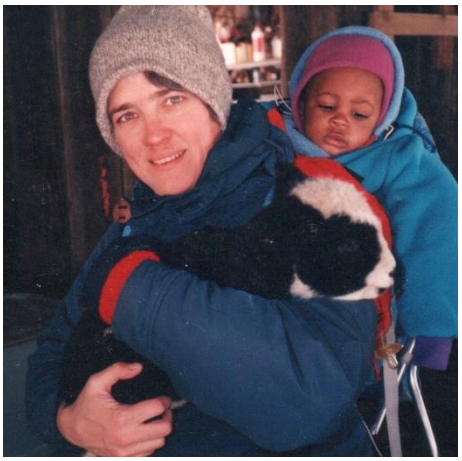
Oral History Interview with Gretchen Miller

Interview conducted on September 13, 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



Gretchen Miller and son Douglass in 1988

Gretchen Miller, September 13, 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.

Abstract

Interview conducted September 13, 2018. Gretchen Miller was born in 1950 and raised in Wichita, Kansas. She had no sense of lesbianism when growing up. She was involved in anti-war work in Lawrence, Kansas. In the early 1970s, she wanted to go West, so she moved to Eugene. Gretchen describes her impressions of Eugene at that time. She went to the University of Oregon Law School and graduated in 1976. She opened a law firm, "Heiman and Miller" with Jill Heiman. Gretchen was elected to the Eugene City Council, serving with Mayor Gus Keller. During her term, she and other councilors addressed issues such as the city infrastructure and the building of the Hult Center. She discusses her work against the anti-gay political measures. She finished her term in 1982. When she was an adjunct faculty member with the University of Oregon Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management for more than twenty years, Gretchen came out to her classes. Gretchen got together with Sarah Hendrickson in 1980. She talks about their children, parenting issues, racism in the community, and belonging to the Unitarian Church. She also talks about her partner Sarah transitioning to a man, the gender and sexuality spectrum, and her own identity married to a transgender man.

Additional subjects: ACLU; Adoption; American Civil Liberties Union of Oregon; Ballot Measure 8; Ballot Measure 9; Ballot Measure 13; Bell, Derrick A.; City planning -- Oregon – Eugene; Civil service – Oregon – Eugene; Collectives; Community life; Coming out (sexual orientation); Cooperatives; Counterculture; Emerald People's Food Cooperative; Eugene (Or.) -- Social conditions; Eugene Human Rights Commission; Eugene School District 4J; Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB); Fidanque, David; Gender nonconformity; Goldschmidt, Neil Edward; Hippies; Homophobia in schools; Hult Center for the Performing Arts (Eugene, Or.); Human rights; Hyman, Jill; Keller, Richard Antone "Gus;" Lively, Scott; Lesbian mothers -- United States; Mabon, Lon; Marriage equality; Ordinances, Municipal -- Oregon – Eugene; Oregon Citizens Alliance; Parenting; Referendum 51; Same-sex marriage; Transgender people; Unitarian Universalist Church; University of Oregon. Department of Planning, Public Policy and Management (PPPM); University of Oregon. School of Law; Vetri, Dominick R.; Vietnam War, 1961-1975 -- Protest movements -- United States

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Long: This interview is part of 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 Gretchen Miller on September 13, 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 Library Special Collections and University Archives and Professor Judith Raiskin of the UO Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality studies. Gretchen, 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.

Miller: Yes.

Long: Thank you very much. Let's start with the basic question. Can you please tell us when and where you were born and something about your early years?

Miller: October 13, 1950 in Wichita, Kansas. I have two older brothers and one younger. My father, who is still alive and is 100 now, he's kind of a self-taught aeronautical engineer. He got a job at an aircraft factory during the war and worked there from 1940 to 1980 something. I grew up in Wichita. There weren't gay people then they didn't exist, at least not if you were in Wichita. In retrospect, it is very clear that there was a cousin or something of my mother who lived in a little kind of a studio apartment next door that we owned. He lived there for a few years and he was very nice to us and then moved off and it's very clear that he was gay, but not at that time it wasn't clear at all but there just wasn't any such thing. It did not enter into the equation.

I didn't have boyfriends. I didn't really date and I was a nerd and kind of argumentative perhaps, and a little difficult, kind of a brat sometimes. It was hard to say if I didn't date people, it wouldn't necessarily be because of sexual orientation. It could well be because I was kind of a jerk, kind of a brat, argumentative probably smarter than most of the people and I certainly was smarter than most of them, interested in different things. It's kind of hard to pick those things apart and when there is no gay or lesbian culture and lesbian isn't even a word that exists, it's pretty easy not to think that's what it was.

I grew up in Wichita and then I did went off to college and did some other stuff and finished college. Let's see, I started at Cornell then I went back to KU, Kansas University, went off to live, work on a commune for the summer with my boyfriend, who I had finally met through the Peace Center, an anti-war work in Lawrence. He and I lived together for about ten years and came hitchhiking out to the West Coast. We spent a couple weeks with my brother in San Francisco, headed north, stopped in Eugene because his junior high school buddy was living in Eugene, rented a room in the house next door and basically never left that was that. Eugene has been very congenial and that would have been about 1974, my best guess. That's when how long I've been in Eugene.

Long: What brought you West at all?

Miller: We just wanted to go to the West Coast, go see my brother in San Francisco and then start north and see how far we'd get. We were just traveling.

Raiskin: What did you study in college?

Miller: Classics.

Raiskin: Interesting.

Miller: Ancient Greek and Roman history, mostly Greek.

Raiskin: What drew you to that?

Miller: Well, I just sort of fell into it. I was in a six-year Ph.D. program at Cornell and at the scholarship house where I live, there were all these classicists and history is my thing. I've always liked it. I just sort of fell into it and then when I finished some time at Cornell, I had nearly enough credits for the major to graduate when I transferred. I need to take about two more classes so why wouldn't you?

Raiskin: What was Eugene like when you came here in 1974?

Miller: Well, right about— must have been earlier than that. It was earlier than that. It must have '71 or '72 was what it would have to be. I was in the throes of urban removal. I know a friend of mine, Diane DePaolis, who came to law school said that she came in and brought all of her money to pay for her year of school, put it in the bank and then went off to work for the summer and came back in September and the bank was a hole in the ground. There was this moment of thinking, "What have they done with my money?" Well, they did still have the money and all but that was kind of what it was. You turn around for a few weeks and something would be a hole in the ground. They were urban removing at an alarming rate but what it was like, it was a very congenial, kind of easy going place in the '70s. The Hoedads were really busy with all of their groups, of course. Starflower got organized about then, maybe a little later.

Raiskin: These are collective businesses and organization?

Miller: Yeah. They are. They are. Yes. There was a lot of push towards alternative economy, I guess we might call it, cooperatives, collectives, people getting together to create their own jobs. In the early years, the first few years I was here, I volunteered at the Emerald People's Food Co-op and needed a job and it was there that somebody suggested that were hiring people to drive school buses. I drove a school bus for a year. It was a very educational job, I must say. When you drive a school bus, you get in this bus that seats let's say fifty-two middle school kids and there they are kind of wrestling around because their Brownian motion continues. You turn your back on them, you start the engine and you drive in traffic and they're all behind you. That really can be quite exciting sometimes and all you have to control them, you have a really good set of mirror up there, much better than anybody else's mirror. You can actually see the whole bus but if you're me, you can't remember fifty kids' names every day. It's much less effective to shout, "You in the brown coat, sit down," but you're in traffic, what can you do? I developed a good mommy voice, which served me well many times later. It was kind of a fun year and I know that the kids can also be very cooperative. When it snowed, their favorite thing to do, some of them, was hop out and lower the windows, run out of the bus ahead of the other kids and then throw snowballs back into the bus. I finally got tired of this and I gathered them all up in one day, before I started driving I said, "You may not know this but when I get back to the bus. Well, I have to clean the bus and I have to clean up everything you've left and they don't actually pay me

for this. I just have to do it." That's probably not legal but that's what happened. "I don't really appreciate it when you make a big mess on the bus." They actually were much neater for several weeks after that. There's some hope.

Okay, that was the first year and then what else did I do? I don't know. Then, I went to law school. That was a real whim. I sort of do things on— I've realized as I get older that I've never had a plan whatsoever. I admire people who have plans. I didn't know what I was going to do. I was pretty sure I didn't want to drive a school bus forever. Somebody told me that the last LSAT exam was that coming Saturday and there was just trying to sign up for it. It was like the last day or next to last day to sign up for it. I signed up for it and took it. Boom! There I went to law school. That kept me busy for a few years.

