Oral History Interview with Alicia Hays and Adelka Shawn

Interview conducted on September 11, 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

Adelka Shawn and Alicia Hays at the March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation, April 25, 1993

Adelka Shawn and Alicia Hays, September 11, 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 11, 2018

Alicia Hays was born in Nebraska into a conservative Catholic family and grew up in Idaho. She was the second of six children. She discusses family life. Her family was supportive of her emerging sexuality. When she was in high school, she broke her back in an inner-tubing accident. Alicia went to Idaho State University and participated in wheelchair outdoor sports and activities. She had a partner who played women's softball. She met many women athletes from Eugene. Alicia moved to Eugene in 1983. Alicia discusses the lesbian community in Eugene. She talks about her and her partner Adelka Shawn's public involvement with the campaigns against the anti-gay political measures. They discuss the stress they felt during the campaigns, and their self-realization of the need to be out. Alicia discusses her administrative work with Health and Human Services. She talks about the character of the lesbian community in Eugene and her work on the Eugene School district board. She also discusses GLSEN, the Gay Lesbian Education Support Network, which works to ensure that LGBTQ students can attend school free from bullying and harassment. She talks about support for transgender students. Alicia and Adelka talk about parenting. Alicia and Adelka conclude their interview by talking about retirement and aging issues.

Additional subjects: Alternative insemination; Artificial insemination, Human; Boy Scouts of America; Discrimination Against Gay Volunteers; Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDA); Eugene (Or.) -- Politics and government; Eugene Human Rights Commission; Eugene Pride celebration; Eugene School District 4J; Hagedorn, Karm; Happy Lesbian Couples; Landforce, Debora; Lane County Health and Human Services; Lesbian mothers -- United States; Marriage equality; McCauley, Maureen; People with disabilities – civil rights – United States; Sager, Jill; Self-insemination; Shawn, Adelka; Sperm donors; Transgender students.

Adelka Shawn was born in 1957 in Aurora, Colorado. She had four brothers. Her father served in the Air Force, and her family moved around a lot. While growing up, she had no sense of lesbianism. She ran away from home when she was fourteen and hitchhiked with a friend to North Carolina. She moved to Oregon when she was nineteen, in 1978. In Eugene, Adelka got her GED. She then went to Lane Community College and became a feminist. Adelka became

involved in the movement to stop and prevent violence towards women. Adelka lived in the Whiteaker neighborhood with her then partner, Maureen McCauley. She describes the Safe House Program she and others started, to provide places for women to go to escape domestic abuse. She describes getting an associate's degree in sign language interpretation. Adelka discusses how she met her partner, Alicia Hays. She talks about her and Alicia Hays' involvement with the campaigns against the anti-gay political measures. She and Alicia were tapped to be the public face of the campaigns. They discuss the stress they felt during the campaigns, and the realization of the need to be out. Adelka talks about her work with the school district as a sign language interpreter, and later as a teacher of the deaf. Adelka talks about the increasing acceptance of LGBTQ teachers and staff in the school district over the years. She discusses LGBTQ students in the schools. She and Alicia talk about parenting. She explains the policy of the Eugene Register-Guard to only list heterosexual parents in birth announcements. Adelka and Alicia conclude their interview by talking about retirement and aging issues.

Additional subjects: Adoption; Alcoholism; Alternative insemination; Artificial insemination, Human; Barry, Kate; Boy Scouts of America; Closet Space (newsletter); Discrimination Against Gay Volunteers; Domestic abuse; Eugene Pride celebration; Eugene School District 4J; Feminist bookstores; Hagedorn, Karm; Happy Lesbian Couples; Harbaugh, Anne "Izzie"; Landforce, Debora; Lesbian parenting – United States; Marriage equality; Mobility International USA (Organization); Mother Kali's Books; Newman, Connie; People with disabilities – civil rights – United States; Pornography; Portland Community College; Rape -- Oregon -- Eugene – Prevention; Rape Crisis Network; Riviera Room; Ryan, Barb; Safe House Program; Self-insemination; Sheklow, Sally; Sperm donors; Vietnam War, 1961-1975; Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA).

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Interviewers: Linda Long and Judith Raiskin

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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 Adelka Shawn and Alicia Hays on September 11, 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 University of Oregon Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives and Professor Judith Raiskin of the University of Oregon Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies. Adelka and Alicia, 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.

Shawn: I agree.

Hays: I agree.

Long: Thank you. Let's just get started with basic question, Adelka, we'll start with you. Can you please tell us where you were born, where you grew up, and something about your early background?

Shawn: Sure. I was born in December of 1957, in Aurora, Colorado. My father was in the air force as a pilot and so we moved around a lot. I lived in Colorado, Alaska, Virginia, Illinois, Oregon. And my father served seven tours of duty in Vietnam, so he was gone a lot. And we moved to Illinois in his final— where he was stationed in his final assignment. And that was when I was a freshman in high school and eighth grade, I think. I quit high school as a freshman when I was fourteen years old and ran away from home and moved to North Carolina with my friend Karen. And hung out there being a bad teenager for a number of years and then moved to Oregon when I was nineteen, I think in 1978. Well, the math might be wrong. '78 or '79? No, '78. I moved to Oregon.

Raiskin: Why did you run away?

Shawn: Good question. Partly because my friend was in a bad family situation. She was being abused in her home and she wanted to leave and what's a friend to do but hitchhike to North Carolina. And it was my third time running away from home at that point. I don't really— I think it was 1971, 1972 and it was kind of a cool

thing to do. And I didn't want to be at home. And I don't actually know why.

Raiskin: How did your parents respond?

Shawn: My father responded by drinking and thinking I was dead and my mother by searching and finding me and bringing me home twice. And then the third time we just made an agreement that I would call weekly, and we found friends to live with. We got jobs dish washing.

Raiskin: And what are they upset your parents upset about you're not going to high school? The education part of it.

Shawn: Well, I think my family always assumed we would all go to college, so I'm sure they weren't happy about that. But that, I think that was kind of the least of their concern at that point. Because I had hitchhiked across the country and they were more concerned with my safety than my education at that point.

Raiskin: Did you have any sense of yourself as a lesbian in those years?

Shawn: I don't think I knew the word lesbian at that point. Probably not till I came to Eugene. I mean, I may have known it, but it never occurred to me. I knew I always liked having friends who were girls. I dated boys, but they were the androgynous Bobby Sherman types. I'm dating myself there. It wasn't until I came to Eugene that I saw lesbian community and saw lesbians and went, "There you go." And then it all clicked, made all kinds of sense.

Raiskin: Alicia what about your early life?

Hays: My early life is a little different. I'm from a family of six kids. I'm the second oldest. Parents never divorced; they're together. The family's still very tight. We just got back from a family reunion with all of us and only one of us voted for Trump, which is surprising given that I was raised in a conservative, Catholic, Republican, very Republican, household. But things change and it's a fun family to grow up in. I grew up in Idaho, early years in Boise, and then my dad ran a steel company and we moved to Pocatello or as we refer to it, "Poke-a-hell-hole." And in my family, like I said, there's four girls and two boys, but really in my family— one of my younger siblings coined the phrase: "No, there's two lesbians, two girls and two boys."

My older sister and I are both lesbians. And when you see our pictures, I think I was still in diapers and my parents got us a jeep with army helmets and guns and this was '62, '63 because that's what we wanted. And so kind of always grew up with boys tennis shoes and just being in letting— my mother just let us be and my father as well. Let us be who we were. In terms of a sense of coming out, I think I had that sense about really enjoying the company of women being around women. I remember my sixteenth birthday, my mother, we had just moved to a new house and she asked me to help get the house ready. Out of the six kids, I was the one that helped a lot. And because she was going to have her friends over

and I loved her friends. They were a bunch of lesbians from the bookstore that she ran.

And I knew these women, they were university women. And I remember on my sixteenth birthday going to a movie, coming home, excited that my mother's friends were going to come over, but it wasn't my mother's friends, it was a surprise party with all my friends. Was a little disappointed of like, "But what— this is great. My mom's friends are coming to— Oh no, they aren't coming. That was just what she told you." And like this sadness on my sixteenth surprise birthday party because my mom's friends weren't coming.

And so I was having that sense in high school, but my older sister was having a little more struggle. She was in college, college athlete doing that. Kind of pushing away the whole concept of being a lesbian. She wasn't happy and we would talk because you went to college in the same town where I was still living, going to high school.

