UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
WOMEN IN HOUSTON

Interview with: Pokey Anderson
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EG: Okay I'm going to start out…

PA: Okay.

EG: with some simple biographical questions. Where and when were you born?

PA: I've got the list.

EG: Okay.

PA: I was born in 1949 in Duluth, Minnesota.

EG: Okay and you lived there until you were how old?

PA: Um, not long and then we moved to Minneapolis when I was just a little kid and my dad worked for the Federal Government so we moved around in the Midwest mostly and then ended up in the Washington D.C. area in junior high and high school for me.

EG: Oh okay. So you spent your elementary years in the Midwest and then… okay. What was that transition like for you moving from the Midwest to the capital?

PA: Well it was kind of funny because in Columbus, Ohio when I was in elementary school, you know, I had been to a whole bunch of states. You know I thought I was well traveled and then when I moved to the D.C. area those kids had been to Egypt and Rome and you know… because a lot had worked for the foreign service or wherever. So all of the sudden I was kind of like, "Hey, they are the ones that are well traveled I'm just… a rube from the sticks." So it was an adjustment, but it was fun.

EG: What did your dad do?

PA: He worked for the Veterans Administration. He helped Vets adjust psychologically, whatever they had happen to them.

EG: And your mom did she work outside the home?

PA: Not while we were growing up.

EG: Later on?

PA: It was hard enough just dealing with us.

EG: And you had siblings?

PA: I have a younger brother yeah.

EG: How, what is the age difference between you two?

PA: Three and a half years.

EG: Okay. And what is your full name?

PA: I have to tell you that? (laughter)

EG: It would be nice for historical record.

PA: Okay, I'd rather not.

EG: Okay then you don't have to.

PA: When I'm dead I'll tell you. (Laughter). Now let me tell you a little bit about confidentiality. When I first came out in Houston I think I was the first lesbian on TV and I just kind of made a rule then that I don't care if you call me on the phone (of course we didn't have email in those days) but you know you can email me just don't come to my house. I need that one little sphere of privacy and, you know, in these days information is so ubiquitous it's probably ridiculous to think you have any sphere of

privacy left but it's just… that's my myth that I have a little sphere of privacy where I can, you know, keep my home safe, who knows… (laughter) it's probably a myth.

EG: Okay. Well that's fair. So you moved around and then what was your experience like in D.C. going to school? Can you talk about your educational experience?

PA: Um I don't know I guess it was kind of normal. In junior I was co-editor of the newspaper and no… I was a good student. I seemed to be pretty well cut out for the student life.

EG: Did you go to public schools?

PA: Yeah.

EG: In D.C.?

PA: Arlington, right outside, yeah.

EG: So were you exposed to a lot of politics, political activism at that time growing up?

PA: I wouldn't say so much. I mean D.C. is a very political place but, you know, looking back I think I really got a lot of my sense of social justice from my mom. She grew up… I was in a mixed marriage geographically, my mom came from Georgia and my dad came from Minnesota and California and she (my mom) and her sister in the I guess in the late '30s, mid '30s they were sticking up for the rights of African Americans and nearly got kicked out of college for that. And…

EG: What college was that?

PA: That was, gosh…. They went to two different colleges and I can't remember which one of them got in trouble. I think one was Agnes Scott and the other was… I forgot. But, so I mean I was exposed to the idea that you stick up for what you believe in

just as part of the "air" in my house, not to say that there was a perfect understanding of social justice I think that is something that we keep working on as we all experience more understanding of different cultures and what they have had to put up with, you know. So but I think that's where I got it. And my dad is very… he is very fair minded and I also I also think I learned to argue in the household because they would always listen and it's always I think it's really just great fun to throw your ideas out with other people and nobody has to go home with any bruises on you just see if your ideas float or not and that's how you decide if you have an argument. So…

EG: Interesting. So your mom was kind of active in social justice realm prior to your birth did that continue as you guys were growing up?

PA: Well kind of centrist ways. Not radical by any means. I think it was a challenge for her to have me be, you know, out there when I called here up in 1977 and said, "Hey Mom I'm coming home. I'm going to be going to the White House." I was invited to go, you know, meet with people at the White House and she was like, "Really?" And she said, "So is that going to be with your feminist activities or your lesbian activities?" And I said, "Well it's going to be the lesbian activities." And she said, "Now how am I going to brag to the neighbors?" (laughter). So you can see there is this sense of pride but also I think, you know, it is still pretty alien to her so…

EG: So what was her idea of feminism, what did she think of kind of where did she fall?

PA: Well she is no longer with us, she has been dead for over 20 years but I mean she wanted me to be pretty much like a standard person, you know. Wear lipstick, wear a

dress, get married, have some kids… um, you know, at that point sure, you could have a job too but I think it was a relatively standard idea of what a woman would be, you know.

EG: How did you interact with your brother as a child?

PA: Oh I'd beat him up (laughter) he was younger I gave him a hard time. We were pretty good friends as little kids he was a good kid.

EG: Did that change as you got older?

PA: Well I guess you could say our interests and other things diverged. I was a good student, he wasn't. He fell in with "the wrong" crowd. And he started getting addicted to drugs and alcohol. So that was challenging for everybody.

EG: How did you interact with friends as a child, girls, boys was it just normal… I mean… "normal"?

PA: Well I don't know I think I started having crushes on little girls in elementary school but of course I didn't know what that meant and nobody was talking about it. I mean even in high school nobody was talking about it and this was way before Stonewall. So, "the love that dare not speak its name" in those days there was nobody on TV… forget Will and Grace there was nobody on TV. We didn't even have the equivalent of Amos and Andy, nothing.

EG: Right.

PA: You know I think there was like one guy who sat behind a potted plant that when you know the first gay guy on TV and that was it, no name… nothing so I mean it took me until college to figure out, you know… I dated guys in college and I was finally like you know… here I am with Walter and I want to go over to Kathy's room and talk with

her, what's this all about. So finally I got it through my skull. It took a while. You kind of fight it for a while and then you go… nope it's just not meant to be.

EG: Now you said you were the editor of the newspaper…

PA: In junior high.

EG: In junior high. What other activities were you involved in?

PA: Oh I played sports, softball and stuff. Played around, just played in the neighborhood with the kids, the other kids. I don't know I went to the library a lot in the summer. I'd get a big old stack of 15 books and take them home.

EG: So you said you started having crushes on girls as a elementary school child but you couldn't really articulate it or understand it.

PA: Right.

EG: Did you feel was there kind of a feeling that you were any different or…?

PA: By junior high I started getting that feeling, yeah that I was… you know even though you didn't have words for it I was like "man I really feel alone" and so many gay people have looked back and said "I felt like I was the only one in the whole world" and yeah I felt like that. Because, you know who knew? There was this whole sub-culture in many big cities I mean by the time I came to Houston there were 20 gay bars and that was in the '70s and yet nobody could see it unless you are in it, you don't know. I mean I don't even know if the hair dressers were around in those days… maybe (laughter). So yeah by elementary, by junior high I started feeling different and then, you know I think development and curiosity about sexuality kind of comes and goes it flows as you grow up and sometime it isn't very important and other times it seems like you've got to figure it out.

