

Frankie Siebert

Narrated by Beth Kahman

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Transcribed by Amy Baltin

Abstract: Frankie Siebert talks about his life, growing up in Montana, moving to Denver and coming out as a gay man. He talks about his life in the 90's during the AIDs epidemic, and the impact the epidemic had on his life, and the life of his friends and family.

Frankie Siebert. [Frankie] [FS]; [Beth] [BK]

[0:02] [BK] Hello, my name is Beth Kahman and I'm here today at the Colorado LGBT Center for an oral history project and I will be interviewing Frankie Siebert. Is that how you pronounce your last name?

[FS] Correct.

[BK] Ok, great. Today's date is Friday October 17th 2014. Let's just dig in Frank and see what your life has been about... So, let's start at the beginning. Where were you born?

[FS] I was born in Billings Montana to an immigrant father, had only been in the country, probably, about 1920- 2 months. So, I'm a first-generation immigrant child and that had a bearing because of the strictness, and things like that, that went with his upbringing. Lived on the south side of the tracks meaning we were very poor, started with absolutely nothing and worked our way up.

[BK] Did you have a religious affiliation?

[FS] We were born Roman Catholics, yup. I was born Roman Catholic.

[BK] Tell me a little bit about your school. What were things like growing up in Montana?

[FS] Well, first grade I was starting at a parochial school, and we moved because as I said we kept moving up. Dad would buy a place fix it up, then we'd move up a little better; a little more. So, I had to leave in the middle of my first grade and I just truly adored my little nun teacher and mom still talked about her until just recently, because I'd always bring her up. I went on to public school, and extremely non-defiant child I did everything I was told, I was accused of being too responsible, not accused but suggested I was too responsible by the nuns. But I did not want to go to this private school after the first month and I literally held on to the door frame with my feet and my hands. Moms like, ok, I'll send you to the parochial school down- you know, but you're going to have to walk there, and I have since walked and it truly was a good mile and a half. I mean as a six year, I had to walk to school and walk back, because if you want to go that's how we'll do it. I tried private school again and just again, no and went back to parochial school. Eventually in the sixth grade I started the private school again and that time I just had the best teacher in the world, my teacher- everybody has a teacher, that was my teacher, and I loved art and things she taught me, she just opened my eyes. Then went to junior high, absolutely hated it, scared to death because I had to go to gym class, I didn't know why I hated it, but I was petrified of gym class. And then we moved to northern Wyoming, and I started my high school years. That was eighth grade and then the high school years at public school and I was for three years the picked-on kid, I was the bullied kid, and other people would get in trouble because it was an extremely small school, only like 200 students, junior high and high school together, so the teachers saw

and knew everything. So, somebody caught you being bullied, spanked the bully with a wooden paddle, that they had to make themselves. So, then you were in more trouble, and it went that way until the junior year and senior year for some reason. I joined the team, I all of the sudden became the team captain, and joined the team, and all of the sudden I fit in, and ended up becoming senior class president. It was hard to go back to nine, ten-year reunion, because I remembered the initial part and then realized, oh these people do like me. It was a very bouncy way to get around.

[4:43] [BK] Maybe we can go back a little bit, towards that age frame you said, and you might have mentioned to- I think we've had a previous conversation where you talked about your schooling that you were very good at reading the board and listening, and auditory type of learner, but you had some challenges, if you had to do testing?

[FS] I was really good in the grade school years and into high school I could read if it was historically relevant, my father was part of the Second World War, he was a child running with his mom and brother and sister throughout all of Europe. I could relate to all the countries, so if it was historically based I could read something and take it in, cause I'd already had the auditory part of it. If I had to read something that was just off the wall, Kill a Mockingbird; Catcher in the Rye, any of those, I never read them. I didn't get it, I literally didn't get it. But I could take tests, like through high school, I never took a book home for homework ever. Semester tests would be coming up and people would say I can't believe you don't have any books. Never did homework, but I would pass with extremely high grades I would pass the tests, which allowed me to be a C student to get through school. So, that's how I snuck through on my own will, and my own way to figure it out.

[BK] Right, and you said that your dad was in World War Two, so you were a second language learner?

[FS] No, he was German and they spoke German, and I was the oldest child so when they wanted to keep stuff from us they would always speak German. My mother was first generation on her side, but her family always spoke German, and they even introduced her to my dad because they got a good German boy to meet your daughter, so that's how- it wasn't a setup but- They would speak German, so what would happen is I started understanding it. Never learned it but they knew- so I would take things in through hearing and I can still to this day communicate really well with other languages because, give me three days' communications communication.

[BK] Now, you said you were the oldest, how many brothers and sisters did you have?

[FS] I have three younger brothers, I did find out when I was just twenty-nine that my mom had had a miscarriage, always wondered why we were always so close, except that one batch between the first and the second. I look back and realize it had an effect on our family. Mom always wanted a daughter, and I always wondered why they talked about that was the daughter I lost, are you the daughter I should have had, about my younger brother. I don't know if I heard that stuff, it's one of those things- you don't know why your gay. I think I'm gay because of heredity, but I knew they went through all kinds of process themselves about why I should have been gay. What happened, what went wrong, it was always like, what went wrong.

[BK] So, do you, on that thread, do you believe that you were born gay?

[FS] Yes

[BK] No question at all.

[FS] Right.

[BK] What was that like for your family and your younger brothers? Were you out to them? Did they know?

[FS] That goes into getting into college, so, do we want to go that far yet? Ok, so what happened was I went off to college, actually a very prescient part of this is the fact that I thought I had the calling. If you are Catholic you must have had the calling, because you didn't fit, you would go on dates with your friends and you just knew it wasn't the same with you. I must have had the calling, so I went to the seminary. My father was very opposed to it, ended up being the most hurt when I did leave because he was very proud of me being there but he was very opposed to it. When I left because I did not do well with my classes, I did so poorly in philosophy that it crushed me. It cut me off at the knees, it was huge. I quit college and went to work at... in Denver. I had a friend from college who had quit through the summer before, so I went two quarters then we were always friends so we got an apartment together in Capitol Hill in Denver, and ended up going to- living on Capitol Hill I started having these little bitty tiny things about that person could be a homosexual, then you'd hear somebody was a homosexual and I really wanted to see what one looked like. It was so foreign and I was so unprepared for it.

[10:26] [BK] And what year would this have been?

[FS] This would have been '73. I ended up going with some friends to Hidden Valley Ranch party they would have every once a month, maybe three times in the summer. It was a big deal to go to these parties, it was like you could get as far away from everybody, you could be yourself. So, they'd have these gay parties, and my one friend picked me up. I knew he was gay.

[BK] How did you know?

[FS] Because in the seminary he could have abused me- I let myself be taken advantage of, drunk. It was always a tension between us, because I was also not attracted to him in any way. I mean never would have, never that type of person, that style. It just wasn't, but it was the release. He had a friend he told me was a bartender, and Chuck was coming over and they were going to go to the bar. Come over and meet him- I mean go to this party, come over and meet him. So, I walked in the door and there was Chuck, it was like... all that music and everything. So, I said you guys give me a ride on your way, back to my place, so I got in the car. It was the backseat of a Volkswagen bug, and they drove right past my apartment down thirteenth, and I said I live there, they said here's a bottle of wine and they unscrewed the cap, and I took a sip, and we went. I knew what I was doing, so when we got up there I came out mentally, physically, emotionally all on July 3rd 1973. What happened was the dominos fell, the minute I accepted and knew that, I knew since I was four years old... So then when my mother eventually asked me if I was ever going to get married and that was later, that was in- probably in '76, about '76. A history of our family was to write a card, so the Easter card came, Lisa's having some testing done, grandpa has some skin cancer, dad's got a little bit of a problem with- are you ever going to get married or what? Please set us straight, Happy Easter, Love Mom. I wish I had kept the card, because that's exactly- I can read it, I can see it.

