Oral History Interview with Carole Bennett, Judy Boles, and Donna Adams

Interview conducted on September 14, 2018

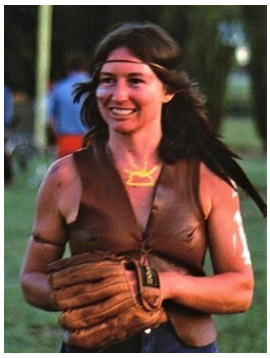
By Professor Judith Raiskin, UO Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Linda J. Long, Curator of Manuscripts, UO Special Collections and University Archives, UO Libraries

For

The Eugene Lesbian Oral History Project

Donna Adams with son Taylor, mid-1990s

Judy Boles, ca.1980



Carole Bennett, 1979

Donna Adams, Judy Boles, and Carole Bennett, September 14, 2018

Recorded in the University of Oregon Libraries

Preface

This is an ongoing community-engaged oral history project. Linda J. Long, Curator of Manuscripts in the University of Oregon Libraries, and Professor Judith Raiskin of the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Department at the University of Oregon, conducted video interviews with eighty-three narrators in the summers of 2018 and 2019. The interviews were held in the UO Libraries' recording studio. This collection includes the video interviews and the bound and on-line transcripts. Associated with the interviews are materials collected from the narrators, including photographs, diaries, flyers, business records, letters, posters, buttons, and T-shirts that document the businesses, organizations, and cultural and political activities discussed in the interviews. These collections will be made available separately as individual archival collections and can be searched and retrieved using the Library's Online Catalog.

In the 1960s-1990s hundreds of lesbian-identified women came to Eugene, Oregon from across the United States. These women founded cornerstone organizations central to Eugene's history and influenced Oregon's political landscape. They created and worked in collective businesses, ran printing presses, and founded cultural organizations (theater companies and dance troupes, music bands and choirs) and gathered in lesbian cultural spaces (book stores, martial arts studios, restaurants, bars, and softball teams). They became leaders of Eugene community service agencies and worked in City and State government positions. A number were instrumental in leading important legal challenges of discriminatory policies at the county and state levels regarding employment and housing protections, benefits, lesbian and gay adoption, and marriage equality. Those who came to study or teach at the University of Oregon were influential in making institutional change protecting the rights of lesbians and gay men.

The artist Tee Corinne, whose papers and photographs also reside in the University of Oregon Special Collections, asserted, "The lack of a publicly accessible history is a devastating form of oppression; lesbians face it constantly." The Eugene Lesbian Oral History Project seeks to preserve a specific and vibrant history that otherwise is lost. This collection of interviews captures a range of engaging and important stories that reveal new angles on lesbian history, women's history, the counterculture movement in the 1960s-1980s, Oregon history, feminism, sexuality, intentional communities, and women working in jobs reserved for men. Looking back over twenty-five - fifty years, the narrators reflect on the complex relationship of individual aspirations and larger social

movements in times of dramatic historical change. Many of the narrators have retired and continue to be involved in vibrant artistic, scientific and political work.

Abstracts

Interview conducted on September 14, 2018

Carole was born in 1942 in Vancouver, B.C. She moved with her family to Tacoma and then to San Diego. She met Judy Boles, a lifelong friend, while in elementary school. At a young age, Carole had crushes on girls, but was terrified that someone would find out. Carole was a talented athlete, but felt she could not participate in school sports because she thought others would associate sports with lesbianism. In Eugene, Carole worked at a variety of jobs. She worked at Wild Iris restaurant, cleaned trucks at Starflower Natural Foods & Botanicals, and started her own cleaning business called Arrow Cleaning. She later did social work in Lane County Mental Health. She concludes her interview by talking about her friends, the reason why she stayed in Eugene—to be with a community of women friends.

Additional subjects: Athletes; Boles, Judy; Community mental health services -- Oregon -- Lane County; Eugene (Or.) -- Social conditions; Lesbian community – Oregon; San Diego (Calif.); Wild Iris (restaurant)

Judy was born in San Diego in 1944. In early elementary school, she remembers thinking she had a really bad secret. She went to Carlsbad High School, and dated boys. Although she continued to date men, she had a lesbian relationship while in college. Judy was in college at the University of California, Berkeley during the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley. Over the next ten years, she was in and out of college. She received a degree in English. Judy met Carole Bennett, a lifelong friend, when they were both in elementary school. Judy discusses the alternative restaurants in Eugene, such as Gertrude's Café, which later became Wild Iris restaurant. Because Judy had been a comptroller, she was asked to do financial work for MIUSA (Mobility International USA) and Wild Iris. Professionally, she served as the City of Eugene budget officer, and later was the City of Springfield Finance Director. Judy discusses the tendency of lesbians to do social services work.

Additional subjects: Collectives; Cooperatives; Eugene (Or.) -- Politics and government; Eugene (Or.) -- Social conditions; San Diego (Calif.); Softball; Springfield (Or).

Donna was born in 1956 in Louisiana. She attended college in Colorado and came to Eugene in 1976. She attended Lane Community College, then transferred to the University of Oregon. In her leisure time, she enjoyed softball. She discusses working for the City of Eugene, starting in 1980, and discusses the sexist environment she first experienced there. She discusses parenting with her partner, Cheryl. Cheryl was a musician in the band "TranSister." Cheryl died in 2015.

Additional subjects: Bands (music); Camelio, Cheryl; Eugene (Or.); Lesbian mothers -- United States; Parenting; Softball; Women's music

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Session Number: 059

Narrator: Carole Bennett, Judy Boles, and Donna Adams

Location: University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon

Interviewers: Linda Long and Judith Raiskin

Date: September 14, 2018

Long: This interview is part of the Eugene Lesbian Oral History Project. The recordings will be made available through the University of Oregon Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives. This is an oral history interview with Donna Adams, Judy Boles and Carol Bennett on September 14, 2018, taking place in the University of Oregon Libraries' recording studio in the Center for Media and Educational Technologies. The interviewers are Linda Long, Curator of Manuscripts in the UO Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives, and Professor Judith Raiskin of the UO Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies. Please let us know if you agree to be recorded for this project, and that you give your permission for the university to preserve and make available your recorded and transcribed interview. Donna?

Adams: Yes.

Long: Judy?

Boles: Yes.

Long: Carol?

Bennett: Yes.

Long: Thank you very much. Let's just start with the basic question. Can you please tell us when and where you were born, and something about your early years. So let's start on my left, Donna.

Adams: I was born in Lake Charles, Louisiana, and was raised in New Orleans. I've been really fortunate in my life to have a family that even though it was hard when I was of an age when I came out to them to be accepting. It kind of went against most of my family's belief systems and their political beliefs, and also religious beliefs, but they've been very supportive. I was able to raise a family and they support my kids and grandkids, so I'm really fortunate.

Raiskin: Okay. What year were you born?

Adams: I was born in 1956.

Raiskin: Okay.

Long: And Judy?

Boles: I was born in 1944 in San Diego. I first realized that I was a lesbian when on the playground, maybe fourth, no like second or third grade. Somebody explained to me what a queer was, and I went,

"Oh, that's me, and it's really, really bad. This has to be a secret forever." And I probably, my parents suspected and asked me about it when I was in high school, and then I think they figured out actually, abide by the old rule, don't ask things that you don't want to know the answer to. So, it was years later before I really officially came out.

Long: Okay, Carole?

Bennett: I was born in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, August 4, 1942. My parents brought me over the border into Washington, so I lived there in Tacoma, Washington until I was eleven, and then we moved to San Diego.

When I was six and a half years old, my next door neighbor Skippy Brown, in Tacoma, six and a half, he thought I was really naïve. In six-and-a-half-year-old vocabulary he said, "You're really stupid. You don't know any bad words?" I said, "No." He said, "Well, here they are. Bitch, bastard, F-U-C-K, and queer." A queer, he defined, "A boy who likes boys and a girl who likes girls." I was six and a half, and I was completely stunned because I knew that's what I was. I'd had crushes from day one in the first grade.

It put a pallor over me, and in that moment you really don't have a sense of the future when you're six, but I somehow comprehended a way that I was going to have to live my life. Which was, nobody can ever know, and I'm different, and I'm a bad word.

So, that stuck out in my mind for, well, how long?

Boles: Ever.

Bennett: Yeah. And in 1977 I told my mother, I said, "Mom, I'm gay." It took me hours. She said, "Oh, well I'm not. You didn't get it from me." And then my sister's friend, well I guess former friend, outed me. They said, "You know, your sister's a lesbian." "Yeah? We know. Sure. We know. We've known that." And so it was, I guess not surmised, but through my various friendships my sisters picked that up. That was my early experience of self-definition, self-identity.

Raiskin: What was high school like for each of you?

Adams: Well, one of the things that just their discussion brought up for me was that one of times that was most cementing for me that felt really okay about being gay was when I was in high school the *Time* magazine put a— it was during the Vietnam War, and there was a man on the cover of the magazine, and this one line just resonated with me. It was, "They gave me a Purple Heart for killing my fellow human beings, and they gave me a dishonorable discharge for loving one of them."