EG: You went to college in Florida?

PA: Yeah.

EG: What college was that?

PA: Edgert College in Saint Petersburg.

EG: Okay. Can you talk about your experience there? When did you go, when did you start college?

PA: 1967.

EG: Okay.

PA: Well this was kind of as I was going through college the country was getting more political with Vietnam and so on and but our college was relatively sedate. We were liberal but not, it's not like one of those big university campuses we didn't have that many students to like, you know, do whatever, have a big protest or something. I think we took over the president's office once. So in feminism was just kind of, you know in 1967 I don't think NOW was started yet or if it was it was just barely started. But we started having feminist meetings on campus and so I went to those and met some other women there and we started just talking about the issues and you know probably the thing that I remember the most about those meetings was whether or not we were going to allow men. The good old, "Are the men welcome ore aren't they?" issue. So we went through all of that and there was no gay activism on campus if there was I'm not sure I would have known where it was or I would have been afraid to go there. I mean there were a couple of women who got kicked out of school, you know, with like no notice they were just gone and everybody was like "They got kicked out." "Well why?" "Well

nobody will say." But I would lay money it was because somebody found out they were lesbians.

EG: You went from high school and you became active in the feminist group on campus. How did you make that transition, why did you get interested in feminism at that time?

PA: Well I think I was always interested in issues of fairness, especially as regards to gender because… I was a little kid and I'd say "What's in the men's room, why come I don't get to come in there?" And then my brother would come back and he'd go "well it's this and this." And I'd say well we didn't have one of those in our room. And so there was just this kind of… "Well what's across that line? I want to know what they get that we don't get or vice versa." So it's not like I just had this brand new light bulb go off in college about feminism. I was always curious and always felt like, you know, people should be judged on whether they can do something rather then what equipment they come with. So you know me, I was playing softball in elementary school and you know they always pick the girls last. Well I wasn't all that good but some of the girls were. They shouldn't have picked them last. I could see that… they say now, you know, they can tell that kids know by the time they are two or three you know about that people treat little girls and boys differently and they start to understand that some of the toys are only supposed to be only for the other sex. I don't exactly what time they get that but it is very early.

EG: What degree did you pursue?

PA: BA.

EG: BA in…?

PA: Sociology and anthropology.

EG: Anthropology at the time was… I mean what were you trained in, that's interesting because…?

PA: Well it was… you know we had different things like cultural anthropology and different things. I mean it was just really looking at the concepts of anthropology. I went on one field trip and we went around New Mexico and looked at some of the Native American museums and ruins and art and different things like that. I mean it wasn't like we were getting ready to go and be a Ph.D. anthropologist it was kind of more introductory.

EG: And did you live in female dorms?

PA: Yeah, right as I was leaving college they started integrating the dorms that way.

EG: So what was that experience like I mean you had never lived in an all girls house or anything?

PA: Right, it was great.

EG: Yeah.

PA: Oh yeah it was fun. Because I didn't have a sister either. So that's actually how I got my name, "Pokey" because we had a resident advisor who would tromp us all over to the cafeteria together and you know I would be so busy talking to all my dorm mates it was just really fun you know because we are the same age, we had some of the same interests, they were smart and so I would just be going "Yak, Yak, Yak," And they would be all done and she would say "You're the pokiest eater I've ever seen." So, you know, nobody knew anybody's name and that how I got the name.

EG: And at that time did you identify as a lesbian or no?

PA: Well no, I didn't…I was fighting it. If you had asked me I would have said, "No."

EG: So there wasn't… I was going to ask if there a tension if that had been if you had been out at that time and living in a female dorm prior to.

PA: Well there was I think when you put whatever it was a couple of dozen women together see I think relationships between people have… there is a chemical component whether it is specifically sexual or not. And you know, it's like do you like people? Cool. And then you know you have to figure out well is it okay if I give somebody a back rub and you know on and on. But I mean this is the days before, for the most part, before there was a lot of sexual activity going on on campuses. There was some but it wasn't like rampant and as I said there was a couple of young women kicked out. So I would seriously doubt if there was a lot of lesbian activity going on at that point. Maybe but I didn't… I sure didn't know about it.

EG: So in 1969 you were in college during the Stonewall riot.

PA: Yeah.

EG: Did you pay much attention to that?

PA: I didn't even know it happened.

EG: (inaudible) (18.4)

PA: Who knew… yeah I didn't know.

EG: Did you reflect on that at a late date or it never really?

PA: Well you know it's funny because by the time I moved to college I was in Florida and then from there I moved to Houston and I mean there's ways in which things happen in San Francisco and New York and then you know it's like somebody brings them on a

donkey to places in the middle of the country and it takes them maybe six months, a year, five years to get here. I didn't know and I… you know we were just doing our thing and I think it was taking a little while longer for things to filter in. But later in the story when I talk about the gay political caucus that we used for example in San Francisco to do something here.

EG: So in 1972 you moved to Houston?

PA: Right.

EG: Which was right after you finished college?

PA: Yeah.

EG: And why did you move here?

PA: Her name was Barbara. I had a crush on her. She was in my college dorm and I didn't know what I was doing or where I was going so I moved here. And I wasn't out but I had after college I spent part of the summer there in an apartment with a couple of friends and one of the friends was coming out. So she was going to the gay bar and she said "Why don't you come along to the gay bar with us?" And I was like, "me?" (laughter) but really, really curious. So I said, "Okay I'll go but this is just like, this is like anthropology I'll just go and see what's it's like but you know don't think anything of it." So I went and I though "Wow this is kind of neat, look at all these people you could look at them on the street and you'd never know." So it was definitely an eye opening experience. So I guess at that point I was starting to kind of say "Yeah this feels really comfortable to me even though it is new and strange it feels comfortable." So when I came to Houston it was you know, my intent to get my friend to fall in love with me, you know we would live happily ever after. That's now how it worked out as these

things do. You know, she got a boyfriend and… well she had boyfriends all along. So at one point I… there was this thing called the Montrose Gays Community Center at the corner of Whitney and Taft and that was probably about 1973 and I started going there after the National Women's Political Caucus happened at the Rice Hotel and then I found out about this little place. So I started going there and at one point somebody called me at home and left a message about you know the Gay Community Center and my roommate got the message and I was like "Okay now I have to tell her." So I told her that I was going there and she was all shocked and so then we moved separately after that. I kept going there and then I got interested in NOW and a little bit at the Women's Political Caucus. There was a Women's Center at 3600, 3602 Milam something like that and it had the NOW group and the Women's Political Caucus, Women's Equity Action League, all in one building (probably I guess in mid-town). I'm not even sure if that building is still there. Anyway so that was just a hot bed of feminist activity and over the course of the early '70s I would work with Women's group like NOW we had a lesbian and sexuality task force. And then, you know it would seem like more stuff is going on in the gay movement so I would go and work with some gay group and I kind of ping pong-ed back and forth, you know I would get frustrated with one group and, you know, you'd get frustrated with the gay men because they weren't feminist and then you'd get frustrated with the feminist because they didn't get lesbian sexuality and they were wanting everybody to be quiet about it. So it was like, you didn't really have a home but the Lesbianism and Sexuality Task Force as a part of NOW was a pretty comfortable place and I remember when they started it a woman named Harla Kaplan went around to some of the bars was kind of button holing people and saying… The bars were like

