Oral History Interview with Gail Winterman

Interview conducted on August 27, 2019

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

Gail Winterman, ca. 1985

Gail Winterman, August 27, 2019

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 27, 2019. Gail was born in 1955 and grew up in a suburb of Philadelphia. All four of her grandparents had emigrated from Russia. Her parents were leftist. In high school, Gail moved with the hippie crowd. She went to Pennsylvania State University and studied psychology and animal behavior. While studying in Georgia, she read Ken Kesey's Sometimes a Great Notion and became interested in Oregon. She considered Eugene the "hippie Mecca of the West." Gail lived in a communal house on Hansen Lane, and discusses others who lived in the house. She began working at Metropol Bakery. She describes her life in Eugene and in the lesbian community. She talks about collectives and cooperatives in Eugene at that time. She considered herself bisexual, but during her time in the lesbian community, she didn't give it much thought. She discusses the constraints she felt in the community and its rigid cultural norms. She describes her new relationship with a man. She also talks about becoming a nurse, and starting Volunteers in Medicine.

Additional subjects: Amazon Kung Fu; Bisexuality; Collectives; Communal living; Community life; Cooperatives; Gertrude's Café (restaurant); Heterosexuality; Hippies; Lesbian identity; Lesbians – Identity; Male Privilege; Mama's Homefried Truckstop (restaurant); Martial arts; Metropol Bakery; Parenting; Perry's; Riviera Room; Vietnam War, 1961-1975 -- Protest movements -- United States; Volunteers in Medicine; Wallflower Order Dance Collective; Whitebird Clinic.

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Narrator: Gail Winterman

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Interviewers: Linda Long and Judith Raiskin

Date: August 27, 2019

Long: This oral history interview is part of the Eugene Lesbian Oral History Project. The recordings will be made available through the University of Oregon Special Collections and University Archives. This is an oral history interview with Gail Winterman, on Tuesday, August 27, 2019, taking place of the University of Oregon Libraries' recording studio in the Center for Media and Educational Technologies. The interviewers are Linda Long, Curator of Manuscripts in the UO Libraries' Special Collections and University Archives, and Professor Judith Raiskin of the UO Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Gail, 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.

Winterman: I agree.

Long: Thank you. Let's begin with a basic question, can you please tell us when and where you were born, where you grew up, and something about your early background?

Winterman: I was born just outside of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1955. Grew up in a suburb of Philadelphia, Hatboro. I had four grandparents who were immigrants from Russia, but my parents were very progressive leftists, had been political activists in their day. I had a loving family. Very close to my dad, and very opposite my one sister. Very different.

Long: What was she like?

Winterman: Everything that was important to her came out of the movies, so hair, makeup, a man, being on, being looked at. Not much thought to career and self-sufficiency. Didn't work out too well for her.

Long: Can you tell us a little bit more about your parents' leftist activities? What did they do?

Winterman: My mother, well, her father was a journalist for a Yiddish newspaper. He would bring his comrades home when my mother was growing up and they would talk long into the night. My mother worked for the United Electrical Workers, they fought for the unions and they were part of the Young Communists Organization, which was common in those days, progressive young people. We were Jewish in a non-Jewish community, and we were Democrats in a conservative community, so I always felt like I was a little different. My parents were atheists; they didn't do any

Jewish rituals except food. Going to Ben and Irv's was a big deal. That's a deli.

Raiskin: What was their hope and plan for you? What did they want you to do?

Winterman: Education, and I think they assumed I would live a conventional life, but always have— when people ask my sister what religion she was raised as, she says "Democrat." They didn't pressure us to find a Jewish partner, so turned out when I did— well, that's a story for later.

Raiskin: Did they expect you to work when you were an adult?

Winterman: I never thought otherwise. They didn't pressure us, it was education. You would go to college, so when my sister didn't go to college, that didn't fit their plan. I was self-motivated, and asked to do things that enriched my life that they just figured I was good to go. Very self-sufficient, I identified things I was interested in, there was things that my school offered like a lot of video— started out, actually, with Super 8 film in eighth grade. Our district had a real champion of kids doing video, so I did that throughout high school. My parents didn't— we traveled in New England, but they didn't like camping. I wanted to go camping, so I signed up with the American Youth Hostels and went camping with them.

I knew what I wanted, I knew what I was interested in. They were kind of hands off, they didn't question me when I was doing things that maybe other parents wouldn't have let their kids do. Go visit

my boyfriend who was at Boston University when I was seventeen, they sort of let me make my own decisions.

Raiskin: What were your friendships like in high school?

Winterman: I was part of the hippie crowd—big surprise—which was a small crowd in our school. We jumped on all the opportunities that Philadelphia offered. Went down to Sampson Street, went to head shops and went to concerts. I saw Joan Baez at the Philadelphia Spectrum for $2 a ticket.

Long: Wow.

