

LAFAYETTE COLLEGE
LGBTQ ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview of
Ann Carter
Conducted by
Mary Armstrong
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Special Collections & College Archives

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Carter

MARY ARMSTRONG: All right, so we should be rolling. This is an oral history interview for the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Queer Lives at Lafayette College Queer Archives Oral History Project. My name is Mary Armstrong; I'm professor of Women's and Gender Studies and English at Lafayette College and also chair of the Women's and Gender Studies program. I have with me today Ann Carter, who has a long and storied and wonderful history as a staff member at Lafayette College. And Ann, we will start off by thanking you very much for your time and your generosity in participating and talking to us today. The Oral History Project is dedicated to capturing and preserving the history of LGBT faculty, staff, and alums from Lafayette College. So every interview starts the same way: we'll ask you to state your name and confirm that your participation is voluntary and that you've given your informed consent.

ANN CARTER: OK. My name is Ann Carter, [01:00] and I'm thrilled to participate, and you certainly have my informed consent.

MA: And voluntary.

AC: And voluntary, absolutely.

MA: Excellent, marvelous. Thank you. So the reminders are: you can decline, of course, to answer any question you don't wish to address; you can just say "pass" and we won't. We'd love it if you would elaborate on things, any questions or any comments or things you think, Oh, I wish she'd ask me this, don't wait for me, by any means, (laughter) just feel free to contribute additional thoughts. And I'll add that if you have the moment I always have, which is I go home and think, Oh, I should have mentioned -- I can't believe I didn't -- you are more than welcome to write up any additional thoughts or stories or things that you think about that you'd like to add to your interview and send it in to us in writing, and we will add it to the transcript.

AC: Perfect, will do. Thank you.

MA: So there's no danger of forgetting (laughter) and not having a second chance. There's lots of chances. So we'll start off with personal information and [02:00] then ask more general questions about climate at the college over time. So if you could -- and this I think might be a complex answer to you -- describe your relationship to the Lafayette community. As a staff member, how do you define yourself as a member of the community?

AC: An old-timer, basically, because I've been here since 1981, a year shorter than Lynn's tenure here, but I arrived in '81 and was hired as an administrative assistant, a new position that had been created in the development office. And they wanted a writer and editor for some of their campaign publications and to handle some of their donor relations. And so it was not an administrative position. After a few years, I was promoted to the administration as assistant director of development, and then was promoted to director of development communications. So over the 34 years I was here, I basically had [03:00] the same job, just with more of the other duties as assigned kind of thing. And I worked during that time with five presidents.

MA: Wow. And your work with the president was as -- in what position?

AC: Director of development communications. So I handled correspondence, things like that. Some proposal writing, occasionally work on plans, you know, institutional documents, that sort of thing. So it really was other duties as assigned, but that's what made the job so much fun. So it was not the same job over the whole 34 years.

MA: Oh, OK, wow, amazing. So it was one job that was actually many different jobs under many different administrations.

AC: That's right.

MA: So you've got the scoop (laughter) from the top.

AC: Well --

MA: That's excellent. So you have the same -- you have 1981 to 2014...? Or 2015?

AC: Well, actually, '15 [04:00] is when I retired, and then I stayed on part-time for an additional year until my replacement came on board.

MA: Got you. OK. So that's the time period. How do you identify as a member of the LGBT community?

AC: Very tentatively here at first, because there really wasn't one. In fact --

MA: I meant more in the terms of the question, like, what do you call yourself? Gay, lesbian, bi, like...?

AC: Oh, I see. I like the word "gay" because it sounds so happy, (laughter) I like the word "queer" because it sounds different, and obviously "lesbian." I'm sorry I misunderstood.

MA: Not at all; I wasn't clear. Yeah, I'll word it better next time, that's for sure. So when you professionally describe yourself in your relationship to the college, it's primarily as a staff member? [05:00] How would you desc--?

AC: I would probably say a member of the administrative staff. Administrative staff. Just because that -- it's a 12-

month, for example, position, you know, not like someone who just works for a department during the academic year.

MA: Absolutely, and it's a kind of staff, professional staff work that's of a type, so that's exactly the thing we want on record. Anything to add about sort of who you are in the very descriptive sense?

AC: Not really. I regard my academic background as kind of a hobby. I loved it. I loved going on the academic track. I did teach in some capacity for about 11 years, but I think I found my true place in the world when I became an administrator.

MA: Oh, that's great.

AC: I really like working behind the scenes and [06:00] kind of helping other people and being part of the big picture but not being responsible for it. (laughs)

MA: Nice, that's great. And your academic background is...?

AC: A PhD in English.

MA: Excellent. So you know the profession from a couple of sides.

AC: Right, right.

MA: Wonderful. So great. These are some questions about being sort of queer on campus, and you can take them in any direction. And you also have, in a way, you have more than three decades at the college, so when you describe a

moment, it would be helpful, I think, for people who are using these histories to know sort of do you mean the '80s or the '90s or the -- you know what I mean? (laughter) Because I'm guessing it'll have changed very much.

