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## SPEAKERS

Vince Lee, Judy Reeves

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V

Vince Lee 00:00

So, today is Wednesday, May 26 2021. Want to make sure I get the year right. I remember messing up an announcement previously before. So my name is Vince Lee, and I'm the archivist for the LGBT History Research Collections at the University of Houston Libraries, Special Collections. I'm joined today by the incomparable Judy Reeves, of GCAM. And, Judy, welcome for joining me today. And, you know, calling-- be part of this chat, because that's what I want to treat it as as a chat, as opposed to some interview, which I know kind of puts folks on edge. So just thanks. Thanks for joining me today. And,

J

Judy Reeves 00:44

I'm excited to do it. Just a little one on one once in a while.

V

Vince Lee 00:47

One on one is great. Yeah, sometimes it's, it's hard. I think that's what zoom and this post-pandemic world has kind of given us a little bit of one on one time and connecting folks. So here's another way to connect in an interview and talk. Right, so I will lead things off if you don't mind and just ask, what is GCAM for someone in our audience that's listening in and just joining us for the first time and hearing about GCAM for the first time. Could you tell me a little bit about GCAM. And what it stands for?

J

Judy Reeves 01:21

Well, I have no doubt that some people are just hearing about it for the first time because I think we're the best kept secret in town. Seriously, we've been around 21 years. It's Gulf Coast Archive and Museum of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender History, Inc. [laughing] Yeah, we've been around a long time. We're actually were formed in 20-- In 19-- it's Hello 1999, see, I have to take you to an entire different century for this. And we originally started out just to

collect a few things, as much as we could gather, garner, because AIDS epidemic had just deleted so many names from our friends lists. And families were moving in and tearing things apart and throwing things away. So we decided there was a real need to save our history. And it goes further back than that. We had a lot of history that was questionable, you know, if like, when did this bar close? And when did this person leave the the area, and so on and so forth. So it was just a good time to start something like this.

 Vince Lee 02:40

And could you tell us your role, with GCAM, and I know you've been you probably wore several hats and roles throughout its history, but just for our audience.

 Judy Reeves 02:55

I don't seem to be able to get off the board for more than a couple of weeks. I am actually one of the founders. We have 13 founders. You want me to tell you who they were?

 Vince Lee 03:07

Please.

 Judy Reeves 03:08

Okay. Brandon Wolf, Rick Hurt. And those were two that really started all this. Rick Hurt went on [? hand net ?], and I want to explain what [? hand net ?] is right now. But it was a computer list and said, where's our museum? You know, and we go to the Fine Arts Museum and the History of a -- where's the GLBT museum, or the Gay Museum is actually what he said. And Brandon Wolf hit the ground running with his listserv and invited everybody who was interested in coming to talk about whether or not we needed a museum in Houston. So Brandon Wolf and Rick Hurt started it off Bruce Reeves, Ray Hill, Jimmy Carper, Stan, whose last name never got spoken. Teresa Monet, Frank Parsley, Ralph Flasher. Dan Medina, Pat Turner and Ella Tyler and yours truly. So there were 13 of us there. And Brandon had had the foresight to call in Dr. James Sears from the One Institute to come talk to us about museums and how they form. So from that point, we did decide we needed a museum and we formed very quickly a core committee, and I was the secretary of that committee, I think, because I was the only girl who could write at that point. So the others were busy writing for papers. So they needed me because I wasn't working at that time. So I started out as secretary, I've worked my way all the way around the board. And I was named "curator for life" in 2000. So and that stuck, I'm still curator. And I use that term very loosely because I am not an educated curator. I have no background for this at all. But I've been on the board and all capacities. And right now I am the chairman of the board. So --

 05:06

That's, that's how I know your role. I knew that you're the current chair.

J Judy Reeves 05:11

Yeah.

V Vince Lee 05:11

You're probably an emeritus, I guess, using the academic term committees and subcommittees in the organization. But yeah, I'm glad you mentioned the 13 founders, because I think you've anticipated my question about, we're not able to do even though we'd like to think we can do anything and everything. We can't do it all alone. So it sounds like there's been a team or a group of folks in during GCAM's history that helped in various capacities along the way.

Ω 05:42

I can certainly attest after 21 years on some board in some board capacity, that you cannot do it all alone, trust me. But they think you can, you know, everybody else says, oh, Judy's the chair, let her do it. It's like nooo. But it just takes a little cattle, I mean, a little spring, you know, to get their attention, and everybody jumps in to help, you just have to find what niche they fit into. The current board is there's seven of us. And we come from all walks of life. And in fact, one of us lives in Atascocita. So we're not all Montrose-ites, or whatever you want to call us. Actually, one of them lives out near U of H. So we're all over the place. But I have a good board. And they're hard workers. And I like to call them my board, but actually, they're GCAM's board. But they'll do just about anything they're asked. And that's very important, because we are such a small mom and pop kind of organization that everybody has to wear multiple hats. And that includes all committees. And I mean, we've got our fingers at about six pies right now. And we've been shut down for a year. You know, so it's amazing. But our current board is long as we're naming names--

V Vince Lee 07:12

Please.

J Judy Reeves 07:13

My intrepid Vice Chair, he's new to the position. And I think I've kind of surprised him as I keep calling on him to do things is Charles Hendricks. And Wesley Hess is our secretary. Now Wesley joined in because he had a lot of gay friends. And he wanted to know more about gay history. And he thought if he was on the board, he could learn more. And trust me, he has learned it. In fact, he's running circles around me. But he's also my best volunteer as far as going to the warehouse late at night or something. So I love that about him. And he takes good notes, too. Bruce Reeves is our current treasurer and webmaster. Robert Graham is he's our financial person. He works on larger groups and grants. He searches out grants for us and that kind of stuff. He's actually retired and he does tutoring of students out at Atascocita, college students, so he's a real big help. He's also my, you know, grammar person, if I have a question. Craig

Farrell is our at logic. Number two, Robert was our at large number one. And Craig is kind of over outreach and education along with Charles, that's part of the vice chairs job. And then we have our ambassador Alton SewAge Debris. And he's our fundraising, king, queen, whatever, whichever outfit he's wearing that day, those days. And we have Loyd Powell and Robert Conn on our board of advisors, especially when it comes to leather. And so leathers, leathers a whole different ballgame when you have collections. I mean, you can take care of pictures and costumes and books and papers and so on. Don't say anything like I don't do that. Okay. But leathers a whole different ball of wax, so to speak. So we call on our experts on that. So that's pretty much all of us as far as the workers now we have some volunteers, which I've only seen two of them in the past year, but that's okay. They contact me frequently. And but I had a hard time asking him to go out and do anything even in the storage. So what that's picking back up again, so --



09:38

Volunteers from the community?



Judy Reeves 09:41

Yes.



Vince Lee 09:41

And I think we've also had volunteer sent your way from UH, or at least from students that are looking for practical.



09:48

Oh, yeah. We've had a veritable parade of volunteer from U of H students. Thanks to you and Christian, and I've greatly appreciate that. In fact, I could use a couple now. No. That's another topic, isn't it. Okay?



