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B: . . . but she seemed so at ease with everybody. I said, why not? People are people. Well he says, when we talk about colored people, they say Black, and I tell them I don't use Black. When I was growing up if you said somebody was black that would have been a derogatory term. I just never have gotten So I still say "color." Even this class for women's studies in Los Angeles, where they say Black, I say, Huh-uh, I'm not black, I'm colored. And they just crack up. And they got . . . they were nice, when they'd talk they'd say, "I mean colored, Bess." You know. And go on. I appreciated that. I just, it just doesn't set right. I remember my mother made me get down on my hands and knees in front of my brother, this one next to me, and apologize for . . . and say, "I'm so sorry, Elvin, I called you black." And he stands there grinning like an ape, you know, loving every minute of it. Cause I called him an old black so-and-so. You just didn't use it then when I was growing up. And this . . . had a few years married to a white girl from France, who's an army brat. And sometimes . Kent and I would get to talking, and I'd say, Listen Nigger. Oh, she just goes all to pieces. And we do it deliberately. She just has a fit. She doesn't want me to say that. "Rita understands what I'm talking about." I just say it, you know, and then sometimes, she'll turn around. She doesn't understand the banter that he and I have back and forth. It upsets her. She thinks we are angry with each other. And I told her, no we're just talking, and we understand. And I come over to their house and I start this sort of thing. The first time I did it she went in her room. She thought we were so angry. The next thing we were laughing and talking and I said, what's the matter with . . . ? She thinks we're angry. Well, she said, she never had that kind of relationship with her parents. Army people. German. Her mother and father, she said were too strict on her. Familiar ring. You were terrible, your mother told me you were a very difficult child. She did. I liked them too. We talked about our children.

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B: And I don't know whether they know what I am or not. They never ask any questions and sometimes I say some things and Alice will look at me. I don't think it's gotten to Woody yet, the father. Now her sister knows. She knows. Connie knows. But she's talked with Kent and it doesn't disturb him and so anything that doesn't disturb him doesn't disturb her. They have mixed children. So I told her, well you know, you have mixed children, so I'm mixed, I'm mixed all kind of ways. And she says, what do you mean? I said, you know I'm gay. Oh, she says, . . . yeah. There's nothing wrong with it. Do you dislike me more now that you know I am. Well, no. I said, aren't I the same as I was a

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couple of hours ago? Well, yes. But how can you? I said, it ain't none of your business, how can I. What do you do? I said, what do you do? Well, you can't. I said, well, then don't ask me. I said, I didn't ask you what you and Kent did. So don't ask me what I do with my friend. So . . . a few times people have asked me, What do you do? I always give it back to them. What do you do? And that kind of stops them. I can see them wanting to ask more, but after that they kind of hesitate, because they don't know whether I might tell. What I do. And they don't want to hear that. I know once I told a woman, You certainly don't know what to do, do you? She was complaining about her husband. I said, you want me to teach you a few things? And she said, Yeah. And I said, yeah, but you wouldn't go back to your husband. She got . . . in the face. She didn't know I was gay. She said, you mean? I said, uh-huh. I am. She said, Bess! We were good friends. She said, I'd never believe it. I said, I don't why. I don't hide it. And she said, now come to think about certain things, well yeah. I says, want me to teach you? She says, oh no! No, she said, I might not go back with my husband or boyfriend or whatever. So, that's what I said. I don't care to hide it. It makes me uncomfortable, I think. If I . . . now I'm prudent. In Chicago on the job, I knew we'd get fired, Rita and I both, if they knew you'd get fired. Course they were so sanctimonious about some things and prejudiced as all heck about it in other things. So we never said what we were. We lived together. My faculty friends, they'd say you and Rita come to such and such a thing, and we went together. We couldn't go dancing with each other. And when Rita's faculty did anything our principal would always say, is Bess coming? You know. They knew we lived together. But no one ever said anything else and we always were together. Where you saw one you saw the other. Now, we didn't have but one - we only knew, and this was a couple that Rita knew, but we didn't socialize with them. They had been teachers. And they retired. And they moved out to Palm Springs, California, and bought a home. And see they were together some 35 years. We only knew guys. We knew a lot of gay men couples. So our social life was usually with them. And when we went out in public, Rita and I were the only women and there was always this bunch of men. Well a lot of people didn't think anything about that, because the majority of the men were in the education profession. So they weren't going to jeopardize their jobs by acting up when they were out.

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They were not effeminate acting. You know, some of these men put on a lot of stuff. But they were honest and truly gay men and just acted normally. They didn't hug and kiss and all that sort of stuff. Rita and I didn't hug and kiss a lot in public. So anyway, that was the extent of our social life in Chicago. We did a lot with heterosexual groups. Course you were in a public school system and they did a lot. I was the Social Chairman for 20 years.

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K: Is that right?

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B: Oh yeah. In my school. We had a good time. I made all the teachers join. I put crazy pictures on their windows when they joined the Social Committee, in the classrooms, and everybody who didn't get one, all the children knew, oh, you didn't join the Social Committee. Miss Bess hasn't put a picture on your window. So we had a hundred percent. And planned lots of things with everybody. I always took into consideration what people like, all through my life. Whatever I did with them. I tried to consider how they would feel about it. So I tried to act accordingly. And I guess maybe that's why nobody was really very ugly to me. Even if they suspected. I still correspond, and my birthday thing is loaded, with my staff members. Friends I've made. I'm true friend, once I'm true. You have to really do something awful for me to really, you know, get rid of you. I had one old high school girlfriend, went through high school with, and when she got into trouble with her husband in New York, she was having an awful time with this doctor, and she called me in Chicago and said, Bess, may I come stay with you a while? I said, yes, come on. And she came, stayed with me. And she was running around with my Ex. I knew it. But you see, I didn't want to marry him in the first place. So I said, why should I jump on them about, cause I didn't do the right thing. If I'd have followed my head I would have said, No, I'm not, and not let my mother pressure, I wouldn't have been married to him in the first place. I never told her. Never said anything to her. I never said anything to him. She finally married my brother. And they have a son. So I'm glad I never said anything. And I would never tell him.

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K: Your brother.

B: Yeah. Not even, he's dead now, but I wouldn't have told him while he was alive. What good would it have done? If that's what, she was under pressure, maybe that's what she needed to do right then. And I cared so little for the guy . . . married. He was all right. But I didn't . . . I'll say one thing, he was very nice when I asked for the divorce. He never said anything about me to the boys as they grew up. and he saw them all the time. I never kept them from seeing him. The only thing he always said to them -they finally told me later, a few years ago - he always said, it wasn't your mother's fault, it was mine. He was a womanizer. It was mine. And I just said, well, he did like the women, which was true. But I didn't feel that it was, once Ken asked me, he says, "What really happened between you and daddy?" I said, that's between the two of us. That's not your business. He says, Well I really want to - we were talking about things - I said, what did he tell you? He said, he told me it was his fault. I said, well

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it wasn't his fault. He said, did he find out how you were? I said, I don't think you need to know that. So he said, OK, OK. But I didn't lie. I just evaded. Which I, no, I didn't evade, I refused. I think some things you can say and some things you just don't need to say. And he says, I guess I shouldn't have asked. I says, Right. You knew. No. He knew. You knew. But the reason for divorce is not your business. But that was the reason. I just told him I couldn't, it just would be unfair. Maybe that's why, no, that wasn't why. He was womanizing before I married him, so he just liked the ladies. He married again, and this son lives down in Colorado Springs. He's a captain in the air force down there. And the three boys grew up together. So I don't fault them. It's not their fault.