From that point on I never questioned my sexuality again. And I was like you. I had crushes on girls and was asking them to go steady in fourth grade. I just knew that. High school was okay with me. I didn't come out in high school, but I was out internally but not externally. I came out shortly after that with my sisters, and

they already knew. It took me a while, it took me until I was in my early twenties to tell my parents.

Raiskin: Did you date boys in high school?

Adams: I dated boys. I dated boys, but it never felt right, and I started dating girls pretty early after that, seventeen, eighteen.

Boles: I enjoyed high school. We went to a small school. Carole and I actually have known each other since grade school.

Adams: Oh, that's awesome. I didn't know that.

Boles: So, if I'm fibbing, you can check it out. I liked high school. I was a good student, so typically when you're good at something then it works for you. We went to a small school, so there were like ninety-something, ninety-nine kids in my class, and there were sort of like the sociable people and the brains and the whatever.

But people really liked each other, not like some other Oceanside—I went to Carlsbad High School, which is on the coast in California. And right next door to Oceanside, which is a much bigger town, which is also right next to Camp Pendleton, which is a huge, huge Marine Corps base, so a lot of kids had either their dad was a lifer or somebody worked on the base.

But Oceanside was much more cliquey, and people within classes didn't like each other. And year in, year out in our measly little school, everybody like everybody.

I did date in high school, David Berger. Yeah, he was a good guy and we enjoyed each other's company. People asked, one day we left school, we decided we were going to get dressed up for some—I can't remember why. But then we came back to school all dressed up and a couple of the teachers said, "Did you guys get married?" "No, no, no." Yeah, so I liked high school. I enjoyed it.

Bennett: It was announced by our vice principal at Carlsbad High School that this is a strictly hand holding school, so not even arm-in-arm. I caught on really quick having the understanding that I was queer, which is very, very bad, at six-and-a-half-years old.

I understood that I needed to always have a boyfriend. Not that I pursued it, but I could kind of conjure up kind of a crush on a boy in the same way with a girl. I had to hide the girl crushes, and they became my best friends, lots of them. I always had a boyfriend, or somebody that I liked, and that was my cover. And then, eighth grade I had a couple of boyfriends, and then I had boyfriends in high school. When I say boyfriends, I mean we'd go to Herb's Drive-In and have a Coke and a burger. We'd go to a movie. We'd go to the beach. Drive around town. They call it dragging the gut here, but it was cruising the strand, which was cruising the main little one-lane road on the beach.

The one significant thing is I really was so well closeted, but terrified that somebody would find out, and I did everything that I could to act feminine, which was really hard. I have to say this one thing. In seventh grade, a good friend, Linda Lopez, said, "Carole,

why are you always acting like a guy?" Another wave of, "Oh shit, I'm busted." Oops, bleep. So yeah, I always had a boyfriend.

And then, thanks to Judy Boles, when I was twenty-six, because my mother would call on the phone and Judy would be there and she'd hear me. "Oh mom, I'm dating. Yeah well, yeah I'm dating somebody." And Judy, when I got off the phone, she said, "You know, Carole," in a very kind way, "You don't have to pretend you have a boyfriend or that you're interested in men." She might as well have told me something that was unbeknownst to me in my thinking and my awareness. And I thought, "Whoa, that would be a big step. What a relief." "Do you think I can, really?" After that, I never had a fake boyfriend.

Long: Now, were you two out to each other, then? Did you connect?

Bennett: Well, in 1969, I had come back from traveling, and Judy had been going to school and traveling, and we met up in California, back in Oceanside, Carlsbad, San Diego. I knew that I needed to talk to Judy Boles. I'd already had one three-year relationship with somebody on the East Coast, and when I came back to San Diego, again, no lesbian thinking vocabulary awareness connection to anybody else who might be that way.

Judy— so we got together. I sent her a postcard, and I had lived in Germany for a while, I think I sent her a postcard from Germany. I said, "If you get this and you want to get together— " Well, immediately she called me as soon she got it. I went to San Diego to

visit her. You were engaged to David at the time. Let's see, I was twenty-five. Judy and I are about a year and a half apart. I was twenty-five.

Well, we sort of had a conversation, but it was mostly demonstrative, and she said, "When did you get into this lesbian stuff?" I said, "About three years ago." Well, we had already had a little bit of alcohol and pot, so. When she said, "When did you get into this lesbian stuff?" I told her, and she said, "Oh, I've got to think about this." And it was about five minutes later she said, "Yeah, okay. Let's do this." And we were together for about four or five years, and had a lot of travels together. I became very close with her mom and dad. Her mom is still alive, ninety-six years old, and I call her my second mom.

So yeah, Judy and I, this is the continuity, and I think continuity is very important to me in my life. It's like a family. I mean, we can talk about people we knew fifty, sixty years ago.

Raiskin: What happened to David? You were engaged to him at the time?

Boles: Well, sort of. It wasn't really. I mean, I knew I wasn't doing that, but I was still at the, you know, "Well, maybe I could do this." Do you really want to be a lesbian? Boy, that's a tough row to hoe. If I don't have to, maybe I can not have to do that.

Raiskin: Had you been with women before Carole?

Boles: Yes, when I went away to college. Yeah. But anyway, so it was like, "Okay, no more of that," because it was messy. Because when you're eighteen or whatever, it's like a kid in a candy shop. So I wasn't going to do that, but when Carole— Carole said it was like five minutes after this kissing thing, it was more like five seconds. "Okay, good."

And then it just went on. I'm kind of proud of the fact that my best friends are my exes. I always think that that says something nice about you.

Raiskin: What happened as you're seventeen, eighteen years old? What were your plans for your future?

Adams: Well, I have an identical twin sister, and she left home the day after we graduated from high school to go live with a drummer down in San Diego, and my parents were devastated and I was devastated because I would miss her so much. So, I took a little bit of time and stayed home with them and worked for a while, but my goals were to go to college and start a career.

I ended up going to school in Colorado for a year at Western State, which is a little teeny town of Gunnison, 6,000 people, and met a woman named Pat who was the only other lesbian in town. We kind of had a relationship, but it wasn't ever a really strong relationship, it was more of a relationship of necessity to get the hell out of dodge. We packed up a van, and I quit school there.

She was born in Eugene actually, so we knew that there was a women's community here, and we got in this van we named Meatloaf and threw everything we owned including dogs and everything else in it and came here. And rolled into town on fumes, and ended up in Eugene. That was kind of how we got here. We traded the van in for two bicycles and that was the start of it.

Raiskin: What year was that?

Adams: That was in '76.

Raiskin: What did Eugene look like to you when you came in '76?

Adams: Oh, it was wonderful. I mean, I needed to be someplace a little bit bigger. There was a huge community thing going on. I was young. I was only twenty. That was four months before my twenty-first birthday, so I couldn't get into Riv Room so I snuck into the Riv Room. It felt like a bubble from everything I'd experienced in terms of— It felt like home in terms of being a place where I knew I could just be who I am.

Long: So you knew that there was a lesbian community in Eugene when you came?

Adams: I did, yes.

Long: How did you find out about Eugene?

Adams: My friend Pat was born here, so I knew that.

Long: Oh, yeah. That's right. Okay.

Adams: And then I also needed to go to a larger school because Western State was pretty small, so my goals were to transfer and come get my residency here. I went to Lane for a while and then transferred to the university.

Raiskin: What did you want to study when you came?

Adams: Environmental science and chemistry. So I ended up transferring my credit from Western State and did the Environmental Technology program at Lane so that I could get a job, and then transferred out of that to the university after that.

Raiskin: And what year did you— you didn't come together? You came together?

Boles: No, right after high school I went to Berkeley, and I really didn't know what I thought I was going to do. Actually, I applied to Caltech and I got a letter back— Caltech is a public university in the state of California, and I got a letter back saying, "We don't accept girls."

Bennett: Oh, my God.

Boles: Yup, so I went to Berkeley. But anyway. I went to Berkeley nominally. As soon as I got there I was all about coming out, and I just never went to class. I spent all my time being with women. And so of course, if you don't go to class and you don't do the homework and you don't do any of that stuff, guess what happens? You're gone.

So, then over the course of ten years, I went to school and then I worked, and I went to school and I worked, and I went to school. I think like 1973 I finally actually got a college degree in English literature, which had nothing to do with anything that I ever thought I was going— I majored in sociology and philosophy and political science, but I always would take English because I like to read, and so it was an easy— finally I get to the point, "Okay, I've got to get a degree and get out of here." I add up everything, I have more English than anything else, so that's what I graduated in.

I have never had any ambitions. I'm not really career- or money-motivated. I just follow my nose and whatever comes up is where I go, so that's the truth about me is that I didn't think— now, I think I wish I had been an engineer, because I was okay with the numbers, and looking back I think, Oh, it would really fun to build stuff.

Raiskin: What year did you start Berkeley?

Boles: Nineteen sixty-three.

Raiskin: Okay.

