public way, that was a very remarkable thing at that point, something that had never happened before where someone ran for a student body presidency. He was the first to ever be elected as openly gay in the country. So my political consciousness began to develop on top of my sexual behavior.

SP: FREE, that came around about the time of Stonewall, even a little bit before.

DM: Yes.

SP: What is your impression of FREE? Did you ever want to go to their meetings?

DM: I was curious but the meetings were in the Students Center at the University and I didn't really feel at that point like walking into a room and saying I'm gay because I haven't gotten to that point. So I knew about them and knew that they met. They had a reputation quite frankly for having a lot of people, not from campus active people who would come to the U to be active and older people. So it was something that I sort of stayed away from even though I knew it was available.

SP: Does that have anything to do with all the people coming from outside of campus?

DM: Yes.

SP: You didn't want to be involved partly because of that?

DM: Yes, I was young. I was eighteen years old. I really really wanted to be with my peers rather than--At that point people who were thirty years old seemed like they were ancient to me. That's mistaken in reference to that but at that time it felt that way.

SP: You remember Jack Baker? How did you first hear of him?

DM: Through his campaign for Student Body President and he had some wonderful posters throughout campus and there were very, very clever and very witty and he was very subtle in his use of the fact that he was gay in running for Student Body President. It was really quite a time.

SP: Did that inspire you in some way?

DM: Yes, it did because it showed that you could be out and noted in the public and be talked about in the media and still have a life. Sure. I think it inspired me and I think it inspired a lot of other people, too. I don't think I was singular for being at all. I think it inspired a lot of other people too, recognizing that they could be publicly out. It took me a few years after to do the same but that was a good catalyst.

SP: Do you think his being out spoke for most gay people or, did it speak for you or, was it inspiring just to see someone who said: "I'm gay, I can be public."?

DM: It was the inspirational nature for being publicly gay. Quite frankly when I came into politics and ideology I didn't like Jack very well because he was essentially a traditionalist and somewhat conservative in his personal politics and I was pretty much a progressive and an-anti war activist. So it was not the politics at all. It was really just the representational value of being openly gay.

SP: Did you have any personal conflicts with him at the University?

DM: No, no personal conflicts.

SP: Political conflicts in a personal...

DM: Actually I was active with student government groups and he was very much an anti-group person and there were at that point on campus, there were political parties, not DFL or Republican parties but different student groups that would mobilize around different issues and there were two or three primary parties from different ideological vantage points and he was not in line. He didn't like any of them. Essentially most people who were active on campus did not support Jack politically and vice-versa.

SP: So he didn't adhere to a political party?

DM: Not at all. His own agenda was pretty unique to himself.

SP: Did that work against him?

DM: I think so because he was not collaborative. He wasn't very interested in building coalitions. He always, I think, had a reputation of being an individualist and a loner and that can be very good. But to be politically successful, I think that it did makes that more difficult. As I think, you see representative now by the fact that he's very hard to get a hold of, he's really embittered about that period. He's really totally retired from gay politics or politics of any sort and I think that sort of detached nature was there all along for Jack, you see it better represented now.

SP: What else was happening, maybe at the University because you were there, but outside of the University, did you see any other evidence of gay life? Let's just talk about gay life.

DM: No. I was pretty much, during that time, I was at the U. Everything that happened in my life, happened at the U. My development: gay consciousness, my political behavior, my sexual expression with all these people that I met on campus or around campus or through campus groups and where the politics of being openly gay sort of began to work for me as the anti-war movement. There were anti-war veterans and anti-war feminists and actually as the different marches and demonstrations went on during 1970 and 1971 and 1972, there would be gay contentions that would march too behind gay banners. So that sort of I moved into the anti-war movement was as an anti-war gay person.

SP: When did you start to be aware of Gay Pride, the celebration, the march, the rally?

DM: Pretty much right away, in 1970. I don't know much about the organizations or the people involved in coordinating the events. It's done through flyers, brochures and I think that the initial emphasis must have been campus space. But I don't remember that precisely.

SP: Do you remember what happened at the first march? Were you there?

DM: Yes. It was very small. It started in Loring Park and at that point the marchers and it couldn't have been more than one hundred people, very small group of people with hand-made placards and there was no entertainment or celebration per se. It was really pretty much like every other protest march at that point and it marched down Harmon Place and around the Loring Park neighborhood, did not even go downtown. So it was very short, like eight or nine marched and there were still photographers, news media because the idea that people would willingly march in public as gay people or lesbian people at that point was fairly news worthy. So it would get media. There would be people as soon as the camera would come, half of the people who were marching would put on sunglasses or doctor faces, sort of turned around because at that point there were a lot of people who did not want to be photographed or known in any public sense as gay.

SP: And there was a very small amount like you said?

DM: Very small.

SP: Like under twenty-five?

DM: Under a hundred. I don't know rather it was as small as twenty-five but it was under a hundred.

SP: Were there any speeches given?

DM: I don't recall them. It was pretty much just a matter of marching and chanting.

SP: Do you remember the chants?

DM: I don't remember the chants. But it had to be the "two-four-six-eight Gays verses as good as straight" sort of the pretty basic simple chants from the early 1970's, "three-five-seven-nine Lesbians are mighty fine." Those words were in the early chants. But that was during the "gay is good" period. That was the big button at that point. Then it wasn't a matter of seeking real political acceptance, it was just to even convince people that being gay was an ok thing to be, that it was healthy and not dysfunctional. At that point, just wearing a button saying that "Gay is good" which is a pretty fundamental message now, that was something of a risk. That was a hard message to send to people. People didn't think that it was at all.

SP: Do you remember any of the things that were going on like with the American Psychiatric...

DM: Sure, that was terribly helpful. Not so much what it said to the straight community but even to what it said to gay people that you see it's not averational behavior, it's perfectly healthy. It's not something that can be called mentally unbalanced or mentally ill. So that was terribly helpful, I think.

SP: Was there any literature that you read at that time that...

DM: I'm certain there was.

SP: Do you remember the Kinsey report?

DM: I remember reading synopsis of the Kinsey report, sure.

SP: Off campus. I'm sure you wandered out off campus at times?

DM: Yes.

SP: Do you remember what existed? Is there anything you ran across as part of gay life in the Twin Cities, either St Paul or Minneapolis?

