

**Interview with Allan Spear**

**Interviewed by Scott Paulsen  
University of Minnesota**

**Interviewed on October 27, 1993  
at Mr. Spear's History Department office  
Minneapolis, Minnesota**

**SP:** This is an interview with Allan Spear. It's the 27th of October. And, we are talking about the gay community.

Allan, where did you grow up?

**AS:** Michigan City, Indiana.

**SP:** How did you come to the Twin Cities; what was the draw?

**AS:** I had just finished my PhD in History at Yale in 1964. I was offered a job at the University of Minnesota so, I came here in 1964 to take a teaching job in the History Department.

**SP:** What part of history were you teaching?

**AS:** I had done my dissertation on the development of the African-American community in Chicago in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I came here to teach African-American History. I taught a course called Race and Nationality in American History, and standard American History survey courses as well. But, I did come here as a specialist in African-American History.

**SP:** And, why did you end up staying? Did you come for a certain period of time?

**AS:** No, I came with a tenured track position. I came to a permanent position and got tenure within three years so, there was never a sense that it was a temporary job. I did have opportunity, at various times, to go elsewhere but, I never seriously considered them. And, I've liked it here.

**SP:** Let's talk about your coming out. What was it like to come out at that time? Can you tell me when this was?

**AS:** I think it was a process that began in 1972. I came out publicly in 1974 so, I think the process was a two year one. Although, in another sense, coming out never ends. You are constantly coming out; I'm still coming out even today twenty years later. I'm still coming out because, you still keep meeting people who don't know. You still have to decide when you are going to be out

and when you aren't.

The process really began in 1972, when I started telling friends, political associates, colleagues here at the University. I gradually became more and more open in 1974, when I suppose the most dramatic part of my coming out was when I gave an interview to the *Minneapolis Star*. It was a front page story in the *Star* about my coming out.

**SP:** Do you know if that was previous to the *Advocate's* article?

**AS:** The *Advocate's* article was based on that. The coming out story was the story to the *Star*. If you read the *Advocate's* story, they talk about the story in the *Star*.

**SP:** So, what was it like to come out at that time?

**AS:** If you try to recreate the political context, this was the time when people in professions and a stake in society were first beginning to come out. I think the first wave of "comings out", if you will, in the 1960's tended to be among mostly counter-cultural people, people who were political radicals. [phone rings] People who were considered on the fringes of society. I think it was in the early 1970's that you first started getting the so called "respectable people". That's not that we were any more important than anybody else but, I think that was a kind of second phase, where people who had jobs that might have been jeopardized started coming out. I think one of the first really important comings out was Doctor Howard Brown who had been Health Commissioner for the City of New York and a very prominent person in the public health field. He came out in 1971. It was a front page story in the *New York Times*. Martin Duberman, then a historian at Princeton, now at City University of New York, came out at about that time. This was a time when academics and professional people were first beginning to do it. So, I was by no means off there by myself. Yes, it was early for an elected official to come out. Elaine Noble had just been elected, not yet sworn into office when I came out. She and I were the first two fairly well known elected officials to come out. I have since come to understand there were a couple of women who were elected as lesbians to the Ann Arbor, Michigan City Council in about 1972 or 1973, who were probably the first openly gay elected officials in America. So, Elaine and I were actually not the first but, we were the first to make a splash. She made *Time magazine* and *Newsweek* when she was elected as an open lesbian in November of 1974. A month later I came out and that made the news services and newspapers all over the country. It was early but, I still think about the people who did it a decade earlier, were the risks were far greater.

The major answer I would give to your question, "What was it like?" is that there was a sense of not knowing what was going to happen. I remember when I called some of my colleagues in the Legislature to tell them that I was doing it. One person said to me, "Well, I don't think you should do it. The only person I know in elected office, where this became an issue, was a legislator who had a few years earlier been caught by the police trying to seduce somebody in a YMCA john." I said, "Hey that's not what I'm doing. That's not anything parallel at all. I'm not going to be arrested for anything, I'm not being caught for doing anything wrong. I'm going to make a statement about my identity." He said, "Well, with that case, that was the end of his career." And, I said, "Well, I don't think that is going to happen in my case." but, I didn't really know. In fact, it wasn't until two

years later when I was handily re-elected, I didn't know for sure.

