Oral History Interview with Maura Scanlon

Interview conducted on August 23, 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

Maura Scanlon, Eugene, early 1980s

Maura Scanlon, August 23, 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 on August 23, 2018. Maura was born in Massachusetts but grew up in Colorado. She grew up in a liberal Irish Catholic Family. She went to Colorado State University in 1967 where there was a small group of lesbians with whom she socialized. She moved to Eugene in 1975-76, and came out as a lesbian at age twenty-six. Maura describes a sit-in with a group of lesbians at a restaurant, a "zap" at the restaurant with a group of lesbians to draw attention to its anti-gay policies. Maura describes a lesbian talent show and explains that many lesbians had part-time jobs and therefore had more energy to put into the lesbian community. She got a degree in librarianship from the University of Oregon, and a teaching certificate. She describes the jobs she had in Eugene and in Creswell, a conservative community. Maura describes the fear of being found out she was gay while working at a Creswell school. She discusses working at Peralandra Bookstore in Eugene. Maura talks about spirituality and meditation. She also talks about becoming involved with a man, and the changes this brought to her life.

Additional subjects: Ballot Measure 9; Bisexuality; Center for Sacred Sciences; Communal living – Oregon; de Frisco's Tavern; Full Moon Rising planting crew; Gold star lesbians; Hasbians; Homophobia; Lesbian identity; Lesbian separatism – Oregon; Massage therapy; Meditation; National Organization for Women (NOW); Non-Monogamy; Sheklow, Sally; Shit jobs; Spirituality; Vietnam War, 1961-1975 -- Protest movements -- United States; Wild Iris (restaurant); Zoo Zoo's (restaurant).

Transcriptionist: Rev.com and University of Oregon Libraries

Session Number: 006

Narrator: Maura Scanlon

Location: University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon

Interviewers: Linda Long and Judith Raiskin

Date: July 23, 2018

Scanlon: Okay. But in general I could look at somewhere around where you are.

Long: Yeah.

Scanlon: As opposed to gazing off into space.

Long: Yeah. Okay. 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 Maura Scanlon on July 23, 2018 taking place in the University of Oregon Libraries' recording studio in the Center for Media and Educational Technologies. The interviewers are Linda Long, Curator of Manuscripts in the UO Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives and associate professor Judith Raiskin of the

UO Department of Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies. Maura, 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 you recorded and transcribed interview.

Scanlon: I do.

Long: Thank you. Okay. Shall we begin with the first question then. Can you please just tell us where you were born, where you grew up and something about your early background.

Scanlon: I was born in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, but at age two, I moved to Denver, Colorado, and then I went to college in Fort Collins, Colorado in 1967. And then, I don't know when it was maybe 1974 or six that I came out as a lesbian and there were— Fort Collins was the college was like an agricultural veterinary university, the state university. And so it was kind of conservative and we were, gosh, we felt like we were the first lesbians in the world or something. We put an ad in the paper to get other lesbians to come and have a potluck with us. And we got all six of them and we figured that was it. We were kind of naive about— there might be some that might not just be responding to ads like that. But anyway, it was a small group and we were really close.

But at one point I wanted to move and so I decided that— Eugene we'd heard was like, "Wow, that was the place to be if you were a lesbian." So, I went and a friend, one of the women in the circle came with me and then a few months later, two, three, four, they

ended up to be like most of us all ended up in Eugene, about six of us, I guess.

Raiskin: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Can I back up just one moment just to ask you what it was like for you to come out when you did, how old you were, how your family was with you.

Scanlon: Okay, let's see. I was probably twenty-six. Twenty-four, twenty-six. And let's see, how did that happen? I decided I was going to leave. I'd been with this group, I'd been active in like Vietnam protests and was with the group that said, "Oh, let's live on community land sometime." This was a heterosexual group. And a lot of us met each other through this woman named Bonnie Germaine, who had a bookstore. That was the center of the planning. And one plan was to buy land and she did that. And I went, I said, "yeah, I'll go with you." And so I went to Montana, but as I was getting ready to go, there were these two women who said, as members of NOW, which we were, the National Organization for Women, we ought to support our lesbian sisters by going to a lesbian bar, so we're going to go in Denver. It was like a field trip. And turned out that the women who were pushing for this are both married women who were really interested in each other.

And so a group of us went, and I got so nervous I was going to meet people there. And this was in Denver and it was under a viaduct and it was in a really dark part of town. Underneath the bridge was the "Macho Club" in big letters with men hanging out outside with their white T-shirts rolled up and stuff. And my

friends weren't there, so I went in and it was too scary. I came back out. It was just scary to see, I don't know. Okay. I went in and then all the women at the bar turned their head to see me and then they, and I just like, oh my gosh, it just felt like, they looked and it felt like men at a bar and I backed up and went out into the parking lot and then I was locked out of my car. I left my keys in my car because I was so nervous. Luckily this wonderful tall woman showed up and helped me get into the car and she was just wonderful.

And so the other people came and we danced and we love— I loved dancing there because it felt like I wasn't concerned about what anybody thought about me because I wasn't a lesbian and these were lesbians so I could just totally relax. And it was really fun. And so the next day I'm getting ready to leave to go to this land in Montana and I'm back in Fort Collins to say goodbye to people. And I tell this one friend what happened and how I met this woman who broke into the car for me and I said she was a forest service worker and all of a sudden she said, "Was her name Kathy?" And I go, yes. And you said, "Oh, well, she and I have been in kind of a relationship" and it was like, what? Later in the day I find myself with Mary kissing and it's like I really felt like I was walking above the ground. My feet were not touching the ground as I walked around. So that was my coming out story and my parents did not know about it for quite a while.