smoky and I remember the one called the Roaring '60s on Shepherd when you go in it's a… for some reason they had to make them private clubs, maybe to have a liquor license I don't know why but so you had to sign in. So the first time I went I was ready to sign in and they go, "Well don't put your real name!" So but you know it was kind of like almost well, just dark and smoky and you definitely got a feeling like you wouldn't want to bring your mother there. So anyway here goes Harla you just… she kind of goes wandering in and she goes up to people and tell them you really need to come to this. And I was like, "This is never going to work." But she got 50 people there the first meeting. I think it was a pretty important group and out of that grew organizations like Lesboradas, like there was a duck softball team, The Point Blank Times newspaper that kind of a monthly magazine/newspaper thing that came out in the late '70s and then our efforts. Lesboradas did a big effort for the International Women's Year Conference in Houston downtown. So that task force was very important place for women to get together and start other organizations.

EG: What was the membership of the task force was it, was it diversity?

PA: Well I think it was probably all white. Mostly young women, probably 20's, maybe a few 30's.

EG: And the goals?

PA: Well it was to partly to beat up on NOW and say, "Look you guys come on, you know, we are part of this movement and don't just keep telling us to go back in the closet." You know there was a big argument at that point because the ERA was in play and the argument was "If you guys… if you lesbians will just hush we'll get the ERA but when you guys come out then all these other issues come out and of course everybody in

the movement is painted as a lesbian and they are going to use it to keep the whole movement down. And you know Betty Ferdan was up there with that argument pretty good, pretty big time for a long time until the International Women's Year Conference when she had a dramatic turnaround and supported lesbian rights as part of the Women's Movement. That was really a stunning moment. I was there and I was working really hard behind the scenes as a delegate with the National Gay Task Force women, the lesbians on the board. We had worked… gee six months, nine months in advance to try and get this National Conference to make sure that it had lesbian rights in the platform and to make sure there were plenty of lesbians as delegates. So we went to all of these state conferences or as many as we could and elected people and we had people like Gene O'Leary behind the scenes who was probably the chair, or the co-director of the National Gay Task Force at the time. I mean they were working people and somehow they got to Betty Ferdan and when she got up on the floor to make her speech I was like… "Oh no how did we screw this up?" Because we were trying to… I mean these guys were strategists. They were trying to make sure they had people at the microphones lined up, you know really organizing the floor debate so the people we didn't want up there wouldn't even get a chance to talk and here comes Betty Ferdan I was like tearing my hair out, "Oh no this is going to be terrible." And she got up there, I still have the tape, she was up there saying, you know I've loved men and maybe I've loved them too well and this has long been a difficult issue in this movement but I think it's time that we include lesbians. Those aren't her words exactly but that's the sentiment. I was in charge of balloons so I had come in the back door of the Albert Thomas Convention Center with a what do you call it… a helium tank that was almost as tall as I am, like over 5 feet tall

and trying to convince the guard, I mean in these days you could never get anything like that in a public building they'd have you in jail with Osama Bin Laden. So here is this big old helium tank and 1,000 balloons and I somehow get it in past the guard. I go behind the seats and I grab everybody I know and say, "Hey can you help blow up 1,000 balloons?" So they are blowing up balloons behind he scene that say, "We are everywhere, Lesbian Rights" So finally after Betty Ferdan speaks and a bunch of other people speak the president of NOW spoke and I forget who all, maybe Ellie Smeel then all the people around, there was like 20,000 people in attendance, they all let their balloons go up and hit the rafters and people are dancing on their chairs. It was quiet a movement.

EG: Prior to 1977 how did the interactions between groups that included both lesbians and heterosexuals and then just lesbian groups as well as between inside of organizations that included heterosexual women and lesbians, how did that play out on the local level in Houston?

PA: Well I think there is a class element of the change. That before the '70s you could probably safely say that the "out" lesbians were working class and a lot of them were very identifiable, butch… you know, maybe they would be carpenters or truck drivers or whatever. And the women who maybe had a position in academia were incredibly closeted and would have really small groups of friends, like maybe 8 or 10 people that they would socialize with that were lesbians and then after that it was like "Don't tell anybody." Even at some of their parties they wouldn't ever say a word. They were really closeted. So after the early '70s this started to change and you'd get people like me, young people who have a feminist grounding, not just the lesbian as you know, gay

or queer but feminist as part of being a woman and demanding the right to fall in love or partner with whoever you want, it is a whole different way of interacting with the world and then… you were going from the early part of the century where people were just going, "Well we're really sick or we are a third sex and would you just please not be too mean to us?" and that kind of bended knee kind of approach to politics and you know then as time goes on and people are like "Yeah we're…" I mean I don't know all the different points on the spectrum but finally we finally get to feminism and we're saying "You know what we are regular human beings just like you… we don't know how we got this way. The question is are you going to treat us equally? That is the only question." And so that is really different and it was a battle with… again, with you know the men's groups wanting us to treat us in sexist ways. I mean I remember one time I went to a gay group and they were making their news letter and I was like, "Oh man you guys are messing some of this stuff up. Here let me help you." So I started typing which I do well and some guy walks up on the porch and he looks at me and he said, "Oh you got a new secretary." And I was like "No, you didn't get a new secretary." But women's groups you know it was this hiding thing because the greater population was using the fear of being labeled a lesbian to keep all women down and it was hard to get that idea across.

EG: What do you mean about hiding?

PA: They wanted the lesbian "out" component of the women's movement to just be quiet and don't say a peep. Just do your job. Stand in the background. Work hard but don't say anything. You know…

EG: Right. So they kind of they were kind of saying, "We'll get these rights and then we'll get the rights for you once we have that…"

PA: Maybe.

EG: Maybe, so maybe not.

PA: Well see I mean as a women, as a lesbian who has no income ties necessarily with a male partner, you know, if you are getting 59 cents on the dollar and both of you are only getting 59 cents or 65 cents on the dollar then you need equal pay even more than probably a heterosexual woman who may have access to a man's salary in her household. So you know when you get women's rights, you definitely are getting rights for lesbians. Maybe abortion's not quite on the top of the list but certainly it is tied to in what happens in your own body, your reproductive rights. So yeah they wanted us to be quiet but I think I mean, for instance in Kathy Whitmeyer's first campaign a woman named Carolyn Nichols who was active in the NOW Lesbian Task Force. She was very interested in politics. And I think she was the volunteer coordinator for Kathy Whitmeyer when she ran for controller the first time. And you know she just did a bang up job and you know I think certainly maybe a quarter of lesbians have kids but you know for those who don't we may have more time to volunteer and more flexibility on schedules. So some of us work pretty hard at doing whatever it is that make us interested in something. You can't keep that down forever. (laughter).