Winterman: There was a lot of music, a lot of good feeling at that time. There was a lot of angst around the war, so a lot of us— it was actually my idea to do a school assembly and put it together as an anti-war assembly. The principal, we happened to have a little window where we had a liberal principal, he let me graduate after eleventh grade, but we did this assembly where we brought in the Vietnam Vets against the War, they spoke. We read Mark Twain's *War Prayer*, I remember cutting up a book so we could make slides and put pictures up with his *War Prayer*. Then we did some guerrilla theater on the stage, and we had some statistics, but not much. I was reamed out by my physics teacher that some day I would be put in my place, and then the opposing, the opposition was allowed to do their assembly, which turned out to be slides of statistics, so it was very boring.

Long: What year was that, Gail?

Winterman: 1971 or '2, maybe my last year. We also had, I was the producer of the Wednesday morning news show, which was on closed circuit television throughout the school. My hippie friends, we were all on the crew, and we had one doing the sports news, which we weren't really supportive of football, so it was kind of a tongue in cheek chance for them. We had fun, but I couldn't wait to get out of there, because I was eager to grow up and go to college, be in the world.

Raiskin: Where did you go to college?

Winterman: My bachelors, I went to Penn State, so we were up in the mountains and I kept, because I needed to be, I wanted to be somewhere where I could grow my outdoor skills. They had a lot of opportunities, actually, even through the school. Compass and survival, a couple classes.

Raiskin: What did you major in?

Winterman: I majored in psychology and biology, because I was focused on ethology, which is animal behavior. Those were the years of Konrad Lorenz and Tinbergen and all the imprinting geese— that was the field I wanted to go in. My last year at Penn State, I actually spent a semester at Duke University doing primate research in there, but in their primate facility, they have lemurs. I was assisting grad students and doing my own project, and I also spent a semester on an island off the coast of Georgia, Ossabaw Island, studying social behavior of their feral burrows. But there were also other animals on the island and archeological sites that were being

looked at. It was a privately owned island, and there was a Yerkes primate facility had a free ranging troupe of chimps on a nearby hammock, so we took the boat there and actually helped maintain them and feed them. It was a wonderful experience.

Raiskin: How did you get interested in animal behavior?

Winterman: Probably give a lot of credit to my father for his interest in science, and of course grew up with Wild Kingdom, and the book of Born Free, Joy Adamson, all that. Jane Goodall, her first book was given to me in high school. Even though I had been thinking of going to medical school, my dad put this thought in my mind. I really could do anything I want, and that really appealed to me. I threw myself into it and was going to continue in the academic world, and didn't, partly because I'm here in Eugene and had to make some choices, but in retrospect I'm glad I didn't.

Raiskin: What were the choices you were looking at when you graduated college?

Winterman: I assumed I'd go to graduate school, in the same field, in animal behavior. Not sure what department, because I had to get creative, but I had met on Ossabaw Island, I read *Sometimes A Great Notion* by Ken Kesey, and also there were three people there who had lived in Eugene and Corvallis, and talked about it. While I was there, one of my Penn State friends had gotten his Ph.D. at Stanford and he had done his internship there, I guess, and ended up getting the job at the U of O in Psych, he was writing me letters about

Eugene. I said yeah, that sounds great. He described it as the hippie Mecca of the west, five minutes out of town you can be on a deserted logging road. Then he said "You can always get job planting trees." It wasn't long before I went out in someone's crummy and saw what it meant to plant trees. It wasn't for me.

Raiskin: Did you go with Full Moon Rising?

Winterman: No, a friend on my street did it, and we went for a drive, I saw the steep hills and imagined carrying the loads in the rain and the mud. It didn't interest me.

Raiskin: Had you heard that Eugene drew a lot of lesbians from around the country?

Winterman: I didn't, really. I didn't, but my first day here I drove into town, went right to the U of O, Straub Hall, met my friend that I stopped at the Women's Center at the EMU, there was a notice up saying "women's community meeting," and I'd been active in the women's community at Penn State and knew when I went to Duke, I knew how to go to the women's bookstores and look at the bulletin boards. Women's community meeting, I didn't know what that was about but I went and what a wild bunch of women they were. They had been to a film festival, not sure exactly if it was a women's film festival, but some walked out and they had to process this. There was quite a discussion about that film festival and what happened, people's feelings, and I thought, Wow, this is great, there were quite a few people there. One woman came up to me and she said,

"I have a room in my house, I'm going to be leaving my house. I have a room, it's $46.50." Forty six dollars and fifty cents. It was a seven-bedroom house and I went out there, so a month after I was here I moved into that house on Hansen Lane up River Road. There was a little enclave of dwellings but I was in the big house, Keefer House, it was called. Ma Keefer used to run a boarding house in that building. Railroad workers, things like that.

Long: Did you know anything about Ma Keefer? Do you know anything more about her? What time— do you know when she would have had it as a boarding house?

Winterman: I don't.

Raiskin: But was set up that way, so it was convenient for people to live there, lots of people.

