

Phil Hoyle Oral History

(Part 1) Narrated by Lewis a volunteer for the Colorado LGBT History Project

October 31, 2014 at GLBT Center of Colorado

Transcribed by Amy Baltin.

Abstract: Phil Hoyle talks about his life, his work for the church and his marriage. Phil Hoyle talks about coming out as gay to his wife and children.

Phillip Hoyle. Born 1947 [Lewis] [L]; [Phil Hoyle][PH]

[L][00:00] My name is Lewis and we're conducting this interview on behalf of the GLBT Center Gay History project. We're recording this in a room in the center on the first floor, and I'm here with Phil Hoyle today, how are you Phil? It's nice to have you with us.

[PH] Thank you, I'm fine, feeling good.

[L] So, I guess I'll begin with the questioning, and kind of start you through the beginning. Restate your name, your date of birth.

[PH] I'm Phillip Hoyle and I was born June 27, 1947.

[L] And what was your parent's names and their occupations?

[PH] My father was a grocer, and his name was Earl Hoyle, Earl Stanley Hoyle, and he was born in Kansas as well. And we lived in Junction City, and my mother was Ion Alice Hoyle, she was born south of Junction City. I think she was actually born...just west of Junction City but grew up down south of Junction City. She lived her whole live in Kansas. They are both deceased.

[L] Do you have siblings?

[PH] I have four sisters, Lyn...and I was in the middle so she was two and a half years older than I, and Holly, and then Christy, and Jewel. Is that enough information yet? Ok.

[L] Alright, tell us a little bit about, well you already described your family of origin, tell us a little bit about your early development including your schooling, your religion, your family connections and if you want.... sexuality, if that's ok?

[PH][01:59] Let's start, I went to church long before I went to school, and was probably there three times a week or more, every week probably from the very first day I came out of the hospital... My dad was a teacher, and an elder in the church, and an organist of that church. And mother always taught, and lead a youth group, and was involved in some, probably in some woman's work, but I don't remember that for sure. All five of us kids were pretty enthusiastic about our participation in the church; there was never any whining. We were all in choirs and Sunday school, and going to worship services, and bible studies, and they had a lot of graded programing there. It was kind of a fairly large church with a minister, and an education director both on staff.

[L] What was the denomination?

[PH] It was an independent Christian church related to the maybe better known Christian church, the Disciples of Christ, denomination. They were from the same movement. I grew up in kind of a family that was educated through high school, my parents were both high school graduates. Dad came out of high school in the depression, as did my mother, he was unable to go to college because of the financial needs of the family, and he became a grocer with his father, although his love was journalism. When he came out of high school he was a journalist and wrote for the local paper. But he realized when he wanted to get married that he couldn't make enough money to get married doing that, and so, he started buying in with his father and was a grocer then for many years; all of my growing up and being at home years... Mother's life in the community was PTA and girl scouts, of course she had four girls, you can understand that. These were intelligent, and engaged people. He was a democrat and she was a prohibitionist, actually a committee person on the Kansas Prohibitionist Party, but there was beer in our home sometimes because dad sometimes brought beer home. So, I grew up in a very interesting kind of open and, in the context a very liberal home, in a very conservative context. I think one of the most important things in my life, is that I grew up knowing that you could be as liberal as you needed to be- in a very conservative context and still appreciate and not insult the conservative people around you. It just wasn't necessary.

So, I went to school...that was called the United Nations School, because Junction City was right next to Fort Riley, it was an integrated town; the school system was integrated; the classes were integrated...It was in the north end of town, and it was a very colorful place. I grew up with friends who were white, black, brown, and some Asian origin. I...went to junior high, the same story, in fact all the junior high kids from Fort Riley were there, and that was a population of over twenty thousand, and so there were a lot of children in junior high. They all came to Junction City Junior High School. I got to know lots of interesting people and, you had new friends every three years because it was, you were at a fort about three years and then you were off to another place so people were coming in from having lived- my classmates in Japan, whether they were Japanese or not, or Germany especially, and so there was this constant rotation of the population. I'm kind of introverted, I learned that you have to be out there...I wasn't like some people who would go and where they only knew white people, I had known a lot of people. I had been in love with a black girl and a black boy all at the same time in junior high and by ninth grade. I was growing up with some sexual knowledge I suppose, and knowledge of myself about my- well some people would say about your duplicity, but it was more than that.

The statistics show that maybe sexuality among men in America is always duplicitous, certainly their general behavior is duplicitous, and it comes from that, something in the brain that segments the great themes of life, so you get to be more than one thing in American studies. I've done a lot of those psychological; cultural studies. So, I always considered that I was at least triplicitous...maybe more who knows.

I graduated high school in Clay Center Kansas, was three years there. It was a shock to go there because I went from a junior high school with twelve hundred people in a school that was built for nine hundred and, I went to Clay Center where the whole high school, all four grades were five hundred students and, it was just like- and there were no black people- there was one Hispanic girl in the class and the whole school was the size of one of the classes...that was different and I think that the level of teaching, except in a few places, wasn't the same as it was in Junction City, and it made the school a little bit easier, but

the music program was really fine, and all arty stuff, they always had good arts in that school. The stuff I was most interested in. So, now what, is that as far as you wanted me to go? In that bunch of questions?

[L][09:00] Yeah, I think that's pretty good. Now tell us about your occupational...actually you haven't talked about your post high school-

[PH] Going to college?

[L] Yeah, why don't you go on about that?

[PH] Ok, graduated in 1965, went to Manhattan Bible College where my oldest sister had gone to school, my next sister had started school. My father had been on that school board for ten years, or longer, until he had a heart attack and had to quit. Therefore I knew lots of professors, our churches were pretty involved, there were other students from the churches I had grown up in...So, I went there too, and I had been recruited from about third grade on to become a minister. It made sense to me because it would keep me close to music, and other things I liked, and I like church just fine, especially if the preaching was good. But I found out very early on that I was not going to be one of those preachers, because I really did not speak comfortably. Taking a class like speech both in high school and college was a most excruciating experience for me. Not because I was shy of people, but it's because I could not organize speeches and be contented with them, and be convincing in any sort of manner...I liked writing somewhat, although I found it very hard to do, and I didn't like speech, but I loved the choirs. I figured churches have choirs, the only place out of schools that have choirs, mostly it was churches, occasionally there would be a chorus recruited from the community. And in large cities- I had never lived in one of those, there were choruses and, semi-professional choirs, but I didn't know about any of that except for the professional ones that recorded, I had some recordings. I had a great fantasy about music. But I went to school, I studied hard, and I was a good student, and I graduated with the kind of honors they had there, and then I took a job.