DM: I loose my sequence here a little bit. It's hard to say sometime what year but I know that it had to be in the early 1970's, 1972 or 1973. I lived in St Paul. I didn't move to Minneapolis until 1978 or 1979 but in the early 1970's I spent sometime at the Townhouse. I was underage. There was a twenty one year old drinking age at that point. So the Townhouse was the gay bar in St Paul. At that point there was no other gay bar. So there had been a bar a couple of years earlier up in the Como Park area on Front Street and I can't remember the name of it but that pretty much had closed by the time I began to do any bar coacher activities, so the Townhouse in St Paul. There was the Suttons' place in Minneapolis, the old Suttons. Suttons had moved locations after that a couple of times, but there was the Suttons' place which had to be down on 7th Street or 8th back by where the freeway is now and there was a bathhouse across the street from that. It's pretty much down by were Sharing and Caring Hands is now.

SP: And that's on Hennepin?

DM: No, that's off Hennepin. It was like off Hennepin on 7th or 8th Street about four blocks to the north.

SP: Do you know what would be there now? Does the Target Center cover everything?

DM: Yes. Pretty much. It's where the Target Center is now exactly.

SP: What do you remember like the Townhouse?

DM: It was friendly. Everyone seemed to know everyone else pretty much and, I don't know if it was gay owned, but all the people who worked there were gay and there was sort of a familial feeling. People introduced themselves casually and got to know other people pretty quickly. It was a mixed bar even then. There were both men and women there, even at that point. So they've always had a reputation for being a mixed bar.

SP: Do you think that's the result of just a close community or being one bar?

DM: Or the fact that was the only place in town to go, I think, more than anything. So if you only had one territory or one piece of turf, I suppose it was only natural that it would be mixed. It wasn't very racially mixed, but it was mixed as far as gender.

SP: Speaking of racially, were you aware of any bars where there were black men, women, Native Americans?

DM: A little bit, at that time too there was a club open and it was an after hours club, opened about the Orpheum Theater in downtown Minneapolis and that was a dance club. But it didn't serve alcohol and it would open at something like midnight and then close down at four o'clock. What was the name of that? I can't-- It might have been called the Club, I think.

SP: That sounds familiar.

DM: There were a lot of people of color who went to the Club. There were also people of color, primarily Native Americans who went to The 19 which I was getting into underage also. There were a lot of Native American. Surprisingly enough, it's not true anymore. Among the crowd of people I remember this to a very high population of Native American transvestites, lots of them, like fifteen or twenty of them. There were an awful lot of Native American men who were either doing cross dressing or preparing preparations both transvestite pre-operative transsexuals. For some reason, that was the bar that the Indian community went to.

SP: The 19?

DM: The 19.

SP: Really?

DM: Yes.

SP: What was The 19 bar like? Anything what's it like now? It's a three-two beer.

DM: It was a three-two bar; it was even more working class at that point. It was a pretty scuzzy little club, just awful. It was dirty, a little bit scary, it had kind of a rough crowd. I was there a couple of times when there were [unclear] knives fights or riot even. It was a very strange place to go to.

SP: Riots started by the patrons?

DM: By patrons, drunken patrons fighting with each other. I remember one incident where a fight broke out and I was with my best friend Mark who was at the front of the bar and I was at the back of the bar. This fight broke out and that seemed to move and other people joined in. It was like one of those traditional movies with people smashing beer bottles on the floor and fighting with jagged pieces of glass and pieces of glass and there was blood flying. I was so-- Mark was trying to get me out of there and summoning me and I just sort of wived my way through without getting even hit or anything else, but I did have little flakes of blood on my shirt afterwards but...

SP: Did you go back?

DM: Oh, not for a long time.

[both laugh]

There was also a shooting at the Townhouse.

SP: At the Townhouse?

DM: The bouncer was shot by a patron. Keith, what was the name? Keith. [interference] Do you think it was a hate crime?

DM: No it wasn't a hate crime. It was just a matter of him trying to throw out someone who didn't belong there and this woman pulled a gun, a revolver, out of her handbag and started shooting. I was on the dance floor when she shot the bouncer three or four times. He did live but it was amazing to me because I went to the bathroom assuming the Police would come and they'd want people who were there. It was a busy evening to tell them what they had heard or seen or whatever. It was a crowded evening, I'm certain there were two hundred people in the bar at the time of the shooting. I went to the bathroom to sort of

calm down because it was very excitable and people would make a lot of noise. They were hysterical. When I came out of the bathroom, there were maybe five people left in the bar. Everyone had left rather than talking to the police or being interviewed. People just abandoned the bar on mass. I was just amazed that people would do that. They would not even want the police to have their names or addresses or make statements. I thought that was astonishing. It never entered my mind to leave but other people obviously thought that was what they needed to do.

SP: So, were these isolated incidents?

DM: Fairly isolated. This is sort of happened. I think they were isolated. There really were not many alternative organizations for people at that time. The religious community was just beginning to develop counseling groups and the Sobriety Movement. Pretty much the only place where gay people would go, would be into bars and so there's always been a higher alcoholism rate in the gay male community. I don't know about the lesbian community and I suppose if you push so many people into a bar situation, you see a little microcosm of everything, all the stories and the tragedies and fights, romances. That's pretty much where everything happened during that period.

SP: I just want to ask you about the bars in Minneapolis downtown. The ones we were just talking about are kind of away from downtown. Was there a difference between those bars and the ones that were downtown?

DM: Suttons, was downtown. That was just in sort of a warehouse area and it was off the beaten path and I don't think people liked to walk on Hennepin Avenue as much. The difference for me was the Gay 90's and the Happy Hour still exists. The Happy Hour, at that point, was there but it was only the front bar. The whole rest of the bar at that point was a straight burlesque house. The only part of the Gay 90's that was gay was that initial front bar. It was pretty small, just one big area [interference] some bathrooms. They carded people a lot. So, that's why I didn't spend a lot of time there until I turned twenty one. You have to realize, during this whole period I was going to bars illegally, illicitly, sneaking up, getting to know bouncers which would look the other way or walking in when people quickly, hoping no one would notice. So, there was a whole kind of: " Oh my God, doing this illegally, I'm not going to be able to get in and that kind of thing". There was a whole "no you" going on.

SP: So, what do you remember about Suttons? Do you remember the owners? Do you know who they were?

DM: No. It was dark. Not many lights and they had an upstairs dance floor at that point too, which is really where people went to dance and another room off the side. I don't really know about the ownership of any of the bars. That's never interested me much.

SP: So, you had the Happy Hour at that time which was a pub-type drinking place and then you had Suttons which was dancing?

DM: Dancing and sort of younger crowd. I think the Happy Hour really did attract an adult crowd more, the older gay men.

SP: So, when you would go to Suttons, when you would go there, would you see people you knew regularly?