So, just not really addressing those feelings. And then when I was a senior in high school, I injured myself. I broke my back. We were inner tubing, my friends and family, and so everything got put on hold, including getting the hell out of Pocatello.

And so when I finally started college and started thinking about it and again, I said my mother ran a bookstore and I remember going in and looking at books, lesbian books. And there were very few

and Pocatello at B. Dalton's, but there were a few, I remember picking up one and purchasing it. I'm terrible with names, but it was one of the older or the couple that moved to California, and I'm sure you all know.

Raiskin: Phyllis Lyon.

Hays: Yeah, right. So, lesbian something, right.

Raiskin: *Lesbian/Woman*.

Long: *Lesbian/Woman*.

Hays: Yeah. I went up to the counter, my mother was working and I kind of intentionally as a joke, put it down, put my hand over it, like to purchase it. I remember my mother picking it up and going, "Does your mother know you're going to buy this? Did she—" And the man next to us said, "Honey, it's okay. You go ahead, you buy that." And I'm like, "That's my mother." So, always supportive. I've been lucky, people here, conservative Catholic; you wouldn't think you would have the support—

Shawn: Right.

Hays: —for who you are. But I certainly have felt that with my family and with my parents, for sure.

Raiskin: What would you say, Adelka, was your temperament, your personality before you came, when you were growing up?

Shawn: When I was growing— I have four brothers, two older and two younger. I was the middle child and the only girl and I'm kind of the peacekeeper by nature, I think, I try, which was a big job in that family.

Hays: I just say Adelka we should share that, her family all lives in town.

Shawn: Yes.

Hays: Except one brother who lives in Seattle. So it's not—

Shawn: Yeah, it's a close family, but it's a—

Hays: I don't know, I feel very close. They are over a lot.

Shawn: I think I felt my role was as the peacekeeper and trying to make things right, walking on eggshells a lot. My father was a very active alcoholic up until the divorce. My mom and he got divorced. I was kind of just trying to tread water and walk on eggshells around all the tension in the house.

Raiskin: What brought you each to Eugene?

Shawn: Well, I was in North Carolina and I knew that I was going nowhere fast there and I knew that wasn't— because I was just partying with my friends all the time, which is fine when you're younger, but it was time. And I came out here, my mom married a second time and I met this guy who was very paternal and caretaking and he wanted me to come out here and live with him, so he was very

chivalrous. This was in 1977, 1978 and he hitchhiked from here to North Carolina so that I wouldn't have to hitchhike back by myself.

We came back here and we lived together like eight months or something. It was clearly not meant to be. But it got me back to Oregon. We lived in Myrtle Point at that time. And I then moved to Eugene, got a job, got my GED and started kind of finishing growing up at that point.

Raiskin: What did you know about Eugene before you came here?

Shawn: Well my mom was here by then. She had moved here with my brothers and so I'd been here and I knew it was a very safe and liberal place to be. At that point, I wasn't thinking about women's community or lesbian community. Once I started going to LCC and hanging out in the Women's Center and taking Kate Barry's women's studies classes. I don't know if anybody's talked about her classes at LCC yet.

Raiskin: Tell us about them.

Shawn: Well, she taught women's studies 101 and it was eye opening and she's a very knowledgeable, wise person who's also a very good professor. She would lay things out in a way that I had a whole new understanding of politics and power and oppression and then between those classes and hanging out on the Women's Center I started meeting a lot of people who made a lot of sense to me.

Raiskin: How did you get Alicia?

Hays: So, after—

Shawn: Again, very different story.

Hays: After I hurt myself when I was a senior and ended up in a rehab hospital back in the day and when I got out, my dad informed me that he had signed me up for the university and I swore I wasn't going to go there, but I had a bumpy transition from this new life. And so I went to Idaho State University and I met a number of women athletes from Eugene and met my partner there and she played softball. And the other thing, there wasn't a lot of wheelchair sports. There was no wheelchair sports, there was wheelchair outdoor activities. And I participated in that, trying to figure out how to roll a kayak from not being able to use your knees. So, risking my life every chance I got to see if I could— I don't know what I was trying to see if I could do.

But anyway I survived that and really wanted to play sports again. My sister was playing intramural sports. I really had planned to play, go on a scholarship. Like she did from tennis. Anyhow, looking at wheelchair basketball, I had seen it played when I was in middle school. Then, you know how they did assemblies?

Raiskin: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

Hays: They had these men come to our middle school and our junior high and I had watched wheelchair basketball. When I hurt myself, I knew there was sports even though they weren't really there in Pocatello.

My partner at the time played softball for Idaho State and again, a lot of women from Eugene playing there on that team. And they canceled the softball team, they cut it and she got a scholarship to the U of O. Well, she had options where she wanted to go, but I knew it was the closest women's wheelchair basketball team. And I was graduating and she had two years left.

And so it came out to Eugene not realizing there were actually no jobs, but I had my degree from Idaho State, so I was sure doors would fly open and I would have a job in no time [chuckles]. Little did I understand the height of the recession for the wood products industry and what was happening here.

Long: Excuse me, what year was that then?

Hays: Nineteen eighty-three.

Long: Nineteen eighty-three.

Hays: Nineteen eighty-three, September of 1983.

Hays: That's how I moved out here. And quick story about why there were so many women from Eugene. I found out later when my friend who was my first basketball coach, Maureen McCauley, told me a story about her and her partner at the time moving out here and living with these two women and telling stories about their house, the room they rented and she said, "Yeah, her name was Beth Bricker and Mary Ann" I can't remember [her last name]. Oh my God. Those were the coaches at Idaho state. Those were the

basketball coach and the softball coach. So they had been here in Eugene. My friend was living with them. They got the jobs at Idaho State and then just recruited heavily from Sheldon and Churchill and South and North. That's why there were so many women from Eugene playing at Idaho State. That's kind of a small world, but brought me out here.

What was funny is some of them chose to stay and I got to know their parents here. And on more than one occasion a parent would say to me, "Why are they still in Pocatello?" I had no answer for them. I didn't know why they were still there.

Raiskin: When you came here, how soon did you see the lesbian community?

Hays: Actually, I knew the lesbian community before I came here because there was a conference that was being put on by DREDF Disability Education and Defense Fund out of San Francisco. I had worked with them right after my injury on learning to be an activist around 504 and making sure 504 regulations were implemented in your state, local government. And then had used them actually as an advocate at my university when I started, there was one bathroom that was accessible on campus so learning to be an activist.

And it happens that a lot of those women were lesbians that were there training. In fact, they told me later, they saw me in the back of the room and say, "Who's that young dyke?" And I'm like, "You could've told me. Could have saved me a couple of years. Had I

known." But anyhow, so we had done a no more stairs conference in Pocatello and some women that were on staff doing that training were from Eugene. And so I got to know them. When I moved to Eugene, when we moved to Eugene, I already had a connection to the lesbian community. And I got the insight on when you go to the Riv Room and all of that, plus playing basketball, that was also a strong connection.

Raiskin: What did the lesbian community seem like to you when you came?

Hays: Well, what I appreciated was, coming from college, and I'm sure this is true in a number of colleges, the lesbian community at your university were the people doing sports. Particularly, that was my connection to the community. When I came here, I remember seeing women that weren't athletes, but they were more like, "Oh my mom's friends from the university, from when I was sixteen," and very intrigued with that.

In fact, I know my relationship— I knew it was ending, and I remember thinking to myself, "Oh yeah, next relationship I want to be with a real lesbian." You're in early twenties. And so real lesbian is an activist or somebody that really understands the culture. And so I was very intrigued by that.

I found one, and I have to say this, this has, we were doing the timeline, we were looking at things and I'm like, "Wow, you are really active and look you married me and you bought a house you

went to work and had a kid." Sorry, I've kind of made your life rather boring.

Shawn: It's not boring.

Long: So how long have you been together now?

Shawn: Thirty-five years.

Raiskin: Wow. I want to hear about your activist time.

Shawn: Well, before I met Alicia—

Hays: See, it was all before. "And then we—"

Shawn: It has continued since then, but in very different ways. I was very involved with violence against women prevention and activities, actions. Some of that was fairly predictable working with Rape Crisis Network, being a volunteer and being a volunteer on the phone and going and speaking in the high schools and stuff. And some of it was less legal than that. And I was involved with some action groups, which you may hear about more from Barb Ryan and I were involved with some of those. I know you've interviewed her, but so we did some more like disruptive actions in the dead of the night.