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And their mother is still there. The woman is still living. And when she came a couple of Christmases ago here I saw her. she was the one he married after I put him out. But I put him out. And Kent tells me that he still womanized after he married her, but she tolerated it more than I did. Well, she didn't have any reason, like I had a reason. I just wanted to get out of that. I was most unhappy. I could not - I don't know whether you . . . - I could not stand a man over me. I just couldn't take that. And I would have to clench my fists and pretend and cussing myself in my head for acting as I did. Trying to make him think everything was fine, it was all right. That was a very difficult thing to do. And finally I got twin beds. I'd tell him, huh-uh, I just can't take it anymore. So I got my divorce. But then I didn't do anything about women. I just started looking at them . . . But see, since I had the boys, I said, you got them here, you have a responsibility, you're not going to die before they do, so take care of your responsibility and then, you're still young, you're young enough. Somebody's out there for you. They'll be out there. And I had already decided Miss Chris Janna was going to be out there for me. So I was a den mother and all that kind of stuff that goes with rearing boys you know, and going to boy scout camp and Y camp and things. And as they both said, they enjoyed their childhood. They really had a good time growing up in Chicago where we were. And they didn't miss anything. And when they finished and were adults, goodbye. And they both knew that and they both say now, you know, you did everything for us, we never felt confined or restricted in our activities; you were a good mother. So I says, good. Now be a good But that's just the way I am. If I'm going to do something, then I'm going to do all of it and do it well. And then I'll go on to something else. So after I got them off, then I went lady hunting. And it turned out nicely.

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I'm not at all sorry that I chased Rita. I certainly enjoyed the years with her. I certainly learned a lot. It certainly was

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pleasant enough. Very pleasant. And I still, there are times when I get very lonesome, but I figure well, you know, you had a lot of good years that some women never get. Some women never find someone that they can just really love and be loved, and I knew I was loved. And see I'm fortunate. I consider myself fortunate, anyway. And I figure maybe there's somebody out there for me. Kent says, oh, mother, spruce up, somebody might be looking, you might find one of those singing ladies. I said, well, I'm going down there to that retreat, and we'll see if I can. Anyway, I told you what I told Mo. I was going to put on my, when they told me I had to sleep with her, I said I'd better put my chastity belt on and throw the key away. She says, oh no, bring the key and give it to me. I said, I might do that. So she's sleeping in the bed, the other two are sleeping on bunks. So that's going to be interesting. I don't know what's going to come of it. But we'll wait and see. I'm not going there looking. I'm going there just to enjoy the fellowship of the women. And since I've never been, I'll be curious about a lot of things they are doing. So, that's it. I don't know what else. See, you ask me something, I get way off onto something else.

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K: Now tell me about these years when you and Rita were living together. What do you think people thought?

B: I guess they thought - everybody knew I had children. And my boys had grown and gone. My feeling is I don't think they thought anything. There was so many women teachers living together. And history women teachers lived together and nobody thought anything about it. Used to talk about the old maid teachers who lived together. The fact that she had never married didn't seem to enter into it, because I had children. Then we were both in the Episcopal Church. She was Anglican, but over here, in the Episcopal. And we both worked in the church. The boys had grown up in the church. Acolytes. And they saw them, most of my colleagues in my school, went to the same church. And they had grown up, their children had grown up with my children. So then after they left, here I am, I had moved out to the suburban area to get the boys into another high school. At that time the gangs, the Black Panthers, were very strong in Chicago and I did not want Earl - he's too easily led - so I got him out of this, into Maywood. And when they finished there was no reason for me to stay in Maywood. So I moved back to Chicago. Well, here I am with a 2-bedroom apartment and by myself. Rita and I had been running around together and she stayed most of the time at my house. so I don't think they thought anything about two women living together. They came to our home. They had, we prepared dinners. Parties. And they invited us to their parties. The only thing we didn't do when we'd go, we wouldn't dance with each other. Everybody liked to dance with Rita, cause she's such a good dancer. And even some of the older teachers in my school. No one ever said, everybody knew

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her - well, for one thing she had been at my school as a training teacher, so they knew her - we were just fortunate I guess that things worked out thataway. No one ever said a thing. At least it never got back to us. I'm sure that there was some, that if they had thought, there were a few little mean people that they would have let their feelings get known. Not once. and at her school too. And the principal. Now, I had - she had two principals while she was there. I had four. Cause I went there when the school opened.

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And I had Mr. Lewis. Rita didn't like him. I don't know why she said he was my boyfriend. Because I have a bad habit. I'd been teaching a long time, when I finally went to this school. And he came to visit me at my school where I'd met Rita. I had, what they used to have, what they called A, B and C grades. I had one "C," children who finished kindergarten, were too old, and were really not ready for 1st grade, needed some more. So they had this one "C," and that's the kind of class I had. Well, he came to visit. I had my name on this transfer, when I saw that hole, remember. And he walked in and my children were busy. He walked around and looked, see what they were doing. Then he asked me if I'd step out in the hall and I did. And I told the children, You have your assignment. I'm going to step outside and talk to this gentleman. Go right ahead with your assignment. They did. He kept the door open. My children didn't move. They knew better. He couldn't get over it. That someone had control over little children like that, without being older. So he asked, he went to my principal and asked, could he take me and the principal said, no, and so he did anyway because he had seniority. And that's how I got to the new school. Well, he stayed there, he was on the up and up and was working on his Ph.D. And so his friend, another Jewish man, Dr. Lubensham, came, a little, short guy. When he came in and introduced himself, they used my room for the faculty room. They had 200 faculty members. Big school.

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K: Wow.

B: And my room was the kindergarten room on the same floor as the office, first floor, and on the end, and it was a double room. So we had room in there for everybody to be seated. So he came in and introduced himself. And he was asking about who was this and who was that, he had a list. So he got down, who is Mrs. Clark? I said, you're in my room, sir. Well, the faculty just laughing, cause they knew me. And he wanted to know why everybody was laughing. They started telling him anecdotes about me, and somebody says, now when you get ready to go visit her room, be careful, cause she's going to put you through hell. And they was

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cracking up, and I'm sitting there poker faced, you know. And he really didn't know what to make of me. We had 3 assistant principals at the time, the school was so big because there were 3 sections. And one was Lucy. So he called her in and he says, What's with this lady down there, he said, do they mean what they say? She's going to teach, she's an excellent teacher, she's always got the fear in them, don't mess with her, cause you won't have any trouble with her. Cause she's going to do what she's supposed to do. So he come to my door. Kindergarten doors all had glass doors. Other doors had glass at the top. And he come and he knocked. And I kept my desk by the door. Nobody came into my room and walked through my room. You came and stopped at my desk. Children, teachers, everybody. And he said, May I come in? I said, sure, it's your school. You're welcome to come in. He says, yes, but I heard it's your room.