Boles: Yeah, and it wasn't as hard to get in then as it is now. But I was actually a very good student, and I aced the college boards. Sometimes you take a test and you're just bing, bing, bing, so that's how that sort of flukey happened.

Raiskin: Were you there for the free speech movement in 1964?

Boles: I was. I absolutely was. I stood out there, and Mario Savio, that was the Cuban Missile Crisis at the same time, and of course people were going crazy. All these speakers out right in front. You couldn't actually at that time congregate on the campus itself, but right in front of, there's kind of an open plaza.

Raiskin: Sproul Hall.

Boles: Yeah. The people would set up speakers, and yeah it was very exciting and scary. But yeah, I was there.

Long: What did you think was going to— might happen? I mean, was everybody expecting to be bombed by the Cubans?

Boles: You know, the Cuban Missile Crisis thing, I think people really were not sure what was going to happen. If there was actually going to be some kind of confrontation. I don't know at that age if I really— I was scared, but maybe not all that scared, just because your mortality is the last thing on your mind when you're eighteen. I don't have a sense of what other people might have felt like, but I think that might have been kind of universal. It was scary, but also exciting, and probably in your heart of hearts, "I'm probably not going to die."

Adams: I was younger then, and I was hiding under desks. We had the drills. Like it was going to protect you getting under your desk and ducking.

Boles: Right. Yeah, yeah.

Raiskin: What were you wearing in college? What kind of clothing?

Boles: Well then I was kind of doing sort of this— well actually, we should back up. In high school you had to wear a skirt, and Miss Rector, who was— well, our PE teacher in grade school was Miss Dyke, I kid you not. Okay? And in high school it was Mrs. Rector, who was clearly a dyke, reflecting back. But she would make you, if your skirt was too short you kneeled down on the floor in the gym and if the hem of your skirt didn't touch the floor, home you went to change.

In college, you were not supposed to wear pants, but nobody really bothered with it much. I can't really remember, for sure. Carole, what'd I wear? Anyway, but I think I probably wore pants. Certainly if I could, I would. And because I wasn't going to class, so what?

Raiskin: Did you go to college after high school?

Bennett: I went to the local community college for two years in Oceanside, California. And then somebody mentioned to me, "You know, you don't have to go a full continuous four years to get a degree. People travel, they go to Europe." And I went, "Whew, thank goodness," because I wasn't oriented towards a career, but I knew and I'd known for a long time that I wanted to go to college. I was the first person to graduate in my college in my generation, in my parents' generation.

And then when Judy and I re-met in 1969, her parents invited us to move to Weiser, Idaho together. We lived on fifty acres, and farmland, very different than southern California. They were really prejudice about men with long hair, and it's just hard to believe that was, well 1970 to '74. Then I finished my degree after Judy, so we both worked, but we helped each other as far as providing for the household while the other one went to school.

I just want to digress for a minute. The first time I met Judy was on the playground at Pine Street School, and it was following our PE hour with Miss Dyke. Miss Dyke. But that word, I didn't know what that word meant, but she wore seersucker dresses, gloves with the fingers cut out, and these giant hats because it was always sunny. One of them Tijuana on the front, and sometimes they had a bill like that. And Miss Dyke, our PE consisted of square dancing, circle dancing, volleyball, I don't know, Jacks or something.

Boles: Put your little foot.

Bennett: Pardon me?

Boles: Put your little foot, put your little foot.

Bennett: Oh, perfect. And I hated it, because Skip to my Lou, go to the left, and I was always going to the right. Oh. And it was not my thing. After class, this girl came running up to me full speed. She gets into my face and she said, "Hi, my name's Judy. What's yours?" "Carole." "Hi." And then she fled. As fast as she appeared, she fled. I looked at her and I went, "Okay, I know she's like me."

Adams: Wow.

Raiskin: How old were you?

Bennett: Pardon me?

Raiskin: How old were you?

Bennett: I was twelve, and Judy— I was in seventh and she was in fifth.

Boles: I would have been ten.

Bennett: But she was in my sister's grade. This is a small town and we all knew each other. Judy was my sister's friend. But when she came up to me it was another revelation, but a stark— I was terrified that she was going to say, "And, I know who you are." I honestly, I was frightened, Judy. I've told this story before because it was dramatic for me.

Long: So Judy, did you sense something about Carole that allowed you to do that?

Boles: I'm sure I did. Yeah, I'm sure I did. Because you remember when you're in grade school, the distance between one grade and the next. Somebody who's a grade ahead of you, it's like they're a completely different social class. They're the nobility, you're the peon. So the fact that I went up to Carole, I don't remember this. I don't remember a lot of things. I guess Carole is my memory. But I'm sure I did, and yeah. But that's right.

Carole is a fantastic athlete, just superb, even then. I was sort of half-assed athlete. Carole was like really, really good, and could have played, I think, professional golf or a lot of different things. So, I kind of recognized— I'm sure that's part of how I sort of knew that Carole was in the realm there with me.

Raiskin: And so how did you two come to Eugene?

Boles: Well, my folks bought a campground in Weiser, Idaho, and they invited Carole and I to come. Of course then we were unfaithful to each other naturally, and we met other people. And somebody who went to school at the U of O, so we had come over to visit and when we finally said, "You know, we shouldn't really be a thing here."

Bennett: We moved to Portland.

Boles: Yeah, we moved to Portland, and then because we heard there's no jobs in Eugene, because there's all these people graduating from school and they're looking for a job. And neither of us— Well actually, we put each other through our final years of college. I was finishing up, and everyday Carole made me a tuna fish sandwich to take to work, and then when she finished, then— you finished after me, right?

Bennett: Uh-huh [affirmative].

Boles: Yeah. So she helped me finish, I helped her finish, and then it's like, "Okay, this is silly. We have to be someplace that makes sense." So,

that's when we moved to Portland, thinking there's no jobs in Eugene, and then I can't remember why I moved to Eugene. I can't remember what prompted me to do that.

Bennett: I think Melinda wanted to.

Boles: Oh, Melinda. Okay.

Bennett: Because Melinda and Judy moved to Portland from Weiser, Idaho area, and I'd already left with somebody else and moved to Chicago for a year, and I was miserable in another urban area. And we got a call while in Chicago from Judy and Melinda, who were now living in Portland, Oregon, and they said, "Why don't you come and live with us? We've got ten acres and a big house. Why don't you come?"

So, within about six, seven weeks, we were back out here and we lived together. And then we were there about six months when, I think it was March of 1975 that you and Melinda moved to Eugene, and that's when you met Linda Phelps and a lot of people, a lot of women.

Boles: Yeah. That was—

Bennett: Then I stayed in Portland.

Boles: And when did you come? You came down to Eugene a couple years later, or?

Bennett: June the first, 1978. I had come down several times to see Judy, and then I had met a few friends through Judy. And one afternoon Judy said, "Well, we've got this softball team, Eugene Naturals. It's really cool. It's all—", I don't know even know if we used the word lesbian. But anyway, "It's all women, and you'll never guess who's on the team." And she gave me the name of the person, Judy Enkosky. We all went to Carlsbad High School together.

So, we find out that Judy is also a lesbian. And I harken back to, she was three years younger than I, but we always went to the beach and we would lie on the blankets at the beach. And everybody's in the water and out of the water, and again, I don't know what our language was or how we talked, we would talk for hours every day at the beach about philosophy, art, spirituality, without any strong background in it, but just the kind of innate this and, oh. And again, I just texted Judy, who now lives in Hawaii, and she said, "I'll never forget our talks on the beach."

And it was, you know what? We planned our life, we planned our life on the beach that summer. Anyway, we met up again, and Judy Boles said, "Well, I'll call Judy and have her come over." So Judy Enkosky -Phillips came over, and we were hugging and we were so happy to see each other. It had been thirty-five years, or fifteen or twenty, and, "Oh, you're living in Portland?" "Yes." "You should move to Eugene," and I said, "Okay." It was the thing that I thought, now it's the path that I'm on. This Judy, and meeting all

these women, and then Judy Enkosky, at that moment it was like full circle. You're supposed to be here, Carole.

Boles: Yeah.

Bennett: And I have said it before, when I did move to Eugene, I was in a realm that I had never been in before. Like a kid in a candy shop. There was so many women, so many wonderful women, and you never, at the time it was important, you really never had to talk to a man. Not that I was a separatist, but it was like, "Well, finally I can interact and go about my daily business," and everything that you do over time, and you can just be with each other.

Boles: Yeah. I want to say something about sports, because Carole was on the Naturals, and also on Peralandra Pearl Divers. Of course we didn't put the Pearl Divers on the shirts.

Bennett: I think we did, didn't we?

Long: Later they were, those words were on the shirts.

Boles: Was it?

Long: Yeah.

Boles: Okay. Well, Carole was really a terrific player, but she would hit very, very long. Mostly she played left field because she could catch and throw and do everything. But when she would hit, she would be so on the ball that most, maybe half the time, it would go

along the left field line and go foul, but it would be so close to being completely over the fence you can't believe it.

