

**LAFAYETTE COLLEGE**  
**LGBTQ ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interview of**  
**Frank Hermann '59**  
**Conducted by**  
**Mary Armstrong**  
**June 7, 2019**

Special Collections & College Archives

David Bishop Skillman Library

Lafayette College

2019

Hermann

FRANK HERMANN: You have two of them?

MARY ARMSTRONG: It looks like our recorders are running.

And this is Mary Armstrong and I'm here with Frank Hermann, class of 1959 in beautiful Pardee Hall on the Lafayette campus on June 7th, 2019. Frank has been generous enough to agree to do an interview for the Queer Archives Project at Lafayette College. We'll start, Frank, as we always do with every interview, to ask you to please confirm, to state your name and confirm that your participation is voluntary and that you've given your informed consent.

FH: Okay. My name is Frank Hermann and my participation in this interview is voluntary and I have given my informed consent to the use of this interview.

MA: It's like a test. We start off with a test to give you something hard and then see if you can say it back. Would it be okay if I took your photo after the interview to use with --

FH: Yes, certainly. [00:01:00]

MA: -- the project?

FH: If Tony's still here, if you want him in it...

MA: I would love to have Tony in the photo. Let's absolutely do a picture of him and the two of you together. And you

and Tony are married now?

FH: Yes, we're legally married.

MA: That's really, that's pretty marvelous. So I'll give you some context for our interview. But first of all, I want to just really say thank you for being here and for doing this. We're very excited to have you here.

FH: Thank you.

MA: So the questions really are only prompts, right? So it's, it's not at all like we have a series of questions that we want you to answer. It's more like giving you little nudges to think about your time at Lafayette. You're back for your 60th reunion but I imagine there are moments that are, that stand out, and to reflect on anything else that you want. So it's not like we have to have certain questions answered. If there's anything that comes up you don't want to answer, you may, of course, decline to talk about it. The main thing is that this interview is really the story of your time at Lafayette. The way you want to tell it and about the things that you thought were important [00:02:00] and that you want to share. You will receive a copy of your transcript before it becomes public in any way. And so we will send you a hard copy, the entire thing, in its complete form once it's all transcribed. It'll be all typed up and you'll get that

copy. And then you can go through and look at it. You'll have a couple months to do that and send it back to us. So we want you to have first crack at any edits, anything we got wrong in the transcription or anything you'd like to change. So that's there. So the last thing is that, in my preamble, is that the interviews are, they're not like they have an end point that means you can't communicate with us anymore. So if you think of anything later that you didn't say or you want to send an email or call and tell us something else, don't feel like this is it, in other words.

FH: Okay.

MA: We try to keep it rolling. From our interactions so far, you used the he pronouns. Is that correct? [00:03:00]

FH: The which?

MA: Him? He?

FH: H-e. Yes.

MA: And you define yourself as a member of the class of 1959.

And you identify as a gay man. Is that correct?

FH: At this point in my life, yes.

MA: Yeah. At this point in your life. Because we ask folks how they identify as members of the community. And so that's one of our questions. And how do you professionally describe yourself?

FH: As an engineer, you mean, or planner

MA: Yeah.

FH: Well, I'm in two positions, in a sense, or two skills. I did my engineering here but also, just as part of the record, I had, already, when I came to Lafayette, I already had an undergraduate degree in education. So I had a, more or less, liberal arts training separate from the, what do you mean, what do you call it when you have an engineering, you don't get the languages. Your language skill for the engineering degree is your mathematics, not [00:04:00] other -- language.

MA: Right.

FH: -- languages.

MA: Right, right.

FH: So I never did have a second language. My graduate work, though, was two years at University of Pennsylvania in urban and regional planning --

MA: Yeah.

FH: With a specialty of going to the Wharton Economics School and becoming interested and involved in economic modeling, computer modeling, and also working on the computer modeling for the Penn Jersey Transportation Study and other computer modeling when I went to work for Bureau of Public Roads. So I have a broad background of not just engineering but also of the computers, computer modeling of

the era and that. Much which, by now, I've gotten out of time with it. So my work as an engineer has been heavily into engineering work, but still with a full understanding of the impact to the work that you're doing on the entire community.

MA: Wow, that's fantastic. It's like a true liberal arts engineering career.

FH: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: Where you really see it [00:05:00] in a 360 degrees --

FH: Right.

MA: -- three-dimensional, that's very nice.

FH: Yeah. I'm one of the few engineers, at least at Lafayette, if not country-wide, who got a Phi Beta Kappa.

MA: That's fantastic.

FH: Yeah.

MA: And that is unusual. Congratulations to you.

FH: Yeah. It was very rare.

MA: Yeah.

FH: But that was partly because of the work with the theater and with the newsmag-- the monthly or weekly magazine, whatever it was.

MA: The newspaper? The student newspaper?

FH: The newspaper here.

MA: You were involved in it.

FH: And also having done a large share of the undergraduate here, I did a lot, almost to a degree level, and probably for another one or two courses, could've had a degree in geology or whatever it was, the sciences, earth sciences.

MA: Yeah. Absolutely. Wow, you had a, a really broad-ranging education here.

FH: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: And you continued that throughout your working life.

FH: Yes.

MA: Wow, you're a, a true product of the Lafayette vision of the engineer who has the broader world view and is both excellent in engineering, and also looking at all these other things. [00:06:00] And theater, too, which we'll, which we'll talk about. So anything to add into sort of the identifiers?

FH: I don't think in that sense.

MA: Okay.

FH: Just in the events that occurred later in life that --

MA: Okay.

FH: -- not directly related there, I guess.

MA: Okay. All right. So to, to sort of plunge in, one of the questions that we ask to, to start is really broad, just to capture your thoughts on, so you, you were at Lafayette from, if you...

FH: Fifty...

MA: Fifty-five to '59?

FH: Fifty-six, (inaudible) '57, '58, '59. Well, we graduated, probably fif-- it's summer of '56, would be my guess.

MA: Right.

FH: And you'd have to look it up.

MA: That sounds correct. That sounds exactly right.

FH: Because I only really was here three years, not four.

MA: Oh, okay.

FH: Because I already had all of the, all of the liberal arts courses that engineers were required to take.

MA: Oh, wow.

FH: They, I just transferred. [00:07:00]

MA: Oh, okay.

FH: So I didn't have to take --

MA: So it was three years.

FH: -- English and all the other basic courses.

MA: Oh, okay. So it would've been '56 to '59 --

FH: Yeah.

MA: -- would've been your three years here. Okay.

FH: Yeah.

MA: All right. So that's important. So on, during your three years here, one of the things we ask, and we were talking just before I started recording, but how different things



are generationally, right --

FH: Yeah.

MA: -- across, for gay and lesbian and queer-identified people. One of the things we ask our interviewees is what was the climate like for, for gay people on campus? And so this is an interesting question. We're talking about the late 1950s here.

FH: Yeah. Well, the interesting thing is, and I don't know what it would've really been like for somebody who was out and gay because at the time when I came to Lafayette, I had never had an experience, and probably didn't even really realize what it was to be gay.

MA: Yeah.

FH: I had my first experience with a man who I had known through some other contacts and kind of guessed was. And finally just called him and we had the first experience I had, which really didn't do or do much for me. So while I was at Lafayette, I really didn't do anything either on-campus or off-campus. I just essentially didn't. It wasn't until I got out of here and started moving into the world that I did anything. So I wasn't looking for anything. I wasn't expecting anything and wasn't doing anything that would've attracted somebody to come chasing after me. My only experiences, because, again, I was aware

of gay, to the degree of being aware, was working in theater, I had suspicions but never took them any further with a few men. And the one which I think I mentioned to you, which should be interesting in hindsight, and I hadn't thought of it at the time, was two men who I knew and who, in hindsight, probably were, and they were working with the theater group. And I had to get them, [00:09:00] we had some problem where I needed help in a hurry so I raced over to the dorm room that one was living in and it took them a while to open the door and let me in and talk to me. So I wonder, in hindsight, whether there was other things going on or whether there was other things going on.

MA: Right.

FH: But, again, there was no real awareness of it while I was at Lafayette. The one which I think I also mentioned in the phone was that during the reunion five years ago, I brought Tony with me and that kind of woke up some people in our class. And during one of the lunches, we were sitting over in the cafeteria or wherever it was, with one of the men in the -- engineers that had been in school and he noted how I hadn't been too active with the other guys, which partly was because, at the time, I didn't have any income, so I had to actually work on the side to get the money to go to college. [00:10:00] So that was part of it.

But also that I was keeping out of the way. And the comment, he says it probably is good that you didn't come out because might not have been a good experience for you to have come out at that point in time.

MA: Right. Yeah.

FH: And I think that, he probably expressed it better, that it would've been very prudent to keep yourself quiet, closeted and out of sight --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- at that point in time.