Vince Lee 10:07

No, and we hope to resume that in the very near future because students always need credit for their classwork and experience. And there seems to be no shortage of work and things to do.



Judy Reeves 10:24

I think we have just about everything in the world. And all of a sudden, something totally new and unexpected jumps up in my face. And it's like, now I should know how to handle -- No, I don't know how to handle this. I've never seen anything like this in my life. So yeah. And I just lay it on your students, and they come up with brilliant suggestions and ideas.

V

Vince Lee 10:42

And technically savvy, too, in terms of thinking of other ways to capture things.

J

Judy Reeves 10:47

Yes, unlike, I am not technically savvy, I am the worst possible computer person in the world. Of course, that comes with age. I'm 71. And I haven't had a job in 100 years. So.

J

Judy Reeves 11:02

But we get by, you know, you'll be happy to hear we're building a new webpage.

V

Vince Lee 11:09

Nice, very, I can't wait to see that. Some of the content and things that you're gonna incorporate in. So the other question I wanted to get to is, and I think you touched on it a little bit earlier was what was the impetus and inspiration for Gulf Coast Archives and Museum of GLBT History? And I know that you mentioned something about the AIDS epidemic and the crisis and kind of capturing that history. Would you say that's the main impetus? Or were there other factors in playing?

J

Judy Reeves 11:42

Well, I may have jumped the gun on that comment. That became quickly our focus. The reason we formed was actually we realize that so many fundraising organizations and drag queens have just had become a dime a dozen, so to speak. Oh, I don't mean to insult any drag queens, but I mean, people were out in bars, entertaining just for the fun of entertainment. And now they were out doing it for dollars. Yeah, I mean, some of them did it for their meals or their next drink. But now they were doing it for actual charity dollars. And we realized that so many of those groups formed and then went away so quickly that we were losing the whole idea that they even existed. So there was a very definite need to start looking at our history here in the community of Montrose. It didn't take long after we opened our doors, and we had started collecting things already. All thirteen of us have, you know, stuff to start off the party with, but it didn't take long after we opened our doors to find out that the very first collection we took in, a person called and said, I need to bring some stuff - are you taking, you know? And I said, Yes, you know, so I gave him the address. And he met me there. And he had a Jeep full of boxes. And I thought, wow, he's got big closets, you know, because all mine came out of my closet. So when I helped unload, and he said, Okay, I can go get the rest of it now. Okay. No, I figured that was it. When he was done. He had like 60 plus boxes, file boxes of stuff that he brought over. And we were just talking about it and kind of glancing in some of the boxes, he would take the lid off and pick something up and say, well, this was so and so. And I was like, Okay, well, that's cool. Would need more history on that, you know. So before he left, he finally said, this was my lover's belongings. And he died from AIDS 12 years ago. And I've had these boxes in my condo

ever since. And I now know, I can bring them someplace, and they'll be loved and cherished and taken care of, like I've done all these years, they won't just go in a dumpster somewhere and in his memory will be preserved. And I was like, okay, you know, and it gave me a whole different perspective, all of a sudden. And I took it back to my board and gave them that story. I went, Okay, yeah, we're collecting history, but that's not all of it. We are here to allow people to begin to heal and start living again because they can bring their dead to us. And that was the whole thing for me at that point. And it has proven true on so many -- at so many times. And we are we're a repository for the dead's belongings and that includes dumpster diving, sometimes because families don't want to give it up. But we're an intrepid bunch. So yeah, there was a two, two reasons to bring GCAM into focus. And I think we've done as good a job as we can, considering we're still a very small organization. I mean, we don't even have a building.

v

Vince Lee 15:21

That's pretty heavy -- what you what you've just shared with me, I mean, to have someone whose lover had passed, and what remains is maybe some of their clothes or costume, that's a tangible representation of who they were. So,

j

Judy Reeves 15:41

Wow, I actually realized I had been in his condo before. And I remembered, it didn't really stick at that time, it was like pre-GCAM, I guess, you know. It was like, and I can't remember really why I was there, I think I was picking something up for somebody, but I remember walking through his apartment, and there were file boxes at the front door, you would go left into the living room, and you had to walk past rows of five boxes, like shoulder high, four boxes stacked in two fours, you know, four high. And you got to live in a room and there was a couch, you know, coffee table and so on, you followed more boxes into the kitchen area, and they kind of stopped at the kitchen door, but you went into the bedroom, and there were more file boxes all over the bed. They had -- he had trails between the boxes. And I remember that vividly. Once we got to know each other more, and it was like, oh, years of -- I was just with somebody pick something up. Now. The amazing thing about these collections, is we have to be very careful to get them to sign a paper for us, when they give it to us. You know, every museum does, you know, sign this paper. It's now ours, it was yours. You're saying it was yours. But now you're giving it to us and we can do with it what we want, or what we feel is best. And on my third phone call to him, and next several days, I said, Can you tell me why? You gave me this pack of cigarettes? [Laughing] Open cigarettes? And he says, Well, certainly, he said those were that was the open pack that he had in his robe pocket the morning he died. Well, of course, you know, I wouldn't he wouldn't have thrown that away. But little things like that are very precious to people. And and I had to explain to him, I said you realize these are not historic in any way, shape or form except for you. And they're not historic for you. They're just a final memory. But it has no historic value to the to the museum or the community. He said, Well, yeah. I said, so you won't mind I if I throw them away, or you can come pick them up. But one way or the other, it's not going to become a permanent part of the collection. And he says no, just throw him away. And we have three different calls like that. The most amazing thing that was -- Am I running off at the mouth?

v

Vince Lee 18:15

— No, no, I love -- these are stories I want I want to listen to it.

J Judy Reeves 18:19

Okay

V Vince Lee 18:20

The audience wants to listen to.

J Judy Reeves 18:21

The most amazing thing about that entire collection was not so much the the three by five foot cards that their friends had made for this person when he was in the hospital and that was plastered all over the hospital walls. But the intricacy of the collection in that I opened one box and I found a glass syringe and bottled injectable medicine and pillbox I got all of his drugs and all of his drugs paraphernalia, because he couldn't throw it away and he couldn't do anything else with it. And so we got it all. And I pack those away separately. I did discard the syringe -- Finally. I kept it for a while I wrapped it up very carefully, because we don't use glass syringes anymore. I mean, that's historical right there. But, but I kept all the meds. And eventually, I dumped all the meds into a baggie and I took it to the either the fire department or police department, they pick up unused drugs periodically. You can drive -- they do a drive by and they don't ask any questions and I poured all the drugs into the bag. And I explained to him what it was and they said fine, you know, thank you very much. But I kept the bottles because I realized that it was after 2000 and I was doing this it was like two oh three or four and I realized that Jimmy Carter, one of our founders, I was helping care for him. He was a long term survivor. And his meds were different. When I showed these to him, it's like, oh, that's what I used to take, you know, he was on a different regime, a different program. And he changed to another program. Later on, I thought, These bottles are valuable, because that's the combination the concoction that they used to give people that was toxic to their bodies, but they thought would prolong their lives. And I have all those body -- all those bottles with the name of the drug on it and the date. And I think that's important. I don't know, I could be wrong. If I'm wrong you of all people should be able to tell me that I think this is the first time you've heard this story. So to me, it's a historic value. I don't know.