Okay, I would hit completely to right because I'd be going like, "Oh my God, now they threw the ball to me. Okay, where is it, where is it, where is it? Oh, okay. Now, now." Ping! But luckily what would happen is sometimes it would go over the second base and first base person, and really be right in that sweet spot where, and of course the weakest on a softball team is usually the person in right field, so I was always hitting to the weakest person. So often, I would actually get on with having no athletic ability.

But anyway, sports. That was a terrific time. I mean, every lesbian in town came to those games. You could not find a place to park, nothing. I mean, those were the social events of whatever.

Adams: Every week.

Boles: And I know you played.

Adams: I played for a while, yes I did. I spent most of my time in the bleachers making out with girls and watching people on the field. But no, that was a really great activity to do where it brought people together, and I don't know that that exists anymore. Those were really great experiences doing a lot of outdoor things. Hiking with other women. It was like a real community feel with all of those things, aside from the co-ops and everything else that was going on at that time.

Boles: Yeah.

Bennett: Well I have to thank Skippy Brown for a lot of things, but he taught me not to throw like a girl. He taught me everything about how to throw the ball. Football. They had a pasture and horses, but we set up broad jump, high jump, pole vaulting. We did all those things for years and years.

In seventh grade, Judy pointed out that I was an athlete then. It was something else I had to hide, because I thought, "If I'm athletic— " That's why I would have loved to have been a PE teacher, but I thought, "No, I can't do that. I'll be outed." I was a good athlete, but I didn't— and I had to do all these things in a skirt, and the skirts came down to maybe three inches above your ankle. And flats, not tennis shoes, but flats.

So my seventh grade homeroom teacher talked to my mother, and my mother said, "You know Carole, Mr. Huntington wants you to play on the boys softball team," and I didn't want to, because again, that was going— a sign that I'm different. I just never felt that it was something I could celebrate. But innately, it was the most terrific thing to be physical and run around and scream and yell. That's what was so good about our softball, the Eugene Naturals and Peralandra.

So, I did play only one game, and by the time the game came around we were going to play the Carlsbad Army-Navy Academy. Well, by that time my boyfriend was Richard, and he was the

pitcher for Army-Navy Academy, so I had to stand up there and bat against him. And this is what I did. I was kind of humiliated and so over-exposed to this situation that I just wanted to run away. On the one hand, my mother wanted me to do it. "Won't that be wonderful?" He struck me out, and I cried. I just wanted to crawl away, but that was my experience.

And gosh, I really wish I had— you know, maybe if I— I don't know, but that's what it was. It was a very exposing moment, and I guess I felt exposed, too, when Skippy Brown said when I was six and a half years old what a queer was.

Raiskin: Those stakes were too high.

Bennett: Hmm?

Raiskin: Those stakes were too high.

Bennett: Yes, that's a good way to put it.

Raiskin: So, you were all in Eugene by 1978?

Bennett: Yes.

Boles: Five.

Adams: Seventy-six.

Boles: I was here in '75.

Raiskin: Okay, and you were playing softball. Where was the softball field?

Bennett: Amazon Field.

Adams: Amazon Field.

Boles: Of course. Where else?

Adams: Where else, yeah.

Bennett: And we did, we thought, "Well, this is just underscoring who we are."

Adams: It was perfect, yeah.

Long: But where is that?

Bennett: At Twenty-fourth and Pearl.

Long: Oh.

Bennett: Twenty-fourth—

Long: Right by where the high school is.

Bennett: Yes.

Adams: Yes, right beyond there.

Boles: Yeah.

Bennett: It's right down from Roosevelt Junior High now, or middle school.

Long: Okay.

Adams: There was a couple of fields there, yeah.

Boles: Yeah.

Raiskin: And where were you all living?

Bennett: Well, the first 1371 Sunny Drive is where I moved into with Judy and Linda and one other person, and then many people who crashed there.

Boles: Well, Susie Grimes lived with us, too.

Raiskin: What part of town is that?

Boles: River Road area.

Raiskin: River Road, okay.

Boles: Yeah.

Adams: I lived on Polk Street, and it got turned into some kind of— I got evicted because they turned it into some business. It was across the street from the no-tell motel. When I first moved here, also I had the same thing, "You'll never find a job. You'll never find a place to live." And, Heatherton Sage found me a house, and so that's where I lived during that early time for a couple of years.

Bennett: Wow.

Adams: Yeah.

Boles: Yeah.

Raiskin: It's kind of amazing that so many people came knowing there were no jobs, no place to live, there's a housing crunch. Imagine how many people would have come if that was not the case.

Adams: Yeah.

Bennett: Yes.

Boles: Well, it's like thank goodness for the rain, otherwise everyone in the whole country would move to Oregon.

Well you know, I guess work stuff is something that we should cover, because people contributed— well, there were kind of the entrepreneurs, and that included Wild Iris. And probably you know that Wild Iris, the partners there were Linda Phelps, Charm Bernard, and Maryann Gould. Actually they assumed Gertrude's debt, and that's how they came in. I was actually a part of anytime it had something to do with money—

Adams: You're the accountant.

Boles: People would ask me to come. It had something to do with money, how they were going to work this out, so I helped moderate that discussion of how— I mean, really there was nothing to discuss because financially it was not succeeding so they were lucky to have somebody saying, "We'll take over your debt." But—

Raiskin: Why were you asked to help with financial situations?

Boles: Because I had already— the work that I did actually when I was in Idaho, I was a controller for a car dealer, which is actually quite a responsible job. I actually started bookkeeping when I was in high school for my dad and his partner, they owned an auto supply and after school I'd do the books. Not the quarterlies, but all of— and so, over the years whenever I had to get a job, well I'd do a little bookkeeping. Well, pretty soon I'd do a little accounting. Well, pretty soon I'd actually do a little finance.

When I came, I ended up working for the City of Eugene as an accountant. And I had this other background, so I kind of knew what I was doing. So that's why. Linda and Charm and Maryann took over and started Wild Iris kind of at the— Carole waitressed. You should talk about what you did at Wild Iris, and the miser meals and—

Bennett: From 5:00 to 7:00 on Wednesdays the Wild Iris offered what they called miser meals. I don't know what they were, much, much less. They were the same menu, a little bit restricted menu, and smaller portions. And my friend Mary Jo and I, my girlfriend at the time, waited tables. It just felt really good, I always liked getting money for other people, fundraising and that sort of thing.

But I was talking to my mother on the phone, and I told her what we were doing. She said, "Oh, do they have dessert?" I said, "Oh yes, they have a nice dessert menu." "Oh, well I'm going to send my pumpkin cake roll up there." I said, "Oh mom, that's fantastic." I didn't want her to. It was just something more I was going to have

to deal with. She made the pumpkin cake roll, she wrapped it really, really well, and a few days later it came in the mail. I said, "Be sure you send it so that it arrives on Tuesday," because it'll be— we served the pumpkin cake roll, and it was a hit. She was very happy.

My mom, thinking back, she did a lot of wonderful things, but when I get to Arrow Maintenance I'll tell you another story about my mom. But, what else?

Boles: Well, how much did you get paid doing the waitressing at Wild Iris?

Bennett: We didn't. We other jobs, but we just did this for our community service, I guess, and we were friends with the owners.

Boles: That's right.

Bennett: Yeah, we just wanted to help out. Because one of our business accounts with Arrow Maintenance was the North Bank Restaurant, and they had twilight dinners. We fashioned it after that, the miser meals.

Boles: Well, I'm not 100 percent certain on this, but I'm pretty certain. Actually, the food person from the *R-G* came and reviewed Wild Iris, and said the food was good, but— And of course, he or she, I can't remember, didn't say, "Well, it's just loaded with a bunch of queers in there," but that's basically what they said, so don't go there because it's nothing but a bunch of lesbians in there. Of

course that's not what they said, but it was something to the effect that the clientele or whatever. That was a whole other thing.

Long: That was the *Register-Guard*, the local newspaper?

Boles: Yeah. Yeah.

Long: So, where was the Wild Iris located?

Boles: What street was Wild Iris on, Lawrence?

Bennett: It was on Lincoln, between Eleventh and Twelfth.

Long: Okay.

Bennett: I think it was 1261 Lincoln.

Boles: Yeah. I invested, because I bought the espresso machine.

Bennett: And it was definitely a local meeting place for lunch.

Boles: It was, yeah.

Bennett: It was well known for the very good food if you had enough time to wait for it.

Boles: You know, we should— there's others—

Raiskin: Where were you working?

Boles: I'm sorry?

Raiskin: Where were you working at this time?

Boles: City.

Raiskin: The city, okay.

Boles: I worked at the City of Eugene. I started as an accountant and then I became the budget manager. Then I went to Benton County as kind of the assistant finance director, and then I came back to Springfield as, I can't remember exactly where I started. I think the like the accounting manager, and then I ended up as the finance director at Springfield.

Raiskin: Were you out in these jobs?

Boles: You know, not really, but I wasn't keeping— I wasn't saying, "Hey, guess what?" but if somebody asked, or— Well, that was part of what was going on, because of course in these years were all the ballot measures.