Winterman: But we made it work. We didn't have seven people, we went down to about five, and then it started dwindling.

Raiskin: Who did you live with?

Winterman: I was the last person out, I had to clean up stuff that was in the attics. I don't know why I bothered.

Who did I live with? You saw the picture of Alex Sullivan. She was one of the founders of Mama's Homefried Truckstop, so she was an excellent cook. It got me started on my foodie path, she would make amazing things and experiment and not be afraid. Other people in the house also cooked, so the pies out at Alpha Bit's were

her pies. A long time ago, she's gone from Eugene. Who else? D.K. Taylor, she did theater improv and she was from California. Then there were some men, Howard Bernstein, I still see him to this day, close friend, was kind of like a brother. Cami Brown, you would not know, Lisa Cappazoli. The women that lived next door in the green house were Emily Fox, Shady Grove, I think her name is Charlotte, Michelle, can't remember her last name, Dyana, what's her last name [Kahapea]? Something like— or something. Mint, who I had a connection with recently. My first professional job in this town was as a museum educator. Jeffrey Gottfried hired me when he became the director of the brand new science museum. He is now married to Mint. I ran into him, and he was saying, "Did you know Marcia Daneb?" I said no, and he says, "Mint?" Oh! Mint! A lot of people went through, Deborah [Darko 00:18:11] lived in the yurt, and then across the street was Phyllis, I called her Christopher. Nancy Schute, Kori, who now lives in Portland. Kori, her name was Carolyn then— came from Penn State with me. Not exactly at the same time, but she came shortly after. She was working on her master's in philosophy and had to finish up her thesis on Descartes. She came out here and got into woodworking, children. We parted; we remained friends.

Raiskin: What was your impression of Eugene when you first came here?

Winterman: It was what I wanted. I liked communal living, there was such a big community of women. I shortly got involved in kung fu, but my first impression was that it was extremely progressive. One of my

first jobs was baking at the Metropol at the Fifth Street Market when it was a place for political activists and people to go, not just for higher income folks. I remember this old socialist guy, he called himself Stupid, he would write, he had a tablet, with comments from Stupid or something. He would write these quotes and hand them out, but he was an old Wobbly. I wore a Mao hat in the bakery, before they made us wear the white hats. It felt like everyone agreed, everyone saw things the way I did. Not 100 percent, of course, and we were aware of the other populations in Eugene. The railroad workers and logging was really big then. You couldn't go anywhere without seeing log trucks on the road, now when I see one I'm surprised. The beauty of nature was my big focus, so every opportunity I could, I was going somewhere. Now it takes a lot more to get me in the car to drive an hour and a half or something, but I think back then it wasn't, I'd go by myself, spur of the moment. Let's go. There was just so much here, so of course it fed what I was looking for in the beauty of the West.

Raiskin: What was a typical day like for you when you were working at Metropol and living on Hansen? A typical weekday and weekend.

Winterman: Weekdays, well I worked 6:00 in the morning and I was done by noon, so I would come home. In the summer we went swimming, we laid around in the sun, in people's fields. Typical day, that's a long time ago. It wasn't much different than now, now that I'm mostly retired I try to remember what I did with my free time. During the winter, I don't remember my typical days in the winter

time. I worked, I mostly worked. I only did the Metropol job for about a year and a half, then I went on to more professional jobs. Weekends, there was always something happening in the women's community. We went to movies a lot, Cinema 7. Foreign movies were big, they had fifty-cent movies here on campus and we went to those a lot. Then there were parties, and dances, and performances.

Long: Where was the movie theater?

Winterman: It was in the Atrium, on Olive Street. It's now Center Court, Olive and Tenth.

Long: Olive and Tenth.

Winterman: It was upstairs, it was the first alternative art theater.

Long: What was the name again?

Winterman: Cinema 7.

Raiskin: What was your romantic life like at that time?

Winterman: Well, when I started kung fu I was courted by one of the kung fu instructors. She had goats, they were living together but they weren't— at the time they weren't really a couple. Or so I was told. It was such a great— I have to think carefully how to say this. It's funny now, my first time spending the night at her house, the other one— Should I use names here? My other kung fu teacher comes home, throws me out of bed. My car is blocked in the driveway by

her car, so I can't go anywhere, and they're having this big fight in the house. Two black belts. This was a little out of my normal reality, women fighting, and I did squeeze out of the driveway. I ran over a few bushes on my way out. That sort of got patched up, and I was with her for two years. Basketball player, softball, she was always doing something athletic which that's just not my thing. We enjoyed nature a lot together, and certainly enjoyed her goats, since she did the bulk of the work.

Raiskin: What did you think about lesbian identity or, what had you know about it growing up, and how did you feel getting involved with a woman?