[BK] She said those exact words?

[FS] Yes. That was the card. So, Mother's Day was coming up, so what do I do, the family thing, I write a letter, and it's a four-page letter and I said I'm really glad you met Michael, because I really like him, and I know you don't dislike him because of who he will be. If you dislike him now it's because of who he is, but this is- I've known you to like him, and I am gay. My brother, right under me found out. I called my two younger brothers and said mom and dad are going to get a letter, I put it in the mail box.

[BK] So you came out to them?

[FS] I came out to the younger ones

[BK] Via phone.

[FS] Somewhere over in that period. Probably in the early 76 or so. One brother even came and visited with his girlfriend. They just didn't care, the brother right under me he was horrid, if he could have come down and killed me he said he would have. This is Montana rifle toting family, so you know we went through it and we went through years of mom crying, such a history of my coming out, because my coming out took thirty-three years. From coming out to acceptance, that's the only way I can look at the timeline of my coming out. Yes, I came out and however we want to proceed from this point, that is a thread that goes through my entire history.

[BK] So what was your mom's initial reaction? Did she pick up the phone?

[FS] Mom's words to me on the phone when I talked to her were, I've known since you were four years old, I've known since you were a little boy. I knew you were different, I didn't know what it was, and I believe her, I didn't... Nobody knew anybody and if you did it was it was kept quite because it was a horrible thing.

[15:12] [BK] Right, now what about your father?

[FS] I was able to talk to my mom only. My dad was- we didn't talk for off and on for years, I mean he was just angry. Again, the part that goes through the history which is really an interesting part is, my father had a very angry approach that was, and he was uneducated in the sense he went to the third grade, very educated life wise. But he was like, the same mother, the same father, and the same blood and how could you turn out gay, and with vehemence. For over thirty-three years, where in the end he would joke about- he would start joking over maybe ten years out he was joking about, yeah same mom and dad and how could you turn out to be gay, and then eventually to more like, I don't understand how it happened, because you know, you have the same mom and dad. Then eventually, about a year before he died- six to nine months before he died actually, we were talking and he had his arm around my shoulder and he was talking, he says I just don't understand it same mother, same father. My mind was going down that road, and he goes, I just don't understand it, same mother, and father, how could three of them turn out to be republicans. I mean what a change, so I would say it was thirty-three years to heal and get to that point.

[BK] So that was his stamp of approval, if you will, stamp of acceptance. That's great. So, I like how you said that whole coming out it's a process, it sounds like. What about your occupation? Let's talk about that for a little bit, what did you do way back when, and what do you do now?

[FS] Ok, I want to finish up with that last piece, when you said it's a process, and that is- I'm saddened by people who just stop and won't go through the process. It's like that's their problem, with their parents

or- especially with their parents and family, it's like if I can pass anything on its like fight for it. If you're lucky enough, and you all live long enough you will get there. It can work, I know. That's my piece of advice on that part of my life.

[BK] And, your saying that within yourself as well as with the family... In terms of the process what your saying is it's worth it.

[FS] It can heal, but you have to give it time, and mine took thirty-three years, and was worth very minute, every horrible minute up until the last good one.

[BK] Well, I don't mean to switch gears I mean I think it's really important. You were talking, I think, when you moved here to Capitol Hill in Denver, that you got really involved in the gay coalition I believe. I don't know the exact terminology.

[FS] Right, well, what happened was, what was really cool in the '70's- eventually after I moved out of this friend who, I ended up rooming with the guy that I was in the seminary with that I didn't like physically, who wasn't abusive but I allowed whatever happened. We lived across the street from a place called Gallery House, everybody in that time period knew Gallery House. We even had a big Coke machine on the front porch that people would come up and use and it was 1340 Williams, that was the address. It was a home that a guy who was about thirty- ten years older, so he was thirty and we were all twenty, so he was an old guy, and he owned the house. This was- remember now we're starting to go into Nixon's recession, all the horrible, really horrible stuff, the recession it's like all that was going on but it's the fact that nobody had any money. We all, there were eleven of us at one point renting, each renting a room in this house. We were all gay, so it was always really clean and really nice and we all lived in the kitchen and the living room, but we all had our own room. At one point, there were only three of us paying because they for some reason always had money. He was what I hoped, what I got from him a person that helped people latter on, if people are in trouble you just do what you can, and you help them out. I've got somebody working for me right now with a broken arm, because they let him go, and you're just going to work here, we'll make it work.

[20:11] So, we all lived in this house called Gallery House which meant we also were kind of connected- we were a hub, so more and more people would come in and talk to us, it was always people coming and going, it was a sexual home, it wasn't a bath house. There were relationships, it was like college kids, we were all that age bracket, we were meeting each other meeting new people, so we were meeting some of the political people. I was a very avid newspaper reader, news person always, I have always been informed, and we saw that there was going to be this- not saw, we just talked about it, I don't know how it came about but we all knew there was going to be this meeting on a Monday night at the city and county building, which was always boring and always over by ten o'clock. I remember the place was packed, I was the kid, I didn't know anything other than to be there and see these people like Paul Hunter talking. Paul Hunter was an idol of mine, I loved Paul- he wasn't really an idol, he was one of my dear friends. He was a lawyer so he really was involved in stuff and could work, he wasn't afraid to be gay, so he could work with the system. I just remembered the end of that meeting when we were talking about how we felt the police were after us, the city didn't give a rat about us. We were people, people that they should be paying attention to, and I don't know that it was Ted Hackworth, but I remember some of the council people names and I remember this one council person, more white than salt and pepper, straight man, 1973, coat and tie, the last person you'd expect and he said this is one o'clock in the morning, and he said, we've never had such a wonderful discussion and such an open

vibrant discussion with so many people wanting to be involved, ever. This is the latest I've ever been in a meeting of the city council. We'd like to close it up now, but we want you to know we heard you. That was my take away, that's all I really remember, was that one o'clock statement, was a big deal to me. We felt like they heard us.

[BK] It sounds great, I mean intense.

[FS] Yeah, it was intense, but really awesome, it was really special, and you knew it, you just felt it. This was city politics.