I had been working on weekends in little churches in north central Kansas, and as a senior, in my first senior year, in the spring, I went to Wichita, Kansas. Someone was trying to open up a relationship with the Disciples College there, and our school, and they asked if I might be interested in such a job, and sent me down there to interview and I got a job. A very part time job, weekends for three months and stayed on full time for three months in the summer, then I had to go back to school because that was only my first senior year. But I discovered I really felt much more at home among these disciples than I did with the independents I'd grown up with. Although it didn't take me long to see that there was as much prejudice against independents among disciples, as there was prejudice against disciples among independents. I came to understand that was based on prejudice rather than experience, there may have been some experience way back from somebody else but basically those differences were mostly based in something real but they were based mostly in prejudice. That was very interesting for me because I was moving from being the liberal among the conservatives to being a more conservative among the liberals. But that was perfect for me because it taught me much more than I had been learning up until that point and, so, it was just a perspective then that informed my ministry all the years I was involved in- helping people basically as happens among liberal churches you gotta help people come away from their conservative past and not feel like their betraying everybody, including God, and learning how to live with that. I was pretty good at that, so I worked four years in a very successful downtown church in Wichita, Kansas one that was on the way up to becoming a mega church and, there

was a new staff person every six months, I was there four years and, my job description kept changing to accommodate them and of course for me it was wonderful, but people didn't realize it meant I was in charge of fewer things every time another person came in. Which I thought was really good, and of course I was left with music and, Christian education, but not- I didn't really have the youth part of the Christian education accept structurally but, you know, it took a lot of the burden away from me and I was able to do more stuff with multi-media communications in all programs I was involved in and because there were more ministers around I never had to preach and I loved that... I got to work with professional musicians, which is something I had never done before, and it was overnight, I was in charge of this choir- overnight I had hired soloists, overnight I had to interview people for those positions, and hire them, and overnight I was working as the music director with a number of professional musicians quite a few of them, in the children's program and, the adult and teenage programs. That was very interesting, pushed every skill I ever had, and when I left that job I went to graduate school in Wichita State University in music school there.

Actually, entered into an academic program as a special student and after I got my eighteen hours I applied for a- whatever it's called, and was granted that. They liked me; after the first two semesters I realized I was going to be able to handle it. So, I learned a lot going back to graduate school. I knew I was at a point after those first four years, I thought I'm not sure I really want to stay in this church work because I had frustrations. I found out the things I was frustrated about were the same things that the musicology teachers at the university were frustrated about, so it changed my way of thinking about that, I would just choose to work where it seemed more important or more bearable and, I realized having all the variety of church work and all the age groups was much more attractive to me than teaching music history to undergraduates students who did not want to take it and, doing that for the rest of my career. So, I thought ok, but I knew I wouldn't regret going to graduate school, and I messed with that for three years and, was at the point where I was going to have to declare what I was going to do my thesis on. And, I realized what I was looking at was very complicated and was going to take me a long time and then I would have to do a PhD if I was actually going to teach at university. So, I thought, I guess I should give the church another chance here. I thought I got to get credentialed though because I had this independent background working at a disciple's church, so, ended up going to a disciple's seminary, Texas Christian University, the Brite Divinity School there, and then I had a long-standing career following that over twenty more years, and that was that. And I was in interesting churches; Fort Worth...maybe the most interesting in Jefferson City, Missouri where- I was there nine years so I saw a lot happen in the life of a church that long. Then I was in a very interesting, for me personally, ministry at a church in Albuquerque and... We haven't got to your main points I think.

[L] Well let me just ask you a question that I didn't hear you talk much about. When you were going through all this experience in your occupational history, did you experience any discrimination or particularly outstanding challenges?

[PH][18:09] Well, a lot of challenging things because churches all during my career churches were changing so fast, as the cultural was changing so fast. I came out of high school in 1965; in 1966 I was preaching in a little country church here and there in western Kansas, and north central Kansas and western Kansas. And the teenagers were changing rapidly at that time and by the time I got- well then, I was in Wichita, so my life was changing as I went urban and was around urban kids and, that was a whole different thing, and urban people, and actually around wealthy people. Wealth I had never seen or experienced before, so I was learning I was very wide eyed learner as I had been all the way through