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K: My school, but your room!

B: Your room. We got along fine. Never had any problem with him. After he left we had a woman, who came, Dr. I can't think of her name, a colored woman. Boy, she tore up our school, faculty wise. Nobody liked her. When she first came she didn't have a meeting. I went to her office and I said, Now Dr. Can't-think-of-her-name - she had a good reputation - They'd sent her to schools to straighten them out, you know. But we had a well-knit faculty. It was about equally mixed racially. And we were Roselle University's lab school, so we got a lot of their students who came and did a lot of extra work, so the children really benefitted from all this extra stuff. And the faculty all got along. And she came and stripped the faculty. She didn't like certain things that were going on. I remember we had summer school the first year she was there. And she had us all in the gym and she said to these 6th and 7th graders - that was only for them that year - whatever they did, they should do the best that they knew how. If they're going to be a prostitute - well, then I got mad - Be the best one there. And she walked out of the gym. Everybody was stunned. Children, teachers, and everybody. Dragging her sweater behind her she went out like she was making an exit in a movie. So finally, we got the children back to the rooms. And they said, do you think, did she mean that? I said, oh, I don't think she did. I think she was upset. But of course, the word got out to the parents. And they raised hell. When the regular session started, the rest of the teachers had gotten word. She didn't like the little cliques of teachers. So she started after them. They were a holy terror, cause they got mad. Half of them, they were some of the best teachers we had. She got 3 administrative transfers of 3 of these teachers, and was working the 4th, and there were about 6 of them, when word must have gotten down and the District gave her an administrative transfer. She had torn up the school. Everybody was mad with everybody. And they sent her

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way north to a white school. They said they like her over there and she's done a good job. Maybe she learned her lesson. Anyway, they sent us a woman, Miss Spokes. To heal the wounds. She was just right for that. She did a good job.

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She was soft spoken, but she'd been a teacher so she knew. But we had lost some of our best, a lot of teachers transferred. So the school just kind of went down like that. What did you ask me originally? I got off on that.

K: Oh, I asked you what you thought people thought.

B: Yes. So we had some new teachers coming in who didn't know me or Rita. And some of them had heard about the school and a few of them came in with attitudes. So when we had a - I'm still chairman of the Social Committee - when we had our first to-do, the members either brought their husbands or wives or a friend, and of course, I brought Rita. And quite a few people, who is she? And a couple of those who knew said, well that's Rita. That's Bess's friend. And they started out, What do you mean, Bess's friend? Well, the people that they, whom they asked, didn't know what to say to them. Bess's friend. They live together. Well, a couple of them wanted to start something. But I heard of it later. They got told. You know. That's none of your business. They live together. What's wrong with that? So I never heard anything really. That was said. They never would tell me what they said. Apparently, the old teachers took care of whatever had to be taken care of.

K: Right.

B: And I never told Rita. That would have upset her.

K: Right. But years later they told you this had happened?

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B: They told me this, you know, afterward, years after we had - well, one thing, they told me after two people had transferred out, then they told me what these people, these teachers had said. After they were no longer at my school. Cause after that so many teachers left, the group didn't stay together a long time.

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K: So these teachers that transferred out, what did they say?

B: They were just asking questions, why does Bess always bring Rita to everything? Why doesn't she bring a man? They said, that's Rita's friend. We knew Rita when she was here as a student

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teacher, you know, that kind of thing. So they, I guess they really couldn't come out and say what they thought, because of the reaction they got from the other teachers, who thought nothing of that. So I didn't even tell Rita what they said, anything like that; why, she would have run. She didn't want anybody to talk. I said, I don't care. She said, I do. So anyway, we never had any embarrassing questions asked. Would have been embarrassing for her. It would have been all right with me. Because I knew some times when we were shopping - she was a little thing - I'd put my arm around her and she'd . . . and I'd say so what! I wasn't hugging her or anything. I was just moving her around. And she was little and I could move her from one place to another. And I'd do that and she would get upset by that. She finally got used to it, because that was just my way. I did that with older people, with children, with anybody I was walking with. I always, I'd hold the doors. And I'd see that they were seated. Take their things and all this other. I was just. I think that was just southern training. Cause being the oldest in my family, I was supposed to take care of my brothers, and my mother insisted all deference be given to her when we were out together. I remember my brother coming back from a party, with a napkin and a crumpled up little cookie in his hand that he'd gotten. He brought one home for my mother. We shared everything. That was depression time and if we got - they used to have wagons that came around with the fresh fruit, you bought your fresh fruits and vegetables. So we got a chance to eat everything. We might not have had but this much, but it was divided in 4 parts. We all ate some. That was the way she, we grew up. Everybody had to have some of it. Even things we didn't like. My brothers didn't like broccoli. They called it chicken feedin' weeds. And I didn't like squash. I had to sit 4 hours over a bowl of squash. I wouldn't it. I said, mother it's cold. And she said, you should have eaten it while it was hot. So I never did that again. But that was her way - we shared. If my brothers didn't do their work, I had to do it, cause I let them go out and play before they finished their chores. So I was just, it was this all built in thing that I kind of took over. I guess I still do. I'm working on it, trying not to. It's so hard. I go to meetings and I try to sit quietly, and everybody's saying, what shall we do? And I want to say something, and I say, oh, wait, let somebody else say something. I go to this church group. I just started it. Christ Church just moved over there. And they have what they call a Koinonia groups, for new people, small groups. And we've had about 6 meetings now. Now the priest wants us to get a leader. The last two meetings he hasn't come; he's left an agenda. And since I'm always earlier, the first one there, I kind of went down this agenda. So the last time I said, Father Jeff wants a leader. Everybody says, "Bess," I said no! I'm not going to be the leader. Someone else needs to do this. I said, "I don't want to take charge all the time. I'd like to sit back and just be a member." But I guess that's really part of my personality. I like things run well. I like them in order. I like them well thought out. But that's been true all my

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life. My notebooks I turned in, everything was organized. I write little notes. My younger son takes it up to. He writes, he keeps a little thing, and he writes notes to himself, all the things that have to be done every day. I write notes to myself. Planning things. As my mother used to say, you didn't think that out. and if you didn't think it out, it's not worth talking about. So I guess I learned that very young. I thought out how I was going to get Rita and I planned all of that.