[BK] So the tide was turning a little bit, even back then in '73, and so you have this hu of support, as you called it, and then you were talking about this Paul Hunter, he was an out attorney at the time. Is that, right? And then you're talking about this Ted Hackworth-

[FS] I don't know that was Ted Hackworth, I just remember him being a council person at the time. I remember- you know he might have been the exact opposite, he might have been the 180 degrees' devil's advocate for all I remember right now. I just remember some of the council stuff and I remember what he kind of looked like, and different things that were going on. '74 was when I turned twenty-one and so that was '73, so remember it didn't all just change wonderfully then, because all of the sudden we would go to the Broadway bar down on thirteenth and Broadway, he'd be going in and the police would be sitting across the street and ticket you with a jaywalking ticket for crossing the street. It was harassment, it was flat out we're going after the gay people, we're going to get them, we don't do it at other bars, we don't do it on other streets. We were able to go back, and I say we meaning it was a community that just wasn't going to sit back and just take it. We had enough leaders that we were able to be supportive of and walk behind and give them weight as a community, and I feel proud that at that point I was not afraid to be gay and therefore I was not afraid to put my weight there and be there. It just didn't matter. Since we were such a family, with Gallery House, how many of us were there and how we went through that very poor time and there was a bar called the 1942, was the other one up the street. We were hungry and three of us were working, we got food stamps. Three different people got food stamps and there was a law that you had to have your own separate refrigerator to have food stamps, so we broke the law, but we got all our food and we fed all of us. We'd take our food stamps and we got real food, and we did all the things right, and then on Tuesday nights was Mama Zittel's spaghetti night at the 1942, which was an old western, mustache, I mean, the stereotypical gay bar from 1976. The mustache guy with the cowboy hat and Mama Zittel, she was a mother and she would make spaghetti, twenty-five cents you went in, you got a spaghetti dinner. Everybody went. They went a lot of them because they were hungry, they were really hungry. It's just what you needed to do, we survived.

[26:07] [BK] You survived, you provided housing, you provided food, you took care of each other.

[FS] We took care of each other, we were a family, we were a community. That's all I can say about the '70's, it seemed like everybody was a family. And yet, at the same time, that was the same bar that was making sure they took ID's of any black person that showed up at their door. Then you had to stop going there, because it's never as wonderful or as smooth as it seems...

[BK] And so you said that there was a couple of bars, now this would have been after Stonewall in '69, right? So, you said during the Regan years of the later 70's and things like that, you were involved- were you involved in Act Up?

[FS] I was not involved in Act Up, I had some very good friends that were involved in Act Up.

[BK] And if people don't know what Act Up is?

[FS] These were people who felt you broke the law and you did anything to get attention. Act Up was more for what would have been the 80's, the mid to late 80's because that would have been the AIDS crisis.

[BK] Ok, let's go back a little bit and talk about the time frame between- in the 70's. What was your experience like as a gay man, living in Denver?

[FS] It was very liberating, it was exhilarating. When you're in your 20's the whole world is there for you and you- kind of blinders on because nobody else matters it's all about you and that happens to 20-year-olds, and you can only look back at that from your own history. That's what happens. I met my first partner, who was the love of my life for the rest of my life. We were going to push each other down the side walk in wheelchairs, one or the other. I remember meeting in Cheeseman Park, because everybody met in Cheeseman Park. Cheeseman Park was the social center if you weren't at a bar. Gallery House started the first volleyball games that went through decades, and part of that group still plays in Cheeseman Park. But we started the first volleyball team, because we just took a net over and played. I remember sitting on the grass in front of the pavilion on the little hill, looking out, and this gorgeous blond thing came walking up in super tight 1970's YMCA shorts and that was it. And laid down on the grass and fell asleep. A friend of mine showed up, and I saw Bill coming up the way and he walked right over to Michael and so I'm like, I jumped up and I- Hi Bill, how are you? He was, oh, this is my friends Bob and Michael; and Michael turned and looked at me and says, we're going to jump over the fence in the botanic garden and take naked pictures, you want to go? I'm like, no, because that was against the law.

[29:42] So, a week later I was at- this would have been '75, I've now switched into '75, a week later I went to the bar with some of my friends from the Gallery House because I lived there for over a year and a half. Max and I went out on the dance floor, one of my friends from Gallery House and we went out onto the dance floor and I looked and I said Max look at that guy over there, he's looking at me, oh he's so handsome, he's so cute, oh my God. He goes, go talk to him, and then I'm dancing and all of the sudden Max walks off the floor, so I walk over, and I walk up to Michael...and I walked up the steps and I'm like hi, you want to dance and he goes no. I was crushed, so I started to walk away and he said, doesn't mean I don't want to talk to you. Oh, ok, so we talked a little bit and he goes I'm going to see my friends and he walks out, I'm sitting there, he comes back, past me and in those days the bars- the speakers were the size of a large couch, and I'm standing right in front of one, because that's the pathway, and he comes walking right past me, and all I see is mouthing. I have no idea what he's saying because it's so loud, and he's mouthing something, and I smiled and shook my head yes and he reached into his martini and pulled the olive out and stuck it in my mouth. That was something I hated, the thought of an olive made me sick, and he walked away as he said something, so I followed him back and he goes, we're going to smoke back here. Well that was smoking pot, that was so illegal, I mean, my God this guys doing everything illegal. So, I went back there and he's smoking on a bench, and he's like

do you want to leave, and I'm like, yeah. He told me he lived up on Thirteenth and Williams and I said I live on Thirteenth and Gaylord, so we would go walking up the street and we're talking and laughing and he's smoking a joint as we're talking. I mean this is a place where you can get busted big time, you can go to jail. We get to Thirteenth and Williams and we stop and he said you live on this street right and I went yeah, he just turns and starts walking over there...

[BK] Ok, so you were talking about Michael and talking about meeting him.

[FS] Yeah, and we go turn half a block and I take him in and I take him to my room and 1975, it was incredible, it was awesome, and for me I fell in love. I fell in love, for him it was just like I was another trick, and not that he didn't care about me, it just was what it was. Then we started- I'm not somebody to let somebody go. I've really have always fought for all my relationships hard, like I said with my relationship with my father, thirty-three years of fighting for it. So, I would call him and I would meet him, and then we would go out. He worked at the Magic Pen in Larimer Square, I'd meet him down there for supper or something, he'd slide me something to eat because we were all hungry and he would come and stay. He would call me one night, my phone was beside the bed and it would just ring, and so I'd pick it up and he said I just got off work, he says you want a cheese enchilada. I'm like sure, so he'd come in at two o'clock in the morning with a cheese enchilada and onions, and we'd just cuddle up and sleep. Then one day- my first and only hit of acid, he came in and said, you know what, let's take this acid. I was scared to death, I come from Wyoming and Montana, and I mean this is stuff that causes babies to be deformed, and everything horrible that can possible happen, is going to happen with this hit of acid. So I follow him to his house which is over on Gaylord Street, with some of his friends that were living there- he's a member of the Divine Light Missions, so he's a devote of Maharaj, which is like so foreign to me, this is like again, here I'm a catholic and no false God's and all this stuff and here's this guy whose doing Sant Sant, and meditating and I- everything and God he had the prettiest blue eyes and the most beautiful blond hair. I walked around the house for half an hour asking Michael gave this to me, should I take it? Yeah, you'll be fine. Michael gave this to me, what's this- finally I just go- and I take it. We go out, we go dancing and we go till two o'clock in the morning, then we head to Cheeseman Park... well no, we don't go to Cheeseman Park we go home and we're like ok, it's the end of the night. Laid down on the bed, my record player is playing, actually it was KDOD, so it was Swan Lake was playing- I'll never forget. The one and only time I had hallucinations, I mean there were colors everywhere, going everywhere. All of the sudden he sat up and goes I'm going to go now, and he left and there I am tripping my brains out, it's the last time in my life I took a hit of acid. I didn't see him for like 36 hours- I said what the hell happened to you, I was scared to death you got hurt, what happened. Well I went to Cheeseman Park and climbed a tree and sat there till the sun came up. Well not knowing him and then knowing him that all made sense later in life, but-

[35:42] [BK] But then did you feel a sense of abandonment?

