

**Interview with Kerry Woodward**

**Interviewed by Scott Paulsen  
University of Minnesota**

**Interviewed on December 18, 1993  
over the telephone at her home  
Oakland, California  
with several questions asked by Dallas Drake  
in the final section of the interview**

**SP:** First of all I want to ask you where did you grow-up?

**KW:** I kind of moved around a lot, it was all in the Midwest. Elementary school was in Ohio. Junior and high school was in Michigan in a town called Birmingham, it's a suburb of Detroit. I went to Oberlin College and, I spent a year in New York then, in Atlanta for a year getting Montessori training, from there I went to Minneapolis.

**SP:** I see. You traveled around so much. It sounds like traveling rather than living somewhere.

**KW:** In a way.

**SP:** Can you tell me what did your parents do? Did that effect the moves?

**KW:** I don't think so. My father was in advertising and my mother was a housewife. I think they just moved a lot when I was younger; my dad was just trying to find a job that he really liked. When he got this job in Michigan he stayed there, he wasn't in the military or anything.

**SP:** I see--He stayed in advertising the whole time while you were growing-up?

**KW:** Yes.

**SP:** And, your mother worked in the home?

**KW:** Right.

**SP:** You went to different schools. The next question I want to ask and, I don't know what period of your life this was but, at what time did you start to identify gay people?

**KW:** It was in Minneapolis when it entered my consciousness. I'm trying to remember. I guess I moved to Minneapolis in about 1972. That was the time of the Women's Movement. I had gone

and visited the women's bookstore. My friends were kind of into the Women's Movement, not in an organizational sense but, in the way we were living our lives. At one point I was dating men and I was living with a man when I came to the realization that I was a lesbian. I was living with him for almost a year and a half. I was just very depressed and my life didn't seem to be working for me. I had been in relationships with men, none of them seemed to work. I was basically unhappy and couldn't figure out what was wrong. I was to the point that I would think of suicide on a daily basis for months and months. During that period I was writing in a journal. I wouldn't read what I wrote, I'd just write a page or two and set it aside and then several weeks later I'd pick it up again but, I would never read the things I had written.

In 1974, I had read an article in the newspaper about the passage of the Minneapolis gay rights city ordinance. I remember thinking, "that's good those people need that." [laughs] But, somehow it struck me, it hit home in a way. Not too long after that I had started getting involved in the DFL [Democratic Farmer Labor Party]. I had gone to the precinct caucuses basically, just see what they were about and went on to the platform committee on the district level as an alternate. The guy I was living with was doing the same thing. He was going to the precinct caucus too, he was getting involved in the DFL in the same way. At one of those platform committees I met Steve. He would talk about what he was doing and the issue of gay rights, he was working for a specific plank in the platform. I just remember being very impressed by him and what he said. He seemed like a nice person, someone who was genuine about what he was doing as opposed to being in politics to seek power, fame, glory, etc. He seemed like a genuine activist. He was looking for people to help out with this organization which was called MCGLR (Minnesota Committee of Gay and Lesbian Rights). I approached him and said, "Would you be at all interested in a straight woman working with you?" He said yes so, I went to that--Oh, no what happened from there?

There was a forum he had organized with Phylis Lyon and Howard Brown. I got a mailing through the DFL for that because, I think they had sent it out to all the DFLers in Minneapolis and St. Paul for this forum they were having. I decided I would go. And, since Phylis Lyon had been the co-author of the book Lesbian Woman I thought I would read it before I went. I started reading that and I couldn't put it down. Everything that book said seemed that it was written for me. It just brought my conscience to "maybe this is what is happening with me maybe, I'm a lesbian." I realized at that time that I needed to really think about it and do something about it. At that point, I went to the Lesbian Resource Center and talked to some women there. That's when it all jelled and fell into place and I realized that what had been going on with me is that I had been denying a major part of my being. At that point I went back and read that journal that I had written for the last year. It was filled with entries one after another of me thinking that maybe I was a lesbian. Each time I'd write "It's weird I never thought this way in my life, why am I thinking this now?" The next entry which would be two, three, four or five weeks later would say the exact same thing, which was "funny, think I've never thought of this before." [laughs] So, I realized I had been in a state of denial. From there I just got more and more involved in the gay community and my life seemed to make more sense to me and, I ended my depression. That's the story.

**SP:** I wanted to find out, with the early contact with the gays and lesbians, can you describe that scene? What you saw when you were first aware, maybe not when you were first identifying it in yourself.

**KW:** When I first came out in 1974, basically in Minneapolis I wasn't aware too much of what was happening nationally, it was what was happening in Minneapolis. The community was pretty separated in terms of women and men. Apparently, there had been initially some male (gay men's) organizations were somewhat open to women but, the women that had tried to join those organizations had felt they were pushed to the background and they weren't given much say. They weren't given much power within the organizations. The organizations were essentially gay men's organizations which functioned for gay men and women's roles were maybe not non-existent but, certainly not equal. As a reaction to that, women had begun to separate and develop their own organizations. This was happening nationally, it's just that my knowledge of what was happening on an organizational level was limited to Minneapolis although, similar stories were happening around the country.

