

NARRATOR: The following program contains language or images of a frank or sensitive nature, which may be considered objectionable by some. Listener discretion is advised.

(SINGING) I am what I am I.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

MAN: Whoa! It must be Saturday night at midnight because you're listening to After Hours, a continuing tradition on KPFT at Houston 90.1 FM. The crew of After Hours is ready to bring you news, interviews, and music here for gay and lesbian people. Just as Gloria Gaynor says in this song, it's time to open up your closets. We at After Hours urge everyone to come out of their closets. By our definition, that means standing up for yourself and taking responsibility for your own life. But if you feel that you can't come out right now because of your age, your job, or whatever reason, that's OK. We're here for you too. So sit back, relax, and enjoy this week's edition of After Hours.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

WOMAN 1: If you've been channel surfing, you've found After Hours. My name is Jules Gray, and watching Michael make the board here move and the lights twinkle. And you know that After Hours is gay and lesbian late night radio, and we've got a show lined up for you tonight. We've got Jimmy here with the QMX a little later. I don't know if he's going to be doing much of that. He's not feeling well. He just got back from a major trip and he's kind of little jet lagged. You should see that.

And we're going to talk to Arden Evers Meyer. I hope I did that right, Arden. And a friend of hers, Scotty, from the lesbian over age 50 group, LOAF, which is a local group here in town. And I called them to discuss Stonewall 25 and was surprised by some of the conversation that we had, and thought that even though the original idea was out the window that some of the things that we talked about on the telephone were just as important and just as interesting. So we're going to talk about some of the things about being over 50, and being 20 in what '40s, '50s. '50s, wouldn't it be the 50s? I can't add right now.

But first, I want to let Michael have the mic for a few minutes. He's going to be doing something here soon. The prez is going to be in town, and you're going to be out there waving at him, aren't you?

MAN: Our friend Bill is coming to town, and it's really hysterical because he's coming on February 6, which is a Sunday. Mark your calendar. And it's for the Texas presidential gala. And then right after that, the Texas presidential dinner. Now, the really great thing about this, I thought, was that the first one, the gala, is \$10,000 per couple. And I thought, well, damn--

WOMAN 1: You're kidding me.

MAN: I don't-- I just don't happen to have \$10,000 lying around.

WOMAN 1: I'll loan it to you.

MAN: OK. For those of us who are poor like me, the second one, the dinner itself is only \$1,000 a couple. Now, so that's more in my price range. But what I'm excited about or what I am interested in is protesting Bill Clinton, and we're going to be addressing several issues for them, in fact. Number one, the next-- the necessity of adding sexual orientation to the 1964 Civil Rights Act. We know that a lot of cities and states around the country are undergoing these massive attacks by right-wing neo-Nazis who are intent on completely and totally wiping out the Civil Rights of queer people.

And the only thing that can stop us having to face these attacks all over the country indefinitely is a federal queer civil rights Bill, so we want that. We're also going to attack him for his failure to lift the ban on queers in the military. Don't ask. Don't tell. Don't cut it. And as far as I'm concerned, it may just make things worse. We also are demanding that he enact the recommendations of the National Commission on AIDS, which he promised to do as a presidential candidate, but one year into his administration he has failed to do.

And fourth and finally, we want a single payer system of National health care. Not that managed competition crap, which basically gives more power to the insurance company and still maintains a multi-tiered insurance. I guess you'd call-- I guess we'll call it a program. We'll call it a program since that's what they're calling it. But basically, we need single payer because it's the only thing that will get everybody everything that they need. So we're going to be protesting Bill Clinton on Sunday, February 6th. 5:30 at the Wortham Center.

WOMAN 1: 10,000-- I'm still shocked. \$10,000 per person.

MAN: OK, and just think what you could buy with \$10,000.

WOMAN 1: I could buy a house. It would be a small house, but a house.

MAN: Yeah, I mean-- and I wouldn't be wearing Converse right now. I would not. I would be wearing--

WOMAN 1: \$10,000. For some reason that just is-- how many Democrats do we that have 10,000? The only people there will be Republicans.

MAN: Actually, there's going to be lots of people there. Ann Richards is going to be there.

WOMAN 1: I bet she gets a discount.

MAN: Probably. Lloyd Bentsen is going to be there. Henry Cisneros is going to be there. A whole bunch of people are going to be there. So I'm expecting lots of media attention. And this would be a really good opportunity for us to force our issues onto the media and hopefully get some response. He's been hit by activists in Washington, New York, and Seattle around these similar issues. And I think we have to keep up the pressure on him if we want to get the things that we need.