EG: So in 1973 you attended the convention of the National Women's Political Caucus and I guess you talked a little bit about your experience afterwards, how you got very involved in organizations, what was your experience like at that convention?

PA: Oh that was fun. That was at the Rice Hotel downtown and I think it was the first national convention of the National Women's Political Caucus and so you know the people that I had heard of before were there… you know Gloria Steinam. I'm pretty sure

Sissy Farenthal was there. Just, you know I'd be just sitting in the chair and watching all these people go by that I had heard of and it was very inspiring. I think Flow Kennedy… anybody that you can think of from those times would have been there so that part was really fun. There was a lesbian caucus on the top floor of the Rice Hotel and just about any time of the day or night you could go up there and there would be… you know they would be meeting, talking and I remember somebody was playing the guitar one time. You know it was really fun. I went with my friend Barbara and, you know, after a few hours you'd run into each other. And she'd say "Where've you been?" "Going to some workshops." And so but I guess that's how I found out about the little place, the community center, the Montrose Gaze Community Center. And so I don't know I mean it was just really fun to be around all those women.

EG: So you went to the Montrose Gaze Community Center after that. You went… did you go to other places too, were there other organizations at the time or?

PA: I didn't know of… I didn't know where to go. So I think that was the first place I went to. You know I had been in Gay Bars in Saint Petersburg, Florida but I hadn't been I don't think there were any organizations that I had found there. So I guess that was my first experience in an organization. And you know it wasn't… there wasn't much going on. There was a pool table and you know people just kind of hang out but I did meet some of my friends there. Some who I still know. And there was a guy named Hugh Crill, about that time he went to City Counsel and you know, said, "I'm a gay man and I want my rights." And oh gosh what's his name…? The very, very bigoted counsel man, Frank Mann… he said, "You don't need your rights you need a psychiatrist." And so Frank Mann got a target on his back from that point on. I mean it wasn't hard he was just

one of those guys who could say something bad about people of color, pregnant women, gay people… you name it he would get them all. He could do it all in one paragraph. And so anyway later on we campaigned… it's really great when you have somebody like that who is just a perfect target and it was hard to get people off city counsel in those days. There were less seats and everybody was white male except for one black male. They would be in there… they'd be in there for like 30 years, couldn't get them out. And finally somehow we managed to get Frank Mann out of office. That was a very happy day. We were celebrating. It was long past his overdue mark there.

EG: When was that?

PA: I don't remember I guess it was in the '70s. I don't know exactly when we got rid of him but yeah.

EG: After you went to the National Women's Political Caucus Convention you helped found the Gay Lesbian Political Caucus?

PA: Right.

EG: Did that come out of your experience with the Women's Political Caucus?

PA: Well it was actually just called the Gay Political Caucus, the GPC in those days. Later it got lesbian added to it. It came out of reading about San Francisco and that they had done something like that and it seemed really perfectly tailor made because a lot of gay people didn't really come out of the closet but you could go in the voting booth, pull the curtain and you are still, you haven't revealed anything to anybody except that you are going to vote a certain way so we thought… "well let's see what happens here." And well the other thing was that Craig Washington was on the floor of the State Legislature and I guess it was in the early '75 and they had just revised the whole criminal code and

Craig had tried to get the sodomy laws which made private consenting sex between adults of the same sex illegal. He tried to get the sodomy laws taken off the books. 2106 is the number of that law. And when he brought that up he started getting cat calls on the floor of the legislature, you know, bathroom jokes and when I read about that I was really, really mad. You know, it was like, it's one thing to be a second class citizen. It's another thing to be laughed at in a place that is supposed to be, you know, dignified. I was really, really mad and I think that plus hearing what they did in California was where I got the idea that we should do that. So I invited three of my male friends over to my house and they were Keith McGee, Hugh Crill and Bill Bowie. And so three guys me and my dog, who was a terrier at the time, we started the Gay Political Caucus in June 1975. And, you know, in all honesty I thought we might get 20 people. I didn't know we were going to be, you know… I mean who knew it would be such a success? But it was the right idea at the right time and you know at one point it did become… other people called it one of the most effective political pressure groups in the city. So it was… I didn't stay with it that many years but I am proud with what the community has done with that.

EG: Why did you decide to partner with three men as opposed to… given your activism in the Women's movement?

PA: Well I knew them from a group called Integrity, I think they were all associated with Integrity and liked them all and I mean most of the women that I knew then and still know aren't that interested in elective office or you know, politics in the small sense of who is going to be elected. So you know in the beginning even though I was involved there weren't, there was always a small percentage of women involved. It is much more interesting to men to be involved in electoral politics.

EG: Why do you think that is?

PA: I don't know. I never figured it out.

EG: And why do you think that you were one of the women who wanted to be involved in that aspect?

PA: I don't know I'm good at thinking of ideas and I also, I like math and I was like, "Hmmm a lot of elections are decided by 3%, 5% and I was like, hmmm. If you could get 5% of the population to vote a certain way in a block that decides and election." You know I'm always willing to give society a chance to change in an orderly legal way like… "Let's try it out." "Okay you say you are for democracy and equality and justice let's try it out, here let's put you to the test." And so I guess that's… I figured let's try the electoral process. We screened people. We had a committee that would ask candidates what their views were on specific things that we wanted done and then they would get a grade from 0 to 100 and based on that grade and the committee and then the full Caucus would decide whether to endorse them. And if they get endorsed there is little push cards printed by the tens of thousands at one point passed out in the mail or at the precincts encouraging people to vote with the caucus. And then you know during various times in that time a lot of progressives would read that and go "I'll agree with this I'll do that." And some of the judge races nobody has time to figure out all those things and so sometimes I'm sure that people would say, "If the caucus said they are good, they are probably okay." Some of the candidates would say, "You guys have the most thorough screening process of just about any group in the city." Of course that would vary because it is all volunteer.

End side 1 tape 1

EG: Were there critics of your, the organization within or outside of the gay/lesbian community and if so what were their criticisms of the political caucus?