Winterman: I knew nothing about it. Had given it very little thought, I was interested in boys growing up and I was interested in high school, had a good relationship with a real decent person, a guy that— we were very similar. It turns out years later, talking to him, he had led a very similar path, only up near Ithaca. One of those other hot progressive spots. Adored my dad, I am his daughter. He got me interested in science and anthropology; he took me out west on a trip where it was both of our first trips to see the National Parks. I had a good relationship with my grandfather, but could see I was a feminist and a lot of things made me angry about men.

In college, it seemed like a lot of women deferred to men, what music we were going to listen to, just how things went, parties seemed to be, a lot of loud music, drinking, and drugs. Mostly drugs. That was what people— it wasn't— these weren't college

material kids. One summer, I liked summer term up at Penn State, it was beautiful up there and cool, not hot and humid, like Philly. I couldn't get a decent summer job, so I went to school. This place we lived, we had an apartment, and I don't remember. My roommate sort of made this connection to these other women who came over, they were so fun, they were lesbians and they wanted to be my friends.

I had read, prior to that, I should say, my roommate had— she brought the book in, *Lesbian Nation*, by Jill Johnson. She was talking it up a little bit, and I really wasn't thinking about it. I had an active sex life with men, but then here was this young woman who played country music, her family was a country music singer. This is also not something I listened to growing up. Somebody who was very different than I am attracted me, and I was open minded. We went camping and we had a good time. It was freaky to me, it was scary, it was different than what I was used to or that I had really thought I would do.

I kind of grew used to it. My sexuality opened up, it wasn't like, this is who I really am. I knew I still liked men, sexually, I was attracted to men, and then I started looking at women in a different way. It developed and it seemed to be more and more a better fit for what was going on in my life, and in the world, I felt supported. Not always, but at that age, there was a lot of camaraderie. We marched— there was a lot of stuff going on in women's studies at Penn State, in literature mostly. I remember a group of us walked

over, someone had built a giant towering phallus on the lawn of Old Main out of snow. We all went over and—[gestures pushing over] so, my identity was more and more as a strong feminist woman.

Raiskin: Did you talk to your parents about it?

Winterman: I didn't. I did not. They knew about my feminism, I did not talk to my parents about it. I just kept saying, women this, women that. This is who I went camping with, then we went here. After hearing the same name, I never sat down and I just sort of let them figure it out, which seems like a very cowardly way to do it, but my dad asked if— they thought maybe it was something they had done, but they talked to their very progressive aunt in San Francisco and she reassured them. She turned them on to PFLAG. I never talked to them, they never talked to me really about sex, except in a biological— in those terms.

Raiskin: Did you identify as a lesbian, or were you still—

Winterman: I did. I did, for a long time there weren't many men in my life. I had a lot of negative feelings about men for a long time, and I still do, and studying primates, I try to look at things from a behavioral point of view. This is the little ape we are, this is it. We're not bonobos. I didn't think of myself— I did, I think in private I knew I was bisexual, but because I was so immersed in the lesbian community I didn't give it a lot of thought. If something happened

somewhere else, it was a private thing. I didn't have too many male lovers during my twenties. A few, just for fun.

Raiskin: Could you imagine yourself having, being with women your whole life, or having a future?

Winterman: I did, at the time. My last relationship, my last lesbian relationship was very difficult. It was with a Navajo woman, and it opened my life even more to— This is something I wanted to talk more about later, I was burned out after it. I was feeling like maybe I always knew that relationship wasn't going to have a future, even though we talked about having a child together. It was at an age where I was thinking about doing that, having a child. I had just finished graduate school, I had just ended this relationship, I wanted a new chapter in my life. I actually consciously started seeing men. Someone had said to me, "You know, you really pick high risk people." I thought about it, and it's true. I would pick someone who was so different from me because it was stimulating and interesting. Not necessarily a good match for a peaceful relationship.

Raiskin: Have you thought about having children?

Winterman: I did, actually I met a man who had two young children. Eight months and five years. Once we knew we were going to stay together, his son was seven, and his son was extremely challenging. Not just for me, but for others, and I didn't want to start from the beginning. I was just counting how many years I could just be with

my partner, and it worked. We survived it. It was the hardest thing I've ever done, being a stepmom. Having the person that I'm with really helped.

Raiskin: When you started that relationship, what were your ties like with the lesbian community?

Winterman: I had lost a lot of my ties. I had been in graduate school, my partner left. She moved out of state. Lee Inkman lived with me for a little while, and Helen Shorett. I had a house with an extra room, so I had a few roommates. What was the question? I feel like they fell away gradually, and then I was told in no uncertain terms that you cannot challenge the status quo and be heterosexual.

Raiskin: How did that get communicated to you, and by whom?

Winterman: In those words, I don't know if—

Raiskin: What did you think about that?

Winterman: It stayed with me to this day. It was a real slap in the face to another woman, who has given a lot to this community and it's been hard for me to forgive for that, and for a couple other statements by the same person. She's not the spokeswoman for all the lesbian community, but I stepped way back and that there wasn't room for someone to be bisexual in those days. There wasn't room to do anything out of the cultural constraints of this community. You didn't wear a dress, you didn't dye your hair, you didn't live with males in your household.