MA: Yeah. So people who were, any men who were gay identified in that time at Lafayette, would've just been very careful to, to keep it quiet?

FH: It'd be interesting what you could find out from other people, especially if it's ways to reach anybody who got kicked out. I wonder if the college would, more or less, directly or indirectly, try to get a gay person out of here at that point in time.

MA: Yeah.

FH: Because it was an all-male school. So there would be even a concern for annoyance, if not real terrifying of straight guys who just didn't appreciate being approached --

MA: Right.

FH: -- if somebody were to approach them. [00:11:00]

MA: Right.

FH: So that I don't know because I didn't make any such approaches.

MA: Right. Right. But it was all quiet while you were here, basically.

FH: Yeah.

MA: Yeah.

FH: Yeah.

MA: We have a, we had an interviewee who graduated in the '70s, Catherine Hanlon, just after the college went co-ed. And she gave an interview for the Queer Archives Project. And she was almost kicked out for her relationship with another woman while she was on campus. And she just avoided expulsion by the dean. And her interview talks about that. And I wonder if there, I mean, you raise a really interesting question, which is maybe that people felt that that would happen to them, or it almost happened, or even did happen, and we don't know the stories from that era, that people were maybe kicked out or they felt like they would be if they came out.

FH: That could be. Again, because working in theater, I'm sure that some of the people were.

MA: Yeah.

FH: And yet there were no approaches made or --

MA: Yeah.

FH: No "what are you doing tonight's."

MA: Yeah.

FH: Even hints of "what are you doing tonight." [00:12:00]

MA: Were there ever rumors or a sense of anything --

FH: Not that I know of.

MA: Like that? Or people didn't talk about it?

FH: Yeah, I think it was just not talked about, period.

MA: Yeah.

FH: At all.

MA: Yeah.

FH: And the word just wasn't used. The biggest single thing that I can remember, in the gay movement, in the whole history of gay movement, was a *Time* Magazine article. And that was, I forget the year. The *Time* Magazine had a front cover issue on homosexuality.

MA: Yeah. This was, like, in the '70s or something, right?

The '60s?

FH: It was the early '70s, yeah.

MA: Yeah.

FH: Or late '60s or something.

MA: And that was a bombshell.

FH: No, it was before Stonewall so it was before --

MA: Oh, then it was...

FH: -- '69. So -

MA: Okay.

FH: -- it would've been in the mid-'60s.

MA: Mid-'60s. Wow. We'll have to look that up, for sure.

FH: Yeah.

MA: And that felt like a bombshell to you, that that was...

FH: It, world, I think it was worldwide.

MA: Yeah.

FH: It was a major, because, again, nobody could really move, which we knew we couldn't move.

MA: Yeah.

FH: But at the same time, it came out.

MA: Yeah. Incredible.

FH: Yeah.

MA: And, and the [00:13:00] homosexuality as a mental illness was still on the --

FH: Yes.

MA: -- the diagnostic and statistical manual of the APA there until '73. So this, mid-'60s, that would've been, people would've been shocked.

FH: Right. And what would be interesting if you, have you worked with the Skillman Library to look back where they stood at that time? The one that's interesting to me is that anything about homosexuality was so off to the side.

At the University of Pennsylvania, if you went to the catalog, not even if there was a, quote, catalog line, homosexual books, which would've listed them, but they were categorized. So there was a category for them. But the only homosexual books at the University of Pennsylvania, of which there were three, were in the locked stacks, way in a back corner. And I don't know if that's because they were in the back corner because they were in the back corner.

[00:14:00] Because they were stored-- they were filed numerically and the 100 or 300, whatever they were, just the way the building was laid out, and I don't think they laid it out because of the homosexual books.

MA: Yeah.

FH: But the way it was laid out, that number of, was way in a back corner --

MA: Wow.

FH: -- of the library.

MA: Wow.

FH: But they were that rare and that secured. So it'd be interesting, if you haven't done it, to have somebody from the library here, especially if there's any older staff --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- still around or older staff --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- still alive --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- who could remember what, if they did, if they did anything with books like that here at this all-boys, all-male school.

MA: That's a very, very interesting question. I think it's a wonderful question. At the University of Pennsylvania, if there's three books somewhere in the back, locked up --

FH: Yeah.

MA: -- it tells us that, right, there's a public silence and an enforcement of --

FH: Right.

MA: -- not, you're not going to learn anything about this topic.

FH: Yeah.

MA: Right? One thing I do know, we haven't looked at this directly [00:15:00] and it's, and we, we should and will, I'm sure, now. Riley Temple, who graduated in 1971, talks, in his interview, about going to the library and looking at the shelf where the sort of, quote, unquote, gay books were and he notices that the carpet is a little bit worn, so that he has the feeling that a lot of the gay young men are going there to, to sort of --

FH: Opening the books and...



MA: -- opening the books to sate their curiosity.

FH: And, quick, putting them back because they don't --

MA: But, yeah. So...

FH: -- they don't want to check them out unless --

MA: Right. Right. Right.

FH: Yeah.

MA: Just standing there --

FH: Yeah.

MA: -- as opposed to checking them out. And it's a great story and it's, it's interesting because your, your comments really resonate with how important the library is. I mean, in the, apparently in the late '60s, Skillman did not restrict those books because somebody describes going to look at them. But I wonder, it would be interesting to ask, in the '50s were they there or when that changed.

FH: That'd be interesting. I'll have to shake my mind up. Because you're right. [00:16:00] We could go anywhere in the stacks. I don't think there was any, the only things lacked were, locked, I think were mostly valuable or delicate or rare things. But all of the other books, and I wonder if I did go and maybe my, I helped wear out the carpet. I'm not sure because I was, I was aware of the subject and I had knowledge of it, though I'm not sure how and why. So I may have, that'd be interesting. I'll have

to do some shaking in my head to try to think.

MA: Think about whether you went there in the library.

FH: You might ask her or whoever you know if, you have somebody who is still there in that early time period, if they could report on that.

MA: Yeah.

FH: In other words, this is something they would've probably noticed also.

MA: Right. Absolutely.

FH: But you wouldn't even, as you say, if you did bring it out and go over to a desk and carefully read it, I'm just trying to think. Maybe I did. [00:17:00] Because I'm trying to think. I may have, and brought a cover from another book that I put on it so that you couldn't see the cover.

MA: Yeah, absolutely.

FH: But then put it back in the shelf where you got it from. You didn't leave it on the desk --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- and walk away.

MA: Yeah. Too dangerous.

FH: Yeah.

MA: Yeah.

FH: So I may have. And I'm not going to say I did or didn't.

MA: Okay.

FH: But now that you're shaking my mind up, I do remember,  
whether it's this library or somewhere else --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- bringing a cover to put on the book so that nobody would  
know what I was reading.

MA: Wow. Isn't that something?

FH: So it may have been here at this library.

MA: Yeah. Because they were open here and there weren't any  
locked stacks.

FH: Yeah. Because, again, you know, I'm leaning more towards  
saying that is true. And the reason I'm saying that is I  
don't think I read either, or any of the three books at  
Penn because I already knew them.

MA: Oh. Then you, maybe you did wear out the carpet --

FH: I have a --

MA: -- in Skillman Library.

FH: -- gut feeling I might've helped wear out your carpet.

MA: That's, that's pretty amazing connection [00:18:00], isn't  
it?

FH: Yeah.

MA: That's, that's really something.

FH: Yeah.

MA: One of the things that, that I think is, that comes up in

our interviews is how important the library is.

FH: It's, well...

MA: The availability of information about diverse kinds of, you find yourself in the library.

FH: Oh, yeah.

MA: Yeah.

FH: The library. And it's tragic that people aren't using the library as much today. But that's a whole obviously separate subject.

MA: A whole other thing.

FH: Yeah.

MA: But it's a -- well, maybe we found a connection across, across the bookshelves. And it's something that reminds us how important this information is. So it's the late '50s and people are not out. And obviously there's legality questions and, and, and it's interesting to see that maybe we've stumbled on a place where information was available, if not talked about. You kind of had to hide it but you could go to a library.

FH: Is there a way or have you [00:19:00], the library, would the library know what books they had in '59?

MA: Yeah. I was just thinking that as well, actually.

FH: And find out what books they had.

MA: When they accessioned them.

FH: And let me know. If you can find that out, send me the titles and see if that shakes my mind. Because I probably did read the book at some point. But did I read it at that point and did I read it here?

MA: This would be a wonderful project. I can imagine one of our students working on this.

FH: Yeah.

MA: That they would go and see what was accessioned and in the library on the catalog.

FH: And was it cata-- was it secured or was it unsecured?

MA: I, it's interesting, I've never heard of Skillman having secured...

FH: I don't think so.

MA: Except for, as you mentioned, rare books.

FH: Yeah, rare and valuable things.