school. I had a lot to learn. But the challenges were of course, what was happening in church music all that time, and what was happening in the Sunday school going down the tubes now because people were having fewer children, women were all working and they had done the volunteer work to keep churches going for all this, decades and decades of American church life. All of the dynamics were changing and even faster in large churches because they were one to hire things done rather than do it themselves, and that was throughout my career like one of the main things. By the time, I got to the last church I worked in which was kind of a music and fine arts job in Tulsa, Oklahoma in the 1990's the church was run by the staff. The programs were led by the staff, few volunteers helped, and I hated that because my ideal of the church was people coming together to fulfill their own ministries. You know, this- my conservative background- their own ministries that they felt they needed to do and wanted to do and, here they were just- I was having a combination of aging- and I was finding the greatest impediment to my interest was happening. Plus, being in a very modern church, and these disciples. Very middle of the road, quite a few very liberal people in it, by then a lot of fundamentalist as well. By the time, I got closer to the end of the career, like when I was in Albuquerque in the 80's or in the 90's- all through the 90's, there was a swing in the stuff were still seeing where the conservatives in America were getting louder, making more connections with the religious communities- conservative religious communities, and that was affecting our church as well. In 1968 the General Assembly of our church did this kind of an affirmation that gays, lesbians should be afforded all civil rights in the United States public life. That's before I even worked in a disciple's church. By the time, I got to seminary I knew the problem was going to be over leadership, because they were then talking about we've got to be recruiting and evangelizing, or proselytizing, or whatever among gay and lesbian people. We have to open our congregations to them, but I could see the big problem was going to be who's going to teach in Sunday school. Are you going to let these people teach in Sunday school? Not likely, although there were many people teaching in Sunday school already who were gay and lesbian. It just wasn't- and then if they got any leadership in the congregation soon somebody was going to say to say I'm going to seminary, I'm going to become a minister of some sort. It was good to see- that would be the problem, and soon as I got to seminary I realized marriage was going to be the big problem! I saw that all taking place in about thirty years of that career, and I- because of my own sensitivity to those issues because I...my first adult friend was a gay guy, who worked in church music and, he and I were always in correspondence, always on the telephone, all that kind of stuff. I was in and out of where he worked in churches and, I could see that it was tough, and it was going to get tougher, and he was in a UCC Church which tended- I think their choir lofts were more gay than disciple's choir lofts. Luckily the choir loft has always been more open to gay and lesbian people, and other oddballs as long as they didn't wear funny hats. You know, I'm talking about the perception of it, as long as they put them in a row and not look different. They could sing better and they were more likely to volunteer for that kind of stuff anyway. I went on, by the time I was getting to the end of that career, and by the time I realized I was probably moving away from my life in ministry and my life in family with wife and children, and I had a wonderful wife and two very interesting children, a third child we picked up, who was an undergraduate student at Lincoln University when we were in Jefferson City. A black guy from- Alfrancis Ovia from south eastern Nigeria, who was a business major, he and his wife, an American, he is now a U.S citizen, and their two children were like members of our family and he always called Merna mom hoil, he never did call me dad hoil. But that's a whole different story I'm probably not going to tell in this interview or maybe any. He was an undergraduate student that needed an American family, and Merna said, you'll be in our family. And it turned out to be much more true than was the intention of the international student

program that we were involved with. So, just accommodating to seeing all these fairly liberal and open congregations having to deal with the fact that all the sudden we had a bunch of Cambodians in our church and all of the sudden there were- there was one guy who was kind of an evangelist among the Cambodians in our community, in Jefferson City, Missouri, where they didn't know about Cambodians, much. He wanted me to baptize children, so then we had baptisms that were bilingual. Which I thought was a great learning experience, since I was the educator there, great learning experience for the church. But I also found out either Khmer has many words for everything that is spoken in English, or he was preaching along with his scripture reading. I could never determine, not knowing any Khmer except very few words. It was interesting, while that was a wonderful thing it was also a great challenge for the congregation. I got to watch that take place and many people helped in ESL classes and stuff, and many people seemed chagrined-

[L] ESL being what?

[PH][25:55] English as a second language. They were helping instruct these people who only spoke Khmer, to speak English as well. Anyway, there are many stories about that, but I always have way too many stories.

[L] Well could we loop back for a bit, and you mentioned your marriage, could you tell us a little bit more about how you met your wife?

[PH] Yeah, my roommate when I was a sophomore- I guess I had a reputation of not being interested in girls, I found out later, I was, there just wasn't any girl in that little tiny school I went to that I was interested in, in any sort of special way. There was one that was kind of cute and I liked her personality, but she was not bright, and I knew I could not live with a person who was not bright because it just wouldn't work. They had a social occasion at the end of the year, I took her, and she was oh so excited, but she didn't come back to school- I was so relieved. But my roommate that second year, same one I had first year, said Phillip I met a girl that you need to meet, I think you'd like her.

[L] Now this is your second year in college?

[PH] Yeah, I was a sophomore and so my friend Roy- my roommate Roy said that. I wondered why he wasn't- but I found out, he was already interested in this redhead that he had met in the summer before, when he was working in a gas station in western Kansas; to imagine running into somebody who was going to be in the same school. He introduced me to Merna, Merna Vance, her name was, from western Colorado, that's why we were in Montrose later in our life helping take care of her parents. But I met her and she was a livewire, just outgoing and just endless enthusiasm that- she was much more independent, much more like my sisters were, more impressive as a human being, I was impressed. We started having like coke dates, they were called, that meant coco-cola in those days, and started talking a little bit, and started double dating with Roy and his girlfriend, that kind of stuff. We really like each other and we were worlds apart, she grew up on a farm, but she had been, the state 4-H vice president as a senior. She had wonderful verbal skills, she was a big person, in speech and drama; the things I liked but didn't feel very confident in. She went out- a women, I mean a student and preached in churches in Kansas, in conservative, independent, Christian churches, while she was raising money for a summer internship in a mission in Toronto, Canada. Or some other little town up there, a smaller town up there. She just did it, she never worried about what people thought and, in a sense she was very

naive and just assumed that's what you did, so she went out and did it, and people gave her money to go.