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I once told her - I was going to a conference at Notre Dame. And she was going with me. An educational conference. And she needed to go and because I was her master teacher - she was still living with Gwen - she got her little dust together - I wasn't going to any - went to a motel. She said, I thought we were going to - I said, we're going to Notre Dame. There were some courses there. I was just partially lying. And we had a good time. She told Gwen truthfully where she thought she was going. We did go to one lecture. But I went to have a good time, to get to know her better. And that was getting to know her better. That was fine. But I thought it out, what to say, what to do, to make it on the up and up. I didn't want to embarrass her. I didn't want her to have to lie too much. My lying a little bit was all right. I had ulterior motives. And it worked fine. But that's what I mean. I would think things - they said sometimes I'm impulsive. I think I've gotten impulsive in my old age, but for years and years I would think before I did anything. Because my mother was always saying, you make a move before you think, young lady. When are you going to start using your head? I can hear her now. She was so proper. And I did not want to be proper like my mother. Sometimes people tell me, who knew her, you're getting just like your mother. I say, oh, let me break out the chains. Not that she didn't have some very good qualities. But I don't want to be accused of being too proper. But my mother was a, she was divorced when it wasn't popular to be divorced. And when she came back from Chicago, I can remember people in church saying, Oooh, the gay divorcee. She loved to dance. And my brothers and I used to help her dress to go out to dances. And of course, she sewed; she had gorgeous clothes. Her customers were mostly white and they would see a dress downtown. And they'd come and get mother. And she'd sketch it from the window and go back and make it for them. The mayor's daughter got married and mother did the wedding. She didn't like to make anything twice, the same way, but she had all these bridesmaid dresses to make. But she had girls in the shop working, so they did most of that. Well, the day of the wedding she was still beading this child's train. And here come all the police cars and you know, the sirens and all this, and they stopped in front of our house. And the bride. Because the dress was still at our house, cause mother told her, come. She put it on there. Came in and put the dress on. Mother still had some beads, so here's my mother with her thimble and thread getting in the car,

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this big long car, with all the sirens, still sewing beads on this child's train, speeding to the church. The girl didn't want anybody else to do it. She didn't want anybody to order her dress. She wanted mother to make her dress. She was very good, she was way ahead of her time in styles. I had dresses before the style came out. And mother had some customers who said, Arleta, did you make a mistake? And mother said, oh yes, then after she made a mistake she had to figure out something to do, then they'd get something new. There was a material that came out called Featherweight. It was red. And my mother - they always had enough material and mother would have some left to make me a dress. She made me a dress out of it. It was gored. And one of the gores she cut short. So she was trying to figure out, what am I going to do. So she cut all the rest of them short, reversed the bottom part, put a band in it, and I had a new style in different colors. See, because it was that Featherweight. When I went out in it, I had a different kind of dress.

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Course I didn't like most of the dresses. That one I liked. Most of the dresses she made me, cause she put ruffles on them, and I'd go right out and tear them all off. I didn't like all that kind of stuff. I remember when I was 13, and the last party I had, she made this dress with all these . . . and all these bows. I didn't want to be bothered with all that stuff. And that was the day also I started menstruating, so honey, I ripped all those things off. I was miserable at that birthday party. And the boys started teasing me because every time I'd get up, you know, I'd look behind me. But she did things - kotex were very expensive then, they had just come out - so my mother took the birdseye, had me make a flat piece, straight single pieces, a T, and then fold a piece and make the bottom of the T to roll up. Cause she didn't want the bulge in front of or in back of me. I mean those are the kind of things she thought of. I had moveable straps on my bras before they became fashionable, cause I was heavy busted. And she made my bras. And I used to complain, you know, that when I pulled them up they hurt. So she rigged it up to some kind of little strips of material where I could adjust it. I never had a piece of lingerie from the store until I was 16, when I graduated from high school. My mother made all of my underwear and clothes and everything. I had tatting and all the pretty little stuff around . . . and I didn't appreciate it. I didn't want all that stuff. I wanted some store bought. My first store bought thing was when I graduated somebody gave me a slip. As a graduation present. But that's the kind of dress making she did. And I had some nice looking clothes. She did, when I went off to college, she did listen to me. And one of the girls who worked in the college, in her shop, was a year ahead of me in graduation, Rose. She's in Los Angeles now. And I would write Rose and tell her, please, when she's cutting out my dresses, please say, Miss Spears, Bess

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is not going to like bows . . . so I got clothes at school that I liked.

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I had the first pair of saddle oxfords in college.

K: Really.

B: And wouldn't wear them. Nobody else had them. I wouldn't wear them. I sent them back. Then when Easter came everybody's parents sent them saddle oxford and I wrote my mother to send them back. You think she sent them back? No, she didn't send them. Told me, too bad. I should have kept them when I had them.

K: First time around.

B: That's right.

K: What kind of clothes did you like to wear?

B: I liked plain, simple clothes. I didn't like a lot of foie-foie stuff. I still don't. I wear things very simple now. I just never liked all that stuff. Laces and fluffs and bows and I have a picture of me with, they used to comb children's hair back there, you put two braids, one here and one here, and you put this big bow. My mother thought I was beautiful when she did that. And I had long hair and she'd curl it all up and put this bow on top of my head. As soon as I'd get around the corner, I'd pull the bow off and pull my hair back and tie one thing around the other, so it wouldn't be hanging all over my face. I was bad when I was - I call that bad. I was different. In action. Than what you would have expected of a southern female.

K: How so?

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B: I didn't fit any of the - that I felt - my girlfriends were all little sissy girls, I was really their protector. I liked them because I could beat any of the boys in the neighborhood. So when I was with them nobody bothered us, cause they didn't know what I would do. I'd fight. I didn't fight girl style like this, I fought like this - I had brothers. I had to protect myself from two of them. Sometimes they'd gang up on me. So I had to learn to protect myself. And my mother didn't encourage me to fight any differently. She did it because she said, why don't you act like a little lady? I'd say, I don't feel like a little lady. That's why I think my mother knew early. But I think she was very wise in not discussing it with me and letting me find out. She thought maybe if she'd channel my actions, that maybe I would lean toward the normal. It didn't work. But I think that's why she felt she

never said anything. There was no way she could have missed when I was with Rita. And she saw us so many times. And she dearly loved - she loved Rita I think more than she loved me, because she and Rita would talk business. Money honey. Property.