V Vince Lee 20:51

I agree I -- Because the visual representation of those bottles and cocktails that they administered at the time, it's going to elicit all sorts of emotions, and we actually visit and see them

J Judy Reeves 21:07

Kind of like the quilt, you know, it is yeah. So--

v

Vince Lee 21:12

And even the cigarette part, even though you had to dispose of it. There's a story behind it. And I think that's going to also elicit reactions from the community. And I think it also gives the community like you said, a sense of release. It's cathartic, because they realize it's okay to let it go. And it'll be locked down and preserved, just as,

J

Judy Reeves 21:33

yeah. And well, and I guess this isn't a good venue to ask you this. But I did have a question about those stories. And I'm going to ask you, and you can edit it out if you want to. So,

v

Vince Lee 21:45

no,

J

Judy Reeves 21:46

I have a million of those stories over the past 20 years. And they're not telling them or they're telling their story. And they're kind of not including the personal concept of the dead lover. I mean, they always include their lover when they tell their stories, but they don't include details like this. Are these stories that GE can can tell? I mean, I didn't use names, obviously.

v

Vince Lee 22:12

Right.

J

Judy Reeves 22:13

But are these interesting stories that we should be keeping tabs on? Because when I go, that story is gonna go with me?

v

Vince Lee 22:20

Right.

J

Judy Reeves 22:21

You know,

V

Vince Lee 22:22

and I think that's just thinking as an archivist, you may want to reach out to donors that had conveyed those stories to you to see if they would be okay with you all, telling that story on their behalf.

J

Judy Reeves 22:38

Ok

V

Vince Lee 22:39

I think another part of it will be, I guess, family or relationships and, and outed and all of that, but I guess it would be worth an ask.

J

Judy Reeves 22:51

Yeah, well, and that was one of the reasons I was very careful not to use names here or, or even locations, etc. And the, the most the story that got to me the most was actually when we moved from Capitol Street to West Main, we were having a grand opening for our first exhibit over there. And the story I got that night, I neither know his name, or where he lives or have any information on him. Other than the story, he told me the five minutes he was at the museum. But it is the most -- it's the story that has stuck with me the longest and the hardest. And whenever I get tired, and I don't want to do this, and I hate computers. And I think about this story, and it just kind of gears me up again, because it's a totally unforgettable story to me. And I think part of that is because of my age, because it was one of those stories. And I invited him back to come to the museum anytime I was there. And I would lock the door behind him and let him stay as long as he wanted. But he never came back again. And I think he was afraid, to. So you know, I couldn't call on him to see if it was okay. But then again, sometimes I think that dreamed that but I know I didn't because there were other people in the room in the building at the time. So. But there are a lot of stories like that. And people need to know that those are the stories that are important to the museums to get out to the public. Because you don't want to sit around in a restaurant or a bar and talk about that, but you can give it to us. And it'll be there for all the world to see in the appropriate setting. So that's my story and I'm sticking to it.

V

Vince Lee 24:46

No, that's great. I mean, that's the only way we're gonna capture those individuals in the community, even if we don't personally identify them at least through those stories. Others may recognize or identify with it. They are in their minds as they listen.

J

Judy Reeves 25:02

Yeah. But and some of them are so alike others. I mean, no two stories are alike, true. But no two stories are really different either. So you may recognize someone in it, but you don't

necessarily recognize the right person. You may recognize your brother, cousin, sister.

V Vince Lee 25:20

Yeah.

J Judy Reeves 25:21

In that story. So that's what's important.

V Vince Lee 25:24

We all bring something to to it, and we listen. Yeah. All right. I know this is on our

J Judy Reeves 25:29

Yeah, no, this has gotten way off. See, I do this.

V Vince Lee 25:33

I was gonna say, I know this isn't on the question sheet. But, Judy, I've always wanted to ask you, could you tell me or tell the audience a little bit about Jimmy Carper. I know Jimmy is no longer with us. And he's been a big part of GCAM. And I've, you know, through your experience, and with him, if you could tell us a little bit about Jimmy.

J Judy Reeves 25:51

Well, I only knew Jimmy 30 years. And I was like, Okay. And I was almost immediately it was love at first sight when we met each other. And I almost immediately became his caregiver. He was a long term survivor, like I said, and he, he'd only been diagnosed a few months before I met him. And he was in perfect health when I you know, as perfect as it gets. But he knew his days were numbered at that point. Ultimately, he ended up a 26-year survivor, 28-year survivor. But you know, he didn't think so when I met him. He was drummed out of his home when he was 17. And he lived somewhere in New York, which I don't try to pronounce too often, because it usually comes out like a dirty word. So he's up there somewhere in New York, but or in that area. He made his way to New York when he was 17. He didn't even graduate from high school, which was a shame because he had a full scholarship to -- I can't remember the college, but it was an important college. And from there, he met someone and the guy was visiting in New York because he was dressing some windows. But ultimately, he belonged in Houston. So when he came back to Houston, he and Jimmy talked for a while. And he brought Jimmy down here and they were together for a very long time. And ultimately, Jimmy got involved in the community, which he was prone to do. He was Volunteer of the Year for several years running with the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard. And he wouldn't get on the board, but he wanted to be a volunteer, and he volunteered the night shift nearly every night. And when Buddy Johnston

started After Hours on KPFT, Jimmy visited that and became a permanent resident there as well. And that's where we really got to know each other more personally. Because before it was just like, okay, we can go do coffee and so on. It was like very light. But at the radio station, we got down into the really nitty gritty community stuff with AIDS and everything like that. So that was in '88. Jimmy just liked to be busy, and he liked to do things for other people, although he didn't have anything. He was, quote, A kept man, end quote. He had a partner who was part-time in Houston and part-time in Washington, because he didn't like the Houston heat. So he would go up to Washington for the summer months. And but, but they, you know, he, he told me, he was very closeted. He was of Jewish descent from New York. And he was much older than Jimmy. And he said, I can't, I can't do your gay thing. I just, you know, I can't I'll lose my job. He was actually a -- flown around from state to state as an expert witness in I want to say botany, but it's not. Um, air conditions and breathing conditions, the quality of air and stuff, you know, emissions and so on. He was an expert in all that. So they were flying from court to court, as an expert witness for these big cases. And he says, I can't come out because I won't be able to do that anymore. And so, he was gay and quiet in Houston. And that was fine. And he was gay and quiet in Washington. But what he told Jimmy was, I want you to work with the community for both of us and I will support that because I can't do it myself. And that's how much he loved his community. So Jimmy was the primo activist because it's it came naturally, and because he didn't have to worry about working because as soon as he was working at a place, I can't even come come up with the name of it right now. But he was getting promoted from the mailroom up. And then he got his diagnosis. And he knew because he had to have a physical and so on, before the promotion took place. He knew he was going to lose his job. And that's when he and Stan talked about it. And Stan just said, you know, go go forth and fight. You know? [laughing] So that's what Jimmy did. He was an activist for the entire time he was in Houston. And up until the day he died, literally. He was active in GCAM, all of that time. He was active in the Colt 45s. He was on the board when we shut it down, unfortunately. He was in ICOH, he was where he wasn't busy joining groups, he was busy supporting groups. And he went every weekend he was at fundraisers and, and dumping money into auctions and things like that, for the cause. He carried picket signs back in the 80s and 90s. With me, you know, side by side, that includes the Boy Scouts. But he had he had a love of history, he had a love of reading. He had a love of radio, obviously, because he worked out so well on the radio, he was a natural radio voice. And he I didn't I don't know where I was going with that. Yes, I do. Oh, when he died. He had, I think something in the vicinity of like 3000 books that were just his special books. He also had shelves and shelves and shelves of things that he had just read. And he enjoyed it, you know, they could go back to the library or book club or whatever. But he had special books, he had history books, and gay history books all the way back to the Holocaust, because Stan had collected things from Germany. And so there was a lot of stuff there. He had medical books from the Holocaust in Germany, and a lot of them were in German, but some of them had translations within the pages of them. So I had all of that I was the recipient of his estate. So I had to do something with all of that he also had over 2500 records, vinyls, as they call them, you know. But he had a huge collection of everything. And that's what he loved to do. He loved to collect and save history. He had box collections from Europe and money collections from Europe and everywhere. And a lot of them were very valuable. But it was what he did. And I think I'm gonna go ahead and say it out loud in public here, he purchased the Charles Botts Library from the RMCC church, when they were trying to get their space back to make a shower and changing spot for the homeless. And that was a big major community upset because he didn't want anybody to know he bought it. And mostly, at first he thought they're just going to be so busy thanking me and so on, and I just don't need that. It's just we want to save it. But then it got to be a big battle. And he was hiding from it. And he said, I don't want anybody to know because they'll come tear the house apart. And he was he was right at some point, you know, that's kind of died down now. But it really hasn't completely it's still rears its