Raiskin: It's very interesting. How do you think that was policed?

Winterman: Cultural norms. The dyke look was very big back then, my friend— I had a relationship with someone for a couple years— she was in San Francisco so it was kind of a vacation lover. She'd come up wearing lipstick because in San Francisco that's okay, but it wasn't okay here. We broke down a lot of messages that we got as kids about forcing women into fashion that is ridiculous, or for men. It went the other way, or there were new rules. It wasn't about not having rules, but I preferred that to exchanging one set of cultural rules and norms for another. It was a pretty— policing it— I can't say, just how people dressed and—

Raiskin: It's natural to want to fit in.

Winterman: I wanted to fit in, sure. I was younger than a lot of people.

Raiskin: What were the mores around monogamy or couples that were part of the community beliefs?

Winterman: Dyke drama. I didn't care for that, I was monogamous. I wasn't interested in some of the other things people were trying. I just wanted a peaceful home life with someone I loved. Sometimes I felt threatened, this woman I was with who was Navajo, she was very attractive and people were often trying to get to know her. I can't speak to the mores, I just know that the kung fu teacher that I'd been in a relationship with for two years left me for a woman who lived next door. I would get to see her car parked next door, and them shut the curtains when she came over.

That was really hard. I was young, I had given a lot of my power up, and had my heart broken. That was a real hard month, but those are good relationships to learn from.

Long: Can you tell us about Amazon Kung Fu?

Winterman: I joined because I wanted to learn self-defense, and I liked the Chinese style. I continue to do Tai Chi where I had learned it in my twenties, and I hadn't done it for many years, so I started over the last couple of years. We were our own clique, I just remember seeing all the people at parties, there were some very politically— there were some real hard liners who eventually moved to San Francisco to do their work. I remember Crow and Raven, do you know these names? They were always working on some campaign to free somebody. If it wasn't Dennis Banks, it was some other women, I just can't remember the names. They wanted to process how things went in kung fu, and how teachers were paid. These teachers, they wanted the old style: We're your shifu and you bow to us. It didn't work that way in that collective, but we put on demonstrations for the community. We were doing one at WOW Hall, I think it was part of another— it wasn't a talent show, it wasn't [inaudible 00:43:30], it was something. Some kind of performance.

Raiskin: What was the teacher student relationship like if hierarchy was being challenged?

Winterman: Barbara was involved with at least three of the women in that class. She'd punch them real hard when she was pissed off. It was nuts.

Long: Can we back up for a second, and tell us, who started Amazon Kung Fu, and do you recall the year it was established?

Winterman: I don't, let's see. When I came in, in '77, I would say it had already been going for one or two years.

Long: It was a collective, so how did the collective work?

Winterman: That's what they called it, because that was the word of the day. They wanted things made, decisions made by consensus.

Raiskin: Did you think that was successful?

Winterman: I didn't get too wrapped up in it. Mostly, mostly. The teachers had to acquiesce some.

Raiskin: Who were the teachers?

Winterman: Well, Barbara Bones, and Joyce Towne.

Raiskin: Where were they trained?

Winterman: In Denver. They met their sifu.

Raiskin: Did they bring in their teachers?

Winterman: He visited, but no, not really. They were good, what did I know?

Raiskin: You were trying to because of self-defense?

Winterman: And being with women who were physically strong. I loved the movements. I was not an athlete, but I loved the dance of it. I like the choreography of the moves, when we did these sets of moves, the forms. There was something about the circular Chinese style that really appeals to me, and it still does. When I have a Tai Chi teacher who was quite advanced, he can demonstrate some other styles. As soon as he starts doing it, I'm just really captivated by it. It was good exercise, and it was social.

Raiskin: Were you friends with people of the Wallflower Dance Collective?

Winterman: I trained with Krissy and Laurel Near, and Lyn, I think. They were all in Wallflower. I also baked bread at the Metropol with Laurel Near. Yeah, they used the kung fu moves in their dance, that was good. I enjoyed them a lot. They had fewer rules.

Raiskin: Why do you think that was?

Winterman: Just personalities, some people were very rigid. There was a real—

Raiskin: When you think back about yourself and your twenties, what's the feeling you have about yourself?

Winterman: I feel very fortunate to have been in Eugene during the heyday of the counterculture and lesbian movements. We were kind of on top of the world, or at least I felt I was a gay woman, which I identified with— we learned to love ourselves, but at the same time, I remember a lot of, several, sad breakups in my twenties. Those were the years of serial monogamy for me. A couple years, and

then things fell apart. That was hard, I wanted a relationship that was stable. I didn't have a lot of good examples of that, plus we were in our twenties. There weren't many rules.

Raiskin: Plus, there was no model of marriage.