I was quite impressed and eventually we were engaged to be married and then we married, and not too long after that, several years we had our first child and then our second. A wonderful, wonderful marriage, and always sensitive to one another, we had to overcome communications difficulties. It's hard for people to believe that there was anyone in the world I couldn't talk to, but she was the one, and I wasn't ever sure and I'm still not sure why that was. Maybe I got caught in an understanding, she's so- we need to communicate, she broke up with me once when we were dating, said we just can't communicate and I can't do that. The next year we got back together because she wanted to talk to me, and so we started talking and we made the commitment to practice hard at verbal communications. We had no trouble with other communications, but the verbal stuff between us was hard- difficult, and it always was, but once we had kids and a common project, we had plenty to talk about, and then when they left home it was more difficult again which I had foreseen as a problem and still had no idea how that was ever going to work. But it was better course by then we played cards and then we could play cards together. But we had really a wonderful marriage, when we- became separated when I was in Tulsa and she took a job in Albuquerque at my almost insistence. I took some stuff out to her, I made two trips out there that fall to take her things, one in October I think, out to Albuquerque from Tulsa in '96...or the fall of '97. I don't know somewhere in there. I took a bunch of furniture, she said I don't this much I said yeah, well, when Michael and Heather come down just send it home with them, you know, what you don't want. So, that worked out ok because it was going to have to be distributed somehow, and then I went back to visit and I flew out there for Thanksgiving. A male friend of mine picked me up from the airport and then delivered me to the house and at that point I realized I was ready to lie to my wife, and I thought, I'm not doing that. I had sworn I would never lie to my wife, any questions she asked me- and I would not- I was really thinking I would go to Albuquerque when I left the job in Tulsa up to that point. But after being separated for a couple of months, when I got back I realized I really wasn't going to. When I got back from that trip I flew into Tulsa, I got a cab from the airport to the apartment and I don't think it was that night, but it was that week I went down three blocks to the New Age Revolution, which I was sure was going to be a gay bar, and it was. And, I made my kind of entry into gay life on my own, where I was not simply visiting with a friend, where he was showing me things about his life. I realized I was there for my life, and that was in...late fall of '97, and actually I think it might have been the first-time I was in the bar by myself period. So, that was one of the things related to my having been married. I had some affairs...I fell in love with a man when I was in seminary. We were walking down the street in Fort Worth and these love song lyrics were just going through my mind, I was singing, I was kind of singing them out loud and then I stopped and I thought those insipid texts I could never stand but I liked to sing so I liked them, but I used to sing them at somethings, but all of the sudden I was singing them to him, and I realized that we were in the street, and I realized that's funny. I laughed, and he said what, and I lied and I said oh nothing. Anyway, he was a newlywed, and I wasn't about to mess up his life, I was in love with him I was pretty sure he was a strong candidate for being 150% gay, but that's not how he was living his life and I was not going to mess up his life. We persisted in being friends for years and five years into that, our relationship did sexualize. It was an out of town relationship, we saw each other maybe once or twice a year for years. It kind of sustained me, although he was always unpredictable, he was kind of less self-assured than I was. I tend to kind of be that way. But it sustained me to have a man who I loved and who I knew loved me but he was kind of unable to

express it very easily, and with any consistency. I'm going down the path quickly at this point, do you mind?

[L] No, not at all.

[PH] [35:31] When we moved to Tulsa he was not that many miles away, and I probably saw him once during that time when we moved back. Even though I was not involved in the circles that I had been, where...we had access to one another through a professional meeting, that kind of stuff. I wasn't in work anymore, the education work, and so I didn't see him, but at one point he called me, he was coming down that way, and would I go do this thing with him. I said sure, but then Merna and I in the meantime Merna and I separated I called him back and I said, you can come down here, I will go with you in the day but you will have to bring me back and you'll have to leave Tulsa, and stay in a motel in some other town far enough away that I without a car would not be able to be there. Because I had to make sure I had people knew I was at home. I said it just has to be that way, to protect him, and because at that point I wasn't worried about protecting myself, but I certainly was- this friend of all these years together, over twenty years and, I think he canceled that trip. Then before I left, or pretty soon after that I wrote him a letter, because I was leaving ministry at that point, as soon as I knew that, I wrote him the letter and told him I will always let you know where I am, if you call me I will call you back, if I'm going through your town I'll make some contact by phone to let you know- but I was basically- a relationship like- I felt I had sustained many, many, many years to our mutual benefit and to his I realized I was going to hand that over to him so that he could do whatever he needed to do to take care of himself. Later he outed me to somebody else, anyway. I suppose my feeling's changed a little bit at that point, but not much. He's still very, very special, first person you fall in love with. Anyway, came to Denver soon after that experience of going to the bar. I was very self-consciously aware of what I was doing when I went to that bar by myself. A friend, that I met in seminary, not the one I fell in love with, another guy told me one time about his gay experience and he said you know every once in a while, I just go to a gay bar, it's kind of a spiritual thing for me, and I thought, oh that's interesting construct. I thought about that a lot and I went down to that that bar and I understood exactly what he meant. I went into that bar, I wasn't still sure, most bars are peopled by men anyway, and it was way too early. My friend Ted, my first adult friend who was gay, he had said you never show up in a gay bar before ten o'clock at night, and I was down there, I'm sure it was eight or nine. There wasn't anybody much in there, I wasn't- it was New Age Revolution and that could be a lot of different things, but it just looked like a gay bar. I went over to the bar and I ordered a beer and I looked up and there was a dildo on a wooden plank with all kinds of decorations, and I thought oh, yeah, I'm here. This is a gay bar. I just thought- I thought oh, there are some kinds of reassuring things- why in the world would that be reassuring, but it was just a wonderful symbol of what was happening and what I was allowing to happen to me. So, I realized I was as I said to my friend I was saying goodbye to, I'm moving to Denver to live as an out gay man, that is what I am doing, and I'm just breaking my ties pretty fully. So, that's what I did, and from that point on my wife and my conversations we kept them up, we were still just wonderful friends as we were though out our marriage even when it got frustrating. We just were wonderful friends and mutually supportive, and we had these wonderful kids, and we had like, twelve grandkids, if you count the African guy and his wife, they have two, we have twelve grandkids. Their wonderful, fun, bright, creative people just like we would want for our children and grandkids, and we just feel so fortunate in that, and we love our friendship, and one another.

[L] When and how did you come out to your ex-wife, or your wife at the time?

[PH][40:43] Well when we started talking, that summer- the first full summer we were in Albuquerque. I had had two affairs when I lived in Albuquerque. The first one was with a friend of hers and she never saw it, but the guy was so funny and he and I, when we started to get physical toward one another and both realized it, I think he was playing me...which was fine with me. She didn't see it because she was already friends with him. She knew how crazy he was and how much fun, and we had already done all kinds of things together, the three of us. So, it just wasn't apparent that that had changed, but the other one was a younger guy who was sure he had fell in love with me. He was very emotional and he was willing to be in love, whereas the older guy- little bit older, they were both younger than I was... but my wife's friend, he said when we started touching each other, he said Phillip no feelings. I thought, well I had already told him I loved him, but it was in this other context...I thought that would be the best thing for my marriage if we protected ourselves from letting our feelings get between each other, and just played with each other, which we did. When the other guy came in, he was all feelings and it strummed something deep in me. I knew that my love for him, which it was true, it was something quite different then his for me. Before we ever went physical, besides just touching each other, before we engaged in any sex I told him, you have to get rid of any domestic fantasy you have in you because it is not going to happen. We had sex a few times, it was different, but at the same time it wasn't the fun that I had with the other guy. It was a thing I was learning about, so many things about myself and other people.