WOMAN 1: How can people get in touch with you to find out about participating in this demonstration?

MAN: Well, since I can't give out my phone number because my grandmother will kill me, and I don't have my hot pink beeper yet, which I am getting next week. Hot pink of course. There's no way to get in touch with me, but I'll be back next week for more information on a number of things.

WOMAN: So if you're interested in participating with Michael in this protest on the--

MAN: February 6th, which is Sunday, at 5:30 at Wortham Center.

WOMAN 1: You can contact the radio station, maybe call here and leave a number. Michael can call you back.

MAN: Exactly.

WOMAN 1: Call next week while Michael's here. Call now while he's out in the lobby a few minutes. He's got to scoot, so if you're going to talk to him about it, now would be the time.

MAN: Remember the dress code is plaid.

WOMAN 1: Plaid. Plaid. I don't have any plaid. I think I have a pair of socks somewhere that is plaid.

MAN: Oh, don't worry, we'll find something.

WOMAN 1: Find something that fits. OK. So if you want to-- if you're interested in more information, now be the time. You can call JAM KPFT. Michael only has a few moments here, so do it now. He can give you more information or tell you how to get in touch with-- or what's going to happen. More information.

MAN: Exactly.

WOMAN 1: So if you need that information, you call him here at JAM JMKPFT. And if Jimmy can get his little fancy finger over here, we're going to take you to something that-- what is it? 5 fancy fingers, OK. The road I took to you.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

MAN: And that was from The Best of Meg Christian. That was Ode to a Gym Teacher, which is one of Jules favorites. And we started it out with, I think, Meg's greatest song, best song, The Road I Took To You. Real pretty ballad. Yes, this is Jimmy. I am kind of back from Hawaii. I'll have a full report next week, but I am a little quite under the weather here.

For those of you who know me, I've got motion sickness that I get every now and then. And so I'm-- I have been better but, I had to be here for a couple of reasons, and one is for a special request for Helen and Kay. Where the hell have you been? And I-- here I-- I hear you're both going to Boston. Sure going to miss you.

Something jazzy. OK. It's not by a woman or a woman's group, but it's by-- almost as good, Ron Romanovsky. And for both of you, it's Baby Take Advantage Of Me. [MUSIC PLAYING]

WOMAN 1: Yes, we're on. That was something jazzy and bluesy for Kay from Helen. And I see that Kay and Helen are leaving town. What a shame. But to Boston, right outside of town from Provincetown. That'll be great up there. That's where all the great lesbian comics play up there in Provincetown, and I'm sure they'll be zipping over there often.

Kay, drop us a line. Helen, drop us a line. Let us know what's going on up there. Send us some of that lesbian literature up there. We'll cue everybody in here about what's going on up there if you will send it to us. Diane called and said she had dinner over at-- well, we'll leave the restaurant nameless. I don't know if this person's out or not. And said she ran into the president of the Houston Women's rugby club.

Deena, and Deena said that they're looking for people to play year round rugby, women's rugby. And they play every weekend, and you can get more information by calling 955-1720. 955-1720. So if you're into rugby or into watching rugby, God, I could get into watching women's rugby. They're playing all year round. I like that. I wonder where they're playing. So call Deena if you're interested in watching or participating in women's rugby.

Let's see. Diane is not going to make it. She got home, and Karen was naked and they decided to stay home. They're going to shoot me for that one. And Michael still here and taking calls for anybody interested in the protest he's doing on the-- I'm sorry, the sixth? The sixth Sunday the sixth He's going to be out there waving at President Bill. I wonder if Hillary will be there. Maybe I'll go waving, maybe if Hillary is there.

And you were listening to some of Jimmy's music. I guess he told you what it was. Did you tell him what-- he told them, he said yes. Like I said earlier, Jimmy's just back from a major fly trip and he looks a little brown. Now you know he didn't get brown here, not in the last couple of days. And he sent us a wonderful postcard with about I guess what maybe 15 naked bottoms, at least 15 naked men bottoms. It said, found Paradise in Hawaii. That's where he went, Hawaii. And that was a cute card. I like that card. I want to put that up somewhere.

With me tonight in the studio, or this morning in the studio, is Arden Evers Meyer. Is that right? Is that right? I've looked at the name, and for some reason, I don't want to get that in there for some reason. And Arden is part of the group Lesbians Over Age 50. I always want to say 55. Was that the name of the group before originally?