ugly head. But that's how much history meant to him. He wanted to save Charles Bott's collection of books and papers and stuff. And he didn't want the accolades for it, he just wanted it saved. And he had full aspirations of putting it all back together and having a space for it. And at that point, he could afford to do that. But because the battles were so ugly in the community, he didn't dare put the stuff out there for fear of it being stolen or lost. Kind of like the bar tops at Mary's and so he was I have a recording of his that I really would love transcribed.

V

Vince Lee 34:46

I was You read my mind because I was wondering if you kept any recordings of Jimmy at the time, or when he was on the radio or?

J

Judy Reeves 34:56

Yes.

V

Vince Lee 34:57

Any of those interactions. So

J

Judy Reeves 34:58

Actually yeah, actually, I had the 30 years of radio because Jimmy was a history person. Okay, that's another thing about him. He had the foresight to do things when nobody even thought about it. He walked out of his house every Saturday night to go to KPFT. And the last thing he does did was push a button on a recorder. And he recorded every single show on cassette tapes. And when the show went to three hours, and he couldn't do that, he put in VHS tapes and recorded it on that. And I had every single one of those plus the they did little promo cassettes, 15 minutes, and they would offer them as a gift if you donated to KPFT during their fundraising efforts every quarter. And they they did a lot of those he and Buddy did a lot of those. And I had copies of all of those and copies of other things that they played excerpts from, had a lot of This Way Outtakes. So. And ultimately, I didn't get rid of those I got rid of a lot. I say I got rid of -- I auctioned off or sold or gave away a lot of his collections. But I kept all of the KPFT stuff. And fortunately for me, I know some very nice people at the University of Houston. And they are now digitizing all of those, they got a huge grant in their name. And they are digitizing all of those. So we will have 30 years of KPFT and Jimmy's voice and Buddy's voice and Ray Hill's voice and almost all politicians in Houston in Harris County, and they even call the White House one night. Yep. And it's on the it's on the air. And I'm very, very proud that he not only had all that, but I had the foresight to keep it when he died, and try to sort through it and get crazy about it. And I finally just gave it up. And I said, "Help me" and y'all did. So yes, I have a lot of those and a lot of Jimmy's histories in that, because he and Buddy would have these little confabs in at the beginning of the show. And they would talk about what they did that week. And there's a lot of history of that in those tapes as part of the show. But also I have about six hours of him in a recording of his life story. And it reached a certain point where there were a few things in here, I wasn't sure I knew about him and wasn't sure I wanted to know

about it. But then when he got to the point like in the 80s, when I met him, I had all of that history. And then he got to a certain point where he had gotten really sick, and he had to stop. Well, I was there for that end of that. And I promised him Oh, God helped me ever entering this now. I promised him that I would -- I have a book published. And he wanted me to publish another book. And I promised him that I would do his story in a book and I would finish it I wouldn't be the epilogue or whatever, for the rest of the end of his book. And quite honestly, I've started that twice and blown two computers on it. And I need to do that again. But at this point, I need some kind of transcription of that recording to help my memory. But you know, I want to do that. That's, that is. Okay. Now I've got two things on my bucket list. My bucket list is growing Vince. Okay --

v

Vince Lee 38:45

Recording that idea and maybe how to help with that.

J

Judy Reeves 38:48

Well you keep thinking because it's a beautiful, you know, recording. I'm sorry. And if memory serves, it was a video, which would be very hard for me to watch. It's very hard for me to hear us his voice on the radio sometimes because I can say, Oh, he was really bad that week or he was really up that week. You know, I can just hear it in his voice. And most people don't recognize that. But I do -- kind of have mixed emotions there. But he was a force to be reckoned with in this in this gay campaign so to speak. There was nothing about him that wasn't gay related and that he didn't support.

v

Vince Lee 39:32

It sounds like he lived it live every day to the fullest. With, with the time that he was allowed to like or *carpe diem*, you know?

J

Judy Reeves 39:41

Yeah. He has t shirts and *Carpe Diem* on and he would put the R at the end of *Carpe* so you know, it was like, okay, *Carper Diem*. Um, I never actually I have met one person since he died, who didn't care for him. He thought he was all ego and when I I must not have known that Jimmy Carter. But I never met anyone who didn't love Jimmy Carter, or that he didn't love. He could get along with anybody. And he would call me down. He said, Judy, you just need to calm down and give him a chance. I'm just like, No. But they were his friends. And he never met, never met an enemy. And he was always willing to listen. And that was a big thing about him. He was an listener. And he didn't tell you secrets. So yeah, he was definitely a force to be reckoned with.

v

Vince Lee 40:38

Thanks for sharing his memory with us, Judy.

J Judy Reeves 40:40

I love to do that.

V Vince Lee 40:43

I guess the other way other well -- Other thing I wanted to kind of transition a little bit to was, how would you say the organization of GCAM has kind of developed or transitioned over time?