Long: What happened with your boyfriend?

Miller: He was building. He was working construction. He had a little construction company. An awful lot of hippies did that, building houses and I worked with him and kind of helped keep that business going. It was never much of a business. He was pretty good at it but you have to be kind of seriously ruthless to really make it in the construction. When we broke up, he started teaching math at LCC and became head of the Math Department. We both left sort of the hippie fields in some ways but anyway, we were together through law school and then—

Raiskin: What kind of law were you drawn to?

Miller: That's unclear. I told Jill Heiman as we were getting— she was in her third year. She was one year ahead of me that sure, I'd go into private practice with her. Once again, not having a plan or a clue, only there wasn't anybody in town doing any law that seemed very interesting to me. Jill worked with co-ops into sort of alternative business law collectives and co-ops. She represented for a while. I think she represented the Hoedads and then they got Mike Goldstein instead but I know, I'm sure she represented Starflower and I know she represented just an awful lot, Mama's Home Fried Truck Stop café, which was over by campus where— I think it's Pegasus Pizza now. It was for a long time. Bunch and bunch of the co-op she represented. We did a lot of small business law and a lot of co-op and I did a lot not just family things, write wills, handled adoptions, do divorces, small business of all sorts.

Long: What was the law firm called?

Miller: Heiman and Miller.

Long: Okay.

Miller: It was the first only women law firm. Jill, I believe, was the first woman to appear in court in Lincoln County when she had a case out there. Still there were lots of other women lawyers in Eugene but I was right kind of at the cusp, the years ahead of me, there were like four or five or six women and the class that graduated the spring before I started in the fall was like that, just a handful of

women. In our class it was like, I'd have to— somebody could look it up, maybe 25 percent women or something. It was a huge, huge change right then.

Raiskin: Did you meet people in law school that were interesting to you?

Miller: Well, there were a lot of interesting people in law school. I'm not really in touch with much of anybody anymore.

Long: What was your graduating year?

Miller: Seventy six. We, Jill and I, practiced law and I don't know what we did. We kept busy and then I think I was down hanging out with some people that we knew from some of the business work and somebody said I should run for the City Council, probably Jack Delay who was on the City Council at that time with his terrific campaign slogan, "Time for Delay." He's just a wonderful guy and somehow they convinced me. As I've said, my story doesn't seem to have any planning. It seems to sort of be who I have run into, who talks me into something. I did. I ran for the City Council and it was fortunate that I had my own law practice because being on the City Council doesn't really fit totally well with doing anything else much even though at that time it was a completely unpaid job. All you got was what? A mileage, seven cents a mile or something like that for driving back and forth to meetings, which is not actually really helpful. It wasn't even then. That was an interesting campaign. I didn't know anything. I still don't know much but I really didn't know anything. Doug McKay was my opponent and

he was the nephew, I believe, of a former governor of Oregon of the same name. So he had all this name familiarity— not with me because I hadn't been here long enough to know that when I started but not to be unkind, I don't want to be— He was a decent guy but just not energetic and charismatic, shall we say. I got the newspaper's endorsement, which surprised the heck out of me because he had all this name familiarity of the entire Republican Party of the State and everything on his side but go talk to Jack Wilson. Somehow, I got the endorsement of the newspaper and I think that made a big difference and I campaigned a lot and things were simpler then. Everything was simpler then. You can do it door-to-door. You didn't need $50,000. It was an interesting year in respect to this project because the first— and now I've lost track of the numbers, but the first campaign, the City Council had passed a human rights ordinance that would protect gay and lesbian people, made that a protected class and the repeal, the referendum to repeal was on the ballot. That was being voted on at the same time.

Now, I was still with my boyfriend but it was kind of not much of a secret which side my sympathies would lie on or which side my opponent's sympathies would lie on but everybody would ask at all these meetings, and being young and naïve and things were different then, I thought a boring lawyerly response about discrimination is basically choice and you have to decide between two people or two things. We discriminate all the time. I decide what to have for lunch. Will I have a hamburger or a salad? It's a matter of just making a discriminating choice. The question is, on

what basis do you make that decision and if that basis is an inappropriate category that has nothing to do with the decision that you're making, then that is what we would sort of call a discriminatory choice, meaning not a good one. We're using the word in two different ways and whether somebody's sexual orientation or what they do in the privacy of home really has nothing to do with what kind of an employee they're going to be. This is for most purposes. Therefore, it would be not a reasonable basis for a decision. Most people were sort of stunned into silence at that point. They didn't have a follow up questions, was sort of, "What did she just say?" but the best, the very best was Eric Haas who was running for the City Council. He was on the council. He was an incumbent. He was a lawyer from Bethel. He died a few years ago now, moved to Oakridge after he retired but he was a really wonderful and crusty guy. His answer at these various campaign forums where you're all lined up, I would come to him and he would say, "I am not a bigot," and sit back down. Of course, he got reelected and of course the campaign lost and the measure did get repealed but—

Long: This is measured 51?

Miller: That would be 51, yes. Thank you, 51.

Long: For clarification Gretchen, you're running for City Council and what year was that when you were running?

Miller: It must have been '79.

Long: '79, okay.

Miller: You have to look and see if that's what 51 was but that would be about right because it was just after law school.

Long: Okay and were you are—

Miller: '80, maybe.

Long: Were you already campaigning? I mean—

Miller I was not—

Long: —The human rights commission— Were you on the human rights commission?

Miller: No. No, no, no. That came later.

Long: Okay.

Miller: No. I was –

Raiskin: I would clarify about the 51.

Long: Yeah.

Raiskin: City Council passed an anti-discrimination?

Miller: Yes, they did.

Raiskin: Again, to protect gays, lesbians and housing in employment?

Miller: Right.

Raiskin: There was a Referendum 51 that was opposed to that—

Miller: Right.

Raiskin: —And that passed.

Miller: Yes.

Raiskin: Okay.

Miller: The referendum passed, meaning the civil rights measure was repealed by vote of the people and that was the same ballot when I got elected to the City Council.

Long: You were elected to the council?

Miller: I was.

Long: Okay.

Miller: Yes and –

Long: That was 1979?

Miller: I guess or '80 or even '81, right about that. I don't know. It must have been about '79 though. That doesn't seem possible.

Raiskin: We can look that up.

Long: Who was mayor at that time?

Miller: Gus Keller. Good old, Gus. Gus Keller was the manager of John Warren Hardware. A great old hardware store downtown, which

was owned by his father-in-law, his wife's father and Gus was kind of just a good old boy, just a friendly, kind of knows everybody and it was really terrible when his wife's father died and his store was sold, which happened while I was on the council because then he didn't have a job. That would have been my third year on council. He had to go up to Seattle for stockbroker trading. I was acting mayor for six months at that point.

Long: What was that like?

Miller: Just somewhat more demanding than being on council but not that different really.

Long: By then, we had a city manager.

Miller: Yeah. We had the city manager. We've had one for, I don't even know when that started. We've had a manager council government for a very long time in Eugene.

Raiskin: I want to go back to the passing of the referendum.

Miller: Yes.

Raiskin: It passed fairly handily.

Miller: Yes.

Raiskin: Which meant that the majority of people who voted in Eugene voted against the rights of gay and lesbian to people to work and live as they wanted.

Miller: That's right.

Raiskin: How did that feel to have the city vote that way?

Miller: I think we all knew that that was what was going to happen. It wasn't a surprise and obviously it would feel terrible except that those were the days and that's what it was. That was what life was like. We were at the Women in Medicine Conference some years ago that was— It came to that a little later but getting out of sequence, Sarah Hendrickson, my partner was a doctor. I had lesbian lawyer friends, a handful. There were no lesbian doctor friends and there was an ad in the back of some medical journal that said something about, "Women Oriented Women Conference," some code word like that. I said, "Look at this. You should go to this." It was in Asilomar, California. She did and met a bunch of lesbian doctors. We just went back this last summer, awesome, wonderful group of people.

We met women there including a lawyer from Chicago with her doctor partner and she was an old National Lawyers Guild sort of reddish, red-tinged organizer representor her lawyer and she told us stories about she and her partner would go to parties in Chicago and they would carry their pants in paper grocery sacks until they got into the party and that everybody would change into their pants and then when you left the party, you'd change back into your dresses because it really wasn't safe to be on the street as a couple in pants. That was a little bit before my time but quite a vivid story she could tell about that.