Long: Like what?

Shawn: Well, we've never talked about it. We've never—

Hays: I'm pretty sure the statute of limitations is over.

Shawn: The most vivid memory I have is there's an adult bookstore. It's actually still here in town. And we went inside and were disruptive with other customers. But we also went in the dead of the night and vandalized a piece at their outside property.

Raiskin: What was your objection to the adult bookstore?

Shawn: Well, we felt that pornography starting from soft pornography all the way through hard pornography was part of the culture of violence that was being created and women weren't safe. And that was a very visible and concrete way that that culture was being created and we thought that should be disrupted.

Raiskin: What was the disruption with the customers? What did you—

Shawn: I don't really remember. I just remember being— I don't, we were just— I don't actually remember what it looked like. I actually, it would be— I want to get together with my friend Barb from the time because she'll be able to fill in some of the pieces. So, from that, then I lived in the Whiteaker neighborhood with my partner at the time, Maureen, who was her first basketball coach [points to Alicia]. And I was involved with a group in the neighborhood with Sally Sheklow and Connie Newman and some other people whose names I don't remember.

And we started the— we began a program called Safe House. And at the time VISTA was a program that was funded and we wrote a proposal to VISTA asking for— to be able to hire workers to

implement the safe house program. That was ‘80 something. I don't know.

Raiskin: Can you describe how the Safe Houses work?

Shawn: Families or anybody in a neighborhood would sign up and there would be— we would do background checks and trainings so that there was a sign that was visible in their home. So people who were walking and we knew that those streets didn't feel safe to anybody, any women at night or many times of the day, too. And so the signs were posted in their windows and you knew that if you didn't feel safe, that was a how she could go to. That was the premise of it.

Raiskin: And what other activities you've been involved with before you met Alicia?

Hays: Before you became—

Shawn: Well, I kind of then started— a lot of the demonstrations that were rallies I would go to, there were sign language interpreters. I started learning sign language here locally. And then in 1983, I went to Portland and got my associates degree in Interpreting. And so then I became more involved with the disabled community and brought my perspective of being in a marginalized community to that work. Sure I did some other stuff too, but I don't remember. It's a long time ago.

Raiskin: How did you meet?

Shawn: I was— Mobility International USA that's housed here on Eugene has lots of opportunities to host disabled folks from around the world. And my partner, Maureen and I, had been involved in that. And when Alicia first moved here, she and her partner came to a fundraising event and we met there. And that's the very first time we met. Right? But when Alicia moved here, she joined the basketball team, which my then partner Maureen was coaching.

Hays: There you go. Actually I remember them Mobility event because they had raffles and Adelka was winning all of them.

Shawn: Yeah.

Hays: It sounds intriguing.

Shawn: I'm lucky at raffles.

Hays: And continues to be so. That's where we met. And then just through the connection of playing ball and knowing Maureen, we hung out together as couples and then.

Raiskin: Reshuffled.

Hays: Reshuffled Yeah.

Shawn: Maureen and I broke up and not long after.

Hays: I broke up with my partner because I wanted a real lesbian as a girlfriend.

Shawn: Someone who would challenge the Republican ideas. She had a few still then.

Raiskin: Can you tell us something about the publications that were around in the early '80s or things where you've found other connections with people?

Shawn: Sometime when I was— must have been '79, '80, '81 before I got together with Maureen. I was living in a house with a woman named Leslie Weygren and it was a big house and she was kind of the main renter, but lots of rooms got rented to lesbians. In fact, that's—

Raiskin: Where was that house?

Shawn: On Washington and Eleventh. And Leslie lived there. I lived there. There were lots of lesbians at the time and Leslie came from New Jersey and she was a big lesbian in every sense of the word. And I learned a lot from her. She also had a friend named Howie, we called him "Bag of Donuts," but it's Howie— it's on that masthead in there somewhere.

Anyway, they with some other people started a publication called *Closet Space*, which was a weekly printed newsletter, newspaper for our community. And their goal with that, one of their goals was that it was lesbian and gay men and they— because they really felt like there weren't really strong connections between those communities. And that was, I think one of their goals with the paper and a lot of the stuff they did. So, that was there.

And then of course at Mother Kali's, the feminist bookstore, which was I'm sure everybody talks about Mother Kali's because it was, you go in and you feel like you're connected to the community immediately. Izzie, who was originally Anne, right? She made it her mission to connect people. When you went in, she didn't just offer ideas about what kind of books you might enjoy. But if you needed to connect with people with certain like-mindedness, there was community information and it was kind of a place to hang out.

Raiskin: Were you here for Referendum 51?

Shawn: I was here, but I wasn't involved in that activity. I mean, enough work around that.

Raiskin: Can you tell us something about the measures that you were here for and both of your involvement in those?

Shawn: They all run together at this point. But we were involved in from the 9, 8, 9, 36 and 20-06, which was the Springfield measure. We had some really good friends who were very involved in that. And so all along the way we would host house parties. And one of the things that we kind of got tapped to do frequently was to kind of be the face of what does a lesbian look like or what does the lesbian family look like. We were willing to be interviewed and the *Register-Guard* and *Eugene Weekly* and after we had Jackson, which was in 1993, we became more involved in that kind of way. We weren't real in the organization aspect of it, but we were helping with fundraising and being the face on occasion.

Hays: Right.

Raiskin: Do you remember what it felt like to you to deal with those, those measures and read them and think about them?

Hays: Yeah, I do remember it. How hard it was. At the time, I was working for— where I retired from— for the County, and you know, when you think you're out and you, you know, you're kind of making that— I was younger, I was starting to come out, but not making those statements. And I remember the one, I can't remember the number, but it was one the rescinded, the governor's protection. And I remember saying being just so frustrated the day after it passed and being in someone's office that she shared with another woman, two women and saying something about it, just saying how horrible it was. And one of the women who I knew was a lesbian and they were best friends, they worked together, got up and basically kind of pushed me like, "You need to leave, you don't want to talk about politics" and shut the door.

And I realized, One, she didn't want to be out to her friend and that I wasn't out because she was surprised. She had voted "yes" for it. And I think at that point in my life was the time that I started thinking, I need to be out. I need to be vocal about this. I need to not just to have people assume. And it's one of those stories where I did come out, we did get married. This woman hosted— was one of the hosts of our— the woman that had voted "yes." And I don't know that her friend ever came out to her. And they retired. But that she hosted one of our showers for the office.

And a number of years later, she had a nephew who came out and she said, "No one in the family understands him." We talked and she was listening to him and he was going through some hard times. And I think how important it was that I came onto her, that she started seeing a community that she hadn't seen before and that played into how her family moved forward with things.

Raiskin: How old were you when you started coming out publicly?

Hays: I was probably twenty-five. Twenty. You think you're out.

Raiskin: Right?

Hays: But when do you say, wait, no, and just in case you don't know. I find it funny being on the school board and if we happen to be on a national Coming Out Day, I keep telling people, I'm still looking for folks, so if there's anybody in the audience that I haven't come out to let me know or now it's kind of funny and fun, but to think back then just how scary it was. I remember doing a panel as a person with a disability on women's studies. I don't know who sent me up on that one. It was probably my work with the Human Rights Commission, but and saying no.

I remember talking to the students and they asked me if I was out and I said "No I don't really think that's important, to be out and it would affect my work." This was before I did come out. And the students just, "Oh, you have to. You have to." And I'm left there at twenty-three or whatever I was, going, “I don't think I have to,” and being challenged.

Shawn: See what I was dealing with.

Hays: Well, and then Adelka went to work for the school district. So you start wondering about that.

Raiskin: Can you tell us something about working with the school district?

Shawn: But it is— it was very similar. I mean, I think we both from when I met Alicia both of us, we never worked in the closet, really. We were always out. But like Alicia said, being out is one thing, but actually literally saying the words— I assume everybody knows. I never hid it. Never— I would always refer to my partner and talk about Alicia, but it wasn't until the measures happened when it was very clear to all of us that we needed people to know they knew people. And that was— which seems so unusual now in this day and age. But people didn't know they knew lesbians. They didn't know they knew gay men. And so that was one of the outcomes of the measures and the direction the movement took was that it is important to actually say it. Invite your neighbors over and say you're having dinner with lesbians.