Okay. I moved to Oregon. Anyway, later I moved to Oregon and it was a secret that my parents wouldn't know because I didn't know how they would deal with it. Irish Catholic family. My parents were— well, I had trained them a bit with my Vietnam protests so that they were against the war by then and they were liberal people eventually. I mean they were, I guess, but I didn't know for sure. When I did finally come out to them, my dad's— you know, they said, "Oh, well, oh well," you know, whatever. And then later my dad said "At first I thought you would just be so lonely, but I guess it's not any different than any of my maiden aunts. They had a pretty happy life and so I guess you'll be all right." He never crossed his mind that I would have a relationship or love or support or community, none of that.

Just that I would be one of these lonely people that sit in a bar or something, I don't know. So that was the reaction, but they got more relaxed. They all were real friendly with my friends. And when my mom once went with us in Eugene to a lesbian gathering and she was in heaven. Everyone was coming over to meet her and everything and she said, "you're so lucky you have so many good friends in your life." Because she'd always been very asocial and so it was just neat. Sounds good.

Raiskin: How did you find Eugene when you first came? What was it like from your perspective?

Scanlon: First thing I noticed that women were walking hand in hand. I said, "Wow, look at that."

Raiskin: What year was it that you came?

Scanlon: I came in '76. Seventy-five or '76, I think it was. I was pretty much thinking it was going to be just easy. My friend and I met, decided now how are we going to actually meet some of these women that we see walking around looking so relaxed and so accepted in the community. And so we went to a NOW meeting because that was what we are familiar with and we met these two women who are still good friends and that was the beginning. And then we'd start going to some things that were advertised for women, including— this was shortly after I came.

Well, before I tell you about that talent show that I went to, then I got a shock and realized this wasn't exactly paradise and not everybody in Eugene was open to gays and lesbians because I was with someone that had come out with me. We had been lovers and then we broke up, but we were still friends, which is my sort of way it all often or mostly happens. Dottie and I came out and then we were in a restaurant and she was sad about the breakup and she was planning to go back to Colorado and we were talking and I had my hands on her hands across the table as I was comforting her. And this was in— when de Frisco's was a restaurant in the Atrium Building downtown by the new library.

So the manager came up and said, "Ladies, if you want to hold hands, this is not the place for you." And, oh my God, we were so shocked. I mean, I was speechless. And Dobie said, she wished she still had wine in her glass so she could throw it at him or something

or that we hadn't already paid so we could leave without paying. I don't know. We were just like what? And he said, "You'll have to leave." And so we left and I just thought, Wow, what I did feel was, wow, what if someone kicked me out of the restaurant because like the color of my skin or something I could not change or hide. And then I thought I'd start getting answers, oh, that is why people might want to hide who they are because they don't get kicked out or whatever. It was just shocking to me because I didn't expect it to happen there. I didn't even expect it to happen, which is funny— it's kind of funny, anyway.

Long: What kind of restaurant was that?

Scanlon: Well, I don't know how you'd describe it. They had some pool tables. They had a bar and some tables. What happened is a few days later, I was at this talent show, a lesbian talent show and it was in the WOW Hall I think, downstairs. And before things were happening or in between, I met some women, I was talking to them and I brought up that that had happened. And they said, they'd heard that something similar happened to someone they knew or whatever. Then when— I remember it was Sally Sheklow—

Raiskin: Sheklow.

Scanlon: Sheklow who stood up and said, "There's a woman over here who wants to tell you her story" and pointed at me. And I was like, "Yikes, I don't even know these people yet." I did get to know people, a lot of them, because I got up and told them about it and

they all said "We're going to have to have a zap. We're going to like go in there." I didn't know what a zap was, but just show up. They picked a night and they said— they got gays and lesbians to come and just go in and be in the restaurant. So that was pretty exciting.

Raiskin: And what was the purpose of that?

Long: Yeah, explain the zap. Was it like a sit in?

Scanlon: It was like a sit in, yeah. Only we weren't just sitting, we were taking part. We were being in the restaurant whether they liked it or not and what could they do if we were all there and we'd make a statement and he'd have to— I don't know what he'd have to do, but we wanted some kind of confrontation and in the sense of we're not going to let you get away with this or something like that. To get attention to it maybe also. Maybe people would boycott it or protest. I don't know. So we all went in, I don't know, I just, I went in and we just— and people were playing pool and kind of like, there were more of us than the other people.

It was pretty much wall to wall, it felt like. And I saw that waitress make a phone call and I saw the owner come in and he just went to the first woman standing by the door and he grabbed her by her shirt and he said "out of my restaurant." And he was going to physically move her out and everyone was going, "Whoa, Whoa, Whoa." And we said, "We want to talk to you." And he said, "Well, not in here." And so we went out to the Atrium because the entrance was within the Atrium and that was this open area. And I

remember sitting on this— all the people on the table, which fell over or broke or something as I recall. But anyway, so we talked to him and it was very interesting. First he was really defensive, said "I don't want my restaurant to be a gay restaurant. I get to have a kind of restaurant I want."

And then anyway, after a while we said, "Let's talk when we're calmer, let's talk in a smaller group." Because there were like, a lot of people stayed in the restaurant but there were at least like maybe thirty people and him. So it was hard for it to cool down. And so we agreed to meet with a smaller group. I got to be part of that and it was quite a way to get connected with people in the community. And some of the leaders of the group were connected to the MCC, Metropolitan Community Church, which was real— I don't know if it was exclusive, but really open to gays, a Christian Church. And so we met with him again and I remember really strongly some of the things that he said, it was interesting.