DM: I would see people I knew. I'd go there with friends and dance and I would see people that I knew from campus. I remember my friend Gary Greffinberg who was very active in the gay movement after about 1972. But at that point, we were both active in student government at the U. He was the Director of the West Bank Union and I was a student Senator. We didn't know each other were gay and I remember I walked in one night and saw Gary out of the corner of my eye and walked over to say hello to him and it was such a classic: he dropped his drink and his mouth open. His drink shattered on the floor. He was amazed that he knew someone who was there. It was that kind of a place. Sometimes we'd see people or know people of other contacts but you weren't certain that they were gay and so you'd run into people and go: "Oh my God, you're gay too!" and develop a relationship based on that.

SP: Even though the University was a good place at the time to be involved in the things that were happening, like you were talking about the anti-war movement, things like that, politics, you still couldn't really-- It took a while to become comfortable to say: I'm...

DM: Sure, Absolutely.

SP: ...I'm gay and in student politics.

DM: Yes.

SP: Not everyone is a Jack Baker.

DM: By no means. There were other gay student activists but they weren't openly gay or publicly gay. As a matter of fact, somewhat funny because I was active in an organization called the BCLA: Board College Liberal Arts Center Interdisciplinary. Board of some sort which was sort of like CLA's student government not the Minnesota Student Association. They had a board of about twenty people with an advisor and at that time I didn't realize but since eight of my other colleagues were gay or lesbian. We sort of came out after we left the U as much as anything: Harvey Zukman, Leslie Blicher, Harry Myers, who directed the student orientation program. It's just astonishing how many, Jim Delay who was a student senator who died about five years ago of AIDS. There were a lot of people who were gay at

that point. It's just that we weren't connected necessarily.

SP: Who were the first gay politicians you met? People who were involved in politics.

DM: Jack Baker, although that was primarily on campus. I think Steve Endean was probably the first gay politician that I met.

SP: How did you meet him?

DM: The sequences aren't really clear to me. Maybe I need to explain a little bit of this to how politics happened for me because I was active in student government and I had gone to a national student conference in Fort Collins, Colorado back in 1971, the fall of 1971. There was an obscure politician from South Dakota named George McGovern there [interference] meeting with people one on one, or in small groups of two or three, or five people. Jack Baker was there as a matter of fact and we met with McGovern on a grassy slope someplace. So I came back to Minnesota thinking it'd make sense for the anti-war movement to support this candidate who was really running against the war. A lot of people were active and the anti-war movement got involved in the DFL politics and went to our precinct caucuses in 1972 which was the first time I had ever caucused and to support McGovern through that process. Of course the DFL Party is so open, if you walk in and say I'm willing to do something, they elect you a precinct chair or give you a campaign position. So I got very active in the DFL Party, worked for the McGovern campaign in St. Paul as a voter registration coordinator in 1972 and pretty much exclusively active in St Paul in the fourth congressional district. At some point shortly thereafter I met Steve either at a bar or in some context because that was really how Steve did his recruiting. Initially it was through the bar scene.

SP: Do you remember which bar?

DM: I don't remember. I'm certain it was all of them. I'm certain it was primarily Suttons. I'm certain he did some of that at the Townhouse too because that's where St Paul people went. So I don't remember the first conversation or the first time I ever talked to Steve. I remember he was really the first person that I met who thought it made sense to move from anti-war politics into gay politics too and saying that was an equally valid thing to do.

SP: Talking more about those beginnings in politics and the democratic platform; how was that introduced? How were gay politics introduced?

DM: I know I was not at the first--In 1972 I went to my caucus but I was not a State Convention Delegate but the State Convention had elected a lot of McGovern national Delegates. They also passed a gay rights plank in 1972 at the state level in Rochester and that got enormous controversy because all the DFL politicians sought an election or running

for election pretty much, they refuted that plan for election and ran away from it. They also passed a pro choice plank. The Republicans were calling the DFL party, the party of abortion, amnesty and gay [interruption] and there was sort of a little bit of a political group that helped to pass the gay rights plank at that convention. Although I wasn't there, Steve was at that convention. That sort of was his first exercise, was to help get plank passed in 1972 in Rochester. We met somewhere either in '72 through the McGovern campaign or a year thereafter and as he decided to push for the adoption of ordinances in Minneapolis and St Paul. I was not involved in the Minneapolis effort at all but I testified in favor of the St Paul ordinance when it was adopted. I had worked on the campaign of Mayor Cohen who I knew very well through the McGovern campaign. When he was elected mayor, after Steve assembled a group to pass the Minneapolis ordinance, he moved to St Paul but he needed local people from St Paul too. It didn't look good to have just Minneapolis people active in that effort. I'd never done anything in any public context of being out but asked me if I would testify in favor of the ordinance and mention I was gay during my testimony and I did. That was a little bit scary but that was where I sort of had my birth of fire. What was that? That would have been 1974. Is that when the St Paul ordinance was adopted?

SP: Yes.

DM: So that was my first public moment and a little snippet of it was broadcast. So some people in my family sort of began at that point to put two and two together. My parents didn't live here but I had grandparents and aunts and uncles and cousins in the area.

SP: Was that part of your reason for coming to Minnesota?

DM: Because I had summered up here quite often with my grandparents so I knew people here. Yes, that was a big part. It was either here or Brown out in Providence, Rhode Island and I had no family at all on the east coast outside of some relatives in New Jersey.

SP: I want to ask you how the local gay caucus started and if there's anything you want to add to what you just said.

DM: Initially it started with the state-wide plank in 1972 and then because so many of the DFL elected officials had run away from the platform, it was important to turn people out on 1974 to keep that from being repealed. Then of course that succeeded, it wasn't repealed. Then it was important to make people show up in 1976 to make certain it wouldn't be repealed from the party platform again so it was this kind of [unclear] upon themselves. The Minnesota Committee for Gay Rights was established by Steve Endean and Allan Spear during that period too in 1974 and 1975. That was an organization to lobby for gay and lesbian political rights. Oddly enough, I think I was not on the first board but on either the second or the third board. I pretty much stayed with them until they went away in 1980. The first couple of boards actually, over half the board members the first year or two, at least a sizeable number, I won't say over half were not gay people, they were white liberals

who supported gay and lesbian rights. It was hard to find gay people who would even be on a board of that nature at that point.

SP: So do you know who? Do you remember some names of the people?

DM: Oh sure. Marsha Greenfield who was the wife of a State Legislator Lee Greenfield. Loren Maker who is an attorney in Minneapolis. Mary Hartman, Cathy Koda, Allan Spear, Steve Endean, Gary Grafenberg. There are other names too.

