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00:04

Back when Harry hay was a little boy, Los Angeles was little more than orange groves and wide open spaces. There was prohibition Doughboys returning from World War One and the birth of Hollywood.



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Today, we look back at Harry's work and credit him with being the founder and pioneer of the gay liberation movement in this country. He has been actively and politically involved in gay issues for decades. He is one of the founding members of the Madison society, the oldest homophile organization in the United States. Harry scheduled our interview for late afternoon. He often works into the night and is never quite sure when he will be up. It was a very cold and rainy day as we snuggled under the video lights in Harry's home near Western Avenue in Los Angeles. his longtime companion was at his side.



01:11

Well, I was the oldest of three. And I, my father and mother were very much 19th century rather than 100 century people my mother was madly in love with Valerie might call Edwardian English life. So consequently, we were raised perhaps a little bit more Strangely, the children generally all block here no labor. And I was supposed to set the example for the other two children and of course, soldiers have been held with Shell shell there is a fairly strict levels. And I was not able to fulfill these in many respects because I was Assisi. And the boys Francis told me that I threw a ball like a girl. And then I asked the girls if I threw a ball because when they said no, you're going to a ball like and grown into a like a boy with the boys know that. You don't do it like a girl either. You throw it like a sissy. And that's when I discovered very early that sissy was northern boy, no girl, it was something else. In this generation are you kids all grow up the Oedipus complex is or you have a psych, a psychiatrist breathing down your neck and the tiger aid on. You think that if you're not a boy, you're a girl, because what else is there and so Seussian girl, the same thing. But in my generation, I discovered very quickly that since he was quite different from being a girl, but I wanted to know about our world. I want to know about people like us and Virgo, I find people like us. How do we? How do we move around in the world? And how do we live in different places? And he gave me what I've always considered was the greatest loneliness tells me that any young kid just coming out and could hear from an

older gay man. He said, You go to some faraway place some time, maybe maybe Darla, salaam, maybe Zanzibar. And it will be an absolutely strange place. And it will have the smells and will have sounds and will have sites that you've never seen before that you're not familiar with at all new feel utterly out of place and utterly, utterly strange. And then across this quarter, all of a sudden, you'll see a pair of eyes open. And you will try to open a glow your eyes the same way to him as he is to you. And when your eyes meet, unlock your home and your safe. This I thought was just tremendous to know that across the world, somewhere there were people like us and this is how we met and this is what it would mean. To know you. I would make that connection and I would be home and I would be safe. There's just something I've never forgotten because this is there. I knew that I was okay to wherever I was there. This is how you make contact with another like me. And I would find my people and he had told me many times he's It's Sunday, maybe you're going to be the one who will find words, the words that we can use to bring ourselves to each other and together. We don't have them yet, but we always think someday somebody's going to find those words. Maybe it will be that word. And so long as you keep your vision, clear and pure, untrue belief and revision high. You will find those people and they will find you and don't even have the words you will make it possible for us to hold each other So what 14, let's say this was the beginning of merging, which would eventually come into being as the modern sciences in 1950. Well, 1950, and Lausanne was wasn't much different from 1930 in Los Angeles would be



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we would be, we would have a number of little bars. First of all, let me say this back in the in the period, 1920s, and 1933 34, when we still had prohibition, we didn't have bars as such, we would have, people would have little, little apartments and the apartment in the apartment, that would be a party going along, and the party would have liquor that was being supplied by the host at so much.



06:07

And in those years, an indecent act was for two men to touch each other.



06:17

People would say why didn't you guys dance when you in those years, we had couple dancing. And you couldn't dance with the person about if you would know about the kind of dancing we did. What couple dancing was like, it would be what Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers did. And in case you think that we couldn't do almost as well as they do not distribute your mind because there were several boys that I used to dance with. And I think we did almost as well. And at this point, we have to remember something else too, which is the thinking that we all carry all of us are involved with this that the men who are interested and other men are perverted heteros we are heteros with bad habits. There is nothing else besides a hetero as far as language is concerned, as far as the law is concerned. The law simply said there are certain people who are who have these perverse and psychopathic personalities, who do these vicious and nasty habits which are therefore criminal and illegal. And this is what you could be arrested for, how would I like to be remembered? I would like to be remembered for my vision and my dream. And for the, for the new ideas and the new concepts, which was introduced into gay thinking.

And I have introduced quite a number of things. For instance, in 1970, I introduced the idea that we have a game window on the world, which is different from the way the streets see. I suggested among other things, that what we see through that gate window 1972, in a letter that I sent back here to Dawn kill Hefner. I suggested that what we see out of that gay window we might call gay consciousness was very interesting, each one of these situations, the first idea of the gay window, and then later gay consciousness. These are things that the moment that they were said, within three months, I've read, find that being said all over the country, so that they were actually concepts and ideas whose time had come. Then in 1976, I introduced the idea that we have a whole consciousness a whole way that gay consciousness among other things, has a whole way of perceiving which is really quite different than what the head rows haven't I introduced the idea of what I call a subject subject consciousness, which is that I reached out to another eye, I think of myself as subject and I can think of you also as subject because you and I share most of the things in our bodies we share with each other, we know how each other feel. And if I join my consciousness to yours, as I hope you will join with mine, we will then the two of us, you'll be able to look forward in the same way to speak to one another.