Long: Wow, yeah.

Raiskin: You're saying that you were not surprised.

Miller: It wasn't a surprise that 51— I didn't think anybody thought it was going to succeed.

Raiskin: We've heard from other people's interview that that was a moment where particularly gay men left Eugene and—

Miller: Yes, that's true.

Raiskin: —and went to San Francisco because of the disappointment of this referendum.

Miller: That's true. There was a number of gay men left or sometime in the next couple of years started making plans to leave, yes and there has not been— The gay men's culture is in Portland, not in Eugene and it hasn't been in Eugene really. There were Terry Bean and Don Powell and some wonderful guys back then and they all went to Portland, basically. Other men that we've known head to Portland pretty soon. Yeah.

Long: Can you take a moment to tell us about Dom Vetri. I believe he was the UO law professor who wrote the text of the ordinance?

Miller: Indeed. What do you want to know?

Raiskin: What was he like?

Miller: That's true. He was–

Long: Yeah. He had to have a certain amount of courage to be out and to write the text.

Miller: You do, you do. Well, it's a little easier to have that courage I think on the university campus than some places because you're probably not going to lose your job and he's retired now but he was an absolutely brilliant professor who worked very hard, taught torts, which is civil wrongs basically, anything that's not a crime. He was just brilliant and he never in the law school, never coasted. He redid every class and every lecture every year and he kept up with developments in torts, not just case law, which would be hard enough but with sort of the theoretical developments of what was going on and how you think about it and he incorporated that into his classes on a constantly changing basis. He's brilliant and incredibly hardworking. Then, he would take on things like writing the ordinance in his spare time. Absolutely wonderful guy and I think, I don't know that he had trouble with the law school not that I know of. He's so smart and worked so hard.

Long: There was another professor who, I think he was an instructor at the law school and he came out to his class and he was reprimanded by the law school dean.

Miller: That wouldn't surprise me. I never came out to any of my law school classes. I did come out to my class at PPPM or I'm way out of chronology here but what the heck. I taught at PPPM, which is Planning, Public Policy and Management after I taught at the law school. Yeah, mostly after.

The last ballot measure it must have been Measured 13. Again, I have to figure it out but it must've been 13. It was on the ballot then and I told my class at the first day of class that I've never done this before exactly like this but I thought it was appropriate to say given the way that Ballot Measure 13 was written, it was extremely broad about what the effect it would have on state employees. I said, "It is so broad that I'm honestly not sure what it means exactly but it is possible that if that passed that I would not be able to continue to teach and that I might have to leave before at the end of the semester." I said, "I don't think that will happen. I don't think that it will pass and if it did, I don't really think that that's what it means because it would be so disruptive to so many people, but given the way it's written, I'd say I have to say that that is a possibility. If anybody would like to drop the class now so as to avoid potential disruption, please do." I also told them I was a lesbian somewhere in that speech. I forgot that part. Nobody dropped the class but that was the only time that I ever came out to the students and I don't see why you would basically. It seemed to me that had at least a tangential relationship to the class what I was teaching but I can't, in most circumstances, it's none of their business.

When I was teaching at the law school among other things, I taught LAP, which is called Legislative and Administrative Processes, that was also the year that Sarah— I got pregnant by artificial insemination done by my partner Sarah with a known donor, a gay man in town, Scott Meissner. I got more and more pregnant as the year went on and my students begin to refer to me as LAP, Lesbian

Artificially Pregnant because it wasn't a secret. It's just that there was no need to talk about it. It's not particularly relevant to what we're doing at law school.

Raiskin: That's funny. Let's go back to the chronology of after 51.

Miller: Okay. Yes.

Raiskin: What was happening in your life then?

Miller: Fifty-one, what's happening? Okay. I was running for the City Council and I was still with my boyfriend and I don't know what was happening. I was running for the City Council. I had passed the bar exam. The summer that I took the bar exam was the summer of the Watergate hearings. That I know because I set my backyard with a radio listening to them and studying for the bar exam, which is pretty horrible and when I was running for the City Council, there were many days that I told myself, "I passed the bar exam. This is nothing. I can do this." It was the only way to keep going some days.

I got on the City Council, discovered not too much to my surprise that you can't really do all that much. Just like almost any other executive position like that. You can propose things. You can sort of nudge things, but you can't actually change the world from that position. It could have some impact here and there and that City Council is a great deal about getting streets paved. We built a sewage treatment plant. That's a huge job and very expensive and very difficult. We built the Hult Center. That's a huge job and very

expensive and very difficult. You spend a lot of time on things that aren't necessarily very glamorous and that's what we did. A lot of it— there's not so much human rights were involved in it, and that other people get to do that and you get to do the fun stuff like berating the Public Works Manager for not getting the bottles fixed. There was the City Council and then that's a four-year term and in the middle of that, Sarah and I got together.

Raiskin: How did you meet her?

Miller: We had met previously. She and her then husband were talking about building a house in the country, out Fox Hollow, out south of town and David, my boyfriend and I, had gone out there to meet with them at the site and talk to them about it and all. We had met, then we spent time together various times after that. They never did build the house. They moved into town and Sarah left— had been at the health center and there was a note in the women's bathroom at the law school, which was where all the women in the law school did all of their major communication because it was the only place where there weren't men. The law school, the old law school, had brick walls and everything was just take to the bricks. So somebody put up a note that there's this cool new doctor at the health center, Dr. Hendrickson and everybody should go see her. I told her that later and she said she did seem like she got an awful lot of law students there for a while. But she was at the health center. I don't think I ever— and then she opened a private practice because I remember her husband Les called me to tell me that she

was opening a private practice and me and everybody else I knew should go to her practice and make it work. You'd have to ask somebody else, I don't know but I'm pretty sure he made hundreds of those calls. I knew her but not as a buddy or anything and then that's her story, really. She woke up one morning from a dream and said, "Oh!" We were going to a party at Gertrude's Silver Eighth Note Café, which was a lesbian, feminist, collective café over on—now it's some kind of an environmental place office now. We were at that party and we got to talking and then we went off and wandered off for a walk and kept talking and her husband and my boyfriend eventually had to go home without us because we sort of never came back. I think we stayed out wandering around talking until about 3:00 in the morning or something. That was that. What can I say? I never did have plans. Things just happened.

Raiskin: Were you surprised?

Miller: Yeah. Yeah, and intrigued and delighted and I remember thinking, I don't know if this is a good idea or not. I don't know if this is going to last. I don't know how serious this is, but I do know that if I don't do it, I will always wonder, so what the hell.

Raiskin: You didn't have any inklings beforehand that you're attracted to women? This was–

Miller: Well, I had a lot of lesbian friends if that counts, but not really.

Raiskin: Then that you were partners very soon?

Miller: Partners very soon. Yeah. I still had to live in my ward on my side of town, so that was awkward. She had just been elected to the EWEB Board. She had to live in her two wards, her area on her side of town. It was a little awkward for a couple of years and that's a big reason that I didn't run for the City Council again, was that I was not going to continue being in my ward on the wrong side of town. If that did not happen, I very likely would have served another term, but what the hell. They did fine without me, I think.

What we did, we got together very quickly after that and I think we date our relationship starting to 1980, which was when that was, February or March of 1980. It's always interesting if you ask lesbians what their anniversary is. What are we anniversary-ing? Our first date? First time we slept together? First time I brought the U-Haul over? What is it? Somewhere around March or February or March 1980, is what I figured.

Raiskin: How did the separation with the husband or partner go?

Miller: Sarah's husband, they had not been getting along for a long time, so it was no surprise. It took a while to get him out of the house. She moved into the basement. He stayed in the bedroom, took her a few months to get him to find another place and move, but that was it. That was an inevitability. It was difficult for me, but we all lived through it and I would have done it much more gracefully now, but I was young and stupid and didn't know anything. I didn't do it very gracefully, such as life. There we are, 1980. I finished the City Council. I must have finished it in '82 maybe because that's— I

don't know. Somebody can figure that out about that. Then, we really could thoroughly move in together and be together.

She had a son who was four, almost five when we got together. Then, when we really were able to live together, then we had the son together and that was when I was teaching at the law school. Derrick Bell hired me at the law school knowing that I was lesbian and living with a woman. That was not an issue for him. I did tell him when I got pregnant during that year, but that didn't seem to bother him either.