Karen Brown and Cindy Hanson had started the Lesbian Resource Center. I believe that was the first center for lesbians that had a storefront on ground level. In other words, you could be walking down the street and you would see the words on the door "Lesbian Resource Center". That was the first one in the country that had the word lesbian on it, on street level on as it's door front. So, it was obviously a fairly brave or courageous act to set that up and to do that. The Lesbian Resource Center was set up as a place where lesbians could come to meet each other and to support each other and to talk about various issues, get information and to socialize as well. They had kind of weekly meetings. It was done all very democratically; any decisions that were to be made about the LRC were made at these weekly meetings. Whoever showed up at the meeting had a vote in that weeks decisions. There was a lot of volunteer work. I don't think anybody was paid, everybody pitched in and volunteered for whatever it took to keep the center open.

In the lesbian community there were no lesbian bars but, there was the Townhouse where lesbians often went to meet each other. Another group which had split with the LRC by the time I came out. I think it was called the Minnesota Professional Women's Association.

**SP:** That was at about what time?

**KW:** Pardon?

**SP:** Was that in the early 1970's?

**KW:** Early 1970's. Maybe it was Minnesota Gay Women's Association. People called it MGWA so, I think it was Minnesota Gay Women's Association or Minneapolis Gay Women's Association. I don't know who actually created it. I think there were several women who had been a little bit disenchanted with the LRC because it tended to be younger women in their twenties and tended to be kind of hippie. The Gay Women's Association women tended to be what was then called older, which meant late twenties and thirties and they tended to be career oriented. The women in the LRC tended not yet have settled into any particular career. So, the women in the MGWA were a little more conservative and a little less hippie would be the best word for that time. They had formed their own organization and that was essentially a social organization. They had meetings I think once a month where they would get together at someone's house. They would have people

Speak or else there would be a topic were they would all discuss with one another. It was essentially a social group.

In terms of men's organizations, I really don't know that much of what preceded 1974 in Minneapolis. I know Jack Baker did his thing at the University, etc. But, I don't know too much about what organizations were doing what.

**SP:** I want to ask you that about the LRC. Did you know if any of those people came from the University of Minnesota?

**KW:** Which people?

**SP:** At the LRC. You said they were younger.

**KW:** I don't think that any of the people at the LRC were from the University. There may have been some people there who were students at the University but, I can't remember anybody as being a full-time student. I don't believe there was anybody there who was working at the University.

**SP:** What other people do you remember from MCGLR, people who were active in it and went on to do more in the gay community?

**KW:** People who were in MCGLR at the beginning time? Allen Spear of course, Steve [Endean], Jim Chalgren, Karen Clark, Janet Dahlem. No, Janet wasn't in MCGLR, Karen was. Eventually, Mary Hartman joined MCGLR but, she was not one of the very first. Karen was in that first board of directors that was put together for MCGLR, Karen was one of those people. There were people who stayed active and that first MCGLR board tended to be a very active group.--Oh, Mike Garrett was on the board. There were people who were active and stayed active within the organization but, in terms of people who went on to become politically active that are still active; the names that come to mind are Allen Spear and Karen Clark. I think Earl Metwall, who was on the City Council, was on that first board of directors for about a year or two. It was an attempt on Steve's part to get some straight people on the board who were politically active.

**SP:** Can you tell me about D. J. Metzger? I read around 1979 she was in MCGLR but, I don't know if she was around before that.

**KW:** I don't think she was ever on the MCGLR board while I was in Minneapolis. Up until the time on the St. Paul initiative I don't think she was on the board.

**SP:** Could you tell me anything about B. J. ...

**KW:** [about D. J. Metzger] She was active in that group surrounding the LRC and then there was a lesbian group that sort of came out of the LRC called the Lesbian Feminist Organizing Committee because, the LRC was not a political organization. Some of the women who wanted to be political and, I don't mean political in the sense of party politics, I mean political in sense of changing society's views and changing the way society worked. It was much more direct action type politics.

That group was called the Lesbian Feminist Organizing Committee. Karen Clark was one of the key people in that group so was Patty Shamus and I think Karen Brown. I believe B. J. was eventually part of that group.

**SP:** That's B. J. Metzger?

**KW:** Yes, I think she was eventually part of that group. But, a lot of the more active women tended to be with the LFOC (Lesbian Feminist Organizing Committee) rather than MCGLR. The time period I'm talking about is 1975 or 1976 to 1979 or 1980, something like that.

**SP:** They weren't in opposition to one another, they were just different kinds of political organizations.

**KW:** They were different--There were people, women in LFOC who were very negative to the idea of any women working within the established political party system [I knew] because, part of what I did as the chair of MCGLR is I would connect up with other groups, particularly women's groups or women that I knew to let them know what MCGLR was doing and what was happening with the gay rights bill at the state legislature and how people could plug in and help. There were women in the LFOC who didn't want me speaking at LFOC and who didn't want LFOC to get involved at all in any way supporting what MCGLR was doing because, they felt that it was usurping women's energies to function in what was essentially a male political world; a world in which women were oppressed and a world in which women, as far as they could see, would never have any real power. Their sort of belief was don't get involved at all. What was important was for women to take control of their own lives and take their own power into their own hands. That was not my view of it and I don't think it was the view of the majority of the women in LFOC but, there were a few real outspoken voices in LFOC against LFOC getting involved in anyway with the legislature or with the City Council.

