

GLAMA ORAL HISTORY PROJECT



PARTICIPANT: Kay Madden

DATE: November 15, 2017

LOCATION: Kay Madden's office in Kansas City, Missouri.

INTERVIEWER: Austin R. Williams

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: Kay Madden was born in Kansas City, Kansas in 1949 and grew up in Linwood, Kansas. After graduating college, she moved to Springfield, Missouri and became a librarian and subsequently continued her education to become a lawyer. She is a longtime member of the National Lawyers Guild, and has been a member of numerous activist organizations such as the Gay Organized Alliance for Liberation (GOAL) and the Human Rights Ordinance Project (HROP). She also served on Mayor Richard Berkley's Commission for Hate Group Activity and co-founded the Pink Triangle Political Coalition (PTPC). She worked for 32 years with her law firm Slough Connealy Irwin and Madden.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: Coming out, Anita Bryant, HIV/AIDS, the National Lawyers Guild, Slough Connealy Irwin and Madden, the Gay Organized Alliance for Liberation (GOAL), the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP/KC), the Pink Triangle Political Coalition, Mayor Richard Berkley's Commission for Hate Group Activity, the Human Rights Ordinance Project (HROP), the Human Rights Project (HRP), Richard Berkley, Emanuel Cleaver, Kathryn Shields, Dan Cofran.

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Kay Madden Interview

AW: All right. We are here on November—What is it?

KM: 15th.

AW: 15th, 2017, yes.

KM: 2017, yes.

AW: My name is Austin Williams. I am the interviewer. This part of the GLAMA Oral History Project and I spell my name A-U-S-T-I-N W-I-L-L-I-A-M-S and I am here with Kay Madden. And if you could, well, state your name one more time and then spell it that'd be great.

KM: Sure. Kay Madden, K-A-Y M-A-D-D-E-N.

AW: All right, and to start off with, I think we're going to maybe try to go chronologically as best as we can, and we might be a little all over the place at times. But if you just want to start with when is it that you were born and where you were born and what eventually brought you to Kansas City. Maybe your early years and the coming out process and however you just kind of want to walk us to the point where you were in Kansas City, Missouri.

KM: Okay, well, I was born in Kansas City, Kansas, on June 30th, 1949. Lived the first few years of my life in Missouri and moved to—My mom and dad moved us to Linwood, Kansas in 1951 and that's where I grew up, basically, on a farm in Linwood. Eventually went to Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, Kansas, for my undergraduate degree. That's now Benedictine College. And then I went to—I graduated from there in 1971 and went to the University of Missouri, Columbia, for a Masters in Library Science.

So that's really how I got to Missouri was I moved from the Kansas side to the Missouri side to go to the University of Missouri at Columbia. Met my husband there. We got married in 1972, which is the same year we both graduated with Masters' in Library Science. Moved to Springfield Missouri, and we were librarians there together in the public library system until—Let's see, we divorced in 1978 and in 1979 I went with my first female partner to Europe for a while in prelude to going back to the University of Missouri to get my law degree. So I ended up back in Kansas City in 1980.

I had decided to go to law school, to quit being a librarian and go to law school to get the J.D. degree so that I could be a specialist as a law librarian. Now that's not what happened. You know life intervenes. Plans go differently than—All the time I was in law school I was going to be a law librarian. I didn't take any trial advocacy classes. I was never going to be in the courtroom. And that's not how my life turned out at all. After law school—I graduated in '83—I took the Bar in '83 and then my then-girlfriend and I broke up also in 1983. And life was a little uncertain for me. I'd gotten a job working in a

law firm, in a labor law firm. Panethiere and Helfand was where I worked as a law clerk when I was in law school. And then the first couple years out of law school I worked in that same labor law firm and it was a great place to work. I got to write some arbitration briefs and politically it fit with what was now my view of the world.