(laughs)

AC: Yes, it has changed drastically.

MA: It has changed drastically, right? So when you talk about the campus climate, if you can situate us as best you can.

AC: I'll try.

MA: You don't have to name a year, but, you know, just a general time. [07:00] The general situation on campus for people in your community and generally who identified as LGBTQ, so over this period as you go, tell us, you know, was it safe, were people out, sort of when did that change, that sort of thing.

AC: OK. When I first came here in 1981, Lynn had already been here a year, so I to my great good fortune inherited a kind of network of friends through her, many of whom were straight, some of whom were not, all of whom were incredibly welcoming to me, and that was very important, because in Markle for probably several decades, I didn't encounter another person I would have identified as anywhere on the LGBTQ spectrum. So the fact that I came into a situation -- we had been in a relationship for

several years in [08:00] Cleveland, she got the job here, I came later to the Lehigh Valley without a job, and we were pretty astonished that I ended up working on the other side of the quad from her.

MA: Wow, was that a coincidence?

AC: Coincidence, yes. (laughs) And in fact, she actually had a conversation with Ellis Finger, who worked in the development office at that point. He knew about a new position they were thinking of advertising for a writer. He sort of figured from my background I would be a good candidate. So without probably knowing about our relationship, he opened the door for me. We actually had some friends in common, as it turned out, had some mutual acquaintances, so he kind of opened the door. They were I think a little reluctant to hire someone with a PhD in an entry-level writing position, but I think, you know, I love to write, so it worked out very well. I'm very grateful to him. So that was how I [09:00] wound up in Markle.

MA: OK, so that's how you started. Wow, and it was a complete coincidence. So your partner, Lynn Van Dyke, in the English department. So you entered sort of perceived as a single individual.

AC: That's pretty much the case, except for this very small circle of friends, mutual friends, that I inherited through

Lynn. And that, I will be very honest, was painful and awkward in the beginning. I received absolutely wonderful support individually from people like President Ellis and my colleagues in the development office, but just not being able to acknowledge, you know, being in a relationship with someone else on campus. You know, Lynn, for example, was once -- she gave a lecture. It was the long-ago version of what I think they now call ARC [Academic Research Committee], where you got a little grant and you did your work and then you reported back. Well, it was something of a deal then, [10:00] and people who were in married relationships, their spouses were invited to the presentation, but... It was painful for both of us, things like that. She would go to events with trustees; because of my level of employment, I would not be included. So we had no identity as a couple on campus. And that didn't last very long. I was promoted fairly quickly into the administration; then I started getting invitations to the same events she was being invited to. We would simply go together. And that turned out to be a huge step in our favor, because people would see us together over time.

MA: Oh, sort of --

AC: So I think we began to have kind of a public face even though we weren't open about it. And things really turned

around then. And that was much better. [11:00] And it wasn't just concerts in the Williams Center or public lectures, but occasional dinners on campus to which faculty and administrators would be invited.

MA: Oh, wow. So the fact that you were here both as employees --

AC: Right.

MA: -- and at a certain level, it enabled you to be a couple, not the fact that you were a couple.

AC: Exactly, exactly.

MA: Wow, that's amazing.

AC: (laughs) It was just -- and, you know, I started to feel more comfortable. Neither of us had job security at the beginning. My position was temporary, funded with a special budget that supported the campaign, and the more successful we were, the less (laughter) of a future I had. The campaign ends and my budget line ends. But they moved me over to the E&G [Education and General] budget, so that gave me a bit of security, and then of course Lynn was on the tenure track, and once she got tenure, then we really felt [12:00] much more stable and comfortable as members of the community.

MA: Uh-huh, interesting. But it sounds like there was a period where you were both here but -- that must have been really

difficult, right? Because you were sort of not acknowledging each other in this shared space.

AC: Exactly. I mean, I was thinking on a walk the other day, I didn't put her down as my beneficiary. Now, to be honest, I had no assets, (laughter) so it was something of -- you know, it didn't really matter. But once she got tenure and we bought a house, then I went to HR and I said, "I want to change my beneficiary form," because at that point, even though we had no legal standing as a couple, if anything happened to me, I wanted to be absolutely certain that the house and Lynn were protected to any extent that I could provide. And I remember [13:00] that was sort of terrifying, to go change those forms, even though I took them home and filled them out and put them in a manila envelope and returned them through campus mail, it was still a public statement. Prior to that, she had only been listed on my record as a housemate. You know, what person to contact in an emergency locally. So that was a big moment.

MA: Wow, yeah. And that felt risky.

AC: I did feel risky. It did.

MA: And like what year was that?

AC: Oh gosh --

MA: It would have been early.

AC: -- when Lynn got tenure, so it would have been in the late '80s.