Again, I don't know if I did it as gracefully as I could have, but I've learned a few things over the years that I didn't use to know, but it pretty much went okay. That was not an issue, basically. I'm not an academic, really. I have two brothers who are professors. It seemed like maybe I should have been, but it turns out that academic law is really boring. Actually, law is really boring and it turns out that I'm not sort of really properly suited to it. Perhaps if I'd gotten the Ph.D. in history, I would have really loved it and enjoyed it, but not knowing that at the time, I would have to say a law degree was a really wonderful thing and I supported myself. I've supported my family. I've had really interesting jobs. I've never had trouble finding work. That's all been a good thing. It's not my passion though. It's interesting. It used to be more interesting. I've gotten kind of tired of it over the time.

Then, let's see. City Council, I don't even remember what I did. I'm sure I did things on the City Council. I can't remember what they were. We had the ballot measures. Then we had the first No on 9.

Raiskin: Can we go back to 8?

Miller: We skipped 8, didn't we? We skipped Measure 8.

Raiskin: Start anywhere.

Miller: Okay, Ballot Measure 8. Harriet Merrick is really— I'm sure you've talked to Harriet. Harriet— it was her thing but the state, oh, God how did we get—

Raiskin: Start with Governor Goldschmidt.

Miller: Yeah, Governor Goldschmidt's— I'm trying to think how it got onto the ballot. Was it a referendum onto the ballot from Goldschmidt's executive order? Is that where we got to?

Raiskin: I believe Governor Goldschmidt's executive order, which was to protect gays and lesbians—

Miller: It was, yes.

Raiskin: The anti-discrimination bill, executive order, was pushed back by the Ballot Measure 8.

Miller: Yes.

Long: That was the Oregon Citizens Alliance.

Raiskin: We saw the Oregon Citizens Alliance.

Miller: Yes, bless their beady little heads. Yes. Yes. Okay. It was Goldschmidt's executive order, which would protect, provide essentially civil rights protections for gay, lesbian people who worked for the state because as an executive in charge of the state executive, that's what he could do. That was his power. Ballot Measure Eight was to push back against that, to repeal that in effect by vote of the people. In fact, it did. There was a group in Corvallis that was formed at that point called After 8, which I always thought was such a great name because then they could have parties for their meetings. But it was repealed and I was not particularly active in that but Harriet was the one who used to be an employee of the U of O of course, was the one who was the lead plaintiff, one of the lead plaintiffs in the lawsuit to overturn that saying, "Mercy me. I don't certainly simply don't know what to do to supervise my employees. That's why I am so confused," and it did get overturned eventually pretty much on that basis.

Long: Do you recall what the text was of Ballot Measure 8? Did it specify for—

Miller: I don't remember. I do not remember.

Long: —how people were to behave.

Miller: I don't remember. I'm sorry. Ask Harriet. She knows. I would if I wanted to know. I could look it up, but I would have just ask Harriet, but that got us to and I was not particularly active in that

because I was on the City Council and I had a law practice and I actually was kind of busy at that point. That does get us to Ballot Measure Nine. The Oregon Citizens Alliance feeling doubtless empowered at that point that they had won, brought Ballot Measure Number 9 and that's the one that has the remarkable text. Still kind of stuns me even now where it talks about homosexuality, bestiality, does it say necrophilia? It might, pedophilia.

Raiskin: —masochism.

Miller: It's got it all in there and it's like, these are all loathsome things which shall not be allowed or permitted or even talked about. It was absolutely stunning in its over-breadth and I have always been grateful to them for doing that because they actually might've passed it if they had had something somewhat more reasonable, like some of their later ballot measures, but they overreached to such an extent that pretty much any reasonable person could see, this is just outrageous. This is just absurd. This is crazy talk.

The campaign was really interesting because the campaign really gained an enormous amount of momentum toward the end. We had been working on it. Sarah and I and a lot of other people here in town pretty much had been working a lot on the campaign. In fact, our youngest son, Douglass learned—That's the first time I saw him, I was sure, read and you can see on their face when they get it. We were at some campaign event and he said, "Mom, mom that says, No on Nine." "Yes, it does. Good boy."

We spent a lot of time at campaign events and having fundraisers and parties and going door to door and so on. It picked up momentum toward the end. I finally figured, I was pretty confident by the end that it was that 9 was not going to pass because busloads of people came down from Portland to campaign against it in the last couple of weekends, because they were so sure that their neighborhood was safe, that they could come down here and you think, well, you've got a tide on your side at this point. The feeling, the whole feeling was just this. People who didn't necessarily support gay rights, but this was just so outrageous and so ridiculous, but we spent a lot of time that was our major effort for that spring and summer.

Raiskin: Nine lost in Portland and Eugene, but in most of the state it passed.

Miller: Yes, it did.

Raiskin: That feeling in Eugene may have been different than in much of the state.

Miller: Oh, it was. Yes. There are more people in Portland and Eugene and Benton County, basically or the areas that would reliably vote no on something like that. There just happened to be enough more people there that–

Raiskin: Do you remember what the margin was on the state?

Miller: I don't. I'm sure I used to know, positive I used to know. Closer than I wanted it to be, but it did. The no vote did prevail.

Long: If you can recall some of the main leaders of that No on 9 campaign, if could tell us a little bit about who worked on that campaign?

Miller: I don't remember who was doing it. I'm sorry. I really don't. I don't know. We were all just working as hard as we could and doing everything we could and up until a couple of years ago, I still had folders full of the lists of the names for the different parties that the different fundraisers, and the people who had connections at print shops and could get things printed for us less expensively. The gay network stretched to every kind of service imaginable, but I just don't remember anymore.

Raiskin: It took an enormous amount of energy in this community, one ballot after another measure after another.

Miller: Indeed it did.

Raiskin: Can you remember what it felt like to have this string of referendums and measures one after another?

Miller: It really felt like that's what we did. It just felt like here they come again. They're coming after us. The first Ballot Measure 9 I know, let's see. You don't happen to know when that was do you? What year would've been about–

Raiskin: Ninety two?

Miller: Ninety two, is that right?

Raiskin: Yeah. It was '92, '93.

Miller: Yeah, that would be right, because our son would have been four, I guess. Okay. Yeah, you would be four. He'd be just learning to read. That was '92, it just felt that year it was so uncertain and the attacks were so vicious that Sarah and I were among those. We went out and got passports for all of us and all of our children and we didn't really think we'd need them, but we kept them along with a certain amount of cash kind of tucked away and these days, you might call it your gold box or something, but we just kept it tucked away where we knew where it was, because if somebody did try to take our children away, we would leave. We didn't really ever expect that to happen, but it just seemed wise to have a certain amount of precaution.

I did have a friend who absolutely literally sewed money into the hem of her coat because her family were Holocaust survivors and she was petrified. She was an extremely capable, extremely together woman who on this topic just became absolutely terrified and felt much safer having money, fairly large amounts of money sewed into the hem of her coat just in case she had to grab her coat and go. It was a scary time because they were so hateful. They were so very, very hateful.

Long: Did you ever meet Lon Mabon— any occasion to meet him?

Miller: I saw him in the flesh. Yeah.

Long: What was he like, if you recall?

Miller: I don't remember. I couldn't tell you.

Raiskin: We often wonder where the motivation for Lon Mabon, Scott Lively where?

Miller: You do, you absolutely do. It's some combination. I've always figured some combination. It's based on fear and whether it's fear of one's own sexuality, which I think is probably part of it or fear that somehow the world is changing and that people you don't understand may actually get some power or have some place in the world. I think there's just an awful lot of it. It's just based on fear and uncertainty and a fear of change. Like I said, there weren't any gay and lesbian people when I grew up in Kansas. If there are any, then it means the world is changing and that's clearly a scary thing.

Raiskin: It also makes money.

Miller: It makes money and they get power. I've suspected with Scott Lively especially that money and power had a lot to do with it. Yeah. I saw him more often because he was more local and it made him important, lots of getting quoted, lots of being on TV.

Long: We've interviewed some people who have commented that, in a backwards way, they're grateful to the OCA because it allowed people to coalesce and to move forward and to gain particular basic rights.

Miller: Yeah, we would not be where we are without that. I don't have any— I believe that too, that we went from isolated people who

might know a few other people, but just a few steps removed from bringing our pants in a paper bag to the party. We'll just keep real low and under the radar and we won't cause trouble and then you don't cause trouble and just living that way to really being out there. Was it the first No on Nine where somebody did and they must have been, yes. It was the first one. They did the— I don't know what they called the neighbors' pictures. They call it, "We Are Neighbors Now" and I think it had a different name then, which I've lost track of that. Our family was in that, so we had Sarah and me.