In my work in the public schools, I worked with a deaf and hard of hearing students and was an interpreter for the first part of my career and then became a coordinator and teacher of the deaf. But I did find out I had a supervisor who when he retired, he told me a story of a family, early on in my career, must've been ‘88, something like that.

There was a family who when they knew I was going to be assigned to be the interpreter for their student went to him and said, "We don't want her with our students because she's a lesbian." We know this because I was out. And he said, "We don't make assignments based on that kind of information." And he didn't tell me about it until long after, which I'm grateful for because that student and her family we worked together for the next twenty years. And I think that we all benefited from that connection.

And it's different being in a public school. I mean, you do feel like— there were a lot of people I worked with who didn't feel like they could come out because they were working in a public school, especially during all the measures. And I was fortunate in my position, I felt like I could and so I did.

Raiskin: Why would you be different than a teacher?

Shawn: You know what, I don't really know why it felt like I had the more kind of have the luxury.

Raiskin: But were you assigned to a specific school or was it more that you traveled around the schools?

Shawn: Each year I'd be assigned to one or two schools. It's not like I wasn't in classrooms with students all day long. But I also, at that point didn't have a child and I don't know, I always felt that, I think we both felt like we had a lot of privileges and had the opportunity to take the risk of being out. And we have a lot of friends who didn't feel that way for a long time

Raiskin: Because you felt you could get another job or you could—

Shawn: I don't know why we felt that way. I guess I didn't— I was more— I felt pretty confident that I wouldn't actually lose my job, that it could be uncomfortable, that I'd have to go through some stuff. But I don't know why I felt like I had that privilege. But I did know other people who felt they didn't. And I felt like I kind of had to be more out because of the people who couldn't be out. And I worked with some amazingly supportive people over the years.

Hays: I think, too, you worked closer to administration and so you knew when you work in a school setting, if you're in the school, there's a couple more layers and you had a strong connection to the superintendent and your manager.

Shawn: Right. I always did feel supported by my supervision, always. Not that they always really appreciated— we would do things like wear our rainbow necklaces during measures.

Raiskin: Did you see in the schools a growing support of gay and lesbian students?

Shawn: No. I think that I did see a shift in teachers and other school staff and their acceptance. I'm not sure how— that I saw dramatic changes in how that affected kids and the school culture. Up till today students still choose to live in or to attend schools in the south Eugene area rather than north Eugene area or some of the other areas because they feel more supported in their schools.

Raiskin: Kids who identify as gay?

Shawn: Yeah.

Hays: Gay, lesbian, trans.

Shawn: Gay, lesbian, trans students still feel safer in some schools than others, even in Eugene School District. I think Eugene School District has done a lot of work around it especially related to trans students in these last twelve, fifteen years. It's kind of been on the cutting edge of some of those supports for students.

Raiskin: Can you tell us something about your work?

Hays: I'm probably less of an activist and more of a policy person. When you're on the inside, which is where I've spent most of my life in a position with more power, I think addressing it that way, which is also kind of scary because you put yourself on the line. But from being on the Human Rights Commission at the City of Eugene, I remember first time I was outed in the *Register-Guard* surprised they heck out of me because I was on the Committee for People with Disabilities. And all of a sudden when we came together, I remember Jeff Wright wrote "Alicia Hays, one of several lesbians on the…" And I remember that just being a little scary. It's funny how it comes around. Jeff ended up at our church being our son's mentor.

And occasionally I would say, "Thanks for outing me in the *RG* kind of took care of that for me." And so how do you change that

system that you're a part of and that you're benefiting from? I also think about how my connection and my being part of the lesbian community and what I've learned about being a lesbian really had such influence on my management style.

Raiskin: Can you explain that?

Hays: I recently retired from Health and Human Services at Lane County. I spent thirty-one years mostly in management at Lane County. And when I left I remember I had 600 plus employees in the department. And I also spent nine months as an interim County Administrator. But I think that concept of collaboration of how do we listen to voices that are outside what's safe, and I did that— I remember we were dealing with issues when I was county administrator and I was listening to the inside circle and [hearing] "this is the way it's going to be." And I remember being occasionally— I share that with my friends probably more than they care. My management philosophy or my philosophy of this is "How we're going to deal with this?"

It would happen to be issue around homelessness and protests. I was there as county administrator at that time. And I remember my friend, we were talking about porta johns being delivered to county property where people were camping illegally as protests. And I was like, "Why did they think they can leave that porta john on the county property?" And I remember my friend looking at me and saying, "Don't you want him to have a bathroom?" I'm like, "Yeah, we're leaving the bathroom."

But you get into this inside base— if you will, this, this mindset. And it's always been great for me that I get to be challenged by my friends to be a little better and to think a little different. I feel that I've had that inside the County because we've had at different times a lot of lesbians working for the county. And I think part of it is just what we talked around diversity and equity. If you hire people and they have a good experience, they're going to tell their friends and they're going to tell their friends It's a good place to work. And I feel like I had that opportunity.

Long: Can you tell us again what your job was in Lane County Health and Human Services?

Hays: I was the Director of Lane County Health and Human Services.

Long: What years?

Hays: I started and I became a supervisor in the workforce and then I moved on to health to be a performance and development person, a trainer. I was in— I ran the internal training programs and then I became a director of the Department of Children and Families for ten years. And that was where you could be a bureaucrat and an activist for ten years and it was great, you're an activists for kids and families.

And then for the last five years I was the Director of Health and Human Services, which included medical clinics, juvenile justice, mental health, our poverty programs, our public health, an insurance company that ran. So it was a lot going on there. It was

fun at the picnic that you guys just hosted. I saw people that worked for me. When I left, people that had moved on and people that I had helped or I had connected with jobs— actually I had somebody who came up to me and said, "I'm retired. I'm Tier One PERS, and thank you for giving me that opportunity." Because when I started I was young and there were jobs open and people say, "Do you know anybody? I got friends I know." There was this connection to my community where I have people got jobs.

Raiskin: What difference do you think it made to have lesbians involved in city and county governance?

Hays: I just think that perspective and you know, that perspective, inclusion of hearing the voice, hearing other people's voices of seeing the situations in different ways of even how we pace things. I mean, a lot of my management style and smarts, if you will, have come from collectives. Like when we're working on measures or we're working on issues of discrimination, and just the connection. People will say to me when I started, "Oh, do you know somebody that could do that?" "Oh yeah, I know them from the community. We can connect them." "Do you know somebody that can— " They would say, "Do you know everybody?" Well, there is this connection in Lane County.

I was surprised when I started as the department director. I got a lot of credibility because of my connections. We could get things done because I knew where people were and I had these connections with these other women really mostly that were

already in other government agencies that were from my community.

Raiskin: Do you feel a difference when you have exposure to other cities and County governance as you've moved around and connected with other colleagues in the state or elsewhere. Is it different in Eugene and Lane County?

Hays: Yes. I think it is because when you go to conferences you start looking around and okay, who are the lesbians and you would connect with them and tell your story is about where you work and how things get done and they're surprised. They're like, "Oh that never happened." Eugene is— I'm sure other communities think they're unique. But Eugene is great. It's my connection to the lesbian community. My being a lesbian, my knowledge really has helped me get where I am in including my job as an elected official has really influenced how I see the world and how I get things done.

Raiskin: Can you tell us something about being on the school board?

Hays: Sure. Let's see. I've been on the school board for twelve years. I'm actually the chair right now of the 4J School Board. We have four high schools. We have about 20,000 students, four comprehensive high schools and an alternative high school. It's a big district. And right now I have been the longest serving board member, which is important for some reason. I don't know why, but I like to share that.

Shawn: Means you can retire.

Hays: How do you take this district and where you see opportunities push a little bit? One of the things when I first started, I went to a national conference and it was the scariest time for me to be at this national conference because there were school board members from all over the U.S. and I had this sense of I feel like I'm back in the '60s, the '70s, around oppression of people who are gay and lesbian. The things that were said, the things that people felt they could talk about. There— I remember in this huge conference hall in San Francisco at the Moscone Center, you know, where all the vendors go. It's just like— it would take you two days to get through it. That's how big the conferences is and finding— it was either GLSEN—

Shawn: GLSEN.

Hays: GLSEN and just saying, "Can I just sit here for a minute?" She says "There's one more of you." And this is—

Shawn: Thousands.

Hays: Thousands of school board members from across the U.S. She said there's a gay man from, I don't know, somewhere. And he stopped by too. I should start a gay and lesbian caucus for school board members. But that's where you have a lot of influence. And in these communities across the U.S. they are very conservative people on school boards. There was one woman I got to know, she was from Texas and we went to a GLSEN presentation and at the end—

Raiskin: Can you describe what GLSEN is?