Raiskin: The anti-gay ballot measures.

Boles: Yeah. I worked on I think all of those except 9, because I had left town at that time. In fact, when I was in Springfield the city attorney who was really a great guy, and he asked me because it was at the time of measure 51. No, that was Eugene. Springfield was 20-08. And he asked me, "Are you going to say something?" And I said, "Well, I probably should, but I'm not." People knew, but it wasn't like "official".

Raiskin: Did you ever feel homophobia at work?

Boles: Huh. Not anybody that I really worked— Well, there was one person who was on the management team who said something like, I'm trying to think how he put it but, "I work with," and I don't know if he said my name or not, and I over— He was a very, very devout fundamentalist Christian, and he said something to the effect, "Well, I work with Judy and I overlook." I'm like, "Well, thanks a lot."

That's a very good organization, the Springfield City organization. They're very in-tune with the community and do a lot of good, and I never really encountered things at work. I mean, but I'm sort of oblivious, so things might've happened I didn't even pick up on.

Adams: I was working for the City of Eugene, and I started there in 1980, actually. I was the first woman, I worked at the wastewater treatment plant in the very beginning as a lab technician in their water quality laboratory. There was a lot of different professions at that facility. There was mechanics and operations people, a lot of people, and I was one of two women in the whole organization. There was like seventy-two employees. There was a lot of people.

I remember going there and there was all these horrible calendars and stuff up. Miss Rigid Wrench calendar, just horrible. Just really bad things. I decided when I first started working there I had to do something, and I went and got a *Playgirl* magazine with all the naked men centerfolds. I covered them up, I covered up privates, but I did a calendar of my own and hung it up in lunchroom. It was called “Turning the Tables 1980.”

Raiskin: That's so ironic, because that wasn't even your orientation.

Adams: No, no, it was just the idea.

Raiskin: I understand.

Adams: And it lasted about two seconds, and it was torn down. My philosophy when I went into that organization was more just getting to know people and seeing people change their perspective about gay people through their relationships.

Raiskin: So, were you out there?

Adams: I wasn't blatantly out, but I was out. I mean, I raised a family. I ended up raising a family while I was working for the city, and I have a thirty-two-year-old daughter and a twenty-four-year-old son, and my partner and I were together for twenty-six years before she passed away. There was a lot of things in the city that behind the scenes, things around policies and issues and leave absences and custody issues, and all of those things, insurance coverage, that was like a learning experience and trying to change those things from the inside out. And actually, a lot of those things happened.

We were actually, I think, the first couple to have a— we petitioned the Circuit Court when our son was born to have joint custody, and we were granted that. It was really through the help of a lot of people that worked in the city. There was the Assistant Public Works Director, he ended up in the City Manager's Office at that time, and he was really good about saying, "You should kind of

keep this quiet," when that happened because the OCA's in full force and they're going to try to take your kids away. That kind of thing was happening.

I never had a lot of discrimination, I didn't feel that from people that I worked with, but I really kind of just built relationships with people as I moved through different positions in the city and over time. I think it broadened people's perspective, and I did really good work, so I think that was helpful. I was able to move up through different positions. I was a laboratory supervisor for a long time. Then when I ended my career— I worked there for thirty years, so when I ended my career there I was the Environmental Management System Coordinator and we were ISO certified for environmental [inaudible 00:52:44].

I felt like the city was a good organization to work for. There was a lot of challenges. There were times where it was really— and I hoped that all of that's worked out now, now that people can be married. Even when the domestic partner thing was going on where they recognized my partner as a partner and my son as my son, when her mom passed away I had to take vacation time to go to the funeral. You know, those types of things. I think there was a lot of progress through all of that time on a lot of those policies, so I felt pretty grateful.

Raiskin: Did you challenge those policies yourself, and work on them?

Adams: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yes.

Boles: Yeah.

Adams: And, there's people inside the city that were really good about doing that. There were some that weren't. There were some people that were just so stuck on the definitions and couldn't see beyond that, so if the person wasn't listed then that was that. Cheryl passed away two months before it was federally legal for us to get married, so— we were also one of the 3,000 at Multnomah County, so we were registered. We got our marriage certificate and our license, and we got married. We had a big wedding, and then they sent us our license back and said it was revoked.

Long: Would you mind telling us how you and your partner got your children?

Adams: Yeah. First of all, I've got to say a little bit about Cheryl, because Cheryl was a big part of this community. She took up every space she was in. She was a big personality. She was one of the people in the first all-women's band here, named TranSister. She was a bass player and a lead singer. She also, when they were in TranSister, they would all take turns playing different instruments. That was another big social gathering. People all came to a lot of those different performances, Wallflower Order and TranSister and WYMPROV!, and all of the things that were going on then.

She was involved with a woman for about three years before we got involved, and they had a daughter through an agreement with a gay man. They had broken up, and they were still living together,

and I used to babysit for Shalan. So, we got together when Shalan was two, and so she was biologically Barb's daughter, and Cheryl was a "psychological parent." She petitioned the court for custody, but then they wouldn't do that so they called it psychological parenting. We had Shalan half time her whole life, and so whenever we took trips or did things like that, we had to get power-of-attorneys, we had to do all of that. I had to pay a different insurance policy to cover her. I had a different insurance policy for Cheryl before the city would do those things.

And then Taylor, we got to know a gay couple, and we wanted to have a sibling for her, so we— well, it was illegal, but I inseminated Cheryl and our son Taylor was born.

Raiskin: That was illegal?

Adams: It was, because we did it just on our own. There was no clinical doctor yet.

Raiskin: I had never heard that was illegal.

Adams: Yes.

Long: But it's not illegal for a man and a woman to have sex, exchange bodily fluids.

Adams: Right, right. Yes, bodily fluids. But it is if you're doing it in a different way. We also wanted his fathers to be involved in his life, and so they've consistently been in his whole life.

Raiskin: Were they in your daughter's life, as well?

Adams: They took that roll on in a really good way. It was great, because her father kind of abandoned her through all of this.

Raiskin: What year was your son born?

Adams: He was born in '93, and she was born in '86.

Raiskin: Okay. Did you have any support from any lesbian parenting groups or anything?

Adams: You know, it's interesting because a lot of gay people hadn't had kids, and so there was really no— they were clueless about a lot of things. They'd be having a party and they'd say, "Well, are you coming to the party?", and we'd say, "Well, Taylor's got a fever." They'd say, "Well, you're coming anyway aren't you?" We'd say, "No, we're not. We're taking care of our child."

And our kids, their friends, most of their parents were straight, so we pretty much had— we had some consistent friends in our lives, gay friends that we've had forever, and so we had that support network. But really, most of our friends were families of our kids' friends, and we spend most of our time on playing fields for Kidsports and those types of things.

Raiskin: Did you feel accepted in that community, and did you have any issues at school?

Adams: You know, we had more issues than our kids did. I'll never forget one time because Shalan was in pre-school, and I remember Cheryl just being completely freaked out because she heard this little kid ask her, she goes, "Well, how can you have three moms?" Cheryl was so freaked out about that stuff, and Shalan was just so matter-of-fact. She goes, "Well, my mom Cheryl and Barb used to be together, and then they broke up. And then my mom Cheryl and Donna got together, and so now I have three moms." And that was it.

Our kids were so matter-of-fact about their lives, and they felt so comfortable. I don't think that there was ever— We didn't have a lot of issues. I'm sure there were people that didn't let their kids play with our kids, but we never experienced that. We were kind of the house to go to. We had kids at our house for slumber parties every weekend. We were pretty much, we were the—

Raiskin: What elementary school did your kids go to?

Adams: They went to Magnet Arts, and then they went to Kennedy, and then they went to Churchill International High School. Both of them.

Boles: Yeah. I guess I want to underscore a point that Donna made, which is that the relationships that people had where they worked, with their friends, their straight friends, how important that was. We've said at different times how important it is to come out, because when people know you and know the quality— I knew Donna, not

well, but I knew her at the city and I knew how well she was respected in that part of the organization. So, when people do good work and they have their act together, and then they are who they are, I think there's as much impact from that as there is from the political stuff.

I'd be the last person in the world to say that political stuff isn't important. I think it's absolutely crucial, but there's that whole other person aspect that I think is just equally important, and Donna was such an example of somebody who had their act together even though the rest of us are going, "Well, why aren't you coming to the party?" "We're going to Riv Room. Come on, come on!"

Adams: I think that's how acceptance grows. I think acceptance grows through lack of fear and understanding, and I think that so much of the fear and so much— I think that that's what causes all that divisiveness and all of that pain and hurt. I always had like a foot in two different worlds as we did this, we had a lot of things in common with all of those people, including all of the gay community. I think that was my way of moving the effort forward, is through just having good, solid relationships with people and having them see that we're no different and our lives are the same. We all pay our taxes and do our work, and want to raise our kids and be happy.

Raiskin: Do you want to tell us more about Cheryl's activities?