**SP:** You made the point to him that he was confusing something here...

**AS:** He was confusing two very different things.

**SP:** Between someone doing something and...

**AS:** One was arrested for committing an act in public, which maybe should not have been against the law but clearly was, he was doing something in public. I was making a statement about my identity. I felt it was, of course, very important that I did come out in that way. There have been, subsequently too, a number of comings out that have been voluntary. Members of Congress, Barney [Frank] did come out on his own but, Gary Studds was caught doing something and he came out. Judge Crane Winton came out after he was caught doing something. I was not caught doing something. It was a totally voluntary decision on my part.

**SP:** Did you find people right away who were supportive, that you could talk to?

**AS:** Oh, yes. I had by this time, the last two years, been telling a lot of my friends. I had a lot of friends, both gay and straight, who were very supportive of what I was doing. In fact, the day the newspaper came out, I had eight to ten people who came to my house because, I didn't want to be alone when the newspaper came out. I didn't know what was going to happen. I knew that the phone would start ringing. The phone did start ringing but, it was mostly people offering support. So, I got a lot of support from friends and lots of letters; a pile of letters from all over the country. Once it hit the wire services, it went all over the country. I letters from gay people and parents of gay people. Then, I got a few of the usual you're-going-to-burn-in-hell type letters.

**SP:** Were those letters insulting or we-feel-sorry letters?

**AS:** They were mostly of the latter. There were a few that were just insulting but, most of them were "We are praying for you.", "We hope you see the sinfulness of your ways.", "We hope that you will cease your immoral acts or you are going to hell and burn in fires forever after." all that kind of stuff. Often, they would come with a little pamphlet that was circulating, at the time in Bible groups, called the *Gay Blade*. I don't know if you ever saw it. It was like a little comic book. The *Gay Blade* told this story, of course, of this person who lived this terrible, promiscuous, homosexual life but, then finally found Jesus and was converted and lived happily ever after. That was the kind of thing.

**SP:** When was the last time you saw this?

**AS:** The *Gay Blade*?

**SP:** Yes.

**AS:** Oh, I don't know. I'm sure I've got it somewhere in my files. [laughs] It may still be around

so far as I know.

**SP:** About the people who were supportive, how did you know them?

**AS:** Well, some were gay people that I had met in subsequent years. I didn't have any real gay friends until 1972, when I first started coming out. Then I started meeting a lot of people. Steve Endean was by that time a good friend. I had been involved earlier that year in organizing Minnesota Committee for Gay Rights [MCGR later MCGLR] which was the first gay political action group in Minnesota. I knew a lot of people through that. I had a lot of friends in the gay politically active community, plus I had a lot of straight friends whom I had known through politics and the University; all kinds of people. Even before being elected in 1972, I was already a fairly well known person in the community. I had been involved in politics, civil rights; a lot of people knew me, I wasn't an unknown person.

**SP:** Can you tell me how you first began to meet other gay people?

**AS:** Actually, the first gay people I met were in [unclear] politics. In 1972, what had happened was that in my district convention a group (three, four, five young gay men) were elected delegates. They got up and announced that they were gay and started talking about affirmative action to elect Blacks, Indians, women, etc. [They said,] isn't it time that we have an openly gay delegate from this district to the state DFL convention? Of course, I had to come to terms with this because, I was still very deeply in the closet. At first, I reacted by being very supportive but, being supportive without letting anyone know I was gay. I was just the supportive liberal. My mind was blown by the fact that there were people in my turf who were standing up and saying they were gay. I started talking to some of these guys and telling them I was gay. They introduced me to other people. One of them took me to the bar for the first time. That is when I first started meeting gay people.

**SP:** Can you tell me something more about the group of people? You said, "your turf". Do you mean your district?

**AS:** Yes, my district. I was not yet an elected official but, I was very active in the party and had run unsuccessfully for office in 1968. Then, I became a candidate later that year. Yes, it was my turf. The political structure in my district was definitely my turf, and here were people that were gay and coming out. That made me come to terms with it.

**SP:** Were most of these people from the University or, most of them?

**AS:** They may have had some affiliation. I don't know if they did or not. Two of them who are still around still, I know exactly who they are and where they are. In fact, they might be people you might want to interview. One is Jim Anderson (Andy) who [is one of] the Saloon. He was known then as Jim Anderson, most people now call him Andy. He was one. The other one I can remember, that is still around, is Tom Schuster, who works for Northern States Power (NSP). He got me down to speak to the NSP gay employees group for training awareness week.