**SP:** Some of those people, do you...

**KW:** I was just trying to remember who they were. I sort of blocked them from my memory I guess. I can't really say who was the main person. There were people in LFOC who were initially somewhat negative to the idea of LFOC or lesbians getting involved in this political system, who later changed their minds and got quite involved. One person I think of is Ann Rickman who I believe; but, you'd have to talk to her. I don't think at the beginning she really had much interest in working in the political system. Eventually, she went to law school, which obviously is a turnabout. I think Janet Dalhem was one of the people who initially was very hesitant for women to get involved; I think later she ended up in city politics or for the city government.

There were people who--Patty Shamus was not totally supportive of women getting involved in the political process but, she wasn't against it, it was more like she didn't want to get involved herself, I believe. [For] a lot of the women it was more that they didn't themselves particularly see any advantage for women working in the political system. Many of them like I said changed their minds later. There were a few really outspoken voices in LFOC that women should not get involved. It could be that my memory doesn't serve me that well because, a lot of those women did

eventually get involved [laughs] probably due to the St. Paul campaign. [pause] So, sorry no specific names come to mind.

**SP:** O.K. We just talked about some conflicts with gay men. What about the Women's Movement; straight women in particular? Were problems that came up on that side?

**KW:** There were, I think in general the straight women in the community--Minneapolis is a fairly liberal place and my impression was that in general there was support but, when it came to an organizational level that support was not always there. I remember there was a point when several of us had gone to a rally in Springfield, Illinois in favor of the ERA, and I can't remember what year this was. There had been sort of a call for women's organizations to send women down to Springfield to take part in this march and rally in favor of the ERA. It was to try to get Illinois to get behind the ERA. Several women's groups from Minnesota joined in on that. I think in Minneapolis there was some sort of coalition, as I recall, of different women's organizations that were working together to get as many different organizations to get their members to go to this rally. At some point, LFOC had been invited to be part of that. What ended up happening was that this whole group from Minneapolis went down. Everybody got on the bus. Several people on the group brought banners or various other insignia, t-shirts, etc. identifying their organization or who they were. The kind of thing you expect at any demonstration. There were several of us on those buses who were going down to Springfield who had our t-shirts on which identified us as lesbian. We may have had arm-bands and a banner. What happened was that Minnesota was supposed to be second or first in the demonstration. Then we got word back from the leadership, I think it was like the Illinois or Springfield National Organization for Women who was sponsoring this. Word got back to us that Minnesota would not march first, we were now going to march way in the middle and to the back unless, the Minnesota contingent got all their lesbians to take off their lesbian t-shirts and lesbian insignia and not march with the banner identifying lesbian rights. The group we had traveled with from Minnesota said they would not do that, they would not tell us not to march [that is] they would not tell us that we could only march if we didn't identify ourselves as lesbian. And, if that meant Minnesota would be back toward the end of the parade that would be fine. It ended up that the people who were running that did in fact do that. They said, "Fine, if you are going to let you march with us then you're not up front any more." [laughs]

**SP:** Kerry, I need to pause one second.

**KW:** The straight women in Minnesota had really backed us up. The other side of the coin is that there was the DFL Feminist Caucus. That was a number of straight women in the DFL; the leader Korrin Horbel, Peggy Spector and a number of other women. Originally, when Steve set up MCGLR had really wanted the DFL women's support. My understanding that Steve really wanted women in MCGLR was to show the women's caucus of the DFL that the gay men had the support of the women in the gay community. Interestingly enough, the DFL feminist caucus didn't want lesbians involved in the DFL feminist caucus.

Several things happened where myself and others in MCGLR felt that the DFL feminist caucus was very clearly antagonistic to having lesbians be a public part of their group. In other words; they wanted our support in terms of writing letters, giving money, etc. When it came to having open

lesbians on their decision making board or having open lesbians identify themselves as part of the DFL or leadership of the DFL feminist caucus, there were some incidents where it was very clear that they didn't want that. They would support us in terms of the civil rights for gay people but, they would not support the lesbians as being part of the organization. That was a whole different group of people than those on buses who went down to Springfield at the time. It was an interesting time but, when you ask about the women's organizations and the support of the straight women's community, it really depended from individual to individual and organization to organization. Korrin Horbel ended up after various discussions and her really looking at the issues of lesbians being one of the people who were really supporting lesbians being a visible part of the leadership of the feminist community.

**SP:** What organization was she in?

**KW:** She was the founder and leader of the DFL feminist caucus during the 1970's.

**SP:** I see. I don't know if I got this, the LFOC stands for what?

**KW:** Lesbian Feminist Organizing Committee.

**SP:** ...which was not into party politics.

**KW:** Correct.

**SP:** O.K. I want to ask you something about the agenda that you had when you first had when you went into politics. What was it?