Shawn: Gay Lesbian Support Education Network.

Raiskin: So it's national?

Shawn: It's a national organization supporting gay and lesbian students in public schools.

Hays: This woman and I had, she's from Texas, she was black woman. I had walked back and forth from the conference that week-- we just happened to be at the same motel. I would show her how to get there every time. And anyway, we were both at this breakout session, this GLSEN session, and they were talking about being inclusive of kids, but it was so far behind where we were at 4J. I was so surprised.

Shawn: It was pre 2001.

Hays: Yeah, I was really surprised. What surprised me more as she was sitting in the back with me and she leaned forward and said to me, "Alicia, did you think this is what this workshop was going to be about?" And I said, "Yeah, I think so." She said, I thought it was going to help us understand how not to have our girls raped by lesbians in the bathroom." And I said, "Whoa." Well, my first response was like, "I guarantee you, I've never done that." And then I said— I just was dumbfounded. I was like how do I respond to this and how many other people are sitting in this room thinking something similar? This woman didn't, she came across very

educated and fun to talk to, but this is— and that's when I was like, people need to run for their school boards. They absolutely need to. It has a huge impact on our future.

Raiskin: This was a strategy of the Tea Party, was to first get people on school boards.

Shawn: Right, exactly and they are still doing it.

Hays: And they are. I had one when they had that strategy— I had one very contested school board race. It was very surprising to me. A guy raised like $20,000 to get my seat.

Shawn: —Eugene School Board. And he was sponsored by Tea Party— encouraged or—.

Hays: But I like to tell you I've won by 71 percent, but anyway—

Shawn: The highest percentage of—

Hays: The highest percentage of anybody running at that time. I'll just one more quick story, which was recently like two years ago, we put forward the first transgender policy in the state on our school board and we have on our school board, someone that was mayor of Eugene who actually had worked against the transgender policy at the City of Eugene and had a lot of conversation around bathrooms, the usual. I wasn't sure how it was going to go for this. And as a school board, it's around good for the kids. So often we have 7-0 votes because everybody has the same motivation, what's best for the students.

But in the audience was packed, there had to be a hundred-plus young people coming to speak. And parents of kids that were first/second graders and talking about not using the bathroom in high school and not, and talking with their friends. We had such a robust public comment.

Raiskin: You mean there were students there who identified as trans talking about their difficulties at school?

Hays: And they identified as gay, lesbian.

Shawn: And they wouldn't drink all day, they wouldn't go to the—

Hays: Restroom and how they— and I remember as [I don't get] ?? get choked up very often, but I remember talking to them after they got done testifying. We all get a chance to talk and I really couldn't get much out. All I could say was, "Do you mind if I take your picture?" I have a very nice picture of this audience. And they did a great job and we were 7-0. And I think their testimony and the power that they brought and we see— so we as a school board in Eugene now people look to us around that policy and we've played it out.

Raiskin: What is it the policy?

Hays: It's a long one, so— But I will tell you where it kind of— as we build new schools, as we retrofit schools we're putting in restrooms that aren't gender specific, they're gender neutral, which I have to say as a person with a disability, as I was sharing with some of my

board members, that's so important because oftentimes caregivers, if their person needs something as people get older with— are of the opposite sex and that causes problems as well. And people. And so we're putting those in. We have dealt with people, instructors who don't want to use the student— if the student identifies and wants a different name, wants a name other than what's on their record or identifies and they have push-back on that, it's a policy, it's a requirement. We deal with those instructors and it's no longer just the students where— I'm hoping we're creating that next generation of activists. So we don't have to create them they're already there, I've seen them. And it's very powerful.

Raiskin: Well, and it's a model policy that can be used elsewhere.

Shawn: And other districts have already reached out for that and copied it.

Hays: Let me just share one more thing, which is, I talk about this national conference, school work conference, but we have a state school work conference and I just for fun, always go to the workshop on transgender youth and I listen to this and there was one of the school board members from Bethel who is a Republican, has been a Republican legislator who when she's in the room, I always just wait for her because she has transgender grandchildren and you don't expect it from her, but I like, "Okay you start and then I'll go" We'll do our little tag team on this. And it's just been just incredible, those watching that shift from where we were when we started in schools to this feeling, I believe that people can be out and it's not perfect and we still have a ways to go.

Raiskin: Can I talk to you about being parents? Can you tell us about your journey of parenthood?

Shawn: Well, we started trying to become parents in 1990. Well, we got married in the Unitarian Church in 1990 so it was sometime after that and we'd gotten together before.

Raiskin: And this was not a legal marriage?

Shawn: It was in the Unitarian Church. It was this civil union or whatever they call them at the time.

Hays: Just on the marriage thing. Adelka's family was there. My whole family was there, including my ninety-eight-year-old grandfather.

Shawn: Both of our families are incredibly supportive and have been there through all of our marriages. We started trying to get pregnant. I started trying to get pregnant in the '91, '92. And we did a lot of research about how to become parents because we wanted to become parents and we initially looked at adoption. But in order to adopt we would have had to lie and say I was adopting as a single parent or that she was and we weren't willing to lie. We did sign up to be foster parents through the state and went through that whole process and were approved and had requested elementary age children to foster. And we were on the list for over a year and they never called us until they had a teenage gay child who had been kicked out of their home.

Hays: If you remember. What we got told.

Shawn: Right.

Hays: Our person made no bones about it. She said there is an unwritten policy in the foster care program that if we place a child in a gay or lesbian home, we ask the parents.

Shawn: Their permission.

Hays: Their permission.

Shawn: The parents who've lost custody got to choose whether or not children came to us.

Hays: Do they get to choose if there's a religious preference do they try but do the parents get to say no.

Shawn: They get—

Hays: No, this is the only thing and it's not written. You can't really argue with that.

Shawn: So, then we decided to have our own, and so we used— we didn't use a medical model. We used a renegade insemination system where we found a donor through channels. So our donor, we used the same donor as some really good friends of ours, the final donor who— we had gone through two donors?

Hays: One other one.

Shawn: One other one. And I tried to get pregnant for eighteen months and wasn't able to. And then I had tried with this donor who was the

same one our good friends used and [they] became pregnant. And they said to us, "Hey, this worked for us." And it was— they had also been challenged by getting pregnant. And do you want to create family with us? And we did. After we realized I wasn't going to get pregnant, Alicia's mother was right.

Hays: Well, I had a deal that we'd do for eighteen months and I must admit I was praying towards the end, “Please get pregnant.”

Shawn: First time.

Hays: I tried it and I got pregnant the first time in—

Raiskin: And your mother knew that would be the case?

Hays: I don't know. I think she just scared all the girls. "Just be careful out there."

Shawn: So, Alicia got pregnant and Jackson was born in December of 1993. When he was born the *Register-Guard*— the nurse comes in and takes your birth certificate information and then goes to send stuff to the *Register-Guard* and asks for the names. And we sent our names in and in fact, I think we even said to her, “They’re probably not even going to take my name” because we knew they didn't do that at the time.

Raiskin: They had a policy? What was the policy?

Shawn: The *Register-Guard* policy was, they only put married— no it wasn't married people.

Hays: Birth parents.

Shawn: Birth parents.

Hays: Which we knew wasn't true because I had friends that were straight and who were using artificial insemination.

Shawn: They said it was because they were birth parents, but really it was because they were heterosexual parents. So— but the woman at the hospital was like, "Oh, I'll put it in. I'm sure they'll do it." You know, how people are.

Hays: And at that point we had the choice because Adelka's name could have passed.

Shawn: Right.

Hays: And so, just leave her as the "father" and that it would be in or to say, okay, sure, let's take this, what the heck, let's take this challenge.

Shawn: The birth announcement came out and it only listed Alicia Hays. And we did not appreciate that in the least. I have a letter from the *Register-Guard* saying what their policy is. And—

Hays: And when you're a new parent, you're kind of busy. And being an activist and a new parent isn't something you do, but your community comes through.

Shawn: Yes they do.

Hays: And Sally Sheklow said, "Do you want me?"

Shawn: "Is there anything I can do?" And we said "Yes, could you deal with *Register-Guard* for us?" And she did. She approached them and said— talk to them about their rule. It didn't change. We didn't get a birth announcement. A number of years later, I don't remember '99, I think.