Took me a while to evolve to my more liberal outlook in life. I wasn't raised that way at all. My family—Raised in a very conservative faith and a very conservative political view, so my life experience and the things I got to do changed my view of politics and so by the time I went to law school I was a more liberal person. So at some point along in my working in this labor law firm, the firm that I ended up being with for 32 years, Slough Connealy Irwin—and it came to be Madden; that's what it eventually was—asked me to work for them. And so I left the labor law firm in 1985 and worked with Slough Connealy Irwin and Madden until it closed its doors in September of this year, 2017.

So that's the most recent big change for me but that's recent times. Working with Slough Connealy was one of the best things. I met two of those partners, Fred Slough and Cathy Connealy, when I was in law school and they came to the campus to talk about the National Lawyers Guild. I didn't know what the National Lawyers Guild was. I hadn't known any lawyers before I went to law school. I didn't know anything about the law. All I knew was libraries and how to find information. So hearing them talk about the law in a political way—even though I had become to be more liberal—but hearing them talk about the National Lawyers Guild and the work of the Progressive movement and being the legal arm for the Progressive movement was fascinating to me. It was like really one of those mind-blowing experiences, one of those where the lights came on and I thought, I have found a place where I belong.

So this would have been the early '80s and at that time I was still with my first girlfriend and everything in the gay and lesbian world was very, well, you hardly even said gay and lesbian. We didn't have a name for ourselves really. I mean we were gay but it was so much more. It was so different and so, well, that term closeted is so restrictive. *[laughing]* It's a restrictive word. It was a restrictive time. So I wasn't really—In law school, which was already conservative—The University of Missouri, Kansas City, it's a fine law school. There were some great people there but it certainly was not progressive. And so to find this National Lawyers Guild that was progressive and was talking about how to use the law to change society was fascinating to me. And then I started going to the National Lawyers Guild conferences and found a place that I really fit in. And so it really changed my view of the law. And so gradually, I became more interested in the law as a tool.

After I graduated from law school and passed the bar, like I said, and broke up with my first girlfriend—well, she broke up with me to be exact; I have to be honest here—I went—When Slough Connealy asked me to work with them I jumped at the chance and all of a sudden I was a lawyer. I wasn't a law librarian. I never—I worked in the law library in law school but mostly I now became a lawyer. I was a practicing lawyer with a progressive law firm and it really was just a huge, huge change for me. And that's where, that's how I got involved with the political things that I got to do with the gay and lesbian movement. That's how it happened.

AW: Okay, well, so it was 1980 that you start law school, right?

KM: Yes.

AW: And then you graduate in 1983.

KM: Yes.

AW: Okay, and if I have the chronology right, then the National Lawyers Guild—Did you say you met Cathy Connealy there or before that, or?

KM: I would have met Fred and Cathy in 1980 when they came to the law school.

AW: Okay, right.

KM: Yeah, the National Lawyers Guild's been around for, I don't know, 70 years now, something like that I think.

AW: Right, right, yeah, and so the earliest work I suppose that you would yourself define as activism would have been legal work? Or where is it that—I'm definitely following the timeline of the ways in which you were drawn into the law and how that could—

Was there anything else around that time that you were doing? Or when did you ever consider yourself to be an activist?

KM: Well, it's interesting because I'm old enough that of course I was in college during the Vietnam War but I was not an activist then. I wasn't. But I think back to the time when I was living in Springfield, Missouri—which would have been, I said I left there in '79 so it would have been the mid-'70s probably—and I had realized I was a lesbian by that time and my husband and I got divorced somewhere in there. I think I said it was '78. And I had met my first girlfriend and so I was beginning to have more of a consciousness about gays and lesbians and being out and the homosexual life in the United States.

And Anita Bryant came to Joplin, Missouri and she was getting a lot of flack about her stand on homosexuals. And so there were a bunch of us who ended up in Joplin picketing her and I went with my husband and my girlfriend and a bunch of other people and we went and marched against Anita Bryant. I remember trying to march with a paper sack over my head for a while as a symbol of, "I have to be closeted. I have to be protected. I can't let people know who I am. I can't let people see my face," because of how she was acting and her hatred.

It's interesting. I think there is a photograph of Cathy Connealy and Sally Wells, who was a partner in the firm that I ended up being with. I think they are also picketing Anita Bryant here in Kansas City about the same time, I think. So there I was demonstrating in Joplin and they were here demonstrating in Kansas City and we would meet many years later. It's a nice coincidence.