Adams: Yeah. Cheryl did a lot of things. Cheryl was in bands the whole time, and she got her degree while we were together. She got her Master's of Fine Arts. She was also an artist and a photographer, and had a lot of exhibits all over the place. She was the center of every party or every room she ever walked into. She had this presence about her, and she had an incredible sense of humor. She was just a very empathic and very compassionate person who would do anything for anybody.

I brought a few little things that are memorabilia's that I can show you.

Raiskin: Why don't you show us—

Adams: Can I show you one thing? Just one thing?

Long: Okay. Yeah.

Adams: Because this was TranSister back in the day. This is kind of a—

Raiskin: It's fantastic.

Adams: Yeah. And that's one thing we didn't talk about, is everybody had a mullet or a rat tail. But it was pretty good.

Raiskin: That is fantastic.

Adams: Cheryl's in the middle. So it was just we were a good partnership, and we kind of made agreements around things. I took on kind of the support role and did the job and brought home the paychecks, and she was able to do more of the creative stuff and be there for

the kids a lot of the times. They went to daycare and school and all those things, and so she had time to do other things, but it was just we kind of had this really good working relationship that way.

And then, speaking of things that you deal with in life around being gay, she died when we were on vacation in St. Croix, and St. Croix doesn't recognize those relationships. So, we were fortunate enough to have had our ducks in a row and had all the paperwork for directives in place, and were able to have those faxed to us immediately so that I could make decisions, but it's a struggle. There's still a lot of places in the world where there are things that people have to do differently as a gay couple even if you, you know—

Raiskin: So, in the midst of your shock and grief, you had to deal with these bureaucratic issues?

Adams: Yes, and I had to be there for five days. I was with some good friends who are in the community. You've probably talked to them, too, Susie Grimes and Penelope. If it wasn't for them, I would have not ever made it through all of that. Susie just kind of took the reins and really helped me, because I was a mess and I needed to get home to the kids. So, it took a long time to—

Long: What year was that?

Adams: This was in '15, 2015.

Long: Wow.

Adams: In May. And I think, when did the marriage thing go federal? July?

Raiskin: June. Early June.

Adams: June. Yeah, right after. Yeah.

Boles: Yeah. I don't know, because we were talking amongst ourselves before we came over here, and one of the things that Donna said, and I think it's really true. I don't have the data to corroborate, but so many lesbians in their work worked for a governmental agency or a non-profit. In so many cases, it was like you want to help. You want your work to feel like you're doing something for the community or something for other people. Carole's a good example. When you were doing the fundraising thing for the ONRC. Yeah, you should tell about that.

Bennett: Well, I had Arrow Maintenance Carpet Cleaning and Wood Floor Refinishing business for eleven years. I started it with Linda Phelps, and she was there for the first two years and then she went on to graduate school. During that eleven year period, I had a lot of different other jobs because running the business I worked five days a week at these accounts, and then on weekends I got to a place where I could hire people. There were a total of thirty-eight women who worked for Arrow Maintenance as sub-contractors, because our bookkeeper said, "Well, they can't be employees." Do everything we can to kind of skirt paying taxes and liability, and being responsible.

These are the other people who worked at the North Bank, which was our bread and butter account. My mother, my two sisters, my two nephews, one niece, Judy was one of the thirty-eight people. It was between careers, between jobs, or they needed extra money, or "Hey, let's go work for Arrow Maintenance." I mean, we never, ever had a shortage of people who would come and cover at work.

And then, during that time, I just want to make a quick note too, about my earlier statement. That when I moved to Eugene I would never have to hire a man electrician. I could hire women of all the trades and professions. Then Linda and I started the Arrow Maintenance in the summer of '78 because we needed money, and I think we paid $56 a month rent each for four people. And we said, "Well, what can we do? Ah, well let's just get a job doing yard work, maintenance." Okay, so we did that, and we have many funny stories to tell just how unbelievably irresponsible we were.

I have to tell this part, because Linda and I sometimes refer to it being one of the funniest things ever, but at the moment we just wanted to be resourceful. So we end up at this job. It's out in the country on the way to the airport, one of those small farms. And so the woman was, "I want to see you girls weed this and weed that." So, okay. We went to get our tools, and Linda said, "Did you bring the—?" "No, did you? I thought you did." "No." So, we had really no tools, but we didn't want the woman to know it. So we found an old dog bone that was the perfect shape like a big spoon, and we weeded that whole area with a dog bone.

And then when the woman— we had to hide out. Then it was lunchtime, and of course it's lunchtime, we want to have our lunch. So we take our little sandwiches and we're sitting down in the shade eating, and the woman comes over and said, "You need to get to work." "Well, we were just having lunch." "I'm not paying you for having lunch." "Okay." She said, "I want to see your noses down and your butt's in the air."

In the early stage it was kind of romantic. You know, "Oh, isn't wonderful? We can go to work and then we collect money, and we hardly have to do anything."

So the next thing we know, it's October and the rains are starting. "Oh, what are we going to do? I don't want to work in the rain." So, I don't know where we got the idea, but we said, "Well, what about carpet and upholstery cleaning?" I think maybe a truck went by that said carpet and upholstery cleaning. And we went, this is the way we did research, we made in-person face-to-face visits to all the janitorial services in town, four or five of them, and always run by men. We walked in and said, "We want to start a carpet cleaning business. Could you show us your equipment?" And some eye-rolls. Mostly they talked, they had their hands tucked in their pockets rattling change, and we got nowhere.

So, finally, when we were almost exasperated but not fully, we made a call to industrial chemical lab. I'll say his first name, Clark. So we'd say the pitch, "Hi, we are—" and this was over the phone. "We want to look at some equipment. We need to learn how to

carpet clean." I don't know if we said that much, if we revealed that much, "Carpet and upholstery cleaning." And this was his response, "Well, do you now?" We said, "Yes, we do." He said, "Well, what do you girls, I mean, women," he said. "Now I know my wife who's divorcing me says you should not call women girls." He said, "Well, listen girls. I mean, women. Why don't we meet at my office? 5th Street Public Market."

The fall of 1978, there was nothing there. There was this old loading dock, and then maybe Allan Brothers. Linda and I are really excited. So in walks Clark, who was in some ways amused, but he was not a misogynist, and he was really thrilled that we wanted to do this work. Probably he saw that we would be good customers. After an hour of explaining this, he told us about him, and he said, "You know? How about this, girls? How about if I loan you the carpet upholstery cleaning, all the tools that you need, and I'll give you the supplies for the first few jobs. You line them up, I'll show up, and I'll show you how to do all this."

And he did that for many months, but the funny part was he did—you know, we just kind of, was it Huck Finn or Tom Sawyer? "Oh really? How do you do that?" So, he did the whole job. Then we moved to wood floor refinishing. I don't know where that came from, but it might have been one of his suggestions. At the time, there weren't any environmentally friendly materials, and it was urethane or polyurethane or something. It was just complete brain-

deadening materials, but we persevered and we refinished floors, carpet cleaning.

Oh, okay. We put our ad in the paper, and invariably we would get— I mean, we never had a scarcity of work. One lady called us and she said, "Girls, do you remove black— ?" "Oh yes, we do, we do." So we cleared out lots of blackberries from her house, and we went to the door and I said, "Well, we're finished with the blackberries," which was at the end of the day, and she goes, "Oh well, girls do you clean carpets?" "Yes, we do."

That's the person who got us into it, carpet cleaning, because we would always say, "Yes, we do." And then we would leave and say, "We've got to go learn how to do this." So, that's where the carpet cleaning came in, so I was wrong in thinking that a car went by. But that kind of spontaneity was often at work.

We did the carpet cleaning, Clark came, again, months after months the equipment. This was expensive equipment, and he was only too delighted to be so helpful. He was our mentor. I still know him. I still buy products to clean my house.

Okay, so this was a funny part that Linda, always more practical and sensible than I. We were in the garage. She said, "Girls," this was the same lady, "Girls, I want you to come and look at something." We went in the garage and she had this awesome, about a 1956 Dodge Coronet. I mean, a real classic. And she said, "Girls, do you paint cars?", and I said— Linda says, "No, we don't."

And I was crushed, because my dad was in that business, and I thought, well we'll just bring him over here somehow, or we'll take the car, I don't know. I thought we could branch out. And then we left, and I said, "Well, Linda," and she said, "No, we don't paint cars and we're not going to paint cars."

So, I'll just wrap this up by saying that in that interim of 1978 to 1990 when I ran the business, I also did fundraising for Oregon Natural Resources Council. I produced auctions and other events that had been ongoing with Oregon Natural Resources Council. I also got my massage license, and I don't know, I was just was always wanting to do other things besides— excuse me.

Boles: Yes, Carole was fabulous at asking people for things. She'd ask and they would say "Yes." If I asked somebody they'd say, "Are you crazy? No." But Carole would ask and they'd say "Yes."

So, for example, the Nissan dealer—

Bennett: Eugene Nissan. Yeah, I procured a lot of things. I just got on the phone and got trips to the Amazon, Copper Canyon, just these fantastic gifts. I was delighted. I loved it, and people were kind of like, "Whoa, you got that?" "Uh-huh." And we had two years of very successful auctions.