Raiskin: It was 2000-something.

Shawn: Oh was it? A very active group of people got together and lobbied the *Register-Guard* about this policy because it was still in effect. You still weren't able to have both parents' names in the paper. And took out an ad in the *Register-Guard* with birth announcements. And we included Jackson and I have a picture of that, you guys may have one.

Raiskin: It was retroactive.

Shawn: Was a retroactive birth announcements.

Raiskin: Everybody who hadn't been able to be—

Shawn: Everybody who signed up for this because there were, who knows how many of us there were. But there were, how many in the article? Maybe six or eight or ten. And so we did a retroactive birth announcement that we had to pay for as an ad in the *Register-Guard*. And there was a big demonstration, lots of people canceled their— what do you call it?

Hays: Subscription.

Shawn: Subscription to the *Register-Guard*.

Raiskin: Because?

Shawn: Because during this action that some lesbians took against the *Register-Guard* and whatever this year was 20, 2001 or whatever. The *Register-Guard* didn't change their policy and the reaction was lots of people canceled their subscriptions. Now the *Register-Guard* I believe does put both names in. The other thing about having Jackson was I wasn't able to be on his birth certificate. We went through an adoption process with a local attorney and spent a lot of money and a lot of time. I had to have a home study. I had to write an autobiography and do the whole home study in order to adopt my son. And that— people who came just a year or two after us did the same thing, but the process was way different. That has changed over time. But I had to adopt him.

Hays: We paced ourselves because the judge, the juvenile judge at the court in Eugene was pretty clear he wasn't going to okay it. We had friends that went up to another county.

Shawn: Portland or someplace.

Hays: Because they could see that judge. And then when he retired, that's when— "Okay, let's do this." Because, and I just think back just in his lifetime and who's sitting on the now at the juvenile court is lesbian judge. Just how much things have changed and in just what

seems like a short period of time, I know when you're in it struggling, it doesn't seem like a short period.

Shawn: But looking back— he's twenty-four now and things have changed a lot, a whole lot and he brought us a whole new set of opportunities for activism because in 19— his sister Bailey was in the Spanish immersion program.

Long: This is the child raised by, who was conceived by your friends?

Shawn: Yes. She won in the lottery. In Eugene we— there's a lottery for some of the special schools, what do you call them?

Hays: Choice schools, immersion schools.

Shawn: Choice schools, immersion schools. And there's a sibling policy. If your sibling gets in for one of those schools, then the siblings get to come in before they do the lottery for the remaining spots. But they did not accept Jackson as a sibling at that time. We appealed that process and did a whole process with the school district and had somebody come in and Patrick Fraleigh who was a school psych, but also a private psychologist at the time, came and did a whole assessment and said to them, "Yeah, they're a family. This ought to be overturned."

Hays: They are siblings.

Shawn: They are siblings and—

Raiskin: So the two couples are also interact as family?

Shawn: Yes.

Hays: It was more than they were siblings.

Shawn: It was more that the kids were siblings.

Hays: Because the same thing can happen if you have steps, brother and sister.

Shawn: If somebody moves into your house they wanted to make the decision based on where you lived. So if Jackson had lived with her no matter what the relationship was he would have been able to go to the school. If they had been siblings in the school district's eyes, they would have been able to go. So we had to go through that. Again, another opportunity and—

Hays: Always fun to be an activist with the place you work.

Shawn: Yeah.

Hays: Good times.

Shawn: Very good. And then during the measures, Jackson was going to his school and his kindergarten teacher lived right next door to the school and had "One man, one woman, No on—.

Hays: Whatever it was.

Shawn: Whichever measure it was in her signs.

Long: Measure 36.

Shawn: —in her yard, he had to walk by it to go into her classroom. He remembers that more. But he actually just brought that up not long ago. Then there was the Boy Scouts issue and then there was—

Raiskin: Tell us about the Boy Scouts issue.

Shawn: Well, for those of you who don't remember, it wasn't that long ago that the Boy Scouts would not let any gay or lesbian people be participants on any level volunteers, staff or members of the Scouts. And so being in the Boy Scouts was never going to be an option for Jackson and— didn't meet or match our family values. And there were some of his good friends in his classroom, more Cub Scouts. One of his best friend's dad was the Cub Scout leader. There was already some tension around that. And then he came home one day with a, "I want to join the Cub Scouts" sticker on his shirt. They had touched my child. That's when they kind of went over— Because at that point they were able to come into the cafeteria or come into the school and do recruiting. And so that didn't—

Hays: At the time people I knew that were working at doing human rights works and were on the equity committee for 4J, were looking at that policy and they were holding a public meeting. I remember going there. I share that with people that get nervous when they have to come and testify in front of the school board. I said, "Let me tell you, I remember being there." And I testified and said that I used to joke about letting my kid be a Boy Scout— both my brothers are Eagles. My dad was, and so it's kind of a family tradition and that it would be a great for me because when they

said, "Hey, we need a den mother" I'd say, "Hey, not me. I'm a lesbian. You guys do the work." "Hey, we need somebody to bring to—" "Hey, not me. “Help with the soapbox derby." "Hey, sorry, can't do it" I said. So, it was all funny until it happened.

And I realized what this meant to my kid, that he at five years old, six years old, was now going to have to deal with this, that he hadn't really had to deal with. And that what was hard about them being in the schools was that when we talked to Jackson and we had to explain to him why he couldn't join Travis and all the other boys because of who his family was and that they didn't like his family and they didn't think we should be a family. He looked at me and said, "Do my teachers feel the same way?" Because he was five or six, he couldn't understand these people that were in the schools weren't the same as his teachers. And did he have to worry about his teachers.

And I talked later to my friend who ran it and he goes, "That statement was so powerful to us that the district said “No more recruiting." And unfortunately what they did is they said, "No more recruiting of anybody.” And I think sometimes you have to deal with that pendulum and then you can bring it back to the center. And because I'm a Girl Scout. I mean, I was crossing, I grew up as a Girl Scout and the Girl Scouts don't do that. And people didn't understand that the Girl Scouts and the Boy Scouts were different. Kidsports doesn't do that.

Shawn: Right. They follow the same guidelines.

Hays: Everybody got nixed. And slowly they came up with their policy. I I felt like it was really clear: if you discriminate, you can't be part of us. Will they discriminate so they can be part of the district. But that's not how it turned out. But it's worked through. And Jackson still has those feelings about Boy Scouts.

One of his best friends family were Boy Scouts and they took Sam— they're still good friends. Sam was devastated when Jackson left town, but I remember them telling us the story of taking Sam aside and saying, "You can stay with Boy Scouts, but this is what they think about Jackson's family, and Sam's, you know, first grade crying. "Okay, I don't want to belong, but can I keep the hat?" So we've got these kids. And I remember sharing that story with parents who when they were protesting about the CALC photo exhibit that were coming into the schools where people, I think they were doing— we did one, I know we were part of, “This is What Family Looks Like.”

This one was— I can't remember. It was on discrimination and one of the pictures had somebody coming out. It's trans or something I can't remember exactly.

Shawn: It was a trans—

Hays: But obviously very upset parents, their parents were very upset. And the whole thing was, "I don't want to have to explain this to my kid." And I would say, "Well congratulations that you haven't had to talk about it, but if your kid went to school with my kid,

they're going to know. And it's just part of where we're headed. And let me tell you, it isn't easy when you're the one having to explain to your kid why people don't like your family."

I remember my— on that front he always heard that. He was at my father's house who had a Republican National Committee magnet on his fridge. And I remember Jackson at about seven looking at my father and saying, "Grandpa, how come you support an organization that doesn't support my family?" And my father just looking at him and saying, "I didn't know they didn't, I'll look into that Jackson." So, he's been a little bit of an activist.

Shawn: He had a time in the lunchroom. He was probably third or fourth grade and he was talking, he was just talking about something that happened at home and he was talking about, it's moms, or— and the lunch lady. He referred to her as the lunch lady. One of the people who was working in the cafeteria advised him that he would do better if he just didn't talk about his family at school. That was one of the many times we got to go in and see his principal who, fortunately, she was great and handled all that stuff really well.

Hays: And told him he got to speak about his family and I remember him looking at her and saying, "I understand I'm not going to get to know what's going to happen because this is a personnel issue and I don't get to know." All right. It's good to see. He gets some management stories when he goes to bed.