PA: Well of course there were the what was it, was it Lewis Macey, gosh I think that was the guy that was running for mayor at one point and he had one of those incidents where the microphone was on and he didn't know it and somebody asked him about, this was a time when (mid-seventies) late-seventies people were going "AIDS" you know is a big threat kind of like bird flu now. And you know everybody is all up in arms about it, didn't really know the facts and people were like "you can get it by mosquitoes and toilet seats" and all these different things that were kind of being spread around. Anyway whoever it was that was running for mayor they asked him well "What would you do about AIDS?" And he said, "First thing I'd do is kill all the queers." And well okay, you got a target on his back (laughter). Thanks a lot bud. And so the next morning there were t-shirts around town, I got one that said, "Lewey don't shoot." And he lost that race. He was part of the "straight slate" and there were a bunch of people were running on the anti-gay probably pro-stereotypical right wing religion, what we would call now and they, I think they won a few seats but they didn't really get a foot hold at that point. So that was a time when you know in a way it's almost best for a community that is being oppressed if you have people like that who will say just really stupid things because it really galvanizes people. When people I think nowadays I think people have learned, you know, not to say stuff like that in public. They may think it, they may say it in private, they don't say it in public so it makes it seem like everything is better. Anyway so yeah we had our critics and there were, you know, once again looking west to San Francisco there were people who were going "Oh man we don't want to have like equal rights for

gay people because it will become Sodom and Gomorra like San Francisco" and they were just all agog that the whole city was going to turn gay or something, I don't know, crazy stuff.

EG: So did it support, did the gay/lesbian and gay political caucus initially support all democrats, mostly democrats, republicans and democrats… how did it make those decisions.

PA: Well city counsel is not, especially in those days people didn't identify with party. And it's not officially now even so that's non-partisan. It would tend to be Democrats over the years the Republican party has pretty much clamped down on members of their party who say pro-gay or neutral-gay things. It makes it pretty difficult to support Republicans because they really internally the party just doesn't want them to be on the side of fairness for whatever reason. But I think we did support in those days, it was a little less rigid from that party so I think there were some… you know the caucus tried to be non-partisan, bi-partisan, and multi-partisan…

EG: So did it make its decisions based on the candidate's views of gay/lesbian rights.

PA: Right and they would look at some other things like if they had a voting record already and also elect-ability. It's always nice to support somebody who might actually get elected.

EG: And you were involved for how long with the organization?

PA: Um, that's a really good question, I don't know, a few years. I don't remember.

EG: Into the '80s?

PA: Probably in the early '80s yeah. But other people took over leadership roles and that was fine, you know.

EG: Why did you move out of that did you have a reason?

PA: I don't know. I ran for office at one point '77 I think it was.

EG: What office?

PA: Community Development Commissioner. There were block grants coming down from the federal government through Housing and Urban Development and different neighborhoods that were either lower class or middle class but the neighborhood infrastructure could use some updating they had commissioners so I ran for commissioner and I got like 41% as a write in and then later I actually became the Commissioner for a little while but I didn't find it very, I didn't like it. I liked deciding who is going to be in in office, I didn't like being in office even though it was a tiny little office. Dale Corginski on the other hand liked it and he went on from being a Community Development Commissioner into being in City Counsel. And now he's a judge. So I'd rather be behind the scenes I guess. But I don't know I'm actually… I'm more of an idea person then I am working on a committee kind of person so I would rather just think something up and then hand it over to somebody, "You guys deal with the bylaws." (laughter).

EG: Right. So as the organization developed over time did more women become involved and how did the women and men interact in the organization in the post-political caucus and negotiate power?

PA: Well I think you know you have to work on men one at a time. They don't just come out of the womb as feminists unfortunately. They… most of them you have to point things out to them. So yeah we had to work on them and get them to understand that, you know, we had to treat everybody equally. But there was… Barbara Seganaro,

my recollection is that she served as president I would bet Sue Level was involved in the organization for a long time I would bet she was president at one point. Of course you know she is on City Counsel now. I will probably… I think Anise Parker was involved, she may have been president at one point. So, you know… it's good training if you can deal with some gay men you could probably work on city counsel too. But you know… it's not like it was easy. I think I remember walking out of one meeting. I was just like… "You guys are just not paying attention, you're interrupting the women all the time, you're you know…" so but Barbara Seganaro oh she was tough. She would not let them get away with anything. She was great. She had been a union organizer. She was a big woman. I mean she had a perfect sense of justice she… she just wouldn't let them get away with anything.

EG: Did you feel they had a different or better understanding of your fighting for rights of women too because they were gay men fighting for their rights and their sexual rights?

PA: Oh it's really hard to generalize but I'd say no. You know, I think people come a lot of different places in figuring out justice. And you know, maybe the first step is to say, "Well I'm X and people who are X are treated not quite equally and I'm going fight to get my piece of the pie." And there's plenty of white gay men, especially in the '70s who only saw their piece of the pie and didn't, couldn't translate it into anybody else whether it is a person of color or women or people with less income or anything and it's a process to get there and some guys never did. I remember big fights on the board of the National Gay Task Force with oh I forgot his name, you know, like somebody who owned the Advocate or Gay Bath Houses and, you know, they were only interested in the

most narrow definition of gay rights basically for other white, gay men like me who have money. And, you know anything beyond that was like "diluting the movement" and it, you know, I think it frustrated them because they were very, very focused in on "let's get mine." And, you know, the women in the movement tended to be more interested in the broader view of rights and how various movements for justice were connected and, not just philosophical ways, but could be connected in operational ways and, you know, form coalitions and look at broader picture of justice. But yeah I think it frustrated the men, some of them. But others were, you know, they got it. But again it's something that people have to work at to get and they have to develop friendships, I think across those artificial lines of that we would split up by, labels. So it's a process. There is a funny story with Barbara Jordan. We had decided that we wanted her to co-sponsor legislation in Congress when she was representing, you know, Central Houston and so we called her up and asked to have a meeting with her from the Gay Political Caucus. So, you know that was set up and Mort Schwab, actually he was called Robert Schwab at one point, he changed his name, and I and a couple of other people went and sat in her office with her aide downtown Houston. And we were sitting around a table and she was sitting next to me and at one point Mort said something about, "blah, blah chairman" and he said, "…I mean chairperson." And Barbara Jordan elbowed me in the ribs and she goes, "You've been working on him haven't you?" (laughter). It was really funny because I had. So I just, that was just this great little moment between her and me. And, you know, I wouldn't have expected it from her that she would get that little nuance. It was an interesting meeting. You know she was not "out" at the time. It has become pretty clear that she was a lesbian. But I didn't know. So we asked her to co-sponsor this legislation

that was, I think the equivalent of it now it's ENDA it's basically equal rights for gay people in federal situations. I don't know it's probably education and jobs and several other things, housing maybe. So what she said, I think at that point nobody in the South had co-sponsored, maybe one other person and she said, I can't be in the position of being the only one or just about the only one and she said I will try to help you in the court rooms. I'll try and help you in the halls but I can't be out there as the only one and she said, go out there and get some more co-sponsors and I'll see if I can do it. So that's where it was.

EG: And what happened with that?

PA: Um, I don't know that she ever co-sponsored it. I doubt it. I don't know. I don't remember.

EG: What was the composition, the make up of membership of the political caucus. Has that changed over time?

PA: Um…

EG: You know male/female.