But my brother-in-law worked for Eugene Nissan, and somehow I got the idea that maybe we could get a car donated to the auction. And low and behold, after just a few meetings the owner gave us a car. It was one of the fancier kind of sports car type of Nissan. It

didn't sell, but we did have, like I said, successful auctions. Well, he caught a lot of flack from the timber industry. I don't know if they picketed, but they made it known that they weren't happy with him.

So yeah, that was like I said, I had a lot of stop-gap jobs, so I was never really career oriented and was finally forced when I thought, "Oh my God, I'm forty-eight years old. I don't have a pension plan. I don't have— I better get busy," so I went to New Mexico to study acupuncture, and ended up after a year going and getting my MSW at Highlands University. From then, 1993 to 2009 I worked in social work, mental health, with foster kids and children who were, the term was severely emotionally disturbed children, at Mount Shasta Mountain Center and Lane County Mental Health.

Boles: Carole is perfect example of lesbians in the community whose work was always about helping somebody.

Adams: I think that a group that is oppressed has a tendency, it seems, for every cause in this community. Whenever there's a cause for anybody that's been oppressed, the lesbians are always there in pretty good numbers. I think it always has been that way.

I remember meeting you again at one of those after-hour parties at the Excelsior when you were doing their floors.

Boles: —the basement.

Bennett: We were doing their floors while we were partying?

Adams: Well, you were going to do the floors after the party was over. All those people from all of the co-ops were there. It was like Jennifer Carey from Starflower and who was it? Nancy Strong and Susan.

Boles: Nancy Strong, yeah.

Raiskin: So, you knew all the people who were working at Starflower and at the other collectives?

Bennett: Yes.

Boles: Yes.

Adams: Yeah.

Bennett: Yes. In fact, Starflower was one of our jobs. Cleaning the trucks.

Raiskin: Oh, what was that like?

Bennett: The semis or the bobtails that they transported all their goods around the northwest. Yeah, it was one of our jobs. It was just a lot of fun because you always had women and we made our own hours, and very relaxed work. But once we got to the job we wanted to do a fantastic job. And here always times in the wood floor refinishing when you hit a wall, like if you're running a marathon, and we would stand and look and say, "Oh my God. What are we going to do? This is terrible." And then we would persevere, and then pretty soon we'd cross that barrier, whatever it was, and then it turned out fine.

But afterwards, we always had to drink beer. And now I know why painters drink, because there's something in that noxious petroleum product that makes you just want to drink a beer.

Boles: You know, we should say something about Linda Phelps too, because Linda was such an important person in the community. A couple things that she did, she worked at the recreation program. I called it specialized recreation then, but it was for people with disabilities and doing programs for people in that population. Linda became the director of that program, and one of the things that she did, she applied for a grant from HUD and she got money. It was the first time anybody got HUD money to do something like this. She was responsible for getting the Hilyard Community Center built. They had an architect, but they also worked collaboratively with people who used the center so that it had one of the first hearing loops built into the center. And that, I don't know if it was the first in Eugene, but it was—

Raiskin: Can you describe what a hearing loop is?

Boles: Okay. They have one now they just put in at the Shed, but essentially if you have hearing loss your hearing thing can somehow, it amplifies through this loop. So it's a hearing assist for people who, like me, can't hear diddly. But not like me, people who really have really severe hearing issues.

And the year after they finished the center, the ADA passed, the ADA Bill. They had like only two very minor things that they had

to do the center to comply with the law. Everybody else was like, "Oh, I have to rebuild this and that." I mean, it was massive, but it was— and that's another example that Linda, the kind of work that she did was about helping people.

She and Susan Sygall were a part of the original founders of MIUSA.

Raiskin: Mobility International USA.

Adams: Yes.

Boles: Yeah. This was way, way back really in the early days, and now we know that a lot of what they do is they bring people with disabilities from different countries here to talk about how do you get things organized to get the things that—

Bennett: Accessibility.

Boles: The access and the facilities that you need in your country to make life workable for somebody with disabilities. And I have to tell a story about it because one of the very first groups to come here, they came from Russia. And the people who were in that group stayed at different homes, because of course there was— I mean, this is early, early days. In fact, I did their first financial statement.

But Linda and Susan and other people, Susie Grimes was involved too, but I think that was later. But these gals, and there might have been one or two guys but most of the people who came from the delegation were women. And one of the things then, that if you

were a MIUSA supporter then they'd decide okay, they were going to put on kind of a feed, and the Russians did all the food, which was fabulous. I made a total pig of myself on some kind of egg salad thing that was so good.

But anyway, we're in Laurie McClain's backyard, and all the Russian gals are there and we're having this great time, and they had gone shopping previously. And Laurie's house, you could walk to Valley River Center kind of a back way across the bridge. And they had been to Valley River Center, and of course they went shopping for all the food and all of that. So, we're yak, yak, yak. We think we have identified the gal who's their minder, because at that time people didn't leave the Soviet Union without somebody from the Communist Party with them. We thought we knew who that was because of the way people interacted, and just her affect, which was— .

So, we're all having a great time, and pretty soon though, it's time to leave and everybody's going to leave. Well, two of the gals are missing. Uh-oh, where's so and so and so and so? So, someone said, well in fact I think it was me that said—

Adams: Of course it was.

Boles: "Well, they probably defected." I'm telling you, that gal that we thought was the Party minder, she did not think that was one bit funny. And where they had gone, they had walked back over to Valley River Center. They didn't have money to shop, but they

were feeling the merchandise over there and ultimately they came back.

Bennett: Wow.

Boles: Linda was at that time the president of the board, and has stayed involved in MIUSA. I think she's back on the board or she's president of the board back again now. So, there's just another instance of people doing good.

Well, I have to say about myself, you think if you're a government grunt. Everybody thinks they're arrrrrrrh [mumbles], they're standing around holding up a shovel. Actually, one of the things that we did at Springfield, we did an advance refunding and we got our bond rating increased, and actually that saves millions of dollars. It depends on how much debt you take on, how much building you do, but that was a significant effort that was something, although nobody says anything. "Oh, the great finance department," ever. But—

Raiskin: I wanted to ask you, so we have enough time to talk about your feeling about aging in Eugene, or aging as lesbians?

Boles: It sucks. Really. Because you can't— I just got a new hip, so I'm actually good to go for a little bit longer, but yeah. I mean, it's not— Well, I want to keep my experience of course, but if I could roll back to thirty-five, perfect.

Yeah, you start having health issues, and when I laugh and say I can't remember things, I really can't remember things. I have to call up Carole. "Carole, when— ?"

Raiskin: Is there anything specific of being a lesbian in aging?

Adams: I have something. As I age, my dream would be to be in a community with gay women again, and also, but still have my own space. I really need my own space. So, I do like the idea because there's so many gay people that are alone, and they don't want to go back into the closet and go in a fifty-five and older home where you can't be who you are or feel not supported.

For me, I mean I've talked to Susie about it. It's like, "Let's just build a bunch of tiny homes and then have like a community space and a community garden and all those things," because I think it would be really— I mean, we've all been around each other and been friends for forty, fifty years, so it's like for me, that would be a wonderful thing to downsize and do that. I mean, I'll have family and I'll have grandkids and I'll do all of those things, but it just would be I think nice to have that community feel again.

Boles: Yeah.

Bennett: Yeah.

Raiskin: Do you feel—

Adams: Early '70s was that same kind of thing. That's where people really came together, and then people kind of drifted into all of these different avenues.

Raiskin: Can you imagine a realistic avenue to get there?

Adams: Yes, sure. Just some zoning changes. You know, some zoning changes and people that have a like-minded vision. I mean, I think the vision is probably the biggest part of that.

Raiskin: A lot of people have the vision, and just a few people really have the expertise in terms of city governments and ideas about zoning and some real estate.

Adams: Yes. Yeah.

Raiskin: Everybody needs their floors cleaned and carpets cleaned.

Adams: Yes, there's a big pool there of a lot of different expertise and a lot of different skills and a lot of different things, so I think that it's a totally doable thing. In Oregon, especially. There's so much land. I don't know. I don't mind aging. I feel fortunate that I'm here, and with Cheryl's death, it's fleeting, so I think it's a blessing every day.

Boles: Yeah.

Raiskin: Carole, do you have ideas about aging as a lesbian?

Bennett: Aging, yeah it's difficult for me because my mind in some ways is still thinking in a younger way. I think I've said this before during this interview, that I haven't really been very future-oriented, but

I've always felt as though opportunities present themselves. At one time, I lived in New Mexico, Judy lived in New Mexico. She moved down there for a while, too. This was twenty-five, almost thirty years ago, and we talked about, "Oh, we'll get a ranch and we'll have small homes, and we'll have horses. It'll just be a big ranch with all women, and we'll retire there." But again, not thinking about the future in a real way then, I was thinking, "Yeah, that sounds great." But I was picturing myself the age that I was then, and not now, or older.

I don't know how it's going to look, and I don't know where I fit in. That is something I—

Raiskin: What do you mean?

Bennett: What do I mean?