J Judy Reeves 40:56

Well, actually, many years ago, I can't even tell you when I think probably around 2007 GCAM became a member of the Texas Association of museums. And I saw something on the computer, and I hit on it, I was like, well, maybe they can help us. And I've just picked up the phone and call it and says, Okay, I'm a game museum. And I don't see any of those on your list. And I don't know anything about museums, but we've been a museum for seven years, would we fit in your neighborhood. And they welcomed us with open arms. And whereas we will never be on the level of the Museum of Fine Arts, or the history or the health museum or any museum really, because we're still a ground, you know, ground roots, whatever they call it. little mom and pop place, and nobody really took us seriously when we started talking about Museum and so we didn't raise, you know, \$10 million dollars for a building. So actually, the Texas Association museums have moved us forward a lot, and helped us and been available for questions. And I've been to a couple of seminars that they've had a couple of, like 14 months of classes that didn't cost me a thing, you know, I just had to go and learn and participate. And they deemed this the first original pop up museum. And I went, Okay, you know, and it didn't we pop up when you least expect this, at some event for a couple of hours or a couple of days are in the case of the contemporary arts museum for months, or the Health Heritage Museum downtown for four months. And God helped them the health museum was supposed to be for I think, eight months, I think we're in our 22nd Now, you know, they're they're going to be closing that in October. We have the outbreak outbreak at the Health museum were part of that. And they've had that we're going to close in October of last year. And we were in the middle of a pandemic. And I thought, how weird that you know, they have this pandemic, it's the history of pandemics of the world. And they wanted something local to bring the the local crowd in. And so we are the AIDS portion of that outbreaks exhibit. And I'm very proud to be there. And I just love all the people that helped us get there. And but that's going to be closing in October, and we don't really have anything on the calendar too much after that, but yeah, we're the original pop up Museum, and we've done a lot of temporary exhibits or parts of temporary exhibits, all over town and even as far as the Boeing

V Vince Lee 44:09

air or the craft or the I guess defense contractor or Yeah,

J Judy Reeves 44:16

way way out. Yeah. Yeah, they have they formed a gay group of employees. And they wanted to do something for pride one year and they contacted us. And sure enough, we did their entire lunch reception type area when it was full of glass cases and all that. We filled it out for a couple of months for them. So that was really kind of cool. I mean, I never figured we you know, bow at Boeing is like, Okay, well, we've arrived now,

 **Vince Lee 44:48**

that's a corporate event for sure.

 **Judy Reeves 44:51**

Exactly. Um, so I mean, you know, the Heritage Society Museum. We were a huge part of that for several months. And, you know, one of my favorites is and I have to just kind of brag here. We did we were part of in 204, we were responsible for bringing the Nazi press in them not to have to read this because I don't know this Nazi persecution of homosexuals 1933 to 1945. To the Houston Holocaust Museum. It was a traveling exhibit from the big museum in Washington, I never can't think of the name of it. You can scratch this part.

 **Vince Lee 45:38**

Is it the Smithsonian? Oh, yes, Smithsonian. Okay.

 **Judy Reeves 45:41**

Thank you. But it was also it was also from the Holocaust Museum Memorial Museum in Washington was a big part of it, too. And I was a charter member of that. So that was very exciting for me, not for G camp. So I'm gonna talk about it. But we brought they were doing a national tour, and we got Houston put on the national tour, because the only thing that was required was if you had a large, safe enough space to put it in, and enough volunteers to bring that 1500 pound or whatever it was off the trucks and unloaded. And seriously, it was like three times, then you could do it. And we talked to the Holocaust Museum here, and they never heard of it. But they gave us the space after they investigated. So we were responsible for bringing out here and I had 10 volunteers out there, and we had more fun cleaning up, you know, they had just empty to an exhibit. And we got to clean up and help paint and they painted walls and painted, you know, stands and all that for the the new exhibit coming in. And we got to help with all of that. And that was really a thrill. That was the first real museum that we had ever been responsible for. Of course, it was only in 204. So I mean, we were young. But that was very exciting that we managed to pull that off. And,

 **Vince Lee 47:08**

and being invited to various venues in all across.

J

Judy Reeves 47:15

We seem to get our foot in the door in a lot of places that you know, would never have occurred to me. And like now, but anyway. But that was a very exciting moment for us. And we've done several other exhibits partial exhibits, in other museums, and it's always exciting to be asked and to collaborate with what's going on so and I learned something everytime

V

Vince Lee 47:44

curators or just other folks in the museum's are just tips and tricks and things from

J

Judy Reeves 47:49

Yeah, other people. Yeah. A lot of employees are the museums, they just kind of take me under their, their their wings and say, Okay, now this is how you really do it. And I went, Oh, really? I'm still learning. I'm a child at this. I know. I know, I still

V

Vince Lee 48:06

got a good perspective of community archives. And I think you tried to, you mentioned earlier, grasp the grassroots aspect of it.

J

Judy Reeves 48:15

Well, Texas Association of Museums has always held that we are the only entity of our kind in Texas. We are the only gay archive and museum in the state of Texas. And they think, possibly in the US, they haven't really gotten confirmation from AMA on that. AAM, whatever. And so there are a lot of archives and collectors. And there are a lot of museums. But there's no archive and museums for any specific areas are anywhere. I mean, even the Chicago. I mean, yeah, the Chicago Leather Museum is much bigger than us and got a whole slew of stuff. But they're not on the same level as we are as far as being an archive and museum and it makes a difference. I guess so. Yeah. But I knew I should have gotten some education and if I was gonna do this 20 years ago, now I'm too old to do that.

V

Vince Lee 49:21

No, I think you're managing just fine in terms of learning as you go and also learning with others. That's part of the journey. I'm good gonna get to the next part that I'm I've been always really interested in I'm sure you are. I know that Mary's and especially the Mary's bar tops have been have had special meaning to you and GCAM. And can you tell the audience a little bit about Mary's, its history and also the story of the bar tops in relation to Mary's establishment?