**SP:** Do you know how they were organized? Were they organized from the University?

**AS:** This district included the West Bank of the University but, how they came together, I don't know. Jack Baker was to some degree involved. [unclear] He wasn't in my district, he was in what is my district now but, he wasn't then. He was doing the same thing across town. Whether he recruited them or what the relationship with Jack was, I'm not sure. You'd really have to ask Andy and Tom how they happened to do this; I'm just not sure. They were both quite young, much younger than I.

**SP:** What was Tom's last name?

**AS:** S-C-H-U-S-T-E-R

**SP:** Can you recall groups or establishments you heard of that included openly gay people or were exclusively gay?

**AS:** At that time, of course, there were two bars. Those were the first two places I was taken to after I came out. There was Sutton's on North Seventh Street and First Avenue (between First and Second). There was the Happy Hour, which was the one part of the Gay Nineties complex; the rest to it was straight at the time. There was also The 19 bar; a little beer bar, which is still there on Fifteenth Street (it was Nineteen West Fifteenth Street). Then, there was the Townhouse in St. Paul, which had just gone gay. So, those were there. The only other institution, that I was aware of, that were around at that time was Gay House. It was a drop-in center, which I never went to. Gay Community Services was just organizing at about that time. I never went to that. That was essentially a counseling service. I guess I never thought I needed it so, I never went to that. Those are about it and, that's all I'm aware of that existed at that time. There were not yet any of the religious organizations or sports groups that had started.

**SP:** The types of activities centered around night-time socializing?

**AS:** Yes, and then the counseling services, of course, which filled an important need of not just young but, people who were in the process of coming out. [This included] a lot of people who had been screwed over by psychiatrists, and needed to get some gay-positive therapy. Those were very important, at a time in which if you went to a standard psychiatrist you were probably going to get the Freudian line about arrested development, etc.

**SP:** So, that's what it was like when you were coming out? You didn't have those difficulties of fighting those types of stereotypes?

**AS:** Sure, people still have them. In 1972, I was thirty-five years old. I was older than some of the people coming out at the time. I already had perhaps a better sense of what I was about when I made the decision to do it. I had parents living but, they were not in my face or, controlling my life anymore; I was pretty independent. I'm not saying I handled everything with great--I think what I had more trouble with, and perhaps could have used some help with, was not in terms of counseling, it was not so much in how the outside straight world related to me, I handled that, I think pretty well, in terms of my gayness. The most difficulty I had was coming out at the age of

thirty-five and learning how to establish relationships. One of my friends later told me [that I looked to him as though I] was almost like going through adolescence again. I had to learn how to date and approach people. I had some very unrealistic expectations about once I came out, it would be easy to find somebody, enter into relationships, everything would be solved and I would never be lonely again. Obviously, it's not as simple as that. I had trouble coming to terms with the issue of establishing, learning how to have and develop interpersonal relationships, than I did with the public aspect of it.

**SP:** That sounds like something which is inherently male, the difficulty with relationships. [laughs]

**AS:** Why do you think that. I don't think that. I think women who come out have those problems too.

**SP:** It seems that women are nurturers of a relationship and men are... I don't think I want to talk about it. [pause] Can you think of anyone, gay or straight, who inspired you as a gay person?

**AS:** Howard Brown very definitely--As I indicated a few minutes ago, he was one of the first professional, well known people to come out. He was one of the co-founders of the National Gay Task Force (later, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force). When we decided to try to organize Minnesota Committee for Gay Rights, we invited him out here. He came out [here] and spoke, stayed with me and we talked a lot. I went out and saw him later in New York. I only knew him for a year, and then he died in that next year. He was certainly one. Then Steve Endean, who was one of the first people I met in 1972 after I started coming out in political circles. After Andy and Tom, I met Steve. Steve was already out, talking about political organizing. Steve and I became good friends, and he was one of the people that kind of led me through the coming out process. He never pushed me too hard but, he certainly was always there and very important support. Those were two very definite influences.

**SP:** I have a few questions that go back a little further, when you first started getting into politics. Can you tell me how you got involved in the DFL Party, and was that your first political affiliation?