09:57

It has been 20 years since the founding In the first Metropolitan Community Church, a church with a special outreach to the gay and lesbian community. Today, the Metropolitan Community Church is the largest organization touching the lives of gays and lesbians in the world. There are numerous congregations in the United States and in 12 other countries. since its conception in 1968, the church membership has grown from 12 to over 32,000. The MCC church has played a major role in the birth of the gay and lesbian revolution. The founder of this revolution, is the Reverend Troy de Perry, learn to love the



10:41

Lord. I was born in Tallahassee, Florida, July the 27th 1940. And I was the first of five sons born to Troy, North Perry and Tallahassee, Florida. was very, very interesting. I felt that I lived a very unconventional childhood. But I discovered later it wasn't quite as the appearances would indicate. My father, as it turned out was the biggest bootlegger in all of North Florida, and sold banded liquor as they called it, even to the governor's mansion in that state. According to him, my father was killed in an automobile wreck when I was 12 years old, leaving my mother, a widow with 12 sons all under the age of 12. I'd had dealings as a gay youth only, I couldn't have called myself homosexual then, because there were no role models. And then I would go into the public library and Mobile, Alabama, during my teens, and pick up the site books and all at once, look under that word homosexual, which somehow I knew applied to me. It was always mind boggling, because I would read that they were perverts. They were child molesters, and they were males who wanted to wear their mother's dress, and I would slam books close and say, Thank God, this isn't me. So therefore, I'm not a homosexual. And I can remember that. It took me after marriage, five years of marriage to come to terms with being a gay person. To make a long story short, I had pastored in Florida, and in Illinois, my wife, and I and our two children, our two sons had moved to California. I started pastoring in Santa Ana, California. And it was while I was there, I walked into a bookstore one day, and I discovered several things. Number one, physique magazines, and I always tell people, these were the good old days when they were still wearing bathing suits. But I immediately knew there was something different

about me, I was attracted to the males in the picture. And finally, I got up enough nerve to walk up to the woman behind the calendar, and asked her if she had any books on homosexuality. And she looked me up and down, said she did and I told her to give me whatever she had. And I wrote out a check for \$32.17 and took not very many but a few books back paperbacks back to the parsonage where I was pastoring. And I started reading. Churches told me that you can't love me, I'm a practicing homosexual, that just hasn't changed. And I tell people to this day that God spoke to me, and that still small voice in the mind's ear and said, Troy, don't tell me what I can and can't do. I love you. You're my son. I don't have step sons and daughters. And I knew without a shadow of a doubt, right there, I could be Christian. And I could be a homosexual, that those were not incompatible. And it was just amazing. From that day, to this day, I've never looked back. God spoke to me, as I said, Let's still small voice in the mind's ear and said Now, and with that, I took out an ad. And it said, Here, Reverend Troy Perry, I gave my home address in Huntington Park, California, and October, the sixth 1968 12 people showed up in the living room in my home. I'm a very unusual individual in this regard. I sometimes say that, maybe to a flow. I'm an eternal optimist. The miracle of MCC is that anybody comes to it. Because I realized, like most gays and lesbians that one of the main oppressors throughout history has been religion. But it hasn't been the only oppressor. And Jesus certainly didn't oppress gays and lesbians. When I look at scripture, and I look at the interpretation, but I'm not the only person who's been discriminated against throughout history by the church, women, minorities, I could go on and on down the list. The reason MCC exists today one of our reasons, besides preaching, what we call the revelation that God gave me, the God loves all people, and that were to preach salvation. Yes, we can be Christians. We can be Christians when everybody else is a Christian. Outside of that, the other thing that makes us unique is How we challenge the other Christian traditions and the other religious traditions. I refuse to tell gays and lesbians, I say, Listen, if you're gonna stay in those groups, then you got to fight those groups to make sure you bring about change, because I gave up on them a long time ago. And NSCC is one of those groups that I sometimes tell people, if you're looking for a church, where you have to remain closeted to attend, we're not the group for you. If you're looking for a church where you can't go to the altar, holding your lover's hand, we're not the church for you. If you're looking for that, there's a church on every corner that will serve your needs. But if you're looking for a church, where you can be open in every aspect of your life, no hypocrisy about who you are in your worship of God and standing before God, then we're the group for you. As far as religion is concerned, we've just celebrated the 20th anniversary of the founding of our denomination with the founding of the Mother Church here in Los Angeles. We started with 12 people in the living room in my home. It's very, very interesting. That first group was made up of one woman and 11 males, two heterosexuals, and the rest were gay males. Once you, the rest, probably would consider themselves Christians. I always think it was the most diverse group when they arrived, everybody scared to death. And thinking the police were going to raid the church service anytime and not having to take the attitude, I don't care. We're here for church service. And if they're expecting orgies on the altar, they're going to be sadly disappointed because that's not what MCC is all about. We have grown to where this year October the sixth of 1988. This year, we have a little over 40,000 members in adherence. We have over 300 congregations in 16 countries. We have adherence and 43 others. We've grown from an offering that first service of \$3.18 the last year our membership contributed in excess of \$10 million. We started with nothing today we own about \$20 million worth of property. We started with nothing today we have Samaritan College, our own institute that is going to become smarter University and we'll end up with five colleges as a part of our university system. We're building a hospital in Nigeria. I could go on and on down the list. It's been amazing. 42% of all of our clergy are women with the Lord have the largest number of women in ministry. We're one of those organizations in the gay and lesbian community that we don't

pay lip service to being co sexual or to you know, our making sure that we realize that, yes, women have been oppressed and we're going to do something about that. We don't just pay lip service to it. We do it