PA: Yeah it's going to be mostly men. It was mostly white although Larry Bonorease was president at a time and he is I think he is part everything. African-American, Cajun, you name it. There was a funny incident in the '70s. You know, it's hard to even believe this happened but it did. We had a gathering in Cherry Hurst Park for some of the candidates and I mean, you know, it was just going to be like maybe 50 people and some candidates with a little soap box to stand on and for some reason there was a guy running from the KKK and he decided that he wanted to come and attend and just be like everybody else. And we were like, "Okay." And so he came and I think it was our vice

president at the time was African-American. I can't remember his first name. I think his last name was Cotton and so I was making the order up for who was going to do what and I made sure that he introduced the guy from the KKK. (laughter). You know, and it was just this strange thing, you're coming from the KKK and you want to talk to the Gay Political Caucus…. Why? What!?

EG: What did he say?

PA: You know it was just I don't remember it was just like I don't… just the actual fact of it was much more impressive than what he said. I don't know what he said. It was like what? Later I came face to face with the Klan in Houston in City Hall and that was when we had the referendum to have no discrimination in city employment and what was that '82 or something, I can't remember. But anyway so this big uproar in city counsel and people contest… you know how you can go up, sign up and get three minutes to talk and so there's a lot of people from the gay community from downtown in the hall at City Counsel and the KKK was also there to testify against having no discrimination against gay people. And well they couldn't wear their sheets, which was a shame because some of those people were needing to wear sheets. They were ugly I mean really! And I was this close, I was arm's length because we were all stuffed in the halls really, really close together and that is the closest that I have ever come to the Klan. I mean the whole thing, again, was kind of surreal. We were all down there saying what we thought and I remember this little scene sitting on the bench down the hall away from the crowd and there was something happening that I didn't like the procedural aspect of, you know, and I just started striking up a conversation with an older black women who I don't think had anything to do with this whole gathering. But she was just sitting there

and we started talking. And I said, "I don't think they are obeying the rules." Meaning that somehow that somebody was going to get to talk out of turn or get more turns or whatever. And she said, "Honey, haven't you learned yet? Rules are for your enemies." So I've always remembered that. Rules are for your enemies, yeah.

EG: Can you just talk about some of the women who you worked with in the 1970's in the Women's movement? I mean did you work with Nicky Van Hightower or Buddy Hall or women like that? Who did you interact with?

PA: Yeah Nicky was… we were on some committee, Women's Coordinating Counsel or something and it was out of that committee of people representing different organizations that the idea was sprouted to have a Women's Center and Nicky was, of course, instrumental in that. But I was there at some of those meeting when the idea was sprouted, was conceived. I mean at the time that the Women's Center was conceived I think it was more of an activism component than social service which is which it has become. Now it's, of course, one of the biggest components is to help with domestic violence and at that time it was conceived as more of "Let's change society, let's have a place for everybody to come together who wants to be an activist and think up the ideas and think up the action and all that kind of stuff." So it did change over time. But I always liked Nicky. Kathy Whitmeyer I met. We were working on a campaign for something, maybe state legislature. Kerry Bresenhan was running for office. She had a campaign headquarters on Bissonnett and I was volunteering for that campaign and Kathy Whitmeyer was volunteering for that campaign. So I met here then. I think her husband had passed away at that point, I'm not sure. But anyway, when she decided to run for City Controller she invited me and, gosh… 70 people to her house to just kind of

meet and greet and it was a really mixed group with people from a lot of different races and ages and neighborhoods. So that was kind of exciting because I got to see that campaign, that first campaign, you know, from the ground up. And, you know, I probably volunteered a little bit. Oh gosh, I don't know I mean there was Harla, there was Helen Cassidey who became a lawyer and she just would say anything to anybody at any time. She was a lot of fun. And she used to say… let me get it right here. Something like, "You know I don't want to say anything bad about people with disabilities or lesbians or old people because with any luck at all I'll be one of them and I might be all three." (laughter). She was fun. But you know there were a bunch of characters. There were people in the archives like Betty Barns and so on. I saw Betty not too long ago. They're just funny, neat people and you know it's fun to see them every once in a while again because it's been a long time.

EG: Moving into the 1980's you started a radio show can you talk about how you got into that?

PA: Yeah, there was a women's music company called Olivia Records and they had just put out two albums (in those days you know the big 12 in vinyl and I got a hold of the second one it was Chris Williamson, "Changer and the Changed" and I really liked this kind of folksy, nice music by… so I thought "Well you know I heard this show on the radio on KPFT and I went over there and I just walked over and while they were on the air I said, "This is a really nice album you should play it." And they played it right then. It was a show called "Breakthrough" at that point and people started calling in right afterwards, "What was that? We like that!" So eventually they took a vacation and said, "Would you like to do a show all by yourself?" "Well a whole half hour radio I don't

know." I worked really hard on it and so I did that and later the people that were doing the show decided they didn't want to do it anymore and did I want to do it? So I said, "Yeah." And then I corralled Sherry Wolf to come in and help me run the, what's called "Running the board" that means doing all the various levers and knobs to make sure that the sound actually goes out on the air. So she was the engineer and then we kind of taught each other. I knew how to interviews already and she knew how to do the sound part so we taught each other our skills and became kind of interchangeable. So we had a long run at KPFT I was there 11 years and we got a lot of community support. We were in the top 3 or 5 shows usually in money raising and the thing about radio that is so interesting is you never know who you are talking to and when people are… it's not like people have to go to a building at a certain time and intend to be listening to some lesbians talk. You know, they can do it anonymously, they can do it out in the suburbs, they can be 15, you know… shutting the door so their parent's don't hear and it's very serendipitous who is listening to your show at any given time. So it can be an eye opener (or an ear opener) for people to hear what we had to say. Mostly we were just playing music and occasionally interviewing people and doing a community calendar of events of interest to lesbians, feminists, gay people, progressives but sometimes, you know, an interview could be really to the gut and you know I think it was more than once that someone called up and said, "Public safety people ought to have you guys because I almost about ran off the road listening to what you were doing." And they'd say, "I had to pull over because I was crying." Sometimes you could really move people. So that's a really neat thing when it happens in radio. And I mean I heard later too that there were some people out in the suburbs who didn't know anybody else that was gay or lesbian

and that we might have saved their lives because they had that connection. The visible connection to radio waves. So I feel good about it we did over 500 shows.

EG: What was your job before that? What did you do before you came into radio?

PA: Well that wasn't a job that was volunteer.

EG: That was volunteer? What were you doing during that time for…

PA: I was working as a temporary secretary.

EG: So what a temporary secretary moves around?

PA: Yeah you just… you know wherever somebody's… you know they are on vacation and need some extra help or whatever. And then I did some longer stints like a year and a half at Exxon. Started out as a temporary and then stayed there for a while and worked at… did a stint or two at the University of Houston and then I was at a law firm downtown for nine years as a legal secretary. When I was at Exxon it was pretty funny. I got along well with my boss and you know if I didn't have… if I had finished my work I could do other things at my desk and I was running for office and I was sitting there, you know, sorting my cards of who might be a supporter while I was being paid by Exxon. (laughter).

EG: Exxon now don't they have a gay and lesbian group?

PA: They probably do most of the big companies like that do, yeah.

EG: Did they have that when you were…?