OK. Kim, can we get that mic over just a little bit. It'll be-- pick up. Yeah, there we go. And-- because I remember a couple of years ago thinking that was the name of the group, and then somebody said to me no it's just 50. So-

WOMAN 2: Well, we're six years old.

WOMAN 1: A group of six years old.

WOMAN 2: The group was six years old last October. And about the first six months of its existence, it was 55 and we changed it to 50.

WOMAN 1: Why did you change it?

WOMAN 2: Well, we figured if you could belong to AARP when you're 50 then maybe we could belong to LOAF.

WOMAN 1: Oh, great. Well, I had an ex-lover who used to just-- every time she'd see this group, would tell me-- every time she'd see anything about LOAF, would tell me that she-- would give me a countdown about how many more years before she could join LOAF. And if Ricky's out there listening, which I doubt seriously, they lowered the age, Ricky. You can get in now at 50. That should be, what? One, two-- two years from now. So she's going to love that too.

So you can-- let's see. Let's go back to Arden. When we talked on the phone I told you that we wanted to talk a little about Stonewall because this is a 25th year. And while we talked a few minutes, you made it real clear to me that you were totally unaware of Stonewall when it happened.

WOMAN 2: That's right.

WOMAN 1: That only through the years did you learn about it, the history of it, just like the rest of us, certainly myself. And you were telling me about why. You went on to explain why and what was going on with you in your life at that time, and how difficult it was. You said you were closeted.

WOMAN 2: Well, you've got to keep in mind that I came out in the 40s.

WOMAN 1: In the 40s. And how old were you when you came out?

WOMAN 2: 17.

WOMAN 1: 17, and that was in the 40s.

WOMAN 2: Right. I'm 63. You can add it up.

WOMAN 1: I'm not that good.

WOMAN 2: Anyway, at that point in our historical culture, it was not safe to be out. When I was in College, it was during the time when they had purges. When on any given weekend there would be a whole group of people who would just simply disappear from the campus. And you didn't have to be gay or lesbian, all you had to have was somebody unhappy enough with you to go to somebody and say, I think, and that's all it took.

So we had purges in College. I was in public education for 30 years. If-- I would have lost my job, and I never would have had another one. So it was, it's just pure survival.

WOMAN 1: And it really wasn't pertinent to your everyday life.

WOMAN 2: That's right.

WOMAN 1: So even if you had heard about it, it would have just passed.

WOMAN 2: Well, we didn't have-- first of all, we didn't have television, and we didn't have the kind of communication that we have now. We didn't have the general public knowledge that we have now. We didn't have community like we have now. There was no place to connect. There was no way to get information. For many of us, it was a long time in identifying who we were. We just knew we were different. So where young people today have--

WOMAN 1: A place like the Montrose to come to and connect with.

WOMAN 2: Right. Or they have student organizations in College, and there's high school kids that connect with each other. We didn't have that. There were 400 in my graduating class. And if there was another gay or lesbian there, I didn't know anything about it. So that's just the way society was at that point in time.

WOMAN 3: Except for me. I know it wasn't that way for me in College, which was-- yours was late 40s, early 50s, and mine was '53, '57, so to speak, in there.

WOMAN 1: So it was already different for you when you came along.

WOMAN 3: Yes. We were--

WOMAN 1: But you had more knowledge from high school also here in the Houston area.

WOMAN 3: Of course, softball teams, knowing the different people from their.

WOMAN 1: Groups-- collective groups of more assertive physically active women. See, I talked to a lot of young people. I'm 38, and I'm about to turn 39 and it's panicking me, and I know that must be really funny to you guys. But I talked to people here in town who are 20, 25-- excuse me. We're very angry about things in the community and very angry about ways that our politics is treating people, rightfully so. And I have no problem with the issues that they have that don't understand the leaps and bounds we've taken in the last 30 years.

30 years ago, there was nothing. They had small-- you were telling me that you read Dell Lyon-- Dell-- Martin and Phyllis Lyons had a newsletter, the latter that you read. And I know that there was a Men's group called what-- do you know what it was? Mattachine Society. And that was the way gay people communicated with each other and connected with each other. And things were private and done in personal and private homes.

WOMAN 2: Friendship groups.

WOMAN 1: Yes, friendship groups. And this is before the public clubs and bars and places like that actually were open to the public and advertised to a specific group of people. So what we're talking about now is even before that they had newsletters. I remember reading copies of the Mattachine Society's newsletters, and pieces that were written in those newsletters. I never read the letter, although-- latter. Although, I have read other books that refer to it and refer to pieces that were in it and refer to some of the things that it was written about.