**AS:** Yes, I guess. I became deeply involved in 1968. I had been a Democrat in college [unclear] I had always been interested in politics. In 1964, when I came here, within a few weeks after I was here, I was out door-knocking for [unclear] Smabey for the Legislature, to re-elect Don Frazer and Gene McCarthy and Lyndon Johnson. Then, I got very disillusioned with the Democratic Party after the war in Vietnam started. I really turned against Johnson and Humphrey for what they were doing in Vietnam, and I became active in the Anti-war Movement on campus in about 1965. I did a lot of anti-war organizing for a few years. In 1968, when Gene McCarthy ran for President on an anti-war ticket, I came back into the DFL. I went out and caucused and became active in support of McCarthy's presidential campaign. That year, I was recruited to run for the Legislature. I ran in 1968 but, I lost. I was really an infant in politics, and didn't have much political skill yet but, it was good experience. Four years later, I ran and won.

**SP:** [About] your involvement in the DFL Party, do you think your views were effected by it

toward the gay community or vice versa?

**AS:** Vice versa.

**SP:** Your views shaped the platform for the DFL Party.

**AS:** Yes.

**SP:** Could you tell me something about that, the history?

**AS:** In 1972, the year I was first running for the Legislature, the year in which there was for the first time a gay presence in the DFL Party, it was also the first year we had a gay plank in the party. A number of us went down to Rochester, where the convention was held. Jack Baker was a major organizer in this; we pushed for and got a gay rights plank in the platform of the party. Under Jack's influence, it included the legalization of same-sex marriage. That created a real storm. The party elders were absolutely appalled by this. They were sure they were going to be pummeled in the election, and indeed the Republicans did use this against Democratic candidates. The [DFL] Party sent out a message to all of the candidates advising us to send warning letters to our opponents saying, "I hereby officially advise you that I repudiate the DFL Party plank on homosexual rights. And, if you make any effort to identify me with that, I will file suit against you." So, they were telling us all to break with the party on this issue, of course, I didn't. The irony of this all was that with all this great fear about the so called Rochester Platform, it included some other stuff too. It included legalization of marijuana, amnesty for draft dodgers, etc. And, despite all the fear over the Rochester Platform, 1972 was the year in which the DFL took over both Houses of the Legislature for the first time in history. From there on, I don't think we did marriage again every year after that but, there was always a gay rights platform.

**SP:** Within the party, you said you were maybe a little older than someone like Jack Baker. Did you ever find you were between and people who were older or more conservative would try to pull you aside and say can you talk to these people?

**AS:** Yes, that happened a lot. In fact, I remember after the Rochester Convention being called by some people who said, "Can you talk to Jack Baker and maybe get him to back off? And, maybe we can modify this plank and make it a little more moderate." I said, "No, I can't do that." Yes, that happened.

**SP:** Was there a time, that you remember, when someone like Jack Baker wasn't taken seriously.

**AS:** At first, he certainly wasn't. When he ran for Student Body President he wasn't taken very seriously, then he won. Even when he came into the party in 1972, at first it was a combination of trying to laugh it off and then, "Oh, my god these people are really going to hurt us." At the national convention that year, there were a number of gay people who went from Minnesota. One was elected a national [unclear.] He got up on national television wearing a t-shirt that said Minnesota DFL Gay Rights Caucus. Boy, there were some party elders who were sure not happy to see that because, this was still a pretty radical issue in 1972, nationally especially.

**SP:** Jack Baker was pretty new to this being so public. Do you think that his ability to become spectacular. I heard about his campaign posters; nobody could miss those.

**AS:** High heels.

**SP:** Yes. Do you think that made him a novelty, and might have had something to do with his popularity in the beginning?

**AS:** Remember this was at a time when there was a lot of rebelliousness among students. Certainly, voting for Jack Baker was a way of thumbing your nose at the establishment. I think that may have helped him but, Jack was quite skilled in how he did this; he knew how to play this and what he was about. When he got into conventional politics, he was much less skilled. He tried to transfer those skills, and he seemed to think that you could get elected to City Council the same way you got elected president of the student body; those are two very different kinds of constituencies. He tried some of those same tactics in party politics, and they didn't work; the very clever, cute, and flamboyant posters, things of that sort. That was great for the student body but, that didn't work anymore in politics.

**SP:** Do you remember what ward he was in?

**AS:** He ran for Second Ward Alderman in 1973. He did poorly.

**SP:** Did your stand on civil rights for gays change during the 1970's?

**AS:** No.

**SP:** They pretty much stayed the same? [About stand on gay rights] For instance, we were talking about marriage included in this. Is that something...