SP: I noticed that Kerry Woodward, you didn't mention her. Did she come later?

DM: She came later. She wasn't around right away. She came really maybe in 1975 or 1976.

SP: Do you know what contribution she made?

DM: She was active with the board. At that point lesbian women were not especially fond of working with gay men. She was a woman who was willing to work with men and also to sort of tell men they had to be aware that there were lesbian issues too. She went on to co-manage the St Paul campaign in 1977?.

[pause]

SP: I want to ask you why the DFL and who did they want for this gay platform?

DM: I don't get the question.

SP: First of all, why did gay politics end up in the DFL and not in the Socialist Movement?

DM: Well, because Socialists didn't elect any candidates to the Legislature. So you were either a DFL or you were a Republican. Pretty early the strategy became, after passing the ordinances in Minneapolis and St Paul, the next move was to try to get a state-wide bill protecting gay and lesbian people at the state level and so that became the strategy. They tried to pass legislation state wide. The only way to do that would be really through the DFL Party because Republicans weren't going to support that at that point. There were a lot of Republicans that supported it this year when it finally did pass. They were some but it was still predominantly DFLers who provided the needed vote for the bill. There are always been a few moderate, socially-liberal Republicans that have been supportive all along. They were then, but it was always a matter of being a very small minority within their party. So I worked with the Minnesota Committee for Gay Rights on the state legislation and lobbied for the bill in 1977 when it came very close. It only failed by two votes in the State Senate. At that point that was as close as we ever got until this year.

SP: How did you come up with what demands you wanted? How did you come up with...

DM: It wasn't really [unclear] thing. I think the approach had been on the demand basis that would have not worked at all. It was to try to make the logical civil rights expansion argument that over time society has recognized that there needed to be some protection from job discrimination for people of color and for women and for the disabled. The next step was this sort of say: "well, gay and lesbian people experience documentable discrimination in finding a job or keeping a job, in finding an apartment or keeping an apartment and that is only a necessary thing to add gay and lesbian people to the State Human Rights Act, so that they could file complaints if they could document that they have been discriminated against." It's really not a demand as much as doesn't this make sense: gay people are discriminated against and they need some recourse when they face discrimination. St Paul and Minneapolis both have ordinances at that point so the argument was that: there is discrimination outside of the Cities that needs to be dealt with and give to other people who live in rural communities and other towns the same recourse that people in Minneapolis and St Paul had.

SP: I read somewhere that there were other things included also on the same bill, like legalization of marijuana and marriages.

DM: No. I don't know anything about the marijuana. There were some people in the gay community who thought that the legislative strategy should have been to seek approval of marriages. But Allan Spear was the author and Steve was the chief-lobbyist and that was never part of the legislation that we promoted. There were people who disagreed with that and I remember at one point Tim Campbell came over and chained himself to the urinal at the State Capitol in protest that marriage was not included. He wore a dress and chained himself to a urinal in a bathroom because he wanted to see marriage added but that was never part of the legislation that we saw. That was sort of the beginning of the split in the gay community between basically what you could call the mainstream people who wanted to seek basic civil rights and radicals [who] really didn't care whether legislation was successful or not and wanted marriages sanction and adoption sanction and sort of the family unit, a gay family unit recognized more. There was a real tension there at that point and still is, I guess, but not as much. Those adoptions do happen now and domestic partners happen now although that's certainly not the same as a marriage contract yet.

SP: So, this was at about what time?

DM: Oh, 1977 was the closest that the lobbying ever came to being successful at the state level. There'd been another effort made in 1975. That didn't do very well, just didn't even get out of committee in 1975.

SP: Recently we have seen Karen Clark as a Representative. What was she doing back then? Did you run into her in the 1970's?

DM: Well, she was active in the women's community and the lesbian movement. She was on the board of the Minnesota Committee for Gay Rights. But I don't think at that point that she had really thought about running for office. That didn't happen until 1980. It was in 1982 when she was first elected?

SP: I don't quite know.

DM: Was it 1980 or 1982? I think it might have been in 1980, right after the abortion rights. I know that I was at her convention. She was running for the State Senate at that point against Linda Berglund. Linda defeated Karen and a very late night convention that ran until like three of four in the morning after many ballads. Since Karen lost the Senate endorsement to Linda Berglund, the House seat was up too, so she did sort of shift her gears after that and decided to run for the House since she was unable to run for the Senate.

SP: Can you think of any other people who should be included in this-- mentioned in this part of the history?

DM: Allan was instrumental, Steve was terribly important, Gary Grefenberg was very important during that point. Karen did some work and Brian Coyle did some work. A lot of people forget that Brian Coyle ran for the United States Senate in 1978 as an openly gay candidate. It was the first time we ever had a gay person running on a state-wide basis. He ran on the primary and did very poorly. He got like 20% of the vote but that was the first time that there'd been a person who was openly gay who ran for office in Minnesota.

SP: Was that the State Senate?

DM: United States Senate. I think he ran against Wendel Anderson. I have to go back and look at my records.

SP: That's all coming back to me now that you said that, Wendel Anderson. Any other woman you can think of who?

DM: I'm certain people like Dolly Ruard and Cathy Koda, Mary Hartman, after that the names--D.J. Monroe, B.J. Metzger were active during that whole period.

SP: These women came from, do you know where?

DM: Different places. Nearly all of them from Minneapolis with the exception of D. J. Monroe, B. J. Metzger who were from St Paul.

SP: They were political?

DM: Yes. At that point, really most gay politics was heavily dominated by Minneapolis-based people, very heavily dominated.

SP: Why do you think that?

DM: There were a lot more openly gay people in Minneapolis than in any other city.

SP: Was this at the time during the migration from St Paul to Minneapolis?

DM: A little bit of migration. I don't think it was huge. But there was a little bit of migration after the repeal in 1978.

SP: This is actually previous to...

DM: Yes. The sequence, here, is that we came close to passing the gay rights bill in 1977 in the Spring. That failed. Then the Archbishop was pried and the new Right began to organize and then attempted to repeal efforts in St Paul in 1978. I think because they saw that there was on a state-wide basis that they had to go on the offensive. The way to do that was Minneapolis didn't have an initiative referendum system to repeal the ordinance but St Paul did and so they got the signatures to put the St Paul ordinance on the ballot in St Paul. They were very successful. That was repealed on April 25, 1978 by a two to one margin.

SP: Do you know what was on the ballot? Was there more than just...