Raiskin: Love makes a family.

Miller: Love makes a family. That's it. They called it that and it was a photo show and they had very nice volunteer photographer. Like I said, you reached out to the whole community with everybody's skills. This volunteer photographer came out. We all sat on the steps of our big house there over by Monroe Park near downtown, Sarah and me, and her son from her marriage, James and our son that was born when I was the law professor, Alexi, and our adopted son, Doug from Texas. We have one from "Column A" and one from "Column B" and one from Texas, is what we've always said. Doug is in this picture. He was four then in his little Superman shirt and he's going like that. He's so cute. Bill and Russell, a couple of gay men who rented the garage apartment from us and who were papas to Lex and Doug and so we're all out there and maybe some other people, I can't remember, but we're all

out there in this picture. This was one of the many pictures of people all over the state that they put this exhibit up, the thinking being, you get normal people, ordinary people and the idea is to show that we are just ordinary people. They had a great picture of two great gay cowboys from Eastern Oregon. Just ordinary people, just could be your neighbors, just anybody.

Long: Was it a traveling exhibit?

Miller: It was a traveling exhibit. They took it everywhere they could find a venue for it. That kind of thing, it was, I think very clever. I think very imaginative, really well done and you can only imagine the amount of time and effort it takes for somebody to do that and to put the pictures together and to find the venues and to drive it all over the state and to hang it and to take it down.

Long: This was during the No on 9 campaign.

Miller: This was during the No on 9 campaign and we are all exhausted and doing everything we possibly can. Sarah and I consciously talked about it, made a decision. We are well set. Sarah is a doctor. I'm a lawyer. We're not going to get fired from our jobs. If we did somehow— If we lose a certain amount of custom, certain amount of clients or patients, that's okay. That's not going to be as such a big deal. We'll cope. We don't really have that much to lose compared to a lot of people. A lot of people we know were not professionals and they worked. We knew people who, lesbians who worked at Weyerhaeuser or who worked at just any job you

can think of. Some of them would have lost their jobs if they had come out and others of them, if they hadn't lost their job, would have been so harassed. They would have been unable to continue. They couldn't come out and we knew a number of people who just had too much to risk or people who were divorced and if their ex-husband got a hold of this, they'd lose their kids. All those things.

We said, we really don't have much to lose. We're going to be fine no matter what. From a position of privilege, we felt like you have a responsibility to do what you can. We will be a public face. We will put on our dress clothes and try to look respectable and go out there. I don't remember which No on 9 it was because since they were both 9, I get them mixed up but I did come to a talk at the university, it was sort of a debate with the— Oh, it might've been [Maureen Gabbar 00:48:34]. She was another piece of work, can't remember but one of the other people from the other side and she had brought— The condition of her coming was that she got a certain amount of seats in the audience that she got to fill with her friends. She did and one of them came up to me afterwards and said, "I don't see why you do this, darling. If you didn't tell me, nobody would know." I said, "That's kind of the point." I don't think she ever got it. I don't think she understood that was the point but it was and we tried to make that be the point in the first No on 9 campaign and in the next No on 9 campaign, which coincidentally the next one got the same number, which made it easy to reuse some of the same slogans and things.

Most of the really cool pins and buttons and slogans came from the second campaign because we are so much better at it by then. The first time we were making everything up as we went. The second time, we kind of knew what we were doing.

Raiskin: Remember some of these slogans?

Miller: You get the buttons, like that had the pink triangle and they say, "Straight, but not narrow," or "Better gay than grumpy," was one of them. I don't know these clever guys would come up with these slogans like that and every day there was a new— Somebody, oh, was it Scott who was on the Human Rights Commission later? What was his name? Went to George Fox University, moved to Florida. He had a button machine and he was extremely inventive and every day he'd come up with, like every time I saw him, he'd have a handful of new, clever slogans for me.

After I got off the Human Rights Commission, I mean, after I got off, sorry, back up after I got off the City Council and we adopted our youngest son, Doug from Texas, who is African American. We became a lesbian, interracial family with three boys and we were not as welcome, I think, in some lesbian circles as before because we had three boys. If you're going to be significantly involved with us, you're going to have a lot of boy around. It's just inevitable.

We also had challenging boys, three very smart, active, busy boys and we had some friends who drifted off and who quit seeing this explicitly. They would tell us basically because, well, one of them

said, "Your children aren't nice to each other and I can't deal with it." They fought. They did. There's no question they fought. I'm not any worse than my brothers and I fought but they weren't always nice to each other and that's true but also just they were noisy and rambunctious and we didn't break their spirits when they were young enough, I think is the problem. They had way too much spirit.

We made other friends and they tended to be people with similar children who could keep up with us. We didn't spend as much time in the lesbian culture as a lot of people did, because once you've got a bunch of little kids, you spend time with people with little kids. It sort of happens that way. Especially if you have a certain type of little kids, then you spend time with people who can stand that and who maybe have kids like that and who can just, it just rolls off of them too.

Long: Did you engage with the teachers in schools or school administrators about the children's education?

Miller: We sent Doug to preschool at TBI, Temple Beth Israel, where they had really supportive and helpful and warm teachers who were very good at dealing with very busy children. They also had a great curriculum about freeing the slaves and getting out of Egypt, which they drew explicit connections with slavery and Harriet Tubman and all that sort of thing.

He had a couple of years there of learning that whole curriculum in preschool and they did a wonderful job with that. Then, we sent them to the Spanish bilingual program, which is North of the river and in an area that is farther away from the university, shall we say, in some point of more upper class neighborhood and we had more trouble there. Not trouble in elementary school, we did okay. Doug, I think, never really got a fair shake in elementary school because whenever there was something really active going on that might be like trouble on the playground or something, he was probably nearby because he was really active but since he was the only one who was black, he's the one they'd remember.

There were three or four kids and I know he was there. He was always tagged even though it wasn't necessarily him, but they knew he was there. He had a hard time, although we had some really, really good friends, including a kid his age who was a lot like him, who now is a very sweet gay man in Portland and became Doug's best friend and spent a whole lot of time at our house and went on vacations with us and really seem to like being with us.

We have been mentors of young gay men off and on for a long time. There's another guy, much later we were working in the garden and he came by and chatted and told us some of his story and he grew up in Utah and his family didn't want anything to do with him and could he help us in the garden and he hung out for a while and then eventually he came up to Sarah and he said real confidentially, "I'm gay." Sarah said, "Yeah, that's okay." People like

that, we would just find— They would find us. People have found us.

I joined the Human Rights Commission really because of Doug more than anything else. We couldn't get much on tray into the African-American community. We have some black friends, mostly through the university, but the NAACP, for example, was run by people who were very gay, hostile, and didn't really think that white parents should adopt a black child and didn't think that lesbians should have anything to do with it.

It was not a— We were not really welcome there. That was very clear. In fact, it was some of that family— Some years later when I was on the Human Rights Commission we went over to Sheldon High School, which again is north of the river, same demographic, I was just talking about the better side of town and talk to the assistant principal there because we had heard, we had talked to some students that were feeling very uncomfortable there because of their sexual orientation and they would like to have some kind of support from the administration.

What could we explore with this and could we put on some kind of a program or could, various options, what could we do? She said, "That would not be necessary because they didn't have any gay students at Sheldon." We said, "How would you know that?" She said, "Well, if we did, they would come tell me."

We didn't actually just take that for an answer, but we might as well have because we just gotten nowhere, absolutely nowhere. That was one of the same people who was doing the NAACP. It just, we weren't very welcome there and we never got anywhere with that school until they got some new administration either or the students just had to lump it.

Other than that— Oh, there was one time, which I had nothing to do, I don't think. Well, I did have actually. Alexi, our middle son, went to Monroe Middle School to continue the Spanish immersion program and middle school is a tough time for everybody, I think.

In art class, toward the end of the year, he finally told me that these students had been kind of bullying him and harassing him and they were calling him gay, which he is not, but which he was this cute, young guy with two lesbians moms and he could have been. It's hard to know, although clearly not but anyway, it was toward the end of the year, maybe like three weeks or so left in the school year. I went to talk to the teacher and she said, "Oh, you know, that's too bad." She hadn't noticed anything.

Oh, okay. She would move Alexi over to a table on the other side of the room by himself. I said, "I didn't think that really was probably the right answer to this. I thought there were probably, ta-da-da-da-da-da. She said, "Well, we can't do anything talking about discrimination or bullying or harassment because that's in next year's curriculum."