**AS:** That was really Jack Baker's issue. That was not an issue that most of the rest of us, not that any of us were against it, but, it wasn't the issue most of us saw as the front-burner issue. It is still today, a very difficult issue and much harder to sell than simply including gays in a human rights act or repealing sodomy laws. Most of us were not that anxious to push that. As Jack got more isolated from the Movement, that kind of faded as a front-burner issue.

**SP:** About becoming visible, we talked a little bit about your coming to terms with your sexuality and then finally saying, "I'm looking for the time to say this." What did you have to consider? What things did you worry about? What things did you see as positive about coming out? This is before you came out.

**AS:** There were a lot things that were positive. I didn't want to live a lie, I wanted people to know who I was. I didn't want to worry about who knew and how I should relate to this one or that one. This one may know, and that one may not. I didn't want all that. What I worried about most was that I would be typecast; I would be viewed simply as a gay man and nothing else. That was not all

I saw myself as being. I never wanted to be, and never have been, a full-time professional gay person. I never had much interest in national gay politics or wanted to work for a gay organization. I had a whole lot of other things that I wanted to do with my life. I wanted to be open as gay but, I didn't want that to be all anybody ever thought of me as being. I wanted to be able to have positions and be taken seriously on a whole range of issues, and do a lot of things that didn't have anything to do with gay rights. So, I was afraid that coming out as gay would be so spectacular that it would overshadow everything else, just as I saw happen to a lot of early Black politicians. They were expected to talk about civil right and not have opinions about anything else. That was one of the things I feared. I didn't want every time I was quoted in the newspaper to be identified as "Allan Spear, the homosexual Senator, said today..."

**SP:** Did you ever find that was used by opposition to cloud issues?

**AS:** The newspapers didn't do that. What they started right away, and they have been fairly consistent in that, is they identify my sexuality when it has been a gay story. [unclear] When I make a statement on gay rights, now they say "openly gay". For a while they used some strange terminology, like "admitted homosexual" or "avowed homosexual". Now they say "openly gay". That's fine, I think that's relevant. But, they never identified me as gay when I'm doing something else or making a statement about another issue. No, I have not, over the years, been in any way restricted in terms of the issues I've become involved with because I'm gay.

**SP:** About the terminology at that time, what did it mean to be homosexual and what did it mean to be gay? What was the difference for you?

**AS:** Homosexual was the more clinical term. Gay in a lot of circles was still considered slang. I don't think it was until the mid-1980's that the *New York Times* started using the word gay. Homosexual; I never objected to it as much as some people did. There were a lot of gay people at the time who just hated the word, and were really trying to get away from it. I never minded it that much as an adjective to talk about a homosexual act, or something like that. I've never liked the idea of referring to somebody as a homosexual because, that seemed to be such a clinical way as describing somebody, like "He is a diabetic or a homosexual or an epileptic." It's like a medical term, like you have a sort of medical illness; that is what I most object to about it. By the time I came out, gay was almost universally used among gay people, and becoming increasingly used among other people as well.

We were still coming to terms with the notion of lesbians. When we started Minnesota Committee for Gay Rights, we just called it that. The assumption was that gay included both men and women. However, increasingly women felt left out, with the use of the word gay, and insisted on being called lesbians rather than gay women. The names of the organizations started being modified to include the term lesbian.

**SP:** At about what time do you think that started?

**AS:** Late-1970's.

**SP:** Late-1970's?

**AS:** Mid to late-1970's.

**SP:** I may have already asked this question but, if you would like to add to it. Can you tell me how you felt after you came out?

**AS:** Great! It was the most liberating thing that ever happened to me. Here I was, and I was still alive and hadn't lost friends.

**SP:** Did you feel like it was totally in your control?

**AS:** [Nods yes]

**SP:** When you talk to other politicians who had been outed, that must have been a consideration for you also, in coming out?

**AS:** That I might at some time be outed? Sure.

**SP:** You wanted to choose the time?

**AS:** Absolutely, I wanted to choose the time and the circumstances. I didn't anticipate that I was going to get caught doing something because, I didn't live--well, it's possible. But, I didn't do much cruising in the park or do much of the stuff that tends to lead to that. It was still possible because, people knew, I went to the bars, etc. But, I wanted to choose the time, circumstances, the reporter; I was able to do all of those things.

**SP:** Were there any reactions from the gay community that surprised you? You said you got a lot of support, did that surprise you?