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My mother believed in property. See I believe in spending it. So there were lots of things about her she liked. And she told her so. Rita favored her, cooked for her, fixed little things. Well, being a nurse she knew the kind of things as my mother got sick, that she needed. And when we went there she'd cook different little things, about this much, cause that's all mother could eat. And fix it for her and rub her back and at night when she'd go to bed, she'd rub her down, like nurses do in the hospital. My mother loved it. She got spoiled, you see. I didn't do all that. My mother made me sleep with her. She wouldn't give me a room. My brothers had a room. but she wouldn't give me a room. I've never known why. She had very poor circulation and I'd go to bed and when she'd come to bed she'd take her cold feet and put them on me and move me out of my spot and get in my warm spot. And then dare me to move. If I'd move she'd pinch me. So learned. I can sleep now on the edge of the bed and never move. Even now. and I had to learn with Rita to relax. And be more loving and easier to get along with a little bit. I didn't make love, but I mean, as far as just being natural. I learned how to be that way with her. She taught me that. See, I never wanted to cuddle. Cause my mother would make me sleep like this and then she'd get all down between me like that and I couldn't move. So I guess years of that. And then when I was married, let's not go into that. I hated that. I just didn't like that. And I guess many times he must have seen that expression on my face until I finally told him, I just can't do it. He says, well, all these years - we were married 6 years, that's all - you said this, that it was all right, and fine, and I said, I was just lying. He said, I wondered about it. But he respected me enough to say, you know, no need of you staying in this. I said, you know, I'm too miserable. And I said, I'll take the children and rear them. That I don't mind, cause I helped get them here. So that's how we agreed. So we've had good, we had a good conversation about it. He says, what is it you don't like? I said I don't like you poking and up over me and looking down. I said, I just don't like that. He didn't get angry or anything. So I was fortunate, cause there are some men who would have you know, kept on, made you, and that sort of thing. After that he never bothered me. Until I finally told him - I gave him a year. I went out to California when Kent was 3. And he didn't think I was coming back. My mother says, You have 2 children. You ought to at least give the man a chance. I said, well, he's had a chance. No, I want you to go back and after a year now, if you still feel the same way, then do something. So I came back. He was surprised when I came back with the boys. And I said, I'll

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tell you what. I'll give you a year and myself a year and if things don't change, then we'll have to do something about it.

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So things stayed the same. We didn't have much sex, plus he knew by that time I wasn't in for that. So he came home the day I got my assignment to this school. And I had his check, on top of it, cause I had been washing his clothes and packing them up. He didn't know it. When he came in they were stacked up at the door in the boxes. And his check laying on top of it. and my girlfriend says, why didn't you cash his check? I said, no, he's got to live. And I had his best friend there, who had a car, to move him, because I'm not, I try to put myself in the other person's place. I wouldn't put him out with no money. See the checks had always come, and I had always just given him an allowance, paid the bills and that was it. Never had any problem with money. And I wouldn't embarrass him in front of his best friend. So I called Albert and said, Lloyd will be moving. Bring your car around here. When he came home it was there. He didn't say anything. He said, OK. Irwin came in and he says, where's daddy going? I said, he's going fishing. Help him take his fishing poles down. So he helped him take his fishing poles down. And I never saw him again until but once. He came when Irwin came out of the service. He came to pick him up to take him to his house. I saw the top of his head. I was through. He knew it. He never made any effort to try to see me. Never called. The only time I had any contact with him was when he didn't send the money for the children and I'd call the lawyer and let him do it. And finally I stopped bugging him for that, cause it was my doing. So I didn't insist on him paying any more. The judge didn't say, it was \$50 to begin with, but in that day and time that would have paid for Kent to go to nursery school. But when he stopped paying for it, I sent Kent to my mother. And kept him until into his 4th years. Cause I couldn't pay for him. I had just started teaching and I didn't have the money for a nursery school. So a girlfriend of mine came through on a pass on a train, and she lived in Oakland. And I said, will you take Kent back to my mother? Well, she knew my mother. She had been my . . . so she took him out to stay with my mother for that year. Then by that time I was ready and I called my mother and sent a plane ticket, and said put him on a plane and send him home. He was 5 then. He could go to regular school. Other than that, there was never any talk of money. And after Kent came back, 2 or 3 months he sent, he was married. And the lawyer contacted his wife, who is the mother of this boy down here in Colorado Springs. And she would send the check spasmodically. Finally, they just stopped. And I didn't push it because she would take the boys with her boy over the weekend. In the summer they would go and visit and stay. And I wasn't hurting that much. Things were tight. But I figured since I was the one who asked him to leave - he never spread the word around, I didn't lose my job, he wasn't vindictive, so you know, why make it any more difficult.

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That tells you a little bit about how I am about things. I'm pretty nice. Till I get real mad.

K: Till you get real mad.

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B: Until I really want something see, and I go after it. So, that's about, I can't think of anything else. Unless you have some more questions to ask.

K: I have some more questions, but I think I should maybe give you a break for today and come back another time?

B: I'm all right. What is it? 6 o'clock? We've been talking 3 hours. It's terrible! That's awful!

K: I enjoyed it very much. I enjoy hearing all these stories.

B: Yeah, well, I imagine there's a lot more. I just have to get started and of course you see how I do. I get off the subject and get on something, cause it reminds me of something else. I told Kent, I said, if I hit the lottery - he said, I know if you do, you'd fly out to New York, walk in Rita's house, have a moving van behind you and say, pack it up. And I said, what do you think she'd do? He said, she wouldn't do anything. She'd come with you. Wouldn't say a word. The brother died. So she's had no reason for her to stay there. And that's what I'd do. I'd go out there and get her, just say, Come on Rita. You are going back with me. We're going to get a house or whatever. She wouldn't fuss. Now she got sick. She didn't want me to know. Why not Rita? I would have come. I knew you would, so I didn't want you to do that. I said, but you're sick in the house, had pneumonia, didn't know it, almost died. By the time she got to the hospital, stayed in there. Had a back operation. That's bad cause they was removing that disk right at the spine. I said, you could have been paralyzed for life. And nobody's going to take care of you but me. "I didn't want to bother you." I said, "That's not a bother." Can't make her understand that. See Rita would never admit . . .

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END OF SIDE 3

BEGIN SIDE 4

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B: You're a married woman with children. I said, I'm not a married woman with children. I'm an ex-married woman with children gone. She didn't see it like that. See her problem is she's never

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accepted herself for what she is. I a long time ago, in fact I don't think I remember when I did not accept myself for what I am. And I didn't dislike myself. I figured I didn't have anything to do with it. Whatever I am, I came here like this. And I was so happy when I read that article about the something that they found in the brain of those people they were testing, that is already there. I've been telling people that too. I said, you can't condemn them. Now those who suddenly decide that's what they're going to do, especially males, because they like that, I just question them. But people who, like Jim, Ruben's lover. He was married. He didn't know he really didn't like being married until he'd been married and had these 3 children. But he knew there was something unfinished about himself. But he made the mistake of telling his wife. And she's vindictive. Boy, she took him for all he was worth. And then he had a lover living with him for 2 or 3 years, and the lover left him and started seeing his ex-wife's girlfriend and told his ex-wife what he was doing. She took him back to court to get some more And Jim felt so guilty that he paid until he met me and I said, Huh-uh. Don't feel guilty about that. Next time she takes you to court you . . . fight it. I said, stop feeling guilty. You have nothing to do with it. So she got mad. She has his older daughter. His one daughter. Was getting married. So she came to him and says - they knew cause they knew Ruben - how shall we word the invitations? So he'd been trying to figure out how to do it. And the daughter says, shall I put Mr. Jim Haggart and Mr. and Mrs. Whatever? She says, Mr. and Mrs. - She says, you didn't know Mom was married? He said, No. And she's been getting thousands of dollars every month. And didn't let him know. Oh, I told him, I said what are you going to do about it? I said, call your lawyer. Thing was, she had one child still under age at home. The other two were in college. Don't give her any more money. She's just been collecting. But she's bad with him, believing her, because he found out he really didn't like women. He says, Thank God for you. You tell it like it is. I says, yeah, that's not right. Next time she calls up and says the money's, then tell her it's not coming at all, cause you are now married. So then when he did tell her that, she says, Oh. I said, I'd make her pay back all the money that she'd just gotten, the months she's been married. That's dirty. So he's handling it now. Now he's beginning to, when we talk, he's beginning to not feel so bad. His . . . he's got millions - all his whole family, they're from Michigan, millionaire brothers. So they came to visit a couple of years ago and he had bought this house overlooking the Pacific and he just got, he just had his one bedroom, and he deliberately took . . . and did not put a couch in it, because he didn't want people staying. Cause knowing he's on the Pacific, people come out and stay. So they were in the motel. I said, Jim are you going to tell your brothers out and out? Now they had met Ruben. You're right, he's . . . got to do something, can't be that close friends. Jim must be, I've forgotten what he is, fifty-nine now I think. This was a couple of years ago. I