MA: Valuable. Right, right, right.

FH: There were even, like, some magazines that I forget why I needed them. Was not for this purpose. They were common magazines but they were so fragile or something [00:20:00] that you had to take them out --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- and you had to turn them back in because they could be damaged or stolen from, or torn out, pictures torn out type of thing.

MA: Got you. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

FH: But nothing --

MA: But that makes...

FH: -- that I recall on the subject of --

MA: Right.

FH: Homosexuality.

MA: Right. It would've been more about their value more than...

FH: Yeah, the value or the, or the...

MA: Protecting.

FH: Protecting, physical.

MA: Yeah, yeah. So when you were actually a student here, you didn't identify as gay? Did you identify as straight or are these words just sort of not really --

FH: Sort of...

MA: -- how people thought?

FH: The difference here, but, again, it was even when I went to East Stroudsburg for und-- for the education, is that sexuality was pretty much straight and it was talked about that way. And I don't recall homosexuality really being talked about anywhere because it just wasn't at that time discussed. [00:21:00] And homosexuals, again, here, certainly, and I think at East Stroudsburg, just didn't come out. They didn't do anything because it was so

dangerous.

MA: Yeah.

FH: Wasn't just illegal. It was also dangerous.

MA: Right. Right.

FH: To make an approach.

MA: So there was just quietness around all that.

FH: And I'm sure there were places in this town where you could've gone and that people did come to --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- have fun or whatever.

MA: Yeah. Yeah.

FH: I just didn't know about them.

MA: Yeah. Yeah. So there was no sense, deep in the mists of time we'd heard rumors that in the '50s or the '60s there was a group of men on campus, or professors, who had sort of a group where obviously it was all men. But there's nothing like that that resonates with your experience. You just went through your three undergraduate years.

FH: My parents had already supported me through one college, four years of college. So I didn't ask for anything from them. So I lived off-campus, [00:22:00] over on Cattell Street. It's at, I think, the corner was, there's a big, vacant lot now with some junk in it at Cattell and High Street. And the house I lived in was in that lot now --

MA: Okay.

FH: -- and has been torn down.

MA: Yeah.

FH: And the woman had me, let me live in the attic for a very low price. And, in return, I took care of helping her. She was elderly. So I took out the garbage and did odds and ends around the house.

MA: Okay.

FH: I had a car and I worked downtown, shoveling coal at the Hotel Lafayette, to make money.

MA: Okay.

FH: And I did some other work to make money --

MA: Wow.

FH: -- so that I could go to college.

MA: You were working very hard when you were a student.

FH: I was working. So I didn't have much time to play around at all.

MA: Right.

FH: Even if I --

MA: Right.

FH: -- had wanted to.

MA: Understood.

FH: And then all three years I was in the theater, technical work. I received the award one year for the outstanding



volunteer whatever it was, of the theater. [00:23:00] And so I got a lot of time doing that, too.

MA: Yeah.

FH: So I didn't have much time to hang out. And I wasn't in a fraternity so there was no experience there.

MA: Right.

FH: It would be interesting, because there, again, the men who were in a fraternity, if you were gay, did, things happen -  
-

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- that "didn't happen."

MA: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

FH: Yeah.

MA: I like the, the scare quotes. That happened that "didn't happen." Yeah.

FH: Yeah.

MA: That's, yeah, so the question of Greek life would maybe change the answer. But you were --

FH: Yeah.

MA: -- you were a hard-working, independent person who was --

FH: Yeah, because I didn't...

MA: -- sounds like you were busy every minute.

FH: Yeah. I didn't have the time and the --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- association.

MA: Yeah.

FH: So it would've been hard to say if I had joined a fraternity and lived in a fraternity house, just what might have happened.

MA: Right. Right. Right. You had a different, you were on Cattell Street.

FH: Yeah.

MA: Was college, did you have fun? That was theater for you?

FH: The theater was a lot of fun.

MA: What did you --

FH: lot of --

MA: What were you doing as a star volunteer?

FH: I was tech.

MA: That was your tech?

FH: Tech. [00:24:00] I would take the concept of the show and do the, build the sets, do the lighting, all of that.

MA: And you've continued that?

FH: Yeah. You know, I became, I'm still -- still keep my union lighting card. Union --

MA: That's fantastic.

FH: Stagehand card.

MA: That's fantastic. That's fantastic.

FH: So don't do anything, and Tony and I do the work with the

California Men's Gathering group, where we actually do the lighting for two of their weekends.

MA: That's fantastic.

FH: So...

MA: That's great. So your Lafayette arts and engineering education has followed you right through until today.

FH: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: The theater is something you're still doing.

FH: Yeah.

MA: That's marvelous. What was the name of the, of the -- California Men's Gathering?

FH: California Men's Gathering is a group that's now 40 years old but it was started mostly by straight men trying to find themselves.

MA: Okay.

FH: And over the years it just gradually evolved into mostly gay people. Straights are still welcome. Occasionally one or two will attend. But it's [00:25:00] mostly oriented towards helping gay men have a weekend to either enjoy, just enjoy the weekend. We have workshops. We have assembly sessions. And just basically oriented to making you have a new weekend where you're able to live yourself as a gay person and --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- meet other gay people and --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- totally free atmosphere.

MA: Nice. Build community and, and --

FH: Yeah.

MA: -- be yourself.

FH: Yeah.

MA: That sounds pretty wonderful. I hadn't heard of it before but that's marvelous that you're involved for that. When people did -- one of the things that comes up is the way that language is talked about. How were gay people talked about? Did people mostly say homosexual? Is that how it was talked about? Or they, they used slurs a lot or it was just that silence? You just kinda knew it was out there but it wasn't really...

FH: Yeah, that's a good question. I think it was talked about. I don't think the word homosexual would've been used. It would've been queer or faggot --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- or something like that.

MA: Yeah. Yeah.

FH: The negative word would be used [00:26:00] more often.

MA: Yeah.

FH: The homosexual word would usually get used, I think, more

in the legal sense. In other words --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- this man was arrested because of, not because he was queer, because homosexual behavior. But if you're talking about that queer over there, I don't think the word gay was used by the general community. That was an internal word that was mostly used by the gay community.

MA: Yeah.

FH: I think.

MA: Yeah. Yeah.

FH: Would be my guess.

MA: Yeah. So the homosexual was sort of, like, legal, medical, institutional. And then the other --

FH: Yeah.

MA: -- were negative words or, like, the cultural words that everyday words that people used.

FH: Would be the everyday word that were used.

MA: Yeah. Yeah. And gay came along around that time? Or when did that sort of enter your radar screen?

FH: Well, gay existed but it was strictly -- and with the tragedy of the word -- it was intended to mean all homosexuals or same-sex oriented people. It got too heavily used by the straight men, by the men. [00:27:00] And, as a result, that's why women really pushed the word

lesbian. And now it's, even that goes before the word gay.

Gay was intended to be the word for all --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- all abnormal, or non-normal --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- sexual behavior.

MA: Yeah, yeah.

FH: That was the intended use. But it has been, unfortunately, used the other way.

MA: Thinking about different groups and things, other identities, for some of the alums that we've talked to, really mattered about how they experienced being a gay person. Like, what their religion or their race or their class or where they're from. Do you see any connections there?

FH: Not for me, not really. I was born and raised and brought up as a Catholic. Never went to Catholic school, per se, but did have all the Catholic classes. [00:28:00]

MA: And where were you --

FH: And...

MA: -- where were you brought up again, Frank?

FH: Long Island, New York.

MA: Okay, Long Island.

FH: It's outside of New York City. Just outside the New York

City boundary lines. So...

MA: So just, yeah, down there. Yeah.

FH: So certainly had the opportunity to see New York City and did. I went into New York City a lot. That's another -- I went into New York City on my own a lot as a young high school kid.

MA: That's something. Yeah.

FH: And never got picked up or anything, dammit. (laughs) But it's interesting how that, I mean, when I read now about how young men did get picked up so much --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- whether it was good or bad for them, they did. I just never had that --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- quote, luck or unluck.

MA: Yeah. Sure, yeah. It's interesting, in the history of gay America, how post-World War II, a place like New York, places like San Francisco, they really change and become these urban centers for --

FH: Right.

MA: -- gay folks, gay men --

FH: Yeah.

MA: -- in particular, right? And there's this, like, New York and L.A. [00:29:00] and these -- or, excuse me, in San

Francisco and these places now, that are understood. And that's kind of the history. So it's funny that you just wandered through that and that never seemed to --

FH: Yeah.

MA: -- to s--

FH: And then got back into it, on a major sense, after I'd come out and after graduating from here, then I started moving around with what was then the Bureau of Public Roads. I was in a program that moved us around the country a lot. So I was more open and out. I'd learned how to find a gay bar or a gay meeting place. And so had some more experiences. Then I got shipped to Washington, D.C. and left there, sort of assigned there to different projects.