He was much more human the next time. He brought with him the owner of the Atrium as a manager who may have been a gay man, I'm not sure. But anyway, he was much cooler. And he said, "Well, I don't want my restaurant to be a gay restaurant." And we said, "well, it doesn't have to be, I mean, gay people go to the Excelsior and it hasn't become a gay restaurant." And he said, "Well, I'm thinking about opening up— We did say, "what kind of restaurant do you want?" And he said, "I want the college kids with money," kind of like the higher economic group of the university student or

something—he had this idea. I guess a person can try to do that. But anyway, he said, "Well, I'm thinking about putting up a dance floor and I couldn't handle it. I could handle women dancing together, but if there are men dancing here, I just couldn't handle it."

And so we said, "Well, you open up your dance floor and we'll come in if you'll get used to it or something like that." He never opened up a dance floor and then people stopped going. They boycotted. I guess we didn't know what else to do. I'm not sure, I guess we could have taken some legal action. I don't know if there was any legal support for that or not. We just stopped going I guess. Years later I went in with my mom was visiting and took her into the restaurant and the owner came over. He recognized me and I recognized him, just years later and he was very, you know, "How you doing? Can I get you something? Very—

Long: Accommodating.

Scanlon: He didn't want me to zap the place again. So that was the story of De Frisco's. That restaurant's not there anymore, but I think— well, anyway.

Raiskin: Can you tell us something about the lesbian talent show at the WOW Hall?

Scanlon: I think there were other talent shows and I may be mushing them together in my memory, but Sally did belly dancing. That's what was amazing. I loved it. I love belly dancing anyway, and that was

great. Her name was Hayfield then and they evolved to be a cabaret. And my friend Mary, who was the one that was my first lover in Colorado, she came out and moved out here later, too. She was one of the organizers of it. And I remember a trapeze act. I remember a woman named Wanda, I think. Wanda? Yeah, who sang "Stormy Weather." And she may be the same person or not that was on a trapeze while she was doing it and ended up doing all these fancy things so that was pretty exciting. And it was set around with little tables and women get dressed up in really neat ways. It was very fun. Very fun.

Long: So at that time, were you working in Eugene or were you going to school?

Scanlon: When I first came here, I drove a school bus in Springfield and I worked in a fabric store. Then I decided I would go to get my graduate degree because with English lit, you can't do a whole lot. So I got my degree at the university in library science, the last class before they canceled the program.

Long: And that was ’78?

Scanlon: ‘78.

Long: Mm-hmm [affirmative]

Scanlon: And then that didn't help a whole lot, still didn't get a job as a librarian. But I did work in the Eugene public library, every area except custodian and the office. I got to drive the bus, the

bookmobile and everything. And later, I could tell you stories not this one. Worked in a Creswell School District as the media specialist in the elementary school with the young ones, which was kind of fun. But it was Creswell and it was conservative and it was during the second gay rights bill, I think that was in— going up for the vote.

Long: The statewide measure?

Scanlon: Yeah.

Raiskin: Measure 8, probably.

Scanlon: Probably. I'm not sure of the 8 or 9. I think it was the second one, so is probably eight. Anyway, it was around ‘90, ‘92.

Raiskin: Oh, 9.

Scanlon: Nine.

Raiskin: Measure 9.

Scanlon: Before that I'd worked at Peralandra bookstore.

Long: Can you tell us about that?

Scanlon: Yes, yes. I did have some interesting discrimination in Creswell, so I'd like to get back to that.

Long: Okay.

Scanlon: But first, Peralandra bookstore. I was a massage therapist too, doing various library jobs. And then I got the job at Peralandra and I loved doing that. It was a metaphysical bookstore. And the owner, Catherine Harris, identified as a lesbian. Anyway, so there was some goddess stuff and Buddhism and there was a lot of astrology because Catherine was an astrologer and healing and so forth. It was eastern religion, meditation. I got to deal with the crystals and the tarot cards, and I got into that. And it was a lovely store. It was great.

Long: Where was it located?

Scanlon: At that time it was by the former Mayflower Theater I think. Really close to university. I think it would be on the corner across from the Christian college now, which should be Eleventh— I think Eleventh and maybe Agate, I'm not—

Long: Alder?

Scanlon: Alder. I mean.

Long: Okay, yeah.

Scanlon: That was a good job to have, a good place to work. And I was a massage therapist and had my own practice.

Raiskin: You were part of a healing network?

Scanlon: Oh yeah. I don't remember, the first time I have no idea. But I thought there'd be a women's healing network. And so we got

together, there were chiropractors and maybe a counselor and lots of massage therapists. We just pretty much hadn't got together to have a place to talk and network and maybe had some speakers or talked about workshops we'd gone to and that was good to have.

Raiskin: Tell us about Creswell then.

Scanlon: Creswell. To back up a little bit, when the lesbians back in Fort Collins, Colorado didn't want to have to worry about (the ones that I hung out with), didn't have to worry about getting fired from a job because we were lesbians. We took what we call shit jobs, which we didn't care if we lost and the people hired us just didn't care what our sexuality was, whatever. At that time, I did work in a bookstore there for a while, but I also did like cleaning, house cleaning, that kind of thing. And so anyway, I was just having little jobs that were not good. Like in the back of my mind was, it'd be nice to get a job that I really liked enough to stick with it. So I took this job in Creswell. I went back and got my teaching certificate so that I could do something with my library degree. I got this job in Creswell.