J

Judy Reeves 49:53

Well, Mary's actually opened and I get flack on this all the time. Mary's actually opened on the last day of December in 1969. There is a story in a TWIT that has that date in it. And it was an interview with Farmer. So that's who should know. But Mary's was on the corner of Yoakum and Westheimer. It was the corner had the little block building on it. And behind it was a big house. And in between it was the patio. It belonged to the May family since the turn of the other century. And they lived in that house, the family lived in that house. And when the Depression struck, they decided to earn money, they were going to open a little restaurant. And that's when they built the building. That is that was Mary's and they ran that and made their money and stayed afloat. And when they decided to close it Fanny Farmer was a big friend of the family, I mean, family type member, they called him Uncle, you know, the kids did. And he said, Well, if you're going to close the restaurant, can I open a gay bar there and I went, Oh, sure, whatever. And they didn't give him the building. But he named it, you know, Mary's, and he bought the name, it was a corporate name. And he opened the bar in 1969. And he was a very authentic person. And he ran Mary's into and out of the hole all the time. He was not a good bookkeeper, he was not a good business person. So he kept letting the alcohol license lapse. And they would have to come in and he paid all the fines and he'd get his new license. And they did this for umpteen years. And then when he retired, and sold it to other people, and it just moved down the line from that point, what they were buying was the name Mary's. And nobody really realized that - they thought they were buying Mary's the property from this from everybody. So when Mary's finally closed for the last time, and the TBC came in and said, Okay, this is it. Pay the fines, we're going to renew your license. And if we ever let it lapse, again, we will not ever give another licensed liquor license to this this address again. And they let it lapse. You know, it was a test. And they came in one afternoon, late in the afternoon and just literally shut him down and chase people out drinks sitting on the bar locked the door behind them. And they never gave them another liquor license, they would not renew it. And so the community was just up in arms because the mean old government came in and shut down Mary's down and wouldn't let them reopen. But in fact, it was a normal way of doing business. You know, it's just, you have to have a license if you don't keep up your license, they're not going to baby you. Well, I'm finding that out. And so the community was all up in arms. Mary's had been there. It was like The Gay Bar of Texas, the oldest gay bar in Texas. And that's how that's how it was advertised. And I don't have any real proof of that. But I don't have anything to make it not true either. And everybody who comes to Houston, you know, all the gay people who come to Houston wants to go to Mary, so I believed it. But once it found out that the community found out that the property was up for sale, then they were really up in arms because they knew that if a property sold Mary's would never reopen. Well, they weren't listening. They didn't know it wasn't going to reopen anyway. So unfortunately, it got down to a real fight. People were hunting down. I mean, like dogs hunting down tidbits of information to try to find the real owners of the property because at that point, they knew that Michael wasn't Michael had the name Mary's but he didn't own the bar, the property. And I happened just by a stroke of knowing the right people to be introduced to the May family. And I was introduced to them on the promise that I would not tell anybody in the world of that I was meeting them, and I never did. And actually it was very funny because it was two women in the family that that were in Houston and we sit at House of Pies and made plans, you know, when our go to Mary's and then go House of Pies and talk about it, and so on, and people would come in and greet us and meet us and so on. And they had no idea who they were. And it was really we all and we got some good yuc's over that. But ultimately, they did find a buyer for the property. And it was Bobby Heugel. And I had already negotiated with the May family that GCAM would get those bar tops. And the way I had to earn them was I had to take them to the property. So they could go through it several times. And they were afraid to go over there by themselves, because there were two women, and they weren't part of the community at all. And one of them was older. And the other one was not of age to be in a bar. But it was her property and the bar was

closed, so it was okay. But that was the scale I was working with. So the second time we went over there, I had to chase a homeless person out of the upstairs back office that he was sleeping comfortably when we got there and startled him. And it scared them so badly, they wouldn't go back. But they did allow me to go back a couple of times. And it was written actually into the contract for the sale of the property that Bobby would give the bar tops to me. And I thought that was like really sweet because I thought well, as soon as he signs the contract that's gonna go away, you know, I know the community, but it didn't. But the community continued to break into the place and trash it because they were so angry and and then the other people started breaking in and leaving nasty comments about us on the walls and they say-- I have pictures of all that. And so by the time Bobby Heugel finally signed the papers on the property, he was so over the community, you know, and I didn't blame me. Oh, my God, they treated him like, it was horrible. And it's just like, you can't tell a businessman, Oh, forgive them. They you know, they're upset. It's like, no, they're adults. They shouldn't be doing this. They were breaking into it and stealing stuff. But ultimately, he cut up the bars. And we were supposed to get in there and cut them ourselves. But he cut them up. And that was fine. And he called me one day and we made arrangements for, for me to get some help to get the bars because any one of those pieces practically outweighs me. But it was like it's 13 pieces. We work on 13 a line 13 founders, 13 pieces, no, whatever. So I put the call out to the leather community and the bears. And I said anybody who wants to do something with me, no questions asked, you know, me behind Tony's Corner Pocket at 11 o'clock on Saturday morning. And I will tell you then what we were doing. I need several pickup trucks and several strong backs. And when we got there I looked at him and it's like, just about the exact right people that I expected to answer a call like that was there. And those were all people I knew and could trust, except for one. And I had to threaten him. But I knew he keep his mouth shut if I threatened him in front of all those bears. So

J

Judy Reeves 58:33

he's just likes to drink and talk, share. But you know, we went over to we trailed over to Mary's, and got the bar tops all loaded up into pickup trucks. And I said, Okay, follow me. Don't use your cell phone. You can't tell anybody what we're doing. And that was tantamount in my mind. If we told people were really getting those bar tops, they would crash down the walls to get them. I mean, that's just the mindset. So we took them straight over to Jimmy's, and my house. And we had a big carport in the back but we couldn't see it from because it was directly behind the house. So you couldn't see it from the driveway or anything. And we put the bar tops on that under that carport and then they left and I said you can't ever tell him because they'll they'll run Jimmy's house to get to them. And because that was all they were screaming about was the back 40 Were all the bodies are in there were no bodies back there. And the bar tops. So we had the bar tops and they stayed back there for about I don't know eight or nine months. I had a friend come over and cut all the screws and nails off the back of him so I could stop ripping my hands on them, I was afraid I was gonna get typhus or something so it's like, but we do have them. They're very difficult to deal with because they're so large. We I have a 12 foot a couple of 12 foot pieces. And I think the smallest piece is like 31 inches long. And even as heavy because it's on double plywood. So, but we did get them and I worked on them in the back yard like that for several weeks and tried to get a lot of the grunge off of them because you couldn't even tell there were photographs on them. Did I mentioned they were covered with photographs. No, I didn't.



V

Vince Lee 1:00:28

Yeah, I'm just gonna mention that. Bar tops are in, in and of itself, like a memorial of sorts?

J

Judy Reeves 1:00:36

A memorial, yes, absolutely. It's a memorial to AIDS, but it's also a memorial to Mary's, because a lot of those people were Mary's regulars. And they had died. And that's why we had all the urns, and bags and so on of ashes in the back. And we did so many celebrations of life in the back and buried them, usually with a rosebush, on top of them, or some kind of plant. Farmer's ashes were back there in a big tree. And they had a big brass plate that they had done for Farmer. But the pictures on the bar were of various things that went on at Mary's, but they were also just Mary's patrons over the years from about the 80s on. And a lot of those people are still alive today. And not as many as are dead. But it's still a great pictorial History of of Mary's bars. And looking at them it's like, I couldn't get dynamite and get those bars tops clean. And it took a lot of doing a lot of dealing and a lot of attempts. But finally got them cleaned up. Not all of them, because that's a lot of you know, the bars went all the way around the room. And like I said, we've got 12 foot pieces and 31 inch pieces. And there was a second bar outside, which is a half bar, which weighed just as much. And so but we're still working on the bars, but we that we got them to where we're very proud to show them now once in a while. They could use some preservation, but that's going to take money. And we're going to either have to find some kind of grant or some benefactor who really wants to save those bars to help us out with them. Because the part when they were cut apart, they weren't that part carefully. So there's some jagged edges, and the jagged edges are like brittle glass. So which brings us to the cowboy -- no. Well, preservation of pictures, you know.

V

Vince Lee 1:02:59

No and it's an important artifact to definitely get support or resources to help fund the support of the conservation of the bar tops.

J

Judy Reeves 1:03:09

Yes, absolutely. And, and the cowboy too. I mean, the cowboy is has what they call cancer. And slowly but surely, the picture has been eating being eaten away, and there's no stopping it has to be preserved. And that was actually at I think it was at the BRB for a while, and then it went to Bobby's bar on Main Street. I can't remember the name of the bar now. See, I need crib notes.

V

Vince Lee 1:03:46

Okay.