MA: When did you arrive in Washington? What year was that?

FH: Probably the summer of '60.

MA: Okay. So that's, then, okay.

FH: Because I found out about Cherry Grove on Fire Island --

MA: Oh, wow.

FH: -- and went up there. Then there's a theater at Cherry Grove so I met the guys at theater. And the next thing I know, I was part of their house.

MA: Oh, wow.

FH: [00:30:00] So I'd come up most weekends, I'd go up to Cherry Grove --



MA: Yeah.

FH: -- and spend the weekends working in the theater there.

MA: Wow. What was that like? What was the feeling like?

FH: It was fantastic.

MA: Yeah.

FH: Was a great experiences.

MA: Yeah.

FH: I mean, we put on shows and I'm sure everything was illegal that we did but we did it. And it was all New York City people, of course --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- who probably knew it was illegal and could care less. We did *Once Upon a Mattress*, which is a great show.

MA: I know it well.

FH: You know it well.

MA: My sister was in it in high school.

FH: Yeah. And we did it. And the fairy queen, the queen was a 300-pound drag queen. And we had to literally fly him in. He came flying in and gowns and all this, which we rigged the whole flying system. My then partner and I rigged the whole system up to lower him slowly down to the stage. So, yeah.

MA: That's pretty amazing.

FH: Yeah.

MA: And it felt like a -- that's a sort of classic bit of gay American history, right? Cherry Grove.

FH: Yeah.

MA: [00:31:00] And Fire Island, at that time. That's early gay male community.

FH: Yeah.

MA: The feeling was a happy one? People felt free there and...

FH: It was an amazing freedom, yeah. The minute you stepped off the boat, actually, the minute you got on the boat, you were free. It was a freedom that's hard to describe. But the minute the boat pulled away from the dock, you were free.

MA: How incredible.

FH: And just -- and nothing happened.

MA: Sure.

FH: It's just the feeling was there. And it was so, so wonderful to be there. The one that we just had at the last gathering, Memorial Day weekend a couple of weekends ago, one of the guys was doing line dancing. And I told him you know where it comes from. He says no. Cherry Grove. Huh? Said the police did not allow two men to dance together. That was against the rules. But how can you do it? There weren't enough women. And so the police finally compromised that, okay, [00:32:00] one woman could

dance with three gay men. Three men. Not three gay men but three men.

MA: Right. Yeah.

FH: Well, the dance would then get a little more mixed up but, still, that wasn't working. And all of a sudden some of the guys got an idea. Instead of, you know, dancing with the woman, we just form a couple of lines and everybody got in the line, turn at the same time, the same way. And that's how line dancing started.

MA: I had no idea. When was, when was...

FH: Yeah. Because it was nothing different than line dancing in a Broadway show, except the people.

MA: Amazing.

FH: That was in the early '60s.

MA: In the early '60s.

FH: Yeah.

MA: A way to get around the police monitoring...

FH: Get around the police. Because the two men aren't dancing together. They're in a line. It's a line dance.

MA: That's pretty brilliant.

FH: Oh, yeah. There was a lot of brilliant ways to counteract the police.

MA: It's incredible how creative the gay community has had to be --

FH: Yeah.

MA: -- to create its own spaces and get around all these repressive...

FH: Yeah.

MA: Yeah.

FH: I mean, the local town there, Sayville, [00:33:00] it's hard to figure how that community existed with it because on a Friday afternoon, every train that came in would have 15, 20 or more gay men or couples so that all the cabs would get there to take them out to the dock. And you didn't have to say a thing. They knew who you were. They knew where you were going and to the dock and they knew exactly which dock to take you to.

MA: That's funny.

FH: And get their money and we all tipped them nicely. A couple of times, and we were doing shows. Jimmy and I, Jim, my partner at the time, and I were in the theater, so we'd take whatever stuff we needed from our local theater for the weekend and carry it up in the car or drive up. And I'd dump them off at the edge of the dock with all the stuff and we'd haul all this stuff on the boat and go out.

MA: That's incredible. That's amazing.

FH: Yeah.

MA: And it was just sort of understood, like, wink, wink, here

come all the gay guys for the weekend?

FH: Yeah. Right. But look at all the money we're making out of it.

MA: Yeah.

FH: Yeah.

MA: Yeah. [00:34:00] It's funny how they're happy to take your money if...

FH: Yeah.

MA: Yeah. That can pave the way, too. That sounds like a wonderful time, though.

FH: Yeah, it was a great experience.

MA: And how big was the community out there when you were really, as Cherry Grove formed and Fire Island became...

FH: I don't know how many. Fifty, 100 buildings on it.

MA: Yeah. Yeah.

FH: Yeah.

MA: Yeah. It was -- must have been --

FH: I was almost going to buy one and then I got the chance to go to Hawaii so I didn't. And in a way, I wish I had. And a way, I wish I -- I'm glad I didn't.

MA: Yeah.

FH: But I wish I had because that house that I would've probably bought for 10,000 dollars -- it's worth a million now.

MA: Yeah. I'm sure that's true.

FH: Yeah.

MA: Yeah. Wow. So it was mostly shows and people enjoyed themselves. And it must've been an incredible weight falling off you.

FH: Yeah. It was just being free to be yourself. You didn't go wandering around kissing everybody or something. It's just that you were free. You were comfortable.

MA: Yeah. Didn't have to hide --

FH: Yeah.

MA: -- in that silence. Yeah.

FH: Which is very much what the [00:35:00] California Men's Gathering group does.

MA: Yeah.

FH: Creates that weekend.

MA: Provides that space for people to feel free.

FH: Yeah.

MA: Yeah. Which we still need.

FH: Yeah.

MA: We absolutely do.

FH: Yeah.

MA: Well, that's absolutely amazing that you were out there. I like that I'm going to have a visual of the 300-pound drag queen being lowered on wires for a while. All I can say is

I'm sorry I missed it. Do you have any photos from Cherry Grove?

FH: No.

MA: Oh, no?

FH: I don't think.

MA: That wouldn't have been, yeah. I, yeah. I could see that.

FH: I probably, I wouldn't have obviously taken pictures of anything --

MA: Yeah. Well, if you ha--

FH: -- classified but I may have photos.

MA: Yeah.

FH: I don't know where all that stuff...

MA: If you have any pictures of yourself from that era and you're ever interested in sharing them with the project, let me know.

FH: Okay.

MA: We'd love that, just to put that up. So that's pretty amazing. So your life story went forward from there and then it sounds like you switched from the [00:36:00] East Coast to the West in the '60s?

FH: Got out of here and I had several job offers. But the most intriguing one was with what was then the Bureau of Public Roads, now Federal Highway Administration, that had a three-year intern program for junior engineers, as they

called them. We came in two pay grades lower than a standard engineer, but the three years was in training. And they moved us around the country from all the different jobs that Bureau of Public Roads did. So my first assignment was in local Harrisburg, which was the Bureau of Public Roads office for the state of Pennsylvania. So I was there for a few months. Then I think there was something in Washington briefly. Then I was -- or was that when there was -- there was three-month training course in Washington, D.C. and that was next or something else in between. [00:37:00] The next summer, I was sent to Oregon, working on a road project, the actual construction of a road, in the mountains out -- the Three Sister mountain area outside of Bend, Oregon. So I spent the summer in Bend. I was transferred, at the end of that project, to the West Yellowstone office where the immediate project that I helped to get started was the road to replace the road that had been washed, wiped out when the whole mountain slid --

MA: Whoa, yeah.

FH: -- and killed 100 or more people in a camp.

MA: Oh, wow.

FH: The whole mountain just --

MA: Oh, wow.



FH: -- wiped out and created a lake because it dammed a river up. So we had to design a road to get up over this dam and around the other side, past the river. So I was working on that and I got a call, could I come back to Washington and, yeah, I could come back to Washington. This was probably September, October, because the snow is starting-- snow's already falling. [00:38:00] So I came back and they assigned me to work on various projects, which was right when Kennedy became president. So I worked on several projects, including a project, at the time, for Kennedy on automated highways. And another, I wrote a manual on design of urban highways that was in use for years, including a slide presentation and that kind of stuff, on planning the design of a highway to flow in the city, which now we've destroyed by putting up sound walls all around. So we were designing roads then so you could see something -- to help you to see where you were going. Now all you can see is this big, solid wall, which is tragic but that was one of my projects. But there were all kinds of projects like that that I got involved in.

MA: And they moved you around a lot so you were involved in a lot of places.

FH: They moved us around several times.

MA: And when did you head to Hawaii? Did you, you left the

federal government. I remember we talked on the phone that...