DM: Sure. The Mayor's office was up at that point. George Latimer was running for reelection to his second term. The city council was up at that point. At that point city elections in St. Paul were on a Spring ballot. They're now in a November election like Minneapolis but at that point there was a separate election only for Mayor and city council. Those were two-year term, at that point, too for all those people. They now have four-year terms.

SP: When people went to the ballot box, did they know what they were voting on? Was it in the papers to the average person?

DM: It had tremendous publicity. People knew what they were voting on. The confusion might have been a little bit in the ballot question. I forget the exact phraseology, but it was like: "shall the St Paul Human Rights amendment which prevents discrimination against gay and lesbian people be repealed". I think there was some confusion. You vote "yes" to repeal or "no" to keep the ordinance. There might have been a little confusion but the

papers were so thorough in their coverage. There was a lot of electronic media coverage too. Just looking at the vote returns, the anti repeal forces did very well on this side and they did very well on the north end of St Paul. We did very well in the Summit/University area and some of the precincts in upper Highland Park area that had a heavy Jewish population and around the Macalaster College, and pretty much the ordinance lost everywhere else outside of that band kind of from downtown down to the Macalaster campus so that was pretty much all that we won.

SP: Did that surprise the gay community? Did it surprise you?

DM: I think so. I think people thought that we had a pretty good chance of retaining it. We raised over a hundred thousand dollars to fight for the ordinance and that was a lot of money in politics on a ballot question, in those days that was a lot of money, an incredible amount of money and the political establishment really supported the ordinance. Mayor Latimer campaigned harder to give the ordinance than he did to seek his own reelection. Most of the city council members supported it too. But the voters didn't. At the same time, there were ordinances happening in other cities, in Wichita, Dade County. We were losing everywhere at that point. It wasn't exclusive to St. Paul.

SP: Was there any communication between those other cities like Wichita?

DM: Sure! People made phone calls and shared advertising areas, strategies.

SP: Do you know which cities, because I understand there was, of course, Dade County which had already happened, Wichita, Eugene in Oregon, maybe Seattle?

DM: Yes. Of course, Bob Kunst came up from Dade County to oppose the St Paul ordinance. Jack Baker supported the repeal of the ordinance and did ads for that because that was really the target city, this sort of really extreme gay liberationists, at that point, thought that basic civil rights protection were a waste of time and that the only way to go would be for gay marriage. Because the ordinance didn't include marriage, some of the radicals actually supported the repeal.

SP: Really?

DM: Yes! You didn't know about that, did you?

SP: No I didn't.

DM: You didn't realize Jack Baker did a very public conference supporting the repeal.

SP: Do you think that had a significant effect on the people?

DM: It was demoralizing, of course. It was to the campaign because what the voter could argue and I think, that's exactly why they did it, is that the gay community can't even agree on its own agenda; why should we enact or keep a law which the gay community says it wants. I think there were some voters who thought we couldn't even get our own act together.

SP: So, it caused some hard feelings, I would imagine, between...

DM: Very hard.

SP: ...members.

DM: Oh sure. I always tried to navigate. I really had friends in all groups and all organizations. I tried not to get into hating other people but certainly Steve Endean hated those people and they hated him. It was deep, vicious personal animosity. People really hated one another. Allan Spear is still deeply hated by some of those folks but he's still around.

SP: By some of the radicals?

DM: By the Jack Bakers and the Tim Campbells and the Tom Higgins. Yes.

SP: What about women? Any idea?

DM: Women tried to say that was all a men's issue because women pretty much supported the ordinance and they supported state wide anti-discrimination efforts. They had other items on their plate that they hoped would become issues over time. They tried not to buy into [it.] The dissention tended to be exclusively among the gay men's community and quite frankly the radicals weren't impressed by any women who agreed with them, so there were no women. You have to remember that for a long time, the Tim Campbells and the Tom Higgins didn't even want to see the word lesbian become used. It really wasn't until the late 1980's that organizations began to include lesbian in their titles. There was a struggle for sometime over whether Gay Pride Day should be called Gay and Lesbian Pride. It took years before it became Gay and Lesbian Pride. Of course now it is Gay, Lesbian, Bisexuals and Transgender Pride. That's all a move in the right direction to reflect our diversity. There used to be terrible arguments over whether you should-- Now it's sort of an argument between gay or queer. Then it was an argument between: "well shall we diminish the value of gay by including lesbian?". Be heated arguments over that.

SP: Really? Particularly over Pride. Was that when it came out?

DM: Particularly over Pride. The Minnesota Committee for Gay Rights pretty quickly understood the value of including lesbians, so they changed to the Minnesota Committee for Gay and Lesbian Rights very easily and determined that the board should be equally split between men and women and that was a first for an organization to recognize that if you really wanted to represent the community, you had to represent women equally.

SP: After the defeat in 1978?

DM: Some people moved to Minneapolis. I wouldn't say it was hundreds and hundreds but some dozens or scores of people who were politically active then, and I did.

SP: Is that the time you moved to Minneapolis?

DM: Yes.

SP: That was the reason you weren't planning before that?

DM: No I wasn't planning before that. That was primarily my reason for moving.

SP: Was there a particular neighborhood that people came to? You chose a neighborhood based on what?

DM: On good rental rates and whether or not there were other gay and lesbian people. I moved into the Loring Park neighborhood of course. That was far more gay during the 1970's than it is today even, far more.

SP: How was that more gay people living there?

DM: I'm certain the population isn't a fifth of what it used to be today as opposed to then. There were many many more three-story walk-up apartment buildings and small apartment buildings. With the gentrification and the greenways that they've built, the different condominiums and high rises, they've taken down dozens and dozens of buildings in a Loring Park area, all of which used to have maybe even predominantly or nearly exclusively gay population. Low rents, you could actually rent an apartment at that point for \$150 a month, \$125 a month, incredibly good rents. That's in the late 1970's, so they were good rents even for that period, very good rents.

SP: What were the attractions living there besides low rent?

DM: Close to downtown. I didn't have to have an automobile to get around. Other gay people, so that you could feel sort of secure within your neighborhood and of course Loring Park was even then a much more cruisy park than it is. People would go out in the sun and

meet each other during the summer and there, there was a lot of after-dark activity, a lot of cruising in the park. I don't know why that is true but Loring Park ever since I've come to Minnesota has been known as a place to go and meet people for either legitimate or not-so-legitimate reasons. Of course there were murders then too. There was a murder in Loring Park in 1979: a gay waiter named Terry Knutsen was beaten to death in Loring Park and there were a couple of other gay murders throughout the metro area within the year after that. So really 1979 and 1980 saw what I would call the really beginning of the concept that there were hate crimes and that people would act under hatred of gay people. So that was a disadvantage. People knew there were a lot of gay people in the Loring Park area and so criminal elements would come and occasionally assault people and in that case Terry was killed.