MA: OK, wow. So that was risky to sort of declare yourself in that kind of relationship.

AC: Right, right. Even though it was just -- probably no one -- I mean, I realize now and I laugh -- no one looked at that piece of paper. I could have put down Santa Claus. (laughter) But to me, it was a step.

MA: Yep. It didn't feel so safe to do that, somehow.

AC: Right, exactly. It didn't. It didn't.

MA: Wow, that's a powerful story. And [14:00] it's something to deny a person exists, right? It's something to not come out. And then you --

AC: Right, right. And it was difficult. Of course, increasingly we were making more friends, but that was I think more on Lynn's side of the equation than mine, even though I was included.

MA: Because she was in a department?

AC: Right, you know, and the academic side of things, I think, was much more liberal --

MA: Social.

AC: Yes, and social. She was actually in computer science for part of that time, but they were, you know, kinky enough, they were just -- (laughter) I don't mean that unkindly,

but they were unusual and they were just very welcoming to everyone. I felt terrific whenever I would visit her in computer science.

MA: Really nice.

AC: Which was not often. We did not visit each other's offices very much. Just to try to protect those boundaries.

MA: Right, right. It sounds [15:00] very constrained.

AC: And that was pretty much the first decade. I think when we moved into the 1990s, things began to feel a little more relaxed.

MA: Why was that, do you think?

AC: The AIDS Memorial Quilt. A portion of the quilt came to Lafayette and was displayed, what, in the spring of '92 down in the Kirby Field House.

MA: Tell me about that, yeah.

AC: It was not the entire quilt, of course, but it was a large portion of it. I think students were heavily involved in getting it here -- I don't know who they were; I didn't know them at the time. But I decided this was an opportunity for me to kind of get involved, and one of my colleagues in fundraising [name redacted] was in charge of a committee for publicity and fundraising, and she asked if I would serve on that committee with her for the quilt,

[16:00] and I said yes. So that was another step toward being a little more open about things.

MA: Right, for you to be on that committee.

AC: To be on the committee and be on lists for meetings and so forth.

MA: Right. And when that came, it sounds like it was a big impact moment.

AC: Oh, it was enormous for this campus. Hard to describe. I didn't expect it to have that impact. Lynn and I had already seen the quilt in Washington on the Mall, all spread out, and so we knew what it was like. And this was a much smaller segment, but honestly, I think it had a greater impact. I remember one of my jobs, because I was on the organizing committee, was to be a hostess at the field house for an hour at a time during one or two periods.

MA: Like when people come in kind of thing?

AC: When they come in. And just kind of explain that, you know, people are asked to be respectful in this space. Just that [17:00] "I'm available to answer any questions," "So glad you're here," that kind of thing. I mean, we weren't tour guides in any sense, just basically greeters. And I remember, one of my sensations was that people would come in groups, sort of, you know, laughing. Maybe they

were assigned to go. You know, guys from a fraternity, a class, a sports team would come, and you could see them arriving, "Oh, let's get this over with." They would walk in and fairly quickly separate and move in their own -- people I think wanted to experience that quilt privately. And so that's my memory, is of people spaced around the field house; it wasn't like a group of five people moving from panel to panel. But it became a very introspective, private time -- which is how it had been for me[18:00] -- and there were a couple of panels, I think, that had connection to Lafayette people. One of my colleagues in the development office [name redacted] had a brother who was gay and had died of AIDS-related complications, and there was a panel that the family had created for him. And so some of my colleagues came to honor [name redacted] and her family and to see it. People were having -- it was moving. I mean, people were in tears. And by the time of the closing ceremony, there was a fairly large crowd. During all of this, the names were being read by volunteers. I didn't participate in that, but I remember Riley Temple made some just incredibly moving remarks. He'd been very active in the Whitman-Walker Clinic in Washington, DC, [19:00] which provided medical and other support services. And he spoke very movingly. So there

were some Lafayette connections that were sort of threaded through the quilt display. And by the end, we just stood around the perimeter of the room, holding hands. And I'm sure the person to my right and the person to my left, I'm sure they were students. But didn't know their names, they didn't know me, but we were just all having this very emotional response.

MA: Wow. Was there a shift in climate after that? Do you think there was...?

AC: Slowly, but I think enough people were touched that people felt more open talking about what it meant to be gay, you know, at Lafayette. I think it almost -- it didn't give people a vocabulary, but it gave them a focus for conversation that they could then take in whatever direction they wanted [20:00] to. And I wish I could remember -- I'm not good at fitting things together along a timeline very accurately, but at roughly the same time -- the quilt was here when President Rotberg was president, and sort of I think toward the end of his term, and somewhere in the transitional period between President Rotberg and the arrival of President Rothkopf, who was here first on an interim basis, the term "sexual orientation" was introduced into the nondiscrimination clause in the college catalog.

MA: Oh, OK. There's a moment, yeah.