From the 1970's I was reading gay novels, as soon as those hit the press. In the 70's we started having gay novels written out of the violet quill group, which was in New York City. Some people in southern California and san Francisco started writing memoirs and novels. As that stuff came out I was reading Ethen Lourd and Edman White and Paul Monet... It was like my one liaison with my long-standing buddy and my reading and my friendship with Ted, who actually gave me the first gay novel I ever read...by a lesbian women writer. I can't say the title...but from that moment on I realized there is gay literature, I've got to find it and I started reading it, and I read the historical stuff and I read all the studies. I've been reading sexuality studies for years anyway, and all of the sudden there were homosexuality studies that were not being written by clinical psychologists, but by gay people themselves...I read all of it...all that stuff through the '80's and '90's, right up to the time I moved out to be gay myself, and ever since I've been reading all that kind of stuff.

So, I was getting a sense of myself. I was really comfortable with my bisexuality, and that was the construct I had to understand myself in that way in order to keep my life sane, and to be able to do the work I was doing. I didn't do it begrudgingly, it just made sense to me it matched this duplicitous personality of mine, actually I've always described it as more, it started with language. I had three different languages I spoke, English, all of them, in different settings, and I never made a mistake in all the years growing up, or as an adult I never made a mistake in my language. Never used the wrong words with the wrong group, until I said in front of my son about two years' age, oh shit. He never heard me say that, and at that point I thought I'm an old man, it doesn't matter... Years before I had understood language and vocabulary and feelings... When I would really get upset it would be hell, and the next level up would be damn, shit, and fuck. By the time, I got to fuck, I was ready to-

[L] Tell me a little bit more about how your wife took- when did she first find out you were gay?

[PH][46:33] That summer we were in Tulsa, that summer Merna said we've got to talk, that's like a theme in our relationship, we've got to talk. At that point I don't know if I just decided or assumed, I'm unsure if I decided or assumed she wanted to talk about my sexuality. That's what we talked about, and

it was something we had needed to talk about. I had been revealing myself, my bisexuality to her for many years, but it was always subtle, it was always through what books I had left out on purpose on the nightstand, knowing that maybe she who had much more straightforward personality and much better verbal communicator than I might ask the question. When this friend from seminary, years later he and I finally had sex, I told my friend Ted, Ted said are you going to tell Merna. I said, I don't think so, but if Merna ever asks me any questions I will answer it, I'll answer it exactly like she asks it. I was at the point where I decided ok I don't know what she's asking, but I didn't really think that, I thought I knew what she meant. We had not, either of us, looked at our relationship in terms of the beginning of menopause and stuff like that because marriage relationships change dramatically generally during menopause, because of the aging of both parties and the hormonal changes in the wife. I heard about it from my parents, I heard my dad try to explain to me as a ninth grader why my mother was cranky or something. It was that veiled language then, and I didn't quite get it and I never- even though I had read about that because I had read about sexuality all the time, I just had never put it in that personal context.

I should have asked what we were supposed to talk about, but I assumed I knew and we talked about my sexuality. I told her things about myself and she was very hurt, very angry. I said, Merna you go to Albuquerque, you talk to your friends out there, the two Nancy's, one was her college roommate, one was a good friend of ours, and you talk to Louise, a lesbian friend of ours. These were people we spent a lot of time with, and loved dearly. I said you've got to go and talk to someone. She had no one in Tulsa to talk to. I said I have people, I always have people to talk to, because I'd always had Ted and then I'd had this other friend, who told me about spirituality. She did go out there and one of them- well they were all looking at this stuff from their own point of view, and she did get the support she needed. She told one woman, well yeah, I got something I got to tell you, and they were driving somewhere, and she said Phillip is a homosexual. One of the Nancy's said yeah; and she said what do you mean yeah. She said she and her husband had known that for years. Merna was just shocked, but within a couple of months she told our daughter, my daughter told me this, you know your dad's gay; I've known this for twenty years. So, we were so in tuned to each other and so careful with one another as marriage partners that we both were doing all the things it took to make the marriage work, and last. She had done it almost to the point of fooling herself, but she wasn't unaware of that, from when I had fallen in love with that guy she saw, I know she saw the emotional difference in me, she had to. We were at a very strategic point in our relationship, we sold our house, this was all my fault. We sold our house and moved away from Kansas and moved to Texas, where I started in the seminary. I left the music thing, that idea, and went to seminary where we were going to be in church work, and she really didn't like it. I knew she was really angry with me, and it took her many, many years to even say that she was angry with me, at that point in our marriage. At that point I thought, this is not the time to be angry with me cause I had all this stuff bubbling in me and I didn't want to change my life. If I was going to enter my career than at that point, with credentials, I certainly didn't want to do that. I didn't want to lose my family, put my kids and my wife through all of this trauma.

[L] So this was earlier when you were- going seminary?

[PH][52:11] Yeah, when I started- yeah it was a thirty-year-old flashback. She had known it from that point, because then when we were like fifty when we were talking, so for twenty years she had known, that was right when she had gotten so upset, and worried I'm sure. She was perceptive, but she wasn't willing to push us, and she never liked counseling. She had no interest in counseling and being counseled. We ended up separating without counseling and that probably was an error, but it hasn't

been too bad. It's been much better than most people's experience with separation and divorce with counseling. That's not putting one against the other, but our experience because of our knowing each other so well and really liking each other has been very good. Of course, it changed her life and we both continued learning many things about ourselves and about each other.

[L] But your still in touch obviously and good friends?

[PH] She and most of my grandkids have been in Jim's house and have eaten Ruth's cookies. Jim and I have been to Missouri together and Ruth has meet my oldest sister, and my youngest sister and was her guest in the house. So, the families seem to be pretty fine. I always stay with my kids or I used to stay often with a friend who this fall, early in the fall died. When I was there for the funeral, I think I stayed at Merna's place. We always do everything together, we're always very considerate of one another.