**KW:** I personally or the organization?

**SP:** You personally.

**KW:** Personally what I wanted was equality for gay men and lesbians. I think part of that for me was that the black Civil Rights Movement had played an important part in setting my values for what was right and just. Following that was the Women's Movement and then the Gay Movement just kind of made sense after the Black and Women's Movements. I think it was also a way for me personally to make statements about being gay and about who I was, in a way I that I felt comfortable. I had never been a particularly radical, fringy person. I wanted to be accepted by the world and society for myself as myself and not some label that had gotten stuck on me. My own fear that I had over all my life of having that label on me, motivated me [seek] laws for another group that has been discriminated against and that discrimination is unjust, unfair and unfounded. It was in a way a platform to say that and it was something I genuinely believed. Essentially, that was the goal of the organization also; to put into law that it was illegal to discriminate.

**SP:** It sounds like without the movement you would not have gotten so involved with gay people and identifying that in yourself.

**KW:** I don't know what would have happened to me personally without the movement. I don't know if I would have been able to come out of that denial that I had. I don't know if I would have ended up committing suicide, I think there is a very good chance I would have. Who knows. Would I have finally met a woman who would bring me out and connected me up socially with other lesbians and would have given me a place to be in the world. That certainly happened to other people, it had never happened to me. How does one figure out what would have happened otherwise. Obviously, the movement played a very important part in my life.

**SP:** As far as the aims of MCGLR and Steve Endean; did they match your own, did you see any difference?

**KW:** I think part of the reason I was so active in MCGLR was because, the goals of the organization and my personal goals were so close. I also believed there was a lot of room for direct action: demonstrations, marches, things which were not specifically legislative. I had always believed that legislation by itself would not change anything. I could help and was an important part of social change but, I didn't think that was the only thing that need to be done. I did get involved in other actions and did support other actions. Steve sometimes would get involved in other actions but, he was much more single focused on the legislation. He made sure that MCGLR always maintained that single focus and would not do anything unless it was directly in support of the legislation that we wanted to work toward or had some reason like coalition building that would eventually end up helping to move forward that legislation. I think his idea of keeping the organization so single focused was part of what made that organization effective. The goals of the organization were so clear and it allowed the organization to easily make decisions on what it was supporting and what it wasn't in terms of other organizations or demonstrations, etc. It was clear, easy and effective. Even though I would go and get involved in some other things form time to time, it didn't make me feel like the organization should have been involved in those things. Steve made sure that MCGLR would not get involved in social services. Even though, social services were very needed by the gay community, that was not the role of MCGLR.

**SP:** I imagine that opened him and MCGLR to criticism from the gay community.

**KW:** I don't think it did because, the goal from the beginning was very clear. I think there were people who did not want to be involved in the organization because it was not doing what they wanted to do; social services work, direct action, etc. I did not get the sense that that was a point of controversy.

**SP:** Was there anything that you had differences with Steve in MCGLR that you felt were important?

**KW:** Initially there were some differences in the way that Steve had set up the initial board of directors. Men or women could be members of the board, there were no quotas. The then National Gay Task Force had moved to put in gender parity on their board so that there were equal numbers of men and women. I had suggested to Steve after having talked to several of the women who were interested in the organization, before the organization was completely set up [we thought] that MCGLR be set up with close to parity for men and women on the board. I think there were twenty-

one on the board and somehow close to half had to be equal numbers of women or men. Steve originally wasn't sure that we could find enough women who would be interested but, there were. I suggested that given that the number on the board was twenty-one that there be a majority of women on the board. That didn't go over very well at the beginning because, these were women who had been antagonistic to some of the men who were slated to be on that board because of the separatist movement and past ill feelings between some of the community's men and women. Some of the men felt that some of the women that were being suggested to be on the board were antagonistic.

There were a lot of nervous feelings about giving a majority to a group who they weren't sure were actually behind the goals of the organization. But, Steve agreed to it and convinced the men to go with it. It ended up working out really fine. A lot of the women who had once been somewhat antagonistic ended up having a better understanding of the gay men they had been working with. I think [they] realized that the men were willing to share that power made a huge difference in the women's attitude, interest in the organization and the ability of the women to function in a normal way, instead of feeling that they had to scream and shout to get people to listen to what they had to say. It ended up working out considerably well. I think it was one of the better decisions that the organization made; to make that equality of gender on the board. And, the men found out that the women weren't so threatening so, it worked out well. [laughs] That was a case in which Steve and I started out with a difference but, ended up totally agreeing with each other.

There were times when I thought MCGLR should be more involved in supporting other organizations or things they were doing. Steve maintained a single focus approach. I came to understand he was correct and that was exactly what the organization needed to do. I guess at the beginning I wasn't totally convinced but, I soon was. The one thing Steve and I never totally agreed on was the role of transsexuals and transvestites in the organization and the gay rights legislation bill should include language that would include them in the protected class. Steve had always felt that the bill was for gay people and, that transsexualism and transvestism was totally different than homosexuality and therefore need to be treated in another bill. He also believed that if they were included in the bill, the bill would not have any chance of passage.