SP: That was almost a first, would you say?

DM: At least the first that people knew about and became politically active about. I'm certain over the years there's always been cases of people who made bad choices through their alcohol use and invite someone home. I'm certain there were killings of that sort or people who would pick up street prostitutes or whatever and found themselves robbed or assaulted but this was a fellow walking home after work. He lived in the Loring Park area, was assaulted and murdered. People thought this is outrageous. This is completely unacceptable that someone should be killed just for being, walking around on what was identified as a park that gay people went to. So that really began to focus people.

In the context we knew, at that point, that the state legislation was unlikely to happen soon. The ordinance had been repealed in St. Paul and Minneapolis was sort of this island of protection for gay people and even that was then assaulted through these assaults, violent assaults upon individuals. People then started talking why we need to have gay and lesbian police officers and a police liaison and a police chief who was not going to raid the bathhouses or arrest people in bookstores. So the focus then shifted really from state-wide politics or national politics to making your life more pleasant locally.

SP: Kind of drawing into the neighborhoods?

DM: Bringing to the neighborhoods, drawing into one another. That's really when this whole explosion and other organizations occurred, a lot of sobriety groups, religious groups and gay community centers, etc...People, I think, decided that politics was not the answer anymore exclusively because we have come so close and have been disappointed so often. People then began to determine: "Well, then we'll buy a business and we'll open a business and we'll..."

SP: After the defeat in state politics, we're talking about the community became more involved in itself, its members, its community, neighborhoods etc...

DM: The focus was pretty exclusively on what was happening in Minneapolis at that point. There wasn't much happening in other places or some things, I mean those people who stayed in St. Paul were still active and D.J. Monroe and B.J. Metzger could tell you a lot about that. There was Jim Chalgren who was doing a lot of good work at Mankato. He was a student advisor in Mankato and there was the small community in Duluth but really the bulk of what was happening and that people paid any attention to, was happening in Minneapolis.

SP: You can't help but notice that as far as like newspapers, there were some that started in the early 1970's and then there is just this blank spot until the late 1970's. It might partially explain where people placed their priorities as far as like looking to politics, state politics and then later coming back to communities, having a paper that is meant for neighborhoods that businesses support. Do you think that's a sign?

DM: I think that makes sense. There was a lot more cocooning during that period; deciding if the world is not going to be good for me, at least I would make my own space good. There was a lot more inwardness which, I guess, that made some sense.

SP: Did you, at that time, start getting involved in different organizations or did you stay in the same ones?

DM: I pretty much stayed in the same ones in the Minnesota Committee for Gay and Lesbian Rights. But quite frankly, after about 1980 it was clear that there weren't going to be any state-wide bills passed anytime soon, and so eventually the Minnesota Committee for Gay and Lesbian Rights dissolved. At that point it looked so bleak for anything to happen on a state-wide basis.

SP: How was that decided? Did someone finally say: "Well, we have to..."

DM: I left a year before it dissolved but I think eventually people knew it was harder to raise money. It didn't look good at least on the state scene for Minnesota. Steve Endean had left and gone to Washington, D.C. Kerry Woodward had left en route to California. So, I think the organization basically just imploded. It became too hard to sort of convince people that was still worth doing anything on a state wide level. For a while, there, we tried to look at instead of a gay and lesbian civil rights bill, look at repealing the sodomy statutes. That didn't work either. That was sort of a change in strategy to go away from getting anti-discrimination bill passed, to eliminating the sodomy statutes but that didn't work either.

SP: Why didn't it?

DM: Because the Legislature decided that it wasn't something they wanted to do. They defeated the sodomy repeal efforts.

SP: So, no hope?

DM: No hope. I would say that after the defeat of the St. Paul Ordinance in 1978, that happened on April 25, the state DFL party was still very supportive, very good at the convention in June

before I moved to Minneapolis, I didn't want to do this at all because I was still pretty demoralized with some of my liberal friends: the Greenfields, Jim Chalgren. A few other people decided that it was important to elect a gay person to a gay party office. So, I ran for the State Executive Committee as an openly gay person and was elected easily. That had never happened in Minnesota before. There had never been anyone elected to a state wide political party office before. I didn't want to. I was a reluctant candidate but I think people decided it should be me because I lived in St Paul and it was kind of a symbolic rejection of what the voters had done and it was a way for the party to say: "Well, the voters were wrong and we want to have gay people involved in our political party." I was, by no means seen, the last person who has achieved party office but I was the first person and then Dick Hanson went on to win a national committee seat in 1980. Of course, Rick Stafford is the state party chair now. So, the DFL party as a party groups has always been amazingly open to have gay and lesbian people involved.

SP: There's also a view of the Democratic Party as making promises and using groups at election time and say: "Yes, we'll represent you.", and then maybe not doing anything afterward. Have you heard that before?

DM: Oh sure. People who were active in the DFL party were always under some attack for being involved. I've heard that for years. But, of course, when the bill passed in 1993, eighty percents of the vote margins at both the House and the Senate were from DFL elected officials. It wouldn't have happened without official DFL party support and The DFL party chair. At that time Todd Otis and associate chair Gail Huntly spent many hours lobbying the legislators at the Capitol for the bill. So, it took a long time. It happened ultimately, it took fifteen years unfortunately. We're still one of only seven states with state-wide protection. I think the problem was that we were active in political party politics in Minnesota and Minnesota thought it was such a good state and so progressive, I think, people have always thought that we would be the first. We didn't want to be the second or the third, we wanted to be the first and we are not but, that's alright.

SP: What was the first and about what time?

DM: I think, wasn't the first Wisconsin and wasn't that in the early 1980's or was it the mid 1980's? It might have been like 1984, 1985, but Wisconsin was the first and I think Massachusetts. So we won't be the last by any means.

Of course, I should, maybe, just to bring the political thread through too. Because of the fact that when Mayor Fraser was elected, he brought in a new police Chief Tony Bouza and the police raided the locker rooms, began to arrest people more in book stores and in parks, on beaches. That kind of made people realize that even though Allan Spear was in the Senate and Karen Clark had got elected to the State House finally in either 1980 or 1982, that these were important things. But, we also needed someone on the City Council and I think that was the impetus because we were still taking a beating primarily from the police in our communities here. I think that's why Brian Coyle decided that he wanted to be on the City Council and why he ultimately won because we wanted to have one of our own there, to tell the police: "You can't do this!", to have some authority over that kind of behavior.