[FS] Again, yeah again. Well then October comes along and all- this is a person, I asked him for a picture, and he doesn't have a- I don't have a picture, I've never had a picture. Then he says I'm moving to Washington State and moves away to be with his best friend and help his best friend's dad with the pizza parlor. Then he sends me a letter and... a letter with a picture. I still have that picture, and wow, and he kind of finished the letter with and by the way if you can get a hold of any acid and send it to me, that'd be great. It's like turning into an across the state lines drug dealer, I send him acid. He had me come up, visit him at Thanksgiving, so I went up and it was up in Seattle, it's in Mosses Lake, we're

talking a very small town. But we meet in Seattle and he takes me to see the pink flamingos, which I'd never seen... he was crashing every barrier so radically, but I followed because I was so in lust and in love. I mean he just had me. Then I went back at Thanksgiving, and in December I just moved into a friend's house, was going to be a roommate, and he called me and said I need you to move up with me, I need you to live with me. He really wanted to be together, so he says I will put you through beauty school, because I was half way through- actually it was more than half way through for Colorado license numbers. Went up there, and he put me through beauty school, and the day I graduated, we moved back the next day to Denver. He's like I'm not staying up here, it's cold and wet and miserable, we're going back to Denver, but he put me through, and then we had fifteen and a half years, ups and downs, bought a house together. 1890, fixed the house up, I came home the first weekend we had it, I had gone to the hardware store, I came back and there was a wall missing in the living room. I freaked out, I said that could be a load bearing wall, he goes well I didn't want it here, it's how he would do things, and luckily it wasn't load bearing.

[BK] So, what did he do, I mean you went to beauty school and ultimately had a salon.

[FS] He eventually went to beauty school himself. When we came back to Denver, actually he started beauty school that same fall with the win program, or seta program, anyway he was a minority, he was a white blond man. So, he was the minority of this class, because everyone was a black girl, and he got it. I don't know how he pulled it off, we had no money. So, he would take that check every- put it in the checking account, he'd go to school, it was just, we got through and then we bought a salon together, bought a house and then bought a salon together.

[BK] And what year was that?

[FS] We bought the house in September of 78, and my father called it a God damn fire trap as he walked from the back door through the front and out and he never stopped. Just thought it was a horrible thing I was doing and that was when my other brothers got money for refrigerators and fences and things and I asked for four-thousand-dollar loan, that I would pay them back, they said absolutely not, because he might get part of it, if something happens to you. So, I rigged a friend of ours, said I'll never have children and my parents help me and you'll have to pay me back, but I'm going to give you the four thousand dollars and he did and we did. In fact, he asked for it early then at one point and we're like- but we paid it back, we got it to him.

[40:00] [BK] So, again you had this experience where it's kind of almost community living at its best, where you need things and somehow, they provide it.

[FS] Well, we were, yeah, your family. That's one thing that's happened though out my entire life, including my business it's like we still talk about being family. Family is what you make not biological and it is that important.

[BK] So then getting in this particular time frame, Michael you said that you were together for fifteen years?

[FS] Fifteen and a half years.

[BK] And so, did he start getting ill?

[FS] No, that came along a lot later. Then we just, we ran our business- well we didn't start our business until February of '82, was when we actually started the business. We both were hairdressers... So, we bought the business in February of '82 and it was an incredible, good economy, we had a great economy going in the United States then. So, we were able to buy this business and we got employees with it, and brought other people on that we knew. It was massive, it was twenty-five hundred square feet, it had two facial rooms, a massage room with a redwood sauna, and it was in Aurora. And anybody hearing this Denver history will know that if in the 1980's in Aurora, Aurora was as far away as you could get. We called it Saudi Aurora for a reason it was a drive, and I don't know what we were thinking. But it's what we could afford out there.

[BK] And, what was this called, the business?

[FS] Head waves incorporated. We took forever trying to figure it out like, what should we call it, Francisco y Miquel, Frankie and Michael, I mean we were just throwing names out in our 1977 orange Mustang convertible. We were just running around in our convertible. We would throw things around, that is a little bit of a story, I could never have a car until Michael said you can finally have a car as long as it's a convertible, because that's what we'll drive around in. So, I've had a convertible ever since, my entire life, from '77 on. We finally came up- he said head waves, like permanent waves, only with the head, head waves. I'm like that's it, so that's how business get named.

[BK] How many employees did you have at that time?

[FS] We had to have about ten to twelve off and on. It was a period when- it was at a younger age, and hairdressers when you're in that age bracket you move two or three times before you settle down and realize the grass is greener on the other side but it's just a little greener on a different spot, because the brown spots are still there too. You realize you're going to have the same crap no matter where you go, the same good stuff no matter where you go, so know your enemy, know your good things and deal with it, and people settle in, and so my employees I've had for thirty years now, but one of them came from that period. Then the economy just shattered, it was Silverado with the Bush, Neil Bush took a savings and loan in Denver and they were doing it all over the country, but that's the one that got caught. The Silverado savings and loans of Denver and that was when our economy- it was kind of like J.P. Morgan stuff that happened in 2007, 2008. There was a name and a time and a bang. Silverado was the start of the savings and loan fiasco and crashing, and there was just no money. The oil companies were closing, so if you had Huston as the hub then they slowly worked their way outwards towards Billings and Canada, from Casper and Denver, well those all just dried up. So, all my clients started moving away to Huston, or not having a job at all, we just got to the point where we just weren't going to make it.

[45:00] I knew my lease was up, so I didn't have to keep making payments and I had an incredible friend who was a lawyer and she said this is what we're going to do and she got me out of it. She wrote a letter and the leasing company signed it and we just got out of it and I went for five months to another salon, took my crew that wanted to stay with me, we went to another salon and rented that area. I just paid her so much a month to work in her space, and then I paid my employees, did my stuff, and that was for five and a half months and then she was going under, and I didn't know that until 5:30 on a Saturday night. Easter Saturday and she drops this letter in front of me from the IRS that said there will be a lien put against you on Monday morning. It meant all my stuff that was in there, even though I was not tied to her, if they put the locks on they keep it until you can prove it. That could be years, so

on Easter Sunday, I moved my entire salon, one of the suppliers I knew really well, she said I think I know a place you can go, the three of you can go work if you want to. We went over there for one month, I did a concentric circle around my house, I just kept going, until I found a spot I liked which was over on Louisiana and Pearl, worked there for eighteen years, it was five hundred square feet, there were five of us, worked our butts off and did well, and then had an opportunity to move across the street into a bigger place and kept head waves all through this time, but then expanded that again, like five years ago. So, it's been twenty-seven years on that corner, not the same location, but on that corner, literally. You just keep making it work.

[BK] So, as you said this Silverado Savings and Loans, things are crashing... Ok, we were just talking about how you had your salon in Aurora and you were closing that down and then you got this new place on Louisiana and Pearl, that you said has been here for twenty-seven years, tell us a little bit more about what was going on in that particular time in the mid-80's.