**SP:** I see.

**KW:** I had always felt that they were still a sexual minority of some kind. Even though the transvestites and transsexuals have a different kind of culture, challenges, lifestyle and issues than with gayness, to me it made sense to have it included all in one bill. I thought if you can't get it passed through the legislative process, somehow part of the bill can be amended and get something passed. We had difference of opinion on that. I always maintained that I did not think that the addition of transsexuals and transvestites was necessarily an end to the bill. Steve never felt comfortable with it so, as long as MCGLR it was never a part of the bill. That was probably the main thing but, it was nothing that kept us from working even though, it was controversial also, publicly in the gay community. I don't think it was to the extent that it tore apart the organization.

**SP:** Can you tell me of anyone within the gay community or sexual minorities who was in opposition?

**KW:** When I was there, the people who were speaking most loudly in favor of including transsexuals and transvestites in the state bill were Tim Campbell and Diana Slider.

**SP:** O.K. Do you remember Jack Baker and his interaction with MCGLR?

**KW:** Jack Baker and Mike McConnell thought that transsexuals and transvestites should be included in that bill. They also made many other statements which were opposed to various policies of MCGLR. Nobody in MCGLR or its supporters ever listened to Jack Baker. Even though, he would make public statements and there were occasions when we would meet with him, it didn't make any effect or difference. He was creating difficulties for MCGLR as far as meeting our goals and getting the support we wanted because, he was making public statements. The newspapers, T. V., radio, all the media had this image of Jack Baker being the spokesperson for the Minnesota gay community. If they wanted a quote or opinion, the first person they would go to was Jack Baker. By the mid 1970's Jack Baker was no longer representative of what most of the people in the gay community felt or believed so, he would make statements which were way off base from what most people were thinking. It was a great irritant because, you want the support of the media. When the media is printing quotes by somebody who doesn't represent anybody else that can be harmful. I can't remember the issues or exactly what he was saying, if I heard them it would spark my memory.

I do remember at one point in the late 1970's, when a number of leaders from various gay organizations in Minneapolis and St. Paul including: social service, political and I think religious organizations. Several of us called the press conference specifically to tell the press that we were representing all these organizations and that Jack Baker did not represent any of us. We didn't know how else to say to the press, "Listen, you're going to the wrong person." It did make a difference; the press did start coming to other organizations for opinions. Sometimes they would still get Jack Baker's opinions because, he was known to the general public. But after that, they realized he was not a voice they could use as somebody who represented the gay community in that city. In terms of Jack Baker functioning within the organization of MCGLR, he never did that. He may have in the very beginning trying to get a foothold in the organization but, he didn't have any power within the organization at any point of time. He sort of disappeared, except for these public statements from time to time.

**SP:** I have a question that it is just a name of a church and I don't even know if it's a church. It's called the Church of the Chosen People. Do you know anything about it?

**KW:** I think that was Jack Baker's "church" and he or it ran some ads in a local paper, it may have been the gay paper at the time. I just remember there was an ad to try and get people to come to their meetings or whatever. I don't remember what the ads said but, I remember there was some talk in the community that, and I've never had this verified but, fist-fucking was one of the initiation rights into this "church". I don't know if that was people's total disgust with Jack Baker which created that or, if in fact, that was going on. That's absolutely the only thing I know about that.

**SP:** At what time did you hear of it?

**KW:** It must have been 1977 or 1978.

**SP:** It wasn't real early.

**KW:** No, it wasn't real early that I had heard of it. I didn't think it had too much of a following. During the St. Paul campaign, Jack Baker had come out in favor of repealing the St. Paul gay rights. He was advocating people to vote for repeal. This is obviously a person who does not represent most of the gay community.

**SP:** Especially when most of the gay community was voting for it.

**KW:** What?

**SP:** ...or, they were not supporting...

**KW:** Virtually everybody was voting against the appeal. It was like if you wanted to be in favor of gay rights you voted "No" because, the initiative was to repeal the ordinance. Jack Baker was telling people to vote in favor of the repeal.

**SP:** Why do you think he did that?

**KW:** What was motivating him psychologically, logically or illogically, I have no idea. What he said was that if people thought there was protection for gay people, how did this go, then gay people would no longer fight for their rights. It was something to the effect that even if there was a law there wouldn't really be any protection and people would be lulled into complaisance by it. Therefore, [he thought] what should be done was to get at the law so that gay people would stay angry or something.

**SP:** Did his opinion surprise you?

**KW:** It did. I knew he had some pretty strange opinions but, that kind of blew me away. [laughs] All I can think of is maybe he wanted to stand out and be different than everybody, he had to claim a place for himself somewhere and that would bring him attention, maybe he actually believed it. I could understand somebody saying, "let's not push for an ordinance", if there were no laws on the books at all protecting people from discrimination. I can understand some people's view that if you then get a law on the books, people will think that people have some protection but, people are still going to be discriminated against and those laws never work anyway. I don't believe that but, I can see how somebody might believe it and might therefore not want to put any energy behind creating an ordinance. But, once there is a law on the books that protects people and to support taking that support away as a way of making that group stronger is insane. I think virtually everybody else felt that way and, when Jack Baker came out with his statement that everybody should vote to repeal that gay rights ordinance in St. Paul that was the end of anyone ever going to him for an opinion on anything related to the gay community in Minnesota. It was so off the wall that how could his statements or opinions ever be respected after that.