Anyway, I was freaked out that people would find out I'm a lesbian. So here I am in the closet and I think, Gosh, here I am in Eugene where I thought I wouldn't have to be. But I was really careful. I carpooled with two or three men who were I worked with. And it was weird to not be able to talk about what I did the weekend or who I did it with. And it was stressful. And then there were— the voting on the gay rights measure was up and so people

would come wearing, “Yes on 9” and stuff so you kind of like figured out who— and I started these imagination that I'd wake up in the night dreaming of moms coming at night with lit torches to get me, because I was a lesbian, and I was hanging out with their kids.

I was pretty old stuff that was coming up. And one day the principal said, “Can you talk to me,” no, he didn't even say after school, he said, “Can you talk to me tomorrow? A parent called and I have something I want to talk to you about.” And I had to wait all night. And so I was pretty freaked out and I get there and he said, “A mom says that her daughter said that there's a lesbian in the library.” And I said— well, I was surprised I had this much peace of mind. But I said, "And if so what?" I don’t know how I said it. “And if there was, is it a problem or something?” And he said, “That's what I told her.” I was surprised that I had some support from him and he didn't come out and ask me if I was a lesbian, but he said, "I guess I'll have to ask her what would be the problem if they were” or something like that.

Or how did she know her daughter said that people say she's a lesbian. I guess the mom decided to let it go. But the daughter stopped giving me any respect at all. She would talk to her friends during class and when I would ask them to be quiet, they would just keep on talking. And then later when I would be talking to her about something, she’d stand really close and lean against me and stuff. It's like, this is bizarre and nothing like a fifth grader just

wondering about their sexuality or something. I don't know. It was weird. About then there was a job opening for a library clerk at the Lane Community College. And I said to my principal, "what would it take to break my contract before the end of the year?"

And he said, "Well, not much because we are not going to hire a librarian next year anyway." People were giving up librarians everywhere, couldn't afford them, I guess. So I left. And so, I hate to think I left just because of that one woman, but I had that fear all the time. And it wasn't comfortable. And what was I doing there? So I took this job at the community college, even though I was six to ten, which was pretty much different than everybody else's schedule. And then I finally got a job at the Eugene Public Library temporarily as a young adult librarian. They hadn't had one before. And then it became a full time job. And so I felt really good to start that whole program with the teens and do some of that work that, I liked. Then I got really good at telling stories to kids, which I love doing.

Raiskin: Did you overlap with Laura Philips in the library?

Scanlon: I ran into Laura Philips who was looking for a job and I said, "Well why don't you look at this volunteer coordinator at the library?" And so she got the job, which was great because she worked with teenagers, too. So in another capacity, so that was cool.

Raiskin: Were you involved in the work against Measure 9 when it was happening? Were you involved in the community doing that?

Scanlon: I don't think I actually worked with the organizing. I did. Oh yeah, I must've done something. Handed out things or something, but it wasn't one of the organizers. I was like, give me a job and I'll distribute this or that.

Raiskin: Do you remember how it felt at the time in the community to have that measure on the ballot?

Scanlon: Oh, it's just crummy. It's just crummy to think that other people get to decide if you're okay. Basically that's it. Are you okay? And are we going to allow you to love whoever you want to love? And it just felt really crummy and it gave me a little reality check, of course. I know Eugene might be in some ways very supportive, but as a state or as a country that we have so far to go.

Long: When you were living in Eugene, were you aware of the separatist land movement in southern Oregon?

Scanlon: Oh, yeah. Yeah. I met lots of women who had been part of it or who would, well— for one time I remember someone invited me to like a solstice gathering on the Mountaingroves' land and so I'd get to go for a visit. I know a woman who lived at Cabbage Lane and another woman who is now outside of Roseburg who had experiences in land. So yeah, it was sort of like— they were really true blue lesbians. It's just like they had this higher— there was stuff like that going on. I look back on it and I can see it differently now, but like any group, I suspect, especially when you're under stress from others that you really want to fit in. These are my

people and I want, so there were certain rules spoken or not. Like how you looked and who had more credentials. Oh, there were the gold star dykes who'd never been with a man. I say there were, I guess there still are. It's funny though, I was so immersed in that community. Maybe that's part of the reason why some of us, including myself, took over a job that didn't ask for much from us because our energy wasn't really there. Our energy was with the community for fun, but also for helping out and for making changes and getting our rights. And that gave us plenty of time for drama though, like in relationships and stuff.

Raiskin: Can you describe some of that, either conflicts in the community or attitudes around sexuality and relationships or just to give us a sense of that time and how people thought.

Scanlon: Okay. Well, when I was in Fort Collins, we had to wear a plaid shirt and jeans and these big mountain boots, which I loved wearing. I was kind of an outdoor gal anyway. But people had to wear that whether they were into it or not. It seemed like you had to. And so when I came to Eugene, I thought there's lesbians everywhere. But I realized that a lot of women here dressed like that and they weren't necessarily lesbians. So, there's that. The thing was that we weren't supposed to be butch and femme. No one should look femme, everyone should dress alike basically. You should all have short hair. This is the longest my hair has been. This is the first time I've grown it this long and it was never longer than that the last fifty years. And you wouldn't wear a skirt. It's kind of

funny the way the phases go, because I often wanted to wear a skirt and there were times when I pushed it and I wore a skirt and I was the only one I knew that wore skirt. And I knew I was going to get some kind of criticism. Granted I'm very sensitive to criticism and probably imagine it also, but some of it felt like it was there, or you heard it.