[FS] Well, we set up our business which was pretty easy to do, in ten days I latterly took a blank shell and opened a salon. Michael and I were going through some rough time at this exact same point, Michael was as I've said went I first met him was kind of a wild one, and things don't change other than as you get a little older, you don't metabolize things properly or as easily, so he started having an alcohol problem, we drank all along, but then it was a thing that couldn't be controlled and started causing some real conflict. I wanted to fix him, and I wanted to shake him, and I wanted to just make it well. What happened was we started having some therapy, which was awesome for both of us, our therapist kept me going for twenty years and really helped me heal, ultimately with my father and at the very end gave me the tools for that, the clues and the words. So, Michael went to work at another salon so he could have- so we weren't together twenty-four seven. Great take away from all of this, I learned and I've been able to share with people, do not open a business with your spouse, because you live together, and you work together and you have nothing new to talk about. So, both being hair dressers and him working at another salon, we at least had different people to talk about, and different stories about what happened when you went to work and when I went to work.

[49:20] We got through a lot of that, I think a lot of our trauma was people were- we were starting to read stories in the newspaper both of us being- especially me being information oriented, not news addicted, information oriented. I liked to stay informed, however I would do it with- but it was multiple news magazines, and TV, and tried to get it all, so I could make my choices, my decisions. But we were getting scared, because the gay newspapers and the Advocate and the Out Front in Denver were starting to speak of this disease, it was in New York and San Francisco, we were very frequent fliers at the bathhouse. Denver had one of the premier, not kidding, worldwide destinations of bathhouses for gay men, and bathhouses were a central meeting point and central connecting point for gay men, and it wasn't just about the sex, it was so many more levels and it was called the Ballpark and it had a reputation in Berlin, and it had a reputation in New York, from St. Marks Baths, people would come from New York to Denver. You met people from all over the world and hence AIDs and it wasn't just a local little group of people. So, this starts opening up a whole world, and we're reading about people getting sick and then all of the sudden a friend gets sick that we knew really well. His mom says he died of Leukemia, and you look back on all this stuff and you start realizing these people- you don't want to know, you want to hid from it and you put it in the back of your mind and being again- going back to the Catholicism, I could stay home for six, eight weeks and not do anything and hid in my little house, but then I'd just have to let go. Then guilt ridden and also then guilt ridden, oh my God have I gotten sick,

did I get it, oh my God, and then the guilt that would go with that it was just all encompassing. It would just feed itself, so the late 80's, from '85 onwards, very psychologically hard, devastating, because it was manic depressive, is a good way to describe it, when you were having fun, you made sure you had all the fun, and when you were down you were crushed, because you were scared to death. Because it was the bathhouse, we knew more and more people who started getting sick, because it was always San Francisco and New York, and then a couple of well-known people in town got sick and they started getting Kaposi's sarcoma, so you knew because they had the purple sores and these were the people we played with all the time. Ultimately, Michael and I had made a commitment that if we decided we were going to find out if we had the virus, because they had found out it was a virus, we went through that. We had made a commitment that whoever decided, then we would both go and I made the decision and we went, realizing the actual diagnosis was given to me on September 1, 1989, it was the 50th anniversary of World War Two, I'll never forget it because of my history, how I look at the world is through history, and here it is, invade Poland, invade Frank. I'll backtrack a little on that, but what happened is they found out it was me, I had it, because I went in for my results and he goes but you have T-cells of five hundred and eighty and I have people who would just give their eye teeth, that's almost normal and its ok. Now, ok what about my partner, well we'll test him for free because he's your partner, and you're on a cohort study, because I was on a hepatitis cohort study, and that's how I got on that. They did something horribly wrong, they called, because we kept saying did they get the results, nothing, and then eight o'clock on a Wednesday morning, phone rings and it's like hi Larry, Michael it's for you; I handed him the phone, and he turned gray, I mean white, yellow, grey, and this guy told him over the phone that he was positive and he had eighty T-cells, over the phone, and we knew, we were educated enough to know that if you had two hundred T-cells you were dead, and he had eighty.

[54:55] A friend of ours moved back to town, the same time period, he was the guy in 1979 that lived across the street. Michael and I were gay men that were very open and we were having this torrid affair with him, the two of us and it was not jealousy, it was just a torrid affair that we were both having at different times, with the same guy and we knew it. When he moved back he went down and said I was on the hepatitis study, is there any way you can test my blood from the 70's and they were oh my God thank you we can't ask, yes. So, he went back, tested him from June '78 negative, January of '79 negative, June of '79 positive. The torrid affair was going on from June of '78 through '80, no doubt in my mind that I was infected in 1979, none whatsoever, I don't have any proof, and we both know because it takes so long for it to happen, for it to catch up with you. So, that happened and we hit the road running, we all of the sudden had to deal with insurance and take care of ourselves and get on the drugs, and talk to the clients. We went back to D.C. for one of the marches in what would have been the fall of '89, it was a huge march on Washington. I think the quilt was starting then, and I think that was when the quilt was just in the ellipse. It was massive, it took up the whole ellipse not to know until we got back it took up the entire mall, from the Washington monument to the Capital. And to go back there and see Michael's quilt and all our friends. So, we were denied insurance, because we had signed up for this new insurance in seventeen months before, and they took it away from us on December 26. I knew we were being screwed and I understand the law, but then I knew we were going to lose our house, because we had to take care of him, and in April of that year we had gone to visit some friends and there's a post card at work that said Kiser Permanente, open enrollment, and I called from clandestine phone numbers so no one would know who I was so I couldn't give a name because I didn't want anyone knowing that he had AIDs and then denied us. They said nope, its open enrollment, we went in on May 4th of 1990 and saw our doctor right- and we came out of there and I just sobbed,

because I said they can't deny us now, we have insurance, they can't take it away, we've been in there, they know you have AIDs, they saw you. I mean they saved me mentally, emotionally, financially, it was incredible... to watch the change in his face about six, seven years ago when I would go and meet him, and instead of being just down and doing his work, we laugh and giggle and joke, and I looked at him one time and I said we're not dying anymore and your managing it and I can see the relief and it was for all of us, but at this point in '89 when we found out Michael was sick and people started dying and he crashed in September of '90. He was at work and he just crumpled, and he never came back to work after that, and that's when we started getting involved, I started getting involved with AIDs walk, because I didn't know what to do, I was just going to go out and collect money. I collected a thousand dollars, I was the winner that year, and the winner got two free plane tickets to anywhere, so we went to San Francisco and I took his mother along, and we saw San Francisco together and we did- we went to Washington, and he was sick, and we went out paddling on a canoe on the Potomac and all of the sudden he crashed again. We had to go to Kiser to try and get some medicine in Washington from Denver because they don't talk to each other and you just make it work. I'm a person that can make things happen because they have to, and that probably one of my biggest gifts or qualities, being able to make something work if it has to be done. So, I got it taken care of in Washington, got back home, I didn't have to go into the hospital, but got him taken care of. That was fourth of July weekend, in 1990, because we heard the band playing on the third of July, practicing for the big concert on the mall the next day, and it was incredible music... it was just fun, it was awesome, and yet he was dying. So, I went back to work and I did the AIDs walk that fall for the first time, and then in '90 we started having friends die and I honestly- this is a period in my life that I tell people, I learned eventually, when people would ask me questions I'd go I don't know, I can't remember that, and I'd always find out mid-1990 to '92. I really can't tell you anything what happened, it is, my psyche is so shattered that nothings in there... I look at people now and I say oh that must have been about '91, '92 maybe. I mean we're talking historical things, something might have happened in the country.