In conjunction with that and his drive to get people to vote the wrong way on the ordinance, I had heard that part of the group the Church of the Chosen People Baker did in fact have some loyalist who were part of that group who stayed with him on that issue. I don't know how many, who or what brought them into following him at that...

**SP:** Could you tell me more about the repeal of the St. Paul ordinance and what you did? Were you living in Minneapolis at the time?

**KW:** I wasn't living in Minneapolis at the time. The St. Paul ordinance took us all by surprise. The Anita Bryant thing happened in Dade County and that ordinance had gone down in defeat. Steve Endean had gone down, volunteered and helped out the gay community in Dade County as a volunteer. I don't think he was involved in the decision making group of the campaign fighting against repeal in Dade County. He did get some experience on that type of campaign down there. He came back and got some information that there were people from the right-wing, and probably from the Anita Bryant people, who were trying to get the Minneapolis ordinance repealed. They found out that they could not repeal the Minneapolis ordinance because, there was some law that once an ordinance is in effect the only way to repeal it would [be before a period of about] something like six months to a year. They gave up and the City Council was firmly behind keeping the ordinance so, there was nothing they right-wing could do to repeal the ordinance in Minneapolis.

They [the right-wing] went to St. Paul. Again, it was Steve who first heard this, I'm not sure who he heard this from. These same people trying to repeal the St. Paul ordinance. In St. Paul there was a similar time limit (six months or a year) to repeal a law that had been passed by the City Council through the voters. The only way to do that was within a certain time limit. That time limit had been in effect for three and a half years. What they did instead was use the initiative process. Ordinarily, the initiative process is used to create a new law, not to rescind an old law, it's to create a new law through a public vote. I thought that would keep the St. Paul ordinance safe but, it didn't because, they claimed the new law they were creating was a new law to repeal an old law. Somehow the courts went along with it that, you could in fact use the initiative to rescind an old law. I'm still not sure of the legality of it. But, there seemed to be some much overwhelming controversy in St. Paul over the issue, at the time. The courts didn't want to get involved in it and they tended to go with public opinion. In any case, it went ahead as an initiative.

Steve had been the main person in bringing this to the attention of the gay community, pulling together a planning an attack, a strategy, organizing a meeting through MCGLR. It was MCGLR which was the organization that called a community-wide meeting in St. Paul for all gay and any people in St. Paul to come together and to find out information about what this initiative was and then create a campaign organization to fight against the repeal. Out of that meeting came the St. Paul Citizens for Human Rights. I had been asked to be the manager of that campaign. Steve should have been the manager, he had done all the advance work on it and he had the strategy and know how. But, over the years he had developed a few enemies in the gay community, in the sense that they didn't want him to be in charge of the campaign. He asked me if I would be willing to do

it. I said I would if there was support from the community and he would support me with his know how because, I didn't really have the understanding of the strategy in a campaign that Steve had. He had more experience than I did and, I need that experience to manage the campaign. That was agreed to and I got a lot of support. What happened was that I was the manager of the campaign and Steve was the assistant manager but, it worked out to be that we worked more like co-managers. I did a lot of the field organization and the work of keeping the community together and community relations. Steve did the fund raising and strategy work.

I don't know what other specifics you want. I could talk a long time about the St. Paul campaign but, I need more specifics.

**SP:** What was some of the impact on the gay community after this passed in St. Paul specifically?

**KW:** The impact I saw during the campaign was that it was a great unifying force in the community. Organizations and people who had not coalesced were working side by side, hand in hand, equal numbers of men and women working together, truly unified. The only people who weren't part of it was the few around Jack Baker and a few around Bob Kunst, a guy who came up from Florida. Those were small numbers virtually, everybody seemed to be working together on the campaign.

After the campaign, the defeat, my sense was that the community pretty much fell apart. People weren't sure where to go next, what to do next in terms of organizational goals, supporting one another. There was a man who had been beaten to death on the head with a lead pipe by some anti-gay man. People had their car tires slashed outside gay bars in St. Paul. Stuff that would happen from time to time but, not as often and not with the viciousness that was happening after the St. Paul campaign. It was as if that vote had given license to anti-gay violence. The organization of the St. Paul ordinance (St. Paul Citizens for Human Rights) was closed so, that was no longer available as a unifying force. Obviously, if the St. Paul ordinance had been repealed there was no chance of getting anything passed for years in the state Legislature so, MCGLR's goals were, in a sense, hopeless at least for several years. [The question for MCGLR] What do you do in the interim until once again there is a chance for passing that kind of legislation. I think there was generally a feeling of possibly depression, an immobility in the community. It was definitely a time that was right for new leadership to come in forward and bring in new goals and actions. It was about that time B. J. [Metzger] started getting more involved after that campaign and at that time there was a void that really needed to be filled.