Anyway, so it was a time and you weren't supposed to be butch or femme. And then there'd be people who started coming out like, "Oh, look, she's feminine and she's dressed femme" and et cetera. It was in such a small group that didn't allow that. It took me a while to like say, "Oh, yeah, there are people." So I guess it would take a while before it was that's who you hang out with or something. I don't know. So much went uncontested, unthought out, you just kind of went with the flow. Like I said, I wanted to be part of that community. That community where my mom came and said, "Wow, these people love you." And it was a wonderful thing. And so he wanted it. So some of the hard parts were, well, for myself there was a lot of drama. I mean, I never felt like I was going to particularly have a long-term relationship.

Well, for instance, I never thought I would get married or have kids and I haven't. But I just thought that's what comes with being a lesbian, because that wasn't an option. It didn't seem like. And so by the time I was maybe, of having-kids-age, I pretty much decided that wasn't going to be for me. And then some of my friends started having babies. One of my friends was so— I didn't get a chance to

ask her if she wants her name mentioned. But she was in a very, let's see, in a well-known magazine at that time because she had a baby with her partner and her brother had donated the sperm to her partner with the agreement that he and his gay partner would not have anything to do with the baby or try to be the parents. But they changed their minds and they took it to court. And that was written up in this big national magazine.

Raiskin: Do you remember what year that was?

Scanlon: No. How old is she now? I don't know. Her daughter's thirty something. So it was news breaking, is what I'm trying to say. It wasn't something I grew up with the expectation that that was an option for me. So that's the kind of thing I think I'd like young people to know that it hasn't always been as easy. Not that it's easy, but a lot of things that we might take for granted now just were not happening then. So that was some drama.

Raiskin: So because you were lesbian, you didn't envision a long-term relationship that might look like a marriage.

Scanlon: Right. I have friends who have been married the whole time I've been here, which is getting forty-something years. But a lot of us, including myself, had serial relationships and they were always monogamous and they were often the “moving van the first day,” but that didn't mean that they were going to necessarily last very long. Anyway, that became my expectation and I have had wonderful relationships and a lot of affection for these women

but— okay, there was one that I just really loved and had a heartbreak over. But in general, I guess I was raised to be independent and I'm pretty happy independently. But anyway, it was also considered not okay to be interested in a man. That was definitely a rule. And I had been heterosexual up until age twenty-six or whenever this happened. And there was a time when I was pretty lonely and I had a—okay, here's another thing, my spiritual life has been off and on important to me and that was kind of frowned upon by the lesbian community it seemed like. You could be a witch, you could go to solstice gatherings, but please.

Yeah, I don't know, if they'd ever been a man involved in the religious path, then of course you wouldn't want to go there. It's pretty strict. At least that's who I was hanging out with that would say that. It was kind of a thing I did on the side, was this some spiritual seeking. Anyway, I was at a Sufi camp and it wasn't just spiritual seeking, I guess, because I met this man and I was interested. And this is hard to say, but anyway, he came to see me and I had sex with him and— ooh, I think I might skip that part. I won't tell you that part. Okay, I'll tell you that part. So I got a very painful reaction and went to the doctor to see what was going on with my vagina that was hurting so much. And I told her that I'd had sex with this man and she happened to be a lesbian. And she said, "Well, it's something called honeymoonitis." And she just said "So you were with a man; was it worth it?" I was shocked. I was shocked. I felt like I'm not just imagining this criticism. Anyway, it's there.

So I just really was terrified. I thought I had ruined my life, that no lesbian would ever speak to me again. I was afraid. I didn't even like the guy. I mean, he was gone, but I was afraid if I told anyone this, they would hate me. And I said, this is not the way to do it. If my friends, my closest friends can't accept me, then I should find that out. But I was scared and I told them and they were okay. They were thinking I was really weird and dumb, but, anyway, it was a big thing. And so that was the hard part about being a lesbian. I started wondering how much of my life was in order to keep things cool, to be like somebody else wanted me to be, which you like to think that a part of the reason I did this was to be different.

I loved women but I never— when separatists were talking about being separatist, I just kept my mouth closed. I didn't want to have them say, "Oh, if you're not a separatist get out of here." But I never agreed. But I didn't meet many men because I wasn't doing that much. My sister was married and that was probably the only guy that was in my life. So, I've had a seven year relationship, but most of my relationships have been more like a couple of years. And so in the last ten years I just said, “This— somethings— what's this all about?" I just stopped being in relationships and so for the last ten years I was single and it was okay. See, I could think I was worried that it would not be okay. There's something about being a lesbian. I was trying to figure this as accurate or this is just that the pool is small of people that you can find that might be compatible with you.

And so then maybe this has certain amount of anxiety that you're going to find a relationship and maybe better make sure there's someone there before you find yourself by yourself, as if that would be a horrible thing. It took me quite a while to find out it's not a horrible thing. And so that last ten years was not bad. And it made me think a little more clearly about what I was doing. Then I started working for hospice and I realized my parents are going to die in a few years, why don't I just work with them? And I was ready to leave Eugene for a while. I was thinking, well, maybe it's just I need a different spot. So many people say, you can't leave so it just draws you in and it does go. But I said I have to try it.

And so I know, I killed two birds with one stone. I'll go to Denver where I don't know anybody, live downtown, I've always wanted to live in a city downtown, see how I liked it and I'd be near my folks. And so I was there for two years and they died within two days of each other. And I came back about three years ago. And when I came back, I remember going to— all along I've always had tai chi classes and the same tai chi teachers. There's a long relationship for me. And someone said, "Oh, go to this acupuncturist." I went to him and he said, "what do you need?" And I said, "I'm feeling like I need a community. I can't decide if I want to stay in Eugene or move." He said, "Well, there's this community up the road, Center for Sacred Sciences, and see what you think."