FH: [00:39:00] No. One of the things from the University of Pennsylvania was that I was assigned to work part-time with the transportation study, which was the most advanced database in the country at the time for urban planning. So when I got back to Washington, that was one of the fields I worked on. Not as much in the development of the database as in the sort of management and coordination of the database-- the FAA wanted to use our databases for noise studies. So I was assigned to work with them on getting that going. And while I was there, they asked me if I'd please go to Hawaii. They need a planner out there. And so I was sent to Hawaii and the first assignment was what to do on the Kona Coast and I'm the one that turned the whole state from just fixing the little airport at Kailua Kona into a trans-Pacific airport because the state, itself, didn't see what was going to happen in the future, which has happened. The reef runway in Hawaii is my project --

MA: Wow.

FH: -- essentially because they couldn't get anybody that would [00:40:00] take it over and get it through.

MA: Wow.

FH: But anyway, at some point I had, before leaving Washington, it was Frank Kameny who is the only person ever taken to the Supreme Court level and turned down for having been fired as a gay person. Court just wouldn't take his case, essentially. So I had met with him and he gave me different things, one of which is if they call you in and ask if you're gay, he says you probably have to tell them yes. Because if they call you in, they already knew or they wouldn't have called you in. And they did. And I said yes. And, oh my God, what do we do now. Guess they had to fire me and they didn't want to. I was filling two men's jobs, everything else, and was supposed to be going to taking over part of the office and stuff. So, anyway, it took them six months. I was...

MA: It must've made them very unhappy --

FH: Yeah.

MA: -- to have to do that.

FH: Because they didn't want to lose --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- lose me. [00:41:00] But, at the last meeting I was at, I just told, you know, the state, I was co-chair of the state transportation or something like that. I forget what. But, anyway, I said I wouldn't be at the next meeting, I was leaving the FAA. And this guy came over and

said what, you got another job? Says, no, I'll get a job. He says oh, you're working for us. I didn't even think about it. And Monday I was at home figuring who do I call and what do I do. And this phone rings. Where the hell are you. And he hired me and assigned any impossible job, made it clear when he hired me that you're going to get the tough jobs that nobody can get done because I know you can do them. And you, nevertheless, anything and everything you need, you will get. So if you can't get help or you can't get money, you tell me. Don't let somebody else tell me, you can't have it. You come to me. I will get it for you. And several times, I did come to him and these guys have been pushing me down saying "huh, how'd he do that." [00:42:00] But he was sincere. He felt I could get the job.

MA: Yeah. What a compliment.

FH: Part of the reason nobody else was getting it, they wouldn't go to him, and say I can't get it done because I need this guy -- I brought people out to Hawaii with rare skills who have never been in that, brought out there. Because I realized we were working a horrible working environment and nobody in Hawaii really knew how to work in a saltwater environment. And that's what we were working. I brought the people out that could get things built, that

could survive in those environments.

MA: Right.

FH: And that's what he wanted.

MA: Right.

FH: So, anyway, I was supposed to take over the, I designed the airport at Taoyuan, for Taipei, airport. The new international airport.

MA: Incredible.

FH: It's a one-man design. They just don't do it that way now.

MA: That's just absolutely amazing.

FH: Now we have 50 men committees.

MA: Yeah, sure.

FH: Spend 20 years and never get it built.

MA: Yeah, that's incredible. Yeah.

FH: I designed it and started out there to take over the final design and construction. And he came out and said [00:43:00] I've got to bring you back to Honolulu. The reef runway is just dead. Nobody's keeping it moving. And a couple of other projects aren't going since you're not there. Says I need you back there. Then he says, you know, the government just doesn't fire enough people like you. So I realized he knew. But, anyway --

MA: Yeah, yeah.

FH: The key thing of being fired is at this point there was no

point in my hiding. So at least I could get involved in the gay community.

MA: I see.

FH: And I got involved in the Metropolitan Community Church, which although it was a religious group, really was the gay -- the basic gay organization. There was a so-called gay organization but they had to be so careful and so under the table. Where at the church, it was a problem. We're trying to push that down. Because it was a church.

MA: Yeah.

FH: It was a legal church.

MA: Yeah.

FH: And our pastor one year was actually the head of the council of churches in Hawaii [00:44:00]. I mean, we got along that well in the community.

MA: Yeah. Yeah.

FH: And the Navy got freaked out by the thing because the guys tried to use it as an escape. And the most classic one is two guys didn't want to go back out. They hadn't enjoyed their submarine trip so they decided to play the church against it. So they came to the Navy and said well, we've been going to the gay church and we're going to be, you know, we don't want to go out in the ship. And the real reason, they didn't want to go out in the ship. But they

had skills and should have. And the Navy, initially, oh my God, they're gay. What's going on here. So the Navy called, well, the council of churches, and said, you know, what is this. What kind of a group is this church. The council of churches, whoever the officer there is, told the Navy, well, first of all, yes, they are a full member. They're very active. And, also, they're one of only two of the religions that are members who pay their dues on time. [00:45:00] And the Navy just gave an order that the Navy could not investigate or look at this church and was not to consider it. And so the two guys ended up going out in the sub.

MA: It didn't work.

FH: Didn't work for them.

MA: But it was clever.

FH: It was clever.

MA: And elaborate.

FH: Yeah, yeah.

MA: Oh, that's amazing. That it's not, it's just, like, just incredible, incredible times.

FH: Yeah. It was an amazing period of time.

MA: Yeah.

FH: But that gave me a certain amount of freedom to be myself -

-

MA: Yes.

FH: -- lead my life a little better. It still wasn't as good as you would've liked.

MA: Yeah.

FH: But at least a little bit better.

MA: Yeah.

FH: And a little bit of leadership in the gay community. Not what I would've liked to have done but at least the level I could do.

MA: I'm sure you made a real contribution. And it's, it's funny how that worked for you in the sense of being let go for a ridiculous reason by people who didn't want you to leave, ended up giving you at least some freedom or some latitude where at least you --

FH: The freedom --

MA: -- didn't know you were going to be fired for it.

FH: -- and thanks, again. And that was, of course, the guy that picked me up [00:46:00] and hired me, giving me the skills, the knowledge, the information-- the things I got through him and through the work that he assigned me are amazing. You could never have gotten in almost any other situation.

MA: Oh, fantastic.

FH: But because he realized that first of all he felt I could



do it but also that because indirectly through him, knew that getting another job, once I knew I was gay, which the minute they looked at the government job, why you left the government, would've been very difficult to get a job.

MA: Yeah.

FH: But he felt why should I be concerned about that if he can do the work.

MA: Yeah.

FH: And that was his attitude.

MA: He was smart enough to realize that.

FH: Yeah, yeah.

MA: Yeah. And open-minded. That's pretty magnificent. Wow. That's quite a job history and a lot of accomplishments, I have to say.

FH: Yeah.

MA: You know, I was thinking about your time on campus and so - - thinking about being a successful engineer and also your involvement in theater [00:47:00] and all these things. Were you, you did so much while you were on campus. Were there other things -- I realize I should probably ask, that you were involved in while you were a student? Did you play a sport or -- you weren't in Greek Life. Were you involved in athletics or other student groups? Or it was mostly theater was your, was your true avocation?

FH: Theater was that and a little bit with the newspaper. And something, some geology club or...

MA: Okay.

FH: In that department that I was active with. I swam a lot. I was almost trying to get on the swim team but I just couldn't put enough time in because I had too many other things.

MA: Yeah.

FH: So I never really got involved, other than a tremendous amount of swimming.

MA: Yeah.

FH: I mean, I'd swim almost every day if I could, in any way.

MA: Yeah, yeah.

FH: So, but other than that...

MA: You have many interests, is the...

FH: Yeah.

MA: Yeah. So when, when you have this [00:48:00], really, quite illustrious career in Hawaii and, and Taiwan and, and then after that career you retired, did you retire to Vegas?

FH: The thing that happened on Vegas, and maybe going back on career a little bit, another thing that was great about Hawaii is I never really had any discriminatory feeling towards anybody. Any religion or race or anything. In fact, I liked men of every race and thing. But once I

moved to Hawaii, it was fantastic because you had all kinds of great racial men of all things, and Filipino included. And one of the fabulous things about the work in the Pacific is as we went along, we were getting more and more jobs and we'd have construction surveillance on the jobs. So we'd hire an engineer. But then the engineer who was out there has to come back once in a while. And if it's my job, I'd be sent out for two weeks while he's away.

[00:49:00] So I got to work with the engineers in the field and most of them were Filipino. So, if you look at Tony, I mean, it was the most natural thing in the world to be living with a Filipino man --

MA: Gotcha.

FH: -- because they are great and, I mean, I didn't do anything with the engineers out there but --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- I certainly was comfortable to work with them.

MA: Yeah. That's a culture and a connection that you felt a connection to when you...

FH: It's a whole cultural, they, it's a whole different culture and the way they do their engineering is so different. And most Americans don't like it. I found it great. If you can figure out how to work with them, they will work with you and go out of their way to do a good job and help you.