AC: That was huge. No big deal was made about it at all. I just happened to use the catalog a lot and saw this. So it was somewhere in the '92, '93, '94, somewhere in that period. That made me feel better. You know, [21:00] suddenly I had a little umbrella over my head, (laughter) so Chicken Little was not going to have quite the same effect.

MA: Umbrellas are important when it's raining!

AC: Yes, indeed. You know what I'm saying.

MA: Absolutely.

AC: So I think that opened the door. Then this is a date I really wish I could give you and I can't. I could if I could just sit down and sort through the online issues of the Lafayette alumni magazine, but I didn't have the time to do that. There was an editor of the Lafayette -- she was actually director of alumni affairs -- named Debra Lamb, who edited the alumni publications also, and she got an article about Riley Temple's work for Whitman-Walker Clinic published in the Alumni News. That was wonderful. And she also, I believe, tried to start an organization for gay alums. [22:00] Just put out a feeler in the alumni news, and did get some response to that. I don't think anything really came of it, but at least that was, I think,

an effort. It was in the Alumni News, I'm sure. Just a kind of expression of, you know, let's see if there's any interest out there in forming a group of this kind.

MA: In the mid-'90s, you think, or early-mid?

AC: Early-mid '90s, somewhere in that same period. And as I say, nothing came of it, but once again, it was a form of outreach --

MA: Oh, visibility, yeah.

AC: -- that I think was very significant. You know, and certainly under President Rothkopf, I felt very comfortable. He was very welcoming from the start -- he and Barbara both, to both of us. We were always treated as a couple during his presidency.

MA: Wow, that's wonderful.

AC: Yeah. And that was my big exhale.

MA: Right. That felt welcome.

AC: That really did. That really did.

MA: Yeah, yeah, and you didn't have to hide around then.

AC: Exactly.

MA: So he was president in the...?

AC: Nineteen ninety-three he came as interim president, and then he stayed until his fiftieth reunion in 2005.

MA: Wow, thanks for those dates.

AC: Bless his heart. (laughter)

MA: That's great, great. Wow. So there was a period where that shifted for you, and that sort of parallels with the campus shift, it sounds like, as well.

AC: Right, right. And all along -- I mean, I don't want to gloss over things that were really important. I think there were some people -- Chaplain Gary Miller was here, and I think he and probably some deans whose names I wouldn't remember [24:00] were very instrumental in helping students who were questioning or actually in crisis.

MA: Was there health care, like, well being for -- when did that sort of start for the queer community here? Do you have any sense?

AC: I really have no sense. Really no sense at all. I suspect it started through one-to-one contacts who, you know, the people then were given whatever psychological or medical help was appropriate. But I certainly don't remember any announcement that there will be a counselor in the health center on Thursday mornings or anything like that.

MA: Yeah, it's very emergent, slowly, evolution kind of model.

AC: Right. I have to hope and pray and believe that it was there, you know, that people who needed that kind of support figured out where to go and get it. Once again, in Markle, that was just not my world.

MA: Right, right. Oh, absolutely. Did you have the sense there were, like, pockets [25:00] of gay community, like people created social circles, or -- and then that became more public? Or how did that sort of work socially?

AC: I think they must have existed, you know, networks of some sort. I never was part of them. I had very -- to my disappointment, I didn't have as much direct contact with students. Through Lynn I got to meet some wonderful students, some of whom have remained very close to her. But it was just -- in the development office --

MA: It's a different place.

AC: -- you're not asking students for money, so you don't get to know them in the same way that you become acquainted with others. But I have to believe, in part because of certain events that I would attend with Lynn, cultural events, [26:00] at which there, for example, might be a gay performer, and you could just look around and tell that there were people in the audience or at a brown bag before the performance. For example, Bill T. Jones, the dancer, was here -- gosh, I don't remember when this was. Ellis Finger was instrumental in getting him here. But his partner, Arnie Zane, had recently died. And I think Arnie Zane's parents lived in Easton, at least at that point, and Bill T. Jones came and did a dance performance, but he also

had a brown bag at which he talked about his relationship with Arnie Zane professionally as dancers, and then as life partners. And I remember sitting in the room, and he was talking about bodies merging, both on the dance floor and in their private lives. And there were students in the room who were just clearly [27:00] absorbed in this program. And it was a dialogue; you could ask questions.

MA: Oh, wow. That's powerful.

AC: And they clearly knew each other. I didn't know them, but I got the sense that their gaydars or whatever were attuned that this was the kind of program to go to. And there were several others like that. The most memorable, actually -- and gosh, I wish I could remember the date for this -- a slam poet named Alix Olson, who's actually the daughter of a Moravian College professor, and an out lesbian, she gave a slam poetry performance in Farinon, and the snack bar was packed. She was brilliant. And by the end we were shouting and clapping and stomping. A guy the other students call the diva [28:00] was voguing. (laughter) I mean, it was one of the most empowering experiences. But it was like you went into this little capsule and this kind of thing happened. And I just remember walking out onto the quad when it was over, thinking, I love this place. (laughs) You know, a place that could make this happen.