PA: Oh no! (laughter) Oh no I was not out. Although you know I found this one guy who was a geologist somehow I found him I don't know and he was gay on another floor so, you know we'd talk sometimes.

EG: Did you enjoy your job during that time, I mean did you enjoy…?

PA: Well yeah as long as I could, you know, sneak a little time in for what I thought was pretty important. There was a time here at U of H they will probably send me a bill now but when I was working in the Vice President's office there were some… gosh I was doing two bad things at once… I was photo coping poetry, lesbian poetry from this little booklet on the photocopier of the Vice President's office of academic affairs and one time the copier stuck and I could not get it to fix and I thought, "Gosh they are going to come in tomorrow morning and they are going to be pulling out of this half eaten piece of paper out of the copier that has some, you know, lesbian love poetry on it, you know…my goose is cooked." And so I didn't even know whether to come to work the next morning. But I came in, my shift started at noon so I came in and I was just like, "Oh gosh there going to get me." So I finally went over to see what happened to the copy machine. I was like "Did anybody fix the copy machine." And they said, "Yeah." And I said, "Any…" you know and I looked in the waste basket and there was this totally black piece of paper had come out and I was like "Whew!" So I got to keep my job there that was kind of lucky. (laughter).

EG: So then when did you time with the radio show stop?

PA: That was what 1992? Oh there was a ting at KPFT there that station goes through various permutations and struggles and so on. And people came in from out of town and wanted to change the format and the way things were done and wanted to get rid of a lot of the political shows. So they got rid of, I think there was an environmental show, a native American show, a women's show, my show. By then Sherry had already left and maybe a couple of others that were pretty political and kind of, you know, a nitch show so they just threw us off the air and it was not pretty. We had 1,000 signatures on a

petition we had people come, you know, fill up the entire big room in KPFT to protest to no avail so I was pretty mad.

EG: And then you went on to start a book store?

PA: Yeah.

EG: Can we talk about that?

PA: Yeah. Well that was actually before the radio station ended…

EG: Okay.

PA: So Anise and I used to both work downtown or close enough and I guess we were both downtown so we would have lunch together sometimes and had known her since she was in college at Rice. So, you know, we had talked about what the building blocks are of a good gay community and one of those building blocks would be a book store which kind of functions as a community center too and we didn't have a community center at that time. So we thought about that and we kept talking about it and I knew we had a radio show, a few other things, I can't remember everything we had but… you know bars a church, some organizations, the caucus… different things.

EG: What do you mean you didn't have a community center?

PA: No there was no community center at that point, what was it 1988? No. So we talked about it some more and I did a bunch of research and asked a bunch of people who had book stores, filled like 4 notebooks up with information and then we decided to do it, go for it. So she and I were business partners in Inklings. I mean, we grew… the first couple of years we didn't make a profit and then we did start making a profit and then, you know, I felt good about what the store did too because it did function not just as a place to buy a book or a sticker, a rainbow sticker in any shape or size but as a

community center, you know, we got calls about everything and we could answer most of them. So it was an important piece of a community and I think it helped build… to some extent. I mean one of the things I like to do is to get people to cross their little lines of their demography. So we had some men that came in. It was probably… our average customer is probably lesbian. But we had feminists, we had some gay men we had some progressives we had… just, you know. A guy off the street looking for a hardware store but, you know… I mean one guy came in, we had a recovery section, self help. This one guy came in he was having trouble with his girl friend and he decided I would be a really good person to talk to. So we talked (laughter). I think it helped. You know, whatever…

EG: Did he come back?

PA: No but whatever we were called on to do we tried. There was a funny story, you know you just never knew… We were over there on Richmond near Shepherd, you never knew who was going to walk in. One day this women walked in, she was… the way she was dressed was kind of funny because she had a lot of make up on but she had on this denim outfit but the denim was like Neiman Marcus denim, like very fashionable. And she lived in the suburbs. She was like "I really need to talk to you." I didn't know her from Adam, you know. "Can we speak privately?" And I'm like, (to myself) "Oh boy… privately." So I wasn't going to take her into my office. I didn't know who she was or what she was. So she's like… I said, "Okay we'll go outside." So we stepped outside, here's all the traffic from Richmond driving buy really loud. And she started to cry. And I said, "What is it?" She said, "I think finally… I might be bi-sexual." I said, "Okay you can come in the store and say that. It's perfectly fine to say that in the store." And so

you know we talked and I'm sure I pointed her to some coming out books. She was married had kids, lived in the suburbs. Well her name was Vicki Shaw and now she is a professional comedian who goes around. She is an "out" lesbian and she is just hilarious. But that was probably the first time she told a stranger that she thought that she might be "one of those kind of people." It was pretty funny. I like to tease her about that.

EG: You guys obviously stayed in touch after that.

PA: Well I see her every once in a while. Now she's famous she's a big comedian.

EG: So during that time you stopped your secretarial work?

PA: Let's see… yeah I worked for a few more months while we got on our feet and then I worked full time at the book store. So yeah I did that.

EG: Where did you get the capital to start the…?

PA: Well in those days you didn't have to have a whole lot I think we had I think Anise and I put in $8,000 a piece… well of course that is more money in 1988 then it is now but and then we asked our friends if they would pony up $500 or $1,000 as a loan and so people just said, "Sure." And we had $25,000 to start with and so we could pay the rent and get some books in and paid back our loans within a year or two and so not, Anise and I are pretty tight fisted we don't go in for a lot of extravagance stuff so we kept a pretty good eye on things and then her partner is a book keeper so that we had nice clean books we could tell what was going on.

EG: What was the address of that book store?

PA: 1846 Richmond.

EG: And that was open until 199___?

PA: 1999. I think so. 1998. December 1988 to January 1998 so nine years and a couple of months.

EG: And it was just not able to make it across the?

PA: Yeah that was the time when Borders and Barnes and Noble came into town. Amazon.com was getting a lot of orders. We also went from having two gay and lesbian book stores, Lobo and us to having three. Crossroads Market came in from Dallas. Which made no sense to me, I'm like, "We have two stores already that's enough." So that split the market a little bit more and so splitting the market with all those things and in a way… if you are a nitch like this, the more successful you are at becoming part of the mainstream the less you need a nitch bookstore. You know, the more gay books are carried at Barnes and Noble then, you know, the more popular books are going to be bought there and then you are going to have to carry the ones that are less popular that don't move as fast. So there is this funny way where if you are successful you kind of sew the seeds of your own destruction when you are in a nitch. The same thing happened in the early part of the 1900's with what were called race records. Black musicians would make these great albums, jazz and blues and stuff and they had their own labels but then when the main stream picked them up they went out of business. So it's this odd kind of success.

EG: I kind of wish it was the other way somehow, shift the other way. So when Inklings started were there other?