Again, I mean, that's as far as I got. It was almost the end of the school year. I would have kept that one going, but that was just another brick wall. We're not going to do that. Alexi did, to be fair, possibly bring some of this on himself by being a troublemaker in a calm sort of way.

He had a friend who I suspect was gay, although I've lost track of him, so I don't know for sure. The friend's mother came and picked them up after school a lot. There was one tree out in front of the school and when it was raining, which it does here a lot, you could stand under that tree and be pretty dry and everywhere else to wait for parents is not dry. Alexi and Brian would stand under that tree and all the jocks would be under it because that's where you wanted to be.

Alexi and Brian would nudge in there and then they put their arms around each other and they'd nudge over, the jocks would move away and they nudge over and move away and pretty soon they have the tree and everybody else who'd be out in the rain.

I can see how that's a little bit asking for trouble and they, Alexi and Brian thought they were very clever and they were very proud of themselves. I'm kind of proud of them too but you can see how in middle school that could get you targeted that kind of thing.

Also he did a, in our district, everybody in, I think it's eighth grade, does a program about a big project about my family. It's kind of like a schools— Maybe it's seventh grade, I don't know, school

science fair sort of thing with the big threefold panels. There's all these things and then you do a big display in the gym when everybody's got them done.

You go through table after table of like, "My family comes from Lithuania and this is the Lithuanian flag and this was the Lithuanian national food and this is the Lithuanian folk dance and here's half that came from my grandfather," that kind of thing.

Here's the Alexi and what does he do? He does, "My gay and lesbian family," and he did a big display about, "These are my moms and these, I call these, these are my Papas, my dads and here's my— that helped me, my uncles sort of, and this is my dad and here's other important gay people from history.

We were not actually sure how that was going to go over when he unveiled that but Susan [Detroy 01:00:06] came for on behalf of the Lavender Network, which was a newspaper, a giveaway gay newspaper at the time and took pictures and ran an article about him.

Then, we took his display and him to women in medicine conference, which was in Hawaii that year. It's the only time I've ever been to Hawaii. It was an awesome trip and they had him put up his display and do a little talk about it. He got quite a bit of mileage out of his seventh or eighth grade presentation but you can sort of see why some of the kids in his school might have picked on him a little bit.

Long: What was the reaction to his presentation that night?

Miller: Some of his friends said they were jealous because we, not being sure what would happen, had encouraged some of our friends to come by. Then, we had Susan over there with a bright light taking pictures and everything and they said, "Come see my exhibit. Mine's just as good as his." That was the main reaction I saw that night but Lexi has always been kind of gutsy that way. "Let's take it to him and see what they do." We weren't hiding feeling that we didn't need to. We didn't.

It was the first no on nine campaign. I think we didn't know at all if we were going to win. It was the second one where the big wave came and it was clear that we were going to win. I had that wrong a little bit earlier. The first one nobody knew it was a nail-biter. The second one, it became clear that even though they had not overreached so far and they had written a more sensible measure, public opinion was strongly against them.

Raiskin: Would have it curtailed teaching about homosexuality or mentioning it?

Miller: Thirteen would have. The next one was measure 13 and that's the one that would have curtailed teaching or mentioning homosexuality in schools and that's the one when I, as a professor, I said, "I'm not actually sure what effect this would have on me because I can't tell."

Well, I taught law at the law school, then I taught law in PPPM, Planning, Public Policy and Managements of law to undergraduates who were going to become, as I would say, the future bureaucrats of the world. If the subject of the law is homosexuality, then you have to talk about it. You can't not and teach it, it seems to me. Nobody was at all sure what that ballot measure would have meant if it had passed but that was the third one, thirteen.

Long: What year was that?

Miller: Don't ask me questions like that.

Long: '90—

Miller: Let's see, '92, so the next one would have been '96, no, they were all in the '90s, '92, '94 and '96 or '98 something like that. They were all in the '90s I'm pretty sure.

Long: Yeah, okay.

Miller: They just came one after another and it just felt like that was all we did. I had the four years on the City Council, which it's worse now but it was pretty demanding even then sort of like doing this, I did not realize before I went into it that I had to spare 20 or 30 hours in my week every week but look I do. Who knew? Just trying to keep up with it is a lot of work and trying to keep up with three young boys at home, is a lot of work.

Sarah and I had a big blackboard, a green board actually, chalk board in the hall and we kept it always ruled off as a calendar and we always marked on it. You have meetings, council meetings, other things that we're doing, when Sarah's on call, when Sarah's got to be at the hospital, who's going out early, who's going to be late and there's a tremendous amount of if I pick up the kids at 5:00 and then I get them home, I can get something in front of them to eat but you'll have to be here by 6:30 because I've got a meeting at 7:00.

We did a tremendous amount of organizing like that for years, just ships that pass in the night, moving as fast as we can. A lot of it was political work because these ballot measures kept coming. Truly it did forge a community really. There's no question about it, that you work with people like that for that long and that hard, you become very close to them and you are a community that the OCA created a community where there wasn't one before.

Raiskin: We've heard from people that they see a connection between the forging of that community and the movement of marriage equality. I'm wondering what your experience with the marriage equality movement was or what you thought about it.

Miller: Well, I had always said for a long— When I was kid, I'd had no interest in getting married and again, I didn't think that was a matter of sexual orientation. I just thought that was a matter of good common sense. Why would anybody even want to get

married? It kind of went along with not dating and all of that, just not interested.

The marriage equality movement was never my big movement because why would I even want to join a country club that doesn't want me to join it? A terrible idea but it's a good idea sort of in theory, although it was never my big movement.

Sarah and I did go to the Women and Medicine Meeting in Washington DC, which I think was in '94 and they had an enormous marriage ceremony there with all the people marching nationally like hundreds of thousands of people.

Hundreds of thousands of people got "married" at that and we had our marriage. I just gave it to you our marriage certificate from that big event, which was us and 300,000 of our dearest friends from the capital, out on the big capitol mall in Washington DC. That was kind of fun.

I do. I think it's very accurate to say that this movement brought people together, slammed those closet doors very effectively and once you're out and you've done all this work to say, "We're your neighbors. We're people. We're not very different from you," then, it's much easier to say, "We should get married," sort of like you say and, "We'll see people on TV," and you'll run into people at the grocery store and pretty soon you think, "Yeah, they're not so different. Why not? Let them get married." I think one thing does—

I hate to endorse a slippery slope concept because I hate those arguments but one thing does sometimes lead to another I think.

Raiskin: Did you ever get married legally?

Miller: We did. Sarah and I got married. We called ourselves— Sarah called us the poster girls for same-sex marriage in Southern Oregon. The story, which I like to tell, although it isn't exactly true, is that [Dave Bernanke 01:07:22] called me one day and said, "Gretchen, do you want to get married?" I said, "Why Dave, I thought you were already married?" That's not exactly how it went.

Raiskin: Dave Bernanke was the head of ACLU.

Miller: He's the head of the ACLU and that wasn't exactly how it went but that's too good a story not to be true, I think. Sarah had always done abortions at her office, her medical office on West 11th, which is a major street and the protestors had always been out there picketing her office and there were some dreadful people. Julius was a particularly unpleasant man.

We had organized volunteers to help walk people into the office. You could be coming in for your well-baby check with your newborn baby and this guy Julius would get up and wave these plastic doll parts with red paint all over them in your baby's face or your three-year-old's face, "Did you know that your doctor kills babies?" I mean, it was just, he was a really unpleasant man.

We would get people to kind of help shepherd people in but our best event was that we did pledge a picket where the office happens to have a front office where they do the books and appointments, not seeing patients but the other stuff, had a window in the second floor overlooking the street. The front office people every whatever, every hour would count how many pickets were out there and make a note of it. We got people to pledge money to the ACLU based on how many picket hours there were. The more pickets were out there, the more money the ACLU got and then we made a thermometer and put it in the windows so we could mark them red for all that the increasing money that the ACLU was getting. We figured that— It made us happy anyway.

We had been working with Dave on projects like that and other projects off and on for a long time. He said, "Well," what he actually said was, "The Multnomah County Commission is about to issue marriage licenses and we are trying to get on top of this and would like to know if you and Sarah would like to get married. You give me $60. We'll send somebody to Portland to pick up the license and have it back here." This was like Sunday or Monday. I said, "Sure. That sounds— Let me talk to Sarah probably but yeah. It seems like a good idea." We said yeah.