**SP:** That's B. J. Monroe or Metzger, I get mixed up.

**KW:** I think it's D. J. Monroe and B. J. Metzger.

**SP:** I can check. That's what I have written down. And this is B. J.?

**KW:** Actually, both of them together.

**SP:** Did you see any evidence of people taking that feeling of immobility and doing something with it like either staying or leaving St. Paul?

**KW:** A lot of people stayed and I don't know what they did. Some people left. Steve moved to Washington. Larry Bye, who had been very involved in the campaign and been one of the founders of MCGLR left and came out to San Francisco. Kevin Mosser, Larry Bye and Steve had gone around the country talking to other groups around the country about possibly doing a march on Washington. This is right before Harvey Milk started talking about doing a march on Washington. What Larry, Kevin and Steven were hearing for other local leaders around the country was that the country was not ready for a march on Washington. They eventually gave up on the idea and it was picked up again after the assassination of Harvey Milk; that's when I think the march idea started going. They were definitely looking for something to mobilize the community and nation against the attacks by the right-wing. That time didn't seem right. It was after that trip around the country that Steve went to Washington. Eventually, Larry San Francisco, Kevin stayed in Minneapolis. I stayed in Minneapolis trying to do something with MCGLR and was unable to refocus the groups commitment and action. We tried a few local things; a couple local ordinances that we looked at, feeble attempts. One was in Golden Valley was one but, they didn't go anywhere and it was clear that the public wasn't ready for it. Eventually, a year later I left came out to California.

**SP:** Were you a director for the Human Rights Campaign Fund?

**KW:** While I was still in Minneapolis Steve had started resurrecting the Gay Rights National Lobby. It had been started by David Goodstein and then he kind of got out of it and dropped it. The organization had fallen by the wayside and was essentially defunct. Steve resurrected it and was working as its executive director. I went to California and, after I working as a pre-school teacher for a while, Steve asked me if I would move to Washington and co-direct the national lobby with him. I declined to do it, I wanted to stay in California. What ended up happening was another thing Steve had been thinking doing with the GRNL was to start creating regional offices. He wanted a regional office for the lobby on the West Coast. He hired me as the field director on the West Coast office of the GRNL. What I did was set up an office that served the western states and, worked as a contact person for different people on the West Coast, and to have a West Coast presence of this national organization. While I was doing that, Steve had created the Human Rights Campaign Fund as a pact that was connected to the GRNL. It was a separate organization but, it was part of this family of organizations he was creating. There are a lot of other groups do this; there is a political group that does direct lobbying, there is a political action committee that raises money and gives it to candidates, an educational fund that was tax deductible (that was the Fairness Fund). That's a fairly typical thing for organization to do so that you can do the work you want and stay within federal guidelines. Steve by creating HRCF as a political action committee became the treasurer of that and I was the one of the co-chairs of the board of directors for HRCF. Jerry Berg, who lived in San Francisco, was the other co-chair.

**SP:** After being in Minneapolis or the Twin Cities, and being part of the gay community you moved to California. What struck you as really Minnesotan when you left?

**KW:** I don't know. I had been on the board of the Nationally Gay Lesbian Task Force. What struck me from what I had done nationally is that there were groups all around the country which were going through the same thing that the community in Minneapolis was going through. There

was actually cohesion throughout the country.

[After] coming out to California, what struck me was the extent to which gay people in the Bay Area, San Francisco, had totally become accepted in the overall community. I've heard this also from other people coming out to both L. A. and San Francisco. In Minneapolis I felt like I was a person definitely on the fringe of society, seen as the lesbian or gay person people knew. That seemed to be the main thing people saw in me. Coming out to California it was not much different than the color of my hair or what religion I belonged to. My gayness was recognized as part of me, not like the identifying part of me. I really felt like I was taken for what I was, not who I was. It changed my opinion of who I was and I saw myself as a full person rather than a lesbian or lesbian activist. I was able to see myself as a full person because that is how other people saw me. It was very freeing.

The other thing that struck me in San Francisco was the great numbers of gay people. I was use to thinking a march of demonstration of a 1,000 as a phenomenal success, San Francisco Gay Pride parade would be 2,500. Straight people would line up and bring their kids to see it. That was something I hadn't expected. I was very struck by when the Gay Olympics in San Francisco, the city put extra busses on the line to take people to the various events. There were rainbow flags that the city had hung. The government of the city would fund part of the money for the parade. The city genuinely counted the gay community as their own and as people that were completely and fully a part of the community like any other minority in the city.

The other thing was because of the great numbers of people in San Francisco, the political power that the gay people had and the extent of the in-fighting among the political gay organizations. I was used to Minnesota and Minneapolis where there were internal squabbles from time to time but, it was a pretty unified force. That's not the way it has ever been in San Francisco. Several different gay political groups vying for power. It was interesting.

**SP:** I just have a few questions left, you can give short answers if you like.

**KW:** O.K.

**SP:** Do you know where Lesbian Resource Center started, were it met?

**KW:** I don't know where it started. I know in Minneapolis but, I don't know where.

**SP:** When you became involved with it, do know the meeting places?

**KW:** It was meeting at time at a store front in south Minneapolis and, I'm trying to remember it's exact location. I don't.