MA: How, what makes their engineering different?

FH: I think it's just, maybe we're the ones that are different.

MA: Okay.

FH: I don't know. But Americans take a pretty hard look in one direction and that's the way they want to go. They'll be awfully imaginative and sometimes maybe our idea is better but you're better off to let them do it their way because they also know [00:50:00] what the problems are with our way.

MA: Right.

FH: And they avoid it by doing it their way.

MA: Got you. Yeah.

FH: And once you get them on your side, I have one engineer that we had a real major problem because they had made a mistake in the design. I thought the fence was the edge of the apron and there was a drop-off. The trouble was that the fence I thought was the edge of the apron had blown down before the survey work was done so the fence that I thought was the edge was down at the bottom of the hill. So I had this apron all the way to the fence and there's no way we could build it. And it wasn't in the budget, it wasn't in the contract. So I got the Filipino engineer on board right away. And he was shocked I wanted to work with him. Yeah, of course, because you're the one

that's got to help me solve this. I can't solve it.

MA: Right.

FH: You got to help me. So he worked with me and we designed a way to get the airplanes on and everything we needed, and not have to go down --

MA: Go down to the...

FH: -- do any filling.

MA: Yeah.

FH: Well, from there [00:51:00] on out, I had a fantastic engineer on the staff. And the next thing is I come out on a trip on some, some reason and he says I've held off on this. We're supposed to replace the electrical and replace all the ducts with new ducts. I said yeah. Says come out with me. We've managed to hold them back on this. And we go out and he started hand digging to the ducts. Because the first thing, one of the things that happens is the power cables that run the lights along the runways and all are run, usually, either directly in the ground or in ducts. They had been put in ducts when they were put in the first time. And usually what happens over time, the ducts would collapse, cave in and so on. And so you're not going to be able to pull the cables out and you're not going to be able to put them back. And he says, we started pulling the cables out. He said they all came out clean,

brand new-like. And he showed me. They're running the old cables on the ground, light to light.

MA: Yeah.

FH: But the lights have been moved out of the cans. [00:52:00] Everything's ready to tear out the old system. He says now, look, and he hand dug down. You could still see the labels on the ducts.

MA: Wow.

FH: They were, like, brand new yet. Nothing had happened to them. Two-hundred thousand dollar savings.

MA: Wow.

FH: Yeah.

MA: Yeah, because he, yeah.

FH: Because he wanted to work with me.

MA: Yeah, yeah.

FH: And we, several other things he did just like that that --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- we could get done for almost no cost --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- because he was clever.

MA: Yeah.

FH: So, yeah, I loved to work with them.

MA: Yeah, yeah. That's, that's a great story. I like how you said it's really like we're different than them.

FH: Yeah.

MA: Might have a better way of looking at the world than...

FH: I mean, I would never have thought to dig down first.

MA: Yeah. Yeah.

FH: But, again, a Filipino, anything you do costs money. That was a way to see if we don't have to spend the money.

MA: Yeah. Yeah.

FH: And he realized that if you can pull cables out of a duct and they're still clean and in good shape --

MA: The duct's in good shape.

FH: -- the ducts have to be in good shape or you wouldn't, half the time you can't pull them out.

MA: Yeah. Yeah. That's pretty, that's a pretty great story.

FH: Yeah.

MA: [00:53:00] About engineering, in many ways, and about different cultures and about not coming in as the American, thinking you know everything, but actually having an awareness of your cultural surroundings. That's a really marvelous story. Gosh, I think, I think I'm just about out of questions. I do have one, though, about now. Did we ever get to Vegas? How did we get you to Vegas?

FH: Oh, the company I went with, which was then Parsons Hawaii, which aren't around and then Parsons Company, as Parsons had gotten older, he had sold the company, or done, turned

it into a public stock. Somewhere along the line, in the probably '70s, late '70s, '80s, companies were buying up engineering companies and breaking them up. Selling the pieces to other companies. [00:54:00] And Parsons was ripe for that. It was just set up with so many, it had about four specialty groups in them who normally wouldn't be together in one company but did work together in one company in Parsons. And it was ripe to buy out at the price it was worth, and you could break it up and sell it for far more. So he realized that. And he, himself, already had about 40 some-odd percent of the stock, directly and indirectly, and with some broken arms on the executive floor, he had about 49 percent of the stock. And so he made an offer to buy the -- company back at about 10 dollars higher. So within a matter of minutes, he had control of the company. I mean, the people who sold back didn't realize he already had 49 percent control.

MA: Yeah, yeah.

FH: So he had control. He had 50 plus percent of the company almost immediately. So he took it private. And stock then went down from 20 something, this was the original price. It went down about ten. [00:55:00] So now he's got this huge debt. And one way to get some of the debt paid off is we had other IRA retirement money and if we wanted, there



was certain of that money that could be transferred into stock, buy stock. So I did turn it over. Well, anyway, as time went on, whoever the new -- then the new manager came in, a much more businessman's approach, the company. And he decided not to sell the company, turn the company public again, keep it private. But he also decided that any older senior engineers were costing him too much. Our salaries were too high for him. So he made an offer for us to retire at a ridiculously big premium on that stock. I mean, it was at a huge premium that he put on that stock that wouldn't happen for another ten, 15 years it would go up to that value. [00:56:00]

MA: Yeah, yeah.

FH: So I took the offer.

MA: Yeah.

FH: Well, now I was living, at the time, with another man and we had been together quite a few years. In fact, he had handled, he was a Japanese, an Indonesian guy. He had handled my parent's senior years. We moved both my parents, who he loved, we moved them both to Hawaii. He took care of both of them. My mother died. He handled a lot of that. My father died. We handled that. But, again, what do you do in Hawaii when you have no job? And I tried to get some work and nothing came through, really.

Picked up a few really interesting jobs but still not a lot. We just decide to move to the mainland, do some traveling and sightseeing.

MA: Yeah.

FH: And after looking around, Vegas becomes a great place to live, both for tax reasons, but even more as an inexpensive place, especially at the time, to live. And you're right at the edge of some of the greatest places in the world [00:57:00] to go visit.

MA: Yeah.

FH: So that's how we got to Vegas.

MA: Marvelous.

FH: Later on what happened is one of the engineers that worked for me had a project, an airfield project that he didn't want to take the responsibility for. He could've done it but he didn't want to. So he hired me as a consultant to do it. I took the job, did what was needed to be done. It was basically to hold the runway together temporarily for about a year, it was coming apart pretty badly. Using a special method that I had kinda used before, real careful application of some tack coating to hold it together. And you literally have to walk with them, changing the flow as you need, to not overdo it or underdo it. And we did it, it worked. And the FAA guy was there and we were all happy

with the results. And he told Tom to get over to Yap [00:58:00] and get working on that and Tom told me well, you ought to come along. I said well, you know, I'm a consultant. He says oh, we'll hire you. Okay. So I get off the plane. Tom stays on the plane. He decides he's not going to get off at Yap. And look at the apron and it's an alkali reaction. And just, I'd never seen alkali before but I knew about it. And part of the reason I'm on international paving airport committees, both terminal committees, landslide, air slide and paving committees. I'm still on three international committees yet. And go into the engineer's office. Hear three engineer companies, one Geotech and one structural engineer had studied the apron and all came off with all kinds of crazy and clever ideas, none of which would work. And none that were right. Not a single one of them knew what an alkali reaction was, which was kind of interesting. The only reason-- we never had seen it in the Pacific. [00:59:00] We had seen it. We didn't know what it was, though. Even the federal highways, quote, knew about it but was just beginning to get serious about it because it was starting to affect a huge percentage of highways and structures. So, anyway, the result was they hired me and I'm now with them 13 years.

MA: Wow.

FH: I went with them February 13th. I think I put the date in there. Know if I put 2006. I will be retiring the end, on the 28th or 9th of this month.

MA: Congratulations.

FH: Yeah. Well, no, I would rather work with them because they're going to lose the, one of the things, even though I haven't done any work and gotten hardly any pay from them for the last two years --

MA: Okay.

FH: -- at least I have the computer programs with all the engineering software on them.

MA: Sure. Sure, yeah.

FH: So I'll lose that.

MA: Yeah. Well, I'm sorry about that, then.

FH: Yeah. Going to try, wish I could find a way to keep that computer. In fact, I'm using it this weekend, too.

MA: Gosh, I wish you could, too. I mean, it sounds like it just --

FH: Yeah.

MA: -- just the thing you'd like to keep. [01:00:00]

FH: Yeah.

MA: That's an amazing, an amazing career. Let's see. You know, thinking about all that, and as you reflect back and

you're back for your 60th reunion here at Lafayette, what do you think of the Queer Archives Project and what we're doing?

FH: I think it's...

MA: Do you have some thoughts about it?