But they were to me explosive, very powerful, and empowering moments, but rather self-contained.

MA: Oh, OK, gotcha. Right. So they were moments, but they weren't the culture.

AC: Right, right, exactly. But the right people seemed to know how to get there. So in response to your question about were there connections, I think there definitely were.

MA: Yeah, OK, and somehow faculty and staff and students show up at the right moment because there's, like, this subterranean...

AC: That's right, there's a vibe or -- some just sort of you're -- you just get the sense, this is a place [29:00] I ought to be.

MA: Gotcha. Absolutely. So how did people talk about the LGBT community over time? It was just silent at the beginning and then it changed, or was it a cruel climate, or was it just a quiet one, or...?

AC: A quiet one, I would say now. See, my experience in Markle was not at all like Lynn's in Pardee. There was a lot of dialogue in Pardee; it was -- really, no one ever said, "Oh, what did you do at lunch today? Oh, you went to that brown bag." There was really never any opportunity. I would not invite people to go with me. It was just my life. It was important to me, but it wasn't part of the

climate in Markle. I think it was beginning to spread on campus more generally.

MA: Yeah, OK. And administrative work is more of a bubble, then.

AC: That's right. And even within Markle, [30:00] the offices were so discrete in Markle. It's not like in Pardee, a bunch of humanists have things in common, but quite frankly, I adored the Controller, but we could not talk about (laughs) his business or my business because they were just completely different languages. So we were friendly, but it wasn't the same sort of spirit of community. So it wasn't a negative -- I didn't have terrible feelings every time I walked into the building by any means -- but it just wasn't as open and inclusive.

MA: Gotcha, right. So it was fine if you were there, there was nothing hostile --

AC: No, no --

MA: -- but it was just --

AC: -- no, never hostile --

MA: -- but it was just more like you do your thing and so...

AC: Right, right.

MA: Gotcha, OK. So it's more visibility/invisibility than anything else.

AC: Right. And fortunately it's a small enough campus that it was easy enough [31:00] for me to come over here to the library for a lecture, you know, just go hang out in Pardee, or whatever. So.

MA: So we have been especially interested in capturing -- it's funny, it's -- of course students are our primary interest, but faculty and staff work here, and sometimes faculty convince themselves that they live here, but they actually (laughter) --

AC: Actually, I think it's closer to the truth than you may realize.

MA: They practically do. Oh, I sometimes call office "home," which is disturbing but probably not unusual. But faculty and staff are employees, and sometimes we forget that LGBT climate is also about working there. And so over, you know, we got three decades plus thinking about what was it like to work here, you've described the climate, but how did it change? Policies, benefits... You've named a [32:00] couple of things -- the inclusion of sexual orientation within the diversity statement -- but has it gotten better to be a staff member, a professional staff member person here --

AC: Definitely.

MA: -- technically?

AC: The domestic partner thing. Now, part of it was that we did not drive change. We had no -- at least I never felt like, within the administration, there was a clear channel to drive change, whereas I was so blown away by some of the things that Lynn and Susan Basow and other folks like that were able to accomplish -- you know, childcare. That was a need that people had, people had to address. That didn't originate in Markle; it was I think a lot of faculty who had channels to communicate all the way up to the board. The hierarchy in Markle was such that you really could not [33:00] influence policy in any boots on the ground kind of way. You know, you could express your opinion, but there was no official channel to get that. So something like the domestic partner benefit was something that I think was appreciated by people in the administration even more because it was not something we could have generated on our own. We really felt like it was a benefit. And Lynn and I did register, even though we had separate benefits as individual Lafayette employees, we just felt it was important to go on record as each other's beneficiary, you know, as each other's partner. And we were very, very grateful. In fact, I remember thanking Leslie Muhlfelder very much for that. We both did.

MA: Yeah, and was that her decision from HR?

AC: No, no, but [34:00] that --

MA: But that she's enabling -- yeah, yeah.

AC: -- the form was -- right, exactly. Just saying, you know, we were just -- that was sort of the best place to say, "We're just very grateful. This will not change our status at all in terms of how we're treated by the college, but it's just wonderful to be able to sort of say this is what's happening."

MA: Yeah. And it lets you be formally out --

AC: That's right, that's right.

MA: -- as opposed to pretending you don't know each other at events or whatever.

AC: Right, exactly.

MA: Wow, that's very, very powerful.

AC: Because, you know, there's no tenure protection for someone in the administration. There's no equivalent. There's no lifetime employment guarantee. So that was wonderful, because that was a way of expressing for both of us on an equal basis who and what we were.

MA: Yeah, yeah, a formal declaration, which was --

AC: That's right.

MA: That changes climate, of course, [35:00] when people can --

AC: Absolutely.