Raiskin: Mm-hmm [affirmative]—

Bennett: I guess in way, I'm not sure about my need or desire to live in a lesbian community. I haven't figured it out. I haven't tried to. I'm just going along as I always have, thinking that I'm on the way to somewhere. But I don't know if somebody needs to be a lesbian for me to— Maybe it's just the way I've integrated, the way we have integrated, because as all of us have worked in not exclusively lesbian organizations or businesses. I guess that's my next threshold to cross over.

Raiskin: So, it's something about critical mass. Like you don't want to be the only one in assisted living who's a lesbian, but you don't necessarily need everybody to be a lesbian.

Bennett: Right. I guess, and I haven't articulated it. That's probably been one of my secrets, but the whole idea of not living in my own house, I haven't gotten there yet. But in some places like Santa Fe where there's a lot of wealthy people, there is a lesbian/gay retirement home that's very, very expensive, and we have friends who have their name on the list. They're looking towards the future in a very practical way, and very wise way, and I haven't gotten there yet but I'm expecting maybe somebody like Donna or Judy will say, "Hey, we've got this idea. What do you think? Do you want to?" "Okay."

Raiskin: It's worked so far.

Bennett: Yes, it's true. Yes it has.

Boles: Yeah. No, and it's true, because we actually have talked about this over the years. It's like, well Donna was smart, but the rest of us are like, "Wait a minute. How come I didn't have kids? I was not thinking ahead here."

Adams: My son thinks I'm going to live with him. He says, "When you're old you're going to live with me." And I said, "Well, I don't know if that's going to be the case. I have other things that I'd like to do."

Bennett: And Donna has stayed with a career and a job long term, which is one of the ways in which you can be dependent upon your pension, your retirement. That's the way it's done.

Boles: But we have talked about you buy a big house, and then you hire somebody who makes the meals and does whatever, but everybody's got their own space. But as long as whoever is managing it is reporting to you, then you're retaining some control over what goes on, and we've talked about stuff like that over the years but nobody's grabbed the bull by the horns yet.

Adams: Yeah. Well, Susie's got the property, we just don't have the zoning.

Boles: There we go.

Raiskin: Donna, I wanted to ask you about when Cheryl died, how it was for you in the community?

Adams: Oh, it was so supportive. I mean, the support from the community and not just the gay community, the music community. There was over 300 people that came to her Celebration of Life, and people played music and did— I mean, everybody pulled together and just were phenomenal. She touched a lot of people, so there was pretty much people from every segment of the community.

Raiskin: And how has been for you socially? I know it's true for many people who are widowed that they were with couples, and then it's difficult.

Adams: Yes. The grief process is a roller coaster. The first year, my whole life was around getting my kids through the firsts. The first Christmas, the first Thanksgiving, the first birthdays, the first anniversary, so I was really focused on that. I have a lot of very close friends who have never— they were friends with Cheryl or just friends with me or both, and so I haven't felt like a third wheel at all in any of that, because the people that I'm close to are very connected.

The second year was a really hard year for me, because that's when the sorting has to happen, where you decide what you're going to let go of and what you're not. Which traditions you're going to keep. What we're going to do in our family. So the second year was a really hard year, and I kind of isolated a little bit during that second year and then I kind of rolled out of it during the third year.

Raiskin: And the kids aren't living at home?

Adams: No. My daughter is married, and she got married after Cheryl died. Cheryl got to help. Cheryl picked the wedding dress, which was great. My daughter and son-in-law live in Eugene. They have a house, and they are going through an adoption process now, so I'm going to be a grandmother sometime soon. My son is doing his master's work down in Miami. We just did a 3,600 mile road trip to take his car there for his second year.

It's been a roller coaster, but I feel like the support has been there.

Raiskin: Have you been involved in any online or in town grief groups?

Adams: No. I've done counseling in the past, and I feel like I have the support I need through it so I haven't really done any online stuff. I'm at that place in my life now where, I mean Cheryl, that was it, and so I really don't see myself getting involved again and doing that whole thing. Aging is different now, because I expected to be able to do that with her. Now I'm looking at it in a different way than I was before, so that's kind of that community would be an important part of that for me because I still want companionship, I just don't think I want to do that whole thing again.

Raiskin: You've all individually and collectively led very rich lives here in Eugene, and have just had so much experience. We've been asking everybody who we're talking to to imagine a young person watching this video, either soon or in twenty years, or from a small town somewhere because it's available, is there any advice that you would give to a young person about a best way to live or something from your experience?

Adams: That's a big question. I would say live authentically. Be who you are. I'm very grateful for people that paved the way for me in the past, and I see shifts in our society now that are positive, aside from some other things that are going on now. But I think that with being gay, it's not a generational thing, so there's a lot of backward steps. It's like one step forward, two steps back. Other people can say, "This will never happen to us again." You know, the Jewish community or the African American community, and so I would say keep that in mind. Sometimes those steps may not seem much,

but it is a spiral up. It is moving forward. I would say live authentically and the rest will follow.

Bennett: I guess find a lesbian community. Find a gay or lesbian community. Sorry, I'm drawing a blank about what I would— my niece is a lesbian. Actually out of my nine cousins, there's three of us, and it is fifty years since I came out in increments. I could one on one be very supportive and connect with that person and maybe think about it at the time, but as far as a philosophical view or two, I can't articulate what I would say.

Boles: You know, the other thing that we kind of have remarked on is how being more accepted and more integrated into the community, we have in some way kind of lost some of the uniqueness and some of the stuff that we did. And you look back and "Oh," and now we're all just going about our business and some of that's lost.

I hope that, I mean of course I want more integration, more acceptance, more— And I think it's inevitable. I think you go forward and then maybe you come back a little bit, but I'm fundamentally an optimist and so I think it works out.

But I would say, kind of hang on a little bit to your uniqueness. As a lesbian or a gay man, that there are things that I think are unique about us, and as much as that was a horrible thing when you maybe were a little kid and it was terrifying, now I think that's good. I said to a man sometime, he said, "Oh, I love women." "Yeah, me too."

So, you have an appreciation for people that you shouldn't lose. You should be okay with what's unique about being a lesbian, and don't lose that entirely.

Raiskin: Politically we had to make the argument that we're just like you, but that erases the ways we're not just like you.

Adams: That's right.

Boles: Exactly.

Adams: Yeah, there's an independence component of that, that we didn't have someone else to rely on for periods in our lives, and so I think we gained skills that a lot of people didn't gain out of necessity, and I think those things are all really strong points for gay people.

Boles: Well, there's a culture there that you don't want to completely abandon.

Adams: No.

Boles: And something about being a lesbian that is unique, that's not the same as being— I mean, sexuality obviously is a continuum, so at any point in your life maybe you're over here and the next time you're a little bit more over there, but there's something precious about it that we shouldn't lose entirely.

Adams: I went clothes shopping with a straight friend of mine, and she was trying to get me dressed up for this wedding. She wanted to do my makeup, and I said, "You know, you have understand when I do

this I feel like I'm in drag. When you do this, you're having a great old time and you think it's just okay, but this is different. It's a different perspective." It's just a different perspective and experience.

Raiskin: When you—

Boles: Go ahead.

Raiskin: I was going to say, when you look back on your time, your life, your time in Eugene, what would you say has been your greatest joy?

Boles: Friends, for sure.

Bennett: Well— Pardon?

Boles: Friends.

Bennett: Yes. That's why I stayed in Eugene, because of community and the continuity. And thank you for doing this project, because it's brought something to fruition for me. That yes, I did live this. You know, there's a beginning, and a middle, and an end at this point. I guess it's a sense of belonging. I belong in history now. The whole lesbian thing, it's kind of blurry to me. When you ask questions about lesbian, it's like, "Wow, that's just a part of me." I suppose I could study it or be more introspective about it, but thank you for doing this project. It's been a gift, because that's why I lived here, because of the women.

And the other aspect of it, when my lesbianism is not driven by sexuality or libido, then who am I? Because are you a lesbian if you're not practicing lesbian sex? A rhetorical question, I don't know.

Adams: I am.

Boles: Another part of the aging thing.

Adams: [inaudible 01:45:33]

Bennett: Yeah that too, and that is a part of it. When you're older, it's like, "Well, I used to know what that meant." Now, we are all friends. It's family, your cousins, or a neighborhood. It's a neighborhood of people, a community of people.

This interview has really brought up some more thinking. Something I'm not going to be able to avoid, I can tell now.

Adams: Also for me, this was the perfect town to feel fortunate and to be able to raise a family in, and to have a family as a lesbian couple. I don't think that there's a lot of towns that we could have done that in. I know there are some, but Eugene was really a great community and support. And the city was already structured in so many ways to support those things. I mean there was challenges, yes. There's still inequity, there's still issues, there's still all sorts of things. But that was my biggest blessing, was being able to have a family here.

Raiskin: I want to thank you so much for this interview.

Long: Yes, thank you.

Raiskin: It's been really lovely.

Adams: Thank you.

Bennett: Thank you, Julee.

[END OF INTERVIEW]