[L] So I think I know the answer to this question...up until the point that you and your wife separated and divorced, had you been involved at that time in the LGBT professional, civic, or private organizations?

[PH][54:28] Merna and I as a couple had joined GLAD which was Gay, Lesbian, and Disciple it was the open, affirming denominational organization. We sent money to them. When I was at General Assembly I went to the GLAD both, and that year it was so funny because they were put in the exhibition hall right in the same neck as the ultra-conservative whiplash group. They put them right together...one thing between them. It was the place where the ultra-social liberals went to, down that some corridor and the ultra-conservatives and whoever planned that, and I'm sure it was planned was brilliant...

Ted had lived with us one summer when he was going to graduate school and she finally understood that Ted was gay. She thought he was having trouble with girlfriends. He came out to her and I was pleased. I mean I had known it from the first time I meet him. He was in and out of our home, a guy I met in Chicago at a conference, a gay minister, we were in and out of his home in Canada. We would travel up there, and one time on our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary we took a trip, a protracted trip, three weeks. We flew into Chicago; our lesbian friend Louise flew in from Albuquerque and met us there. We flew on the same plane to Toronto and Bill, this guy I met in Chicago, picked us up and we went on a trip out to the Atlantic provinces and back to Portsmouth, New Hampshire where then Louise left our party. The four of us were traveling together on our twenty-fifth wedding anniversary having so much fun. Playing boulder dash, clear across eastern Canada. Then we came back and then Merna and I spent another week with Bill. She's still great friends with Bill, she still visits him in Canada, and she told me about the time she had gone for Easter, she said, Phil I had the best Easter meal I have ever eaten in my entire life, and it was me and a bunch of gay men. She said the cooking was superb, she was not talking about my cooking. We had had gay and lesbian people in and out of our home, our children knew gay and lesbian people growing up and were aware of it. We had a very open home to foreigners and gays and lesbians and other people that are taken to be very strange.

[L] Can we pause the tape for a minute?

[L] Ok, the next question that I have for you is, you'd mentioned that going into this gay bar in Tulsa and that this friend had told you that every time they went into a gay bar they felt a spiritual awaking or experience and you said that you felt the same things, more or less?

[PH] Well, I don't know if I felt what he felt.

[L] Tell us what you felt.

[PH][58:16] Well, my early perception of what he felt was that he's not very outgoing and always embarrassed by his sexuality, but sometimes he just had to go, and often those encounters ended up with him in very compromising positions. But it was also not only a sexual experience but it was there was something about his makeup that he just had to go and his being there was a very spiritual kind of experience. I thought of that when I went into that bar and saw that phallus sticking out of the wall with Mardi Gras beads hanging from it and I'm not sure what else. It was all painted up and cute. I realized, oh yeah, that spoke to me in kind of a light-hearted way but very deeply spiritual. It was like I had come to the right place. Now remember my mother was a prohibitionist and my being in a bar at all was something I had to learn as an adult and it was not anything that I loved, but I did kind of like the dancing and I liked drag shows I saw in bars when I was doing social research at seminary. I thought that was the funniest and weirdest kind of thing because then I was trying to figure out what's going on here, what's the meaning of this, because I was studying philosophical theology and stuff like that. I also realized it was a great a deal of fun and I hadn't been to one of those places for a long time. I go to that bar by myself and I think my own kind of spiritual thing was I realized after I was not going to lie to Merna, I was not going to allow myself to do that. I just was not going to put myself into that where I'm cloaking things about my life because that is not what- I realized I am going to live as an openly gay man. So, when I went to the bar it was like the crisis of that decision getting under way.

From that point on it was not only clear to me, it started being really clear to other people. I had already come out to my children because when Merna and I started talking she said you have to tell the kids. She was- for her reasons was scared that our relationship was going to end as husband and wife and I thought that was, because I had spent my whole adult life thinking of myself as bisexual or most of it anyway. I thought well maybe there's some other way to solve these things, but I also knew that when you put language to- when you start morphing the realities you add tags, and all that kind of stuff...that when you start doing that you also create something. I was kind of influenced by the constructionist people.

I realized that to tell my children in English, I had to be very careful because I was creating something in myself as well as in them. For them I did not use gay, I didn't use those tags, I said I had sexual affairs with two men in Albuquerque and Merna and I are talking about that. But I knew of course that would out me in Jefferson City where my daughter lived because she would either think it was very funny and interesting and would never be upset by that about her dad it would be probably much less shocking to her than to either of her idealistic brother or mother. She would never think that was a bad thing because of the way she was raised, she just didn't think stuff like that was bad. I knew that if I came up in a conversation, and anything came up I would be outed to the people she was talking with and then a smaller town that could be the whole place. The other thing was I knew in myself I was creating something and I realized then that I was in a different place in my life. That I was committing myself in a sense to myself in a way that I never had and while that can be seen as very selfish it also turned out to be for me a very life changing and spiritual experience. I had dealt with the theology of it and there were no hate words in my vocabulary towards people of any kinds of sexual difference from what people took to be the norm. It was one thing to do all that in your mind and to even tell your children. My wife heard those conversations, I made sure that she heard them, she didn't hear both responses but she heard them we had one telephone. Then when we decided to separate it was another round of phone calls and that one included one to her mother, and I said the same wording and of course it was

later when my wife talked to her than she said he's turned his back on God and my wife said mom that's not how I think about it. She also was very liberal and I realized when you set yourself up to become talked about in ways that people are accustomed to talking about you, you pick up all those years of prejudice and so on.