And I just loved it because it's about mysticism from all the different traditions of the world. And that day there was a house available to buy right down the street. So I said, "I guess I'm staying in Eugene again." So I did. And I bought that place and then I met a man. And here I am in a relationship with a man for the first time in fifty years if you don't count that one night.

Long: And what year was that?

Scanlon: That was a year ago.

Long: Oh, okay.

Scanlon: One year ago. So there I was and I thought, see what I found out while I was single was that it wasn't, I guess, about being the right person that someone's going to be attracted to and want to pair up with me, like having the right credentials or whatever. And then being gone from Eugene for a couple of years gave me a perspective too of, I could live anywhere. And I just am not as identified with what the lesbians think. And see, I'm saying this as if— I'm just a person, and I think being raised Catholic and having a very dominating mother, I was pretty good at following the rules. I guess I even imagined them if they weren't there. I'm not saying that this stuff wasn't there, but it's like my friend Cindy was raised Catholic and I said, "how come you're not all guilty?" And she said, "I'm just not." And it's the same religion, but you take it in differently. So that's kind of my own experience about some of the drawbacks or some of the structure that seemed to be expected that

you should follow. Plenty of people who didn't follow it but I guess that was my experience. When I walked into the group meeting of people wanting to do the archives, I saw people from years ago and I thought, wow, I can't help but think how many know that I'm with a man now and how many people used to be able to have—hate me for it.

Now I would just say think, just think. So interesting thing happened, it was funny, I went to a vineyard and I went with my boyfriend and another couple and I saw these friends of mine, and they happened to be a heterosexual couple that I've known for eight years and they were sitting with two lesbians, which I can still recognize them. So anyway, I'm just introducing myself and then I just had left everybody else over there and I just said, and I'd have a clear blue sky, you know, to them, because they don't know who I am. I said, "I've been a lesbian for fifty years, but now I have a relationship with the man." And so they were just going "uh-huh [affirmative], uh-huh [affirmative]" I didn't know them so I couldn't be worried about what they were going to think. I could, kind of. As I'm leaving and I turn around and one of them says, "bummer" and I thought that was such a compliment. Instead of taking it, it's like, "Oh, you are a bad lesbian." Instead I thought I heard it as, the lesbian community has had a loss. And I just thought, what a nice change of my attitude about it. So it's so much about attitude.

Raiskin: And are you still friendly with women that you were in community with in the past?

Scanlon: Yeah, I mean, I have a smallish core group who I'm really close to. And then the people that I just see sometimes and stuff, they're the ones that don't even know yet if they know that I'm with a man or not. I think of the few couple, okay, I have two friends and we call them hasbians, and I love that expression. And they've been hasbians for at least twenty years and they're still friends with us. I don't know if they're— again, not all of those lesbians are quote in the community. It depends on how involved you are. And I don't know if they ever were. You think it's like one community and there's lots of little ones too. So, yeah.

Long: I have a follow-up question. You mentioned that so many of your lesbian friends took on more low level jobs. Did you think about your future and the consequences of having low paying jobs to when you would think about retirement or taking care of yourself in older age?

Scanlon: I never thought about it. Like my parents were saying, "Get a job, buy a house, buy a car." Because they figured if I did that then I'd get the job. And I think it works the other way, Dad. But I never cared about the insurance and I never thought I would die. I guess, I think a lot of us, okay for myself and others, we kind of kept the teenage adolescent thing longer. It was part of this rebellion thing. It's like, I don't need a job, I'm not going to climb up some corporate ladder. I don't need to. And I had been a hippie before that kind of. So it was just that kind of like who needs it? I can

always get a job. People live on low paying jobs. I can always do that if I need to.

I didn't think about it and a lot of it was the distraction. Everything was so fun and loving and drama or anything that gave you plenty to think about and I just never worried about it much. And I didn't finally get the job for that reason even. I think I just got it thinking I was getting a little bored and I wanted something that I was more involved in and if it happened to come with some money, well that was good too. I got my first new car. Did I get out of it? I think when I got that job I got a new car and I got a house. But people would say, oh, I wanted to say, when you have a house, you'll have that feeling of ownership and like, this is your land and you're going to protect it.

And I said, "What? I have never felt like that." And another guy said, "Oh, you'll never have fun anymore. On your weekends you'll always be working on your house." And like, I don't do that. So I think I'm glad that I learned enough. I can have those things, but I'm not like attached to them. And I think same thing with dying. I mean, I did get retirement though. I did work at the library and I got so much—

Long: That's the Eugene Public Library?

Scanlon: Yeah. And I had worked for city-related things part time for a long time, so it added up to a little but it's not a lot of money, but I guess that's not really been real important to me. But I do think now, if I

need medical help, when I get older, because I don't have kids to help out. I was lucky enough to help to be quite involved with my niece and nephew, even be the coach for my nephew's birth. And so I have some of that next generation coming up that I really, really am grateful for and I feel really good about. But not so much that I could expect them to take care of me in my old age. So that's something that is like— the meditation practice that I do now is a lot about facing our death so we're not afraid of it. And so things like that I'm still working on, like a lot of people.

Long: Could you tell us more about that work you're doing now?

Scanlon: You mean the meditation group?