Raiskin: Do you think his strong feelings have something to do with his tattoo?

Shawn: Yes.

Raiskin: Can you describe his tattoo?

Shawn: Well, his tattoo story. We were on a vacation and he had just turned eighteen.

Hays: He graduated from high school.

Shawn: Graduated from high school and he was eighteen and we came home and he was just proud and pleased and excited to show us.

Hays: Had his girlfriend there and his friends there to show us his tattoo.

Shawn: And it's on over his heart and it's an anatomically correct, quite anatomically correct according to our scientist-sisters. And it says "Moms" on it. It's an amazing tattoo and it's very well done, very artistic. But we're not big tattoo fans, particularly Alicia.

Hays: To my response was, "I hope to hell that is fake."

Shawn: And he was just— he was a little crushed because he thought our reaction would be different. I love the sentiment. I love the tattoo now, but it was shocking at the time.

Hays: Well then I also think it's like this part where, okay, and he knew this, you as a white straight man get to be in the world and not deal

with this. But every time you take— you are a part of this community. And I that's one of the things he wanted.

Shawn: And I think that he wanted to be about that.

Hays: We aren't always the best as parents, but we like it now when he points that out to me. "Still hate the tattoo, Mom?"

Shawn: He feels very— I won't speak for him, but he does— well, I will a little bit, but not too much. He feels very blessed to have been raised in the lesbian community. He has so many aunties that like when we had his going away party, when he went to grad school, it was his aunties. I want my aunties here. He's very aware of the blessings of the community and I'm grateful for that. And he's a straight white guy who plays rugby not rugby, lacrosse and football, and he's been very much his own person.

Hays: One quick story more about Jackson that was pretty funny about being raised in the community was, his girlfriend who we love and everybody would do anything for— buy a new tire for her car. We explained to him.

Shawn: Lesbian community when you break up you keep your girlfriends.

Hays: We told them that, if we know them, they'll be part of our life. She has been, and they went to junior prom, senior prom through college and then they broke up and we were devastated. But anyway recently she wrote him last Christmas.

Shawn: Right on his birthday, right before Christmas.

Hays: —on his birthday and came out to him. And questioning. I don't know that I would say she's over here in the lesbian camp yet, although I have faith. But, we were vacationing with them and we're here, they talk a lot and she has moved to a bigger city and I hear him explaining the lesbian culture to her and I was cracking up I wanted to get on the phone and go, "Don't believe him. He's explaining 1980s lesbian culture. I'm sure it's different now."[laughs]. And we have had a chance, we visit with her when we go to Seattle and she's very sweet and she— we were actually telling her about this project and that it was kind of painful to be called elders. So she takes a picture of all three of us and I think on Snapchat.

Shawn: Instagram.

Hays: Instagram puts "Hanging with the elders." So, it's been— we always say, "You date your mom," so I guess he did.

Raiskin: Have you both retired?

Shawn: Yes.

Hays: Yeah.

Raiskin: And what are you doing now? And how is that for you?

Shawn: It's great. I highly recommend it. We're traveling a lot, doing a lot of projects on the house. Because one of us really likes to do that kind of stuff a lot. And so we're traveling a lot and Jackson just

started grad school, so we're going to go visit him there. It's very different having him completely out of town.

Raiskin: Where is he?

Shawn: He's in Washington, D. C. attending George Washington University.

Raiskin: What is he studying?

Shawn: Security policy studies, focus at this point on national and trans-national security.

Hays: And he is fluent in Spanish, thanks to getting to go to Buena Vista.

Shawn: And he's doing an internship in Senator Wyden's office. He's living the dream.

Hays: He did say that he has finally met some intelligent Republicans and he said, "Don't worry mom, I'm not converting." They have some good points. It's great I would love you to hear because we need more people that can listen to both sides. But he does love to travel internationally and we've had the blessing to get to do that with him.

Shawn: We have a lot of travel plans and a lot of settling in plans during our retirement years.

Raiskin: I know you're not really there yet, but have you thought about aging in Eugene or what kind of—

Shawn: Well, one thing we know— we have a 2,400 square foot house with a half-acre yard, which is just way more than we need or I want at this point. We're very clear that we're going to be downsizing and looking at places in the next ten years or so, five years, ten years where we will downsize, but we'll want to stay close to community and close to where we are in our neighborhood.

Raiskin: And are you still tight with lesbian community?

Shawn: Yeah, I think so. That's where we spend our time.

Hays: When you have a kid, all of a sudden I was just chatting with somebody who's got a kindergarten or, and I said, "You'll find yourself vacationing with straight couples. It's going to be weird for a while, but you'll get used to it and they'll remain your friends."

Raiskin: And that's because your children are friends?

Shawn: Friends, right. And so your social life kind of becomes around soccer and school and all those activities. But we've always had our close knit community of lesbians that have been throughout even then. But most of our social life for many years was around his age mates and their families.

Hays: And it's great because that has changed as well. I have a friend who, a very good friend. She meets a new couple in town and she'll like, "Okay, I've got to connect you to Alicia and Adelka." Because if you're new to town and you are a lesbians so— it's just amusing how that kind of spreads out. And some of the things that those

straight couples have learned about discrimination that they didn't believe existed. But they started seeing in the schools and started seeing for us as a family.

Raiskin: When you were challenging the schools on policies, did you have support of a lesbian parenting group or anything like that?

Shawn: Not a structured one. We have a group of friends who are parents of similar aged kids. And so we're always part of that community. But it wasn't like a structured group per se.

Hays: We joined a group before we got pregnant, Happy Lesbian Couples Group. And some of us are still happy. Some of us aren't. Some folks are couples, some of us aren't. But—

Shawn: About a third of them— some of us had kids at the same time.

Long: So what was the focus of that group?

Hays: I still don't know. Ask Adelka . I went.

Shawn: Alicia went because it was not kind of her thing, but it was really just an opportunity for lesbian couples to get together and talk about what challenges maybe that were specific to us, we were facing. Holidays were always an issue. Less for us. I mean, we have families, if we go to Pocatello or wherever for Christmas, we didn't face challenges of having to hide or straighten up the house or any of that stuff. But those kinds of issues that lesbian couples face and so we were just able— we talked about it. Deb Landforce was the facilitator.

Hays: And Karm.

Shawn: And Karm.

Hays: Hagedorn. And that's actually where I met Karm and Sheryl because I remember they— I'm talking about having a kid and it was kind of one of the first times I ever really delved into what would that mean and challenging them about, "You really want to bring a kid into this community, into this world. And what does that mean for them and burden of being a child of—"

Shawn: I forgot that's where you met them. I had met them before that because I was one of the first members of Soromundi and then I didn't stay.

Raiskin: The Lesbian Chorus?

Shawn: The Lesbian Chorus of Eugene. But I didn't remember that's where you had first met them, was there.

Hays: I hope they don't remember that I actually was like, "Why would you do that?"

Shawn: That's a good question. I mean, because you aren't bringing a kid into easiness, necessarily.

Hays: Right. And what would that mean for your child? He's handled it well. And it's just funny how it changes you. Just being a parent, you're all of a sudden dealing with things you didn't deal with

before, like as an activist I wasn't dealing with the schools. But now that I have a kid, I'm dealing with the schools.

Raiskin: What's his relationship with his sister?

Shawn: They're very close.

Hays: They recently— well he's moved on to grad school. She's moved on to grad school, but before that they were living together.

Shawn: For the first time in their lives.

Hays: Right. I don't think that was a good idea.

Shawn: It was a really a good arrangement for them to be siblings that didn't live together because they're very different from each other. In their particularly just kind of their sensibility about what a house might look like when you're living in it. And, lots of other ways. She's an introvert. He's an extrovert. She's always known what she wanted to do. He's always like been open to the possibilities.

Hays: But it's fun.

Shawn: When they were kids, like when we would go like we took trips together, the six of us like to Disneyland and he was— she'd be the one going [pats] and he'd go be the one to interact with Pluto on behalf of both of them, talked to—

Raiskin: He was younger?

Shawn: Yeah, he's a year younger than her, but he was the one who'd made all the social connections and she was the one doing all the planning and thinking behind the scenes.

Hays: Yes. He also would tell us that he would go into classes and say, "I'm nothing like my sister. She's the smart one."

Shawn: She's the kind of student that teachers love to have and he's the kind of— and they're both very smart. They're both very competent, smart kids. But she's the one who follows all the rules. And schools are built for people like Bailey and Jackson is more the hands on active, interested in just what he's interested in, kind of guy. He wanted to make sure they knew, don't expect me to act like Bailey because I'm very different.