**AS:** No, I expected support. No, the only thing that previously irked me was, before I actually had to make the public statement, people who were pushing me too hard, most notably Jack Baker and Mike McConnell who were trying to push me out of the closet. I resented that. As far as reactions to my coming out, no I felt pretty confident.

**SP:** So, even though there were some people who couldn't understand your taking the time you needed, they respected you enough. They were professional enough?

**AS:** Jack and Mike weren't but, once I came out they were, and wanted to congratulate me. [unclear] In the summer of 1975, I was the grand marshal of the gay rights parade in Los Angeles.

**SP:** We talked about what was happening in Minnesota at that time. There was a low point as far as another state bill not going through.

**AS:** The real low point was the loss of the St. Paul ordinance in 1978.

**SP:** Steve Endean...

**AS:** Left right after that so, did Kerry Woodward.

**SP:** Going back, can you restate what difficulties Steve and Kerry found with this committee for gay rights?

**AS:** I don't think they had difficulties with MCGLR, they were just frustrated over the fact that we were not winning. Certainly with Steve, he just became disillusioned and discouraged with the fight here and decided to move on. MCGR had its internal fights, they were the same as most other groups at the time; gay men versus lesbians, lesbians not thinking they were taken seriously enough, people not thinking we were radical enough or too radical. All of those things were happening.

**SP:** You said that Steve Endean dated black men exclusively.

**AS:** Yes.

**SP:** Do you think that he had a special connection to the Black community as well?

**AS:** Not really.

**SP:** Concerning gay rights?

**AS:** Not really, no. A lot of his boyfriends tended to be non-political people. I don't think he had any real in-roads into the local Black community.

**SP:** When you first began to follow gay activism in the early seventies, what were the most notable changes that occurred from when you first became aware politically to the end of the seventies? Did you see a switch between tactics or demands?

**AS:** My activities were pretty constant. I continued to have, as my major goals, passage of a gay human rights law in the state, repeal of the sodomy laws. Of course when AIDS came along, then the agenda began to shift. That was the early eighties. Then, of course, we also had the agenda of getting funding for AIDS education and fighting discrimination on the basis of AIDS hysterical reactions. A new agenda came along in the early 1980's with AIDS. But until that came along, the agenda remained pretty steady. We had some disagreements over how broad to make the agenda. Jack Baker had been a big advocate of gay marriages. Some of us didn't push that very hard. In 1975, we also had a split in the community over whether to push for the inclusion of transgender people in the state human rights law. Steve and I took the position that we couldn't do that and weren't ready for that. We should just try to get a state gay and lesbian rights protection. There were people who objected to that, particularly Tim Campbell. I think Steve, myself and others, who were working on what we saw as the kind of mainstream movement here, were pretty steady in what we were doing and pretty constant in our agenda until AIDS came along and forced that

agenda to be broadened.

**SP:** Where do you think activism began in the Twin Cities?

**AS:** Jack Baker. It really begins with Jack and Mike's attempt to get married in 1970. As far as I know, that was the first really open effort of openly identified gay and lesbian people to do something and change something in the system.

**SP:** In the 1960's, do you recall any type of...

**AS:** I recall in 1969 seeing the FREE table [Fight Repression of Erotic Expression (student group at U of M)] in the basement at Coffman Union. That got a little attention but, it was in the following year, with Jack and Mike trying to get married, that a consciousness was first raised on the issue.

**SP:** It woke people up to they wanted the same things as everyone?

**AS:** It woke people up. It also made gay people--my god, there were out there who were--most of us very closeted--and here were some people who were really willing to be out front. There was not just the issue of there being able to get married, it was that Mike was fired from the University. Even those of us who didn't think that the right to get married was the first item on the agenda were never the less outraged that the University fired Mike. [He] was a clearly a competent, professional librarian. He was fired simply because, he brought disgrace to the University in this attempt to get married to another man. There were rallies. That was an issue that catalyzed a lot of people in the community. They were simply outraged.

**SP:** About the University at that time--Did the University end up having to change the way it dealt with Mike?

**AS:** He was fired and never got his job back. He was then hired by Hennepin County Library and has been there ever since. I don't think his career was hurt because, he was able to get another job. I had a little to do with that because, I had a friend on the Hennepin County Board who I urged to try to find Mike a job with Hennepin County. [Interruption]

**SP:** Mike did finally get employment but, not at the University.

**AS:** No.

**SP:** Do you think that the Regents were embarrassed by this?

**AS:** Sure they were. They were embarrassed not by firing him but, because he was identified as a university employee when he and Jack tried to get married.