Long: Meditation, mm-hmm [affirmative]

Scanlon: Yeah, it's the idea that a lot of mystics—supposedly, mystics in all the different traditions over time have looked at the same thing. It's more of like a direct experience of the divine and whether you call it God or not. There's a couple of lesbians in that group and one of them still says that she has trouble because she still sees God as this man with a beard. And I'm thinking, God, I let go of that idea a long time ago. It's just an idea, what you hold on to. What you're not quite ready to let go of or you want to keep fighting. So anyway, I think that that divinity that we all have doesn't have any gender to it and it doesn't have anything. It's just something that we all share. And I think that direct connection with that is what, if we're really lucky, we get to have before we die. And if we do then

I think we'll really feel like dying is not going to be that scary because we've already let go of our ego.

It's about that and it's not too serious. Talking about it kind of makes it sound serious. But the— Joel Morwood is the guy who directs it and wrote a book about it. And he can just quote all these traditions about the sameness of the beauty and the peace and the fact that we're all one. And that's to, like, close people out. Just doesn't make sense. Because if we're all the same and we don't have to have these rules and guidelines of how to be in and how to be out. And so anyway, I just really love it. I had experienced some really beautiful times in nature and shamanic journeying is something that I love to do and that's when I feel really close to nature and to that divinity that's here.

And here the speakers will quote Shamans and I'll quote the Jewish mystics and I've been on the Sufi path before and they do a good job of not putting a gender on God at all. And you can do it without the God part. There's the Jnanis part where people go and think, think, think. And I used to love my philosophy classes. There was a teacher that was teaching Black Elk Speaks and he got so excited about it that he quit the university and went and lived up in Dakota with the natives and that's the kind of people that I like that just go for the gusto, you know. But it's lot of fun and joking and it's just a real nice place. So I'm glad I'm there.

Raiskin: I'm wondering if you've had any connection with young people, like the teenagers you used to work with and just seeing how

they're managing this gender and sexuality in these times. Whether you have any connection with them.

Scanlon: Well, when I was the teen librarian, I had a teen council and I got to hang out with some kids that probably only about like ten or twelve. There was a core group and they would come all the time to the meetings and they would love it. And they'd loved hanging with each other. It's kind of funny, I was still nervous from that job, teaching. I had never actually said I'm a lesbian, but I think I didn't hide the fact either. And I think that they figured it out. And there was this one boy in the group who I believe, well, I found out later for sure that he's gay and he wore a, "I'm a lesbian" button and just to tweak people's minds. And I just loved it that they could do that. I just loved it.

Oh, they were reading a book that was about a lesbian, a young girl, a teenager that went to camp and they really liked that book. And the author was available to come and talk. She came and I noticed that they were asking questions like, "Well, how did your parents feel when you came out?" Well, see, they assumed that she was a lesbian and I had found out that she was bisexual, I think, or had been. Anyway, but it was a small group. It made me sad that there weren't more people there. This was back in, I don't know. I'm not really clear on all the dates, but I loved the work that Laura Philips was doing and it would've been nice maybe to have, I don't know. Okay, here's another example. Oh God, it's so easy to think of the hard parts than the good parts.

But I got this new manager in the youth department and the kids really wanted to have a talent show. And so my challenge was to make it somehow related to books so that my supervisor would say, "Okay, that's the thing." I don't know how we got that one by, but it was a talent show. And there was this young man that I had never met before that showed up and said he wanted to be in it. And he was singing in drag and it was really a good job. But he was dressed in drag and he was lip syncing I think. Yeah. And my supervisor even said to me, "Maura, are you doing this on purpose to me?" She thought that I had purposely asked this person to come so that she would be upset. I just— oh, God, it was so weird. It was so weird. Anyway. He came and did a good job. And so anyway, there was just challenges and I guess I didn't always want to stir it up, I guess. I'm glad that the young kids can be more free to do that, especially when they live in Eugene.

But I feel for the kids who don't have that and live in places where it's still really, really hard. And the same thing with me coming out as being bisexual. I never thought of myself as bisexual. I just said, well, I liked men and now I like women, but I thought I was, be hard to say that here today but I want it to be easier in the future, just like with other groups. I just want people to know that that's an issue for some people.

Long: When you think back to your experiences as a lesbian in Eugene, can you think about or tell us about what you might've considered the greatest joy during that period?

Scanlon: Well, one of them is that day, I'm so glad that my mother came and I had that experience with her because seeing through her eyes what I kind of had not taken for granted but just said, "Oh, that's how it is in Eugene. You get to have friends and you get to see them places and they have friends and they like you and that you're family." And for her to notice that and say, "Wow", that felt great. And some of my best friends weren't there. Some of my best friends were kind of timid to go out and be social. But I had new friends all the time and there are people in the room I didn't know, but I probably would know by tomorrow or next week.

And that was just a wonderful feeling to know that— and then when you did meet someone and you wanted to think, "Oh, is this someone that I would like to be in a relationship with?" You could talk to people and they'd say, "Oh yeah, she's cool." Or "Oh, watch out for her." Yeah. I never had an extended family. We left Massachusetts and I would hear about people that had cousins and grandparents and stuff and they'd say, "Joey married an Italian girl from this part of town." And anyway, here I would know people and they'd know people that I knew and it wasn't all just gossip. This is what experience I've had and, I don't know, it was just a real shared family. It was family.

Long: Like an extended family for you.

Scanlon: Right. You didn't have to like everybody in it. That they were your family anyway and you'd certainly stand up for them and help them if they needed you. That's the beauty of it.

Long: Apart from your bad experience with the doctor that you told us about, as a lesbian, what were your experiences for healthcare in Eugene?