Raiskin: Do they know their donor?

Shawn: They do know their donor. We ended up with the donor that for them was once removed from the person who brought that donation.

Raiskin: What do you mean?

Shawn: They knew the person who brought—

Hays: The intermediary.

Shawn: The intermediary. Thank you. That's a better word. But they didn't know the donor. And then when we used the same donor, I don't think we even know who their intermediary was, because she

would give the donation to Karm and Sheryl and they would deliver it to us. And we didn't have any intention of having a relationship with him, but he was willing for the kids to meet him when they were older. And that was important to us. But we didn't know who he was. We didn't know anything about him. But the intermediary was connected with Karm and Sheryl, and when the kids were at eight and nine ish they all got kind of caught up in this idea or excited about this idea of meeting.

The kids did meet. We had— first we talked to our attorney, had a family meeting about what it means, met with him before he met the kids and talked about what kind of the parameters and agreements were, like he was a donor, not a father. And he was great. He was respectful of anything we asked for and followed through on all those agreements.

We had a couple of large or largish family gatherings and then there were times when he was around and the, kids got to meet him.

Hays: He had grown kids of his own.

Raiskin: Why did he decide to be a donor?

Hays: Well, what I remember him telling me was that his mother had passed and he ended up in the foster care system for a little while and then he had children of his own and he just really appreciated being a parent and that he thought if he could help someone be a

parent because it was a really wonderful part of his life that he would do that.

Long: Was the donation done through the auspices of an organization or is it just through word of mouth and how was that?

Shawn: In terms of how it functionally worked, the donor would provide a donation in a small container and give it to his friend who gave it to her friend who gave it to us in a matter of forty-five minutes. Is that what you mean?

Hays: Are you asking like how did we find them?

Long: Like how did a donor become a donor?

Hays: So, we had a donor that we knew and we sat down and ask and talk to him and did a legal agreement and our attorney said, "You should pay for this because right now in the courts, that might hold up if he came back. And said, no, I'm the father, I want to have rights." We did the best all what she told us.

Shawn: She said, "This will not hold up, but you've already done it."

Hays: She said, “If you're going to do it, this is the best I can offer.” We did that and then we didn't get pregnant, didn’t get pregnant. So, I know that for the donor that we did get pregnant with, that his friend had approached Karm and Sheryl, that are you still trying because if you are, I know this person that might be willing if you're looking. And instead of going frozen, just to do a donor. So they had that relationship and so that's their story.

Shawn: That was a friend of theirs who knew someone.

Hays: Right. What happened with us is they knew we'd been trying, they knew it wasn't working with this donor and it may not work. And they came and sat down and said, "What do you think about a new way to create family and would you be interested? We have this donor, we're using, would you be interested in."

Shawn: He's a friend of the friend of –

Hays: Right. Using the same donor. So our kids would be siblings. And we said yes and they got pregnant and then a year later we got pregnant.

Shawn: So that was—

Hays: That's the story as best I can tell it.

Shawn: Then we had a gathering with him, his name is Dennis and his wife and our families. The six of us. We didn't say who these guys were, just here's some friends of ours. And then we felt comfortable enough with the setting that we did tell the kids that, that's who their father was, their donor. And they had good relationship with him. He was— like I said, he was always very respectful of all the boundaries. In fact, he came to watch a flag football game that Jackson was at one time. And our good friends, the same— the Cub Scout family we were talking about, the one who was the dad of the kid who quit Cub Scouts, met him and he was so excited to meet him. He said, "So you're a Jackson's father." And Dennis said,

"I'm the donor." And we're like, and Mark was being— Mark was just excited and whatever. But Dennis was very respectful and knew exactly his role and he was very excited to meet the kids and thrilled with how they were turning out.

Hays: Unfortunately, Dennis has passed away. I'm glad we didn't wait till they were eighteen.

Shawn: Because he passed about when they were about that.

Raiskin: Is there something we haven't hit on that's important to know about?

Shawn: I was thinking, one of the stories that I was remembering in my preparation for remembering dates was, when I was involved with the Rape Crisis Network back in the late '70s, early '80s. There was Take Back the Night march. It was 1979 or something, I think it was the first one. Some people have said at a later date was the first one, but I don't have any documentation. But it was when I was first getting involved in the lesbian community and I was kind of anxious about that, what would it look like, like, am I going to be with all these dykes and is it going to be scary? We did the march and at the end of the march we ended up at Condon School, which is now whatever.

Hays: Condon School.

Shawn: And we were in the auditorium and I just remember just being surrounded by all these women who I thought I would be afraid of

and not being afraid. And then one of the organizers, I can't remember who it was said, “And now we'll all go to that bar we know about.” And nobody said the name and because at that time, we used codes all the time and going to the Riv Room that night and, yeah, anyway.

Raiskin: But the Pride Celebration here that you are involved with.

Shawn: What year was that? Nineteen eighty-one.

Hays: No.

Shawn: There was one in 1981 that I vaguely remember. But then in 1992—

Hays: No, because Jacks wasn't born. Jill and the group of us to play ball together. And I remember Jill Sager saying, "I can't believe Eugene doesn't have a pride celebration." And so we thought, that's a good idea. And of course we have friends who worked for the city who could get us the rec center and people that were in the choir that could perform. And it kind of reminded me of a Judy Garland, Mickey Rooney, “My mom could make the costumes and we can have the show in the barn and we'll save Sparky the wonder dog!” That was kind of what it was like. And then the next year we did it again, only bigger and it had food cards. I mean, the first year it was soda. I remember. I'm like, "Okay, I'll do the food, we'll put soda in a cooler." When we went to Pride this year, which was so diverse from what we have seen and so many young people that it was fun. It's fun to see it kind of morph and grow.

Raiskin: If you could imagine a young person watching this video and learning about your history, is there something you would tell them about the history or about advice for their own lives?

Shawn: Well, I think Linda said it best. We don't know our past—

Hays: We don't know our past.

Shawn: —we don't know where we're going. And I think it's pretty clear where we're trying to go as a community and as— and I'm hopeful that we keep going. It's a little hard to feel hopeful in this political climate in 2018.

Hays: I would say, as I look to the future, I'm not even sure what that will look like. That's exciting. And when I listened to these young people who are out and are out at school and are having these impact, it's powerful. I also, it's hard because I was recently talking to a mother whose daughter is trans and she didn't want to go to certain schools. I'm still like how do we not just have this island amongst that is safe, but everywhere is safe. So that you want to protect that kid. You want to go, don't just go there where it's all good, but then what we just giving up and I think there's good there as well is just not the same form.

Shawn: Right.

Hays: I do worry about slipping back. I don't think people understand what it means not to be able to be married. It's huge. We pay more

in taxes now, but we don't have to have all the paperwork, we're married. We never thought we'd see that in our lifetime.

Shawn: When the activists first started talking about marriage equality, I literally said, "Why don't we work on something achievable? Because that's not going to happen." And in our lifetime it happened. I think that, aiming high and sticking with the—

Hays: I also think— so when I see people doing that, what's safe here I think, am I doing that? What's safe being here in Eugene? I've had the opportunity to travel internationally. I've done trainings on being an activist around disability rights in the Middle East.

And I remember making the conscious choice not to come out and to almost coming out and somebody warning me, "Don't do it. Not here, don't do it." We were in Jordan and we had people from Afghanistan, Iraq and Israel and all of it in there. And I think, okay, do I have that responsibility? Where do I sit back here in my retirement? Or where is that responsibility to move it forward. It's not just even a responsibility. It's kind of fun.

It's great to see those changes, to live those changes. And so while I looked locally about making sure every school is safe. I look nationally about, what about these communities and then of course, internationally for— and really being willing to look at what's happening in countries. And also think how much I lost. I've lost all those relationships because I wasn't who I was.

I was invited to a lot of people's homes, "Oh, come vacation with us come here." All these people I spend time with and I just had to cut them out because I wasn't out. And they— I couldn't have them in my life because they couldn't know who I was. And I wasn't going to come vacation with them without my family, but my family wasn't safe. So, where do we go from here?

Shawn: Just a reminder.

Hays: We may be retired. We got a lot left in us so we're trying to figure, I think out where that next place is, where we can have a little more than what we are doing.

Raiskin: Thank you so much.

Long: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]