Then, we had some other interesting things to do like decide. He arranged— The manager of the Hilton got us a room another reaching out to your friends kind of thing, got us a nice room at the top of the Hilton and some other people gave us some nice flowers

to decorate the room and basically ACLU volunteers put all that side of it together.

Sarah and I had been going to and still are going to the Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene. We had started doing that. I have to back up if I have enough time for this one. I really do. We had started doing that when right after the EWEB recall election, which I left out, which I'm not sure where it fits in here. It would have been about '92, another reason we were so exhausted all the time because Sarah was on the EWEB Board and was elected to four terms and served out three and a half of them.

Raiskin: That's the electric and water board?

Miller: Electric and water, the local municipal utility. They had a female general manager who was and is dynamite. She is smart and capable and a really good manager. She also was gorgeous and tall and blond and there were, it's sad to say but true, three, well two short stupid men on the board along with Sarah and two other people. They just couldn't stand it. They just could not bear it.

They suddenly decided to fire her and they got three of them together with one of those kind of backroom talking to each other kind of deals. They changed the agenda at like 4:45 Friday night for the next Monday's meeting to say something like performance evaluation manager or some vague threatening but unclear things like that and so on. This is all documented that you go on to it and

they come to this meeting and then they just, the three of them just fired her, bam-bam-bam. It was a very dramatic meeting.

At one point, she didn't know that it was coming and she was totally stunned. She didn't know what to say. She's completely taken aback. Finally, Sarah got up and said, "Come on Jean. It's clear they don't want us here," and they walked out.

Then, some people started organizing a recall campaign the next day because bless their pointy little heads, they had done this about a month before. If they had waited a month, you wouldn't have been able to get stuff filed in time to get them on the ballot. They would have had a year or two to let it fade but they were too stupid to look at the ballot dates and they just did it.

We just had time. We ran an incredibly intense campaign with Sarah staying above the fray and with me working as hard as I possibly could to get the petitions together, collect the signatures, get people organized, do this whole thing and people were outraged. People were just outraged.

Sarah did an interview somewhere. We just have the tape of it, on the radio in which she said among other things that there, "I'm sorry John," or whoever the interviewer's name is, "I'm sorry to have to say this but they are just short men and they have that syndrome." She also said, "It is sexism, pure and simple," and a couple of other things like that that were played on the radio over and over and over and over.

People were just outraged including the neighbors of one of the commissioners who all made a point of coming over to sign the petition because he was extremely unpopular in his own neighborhood. I always thought that he was kind of an ordinary, boring, Chamber of Commerce kind of guy but he's the one who ended up, was found out that he had been embezzling from kids' sports and shot himself in his car at the airport leaving a note for his wife something like, "I'm sorry. You have to clean this up." Thanks dude.

I mean, he was a piece of work. There's no question about it but that all happened years later. This was the recall campaign. We worked really hard on that recall campaign and it's a much smaller thing than a statewide campaign but it's super intense especially if you've got about 10 people working hard on it.

Then, we went to our friend Patti Pomerantz, who was together with Jan Elliot, two other women here in town, invited us to go to church camp that summer. Jan Elliot had been a really good Unitarian Universalist for a long, long time and she had been married to Peter Wotton, who had kind of a little bit of a name around town. He had a show called Elderberry Wine on the public radio station and he did his little stories about his life, all that kind of thing.

We've got— It had been Jan and Peter and now all of a sudden it's Jan and Patti and Patti was not really sure how this was going go over.

Long: Is this Jane Elliot?

Miller: No. Totally different person. This was Janis and they moved to Portland and Janis died of Lewy body disorder eventually, different people but they took us to camp and Patti said, "I'd really like it if you'd come because I just don't know how this is going to go. I'm a little uncomfortable. I'd like to have a friend there. Here's how much it costs. There's half-day childcare that's included. Three meals a day will be provided and cleaned up after. There'll be a speaker but you don't have to go to any of that if you want to just sit and worship the coffee urn that's perfectly okay." I said, "I think I can handle that."

We did and we just relaxed when we got there. It was the first time in years that we had been able to be everything we were in the same place. We could be political. We could be lesbian. We could be moms. We could be people who love to go for hikes. We could be people who loved to be served meals and cleaned up after. Doug was too.

It would have been 1990 and the girls, the sweet kind of middle school-aged girls would come by. He was so cute. He is still really adorable and handsome, drop-dead handsome but he was such a cute little guy. He was so busy. We'd get him in a highchair, put him some food, go organize ourselves and by the time I'd sat down, he'd be done and ready to go, which meant that for two years, it'd have been get up and go living because— Forget your own meal. These little girls would come up, "Could I take Doug to the

playground?" "Yeah, you could." That would be just dandy. I can sit and eat some dinner. It was wonderful. It was most welcoming. We have been Unitarian Universalists ever since because that was such an incredibly sweet experience.

Getting back to the wedding, we had been not particularly important in the church but we had been more or less regular some sort of, kind of and then the minister of the church was on sabbatical at that time at the time for the Multnomah County wedding marriage certificates.

Ministers on sabbatical basically don't like to come back early because basically once you get back in town, you're done. Everything starts again. It was only maybe three or four weeks until the end of her six-month sabbatical but still, I know she wanted those last three or four weeks.

I'm calling around trying to find somebody who can do the ceremony and one guy I talked to says, "Would you mind if Carolyn, the minister, did it?" I said, "I would love it but I didn't think it was possible." He said, "Well, she really is back in town but she's not telling anybody because once everybody knows, then it's all over but I know she'd like to do this."

She came out of her sabbatical to do the wedding. It was such a relief because when we went to talk to her, it was like, "Oh, here's a professional. There's somebody who knows what a wedding is." She said, "A wedding is like this, you start with this and you do

these things and it goes like this." I said, "Oh." She said, "Have you written vows?" We said, "No." "Here's a book that's got a couple samples. Pick one." We spent about an hour and we just put this whole thing together, which was a great relief because we had no idea what we were doing.

Somebody else came by and picked me up at work on my lunch hour and took me over to a clothing store and bought me a skirt to wear and boom! There we go, Saturday morning. We're getting married.

Long: Now, this was for the Multnomah County?

Miller: This was in the Multnomah County.

Long: You could actually get married in Lane County?

Miller: Yeah, well, theoretically, not really but sort of. With an Oregon wedding license, it's good across the state. You don't have to use it in the county where it's issued.

Long: Oh, I see.

Miller: If those licenses had been valid, they would have been valid anywhere in Oregon.

Long: I see.

Miller: We did get married. Here it was a big to-do. We were the poster children for lesbian marriage in Southern Oregon, as Sarah said along with her friends Tim and Kent, who were the gay guys. We

had a double ceremony. What was incredibly sweet to me and still is, is that you realize this, you've got it, this was all planned for in about six days. It's not like you're going to send out, save-the-date postcards. It was in the newspaper that we were going to do it but they did not say when or where because we really were not trying to make this a big protest hoorah event.

In order to get to the wedding, you had to know somebody who knew where it was. That was the only way it would happen. I knew that a few people would show up and I really didn't care how many people showed up. As Sarah said, "We knew how to do press conferences."

It was about Thursday when we realized it was a wedding that we panicked. If it only had been a press conference, we'd be good. I didn't really care how many people came but what happened was the church telephone grapevine got going and there were about 90 people there from the Unitarian Church, which is since it's not that big a church, that's a very substantial number and it packed the room and it was so touching.

Everybody said that they wanted to be there. It may be one of the few weddings ever when everybody in the room wanted to be there except possibly the 8-year-old son of my next-door neighbor who probably didn't really want to be there but I think everybody else in the room was there because they wanted to be because this would be the easiest wedding in the world to say, "I didn't hear

about it in time. I couldn't make it." It was just a delightful experience.

Long: Was it at the Unitarian Church [crosstalk 01:20:51]?

Miller: No, it was at—

Long: Oh.

Miller: That's where the church was then but no, this was in the room up at the top of the Hilton.

Long: Oh, I see. Okay.

Miller: The manager and the ACLU guys put together this room.

Long: Was there any thought of a honeymoon?

Miller: I need to go back. We have to go back to work on Monday. What do you mean honeymoon? We have work to do. I didn't even take off Friday to get ready. I should have in retrospect but I didn't.

Raiskin: How did it feel when those marriage certificates were annulled?

Miller: Well, I figured they would be. That was another thing that the ACLU had tried to convince the Multnomah County Commissioners that if they would wait a little bit longer, they would pass the ballot deadline and they would not have to run a referendum election and some other stuff but no, they didn't and I didn't actually think they would ever stick.