[1:04:14] I realized also I not only was creating something in myself, I was creating something in my society about me and so going to the bar by myself then became a way in which it became more real, because I realized this is not Ted's bar, he's the first one who took me to a gay bar. The next book I read was not one of Ted's, all of this stuff was Phil stuff and it was also one that was leaving behind the bisexual Phil and creating the homosexual Phil. I was always homosexual but I was creating the gay Phil and it was a very powerful moment for me of self-realization that just like when I feel in love with Steve I laughed and I was so happy to be there, and a guy come over to me and talked, he was not after me, he was the hostess at that bar. A man that later, the church organist brought to one of the Christmas, seasonal things, that featured the choir quite a bit. He said I want you to meet John, and so I said I'll be looking forward to that. Well I found out it was John the hostess, who wasn't really the hostess, but was the one that made everyone feel good. I watched him go around the bar he talked to anybody and it was always sweet and humorous and involving. That was the beginning of the building of my new communities for me outside of individual friendship. That was the place where that happened over the next few months, I guess about seven months. Had wonderful experiences and got to know very many people.

Years before, in church during the communion, which in our church was a very quiet time, none of this traipsing to the front or any of that. In our church, they passed the communion aliments through the congregation like Presbyterians and it was seen as a very private thing in a public setting. The public setting was the announcement part, but the thing was a meditational time. I found as a married young adult that sexual thoughts kept coming into my mind during that time, because it's where beautiful music was being played, by that time pipe organ by very fine musician, always tastefully done and my mind would- like my mind does- just goes and I'd have these sexual thoughts. By that time, I mean I understood that sex was a gift of God and so I realized because I might want to pray about something else at that time so, I made up a short prayer that I thanked God for sex and my sex. I had made that kind of accommodation or peace years before; before I really started to think about myself as a gay man or thinking that I would ever live in that way whatever that would be.

When I saw that decoration behind the bar I knew I was in the right place, and met John, and I knew like this was the beginning of a new life. It wasn't the end of the other except in a kind of practical way it wasn't an emotional end of it, but it was certainly a great emotion changing to that episode or most protracted area of my own life. That enough of that? So, you want to ask another?

[L] Now, how would you say you've engaged with the LGBT community as an adult?

[PH][1:08:34] When we lived in Montrose, Colorado for the year and a half, taking care of my in-law's I would occasionally come to Denver to meet my old seminary buddy, the one who had talked about being in a gay bar as a spiritual experience. I would come and stay with him and he had been in our home in Albuquerque, and we had visited him when he lived in different places in Colorado, so he was living here and I would come over and stay a few days and then go back. During that time, I went to the public library and the art museum, two of my favorite places and one day he was doing some volunteer work at Colorado Coalition...something like that, it was based here in Denver, they had an alternative

medication buying part of it...anyway, he used to stuff envelopes for them as volunteer work as a gay man. It was AIDs related, for people, a buyer's club...that organization was here for quite a few years. While I was there when he was- took me over there and we stuffed envelopes, someone came in with a massage table and I'd heard the hubbub, because they were going to come in, it was talked about because it was all a little place, like the front room of a house over on what I later found out was Corona. I was intrigued because here these massage therapists was coming in taking this big old, lumbering outfit up the stairs to go to a room to give massages. I found out they were free massages for people living with AIDs. I thought, that's really a wonderful thing, because I knew from Ted's experience, because I had visited him a number of times, and had meet people at his memorial service, I knew that he had a lot of pain that would be a wonderful service element for someone living with a disease that was not going to go away; that was going to kill them at that point, was probably going to kill them. I was deeply impressed.

When I came to Denver I wondered what I was going to do. I had broken a promise to myself that I would never leave a job without having another job in line, but I left my job. I was not interested in anything except to leave it and not angry, but I was just done and I was not going to go to any more meetings. I came out here, started looking for a job, looking in the paper every day, finding hardly anything that I could even claim to be prepared for, or things I could do but- cash register was so long gone, everybody's using a computer even to check out retail and I didn't want to deal with that. I didn't think I could stand that much. So, I just kept seeing the ads for massage therapy schools that were in the Denver papers and I thought that would be ok. I think I can work part time and make enough money to live very skinny and eke out a like bit of a living, so I wouldn't starve and I could actually have a place to live, and do my artwork and writing, and I would just be happy. Not that I wasn't, but you know, take care of my income needs. So, I went to school, a massage school... I went to three schools to interview them to find out what their program was like from my point of view, knowing myself as a learner. At the school I ended up choosing there was up on a bulletin board- the women giving the tour said, this has a lot of stuff for students to look at and people are selling things like tables, and all that kind of stuff, but there was an ad for Colorado Aids Project looking for people to give massages in their clinic...I'm going to do that it was one of the things to help me make my decision for that school, because it was in this neighborhood it was close to where Colorado Aids Project was located, close to where I wanted to live. So, I moved here and as soon as I finished Swedish massage training, which was a third of the program I went over to C.A.P. and talked with Angela and said ok I'm ready to go. We did whatever paperwork, I took Aids 101 course over there, I actually got credit for that in my massage training, and every Tuesday afternoon I gave three massages, and I did that for three years there. Usually students last for about six months until their out of school and then they quit, because at that school we had to get a lot of hours of practice. I kept on, I just loved it, and did that for three years there, and at that point I had my own practice underway and I still wanted to do the HIV massages I had learned so much from it, I had met so many interesting people. I said to Angela, send me people I'll do it on the same bases I'm working here and just feel free to refer people to me and I'll take care them. At that point I was giving them a free massage over there at Colorado Aids Project and I would give them what was then a half price massage in addition to that. They get their free one then they could come to my studio and get a half price one which would be less than most of them were spending in the bar on a single Saturday or Friday night, or some of them every night of the week. I realized I was watching this whole stuff because I was learning about gay life in the city during this time. Some of those people I was still giving massages to when I closed my practice last December, and they were wonderful people who taught me so much about

myself and about people living with aids. Some of them were gay and some were not. Some were men, some were women. I just learned so much about life from doing that and I had the record of volunteer massage and I had people when they ran out of money because many of these people were on disability or others weren't and they didn't have aids but they ran out of money because they lost their jobs and that kind of stuff. I gave a lot of free massages to a lot of people. It just seemed perfect to me.