Winterman: Right. I loved that I was able to be free and explore. I wasn't constrained by the conventional life path that you have to do in a certain sequence. I love that I got to try things, do some traveling, focus on a career. Put on— well, this was in my thirties, I had to put on skirts and stockings when I got my first job at a graduate school.

Raiskin: What was the job?

Winterman: I was hired to run a women's resource center at Mackenzie-Willamette Hospital in 1986. That was going into Springfield, and getting Springfield women and Eugene women to notice a women's center, and use it. I had to go speak to groups throughout the community, and be on television and promote it.

Raiskin: What did the center offer?

Winterman: Mostly health promotion workshops, those were the years where the hospital wanted to market to women because women were making health care decisions for the families. This was before managed care. We had lots of self-help kinds of classes. It was the years of Adult Children of Alcoholics and Women Who Love Too Much and Women Who Run With Wolves. There were a lot of women's, a lot of things swirling around. I had a lot of therapists

from the community come and speak, we did things for all throughout the life span of women. Helped them make health care decisions, help break out of— so a lot of the self help stuff I packaged in a way and put it on a mauve brochure. We had women coming from all over who loved one instructor in particular, Gay Wayman who's still in town, she had groupies coming to hear her talks because she was so funny and practical. We had support groups, we had a library, we did counseling, we had information and referral. I had a list of people to call if they needed something.

Raiskin: Did you work with the non-profits, like Womenspace, SASS?

Winterman: LCC's Women in Transition, I had to go speak at sororities and women's Junior League kind of things. That's where the hose came in, but it was okay because I felt like I was doing something positive and promoting, furthering the feminist agenda in a conservative community. It was okay, I did that for eight years, then decided that I'm not using my science background, I really wish I could. These nurses here, they have to know all this science and they don't have to work forty hour weeks. That really appealed to me, and I had already turned down after graduate school a museum job in Seattle because I couldn't bring myself to leave Eugene and move to the big city. And pay a lot of money, have to have roommates again. It was really low pay at the Pacific Science Center, so I turned it down and ended up in healthcare. After eight years in the hospital environment— well, I got a job at PeaceHealth

after they discontinued my position doing organizational development, doing staff training that was non clinical, like cultural diversity and communication skills, things like that, while I went to nursing school. I had to humble myself, go back into a program where some people had never been to college. I had eighteen years of education behind me, and it was the best thing I ever did. Besides marrying my husband, or having been a lesbian for thirteen years. Those were all good.

Raiskin: What about your nursing career?

Winterman: That has been really good. I was already forty-two when I got my RN, so I didn't want to be a bedside nurse. My back wouldn't take it, and it wasn't that interesting to me. I was able to have multiple roles in nursing I never would have dreamed of when I went to school. I started— I worked as an employee health nurse first, hospital employees, so that's a lot of bloodborne pathogen exposures, immunizations, injuries. After a year and a half of that, I went to a cardiology office, and started a lipid clinic with one of them. He wanted a nurse to work with people with difficult to lower cholesterol who had heart disease, so I did that.

I had heard Sister Monica, who was the CEO of PeaceHealth, was retiring and wanted to start a clinic for the working poor. I met up with her, I said, let me volunteer to help you with some of this, and shortly after, she hired me as the first clinic manager. We built the Volunteers in Medicine clinic from scratch. We picked the

wallpaper and the carpet, we gathered the materials for the folders and everything. I loved that.

Raiskin: Can you tell us something about Volunteers in Medicine, because it's an important organization here.

Winterman: Yes. It was focused on people who don't have insurance, or maybe have poor insurance and they still can't pay for their medical bills. Low income people, not the poorest poor because they have coverage, but the people who fall in the cracks. At the time, Oregon Health Plan wasn't quite as widespread when we started, it was 2001, so that's the population we served. The staff, they have a core paid staff, I was part of that. We had a nurse practitioner, we had a medical director, we had an executive director, business person, fundraising. Then the rest were volunteers. It brought the most wonderful people out to help, whether it was, "I'm an interior designer, let me help you design, pick out things for the clinic," to, "I worked in medical records for so many years, let me help organize." People came from everywhere, Sister Monica was well known and had a lot of contacts, so we got money through that, we got lots of support. Then the people who are doing— the providers, the physicians, other practitioners, are all volunteer. Lab, all of it. I had to wear many hats, because if the lab person didn't show up, I was drawing blood. Or if the rooming nurse didn't show up— in a volunteer organization, it didn't always flow smoothly. There's pharmacy with it, too, so PeaceHealth giving us a huge amount of material as well as financial support. It was great.

Raiskin: How long did you work there?

Winterman: Five years, and the reason I left was that our volunteer coordinator wasn't doing her job. There was no movement, there was no— I didn't have the authority to let her go. She left shortly after I left, but it was time to move on to a non-volunteer organization. I went back to PeaceHealth, and I was there for five years doing outpatient. Then I went to Pacific Source health plans, and I was a case manager, and now I'm back at PeaceHealth as a case manager.