That means that the marriage was void ab initio, meaning it never happened at all, even though I can't seem to convince anybody to say it that way. Everybody always says, "We got married and then we were unmarried." I know I'm being pedantic but it's not true. It's not exactly correct. That was that marriage.

Then, we really got married after [Odegaard 01:22:08], the US Supreme Court case at Saro's family cabin in Lake Tahoe, up south of Lake Tahoe, up in the mountains, up at Desolation Wilderness. Beautiful family cabin that her dad built in the '60s, simple, no running water, simple place but wonderful. We had my oldest brother who's a minister and his wife fly in from Kansas and he did the ceremony, the real ceremony.

Long: That was 2015?

Miller: Must have been, but at that point we'd been together so long and married and unmarried so many times, it's sort of hard to keep track.

Raiskin: Do you want to talk about some changes with Saro and your family?

Miller: Well yeah, then Saro decided that what Saro really was, was transgendered and Saro was a guy. Sarah became Saro and that's not quite two years ago now that he started that transition or actually started in April. I guess it's a little over two years ago. Yeah and Sarah is now Saro and is very happy. He says he didn't really know what gender dysphoria was until it wasn't there

anymore. He is really happy as a guy. He is still the same person, different but the same person.

We went to a thing called Gender Odyssey in Seattle last year 2017, which is a trans convention. Interesting, interesting place, enjoyed it enormously and there were a lot of parents there of young, pre-pubertal children and they said pretty consistently about their children, "There was some grieving or sadness or adjustment because I lost a son but I gained a daughter," or vice versa and, "It's still my child." Well, to a remarkable extent that's sort of how I feel about Saro. Yeah there's quite a bit and there's some adjusting to do and some grieving to do because I have lost a wife but I still have, it's still the same person. It still very much is the same person.

All these years, I have never really bought into the theory of this lesbian identity that I am completely a lesbian. I have always really been more of the theory that sexual attraction is like a lot of other things. It's a sort of a spectrum and you can be in a lot of different places on this scale and you can be at different places at different times in your life. I was together with my boyfriend when we first got together. I was very together.

I can't say that that was something that didn't happen or that didn't mean anything. It was real. I've always felt there's a spectrum and the possibility for change. I still feel that way. What I miss is the gaydar that when you walk down the street with your same-sex partner and you see somebody else and there's kind of a look, I can

still give them that look and what I get back is, "What do you think you're doing?" That's a little disconcerting sometimes.

Raiskin: Much little invisible.

Miller: Yeah. I do not feel like a heterosexual woman married to a man. I just don't and my identity has been lesbian for so long. I don't know, I don't add it up, 40 years more or less, almost 40 and for Saro, Saro's identity was as a lesbian for 20 years before we got together, 60 years almost. That can't be true but anyway, whatever it adds up to. You may lose that identity in a certain sense but I still claim that I am still a lesbian. I just happened to be married to a trans man now.

A trans man is a man but a trans man is a certain kind of a man, I think. A lot of trans men would get really angry I'm sure to hear that. That's a whole set of political arguments that I simply do not need to get into. I have had enough fights in my life. I don't need to pick that fight but that is pretty much how I feel about it. He's a queer man. I'm married to a queer man. It's not quite the same. I still feel like a lesbian.

Raiskin: Do you feel perhaps like a queer lesbian?

Miller: Yeah, that would do. Yes, yes but you know I'm not sure I ever felt like a full-on proper lesbian. I don't think full-on proper lesbians worked at Star Flour and hauled bags of organic flour around and went and lived at Oregon Women's Land at the OWL Trust out in the woods and planted trees. I obviously was never a full-on proper

lesbian. I was always something else because full-on proper lesbians didn't put on nylons and heels and go to court for God's sake but I was going to go to court. I didn't have any choice. They used to have dress codes. Those were the days.

Long: Oh really?

Miller: Oh yeah.

Long: To go to court?

Miller: Oh yeah. Those were the days. That's another whole set of stories going to court but yes, they have, even if you had to dress properly, judge Alan was careful about what he said to women being no fool but man, he would blast some men. A man came in to ask him to sign an order, not even in full-on court wearing a bolo tie instead of a regular necktie, he blasts him and send him out to change.

Raiskin: Wow.

Long: Wow.

Miller: I never heard or even heard of him blasting women like he did some men but I always kind of knew it was there. You don't want to push it too far and find out just how far it was going to go. Yeah.

Long: Before we go on to a different topic, I think it's worthwhile. I still have a question about the EWEB recall, if you could just clarify. There was a very attractive woman in a power of position on the EWEB board.

Miller: Correct.

Long: Was she the president of the board?

Miller: She was the general manager of the utility.

Long: Okay.

Miller: She was the hired employee just like the city manager, same position.

Long: Then, the electors of the board—

Miller: The elected board fired her.

Long: —Were upset that she had that position?

Miller: I think so, yes.

Long: They fired her.

Miller: Yes.

Long: Then, the recall was—

Miller: The recall was the get those two out of office.

Long: —To get those men out of the board.

Miller: Yes.

Long: I see. Okay, thank you.

Miller: That's exactly what it was. Thank you. Sorry, I didn't make that clear.

Long: Well, I think it was just me. I wasn't quite sure exactly.

Miller: I just lived it so much that I was thoroughly into it. One of the three who voted that way had not been in office for six months yet. He could not be recalled but the other two could and they were. Well, one of them, as I recall, resigned and the other one was recalled. I think that's how it went but we certainly submitted plenty of signatures to get them both on the ballot. They both saw what was coming.

Raiskin: Are you in Saro now retired?

Miller: We are both now retired, yes. I worked at the law school as a professor for six years, I guess. I worked at PPPM teaching law to undergraduates, which is lots more fun. What law students, what they say about lawyers are they used to say about lawyers, maybe they've gotten better, although I doubt it, but they used to say that a lawyer to establish his presence, will walk into the courtroom and piss in all four corners. That's kind of law students kind of some of them come in with that attitude.

As a woman, in front of them as the professor, you have to spend an exhausting amount of time showing them that they don't know as much as they think they do over and over and over. If you keep at it long enough, it gets easier and you get older and so on but they continued to be, every year, very young and very sure of

themselves and very assertive and it is just exhausting and it's not as much fun as it ought to be, really isn't. It is, I said, I'm not an academic. I get bored doing legal research.

Then, I went and taught at PPPM, teaching law to undergraduates who were much nicer people as a rule and it was a lot of fun. Then Sarah decided to quit her private practice of medicine. She actually got to hit the peak moment when hospitals were buying practices and they were able to sell their practice and then she had, I think, three years to work for them and at the end of that, was done.

She came home one day and said, "I'm quitting. You better get a job with health insurance." I said, "Okay, I better get—" Then, I got a job for the state first doing workers' comp hearings, which was just part-time and had no benefits but I was able to segue that into a job doing other kinds of administrative hearings, which was a full-time job and did have benefits.

Then, I was an administrative law judge and did hearings. Just a satisfactory thing to do in support of the family and Sarah then became a part-time public health officer working for the county, which wasn't a very satisfactory job, although Sarah has always made twice as much as I have. Doctors make more than lawyers.

Sarah working halftime and I working full-time, made about the same amount of money and continued raising the children and doing all that sort of thing and until eventually we both threw up our hands in despair and quit.

Raiskin: What are you doing now in retirement?

Miller: Oh, well, golly, I'm having a wonderful time. Our middle son, the boy I was talking about in middle school, he used to be kind of provocative and his girlfriend and their 20-month-old daughter have just moved in across the alley. We built a little house on a lot we bought 15 years ago, one-storey, no stairs, half the size if that and downsized and moved into it and our son moved down from Portland with his family and they moved in. We've got a granddaughter across the alley. We have two more grandchildren in Portland.

The youngest one, Doug, is in Arizona. We go down there to see him every year and what do we do? We're really lazy basically compared to, I don't know how we used to do what we used to do. I do not know but we are really lazy these days and loving it.

Raiskin: You had quite a life and quite a family life and a professional life. We've been asking people at the end of these interviews to imagine a young person watching this interview, either soon or maybe over the years but do you have any advice for a young person from this peak that you're at now?

Miller: Don't look back. They might be gaining on you. I don't know. No, it's a great life if you don't weaken.

Raiskin: Well, really thank you for this interview.

Long: Yeah, thank you so much.

Miller: Thank you.

Raiskin: It's so wonderful.

[END OF INTERVIEW]