So, that was one of my things and then it wasn't too long before I discovered the Terry Mangan library at the GLBT center of Colorado which at that point was on Broadway, down closer to the baker area. I was absolutely thrilled, because I had brought a lot of gay books with me, but I really had no place to keep them. I thought I'll just donate them here and then I'll have access to them if I need any research, because was writing by that time and I didn't want to not have those books. I gave a lot of books to the library and did a little volunteer work for our librarian and I loved this group because it supported- the center because it supported GLB's and T's. I loved the diversity of that, its outreach to many different kinds of people and its bringing such people together also. I liked that there were health clinics through this place, there were a lot of inoculations given, lots of HIV tests done from here. Then a few years ago, a straight friend of mine called that she had been looking online, she said, Phillip they've got a program for old gays and lesbians, she said they have art and storytelling and I think you should check it out. I came down here to the storytelling and brought some of my stories to see what it would be like to tell them to GLBT audience. I loved the experience, although it was all gay men at that point. I ended up being the leader of that group, and still enjoying it... Those are my things, early on I had told about supporting GLAD through our denomination, anyway, that's it.

[L] Ok Phil, can you tell us over time what changes you have seen and what challenges do you see remaining?

[PH][1:18:02] Ok, lot of changes in myself as I've kind of indicated. I do remember when I was out in Montrose that year and a half when I would go into town, they had this little windmill kind of things that were being made out of cloth, weather resistant cloth and there were little twirly things and things that went around the spirals and I saw out in front of a store one of those in a rainbow colors and it just raised this question because we had given one of those to my mother-in-law and my wife said she has no idea, that that was gay colors. It had become popular and here this thing was twirling around and every time was in downtown Montrose I went in that store because it was a store I bought things at. Of course, I was always observing behavior to see if there was any hint inside the store that there was something gay there. I never, I wasn't curious for myself but I was curious as a social phenomenon and I never did observe anything, after all this is Montrose. The other night I meet a second younger man from Montrose who is living in Denver, in the years I've been here, so yes of course there's gay life in Montrose, but fewer symbols of it although I bet there's more things like that now, then when I was first going out there in the late 60's. I came here when about the same time that tri-therapy had been developed for people living with HIV/AIDS and I saw lots of change, although when I first came here even in 1999 when I first started giving massages many people were still dying from their HIV related diseases and then I saw over the fifteen years I gave massages to many people living with HIV I saw this like, great host of therapy's, different kinds of medicines being tried on my clients, with varying effects. That was changing fast, and that's not an overall GLBT thing but it was one of the very important things giving the volunteer work I was doing, that changed the world for many people. I was acutely aware of that because I had lost Ted to that terrible diseases and he was a long-time survivor, if he had just been a little more healthy, couple more years he would have been probably still going today.

Of course, those first thoughts I had when I was in seminary about ministers being ordained and that I had met one of those who was openly gay, ordained in New York City, and in the New York region of our church, and that was the ordination then that started moving more and more of the regions to make the declaration that they would not ordain openly gay people. He got in, when I decided to leave church work I thought to call him, because I wanted to find out what he thought. I got hold of his phone number, or the church he worked in in New York. I had met him before and I reminded him who I was; I said, I want to tell you something and I want you to think about it for a week and then I'll call you back, make sure it didn't cost him anything because I figured, he was an associate minister type and he wasn't making enough money to have to pay for that. I said, I will call you back in a week and I want you to be very candid in your answer, and so I told him about my situation, I was separated from my wife, I was a gay guy and I really had decided that what I needed to do was to leave the church... I thought because I was married; because I was involved in marriages of other people; and because of my age, because at that point I was almost 51 I said it occurred to me that I would be happy to stay around in the denomination doing some kind of work if it would actually be helpful to the cause of people really being more open to gays in their churches and in the denomination and in leadership in the denomination. I told him my reasoning about why I thought that would not be good and I said, don't answer me now, just tell me when I can call you back and so the next week I called him and he said Phillip I'm really surprised but I do agree with you, and it's because of my longstanding- being a minister in churches as a closeted gay man, and I just could see that that was going to help the cause. I was too old I was longtime, although I was known as very liberal I was opening and accepting of other people no matter where they came from or no matter how they felt about me, it was just that way, but he said, well let me ask you did you ever molest an underage person. I said oh no I've never done anything like that. I told him exactly what my sexual experience was with some ministers. He said, it just makes sense to me what you're saying, and he said it really surprised me he just thought you recruit anybody and he realized from my point of view, and my age, that I might actually become somehow detrimental to the situation. So, I was relieved to have someone agree with me.

[1:24:55] I've watched that continue now where many churches go online they've got wedding and marriage ceremonies for other kind of GLBT folks. They've had those long before anybody thought to, or they were thinking about it but actually made these marriages available to people. That of course is a great thing, I don't know where that lies in disciples or other congregations, whether it sits really crooked, like something up their craw but I imagine all kinds of things, depending on what part of the country you're in whether you're in an urban area or out in the sticks. I don't say any of that disrespectfully but it's just something that has changed as we all know. Those are the big issues of recent times that are still to be resolved, but my gosh, I can't even imagine the future. A friend of mine said, I can't believe I'm not so radical anymore and we've surely got things we've got to get to and I agree with him. I'm a little unsure of what they are in terms of being overtly polling and drawing attention, but certainly know what has to happen among my gay friends in terms of their- gay male friends- their attitudes towards women, their attitudes toward themselves.

I was so shocked when I went to the MCC church when I first came to Denver, it was very healing for me to go there and it was also was the place where I discovered within myself homophobia related to gay clergy, one of whom I had been. I realized the homophobia I had was stuck right there in the middle of my career and it was a shock to me to realize so clearly how I had so deeply incorporated that prejudice. Fortunately, I had read enough about homophobia and every other kind of social stigma that we carry

deep within ourselves, racism and that stuff and I had not disagreed with any of that, but I didn't see within myself the homophobia against gay clergy until I had left it. There it was, darkly looking me in the face. That was another place where I had had a spiritual experience, it wasn't the one I was wanting or imaging. Then I became very realistic, I understood I could no longer suffer the Trinitarian language of the MCC's then I could among the disciples who still messed with that stuff. That's way too many stories.

[L][1:28:20] No, I think it's great, and I want to thank you very much for the time to do this.

[PH] It was fun.