MA: -- do that. Yeah, very powerful. It sounds like -- and just to make sure I understand -- it sounds like there was less, in your experience -- administrative staff have less power to effect change from the Markle end, but they are affected by those changes.

AC: That's right, that's right. And maybe that's changed, because I know there's an administrative council now.

MA: OK. I didn't know that. I didn't know about that.

AC: That was starting to be formed, but I think its members are elected now rather than appointed, so I think there's increasingly a voice for the administration. But something you just said a minute ago sort of triggered in my mind that you were interested in primarily students, and I guess alums, but also staff --

MA: Very much so, yeah.

AC: Just wanted to mention [36:00] one slightly strange thing. I was so welcomed by Arthur and Barbara Rothkopf, and Lynn and I as a couple, that it was a little bit of a wrench when he left and I realized, oh, I have to start over. You know, I'm not sure what Dan Weiss knows about Lynn and me. And because Lynn at that point had worked her way up through the ranks to being department head and on PTR and chair of PTR and serving on board committees --

MA: That's a lot of power for a faculty member.

AC: -- I thought, I'd better let the president know of my relationship to her just so -- because once in a while, I mean, very rarely, did I have anything to do with a document that would have had any implications for Lynn's work or anything, but [37:00] once in a while, you know, you're writing a proposal, you're trying to help with the language for some kind of document, official document, a strategic plan or something like that, and you're doing your little piece of it, and you just think, You know, if we were married, Dan would have this information about me, and it's just not fair for him not to know. And so both with him and then with President Byerly, and the conversations were great. No problem whatsoever. But I did still feel the need to initiate those conversations. I mean, they were terrific, but just the fact that I had that insecurity about my relationship was significant.

MA: Right, right, got you. So it's not the outcome you're talking about -- the outcome is beside the point because it's all positive, but it's actually the --

AC: The need to feel, because we were not acknowledged as a couple [38:00] openly, broadly on campus, unlike a faculty member with a spouse coming on the campus, there are all sorts of events for them as a couple, and because Lynn and I never actually were included in that way, even though

people knew us separately they might not connect us as a couple. And I just had to connect those dots to be completely certain, because once in a while there'd be little political things that would bubble up, and I just wanted to be open about this.

MA: Right, right. And you would have knowledge. You would have knowledge from your partner. I mean you would --

AC: Exactly. And we had to work that out. I mean, there were certain things that stayed in Markle, inside my head, and I'm sure Lynn had things on the faculty side that we did not talk about. So we kind of understood those barriers.

[39:00]

MA: Absolutely, yeah. It's not you, it's the institution that you're trying to --

AC: Exactly, exactly. And these were just things that, you know, I worked in a confidential setting of one sort and Lynn worked in a confidential setting of another sort. I didn't know what happened on PTR, and that kind of thing.

MA: Right, right, right. Couples can handle that professionally, but the question is you want to -- you have to do the work of letting the instit-- rather than the institution knowing.

AC: Exactly.

MA: It's like it's stressful, and it could be awkward because you can't presume it'll be a positive outcome. What if it was negative? What if it affected your job?

AC: Right, right. And quite honestly, Lynn and I -- (laughs) you will crack up when you hear this, but Lynn chaired my dissertation defense because we couldn't tell anyone about our relationship.

MA: Oh wow, that's amazing.

AC: And my dissertation director had a Guggenheim and was in London. Lynn was the director of the graduate program; by default, she had to --

MA: It was that or come out, which was [40:00] not an option, presumably.

AC: Which was, believe it, not an option. And fortunately, she did not have a voice in the defense -- she was not on my committee -- but she had to chair the actual physical defense as the stand-in for my dissertation advisor. So we knew before we even came to Lafayette that we were going to have to negotiate situations that were awkward.

MA: Right. You've seen that sort of problem before in some way, and the burden is on the employee to do that.

AC: Right, right. And a dissertation defense, the comments are usually submitted in writing in advance, so there were -- we were not stepping into a minefield in any sense. But I

just use that as an example of one reason I was not paranoid but just sensitive to --

MA: It was a harbinger of things that could come.

AC: (laughs) That could come. Little did we know.

MA: (laughs) That you'd end up at the same place. [41:00] So that was a funny double-edged sword for you guys.

AC: Oh, it really was. And, you know, it was sort of doubly ironic because Lynn is a Medievalist and I'm an Americanist, so our fields could not have been more diametrically (laughter) contrasting. So it was simply pro forma, the steps of the defense, someone had to preside, and that was the director of graduate studies.

MA: Oh, I beg your pardon. I didn't mean the defense was a double-edged sword. I'm sure that was pro forma. But I meant being employed at the college sort of, you know, being here, it was great to be in the same place, but wow. That must have been an incredible sort of conundrum, which is like, Great to see you, I can't talk to you.

AC: Yeah. (laughs) Well --

MA: I mean, great and also, like, the set of problems that you described.