[1:01:45] [BK] And this coming from someone who knows every single thing-

[FS] I was feeling really lost. But then when I was at work, this was a big time, part of how it fit into work, friends were dying right and left, and we're talking like your group of friends that you have that you talked about briefly outside. People that you hang with, these are people that are your friends, your family, and it was the eleventh week and it was a Saturday night at five o'clock and I was leaving work, and I just, it was a morbid joke, but it was a joke, how do you deal with it. I laughed, I said oh my God nobody's going to die this week, I don't have a funeral to go to, and nobody's going to die. That was seventeen weeks, with the eleventh week where nobody died. Sixteen of my very close friends, very tight, run with the gang friends died in seventeen weeks, and that was hell.

[BK] How did you cope with that?

[FS] I had to, I had to, Michael was sick and dying, I had to take care of him, I had to feed him. The sewer line broke at home, on a Saturday night, I dug a sewer line so that by Monday morning I could go to the plumbing store and fix it- because we had no money, and to fix the sewer line myself, and to put it back together myself because he was shitting in a bucket in the garage, because that's all we could do. I had to dig a sewer line, so it's what you do. You just function, you just... You just deal with it.

And he died. And then he died, April 19th, he died on- I just kept saying, God I hope he doesn't die on Hitler's birthday, because they were going to have a big thing on 1991 on April 20th on the Capital. I was

just, I don't want to deal with thinking of that and so he died on the 19th. In fact hospice came, she said can I talk to you, she came in and talked to me, I said, when do you think- how much time do you think he has. They told us two weeks to six months, she goes, she said, I'm surprised he hasn't passed while we're in here talking. I stood up and that was the end of that meeting. I'm going to be out there, and went out there with my friend who I'd let in to be with him, was the last person to talk to him alive. That evening people- my friend Michael had flown in, and his best friend in the world had flown in from California to take me skiing, he said come in and take him skiing, get him out on Friday, well that was the day he died. I mean we were just said no we're not going to go, we're stay home. People started showing up, there were nine people standing around the bed, that just showed up, to be there. He died at eight o'clock on Friday night. And we took him out to his garden, he had a wonderful English garden.

[1:05:21] [BK] Want to take a little break here?

Ok, so we're back now, and Michael has passed on and you are in the grieving process for sure, you lose your life partner, you lose a business partner, all of those things. What would you like to talk about now, in terms of, like you said, you just get through day by day you just get through? Were you able to get through, what was your activism, involvement in the community?

[FS] I think the way I was raised, listening to my father's stories, and my mom's stories, I don't involve my mom in a lot of this but she was in a farm family and they were migrant farm workers to a degree. They were just trying to subsist, so you did what you had to do. My grandpa moved mom and the family to Montana, from North Dakota, just so they could get a farm to work as a- he would farm for the farmer, and he would keep some of it, and he could slowly build himself up. My dad got through all of Europe walking, his sister, and brother and mother along, because he saw his teacher dead in a coffin. And you just look at her and cry and say I'm sorry, and go on. So, I learned those stories, so what happened was, I just had to go on. So, the AIDs walk was coming up, summer was coming up, I don't remember much of that summer. I know that I started putting myself into the AIDs walk again because it was coming up and about late July or August I started coming alive a little bit, and doing that because I just had to do it.

There was the governor's chief of staff came in to this lawn for years, and he was governor Roy Romer, and she said you know what I think you should consider being on the governors AIDs council you have somethings to give to this. I said ok, I'll go. I went down, I met with Lansclam, who was the head of the council, he was the leader of it... He was a very intimate confidant and person with Roy Romer also, one of the big things that came out of it was the fact that I didn't understand how government was working and why it was working this way. If I had insurance, but I was sick enough that I could only pay for my rent and maybe my car to get to my job, or pay my rent and pay my food, but somehow, I had to subsist, but what's going to go first, my insurance premium. That's 128 dollars to 250 a month, oh my God, I could live off that, but then I've got to go into the system. So, my issue became I don't understand how this works, why aren't you thinking of paying peoples insurance premiums because they're on insurance and the insurance company is getting their money; they're not going to be happy about it but their getting paid, you can't drop them. So Mike Voss was a lawyer that I knew and he and I ran with it, and we figured out how to make it work, and eventually put it over- this was going through the governors AID council for about a year and a half, maybe two years that we worked on this process and we eventually worked it out where we wrote it off to the Alexander Foundation, and they monitored it, and it was like something to the effect of- if you were at three hundred and thirty-three

percent of the poverty line, so you weren't destitute yet, you hadn't fallen so far down that you had given it up already, but you started getting there you would get insurance. Ultimately my partner that I have now, was diagnosed with HIV, without a job, and was paying his insurance premium and all the sudden I went wait I mean this is ten years later, and there's a program. He was like, I'm not going to do this, I'm like, I fought for this I started this, you're going to go do that; and they paid for three months of his insurance, until he got a job. So it came back around to be beneficial in my life, but we set this up, and I think it started out with sixteen people because that's all the money they could get for the legislator, and then they started proving how much it was saving through welfare, through state welfare, and ultimately it became a program that, I do not know how many people it helps at this point, I don't know how they do it now with Obamacare, it's probably changed out. It was effective and it was very instrumental part of getting people healthcare during the 90's who had AIDs.

[1:11:21] [BK] What was that program called?

[FS] Insurance continuation program.

[BK] So here you are, your rubbing elbows with governor Romer and did you... The Deputy Chief of Staff, I think her name was BJ Thornberry, is that, right? Got involved in this and-

[FS] Through her being a client at the salon, of somebody else in the salon-

[BK] So in this case its ok to mix business with pleasure, because it was working, and it sounds like, you had mentioned, isn't there a day named after you, as a result of all of this?

[FS] One time BJ called up and goes, the governor wants to name a day after you, and I'm like oh ok. I'm seriously so naive and so I called my friend Bobby and I said hey, do you want to go down to the governor's office with me, we're going to go down and go to the governor's office. He's like oh ok, Bobby worked at the Federal Reserve Bank, he was so proper, he didn't hear me... he was so appalled when he came out, he goes, I didn't have a coat and tie on I had tattered jeans, I can't believe you took me in there, and I know I didn't go in there in a coat and tie. I look back now when I tell people, wow if I listen to my story, wow, that was cool. But it was just, you did what you needed to do, that's nice, I was also raised to not toot my own horn. I was raised a good Catholic boy that was just your humble and you don't do that. We went through that process- part of what happened in this time period is another thing about my family is very very much about going on and living, when dad passed I told my mom, she was talking to me and she understood my widowhood ten years later. She didn't get it, all of the sudden we had a connection that was so tight, I mean it was like a string that tied us instantly. She understood me, and I went on with my life, and I met somebody named David, a sweetheart, great kid. We started dating, his mom liked me, we started living together, I told him I was positive, because that was era when- I do anyway- I had a pedicure the other day and I said I'm HIV positive. It's just who I am and what you do, I mean I told him when I first met him, we were extremely safe, he said I'm negative. Knowing David and how it all went back, David was infected and positive long before we met, and I know for a fact I did not pass it on to him. David was my second partner that died; two and a half years into our relationship. We were in the process of starting to at that two and half year level, where we were starting to separate a little bit. My really dear friend Tom and he were starting to get along, we both loved him dearly, had some jealousy and emotional issues over it, but Tom and I loved each other because we went back so far.