And we were talking earlier that I've written-- I've read the book, Lesbian Woman. It was written by the same two women. And it amazes me when I read those kind of things about the black and white of the difference in what it was before and what it is now to now you can drive down the street and recognize a gay bar because people are coming out of it and the neighborhood is in or advertisements in the local publications. But back then, I'm being very careful-- back then, it was-- the what?

WOMAN 3: The gay 90s.

WOMAN 1: The gay '90s? When was that?

WOMAN 3: The 50s, I guess.

WOMAN 1: The 50s?

WOMAN 3: Early 60s.

WOMAN 1: See, that fascinates me.

WOMAN 3: I probably-- I don't know that I ever went to it, but I knew it because it said gay '90s.

WOMAN 1: That fascinates me because we often take for granted the freedom that we have now, and--

WOMAN 2: It's been hard won.

WOMAN 1: Yeah-- well, yes. And there are still people in the community who can recall when it wasn't like it is now and that's the kind of stuff that we'll be talking about.

WOMAN 3: And another thing, men and women both of my generation still don't frequent the bars. It wasn't safe for us 40 years ago and 50 years ago--

WOMAN 1: When your personalities--

WOMAN 3: And we have survived without it. These people don't know there is a community. They don't know about women's music. They don't know about a women's feminist bookstore. These types of things are totally outside the realm of their information. And there really, for them, is no need. These-- and I think, rightfully, they do not call themselves lesbian either. They call themselves gay women. And I think this is correct. I think it's correct, and I think there is a difference.

WOMAN 2: And a lot of women just-- fishermen, they started doing fishing way back and then. And then they all went to a certain Lake and they did fishing together and they did golfing together, but they never really went to the bars.

WOMAN 1: Well, the bars were definitely for-- when the bars started, they-- and bars still are definitely for the young. I mean, I know there are older people there. But when I was at the bars tonight myself, the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, which I belong to had what we call a bar tour where we take new trainees to various bars to give them firsthand experience so that when people call the switchboard board and ask about a bar that people can relate to them firsthand experience rather than reading out of a book what this bar is like. And I was at one of the bars this evening, and I looked around the room and there were older people there, but they were the ones who were holding up the walls.

The younger people were the ones who were dancing and hooting and having a fine time. And that's what the bars are for collecting the younger people and giving it-- entertaining the younger people. When we talked, you said something about-- and you just said it again about the people-- there are people out in our community, who are part of our community, whether they realize it or not, who don't even know we are here.

WOMAN 3: That's correct.

WOMAN 1: And that-- I was going to tell you that when I worked for an oil company, I knew a couple of women who'd been together 22 years. One of them was a retired Marine Lieutenant, which was amazing to me because she was in her 60s then. And her lover was a geologist, geophysicist, one of the two, I can't remember. And when I connected with them through work, and I recognized them, and because they worked-- they both worked in the same place and doing the same kind of jobs, but they weren't in the same office. But I see them together at work and I connected it like we were talking earlier, it takes one to know one.

I connected it and tried to step into their realm to connect with them, and it took quite a while. They were very, very hesitant about speaking with me openly and freely. I believe that they were a little suspicious of me because I literally stepped-- took assertive steps towards them rather than them wanting and seeking me out. I sought them out. And after I got to know these people, these two women, I learned about their histories together and their histories apart when they were young and how they had grown up. I was just-- it was my first time connecting with someone older than myself who had not known the liberties and freedoms that I have known.

When I came out, like I told you earlier, I've never really been in. But when I hit the streets and connected with the community. I could walk into any bar anywhere and feel relatively safe and connected to a larger community. Not necessarily that local community, but the larger community, that there were more of me-- there were more in me than I had known before. And it's still-- when you were referring to people who don't know that this community here is just so hard for people to understand how that can be. How people can be enlightened and awake and in tune to the world and not be aware that there is a gay community around the corner from them.

WOMAN 3: Well, it's a very fearful, risky thing.

WOMAN 1: So what we're really saying is they may very well know it's here, but they choose not to be part of it.

WOMAN 3: But I think that there's a large percentage of the population that doesn't even know it. They don't know there's a KPFT.

WOMAN 1: Oh, yeah we know that-- we know there's a lot of people who don't know there's a KPFT.

WOMAN 2: I think almost everybody is aware that there's gay bars. I mean, you have to be--

WOMAN 1: Yeah, you have to be from another planet now, especially when lesbians are on the cover of Newsweek and this.