PA: Yeah Lobo there was Lobo but at that time it was not very family friendly. I mean again it was a place you wouldn't want to take your mom. You could walk in and there would be a bunch of leather stuff right there in the front. Also this was 1988 they

didn't have any clear presence stuff about AIDS. You know you could walk through their store you would never even know that it existed. So we felt like we could be a place that was for people who were coming out, just a little more community friendly and not quite so hard-core just for gay men. Certainly, Lobo didn't have much for women so we felt like we could be sort of the GP rated book store.

EG: And you've been, you've talked about your involvement politically and you've talked to people not just Kathy Whitmeyer who is part of the women's movement. So people like Lee Brown and Fred Hofines what kind of issues did you bring up with them and did they listen to you, did they hear you?

PA: Well Fred I don't know if I ever sat down with Fred face to face I think that other people did that, that was back in the '70s. I mean I think he was friendly but I'm not sure… you know politicians will always say things like, "My hands are tied. I can't do it and stay in office. I'll lose my whatever…" And certainly in the '70s there's probably a lot of truth to that. Lee Brown, though, I found him… he's a quiet guy. You know I interviewed him for Out Smart. But I found him very intelligent and seemed very open to what I was saying and informed. You know I brought up several particular issues and he seemed like he was up on it, it didn't just take him by surprise. And he, you know, I felt like he did get the basic idea that all human beings should be treated with dignity and justice and he reads a lot so I felt very comfortable meeting with him.

EG: And I read some of your comments about children's exposure to negative messages like violence, commercialization, sexual…

PA: Where did you read those I don't even remember writing those?

EG: Um… I'd have to go back and look where I read.

PA: Okay.

EG: Maybe you might not have written them you might have said them and, you know been quoted somewhere. You don't have children.

PA: Right.

EG: And can you talk about your decision not to have children?

PA: Um, it wasn't so much not to have children as it was, you know… "Today's not a good day." And then you know today kind of piles into "Okay gosh it's kind of late now." You know I think if I had been in a long term stable relationship with good income and a partner that wanted to have kids we would have had kids. As it was I was with a woman who had a kid for four or five years so I was a co-parent for a while.

EG: Where was that?

PA: In the late '80s.

EG: And how old was the child?

PA: She was between 5 and 10 while we were together.

EG: What was that experience like being a parent?

PA: It's challenging. It was an interesting situation because when we first got together my partner and I, she had divorced when she was, the little girl was pretty young. The father was still very actively involved in being a parent even though he lived out of state. So you know they would talk on the phone probably every day and she would spend part of the summer there with him and every other holiday so he was very much involved. So it wasn't like she really needed an extra parent so much because she had a mother and a father who both cared about her. So my role was a little less well defined and of course there is no legal role at that point unless I was to adopt here which wouldn't have

happened. And also her mother was given legal advice that she should not tell the little girl's father that she had come out because he might try and take the child. So this was a big secret for a while. So she talked to the lawyer and he said, "Keep it a secret." Well of course that puts the little girl in a situation too. Like if she opens her big mouth then what happens? Then so then my partner talked with a psychologist who said, "No it's terrible you must tell. It's bad to have a big secret, especially when the girl is in the middle of it." So she did come out to her husband. He kind of… his family was pretty conservative. He got over it pretty fast and it wasn't a big problem. But it was scary for a while to be sitting on that kind of a secret where there could be very big implications. But, you know, child rearing is challenging. What can I say? It just adds another layer of interesting complexity to life.

EG: Can you talk about any other women or lesbian organizations that you have been involved with?

PA: Well let's see…

EG: You had mentioned some that I had not heard of back in the '70s the Lesboradas.

PA: Yeah the Lesboradas that was a group. Well we had Point Blank Times which was a collective newspaper and then that was…

EG: That was during what time?

PA: Late 70's. And then these were all kind of swirling around together and then Lesboradas had a big effort for International Women's Year and then of course the Lesbian and Gay Task force… Lesbian Task Force is now. That was a very busy time for me. I'd be going to like 25 meetings a month. I can't even imagine it now.

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EG: You don't like your (inaudible) anymore?

PA: Oh I just really don't like organizational issues and bi-laws and stuff I've told people I'd rather walk on burning coals than do bi-laws. So I mean I was involved in the Lesbian Health Initiative for a while which worked to help lesbian women understand their own health issues and what they can do to be healthier and also to help society to understand the issues that lesbians bring. There are two kinds of issues one is discrimination or being treated as less than or any other thing and then the other is specific issues that effect lesbians more where there is higher stress rejection from families like psychological stuff, higher suicide rates, depression, or other just general health issues where some of the numbers are saying maybe higher breast cancer, maybe higher lung cancer because you have a higher smoking rate. So there is just practices and effects in the health community and many of those I mean even just to say to the health research community, "Would you please research some of this?" because we don't even have answer and those people, even a few years ago, were being discriminated against, the researchers just for asking the question. They wouldn't get the funding or people would look at them, "Why would you want to research that?" All these kinds of issues, you know, and of course to feel uncomfortable to go to a health care provider where you might need to come out and is the nurse going to be okay with that or is the doctor out if you could find a gay friendly or lesbian friendly doctor that's all the better but then they have to deal with their issues about coming out in their own profession, so you know… it's complex. So Lesbian Health Initiative was one group and they are still going on. There's a River Oaks area Democratic Women that I like to go to that. But basically now I don't do very many groups right now.

EG: Are there other questions that you think I should ask?

PA: I don't know you know I guess one of the things I guess I would say is for people who are trying to do something outside of their own little realm to try to make the world a better place just try to do what you can, don't try and be a hero and you never know what the effects might be. You'll probably never meet some of the people that you had the most effect on. Or you'll never find out and that's just fine. But if you just give it a try, give it the old college try, try and leave the world a little better when it started, you know… it's a good way to live.

EG: This is the last question can you think of other women that I should interview or whose papers I should collect your papers what's happening to them? They might not be ready to… you have a long life ahead of you… you might not be ready to get all of them now…

PA: You never know. I am, I do really want to squeeze some of that stuff out. I'll think about that. But as for other people I don't know… What about, God what's her name… Jane Ely, she used to write editorials and stuff, political reporter for the Chronicle. She's been around 100 years. Ely I think is what it is. She might have some interesting papers that would probably be more political than feminist but she probably knows a lot of where the bodies are buried in this town.

EG: Now what happened to the organization like Point Blank Times and Lesboradas what happened to their documents would anyone have them?

PA: I don't…hmmm we gave some of the… we had subscriptions that we gave to some libraries for Point Blank Times. I still have some of the issues so you know if you want me to bring them over and you could copy them or something that would be okay.

They are in some collections around the country. But I don't know that anybody had any papers they would just get the issue out that was the end of it, then do the next one.

EG: What about Lesborada any idea?

PA: No I don't think there are any papers for that. That was more… I wouldn't know. I don't think so. One of the women for that was in Albuquerque, Nancy Martin… well no she changed her name. That's not her name anyway… Nancy Havens-Levitt. If anybody had any papers she would she is a history teacher.

EG: This is Erin Graham interviewing Pokey Anderson at 624 Agnes Arnold Hall at the University of Houston at 1:30 p.m. July 26, 2006

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