[1:15:17] David passed away in January of 95, full moon was setting over the mountains and I lived in an apartment that had- full moon setting in January of 95 and his mom was on the way and I'd called her and said you got to get here, and he passed before she got there. But Tom and I got through it and we got through it with Barry, and we did this very spiritual thing, with the seminary stuff. there's something spiritual that's supposed to happen to me in my life, I don't feel spiritual, but there's all these other spiritual things that come to me and I always thought it used to be you're a catholic. So, we did the Tibetan book of the dead, and we read it every day for thirty days, we did all of that, and Tom and Barry and I were the last ones that we went and scattered Michaels ashes together, there was a whole group of us, there was one year that was real interesting. This was that year, actually, it would have been 95, the proteus inhibitors, the new cocktail was coming out as they called it, the cocktail, I knew I was going to die, I was going to die by the time I was forty, everybody was going to die. Well I didn't die at forty I made it though, and this is the year that my four closest friends that were left from that group of everybody, I knew that they were all going to die that year because- and then they came out with the cocktail, well Tom died and he died because he had Kaposi's and he was getting really sick, and he wanted to go. I knew he wanted to go, and I honored his wishes by not holding on to him, telling him how much I loved him and letting him go the way he wanted to go, and he did it the way he wanted to do it. I was there with him when that stopped and then Barry did the same thing, and I wasn't with him, but I knew. I had gone to say good bye that morning, he wanted his life to go the way he wanted it to. My friend Bobby that went to visit the governor with me, I knew he was going to die, he ended up getting sever neuropathy, and he became very focused and almost autistic, and we know it was some mental stuff with the disease. My friend Hugh made it, so here we got to the end of the year and two of them made it, two of them died, one of them kind of- we separated because he got so different. So, I lost the last of my friends, well we switch into where I am now, all my friends are- I'm sixty-one all my friends are in their early forties. I don't have a generation, so I built a whole new generation, I mean a whole new set of friends, because that's what I had to do.

[BK] That's the theme that keeps running through your life, that you had to do what you had to do. You pick yourself up. Seems to me, I just can't imagine, it's almost as if you had to become an expert at grief and mourning and lose, and you became a specialist, if you will, as a result. What do you think?

[FS] Through my work I know I'm a great counselor, I have friends who said you were going to be a priest for a reason, because you really had something in you, something deep down that you are still a priest without being a priest, by Catholic standards. I know I've been there to help many people get through many things, I've gotten angry a few times where I've just, why, why can't I just sit down, why can't someone take care of me, well because it's not my personality. My partner that I have now is twenty years younger than me, almost twenty-one, and that didn't mean a lot then because I was going to die and, we'd get through it. He was young and not- he was just starting to set his career, I mean now I'm with somebody whose setting up our 401k because I didn't save money. I had a house, I kept making payments on it so that was going to be my money, and social security. If I made it. Now we're- this summer we've been together longer than Michael and I were together.

[1:20:37] [BK] How long have you been together then?

[FS] Fifteen and a half years, but Michael and I were fifteen and a hundred and eighteen days, and I knew the day- I started counting it out, because our anniversary is in January, so I started counting it out. I never told him, and when we crossed it, we went to dinner and I said, well this is it, you've heard

about Michael for all these years but you just- which gave him a little bit of power in the relationship and solidity, or something that he needed, like we've stuck together, always talk about Michael, but really look at- we're together longer now.

[BK] I can't help wondering how when you talked about growing up, in middle school and being that kid that was targeted for whatever reason, we know the reason, match that with what you have done as an activist as just somebody just rolling up your sleeves and getting it done in both your personal and professional life. If someone was listening to this and they were questioning their sexuality or maybe some family member is listening, what are some take-aways you have learned with all of these really rich, sometimes devastating, but sometimes heroic situations that you've found yourself in.

[FS] Up until five years ago, I would have told you just flat out fight for it, if you believe that you want to fight for it. I don't know now if I've just turned sixty and I've decided I'm a little more tired, and so I don't know if I want to fight for it as much. Yet I've been proving to myself through some issues with my business, I mean Vince looks at me and says you've got to work until your seventy, and I went through about nine months to a year where I was having some real anger issues about, no how dare you even make me think it, I will do it, my mom painted up until she died, and she was a souvenir painter, but she was retired, but she would still sell all kinds of paintings and just do it. So, I'll cut hair, but it's the knowing I have to do it, but I've started coming around to you know what I'm going to be doing it anyway, and he's saving the money, he's working really hard, and every time he gets a raise every part of that raise for the last two and a half years has gone into the 401k. this is what you're going to get and you're going to have to make it to seventy so we can get that, and I'll get this, I'll work a little more because I'm twenty years younger than you. But the other part is his family has a life span of sixty-five, and my family has a life span of ninety. So, I keep looking at him and saying, and I have history, and that history is your gone before me. There was one thing that was important, I'm going to toot my horn about, because I think it's important, and that is because when get into something I get into it one hundred and ten percent, I do it to the point of destruction almost, because it can reach an end where I've just over done it. The reason I got on the board at CAP, Colorado AIDs Project was because of getting so involved in the walk, which got me onto the governors AID council and that just slowly worked itself around. There was one years I made fourteen thousand dollars as an individual walker. Everybody was making maybe three to five thousand. Gio Holland was the one person that competed with me, in raising funds, he was awesome and he worked at US West and at that point they were matching funds so it was great. We had a competition, there were a couple years where he did beat me, but I always said, but you had matching funds, through everything you collected, and we laugh and giggle about it. It was the money was needed to come in, that's all it was about. I ended up being the number one fund raiser, over ten years I brought in over one hundred and seven thousand dollars. Most years were- first year was a thousand and three thousand, then it was nine thousand to more every year; which ultimately ended up being about one hundred and seven thousand dollars.

[1:25:58] [BK] That's amazing. And your still involved with that as well?

[FS] No, I burned myself out completely. One thing I would say to organizations that might listen to this history is especially if someone doesn't want to toot their horn, help toot it a little bit, don't have the thirty-anniversary party of CAP and then kind of ignore everybody that's there that started it, or was there in the very beginning. It kind of cuts deep, so you get away from it even more.

[BK] So, I just have a few other questions that we wanted to talk about and it just sort of in the rapping up. If we go back to around 2002, you said that till 2012, this last decade, what was significant in that time that we may not have been able to touch upon?

[FS] It must be my relationship, and the reason it has to be my relationship is because when your twenty, or twenty-three, and you meet somebody, the love of your life for the rest of your life, you are just flat out ignorant. You just blindly in love, you don't know anything, which means when you do it a second time around, it is really hard because you know a lot more, and you guard yourself a lot more. I did anyway. Vince and I were together as a couple and as we jokingly said with a couple of husbands in between, because we had break-ups yet we still lived in the same house, and did things. Same things Michael and I did, but me being older and much more guarded with my heart. It was like, ok this is it, there over, done, and like with Michael with the drinking, we're done, with Vince with his stuff. but it was like you're out, and then we fought for our relationship to, which is the thing I said, I fight for things. I watched mom and dad fight for theirs, they were divorced when I was ten, they remarried each other, they fought for their relationship. That's my role model, whether it was good or bad that's the part I say at sixty now, should they have done that? I also say should I have done some of the things I've done, maybe not, maybe I ought to have different opportunities, but the reality is there's nothing like coming home a week ago, and having gone through a horrible situation in our personal lives and being able to work through it and being able to go, but we've got each other, we can get through this. No matter how stupid I was or you were, how incredibly bad something could have been we've got each other, we're going to say we forgive each other and work through it, and make it work. Ultimately, it's not stronger than our relationship, and so, the big part is they closed my salon, that other place, and that would have been in 2004, and what happened is my landlord sold the place and I said to him, after eighteen years, Bart no, I had first right of refusal, and he said, why would you say that, I don't remember that.