Scanlon: Well, I was pretty lucky because there was at least one lesbian doctor that I knew about. Oh, there was another lesbian doctor that I went to later. And so I didn't really have any trouble. Sometimes I'd go to a new doctor and I'd have to say I'm a lesbian and that made me nervous that I would, well, they would think or feel or whatever. But no one ever said anything. I was pretty shocked when one— I didn't know her. One doctor, didn't know she was lesbian, but she showed up at a softball game and ended up going home with one of the players. So I was like, oh, this is different. So there was more a— it's not doctors over there and we're over here, but some of us are doctors, you know. That's kind of cool. That was kind of cool.

Raiskin: Is there anything else that you should tell us that you have stories about that we haven't asked about that you want to have recorded?

Scanlon: I don't know. I should have written down my highlights in case I thought of something else.

Long: You do have in your notes that you worked at a restaurant called Wild Iris restaurant. That was a lesbian owned restaurant?

Scanlon: Yes, there was—

Long: Can you tell us about that and where it was located?

Scanlon: The Wild Iris was on Lincoln I think, at about Twelfth, maybe between Eleventh and Twelfth or something across from what was the State Employment Office, which may or may not still be there. Three women owned it. At least two of them are lesbian. The third wasn't part of the running of the restaurant. But it was pretty amazing. Let's see. Oh, what I loved about it was often in the mornings on the weekend, some women would come from having been tree planters. Hoedads was the name of the wider umbrella group, I think. But I don't know. I think there was a women's crew, I'm not real clear about that. But they would come, it seemed like straight from the mountains, but I think they went home and showered first. And then they'd come and they'd have breakfast and that was really fun. And there were a couple of lesbians, who are a couple, who worked at Excelsior. And they'd always come to the Wild Iris for breakfast. I remember they always had orange juice and I felt like it was their chance to be waited on after waiting on everybody else. And I learned how to use an espresso machine and it was fun.

One of the owners, I want to say Maryann Gould, she's got her thesis in the literature of opera or something. Sometimes she'd be singing opera while she's cooking. And the other woman, I haven't— thought I saw her at our gathering last time, but it turned out to be somebody else. Anyway, that was fun. And one time I remember renting— I love to put on social things and I rented the place and we had a— I don't know, I'm sure we didn't call it a Sinatra night, Mafia night or something. And we had Sinatra music

and red tablecloths and my friend Leslie came carrying a violin case. I can't remember what she had in it, but it wasn't a gun, but it was funny. And people dressed up like, either mobsters or, what do you call them? Dolls? So actually I had the chance to wear a boa that night. I don't usually get a chance to wear. That was fun.

Long: What year, what were those years?

Scanlon: Probably early on in my stay here. So probably maybe the middle eighties, I think. The restaurant wasn't there that long, but it was good. And then when we had the— oh, they had comedy shows at the time my mom was there. I hadn't realized what a big deal that was in my memory. Was at Zoo Zoo's, which is a restaurant I think in the Morning Glories there or it's next to Morning Glory and Willamette by the train. And I think we rented that some nights because we had a comedy show and I don't think anyone has mentioned— I meant to try to find their names but Cholena Erickson and her sister, they don't live here anymore, but they were the hilarious comedy act. And I saw the name of Cholena in a book somewhere recently and I never seen it before, but maybe we can try and figure out who they— what their whole names are and where they are now because they were hilarious. And maybe it was just one of the acts, but it was really fun to go there to Zoo Zoo's. What else?

Raiskin: Is there something you'd like your nephew, niece to know about your life?

Scanlon: They know a lot about it. I was lucky enough to get to have them often on spring break. And one time they went with my partner Dana and I, we drove them down to the Southwest. And they always knew my partners. And, let's see, what would I like them to know about? So I don't know. They just kind of knew about my life. I love it that they were right there with me. Lots of the times Christmas would be at their house with— I wonder sometimes if they think "another girlfriend?" you know, if they got confused. But maybe there were longer ones around the time that they were a little, maybe I subconsciously felt like they needed a little something or maybe I was interested enough in those little ones that I didn't have to go find a new girlfriend to add variety to my life. They added so much to my life. It was just so wonderful having them in my life. I just love it that they loved me the way I was and who I was with and don't have to ask questions. Just unconditionally loving each other.

Xavier, my nephew was— I think I wrote this down here. Lily Tomlin came to town, early on, at least a couple of times and more later. But I guess her partner Jane Wagner came first or the second. Anyway, she happened to be in a hot tub where Xavier was. I wasn't there. I wish I had been, but he was only about, I don't know, two or three. But he got to be in a hot tub with Jane Wagner and I was told that she was asking questions about turkey-baster babies. Because that's when our people were having their babies. My friends were having their babies. And she was getting ideas for

material for a possibility for Lily to talk about sometime. Anyway, so Xavier got to rub elbows with some of the famous lesbians.

And they're really open. Raleigh has gay friends. I think she might be going to a gay wedding this weekend and Xavier has traveled with some of his friends who are gay, so I love it that part of that is living in Eugene, but part of it is probably having a lesbian auntie.

Raiskin: Do you think you'll stay in Eugene as you age?

Scanlon: Probably. Probably. I love the ocean, but, I could visit it. And there were lots of women that I thought, oh, I should tell them about these archives and I didn't have a chance to see if they wanted to come. And so some said, "You can mention my first name, but don't mention my whole name." Well, I'm really glad that this is happening.

Raiskin: Yeah.

Scanlon: Thank you for having me.

Raiskin: Yeah. Thank you very much.

Long: Thank you very much. We appreciate it.

Scanlon: Okay.

[END OF INTERVIEW]