WOMAN 2: Yeah, but other than that, I would say there are thousands and thousands, particularly lesbians 60 and over, and there are thousands of them here in the city that have no knowledge of community, no knowledge at all.

WOMAN 1: Well, how did-- I mean, you were telling me earlier how you were in the public schools and how you grew up in a different world that you were afraid to come out. You stayed closeted for a great part of your life. Obviously, you're not completely closeted now or you wouldn't be here with us. But that you spent a great deal of your time like that. What made you connect with the community? What was it that you decided that you wanted to belong to this group LOAF?

WOMAN 2: Well, my life partner of 33 years died in 1985. And I have-- I know lots and lots of women. It's not that I didn't know people. I did. But my particular friendship group, which there were six couples, they've all been together like anywhere from 46 to 52, 53 years now. And it's just like in straight society. All of a sudden a single person out there is not--

WOMAN 1: Part of the group anymore.

WOMAN 2: That's right. So it was like creating a new life and a new world for myself. And that's how LOAF came to be. I went to the West Coast and got information in Los Angeles and in San Francisco for prototype groups, and I wrote to New York City and got information there. And then we worked here for about six months and LOAF was born on the third Sunday of October 1987. Six women.

WOMAN 1: What did you want it to be at that time?

WOMAN 2: The whole-- the very beginning, from the very beginning it's exactly what it is today. It is a social networking and support system for single or couple lesbians 50 years of age and older. And if a woman is-- who is 50 or older has a partner who's younger that woman automatically is accepted. Would not be excluded. But it's pure and simple as social networking and support system.

WOMAN 1: So you have parties and get-togethers?

WOMAN 2: We have-- we have a monthly meeting and we have socials, and we do--

WOMAN 3: Games and potlucks.

WOMAN 2: Potlucks. We have--

WOMAN 3: Camping together.

WOMAN 2: We have an encampment every year.

WOMAN 1: How many members do you have?

WOMAN 2: Oh, at any given time, we probably have about 90 dues paying members. We've connected with over 300 women now.

WOMAN 1: Great. We have women who are in their 60s who are just in the coming out process right now. We have women who-- Oh, yeah. A lot of-- at least half of the LOAF women have been married and have families.

WOMAN 3: Because you were supposed to get married.

WOMAN 1: Yeah, the social pressures to do that.

WOMAN 2: They were not options.

WOMAN 1: Right.

WOMAN 2: 50 years ago. There just weren't. We have women who are referred to us from counseling centers and from the churches.

WOMAN 1: Great. I'm really jealous. I've always enjoyed being with people that were older than me. Even when I was a young person, most of the people around me were older than myself. And I've never had-- until recently, I've never had a lover that was younger than me or my age. They were always older. And somewhere in the 20-- 10 to 20 year range older than me. And I'm kind of jealous that I can't get to meet some of these women. And Michael and I were talking this evening about the older people and more experienced people not passing on information and wisdom and history to younger people, and I'm a little jealous that I can't connect with some of these people. Not for the-- not because I'm looking for a lover. No, I'm not looking for a lover.

But because I would-- but I'm more-- I'm more interested in being able to connect and learn the things that know I've learned since we spoke about that period of time that I have no knowledge of. And that I think that would be very valuable for young people in our community, young people as old as myself to learn these kinds of things and to hear that part of our history that is often overlooked. And I'm kind of jealous. What do we do? I mean, how do we meet these people who only participate in your group?

WOMAN 2: There's-- well, I don't know. There's a lot of them that are active in the community. There--

WOMAN 1: I know Pat. Pat Andy. Pat is so busy I just never get to spend time with her. She's just every-- doing everything.

WOMAN 3: She and I were in the same class in College.

WOMAN 1: Oh, neat.

WOMAN 3: She was a straight woman.

WOMAN 1: Oh, she's going to love that.

WOMAN 3: Well, she was like in her mid-fifties when she came out.

WOMAN 2: The women's college that most everybody thought everybody there that went to the Women's College was a lesbian.

WOMAN 1: Oh, yeah. When I was a kid, that's what I thought. That's why they went there because there was women there. That's what I think about the Citadel in South Carolina, the reason they don't want women there is because they're doing just fine without them. And I just-- but Michael and I were talking this evening about not being able to have that history passed from one generation to another. And so that we're not-- we have no continuum. That each generation of gay people have to learn and try the same things and fail the same ways-- exactly. Every single time.