[1:30:05] I said Bart, when Alice brought me down there to sign the lease I looked at you and I said if I take this lease, if you're ever going to sell your building he says I'm never going to sell it. I said I know, I agree with you, but I'm getting into this too, but this is what I learned from closing my salon in Aroua, so I was able to say, I'm not signing personally, I'm signing as a corporation, and he looked at it and said I'll take it, but don't you ever bring me another sale like this again. But I knew how to speak for myself more, and I said, if you sell I want first right of refusal, and he stoke his hand out and shook my hand. He was in his cowboy hat and doing woodworking, chewing Tabaco, he was like a Montana guy, and I told him I'm from Montana it's a handshake. So then when he said Frank I'm sorry but I'm going to be selling the place, these guys came in and I said, Bart you promised me, and he goes I don't remember that. I described exactly what I just told you and he goes, you know I don't remember that, but that's something I would have done. I'm sending you the contract, you can look it over. I'm going to tell you right now, you're not going to be able to do it, because their offering me way more- they've been trying for three years, this is something I can't say no to. He says, but you do have that right, and I looked it over and I went to my banker right away and he goes, the value of that property, all the paperwork I have here you're going to have to come up with twenty percent plus and extra eighty thousand just to come up with the extra value of the property that their willing to pay. So, I was grateful and I said you stuck to your word and I stayed with those people long enough on a month to month until I got the place across the street, and I built out another place in four weeks, from start to end, I had to- on Easter Sunday there I was staining the columns because it had to be done. I left Easter dinner and came back and stained the columns and I had to be open.

[BK] This is at your place across the street from Louisiana?

[FS] Correct, one was on the north side of Louisiana, and I moved to the south. Best thing that ever happened to us. But I learned how to do those things so that's what, that decade has been about. All of the sudden 2004 I'm moving into a new location and then they opened up the back section and I said, I'll take that and moved into that, and had to build it out in three weeks, because I knew the rent would be due.

[BK] So, again, mentality, financially, and physically you're at a great place. Did you mention what Vince does for a living?

[FS] He went to school to be a CPA, didn't do the CPA, became an auditor, and internal auditor, and so he works at a business that would have- he went into the business and just did the interview as an out gay man, knowing there was all white men working there and not a necessary gay friendly place, and they hired him. He was so happy and so proud, because it was like I'm here and this is who I am and they accepted me, has moved up and has gotten a number of people interviews, that he's just given them names, and they like him so much that they've hired a number, so he's like, so he was the first and there's a number of them now.

[BK] That's incredible, what a difference twenty years makes as well. So, we've got a little bit more time here, in the period from 1973 to 2014 how has the community changed over time. You've mentioned some real specific examples but...

[FS] Well, I think we were a nuclear family when we started in 73 we came together because it was how we had to protect ourselves and we literally going to that meeting at the city council building, there were leaders, but there had to be all those people behind them, backing them and being with them. That followed through in our life, we just did that for twenty years because we got to 1992 where we were marching with Roy Romer who had to support as a governor, he had to go to court to implement this law as a constitutional amendment and so he had to fight it at the supreme court, yet he was not in favor of it, but there we all were marching down the street, as a nuclear group. Since 1992 the next twenty years, it's wonderful for all these kids, the hardest part is being the quote unquote, adult like my parents, the adult like my grandparents were to their children, you don't know what I did for you, you're here because of the things I did. I don't want to be that person, but I sit back and see that they don't appreciate, maybe they do, I think there are those that do, but here's marriage now, they couldn't have gotten marriage without the fighting that went on. Now all the sudden for me getting to marriage, it's kind of like, have we just diluted that entire nuclear family that I lived with because we were so different and special, and wonderful in our own special way, we were removed and we were special and we were that. In 93, we were being integrated and pushed against, and we still came together and we got through it and we pushed through it. Now, society is like what do I care if they get married, it's a civil thing, they should have those rights and it's all wonderful and it's all things I remember thinking, wow, but I didn't know that gay bars would slowly go away, because now you go to a bar. I go to a bar that I know is a leather bar, because I just know my people are going to be there, it's not to segregate myself, but it's my little bar where I go in, and it's like hey Norm, it's my Cheers. But the kids that are going out there now, at twenty-three years old, to thirty-five, they're just going to any bar with any of their friends, and dancing and being and doing. Their totally accepted, which is what we wanted, but it's sad for me, not wrong, not bad, just sad because they don't know that specialness that we felt, because we had to get there. We had to be together, we had to fight for what we...

[1:38:02] [BK] I agree with you, and I think what's important are our projects like this, the Colorado GLBT history project. When I shared with some other friends that I was going to be interviewed, that are my age, I'm fifty-one, they were like astounded. They were like, why would you do that, because there's a world, but there's a sorely missed gap of our stories and the telling of these rich oral histories, and I think your right that we don't stand up and pat ourselves on the back, we're not taught that, and we never had role models. We had straight role models. That's why you talk about that nuclear family it was so important, or our community or our people. That's why people here at the GLBT Center, here in Colorado, Denver is so vital, but I think we need some more experiences with intergenerational, histories.

[FS] Well, it's even more important because when your sixty-one, that group died. So, it's not only that, I mean it's going really fast and now it's even going faster because you know, look at Randy Weeks passed away a couple weeks ago, and I knew him from 1978, 79 when he first moved here. When he was just a kid and now he's in charge of the Denver Center of Performing Arts, all the theater that's come to Denver. Me it was closing down, there were summers where it was just nothing, and he made it live. we've lost somebody really...

[BK] Well, let me ask you this, you know if there was a legacy that you would want to pass on or your take-away what would be some of your take-away or what would... What would you want people to know about you?

[FS] I just, really, ultimately want them to know that I was a happy, friendly, very positive thinking person. I don't like the term cynical, I talked to you about that earlier, I just I know I've had my cynical moments which have happened just because innocents gets taken away, that's how you become an adult, but I on the whole am definitely a glass three quarters full person. It's just the way I'm going to go about life, and even when I get knocked down I still come back with just, that's the way it's going to be. I'm going to be happy and you're not going to take it away from me. No matter who or what comes in my life, and things have happened whether it be relationships, because there are ups and downs in your relationships, I remember that with Michael, I remember that with David, I know with Vince, I know what gets me through is my foundation of I'm not going to take my happiness away from me. That's the biggest thing, I'm just going to make sure I'm happy and hopefully offered something to people by being here, the first forty years.

[BK] Is there anything else you'd like to share?

[FS] Not that I can think of right now, I think we did pretty well.

[BK] I would think so, and I just want to thank you so much for the interview, and all the work that you have done, it's been incredible, and an honor to meet you, and to interview you.

[FS] Thank you Beth.

[BK] So, this is the end of our interview.