SP: Brian, before that, you said he ran for the U. S. Senate?

DM: In 1978. I think he did that more just to have fun than anything else. He knew he wasn't going to win that primary but it was just to sort of show that it could be done. He did alright. Twenty percent isn't bad.

SP: What did he go on to do after that before becoming elected Alderman?

DM: He was sort of a community organizer, lived on the West Bank and the Cedar Riverside highrise and got very active in neighborhood politics because during that point that was really how local politics changed in Minneapolis. Neighborhood groups were becoming more active and people were unhappy that so much money was going into rebuilding downtown. So Brian really worked with a coalition of people very active in neighborhoods. He decided to run in the sixth ward and other people ran in other wards. Sharon Sayles Belton ran in that year and Sandy Hillary. There was sort of a neighborhood-based movement. Of course you have to remember who Brian defeated in his first election too, was another gay person, Tom Clarke, was a Independent Republican gay person. So, he had to defeat Tom Burke in the primary and Tom Clarke in the general election. His two primary opponents were other gay people.

SP: I want to ask you about one other person in politics and two different names, one male, one female in St Paul, Bob Sylvester. Did you know anything about him?

DM: Yes. He was on the City Council and he opposed the repeal of the St Paul Civil Rights Ordinance. He was a very bright, scholarly, good elected official. I did not know that he was having any sexual identification questions at that point because, the fact that he realized that he was actually identifying as a woman, that would have never entered my mind. I knew about him, I talked to him and spent time with him but it was nothing that we ever talked about. So, I was as amazed as anyone else when he actually came out and went public and had his operation. I think nearly everyone was pretty amazed.

SP: Was that very public?

DM: Very.

SP: So do you remember how it was prepared in the media?

DM: Sensitively and I thought it was played very well.

SP: Do you remember what period that was?

DM: Early 1980's, that's my guess, 1980, 1982. The media, I thought, dealt with it very well, he got a lot of support from George Latimer and other people that he had served with. The weeklies, whatever we had at that point: the *Reader*, *City Pages*. They were very good about it. I thought actually, considering its potential for being exploited that Bob was treated pretty well, Susan was treated pretty well by the press.

SP: So, now it's Susan Kimberly?

DM: That's right. You'd probably have to ask Susan to see if she agreed about the press treatment. My suspicion was that Susan arranged for some of that coverage, sort of came out on her own terms with some of that because she is, I think, a brilliant strategist and organizer.

SP: I want to ask you questions about the West Bank. When you came to Minneapolis, did you ever go to the West Bank?

DM: A little bit, yes. Even when I went to the U, the West Bank was not where I spent most of my time. I didn't know a lot about the West Bank culture. It was something that was exotic to even me.

SP: So, what was there for gay people?

DM: I don't know, I guess there were a lot of older homes that had been cleared up now at the Cedar Riverside developments, a lot of cafes and restaurants and artisans selling things on the street and there was sort of a hippie heaven. That was kind of a place where if you wanted to buy some marijuana or score some drugs that was allegedly where you would go and do that. I never did that but certainly you knew people who would come from the suburbs, just walk around hoping they could buy some drugs there. I think, it was sort of considered very bohemian, a place where pretty much anything goes.

SP: Do you remember the names of these places? The Extempore?

DM: Yes. I spent some time there. That was the one place on the West Bank where I did go a little bit. There was a coffee shop and a performance space and a lot of gay people spent time there and there were gay performers there too. I think that the few times that I did go, it was to mainly see people who were gay and performing there. It was one of the few performance places where you could go and actually do gay material. Nice place.

SP: Do you remember what it was called?

DM: Either the performer or the material?

SP: No, the place?

DM: The Cafe Extempore.

SP: That was really a neat place.

DM: A neat place, really neat.

SP: Was it a performing space or was it a coffee place?

DM: That was both a performing space, there was a room and there was another open room where they had coffee and I think, snacks, pretty standard grill. You could go back, they had an upstairs area, you could go and like seat around for hours and talk to people and read newspapers. It was very sociable. It's much like the coffee houses today except far more low key.

SP: Do you remember the Holland Bar?

DM: No.

SP: Mixers?

DM: Yes, a little bit. But I never spent much time going to the West Bank bars outside of maybe the Triangle Bar, a couple of times, just never really did that.

SP: What was the Triangle like?

DM: I don't know, it was--My memories of it are so vague. It was just a bar. Are you looking for a gay angle on it? I don't remember that it was gay friendly at all. I don't remember gay people going there to socialize. That would have been just like a place where you'd just go with friends and to talk and have a few drinks. I really don't know of any place on the West Bank where people would congregate or meet each other really outside of the cafe Extempore. That was pretty much the only place that I had experience with, although I'm certain there were other places.

SP: Talking about bars, do you have an idea why there aren't that many gay bars in Minneapolis-St Paul?

DM: It's hard to get a license at least in St Paul. No, I don't. It's always mystified me with a city metro area this large that there aren't. The community here would support twenty or twenty five bars easily. Why there are so few, I don't know. That is surprising to me.

[cat interference]

SP: What alternatives were there for socializing?

DM: There were the gay bars. There was an active bath house culture. At one point, there were three bath houses opened simultaneously in Minneapolis: Big Daddies, the Lockerroom...

SP: The third one?

DM: I'm sorry, just the two. It's just that the Lockerroom moved location from over by the old Suttons' place over to where it was on 1st Avenue North. There were the parks, Loring Park, the river. Hundreds of people used to go out to the river during the day, over by the east river road.

SP: But when it gets really cold out, where do all those people go?

DM: I don't know.

SP: Just stay at home, hibernate?

DM: I suppose, cocoon if they have organizations or groups. We have, what?, four bowling leagues here.

SP: When did that start?

DM: I bowled even in the late 1970's.

SP: And gay leagues?

DM: Yes. At the Roseville Bowl and I'm certain it was like in 1979 when I started bowling. They just started the year before, I think. Really, there are hundreds and hundreds of people who bowl in a league now. It just amazing to me.

SP: Do you know who started this?

DM: No.

SP: I know that there was a gay softball.

DM: Yes.

SP: Then, of course, the Olympics, the Gay Olympics. Minnesota had a pretty large group of people who went out to California. They were the largest outside of California.