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said, you're close with your brothers. Tell them so you don't have to feel like, you know, you're hiding something. So he did.

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And he was surprised. His brothers said, well they suspected, but they were very happy that he came right out and told them. Now the relationship is . . . which is good. They've gone into business with each other down in Michigan. Buying something. I said, don't you feel better? He said, yeah. So we talk about Ruben, when he calls. Ruben still, he's so shy. He doesn't want anybody to know. I said, he said he took Ruben to a beautiful hotel, Hyatt Regency Hotel, out, practically in the Pacific. Everybody goes up and a big celebration - I've gone there, he's taken me there for Mother's Day - and he said, I took Ruben for his birthday. And he says, he's so used to being the father - you know - don't do that, don't do that. Finally, he says GD Ruben, he says, . . . get together, you ought to be used to this now. And then he and I are talking sometimes and we get nasty. He says, Hey Bess, look over there, look at all those . . . he calls them by that name, how'd you like to lay on that? And Ruben just gets so . . . we do it deliberately you know. And I'll see some guy and I'll say, gee, look at that behind. What do you think about that? Ooh, he says, I'd like to go pat him - he'll do like that. And Ruben . . . Here, I'll show you a picture.

K: Oh great, yes, I'd like to see some pictures.

[tape off and on again]

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B: . . . science fiction.

K: All science fiction. Oh is that . . .

B: My son got me started on science fiction.

K: Oh.

B: So he keeps up with what series I'm reading or what I need and he keeps me supplied with whatever is next. Or something he may get that's very good. He has science fiction on the wall like this, the whole wall, he's got so many books. He's really into it. Certain kinds I like and certain authors. So I . . .

K: What kinds do you like?

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B: I like a lot of fantasy science fiction. Now I don't like the very technical science fiction. It's no fun reading that.

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And my little grandchildren, the girl especially, is into fantasies. Now they have the big books like funny books, pictures of fantasy science fiction. She's into that now. She's driving me crazy to take her to The Tattered Cover, cause I told her she could go there and get in a big chair and stay there all day long and read. Every time I go over there, "When are we going to The Tattered Cover?" I said, I never should have mentioned that . . . that's all she can think about. For her birthday, which comes next month, I'm going to get her one of the 8 books she wants, to own all of them. But they're very prolific readers. I'm glad - both my boys are very prolific readers. And Ruben too. But . . . doesn't read so much; I wish he would read more. But he lived in his country until he was 15, and so he has all the behavior of the males of Ethiopia, which is, We don't do anything. Wives do everything. Supposed to make the, he married a girl from Oakland - she's a fiery little thing when she gets her dander up. She handles him very well. Between the two of us, we call him Imagonna. Cause he's always, I'm going to do something. He never does. So what she does when she really wants something done, she calls in the serviceman or whatever and when they get . . . in the bill. For months he's going to fix this or he's going to do that or he's going to do that. So she just gets it done. And then when he really gets on her nerves, she blows up. Boy, he backs down fast then, cause she's a little thing but she can sure raise a lot of hell. When his friends come, most of them are Ethiopians, and some are married to Ethiopian girls, they have a deck over the garage - all the men go sit out on the deck - they use it for a party. And the wives all inside. They do everything. The men don't do a darn thing. And I would go over there and I'd go, what are you men doing out here on this deck. Why don't you get in there and get, it's your child's birthday And finally she explained to me, she said, they don't do anything. None of them. And the Ethiopian women didn't tell me. The women do everything. So I said, I'm glad he's your husband and not mine. Course when he was with me he did what I told him to do. I didn't have any problems, because if he ever, the few times he contradicted what I said, I says, you want to go back to Ethiopia? No, my mom, no. I'll do what you say. I said, OK. So I didn't have any problem. In the first place, he wanted to drop out of school. I said, you don't drop out of school over here. You finish. So he finished. His brother went on - his brother's a doctor in Maryland. And he started college, but he didn't fancy going to college . . . OK, you don't finish this, your business, cause you're of age now. So she came here, she came to Los Angeles to visit a friend of hers, who was going with an Ethiopian, or was she married to him? Anyway, and she saw Gamacho at an Ethiopian nightclub, and she said that's for me. She came every weekend to visit her friend, cause she was determined she was going to marry Gamacho. And she did. He didn't know, and I told him, I said, well you didn't know what was going to happen to you once she put her eyes on you. But all his friends I know it's the same way that he is about doing things. But he does save his money. She spends it. You know, carefully. They

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both have good jobs and they just called about 3 months ago and told me - just before I left they had bought a row of property, rent houses. He sold all but 2 of them, took the money and paid off their home. Bought a new car that she'd been after him for ages to get. They had a huge backyard that they were letting go to ruin. I says, there's no reason why you should let that, you have two little girls, they need that space to play. Cause they live up on a hill. They can't play down. Had an underground water system put in.

K: Oh yes. Sprinkler system?

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B: Had somebody come and do the whole thing and then put play equipment in there for them. I'd been badgering him to get that done. Took him all these years to get it done. But I say, at least they took the money and used it very practically. So they said they're going to drive out here. The babies call - Grandma, where are you? Cause the other one's 4, this one is just 5. When are you coming to my house? I say, you know I'm not there. And the little one says, you in Colorado? I said, yes. Where is Colorado? I says, it's a long way. Then they start talking on the phone, Daddy, you take us to see Grandma in Colorado.

K: That's a big word for them, huh?

B: Yeah. So they said they're going to drive here, so who knows? And his wife and I said, Cheryl says, you know, I'm a goner. I don't know whether we're going to get there or not. But if she suddenly decides they're going, she'll buy tickets and fly. I mean, that's the way she gets things done. Which is good. Cause she'd be sitting there forever waiting on him.

K: Smart woman.