AC: Right. And by the same token I think it was very good, because we could sort of posit things in a very abstract way. [42:00] Oh, you know, boy, it's really hard when you

have X problem, without mentioning exactly what X problem was. So we could in very general terms sort of help each other, but without going into specifics. Yeah, but it was, it was a tightrope for a while.

MA: Yeah, it sounds like it. It sounds like it, yeah. And then things just progressively got easier, it sounds like.

AC: Much easier, much easier.

MA: In terms of those moments, you've talked about the arts and theater, the AIDS quilt as a big moment. Other sort of on your radar screen as things progressed where you saw how the place was changing through these events?

AC: A lot of it was through sort of student services type things. QUEST and its precursor -- hugely important. Because so much of that was student-driven, and yet their programs [43:00] were open. So I would go to brown bags and listen to students talk and I'd think, Things are much, much, much better here. I didn't have to say a word, just listen to people talk. And then when Gene Kelly came on board, obviously when you came on board, all of a sudden I just felt this was a very, very good, supportive, positive place to be. And even when those students would talk about the problems they still had, I still felt, but you're talking openly about those problems, which would not have been the case when I got here. It was just wonderful.

MA: Wow, that's really great.

AC: I went to a fair number of those programs, just because they made me feel so good about Lafayette. And once in a while there'd be a potluck lunch or something like that, or, you know, a program [44:00] with an outside speaker, and I would just look around at the students and listen to their comments and think, You're much more at home here. It was a very good feeling.

MA: It seems like visibility has been the indicator where you couldn't see people.

AC: Exactly right. Exactly. Unless you were in, like, a brown bag where Bill T. Jones was talking about this, then you could see them, but then they would merge into the broader college community and I wouldn't see them again because I didn't remember what they looked like. But now, and the wonderful experience -- gosh, (inaudible) -- you were here, I'm sure -- on gay pride day or whatever, we all got together in our colored t-shirts --

MA: Oh, on the steps.

AC: -- and lined up out here. That was one of the best moments of my life. Just one of the -- I was green, (laughter) and I was so proud to be green. And it was [45:00] just one of the most wonderful -- I got there a little early, and people were running across the quad in their colored t-

shirts, eager to join the group. It was just -- I laughed, I cried. I mean, all the emotions. And I think a lot of people were feeling the same.

MA: Were really moved by that.

AC: Feeling the same things.

MA: OK, so this is a group of people wearing rainbow t-shirts, lined up like the rainbow flag, on the Skillman steps for Pride Day.

AC: Exactly.

MA: It must have been several hundred people, would you say?

AC: Oh, easily, easily. Yeah, yeah. And other people who were there to support us who hadn't -- they ran out of t-shirts.

MA: Oh! (laughter) Fantastic.

AC: I think we would have been on the roof of Skillman, but I think they ran out of t-shirts. And then that became sort of a centerfold in one of the issues of the magazine, and so it got a lot of publicity.

MA: That's marvelous. [46:00] That's a great moment.

AC: And lots of people -- gay, straight allies, everything. I mean, I walked over with people from the president's office.

MA: Awesome. Isn't that amazing?

AC: You know, so it was just people -- literally, people coming from Pardee, Engineering, Markle, Farinon, Hogg, just streaming across the quad to be part of it.

MA: Yeah, exciting. So this is a happy story, right, because in many ways you've described having to -- it was a risk to turn in the beneficiary form, to standing on the library steps, and it's really exciting, and a lot has changed, from policy to climate. And I wonder, has anything not changed? Do you feel that the college is stuck somewhere, or it has a ways to go, or...?

AC: I think a lot of the students would say it has a ways to go. I can't comment on that, because the change has been so dramatic, quote-unquote, in my Lafayette lifetime, [47:00] limited though it may be --

MA: But from your perspective it sounds like just --

AC: From my perspective, much, much more open. And in fact, if I had to bookend going over there and filling out the beneficiary form with Lynn getting, you know, named, it would be going over there with the statement that we were married. And, you know, just saying, "We would like to be recorded now as a legally married couple," and the response.

MA: Yeah, what was that like?

AC: Leslie Muhlfelder. Hugs, shouts. My boss, Kim Spang, in development, just warm, just so happy for us. And those are my bookends, really.

MA: Beautiful, wow.

AC: So it's hard for me not to [48:00] feel very good about it. I understand where the students are coming from. If I were a student, I would probably say, Well, you know, you still kind of have to make your way. Well, sure. But I think there are a lot more doors now to make your way through, and that's really, really good.

MA: That's beautifully said. That's really great.

AC: You know, and people like you have made a huge difference.

MA: Thank you.

AC: You know, the faculty. I mean, they had to take the lead. There was no way an administrator could take the lead. It had to come from faculty because you are held in the highest regard by students, you're mentors as well as teachers, role models. You know, I think you're the front line.

MA: That makes a lot of sense. Given that the nature of the college gives so much power to faculty in terms of making policy, I think that, you know, says a lot, how we sort of act with each other and what we decide to do as a [49:00]

group, it reflects back to how we treat students and what the college thinks they should do, so.