DM: Yes. There's always been athletics groups and athletics is not my forte, so I've never done anything really other than be a spectator at baseball games. I've bowled for one year and that was enough for me. It wasn't anything that I was obsessed with. But that was fun to meet other people and there would be different teams that would play every week, so you would meet other people in a fairly safe environment.

SP: Where would you bowl?

DM: The Rosebowl. It was on North Snelling and Roseville, close to Rosedale. I don't know if it's there anymore but that's where we bowled.

SP: It was pretty easy to bowl there?

DM: Yes. It was late. It was like a nine o'clock league on a Tuesday and so you bowled starting at 9:00 pm, you wouldn't get done until nearly midnight. We didn't get the prime hours, I think like 6:00 pm or 6:30 pm, the early league starts but it was a lot of fun. I enjoyed that actually.

SP: Is that still going on?

DM: Sure. I don't know where. I know now there are like four different leagues going on now, the Good Time Bowling Association. I think there must be something like seventy or eighty teams now. They bowl all over the place and there are different days of the week and there are like two different groups that bowl on Sunday, one after another. There are a lot of bowlers.

SP: Men and women, mixed teams?

DM: When I was involved, it was all men. But I know there are women now too. It was all men when I bowled pretty much, there might be one or two women, one woman on a team. They didn't really have women's teams back then but I know they do now.

SP: Did you have names for the teams? Were they backed by any sponsors?

DM: I'm certain that some got sponsored by different clubs or businesses too. I don't recall what the names were. There was a bigger drag culture then. Of the drag bowls, during the late 1970's up to the mid 1980's., those were like pivotal events where you had a thousand or fifteen hundred people at the drag bowls and now they are sort of laughable or appeal to very few people.

SP: So they were held like once a year?

DM: Yes, on Halloween weekend, or the weekend before Halloween. The Gay 90's has always pretty much sponsored the drag bowl over the years and people would rent limousines and tuxedos. It was really like a big social event. Now I know they still have them, but I don't get a sense that it is considered a pivotal event anymore.

SP: They were drag bowls, does that mean that they were gay?

DM: Yes. There'd be drag queen contests but there'd be hundred of spectators too, or people who would just go out on dates and bring their boyfriend with them and it'd be a good excuse to dress up themselves, not in drag but as to dress up romantically and to put on the best clothes that you can. There'd be a dance afterwards. It was sort of a whole seven or eight hour entertainment event. And now they do them, I think in the one dance bar at the 90's, on a Saturday night for a couple of hours and they spread it out over a period of nights, the over thirty five and the hag drag. I really don't know anyone who is involved in going to those events or performing in them any longer and I never did know many people in the drag culture and certainly that was part of our culture and that was pretty active for a while.

SP: I think I've asked the questions that I needed to ask. Is there anything that you would like to add, something I didn't ask?

DM: We haven't talked about AIDS at all and what that did to our community. You're looking at an earlier period of course, but as I told you when we went through a list of people that Craig

Anderson and I knew who had been active in the 1970's. The other day when you go through the names and you find that one-third of the names are people that are dead, that's pretty devastating and when you think that most of these people are people who would be in their mid-thirties or late thirties or early forties to mid-forties, there's been a tremendous price a cost of a whole generation of people because those people should be around tell their stories too and there aren't very many anymore. I see very few people from the 1970's any longer. There are very few of these people left that I socialize with or see on a regular basis. I've lost over two hundred people that I know myself and I don't think that's atypical for someone of my age right now, that's pretty normal. But that's another story, that's sort of the 1980's.

SP: Do you feel that has brought people closer together? Has it brought that generation closer together, or has it left too many holes in it?

DM: It has really affected the psyche of people and I think even the people from the 1970's. There were such terrible fights in the men's community over political issues. I think it's made people recognize how irrelevant a lot of that fighting was. Certainly no one wished upon their competitors or the people that they didn't agree with that they should become ill and die and so I think it tribulized a lot of things that were really important to us in the 1970's. When it becomes a matter of life and death and you recognize that some differences in approach or style can be overlooked and ignored and ought to be.

SP: That's among rivals and also the most evident thing to me would be men and women?

DM: Yes. The women's community has been wonderful and has been very supportive to gay men. I think they've been just astonishing in the fund raising that they do and the care that they're involved with in the AIDS organizations that they do pledge walks for and the hospices that they helped to fund raise for. I know that some women do feel that the women's agenda has been somewhat diminished because of the AIDS crisis but you don't hear very much of that. I think most of them recognized that was something no one in their wildest imagination could have anticipated or dreamed of or believed whatever happened. Certainly it's the cataclysmic event of our generation, more important, with far more meaning than anything else.

[interference] What? The AIDS crisis, don't you think?

DM's partner: It's doing a better job with us than the Nazis did with the Jews. That's for sure.

DM: It's a genocide of a sort. Yes, that's the same effect, it does leave people with a survivors' complex. People feel guilty: Why am I alive?

DM's partner: It's been a lot more effective in what it's going to do since the street community didn't take it seriously. By the time they decided to take it seriously, good chunks of their members had become infected.

DM: The infection rates are down by now.

DM's partner: It's an effective killer. It all decimates people who aren't popular with the majority culture. They don't care much and they won't care much.

DM: It's an embittering thing to need to deal with but, on the other hand, I think people responded to those challenges pretty well because they did recognize that we were not going to get traditional health care from traditional institutions. I think our community has done very well in responding to those needs. That really is where most of the energy goes nowadays.

SP: You can even say that even the women, particularly Lesbians aren't as apt to get AIDS, still they can see how a minority is treated.

DM: Absolutely, and that they have a role to play in being support providers to men and understanding the political need for more disease prevention and treatment. I think the women's community has responded very well to the challenge of AIDS. Of course, the political issues now are so narrow compared to what they were twenty years ago. Quite frankly, the whole issue of gay and lesbian people serving in the military does not appeal to me. It has no interest for me whatsoever as an issue. I don't consider that my struggle at all and I think a little bit of that as I understand myself, is recognizing that where I came from, initially was the anti-war movement and the mind set was that you needed to do everything you could to stay out of the arm services and that it was a dishonorable profession and that it was something that you would not want to do in your mind. Certainly people were active in wanting to get the federal government to change its policy, so I support them but it's not something I want to go out and organize for myself. It's a funny shift in the trend of where people were twenty years ago. At that point, we were looking not for a way to get in but for a way to stay out and now, people are trying to stay in so, it's so ironic. It comes full cycle.

SP: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

DM: No. A lot more things happened, but that gives you an overview.

SP: Thank you very much Mr. Miller.

DM: You're welcome.