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B: Ruben was here, what? Last summer. No - this Spring - in the Fall. One of his oldest friends died of AIDS and he had been taking care of him. His family was back in New York. And he really was doing everything for Martin. I had met Martin and liked him. Martin is Jewish. And Martin's family knew Ruben. They weren't lovers or anything, just friends. And he signed over, and they signed over some document that would say that Ruben would, the doctors, he would be the one to make the decisions about the medication, that sort of thing. He was very faithful. He went every day to see about Martin when he was in the hospital. He went, when Martin came home he went by every day from work to see if he was all right. And he would call me very distraught because he had good days, or he had good months, and then bad. Finally Martin died. And his family came and his sister was the Executor

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of his estate but when she got here she asked him, met the lawyer, and they turned it all over to Ruben. Cause, like she said, Ruben you were here and we were way in New York. He had property, cars and that sort of thing. So Ruben was most upset and Jim couldn't do anything with him. So I talked with him two or three times. Finally Jim says, I'm going to send you to Bess. So he gave him a ticket and sent him out here . . . wherever this is, from Los Angeles. When he came he didn't want to see anybody. He didn't even see the twins, and he really likes them. He just stayed here. And I put him on the floor out here. He's always on the floor anyway. And he'd sleep and get up about, I took off from school. And then I drove him down to the Garden of the Gods. And a joke. I kept saying, get up Ruben, it's 2 o'clock, we're going to the Garden of the Gods. And he was so slow I wondered what was the matter with him. Finally when we do get down there and he sees what it is, he says, Bess, I tell you what I thought the Garden of the Gods was a flower. He said, I didn't know they were rock formations. I had neglected to tell him it was rock formations. Course he was very pleased. Got some beautiful pictures. Takes gorgeous pictures. I've said that before. And then put him back, sent him back to Jim. And Jim said it was the best thing that could have happened. Cause with me he could talk. He just wanted to talk. He talked all night long one night, and I was so sleepy, but I listened to him, but that's what he needed.

K: Right, he needed to talk about it a little bit.

B: Yeah. So Jim says, I'm going to take myself down there to see you. He gets angry with Ruben because he gets babyish a lot with him. And Jim doesn't want him to continue to being babyish. And Jim likes to cut up a lot and Ruben is so prim and prissy. He says, what did you do to us? I didn't do anything to him. See I took Ruben because his mother and his grandmother died within a few months of each other. He has 2 sisters and his father never accepted the fact that he was gay. And really gave him plenty of trouble. When are you going to be a man? You know how some of these people are. You're not a man. You're not a real man. So his father got ill and I said, Ruben, you need to go back and see your father from Baltimore. I don't want to go cause he makes me too unhappy. I said, but he's ill. Go back and make peace with him. You talk to him. They couldn't talk cause his father would always come up with something like that. He went. The first night he was there his father came and started the same thing. He got so angry. He packed his things. He had one sister who lived with the father and he told her, I've got to go, and went over to his aunt's to stay there. But at least he had said, he talked to his father and he told him, I'm not going to change, I don't think it's your place to tell me what I should do with my life. I'm, whatever he was, 39 or whatever it was, I respect you but you have no right to tell me what kind of man I am. Which is what his father needed to be told. His mother knew and his grandmother. So they never gave him any problem, you know, they just supported

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him. So he came back. He said, well, I feel much better. At least he knows where I stand and I've told him how I feel and I've never done that. And then the next year his father died. I said, aren't you glad you went? You have no guilt feelings. Talks about it sometimes, but to go year after year, so I took him after his mother and grandmother died. So he wouldn't have to hear all that stuff. His father never changed, so that's too bad. You know. Cause he's got so much to offer. And if his father had been - he put his father in mutual funds, he's a mutual fund freak - he's been saving money since he first started working, in mutual funds, so he's built quite a nice fund, mutual bonds and all that kind of stuff. Tried to get me into it. I got into it for a little while, but see I like to spend money, so it didn't last long.

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But he has his sister in it now. She's doing very good. His little sister he's very fond of. But he still would not accept it. When he's with me, oh, and Jim, we're together, it's no problem. Now, I said to Ruben, you know those people on those sets at Hollywood, half of them are, you know they are, what makes you think they don't know you are? Oh, no, he stays by himself. I said, boy, just the way you act, there's no way they could - students like him, parents like him. I said, but they don't like you for, you know, that you're male or female or gay or not gay. They like you for how you handle their children. That's all that's important. He doesn't want to accept that at all, so I told him, all the rest of your life you're going to be miserable. He has days when he mopes, won't go out of the house, won't answer the phone, Jim will call. They can't live together. They had decided that a few years ago. It wouldn't do for him because Jim gets up in the morning and he jogs and he's fixing breakfast and then Ruben sleeps. Two or three clock, he's for getting up and wanting to do something by that time. And Jim's back see. So they would never make it if they were living together. They own several places. Ruben has his condominium. Jim has his house. Houses, rather. One he's living in now. And I think that's best for both. Jim saw him at a Christmas party that I made him go to. There was a fellow worker who had a Christmas party for all the people who'd helped on the set. He says, shall I go see him? Go! Well, I don't know, he's gay. I said, so are you. What difference, I said, you don't have to go over there and go find somebody and go to bed with him. Just go the party. It's Christmas time. So he went. Jim was at this party. And he saw Ruben. And he said, he spilt his coffee, look at that. And he said, that's the guy I want. He came over to Ruben and said, and introduced himself and talked with him, and then Ruben kind of, he's so, he's too shy. He moved away, went some other place. When he looked up he says, Here comes this guy. He says, Here comes this guy. Again. And bringing me a drink. They had soft drinks. They didn't have any alcohol.

Most of those parties of the gay fellows like that they don't have alcohol. I didn't know that, but they don't. They don't want any problems, so they use soft drinks. So he said, here he comes again. This time they talked a little while longer and Ruben moved away. Jim found him. He went out in the garden and Jim found him and he said, Listen, you needn't try to run away from me, cause you and I are going to be together this time next year. And that was six years ago. Jim said, I saw what I wanted. He went and he got. I said, he was like me. He said, yeah, that's what he wanted. So they are still together, apart.

K: Right.

B: But they're funny. And I like to see Ruben blush when Jim and I start stuff . . . the card I got from him, he's in, he was in Albuquerque doing something, and he said, he had looked for some cards. He sends the worst cards to Ruben, all these naked women doing everything. And he sends them right through the mail. So he said on this card, Look for some cards. I can hardly wait to see what they're going to be, cause he sends some terrible ones. And Ruben looks at them, he just blushes. How can you? And when I see Jim, when I go down to the store where I can get them, I get a pile of them. And I send them through the mail and Jim shows them to Ruben. He can't stand it. I said, they were made to be mailed.

K: What else are you going to do with them?

B: He didn't like that. But it was funny. We had a good time with him. So the last time we went just before I left, we all went out and he said, we were being seated, and I said, don't sit over there Ruben, kind of laughed. Sit over there next to Jim. Don't sit with me. We went in a booth, see. I said, I don't want you sitting with me. Sit with him. Got over here, says I don't want to sit with him, I want to sit with you. I said, doesn't make any difference. With your sitting with Jim. He loves you. Why did I say that? Ruben could have crawled under the table. Jim is cracking up. I love to do that to him. But we have a nice relationship. But I mean, I'm just, I'll do things like that.