Long: Can you give us some examples of some of the people or families who would help with the Volunteers in Medicine program? Without naming names. Just examples of family, or—

Winterman: Yes. Many are immigrants, and many worked low paying jobs. Fast food restaurants, all the places where people don't get insurance. People who aren't established with a primary care doctor or may have burned their bridges, still needed somewhere to go. White Bird, the other safety net clinic, or one of the others at the time, served a slightly different population, but there was— you always felt there was room for two safety net clinics. The third one, the community health center, the federally funded health center.

Raiskin: Is that still—

Winterman: Yes, multiple clinics now. In my current job, I often have people that need these clinics because they won't, or can't, show up for their appointments at other doctors'.

Raiskin: That's what you mean by burning bridges, or—

Winterman: Yeah. They get fired from a whole system. I have seen many angles, many views of the healthcare system from all around, plus I've been a patient. That's not what this discussion is about.

Raiskin: What is your relationship, do you have friendships from the old days, still?

Winterman: I do. Emily Fox lived next door in the green house, I met her when I was twenty-one. We're still very good friends. We can talk about the old days, and she just recently married at age seventy-two to a Jewish man. My husband also has no problem with our histories, it makes total sense. My husband's sister is a lesbian, in San Francisco, so he's used to this environment. It's no big deal, although he did worry for a while that I might leave him for a woman. There was someone in my life, briefly, that gave him reason to be concerned, but it didn't happen.

Raiskin: Do you see people around town?

Winterman: I see Judy Goldstein, I see Judy Boles, I see women at the Temple. They weren't old friends, but they were in the community, I don't get much acknowledgment from them. LaRosa I saw the other day, she was in my Zumba class— is always warm and friendly. I don't see, I'll spot people in a crowd, but I don't hang with them.

Raiskin: It would be interesting to talk about those times together, now, but it doesn't sound like there's a space for that, really.

Winterman: I don't know, for a little while, when I first met my husband he was doing co-counseling, so I tried that and I remember doing that with a few lesbians in the community. There are a few people that I feel are open to me and don't hold a grudge, but for a long time I felt like it was not okay to have defected, like I somehow diminished the community by doing that. Which wasn't true.

Raiskin: In your last twenty years, say, in your straight community, do you feel that there's space for you to talk about your history, or do you feel you have to make the space?

Winterman: I kind of have to make the space, although I don't hesitate to come out about my past, with friends. They don't always know what to say. Recently, I did with a new woman friend, she says, "Oh yeah, we all experimented." I said I experimented for thirteen years. I don't think it bothers people, the kind of people that I would share it with. I don't talk about it at work.

Raiskin: The assumption might be that, like at a dinner party with other couples, you're a straight couple. Other people who have married men and talked about feeling a little erased in that.

Winterman: Oh, like my past.

Raiskin: I don't know if you feel that way.

Winterman: Let's see if I can come up with an example, because something did. When I tried to explain to younger women, like who I work with, the normal path is often that you find your partner in your

twenties. When I say, nobody I knew got married, and that was true in the counterculture group, too. They don't— I can't explain that to them. It just wasn't, it was too conventional. People just didn't bother doing that until much later, and then it became this all important thing. I understood that, too, people want stability.

Raiskin: You were in a community that was very innovative, and I don't know whether it's difficult or easy for you to explain that period of your life to younger people.

Winterman: No. Yes, it is difficult, it is. I remember telling one person, because she had just started a relationship with a woman. She asked me about my life, and I was trying to explain Gertrude's Café, and Mother Kali's, and the energy that women had for each other and for living life with gusto. No one was wanting to change diapers and people didn't even have conventional jobs. I can't explain that to someone who's coming from a really straight upbringing. I work with a lot of them.

Raiskin: I know someone who left here in 1985, went far away, and she said, she thought it was like Brigadoon. She couldn't explain what those ten years were like for her here.

Winterman: Fortunately, I'm in Eugene, I'm still here and people do remember.

Raiskin: There's parts of it still happening.

Winterman: Yeah, we're still here. It's interesting to see what's happening now. I feel a little ripped off that now it's so inclusive, and fluid. It's too

bad that I got the door slammed, that's how I feel, and that's just too bad.

Raiskin: Can you talk a little bit about how you see the current fluidity? Where you see it, what you think?

Winterman: I will always accept, I feel like I'm always accepting of people trying to find who they are. I think there's a whole spectrum, and I don't understand their style, necessarily.

Raiskin: Who are you talking about?

Winterman: Let's think of early twenty-somethings. I just try and remind myself that what looks odd to me now, we probably looked pretty odd in our day. Didn't think so, but I bet we did. I just try and remember where I was, in bucking the status quo. It's not like they're asking for my permission, but how do I feel about it? I'm still learning. I'm still learning about transgender issues, I'm interested in psychology so I wonder what about our culture has changed. I think there's still a lot that's not understood.

Raiskin: What's attractive to you about fluidity?