J

Judy Reeves 1:03:47

[Laughing] But that's where it came from one of the bar back - barbacks took the picture in lieu

or pay when they close that bar. And we gave it to us. And ultimately, because of the Heritage Society Museum, where we did the exhibit, I took that and a couple of bar pieces. And they used it as a focal point in one of the articles that they put out to advertise the thing and someone from their the Cowboy's family contacted us and said, I think that's my father. And sure enough, that's how we found the Cowboy's family and his real name and so on and so forth. And that's been corroborated through all kinds of series of, you know, predicted steps. So I'm, we we stumble on things like experts. We really do. And I'm getting so far off topic.

 **Vince Lee 1:04:49**

No, no, no. And I think what you mentioned to me kind of triggered another question I wanted to ask was,

 **Judy Reeves 1:04:55**

It's what happens.

 **Vince Lee 1:04:57**

What's been the reaction responses from the community when they come to visit you all at GCAM? Because I know you have artifacts and memorabilia that I'm sure give all sorts of memories to them and their families?

 **Judy Reeves 1:05:12**

Yeah, that's a real tough question, because at first, I was determined back in the early 2000s, to keep a rotating, exhibit up. And we could do that at 2507 Capitol where we started. And then we went to 1609 West Main. And so there were rooms, I mean, we actually built a room in the front of our warehouse to accommodate the museum at first. And so we did four or five exhibits in three or four years. And we also went to the expos that Coit Tower was doing. And put an exhibit up at those and had things at the community center with timber cover. And people would come and they would, they would ooh and ahh. And, you know, give us stories and talk about it. And then when we stopped having the ability to do that, because we had to go into storage. And it was because of finances, that was the only reason we had to go back into full storage. And we would pull things out to exhibit. People stopped coming so much, they were bringing us stuff, but they weren't coming to our events so much. And I never really figured out why other than all of a sudden. And you have to excuse this expression, every Tom, Dick, and Harry was suddenly a collector and a museum. And it didn't make sense to me. But it does make sense, now, it didn't then. A lot of people collect things and a lot of people keep things in their garages and closets, and so on and, and it became the fashionable thing to do. And TAM, Texas Association of Museums, says that we started that trend. So we only have ourselves to blame, you know. But we never got financial support of the community. But we got a lot of verbal and physical and support for almost everything we did. And it's a shame that we couldn't figure out how to raise funds. None of us. I am not a fundraiser, I will do anything in the world for you. But do not ask me to ask you for \$1 I just it's it's nothing my makeup. You're either a salesman or you're not. I mean, that's the way it's been put to me.

V

Vince Lee 1:07:53

Definitely a skill set, which I don't have as well as an archivist. I mean, that's--

J

Judy Reeves 1:07:57

Yeah.

V

Vince Lee 1:07:58

Philanthropy or advancement or, yeah.

J

Judy Reeves 1:08:01

Yeah. And you know, if you like what you see support it, you know, period. And I mean, I love your support, like you're giving me 17 boxes, but it costs money to store those 17 or even to go through them or to categor-- catalog them or whatever. When we say we have over 30,000 items, I don't even want to know how many we have now because that was five or six years ago. And we've taken large I bet that 300 to know who will go there. But you know, the most recent collection we took on was a box that was left at the back doorway and if anybody's listening in knows anything about this, please call Vince or me. A box of photographs and slides were left at the back door of JR's. So when Reno went to work, he goes through the back door and he tripped out with a box. And he looked around and it was a box directly in the doorway and he took it in because he figured it was for him. So he opened the box and he found all these picture slides and photographs in it. And he immediately called me and said you want to come over and look at these and I did and he gave them to us it was like 434 pictures, all from three by -- three by five all the way to 11 by 14, I think. Black and white, glossy you know, real photographs not Polaroids. Sepia color, and the box said, "drag queens and strippers." And trust me that's what it is. It's drag queens and strippers, but and there were 949 I think in that vicinity, slides, color slides, and I haven't even had an opportunity to look at all of them. But that's the kind of thing we get. And that takes time and space and energy. And, you know, actually equipment in this case, because it's hard to look at a slide with your eyes cocked, you know, in a window. But that's what I'll do if I have to. But yeah, there's no end to the collections that we get. But the money is just really not there. And because we don't have a building, we don't get the eye of the grant givers so much. I mean, we have a few. It's evening time. Rainbows are starting to come through the window.

V

Vince Lee 1:10:45

It's a good sign.

J

Judy Reeves 1:10:46

Yeah, it's a good sign. I love my rainbows.

V

Vince Lee 1:10:48

Yeah. I love going outside and seeing a huge rainbow after a rainstorm.

J

Judy Reeves 1:10:52

Oh, yeah,

V

Vince Lee 1:10:53

Very inspiring. Yeah, and just our listeners, just staying open and up in operation that costs money in real estate costs money.

J

Judy Reeves 1:11:02

Yeah, they don't realize it costs money, just rent the space, you know, not to mention preserve these things. So we're always open to that. And unfortunately, most of us are, at least in our Craig, don't shoot me for this, most of us are at least in our 50s at this point with GCAM. And we're not as anxious or able to get out there and start in the bars again and doing our fundraising because that's where most of our fundraising took place was in bars, and you know, drag shows and people who, who do love us and do support us through their shows. Because they don't have any money, but they'll they're willing to dance for \$1 for us. You know, it's hard to get back out there, with everybody gearing up at the same time and everybody wanting the same dollars. And I for one, I'm just not comfortable going into a bar situation yet. I haven't even been to a restaurant, really. So yeah, and that's gonna be a problem for us, too. Because everybody's out there fundraising all of a sudden, and we're not a part of that yet.

V

Vince Lee 1:12:15

And there's gonna be a transition to go from zero to 60. It's, it's kind of hard to do that in this pandemic world.

J

Judy Reeves 1:12:21

Yeah.

V

Vince Lee 1:12:23

Um, this has been a great conversation I was gonna ask, What have you learned from being part of G km? What's been the hardest aspect of being a chair? And what's been the easiest things that you can recall? And what do you think others will take away? When they visit GCAM? What do you hope to take away from?

J

Judy Reeves 1:12:45

What I hope they take away with them is I'll start with the easiest first is the sense of where they came from, and how we got here, and wanting to know more, because it's all there. You can't learn it all in one afternoon. You can't even see it all in one afternoon. But it's all there. And all you have to do is ask a question. And obviously, I can talk. I've proven that this afternoon.

V

Vince Lee 1:13:10

Love that.

J

Judy Reeves 1:13:11

Yeah. But and one question leads right into another question. I don't care where you go with it, whatever your question is, I can lead you into another question. But I hope that they get a sense of our history, and that it's not history, but it's just what we used to be. Because now we're not that anymore. But the fragility of that is we can go back to that point at any moment. With the marriage, with the bathrooms, with the gender, with the you know, all of this stuff, they can put us right back in those closets if we let them. And if you pay attention right now, in Washington and other states, especially Texas, they're starting to do just that. And they are taking those rights away from us. Oh, now we can get married. Yeah, but they can take that away from you too. And think about if they abolished gay marriage, what would that mean? It doesn't mean that your relationship goes away. It means everything you've done, bought your house together, gotten insurance together, put each other in your wills, all that goes away, because you're not legally married anymore. It's not a matter of throwing away the piece of paper that you got from the county or the state. So you have to understand the ramifications of the fragility of our history, of our presence. And that's what, god I hate to say this, the younger generations don't understand, because we lost the whole generation to AIDS. And the up and coming generation was worried about survival. And so the younger up and coming generations just had to fend for themselves. And they didn't learn what it was like to be in that situation or carrying picket signs or, or fighting the insurance company, to get him to pay your bill or fighting the hospital to get him to let you come in the door to see your lover before he died. They don't understand any of that. And that's what I hope they take away from seeing our history. Because it's there right in your face. It's just like reading a newspaper or a book, or watching a Pride series on TV. All that happened. But it's fragile. That was a three part question, I missed the rest of it.