AC: And I have to say, I really felt like I had friends on the board of trustees also, by the time it was all over, people who knew Lynn and me as a couple. And that was quite a change. Quite a change.

MA: Yeah. You would characterize the board as also moving with the times?

AC: Definitely moving, right. Definitely, definitely. Riley Temple's appointment as a trustee was huge in that regard.

MA: And he was a trustee for a while, I believe --

AC: For a while, right.

MA: -- and then stepped off to emeritus status some years ago.

AC: Right, exactly. And he still has a voice. So I think the leadership of the college -- actually, I must say, I was supported by all five presidents in various ways.

MA: That's marvelous, wow.

AC: I never felt that a president was a roadblock to me in any sense, but it [50:00] -- I'm talking about my professional and personal development both. But I think it's very hard for an individual president to enact change, but I think in their own ways, they fostered it.

MA: Yeah. A staff member who had come in wearing your shoes but today would be --

AC: Yeah. Would have all sorts of forms to fill out (laughter) regardless of his or her status, to sort of explain to the community who you are. So.

MA: And they wouldn't be feeling like they took a risk doing it.

AC: No. I don't think so. I mean, it's hard for me to imagine any position at Lafayette now where you would -- in the administration -- where you would have the same fears that I had.

MA: That's great.

AC: Which is very good.

MA: That is wonderful.

AC: And I wish I could have had something to do with that change; I don't feel that I did. But I can celebrate it, and I'm grateful for this opportunity to do that.

MA: Oh. Oh, well, I'm sure you did, but that [51:00] -- we can --

AC: No, no. (laughter)

MA: You get to say. It's your oral history; you get to say. Absolutely. So we're going to ask this of folks; it's a hard question. If you rank the climate for staff, right, for folks, administrative staff who came in and had your job when you arrived and now on a scale of 1 to 10?

AC: One being low and 10 being whoop-de-doo?

MA: Yes, yes, excuse me, yes.

AC: It would have almost been a zero when I came here, to be honest. And now, I would certainly say somewhere in the 8 to 10 range, depending on the person. If the person is comfortable within himself or herself, a 10. And even if you're just an 8, you would find your way here, very comfortably, I think.

MA: Wow, that's a beautiful answer and a really positive one.

AC: Well, I do. I'm glad to have this opportunity, because I'm proud now, very proud to work here.

MA: That's great. And things do change, and, you know, history tells us that really positively, and that's a [52:00] wonderful thing. So as we wrap up, any other stories that you think about when you think about your and Lynn's time here and sort of how it was and how it is and...?

AC: I guess one of my takeaways -- and this is a little bit difficult to explain -- but that the more people saw of us as a couple, the more comfortable they seemed with us even individually. I mean, that was certainly true for my colleagues. I never publicly came out in the development office, but people just got used to seeing Lynn around or hearing me talk about her. So, you know, they would celebrate her successes: Oh, Lynn's book, or Lynn's lecture, or "You're going to a conference with Lynn; that's

so wonderful." And so just being affirmed by people who had just basically gotten to know us as people [53:00] -- not as a gay couple or anything, but just as people -- and being happy for us, I think that comfort level is a part of the story. And I don't really know how it happened, but I'm very --

MA: Maybe you did make a little change after all.

AC: Well, I think it's possible because people were receptive. "Hey, Ann, we're having a party; bring a friend." Well, when I bring Lynn three times, it's, "Oh, well yeah. A good friend." And so it was more organic for me. I guess that's the word.

MA: Right, I see that. Yeah, yeah, as opposed to a moment.

AC: That's right. There was no breakthrough, by any means.

MA: Yeah, it just developed.

AC: Right.

MA: Is it proof that people can learn?

AC: I think so. And the number of people who quietly said -- first of all, after Pennsylvania legalized gay marriage, and then after the Supreme Court did -- the people who just said, "Great day [54:00] for you, Ann," you know, "Great day. I know you're happy."

MA: Nice, nice.

AC: (laughs) And it was. It really was. So.

MA: Well, the community has formed around your presence.

AC: Well, I think the world is -- our world, at least, certainly this country has changed. It's an amazing thing to have lived through. We never would have expected it. Certainly the legal protections, so.

MA: Yes. That's wonderful.

AC: And people like you here to carry it forward.

MA: Well, I mean, if I can carry that forward, I'm honored to follow in your footsteps. This is Dr. Ann Carter, administrative staff member from 1981 to two thousand fif-- sixteen, 2016 --

AC: Fifteen with a coda.

MA: Fifteen with a coda. Can't have too many codas. We're going to go on record that she is wonderful in every way, [55:00] an asset to the community, (laughter) and kind and generous to take the time to share her thoughts and memories with this project today. Thank you, Ann, very much.

AC: Thank you.

END OF AUDIO FILE