**SP:** Do you remember Gay House?

**KW:** Gay health?

**SP:** House. It was in that area. I had heard the LRC met there but, some people said they didn't think so.

**KW:** It might have, there was some kind of health collective. I never went to their meetings and I was not involved with them. A person you might ask is Craig Anderson.

**SP:** O.K. I'll write it down. What publications were you aware of at that time that were for women but, also addressed lesbian issues?

**KW:** There was one that was called *So's Your Old Lady*.

**SP:** I get it. What kind of publication was that?

**KW:** I think it was a newspaper format that had poems and articles by women. I can't remember who printed or published it. There were some little poetry magazines that were published from time to time. *Off Your Back* was pretty popular then.

**SP:** There was something *Flower*, do you remember something called *Gold Flower*?

**KW:** That does not ring a bell. Maybe I'm just not remembering it.

**SP:** Were you aware of any other publications for the gay community at that time?

**KW:** Not for the general gay community.

**SP:** Any specific ones you remember?

**KW:** There really wasn't much in the early, mid 1970's. *The Advocate* was around then but, I never really read it. In the real early 1970's my recollection was there really wasn't much. *Gay Community News* was around but, it wasn't easily available. Toward the late 1970's it was more common that people would have a copy of that.

**SP:** O.K. About communes, did you ever hear of any?

**KW:** There was a women's commune that was out in the country, I'm not sure what city but, it was north I believe. It was something about one woman owned the land and somebody else. A collective was running it but, the people who were living on the land and taking care of it were not the same people who were owned the land. There were women who went up. There had been a house and a barn. Something happened during the winter and the house burned down so, I think what was left was a barn. Women would build shelters and tee-pees and live there on the land. They would bring food in bulk up there. I'm not sure how they made their living up there. I'm sure some of them were on government subsidies. But, there was a small group of women who lived in a

collective or a commune.

In terms of communes in the city, I'm sure there must have been some but, more like a few women living in a house as roommates but, not as a commune.

**SP:** There were a few houses around that were exclusively women.

**KW:** Yes, but they weren't like group homes. They were just people living together, they were roommates. There may have been some I wasn't aware of but, I wasn't aware of any that I would call a commune except, that one group up on the land.

**SP:** Some final questions. When you admitted to yourself your sexual orientation, how did you describe yourself with a word. Did you say I am gay or lesbian?

**KW:** Lesbian.

**SP:** What would it mean if you said I was gay?

**KW:** I like the word lesbian because it was more woman oriented.

**SP:** Was it in popular usage at that time?

**KW:** It was in women's circles.

**SP:** Did you have difficulty getting people to understand what it meant outside of women's circles?

**KW:** No, I think that was part of the visibility but, I don't think it was difficult.

**SP:** Did you think that people in the mainstream knew what it meant?

**KW:** Yes.

**SP:** This may sound simplistic.

**KW:** Sometimes the words would be "women loving women" that was being used but, the term lesbian was specific to women. I think people understood that.

**SP:** The question I had for you was, Do you know when the word lesbian became used rather than gay?

**KW:** No, I don't.

**Dallas Drake:** Can I ask a quick question?

**KW:** Yes, and then I need to go too.

**DD:** You mentioned when we talked about Jack Baker that he was kind of an outcast of the community. Can you think of others who were kind of pariahs or rouge personality within the community?

**KW:** Pariah? Tim Campbell was often seen in that kind of a role but, nothing like Jack Baker. Tim had different ideas than other people but he wasn't working against the community. There was a feeling by many, many of us that Jack Baker was working against the community. I don't think of anybody else who I would put in that category besides Jack.

**DD:** Most of the legislative agenda came through the DFL, is that right? Where there any people working within the Republican Party?

**KW:** Yes, there were people working within the Republican Party but, not to the extent of that of the DFL. The main push was through the DFL because, that is where it was likely to get any passage at that time.

**DD:** Can you think of any name of people?

**KW:** I don't know how open the people were at that time so, I wouldn't want to say without there permission. It was a lot harder to be open in the Republican Party than in the DFL so, they tended to be pretty closeted.

**DD:** As far as age range of people that you knew at that time, what would be the youngest person?

**KW:** The whole age range; there were people under eighteen and in there sixties. Most of them in the early twenties and thirties but, it covered the whole age range.

**SP:** This just came to my mind, did you ever go to bars?

**KW:** I did. That was not my main way of meeting people. That was a social meeting people but, that was a social meeting place so, yes.

**SP:** The main way of meeting people was...

**KW:** Through the bars, through the LFOC and then there was a Women's Coffeehouse that had been established that was a non-alcoholic and met on Friday evenings, I think. Also, just through friends.

**SP:** That's all the questions I have. I want to thank you. This was a great opportunity, people here don't get to talk to you very often. This will be available at the Historical Society.

**KW:** I hope it's helpful whatever is there.

**SP:** It's good to get your perspective because, you also knew Steve Endean and I think better than

some people, you worked with him so close.

**KW:** A long time. I miss him.

**DD:** Thanks Kerry.

**SP:** Thank you Ms. Woodward.

**KW:** O.K. goodbye.

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