V

Vince Lee 1:15:39

Kind of what have you learned about being part of GCAM? Yeah. What's been easy, what's been hard.

J

Judy Reeves 1:15:50

The hardest thing is keeping it together. Because we are on a shoestring. And I hate to keep saying that. But that's, you know, money makes the world go round. I've heard that in movies. But the hardest thing is keeping it together. Because it's not just a matter of collecting things, it's a matter of preserving things. And if I don't have the money to put into cleaning the leather, or cleaning the pages of books, or keeping them the dry and at the right temperature, then we don't have that history because it kind of turns to dust on us. And people don't understand that preservation is the biggest part of collecting. And that that is a problem for me. And I have to go out and beg, borrow and steal people to say, Please come, you know, scrub down our leather, so it doesn't get moldy or it doesn't get brittle. Because a leather vest won't last three years in a closet. I mean, without being touched, it needs, it needs the oil of your skin, it needs to be cleaned, it needs the dust cleaned off of it, it needs, you know, a lot of stuff to keep it supple. And and I know people are animal activists, this is not that. But it's you know, it's important to preserve our things that and that's the hardest part of of my job is trying to keep up with all that because we have such a variety of collections that some can go ignored for a long time, and others have to have constant care. What was the easiest? Just getting up every morning and thinking about it. I love what I do. I'm an activist, I'm a pacifist. I'm a volunteer. And I won't know what to do with my life when they tell me I'm too old to do any of that. I'll just hang it up. So that's really the easiest part is just sitting here. And actually, I never thought this would be easy. Take this to heart, Vince. The easiest part is talking about it. But just not on Zoom. But you did it. You got me on here. So I'm happy for you. Yeah, I just -- GCAM it's just it's what it's what our community is all about. And I know there are a lot of collectors out there. And I know people who have done stellar jobs at what they do, but they only collect a piece a single piece of our history. And it's like, a little niche, but we we have the whole megillah but we have all of it. And I'm not saying that with pride, I'm saying it with diversity, you know, we have all of it that we can get our hands on. And, and I'm very proud of that. I mean, we don't have a lot of diversity in our volunteerism a lot of times, but it's not for lack of trying. You know, it just it doesn't happen that that way because people tend to stick to their own groups and help them as opposed to helping someone else. But that's not GCAM is about, GCAM's about everybody. In fact, I want to change our name, but that's a whole nother topic. So--

V

Vince Lee 1:19:20

I was gonna also you've given us-- you know, it's, it's like a panorama, that we keep painting and putting together that may never be finished. But you know, that's what we're trying to capture.

J

Judy Reeves 1:19:31

It won't be finished in my lifetime, that's for sure.

V

Vince Lee 1:19:35

And I know we're working in some strange times right now. And I know GCAM is also in transition between locations and operations. What's the future look like going forward? What do you what are your plans, as we kind of transitioned back post pandemic?

J

Judy Reeves 1:19:51

Well, actually, in conjunction with U of H and others. We have, we're working on a future part of an exhibit that's going to be at the Cushing Library and Archive. And so that keeps us moving. The Health Museum exhibit closes in October. But you know, we need to get something on the calendar for after that we're working in in with in LA, Houston on a fundraising effort. And I'm not going to tell anything about that, because that's for them to tell, right. But we're a part of that. And we collaborated at Christmas with them, because we had all the Radko AIDS, they don't call them ornaments, they call them something else, but ornaments on display that we had, had borrowed. And so we are doing different things with different organizations still, and I expect that to continue, maybe on a smaller scale. But to continue nonetheless, I mean, we don't have huge throngs of people in the bars yet, and so on. And I don't expect that to happen for a while. But if some bar has an anniversary, and they want us there, you know, we'll go there, we have a permanent display case at Tony's Corner Pocket. That's kind of our home bar, so to speak. And we have a part of the upstairs meeting room for the Houston Bears at The Eagle. And so we have a big timeline up there. And and there's a lot of other things that aren't ours, but I mean, we're part of that exhibit. And I expect that to be ongoing. So we're gonna be out there pushing, and I've got all these slides and pictures to look at.

V

Vince Lee 1:21:52

Folks have donated and dropped off and yeah,

J

Judy Reeves 1:21:55

you never know what's going to happen when you walk in the door. I mean, people will walk in and they'll hand me a crown. It's like, oh, this was so and so's and I don't have room for it. And my clients, like, give me some history on it. Yeah, that's the worst part is dragging the history out of the stories out of them. But that's okay, we'll get it done. So we're gonna be out there, whether people like it or not, or whether people pay attention or not. You might as well pay attention, because it's your history, and your name is going to come up in it at some point. So you might as well support it as best you can, even if that's not money, volunteer, you know, do a fundraiser for us. Shameless plug, come on Facets radio and talk about it. I do a show on KPFT calls, Facets. I just thought I'd mention it. But yeah, we're gonna be here. We're not, you know, going away. And we're not going to dump our history into the dumpsters, like some people did.

V

Vince Lee 1:22:57

No, great. That's why we appreciate you partnering with us at UH and --

J

Judy Reeves 1:23:03

I was going to say, as long as we have U of H, you know, beside us, or in front of us or whatever, and helping us along and, and Texas Association of Museums and other places like that. We're gonna survive. And it's good for the community that we did. So. [sighs]

V

Vince Lee 1:23:22

All right. Last question I have is, is there anything else you'd want to mention that maybe we didn't get a chance to cover? Or do you think we've covered most everything?

J

Judy Reeves 1:23:31

I think we've covered everything, and then some, okay, far more than you expected? I'd far more than I expected too. You make me talk, Vince. I don't understand that.

V

Vince Lee 1:23:42

That's that's a good thing. I guess. From what I understand from oral historians and interviewers, you want your guests to talk and maybe interject a little bit here and there. But--

J

Judy Reeves 1:23:53

Well, you're very easy to work with, and I appreciate that, and some people can open me up and other people just aren't talking to a closed box. But you seem to bring out the I don't know if it's worst or best in me. But I thank you for that. And I thank you for putting forth all the effort that it takes to get me to a place like this, and I know what you went through.

V

Vince Lee 1:24:13

Thanks, Judy, I really want to thank you for taking time with me this afternoon to share the screen share your stories about Gee cam and the individuals and everything that went behind it. So thank you.

J

Judy Reeves 1:24:25

All right. Thank you.

V

Vince Lee 1:24:26

All right. I'm going to record buttons and stop.