When I went here to this, you got a couple bars, gay bars, eating places, down on Colfax?

K: Yes.

B: When I was going to that . . . Sister to Sister, I went with him a couple of times. One place you can dance. And I didn't go back with him anymore, because now, I don't mind dancing. You

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could dance with men. You could dance with men like to dance with men and women with women, which was all right. But when you get, when you want to be an exhibitionist, I draw the line. Everybody knew what everybody was. But why go out there and do sensuous movements and yell and say things that I felt were most unnecessary. And there was this one girl I had met there, she must have been in her forties, and she was dancing with some girl, and she was wriggling all down to the floor. She calls me the Gray Fox. I went to a party and I met her and she says, Where's the Gray Fox? And that's how I got that name. But the Gray Fox don't like that kind of show-off. So when I moved over here I didn't let any of those women know where I had moved or my telephone number. And wouldn't you know, a couple of weeks ago, a woman called here and introduced herself. Kathy somebody. She had been in Los Angeles and had met the woman who lives above somewhere in Pittsburgh, we used to live in Los Angeles, who is the chairman of the All Lesbians Conference. She's one person I've kept up with, write and call. And she said, well - this woman lives in Aurora - she said, well I've got a friend, and she gave her my telephone number. I'm going to cuss her out when I talk to her too. She called me. She wanted me to come to a Business and Professional Women's, Black Women's, meeting that she was - in fact when she called the meeting was going on then, to tell me she'd gotten my number from [redacted]. And I said, all right, when you get through will you let me know more about what you are doing, and I'll see if I'm interested. About 3 days later, this girl who had been out there on that floor, called me and said, "I didn't know you were alive." I said, who is this? Pam. I said, how did you get my number? And she told me how she got it. This girl had given it to her. Well, I didn't fuss with Pam, cause she had no way of knowing. She wants to come take me out to dinner, but I told her I'd let her know when I'm ready. And I haven't called to let her know. I don't dislike her. I just don't, I don't want to have the kind of relationship with her that she wants. I'll be a friend, but that's all. I don't like showing out, even when you're with people who know. I don't like a certain type of showing out. There's nothing wrong with putting your arm around somebody. But I always think you should be discreet with whatever you do. Even if it's a heterosexual group. I don't go for all this kissing and all in public, and hugging and . . . them, I just never liked that. So I distance myself from a group, or anyone who's like that. And that's what I did with Sister to Sister. And with SOL group, they just weren't the kind of people I wanted to - now this other group, SOO, is all right.

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K: Is all right.

B: Very different. We just had a good time last Friday. Just talking. Teasing each other. Talking about various things that happened in our lives. And, but it was all pleasant. Even we

talked seriously about something. Nobody got out of line. Now we go hugging, cause everybody was hugging everybody. Because I told them, I said, listen, I know all of you want to stick some of this brown stuff with you, so I was hugging everybody. But that was just part of a play type thing. And that's all right. But when you get, I guess the word is "nasty." Then I don't want to be involved in that, so that's why I've left that group alone entirely. And I will not go to this group, this professional group she's talking about, because this girl is a member, apparently, of this group. I'm not going to put myself in that kind of position. I'm too old for that, I can be choicy. But I was choicy when I was young, so I don't know why I'm saying I'm old, I may as well admit that. I don't know. Maybe I'm, I don't know what to attribute it to except early training, early rearing. You were dignified at all times, whatever you did. You did it with dignity. . . . mother was . . . get you yet. But our teachers did the same thing. Even in classes. It might have been an English class or History class, but the teachers talked about behavior and deportment too. So we got it all around, everywhere, even when I was with the gym teacher. Now the gym teacher was as gay as she could be. I know now. Miss Hackett. I'll never forget Miss Hackett with her big, black bloomers. And making the girls raise their arms and going down these long lines of high school kids, sniffing to see if they used deodorant. She was a character. Oh, and she'd make you go and get in that shower and take a shower. She had stuff there for you to use. And then some girls were afraid - their mothers had told them not to bathe when they had their period or they'd get sick. And she'd push them under the shower, "Wash yourself." A lot of hygiene and stuff she did. Gym teacher. But she was my mother's friend. And I was a gymnast. I was a runner. But I knew she was talking to my mother on the telephone. Because sometimes I start doing something with my girlfriends and she'd stop me and just say, Miss [redacted]. I'd say, Yes, Miss Hackett. "No!" And then when I'd get home I'd hear a little lecture about something. So that's why I think my mother really knew. But everybody was trying to keep me on the straight and narrow. and they didn't know how un-narrow I was honey, that I was just waiting for my chance to get away. But I don't think it hurt me. It made me a little more patient. And I got a lot of experience in the heterosexual world that has really helped me in the homosexual world. It's just generally dealing with people, period. And I think that's good. Fortunately, nobody was branded. I never even heard of anyone in high school pointing a finger at anybody else saying - boy or girl- they're queer or they're funny or anything like that. You just didn't hear that. I don't know whether it's because most of the parents were careful what they said or didn't think about it or just, if they had a child like that, nobody talked about it or whatever. But I can't remember anyone, not even boys. We had sissy-acting boys, but nobody called them sissy . . . if they called them sissy, they would fight or something like that. So maybe it's just the time. South and the times then. That was in the thirties. Who knows?

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Cause now they call them everything, don't hesitate. I think parents are the ones who are responsible for that, cause they start that sort of thing. Saying what a child should or should or should not do, or what another child is doing, and what they think, and of course the children pick it up.

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K: Right.

B: Had a little boy on the playground the other day, crying. I said, what's the matter, Chad. He says, Jesse says I have AIDS. I says Oh God, that's all we need on this playground, and every parent will be down here snatching that child up. I called Jesse and asked, Why did you say that? Well, I really didn't mean it, but he picked up a centipede and they are dangerous and if they bite you you get a disease, and he I said he had one and he had AIDS. Boy, I marched him inside to the principal. Said, all we need is for him to tell two or three other boys and they go home and tell their mother. This is on a first, second, and third grade playground. So-and-so has AIDS. And the next morning half the children will be out of school, just because of some little stupid - some parent would call another one and then you'd have trouble. That's how things start. Boy, she got him. She took him in that office. He hasn't been on the playground since. She called his parents. She said, the sad part about it is this parents upholds him in everything he does. She has always had trouble with that parent. It would be that kind of child who would start something like that. So that's how things start. They're not even true. And the mother doesn't say, you know, why did you say that? She'll just say, "He has AIDS." So my mother used to tell us, you know, if someone says something to you don't accept it for what is said. Examine it first. Find out why. So maybe that's why I look at people maybe different. I don't know. And then the fact I like people. So when people say things about other people, I always hesitate. Not only that, I forget what they said so I can't repeat it. That's a good trait.

K: I think so too.

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B: Well, Tiki, you've gone to sleep. Hey! Tiki!

K: Well, I think I'd better get going myself.

[tape off]

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