Winterman: You don't put people in boxes, with labels. People have different needs at different points in their life, and life's just a continuum of trial and error. It was a rigid community, at least the part that I was involved in. It seemed like there was a lot of— I don't know. I'm still working it out.

Long: I'm wondering if you can describe some of the gathering places in the community, like Gertrude's Café, and Mama's Homefried Truckstop. We've heard some people talk about those places, can you tell us your memories?

Winterman: The Truckstop, or Mama's, we'd call it, or The Truckstop. It was a restaurant, it had lots of old chairs and tables, all mismatched, a stage. There was music there often, and definitely every Sunday. People would come and just drunk gallons of coffee, strong coffee, put brown sugar in it. It was a collective, so everyone was equal. There was art on the walls, it was a place where people went for breakfast.

Long: For breakfast?

Winterman: They went all— they had lunch and dinner.

Long: Where was it located, and who were the people who started it?

Winterman: It was a small group, one of my roommates was a part of that. I wasn't in on that, I wish I could tell you that story. I don't remember. It was at Fourteenth and Kincaid, between Kincaid and Alder. Close by, I think it's now Pegasus Pizza, or it was. You can look at it. I still drive down Hansen Lane to look at my old house. It looks terrible.

Long: What kind of food did they serve there?

Winterman: The big home fries and eggs and pancakes and waffles, things like that. Organic, it wasn't all vegetarian. I don't think. I don't

remember if they had hamburgers. Good desserts, healthy food. Not truck stop food, and they were good cooks. They really made an effort to do some interesting things, lots of good soups and hearty bread. Gertrude's, I remember they were in a house. Their first place was in a house, then they lost that and for a while they were in the basement of the WOW Hall. Then I don't know if they folded, it didn't last long. I think there was a revival, and then it folded again.

Long: It might have turned into Wild Iris.

Winterman: Oh, yes. Some women started Wild Iris. Maybe that's the house I'm thinking of, one of our old houses here. Where else? The Riviera Room. I could describe that to you. Sort of a seedy bar, with a big dance floor and mirrors, and several rooms, women bartenders, it was open to men and women. We danced, we'd go there after kung fu sometimes and dance and drink beer.

Raiskin: Were the men gay, too?

Winterman: Mm-hmm [affirmative], but a lot of women went there. Then there was Perry's, that was another bar on Pearl Street. I think more men went there. When things were going downhill with my last relationship, I'd find her there. They had some interesting shows there.

Raiskin: I wanted to ask you about your memories about some of these anti-gay measures and what your experience around that— those times?

Winterman: The only one I remember was in the late seventies, or maybe it was 1980. I don't remember the measure, I remember us being in the courthouse. The county courthouse, I think. We had a good turnout, and a good outcome, so I can't give you the specifics.

Raiskin: We'll have to figure out what that was. Do you remember Measure 9 in '92?

Winterman: I do. I wasn't involved in that. In '92, I was trying to place myself in the history.

Raiskin: Are you thinking about retiring?

Winterman: I am almost retired, I work about one, sometimes two days a week as a per diem, and I'm holding on because of the people I work with. It gets me out, focused, feels like I can make a difference for some people that day. It keeps my brain working hard. Sometimes too hard, so when they lay more stuff on us, because they keep adding stuff to our job, nothing ever gets taken away, I think, OK, this is it. This is the final straw, I'm done, but I don't quit. I go back, and I try to do it, and well, all right, I can do some of this. I keep thinking about it, but I'm definitely preparing myself and I have been looking for volunteer positions, have tried some out to focus my need to do some community work.

Raiskin: We've asked people, thinking about being in Eugene for such a long time, having had an interesting life in terms of sexual identity, to think about the younger person was listening to your interview,

or maybe in fifty years. Is there any advice you'd give to a young person from this vantage point?

Winterman: I guess just don't yield to cultural pressure to be someone who you're not. If you want to be a lipstick lesbian, then do it. If you want to be heterosexual and wear plaid flannel shirts, do it. Just don't let other people define you.

Raiskin: Good advice. Is there anything that you haven't covered, we haven't asked you about that you would like— a story to tell, or some piece that we haven't asked about?

Winterman: I don't know. Just that it is nice to run into old friends. I ran into Nancy Burbank after many years of not seeing her, and it brought back sweet memories. I think we've all been through many lifetimes, and I've been out of town when there have been reunions, so I've missed every one of them.

Raiskin: Who has reunions?

Winterman: There were two here, one was I think a showing of your—

Raiskin: We brought people together who had been interviewed, yes.

Winterman: There was another reunion a couple years ago, and I was out of town. I know they had people's names up on a board, and they were all drawing lines. Were you there? Who they were lovers with. It was— I think one person had the most number of lines. Treasure your youth.

Raiskin: Maybe there will be more reunions around this project, too. That would be fun, to see each other.

Winterman: That would be fun.

Raiskin: Thank you so much.

Winterman: Thank you.

Raiskin: It was really, really nice.

Winterman: Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]