FH: It sounds like it's good. The key is that I didn't see much of anything of it in the weekend program. I think it is mentioned in here somewhere but almost like it's an extra. I think it should be more emphasized. University of Penns-- there should be something in there. The University of Pennsylvania, many, many years, it's one of the first in the country, the gay community got Carriage House. How they got it, I don't know. How they got the money for it, I don't know. But they bought a building, Carriage House. Are you familiar with that?

MA: No.

FH: You should. You should go -- [01:01:00] you're close enough. Go down and visit them and see what they're doing and the programs they have there. And they're expanded and it's been the guts that expanded their program out to include other things like these black people. Did you realize there's a problem they have, too? Penn, somehow, from what I could see, got into the gay issue, because of that, before they got into the black issue.

MA: Wow.

FH: And I may be wrong on it but it'd be interesting for you to find out.

MA: Yeah.

FH: But the, although Carriage House is still the gay issue --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- it has been a big factor in broadening --

MA: Yeah, that's wonderful.

FH: -- the whole subject --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- of discrimination.

MA: Yeah, absolutely.

FH: Because it became such a major issue on Penn --

MA: Yeah. Yeah.

FH: -- campus. So I think it's something to look into.

MA: Yeah.

FH: But I feel that that level of attention, and it doesn't necessarily mean just for gay.

MA: Right.

FH: But forcing that --

MA: Diversity.

FH: -- level for all things --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- without overdoing it.

MA: Right. Right. Right. I couldn't agree with you more.

[01:02:00] And, really, we've just been at the very, I mean, we've broken the ice in a lot of ways for the college and starting this.

FH: I think you have.

MA: That we've been behind the curve, I think, very severely as a college.

FH: Yes. Yeah.

MA: And we've really been running hard.

FH: At the 50th is the first time, apparently, anybody shocked the president at that president's lunch or president afternoon thing, and asked him what are you doing about gay people.

MA: Yeah.

FH: Huh? What's this all about.

MA: Right. Right.

FH: I didn't have to, at the 55th, of course, coming back with Tony --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- brought the issue, I think, a little further ahead because all you had is a little office sitting over there in, what was it --

MA: Right.

FH: -- the building that used to be the theater.

MA: Far -- or Hogg and Farinon. Hogg, yeah, yeah.

FH: Hogg Hall, yeah.

MA: Hogg Hall. Right.

FH: That was a theater there.

MA: Yeah, right.

FH: Yeah.

MA: I remember hearing that. I didn't know that.

FH: Yeah, yeah.

MA: Yeah, it's, yeah, it's, it's something that I think in terms of, so this is my tenth year at Lafayette and it's been amazing [01:03:00] to me what a struggle it's been to turn the corner in terms of working with the gay alumni. And there's literally been...

FH: Were you brought here for this purpose?

MA: I was brought here to direct women's and gender studies.

FH: Yeah.

MA: And my area of study is I do work in the area of LGBTQ issues. And so I'm an out faculty member, myself, and I teach gay and lesbian studies and that's my thing. But, also, as a person administrating the program, part of my job was to turn the work of the academic program towards thinking about gay issues and lesbian issues and these kinds of things. And so that's very much my job, as I have chosen to define it, has been a big part of trying to work



with other people, work with students and work with people in the library to turn the college to a place that's probably 20 years behind.

FH: I would agree, yeah.

MA: Yeah.

FH: The interesting thing to me is that with its leadership in engineering, what could you do to get that into the engineering curriculum? [01:04:00] Because you really don't want to be known as gay, generally, in the engineering community. I am known, internationally, because I don't hide it. And because I'm so senior, I get away with it. But I'm not sure if it would be comfortable for younger people.

MA: Yeah.

FH: So it is something that needs to be done. Secondly, I find that because, are our minds different or not? There's a lot of evidence that our minds work, gay men's minds work different than straight men's minds. Straight man needs to eat dinner so he goes, gets a club and go out, tries to whomp an elephant over the head and get lunch. We stand back and say better way than getting so damn close to the elephant. Let's use a spear or something. Stand a little bit further out of his way. Is that true or not? There's evidence, [01:05:00] that's not said exactly that way, but

there was a couple of people at Penn that were aware of the historic position of gay, mostly men, unfortunately, because women were there for only one purpose, period.

MA: Yeah.

FH: Create children. Whether they were gay or straight, it didn't matter as long as they created children. Men, there was a recognizable difference, whether they liked it or not. Generally, they accepted it because they found they did different things that helped the community as a whole. This goes back, you know, 8,000 or 10,000 more years. That there was a recognition and there was an acceptance of them because they were different. And we've lost that recognition. And especially in engineering. Because I do see projects differently than many engineers. [01:06:00] And it often drives them crazy. Because they can't visualize what I'm visualizing. And I have no trouble visualizing that.

MA: Something we teach in gender studies, or any of these areas that talk about diversity, is not just diversity for its own sake, which is important, because of equity and fairness, but diversity brings diverse opinions and diverse perspectives. So if you're going to put together a project, if you have a variety of opinions, you'll build a better runway. You'll build -- if you have different sets

of knowledges and different perspectives. And I think one thing that we've noticed very much in working with the LGBTQ students at Lafayette, and I'm an advisor to Quest, which is the student group, is that different, exactly what you say, different disciplines and areas, some are more welcoming than others. So if you're an English major at Lafayette and you go on to a certain career, you have a very different experience as a gay person than if you're an engineer at Lafayette. Of course, the students are less likely to be out, [01:07:00] in many ways, or so they report. And they have a different experience. It's not as, it's harder, in many ways, in some professions, than others, which is what I think you're saying. And I see that even at the student level.

FH: Yeah. And I would -- and Lafayette could be a leader in getting the gay men to be, and women, to be out about themselves and to use whatever, whether it's true or not, there's evidence both ways on whether our brains function. But there's pretty strong evidence that the men's brains function across the two halves, gay men's. And, where straight men, we know don't function across. They go out and whomp the elephant because they, their job is to get it done. And they kind of leave it to the woman to do the thinking, I guess. But --

MA: The --, yeah, oh, sorry.

FH: -- how do you use that? And if it is true, and even if it isn't, how do you use the different mental things that go on? And the engineering could become a major leadership if they could [01:08:00] figure a way to direct it towards that.

MA: Yeah. If it chose to. If Lafayette chose to --

FH: Yeah, yeah.

MA: -- it could do many, many, many things. And our uniqueness, which I think you point out --

FH: No, that's it.

MA: -- that's, our uniqueness allows us to be a leader.

FH: You are and were --

MA: But we have to choose to.

FH: -- a unique school. Yeah. I came here, I was going to go to Lehigh. I definitely wanted to go to Lehigh. They had the biggest testing machine in the world. I enjoyed the people. I knew several of the professors at Lehigh because I had really gone over there several times.

MA: Yeah.

FH: Bob DeMoyer, the head of civil engineering, I met with him. He said go either school. But I'll tell you one difference. As an undergraduate at Lehigh, your instructors are almost all graduate students. At this

school, every instructor is your instructor. That's his job, not his research. And I am available. You will have my phone number. [01:09:00]

MA: Isn't that something?

FH: Up until 10 o'clock at night.

MA: That's beautiful. That's great.

FH: And that was one of the reasons I stayed. Also, another friend of mine who wanted me to stay here got me a job in one of the cement mills, which he managed, so that I could have a job that he made sure the guys knew what I was doing and why I was there, and that they had to treat me politely. I mean, and they did. They're rough guys. They weren't overly happy at first about this skinny little weakling out there. I mean, I don't know how many times my -- and you had to wear steel-toed shoes. And they checked them probably every week or more, a few times, made sure I was wearing steel-toed shoes. But eventually my job, he'd gone , and the company as a whole, Penn Dixie or whatever it was, had gotten in serious trouble with the tax thing on inventory. [01:10:00] Their inventory was ridiculously bad. And, legally, they had to get it straightened out. And that's what he hired me for. And so initially it was pretty rough. But gradually they began to see that, first of all, they didn't even realize they had this stuff. And

so they didn't have to order it. They could just go in the stock room and get it because, again, it hadn't been organized. It was in the stock room but not...

MA: Wow. What a mess. Yeah.

FH: But wasn't put in the correct shelf because nobody had done it. And that was my job. And then, gradually, they started helping me find the other missing pieces of inventory, which nobody could find. And most of it was stuff like steel plates and other stuff that was very difficult to get. And when you needed them, you need them fast. And you couldn't order them and waste the time.

MA: Yeah.

FH: And so they had hide, like, buried in piles with a little hook at the end. And you could slide the piece out. They knew exactly which, in this stack. And so they owned up to what they had, [01:11:00] which changed, and that's part of the reason their inventory was so bad.

MA: Yeah.

FH: So over the years, I really became a great friend of theirs because --

MA: You helped them.

FH: -- I helped them.

MA: Out of a jam.