**SP:** Can you point to any evidence that later they changed?

**AS:** Later on, the University's policy changed and developed a non-discriminatory policy. When I came out in 1974, just a few years later, and I had told my colleagues and Chairman of the History Department about what I was going to do, there wasn't much of a ripple. Of course, I was already a tenured faculty member and not nearly as vulnerable as Mike was. But, it later changed gradually over the years. I don't know exactly when the University developed its non-discrimination policy, sometime in the 1980's.

**SP:** Do you remember any pressure from students or efforts by students to meet gay faculty, or talk to faculty about just gay issues? To get a community at the University.

**AS:** No, there wasn't a whole lot of that until later on.

**SP:** If you look at the newspapers published in the gay community, there seems to be a start that goes from the early 1970's for about two or three years, then no longer there is this empty space. In about 1978, it starts up again.

**AS:** ...with *Positively Gay*. I think that was what it was called. It then became the *GLC Voice*.

**SP:** Do you have any idea why there was that empty spot.

**AS:** It takes somebody with commitment and energy to do it. Bruce Brockway was the one who started *Positively Gay*; he didn't last very long. Tim Campbell took it over. He had the energy to keep it going. I don't think Tim ever made a cent out of that newspaper but, he kept it going. Then *Equal Time* came along as a non-profit community, and it's been really steady. We were starting up and creating a new community here, which never existed before. There are obviously going to be false starts. For every gay institution that started there was probably a dozen that started up and then failed. I think that will inevitably that is going to be the case, and certainly newspapers are very hard, taking a lot of energy and commitment. If you look at other communities; in the early history of the African-American press, you will see a lot of false starts and early failures before you begin to begin to get papers that last a long time.

**SP:** Was there some sort of funding during the early 1970's that neighborhoods got start papers in the community?

**AS:** I think there was, I don't know much about that though.

**SP:** My impression is that those first papers were more a statement of awareness.

**AS:** I don't know what the interests of the early ones were. I can't remember any before *Positively Gay*.

**SP:** Do you remember one called the *Northland Companion*?

**AS:** Vaguely, that rings a bell. I don't think that lasted very long.

**SP:** Where do you think the gay leaders came from?

**AS:** Jack came from the University campus but, others didn't; Steve never had any connection to the University. They came from different places. No, I don't see the University of Minnesota as a major incubator for early gay activism. Jack did come from the University but, a lot of the others didn't. I don't know. You would have to do a representative profile of the early leaders and see exactly where they came from because, I see people coming from different places.

**SP:** Because I can't talk to Steve, do you know anything about his background; did he come from the city or suburbs?

**AS:** He grew up in the suburbs. Went to college for a few years and then dropped out. He became involved in politics; he worked for Wendel Anderson's campaign in 1970. Then he gradually started coming out. By 1972, when I met him he was fully out. He was only twenty-two or twenty-three years old then. But, he was one of the first people to come out who had a lot of political connections, other than me. He already had a lot of connections in the DFL Party. He was the one who [unclear] to make gay rights part of the mainstream, he really pushed that.

**SP:** So, he came to you sometimes?

**AS:** Sure, although it was both ways. We became friends right away when we meet because, we were very much interested in doing the same thing.

**SP:** Who were some antagonists of the gay community, can you think of any? You were talking about Roach. Are there any others?

**AS:** Roach was by no means the worst of them. He was a symbol because, he was head of the church [St. Paul Catholic Archbishop]. At the Legislature, in the mid-1970's, the two, on the senate side in particular, who really became identified with the opposition were two Democrat senators named Wayne Olhof and Mike Menning. Olhof later became the founder of the Birean League, which became one of the big anti-gay organizations. I always made a distinction between the two. Wayne was a very sincere believer, he really, really believed all of this stuff. He really believed it was sin and you were going to hell, etc. Mike Menning was just a demagogue, an opportunist, and just latched onto these issues for political purposes. He was viscous, just an awful person, one of the worst people I have ever met in politics. He ultimately became a Republican. As a Republican, he ran for Governor in the early-80's and fortunately never got elected. I don't know what ever happened to him. Those two I remember particularly as being central figures in the opposition.