FH: But, anyway, that, so I did. And the real truth of the

thing is in my first year, one of your rough courses is that dynamics, statics and dynamics are the roughest. They're the killer courses that kill off the engineers. And it's critical to know that stuff or you're not going to get through engineering.

MA: Yeah.

FH: We had a big, major exam coming and I couldn't understand part of it. And, literally, about nine o'clock, I called Dr. DeMoyer up. I need help. He says come on over. We were up until one o'clock.

MA: Is that right?

FH: Yeah. And he --

MA: Wow.

FH: -- he couldn't remember all the details. He was getting out the books, refreshing, and helped me through it. And I did pass the course, which was critical.

MA: Wow. Wow.

FH: But, yeah, I made a right choice. But that's the reason that [01:12:00], the nature of the school.

MA: Yeah.

FH: They brought me here.

MA: So it makes us special.

FH: And like you say, it was a special school. And I think I got a better education. I know people that went to Lehigh

and their education was nowhere near my education.

MA: Wow. Well, that makes me very proud of my predecessors here at Lafayette.

FH: Yeah. Yeah. You had a great school.

MA: Yeah. Lucky us.

FH: Yeah. Well, lucky me, too, I think.

MA: Well, and lucky me to talk to you today. Is there anything else to add about Lafayette in the past or Lafayette today?

FH: I don't think so. I think generally--

MA: Don't think so?

FH: And you do know Tony's last name, don't you?

MA: I believe it was in all your information but go ahead and say it.

FH: Yeah, Hermann.

MA: Hermann is, so it is his last name?

FH: Yeah. Yeah.

MA: That's marvelous.

FH: And he did that. When I met him, he was still immigrating.

He, his father is an American citizen but he was born in the Philippines. And if he had done it before he was 21, he would've just automatically had U.S. citizenship.

[01:13:00] He didn't so he had to come in as an immigrant, which was easy to get in. But he had to go through the five years. And then, so --



MA: Yeah.

FH: He had met me and we were together for well over a year, I guess. And we go down and he gets his papers, walks over and shows them.

MA: Isn't that beautiful?

FH: He's now Antonio Garcia Hermann.

MA: You didn't even know?

FH: Yeah. You can take any name. When you get your citizenship, you can take anything for a name you want. Doesn't have to be anything with your prior name.

MA: That's a beautiful story.

FH: Yeah.

MA: I wish you so much happiness. That's great you found each other.

FH: Yeah.

MA: Isn't it amazing we can get married?

FH: Yeah.

MA: That's just an incredible thing.

FH: It is.

MA: If they had told you that when you were younger?

FH: Oh, you know, we just, it wasn't even, in all truth, we weren't even really, most of us weren't even considering fighting for it. It just was not going to happen.

MA: Yeah. Seemed so impossible.

FH: It was amazing when they did. And a lot of it came out of a few things. But one of the things was [01:14:00] the HRC and, okay, what was the senator or congressman who was gay and was so famous?

MA: Barney Frank?

FH: Yeah.

MA: Yeah.

FH: A whole bunch of them. There were things going on where we were trying to get a, an employment thing through the legislature. And they were having a lot of trouble, not getting anywhere. And HRC and Barney and a few others decided that one of the things they had to do was get this transgender stuff out of it, just go for LGBT, LG --

MA: LG.

FH: -- LG. Right. And get that.

MA: I didn't know that...

FH: Then add transgender later.

MA: Oh, I didn't know that.

FH: And they went public with it. And the blow back that came from us, that they got for that.

MA: Yeah.

FH: They were shocked --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- at the blow back they took.

MA: Yeah.

FH: And, yeah, we haven't got it yet but we'd rather live without it. But I think that was a major thing --

MA: Yeah.

FH: That helped, the Supreme Court case.

MA: Yeah, yeah, yeah. [01:15:00]

FH: Because they saw that blow back.

MA: Yeah. It's really fascinating because this sort of short-sided political expediency of, oh, we'll just leave, you know, issues of race out for now and then we'll just do, and it's such a lose-lose , and gay people are too smart for that. We know that that divides people and that weakens justice overall. And I was, I remember that blow back. Now that you say that --

FH: Yeah.

MA: -- years ago, and I was younger but I do remember everybody just being like --

FH: And that, I think, helped...

MA: -- no, we're not going to abandon trans people so we can --

FH: No.

MA: -- have our, have our, have our smaller group.

FH: Yeah. We're wondering how it will work with the California Men's Gathering because here we are at a camp, which is a children's camp, so all the bunks are in bunk rooms with --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- 40 bunks in a room or more.

MA: Yeah.

FH: And how do we handle the trans-gendered man who's still physically a female.

MA: Those are, those issues are...

FH: And we haven't had the issue come up.

MA: Yeah.

FH: And we say well, when it comes up, we'll solve it then. But we're not going to worry about it today. But...

MA: That's good. That's good. [01:16:00]

FH: We do have some cabins that we can arrange, although I'd rather not.

MA: It's when people choose to.

FH: Yeah.

MA: I mean, like, the, the trans person, him or her, their selves.

FH: Yeah. Well...

MA: What they want.

FH: You know, it's just, you know, how you handle it in the bathrooms when, you know, there's no longer a separate men's, women's bathroom. And the answer to that, of course, and I understand the college is doing that, is we no longer have, in fact I think the bathroom in our

dormitory is trans-gendered. It's just, it's a bathroom.

MA: All gendered. Yeah. Yeah. That's, that's something that we, we haven't utterly solved that problem but the progress in the last years here has been encouraging, to see the changes.

FH: The physical problems are a little more difficult. The gay center in Hawaii is the first building in Las Vegas to have been able to get away with a tra-- and that was a fight. But they fought it. But [01:17:00] there they had a building they bought that was, already had stuff in it, but they had to build the bathrooms.

MA: Oh, so they could do what they wanted.

FH: So they said we're going to build the bathrooms --

MA: Yeah.

FH: -- so they work as trans bathrooms.

MA: Yeah, as trans. Yeah.

FH: And initially the city wouldn't let them but finally cons-- and they just refused to change, basically they stood up and didn't change the drawing. They just kept pushing the city. Here's the drawings.

MA: Yeah.

FH: It's, you need a separate -- no, why. What's wrong with this?

MA: Why. Yeah, yeah. Just let us do this. Yeah.

FH: Yeah. And they just made a big political issue out of it.

MA: Boy, is there anything more stubborn than, than us? Frank Hermann, thank you from the bottom of my, of my heart, and also on behalf of the Queer Archives Project. And also on behalf of Lafayette College, for being willing to give this wonderful interview today. It's been such a genuine pleasure talking to you. Thank you very much.

FH: Okay. Thank you.

END OF AUDIO FILE

**Hermann Addendum**

MA: All right, we're back with Frank Hermann, class of 1959, who wanted to add something. Yes, it was something about access, I think?

FH: Yeah. One of the greatest experiences of my life was the good fortune to go to Hawaii in 1966. The governor of the state of Hawaii had a wife who was paraplegic. And as an engineer or architect, or, in fact, anybody who had just designed a new project, to watch the state police lifting the governor's wife in her wheelchair up over the stairs did not go over well for you, for any hopeful work in the future. We learned, from that year, I learned, and

obviously the engineers and architects in Hawaii, learned to design for handicap from day one. We just didn't build [00:01:00] buildings that a handicapped had a problem getting around in the building, getting into or out of it or getting between buildings. And many of the buildings here are older. They are problems. But as the buildings are renovated, we think that, I think it's critical to figure ways to put handicapped. We're in, is it Keefe Hall and we notice that if you come up the sidewalk, up the hill towards it, the only way to get into it requires going downstairs or walking what's probably a few hundred feet uphill and then coming all the way back. There is a short place there where a ramp could easily be built to handicap standard, even a 20 to one standard, and shorten that distance. And the same applies to others. And my point isn't, as a criticism, but that this kind of thinking apply to all of the projects in the building, in the campus.

[00:02:00]

MA: Thank you for saying that. One of the things that I was on the faculty diversity committee a couple of years ago and one of the things we talked about were the students and its administration, faculty, student committee, is some real access issues around a lot of the, the campus. Now, Keefe Hall, which is where you're staying now, clearly has some

of those. I always ask my students in a class when we talk about being aware of difference and diversity, where the ramp is on Pardee. And it takes them a long time to figure out that it's sort of off the side, on this one side. And if you don't happen to be on this side, you have to make a long journey around and go out to the road and all the way around to get to this ramp, right. So it's technically accessible but it's not really easily accessible to somebody who's differently abled. And it really means a lot to me that you, that you add this because so much of your interview has been about the importance of inclusivity. Different people, different perspectives, in the end, makes a better product and a better outcome.

[00:03:00] So thanks for sharing this.

FH: Okay. Thank you.

END OF AUDIO FILE