There were a number of people who would always appear at the Legislature when this issue came up. I can't tell you too much about these people, except that they would come over. There was a woman named Mary Prior, who was associated with the right wing of the Catholic Church in St. Paul. [There was] another named Terry Todd. These people ultimately became identified with the Concerned Women of America and other national right wing groups that began to emerge in the late 1970's. So, by the late 1970's there was a pretty organized core of antis.

**SP:** Do you think that had something to do with the gay community becoming more political in its activism?

**AS:** I don't know which came first. In some ways they were responding to us. It wasn't one way. They emerged when we started making gains; they saw us getting close to passing state-wide legislation. They suddenly emerged, and this became one of their big issues. So, I think it worked both ways; our increasing visibility mobilized them.

**SP:** It sound like these were religious based.

**AS:** Yes.

**SP:** Were there any that you know of that helped the gay cause?

**AS:** You mean religious groups that helped us?

**SP:** Actually, that is two questions I would like to ask. Were there some that were so...

**AS:** ...awful that they helped? Yes, I think so, on a number of occasions when they went so far in their hatred that they just turned people off. I think that was one of the things that led to Dean Johnson's conversion on the issue. He saw people within his own church take such extreme positions. In the 1980's, when Karen Clark was presenting the gay rights bill before the House Judiciary Committee, she mentioned that there was a time in the not too distant past when being gay was a capital crime. The audience started to applaud. I think that kind of behavior just turned people off.

On the other hand, the other part of your question [unclear] I said yes definitely. A lot of the mainstream churches from a fairly early point, the mid-1970's on, had statements of support of gay human rights, actual conferences of churches did.

**SP:** Could you say they were Catholic, Protestant, Jewish? Did they come together?

**AS:** They didn't come together until this last year, when we got the support of the Joint Religious Legislative Conference. We could never get the Joint Religious Legislative Conference support, which is a group made up of representatives of those three major denominations. [It was] because Protestant and Jewish groups were supportive and, the Catholics weren't. You see, the fundamentalists don't belong to that, they are against ecumenicalism so, they don't belong to any of these groups that come together for common goals. But, the Catholic Church does, and they were the ones who held out until this past year when, for the first time, we had support from the [unclear] Religious Legislative Coalition.

**SP:** About an event, if you remember it. During the period when St. Paul's ordinance was going to be repealed or threatened, there was a fruit warehouse that was being opened.

**AS:** And Anita Bryant came.

**SP:** Do you remember anything about that?

**AS:** Yes. That was exactly what it was. She was representative of the Florida orange juice industry. She came in for the opening of this fruit warehouse. This was during the time of the St. Paul repeal effort so, naturally when she came she was metted with press. Nobody asked her about orange juice, they asked her about her position on gay rights. I remember the Legislature was in session that day, and I wasn't able to go but, there was a big demonstration in front of the fruit warehouse by the gay community protesting her appearance. At that time we were all boycotting Florida orange juice. So, there were people over there protesting her appearance. All I remember, in hearing about it, was that it was pouring rain and everybody got absolutely soaked.

**SP:** You heard there was a pretty big turn out for it?

**AS:** Yes.

**SP:** Do you think that something like this which has some comedy in it appealed to the gay community? It was...

**AS:** a fruit warehouse? [laughs] I don't know.

**SP:** But, also having her, a former Miss America.

**AS:** Oh, I suppose. Although, she just became a symbol of our opposition. She was also not very smart. She said things that were really ignorant and stupid so, she really became a symbol of the know-nothingness we were up against.

**SP:** Comparing the two cities, St. Paul and Minneapolis, do you think there is a difference in getting the rights in each city?

**AS:** There was. Initially, they came at about the same time. St. Paul followed immediately after Minneapolis in 1974 but, Minneapolis has always been a socially more, slightly more, liberal city. St. Paul has been historically more democratic city, a more labor city but, on social issues Minneapolis has always been a little more progressive. However, I believe that the only reason that the Minneapolis ordinance was never repealed, while the St. Paul was, is that the St. Paul Charter allowed for initiative and referendum and that Minneapolis didn't. I believe that in 1978, if the Minneapolis Charter allowed for initiative and referendum, that the same forces that got it on the ballot in St. Paul would have got it on the ballot in Minneapolis and it would have been repealed in Minneapolis too. [It would not have been] by as perhaps as much of a large a margin as St. Paul but, I think it would have been repealed.

**SP:** I think I've asked all the questions.

**AS:** O.K.

**SP:** Thank you Mr. Spear.

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