AW: Right, yeah. Well, many different cities found many different reasons to picket Anita Bryant at that time.

KM: And another thing that I did during that time was—And it's so hard to realize now, sitting here in 2017, how revolutionary it was to even have something as simple as a rape crisis center. And in the '70s those were just beginning to be put together for assistance to women who had been raped. There was this organization in Kansas City called MOCSA and there were a group of women in Springfield who were interested in forming a rape crisis center. And so the women from MOCSA came to Springfield and helped us do that. And there was a couple women who especially were driving that and I got caught up into that also and did that kind of work for a while. We had a hotline. That was what we did. We had a hotline 24 hours so that women could call if they had been raped and we would try to help them through the legal process and maybe even meet them at the hospital for their exams. And we'd try to be with them through the whole thing. And so that was revolutionary at the time.

AW: Right. This was during your time in law school, or?

KM: No, this is when I was in Springfield so this is—

AW: Oh, this is back in your Springfield days? Okay.

KM: Yeah, this was more like the Anita Bryant time. This would be the mid-'70s.

AW: Okay, okay.

KM: You know, there were still women-consciousness-raising groups in that period of time.

AW: Right. How much did—I'm trying to phrase this the right way—the liberation movement of the 1970s and your own personal coming-out experience, I guess—Was there anything in particular that—Well, I mean Anita Bryant would be something to be opposed to, but I guess I'm trying to think—

In the late 1970s—Let me ask it this way. This is before the AIDS epidemic, the 1980s.

KM: Yes.

AW: And how in that time did you view, for instance, the relationship between gays and lesbians? Was it more splintered at that time, or was there an alliance with the things you were a part of? Or was it perhaps more about women's liberation rather than gay and lesbian civil rights? Does that make any sense?

KM: Well, it does make sense, but this was the '70s. There weren't really, that I remember, any opportunities for homosexual men and women in Springfield to work together. There really wasn't anything going on. There weren't any centers. There weren't any movements. I mean you were just trying to, I think—Getting yourself into a nightclub, there was probably only one in Springfield. I mean just even going to a gay or lesbian nightclub or coming to Kansas City to a gay or lesbian club was a big event and that's

where you would see other homosexuals, male and female. But there really wasn't an opportunity to unite with them that I remember. Like I don't remember there being any— There must have been some kind of organization somehow that got us to Joplin but it may have just been that we knew Anita Bryant was going to be there and a bunch of us just went on our own. But there wasn't really an organization that came out of that. So I think of it more as part of the whole feminist movement and because lesbians were such a big part of the feminist movement that it did go hand in hand at that time.

AW: Okay, yeah, and perhaps even community might be a better term than organizations as far as finding a group—The transition, maybe we'll go from coming from Springfield into Kansas City. Did you find yourself in any particular—either community of women or any particular organizations during law school and during the early 1980s, at that time? I mean the moving process, I suppose. How'd you make friends? *[laughing]*

KM: *[laughing]* Well, I was in law school so there was the community. And gradually, I got to know a few other lesbians, and I don't think I knew any gay men that I can remember at the moment, although there—Well, again, even then—As soon as I said that I thought, *No, remember so-and-so and so-and-so and so-and-so in your law school class, Kay. You've forgotten.* But there wasn't any overt way for homosexuals to have any kind of a group in law school at that point. I mean things are so different now. It's light-years away from where it was. I mean it was still kind of a whispered thing.

AW: Right.

KM: It was in the early '80s. I was in law school '80 to '83. Reagan was president. John Lennon was shot. Other stuff but that's what I'm thinking of at the moment. So there weren't really any groups at that point that I knew of. And so my friends were mostly with law school. There were a few people that I think my then-girlfriend and I knew who'd moved here from Springfield. And so we knew them and, say, a couple lesbians that we would see. And we would go back to Springfield and hang out with our friends there too. For a long time, we did that. □

AW: Sure, yeah, okay. So you graduate law school in 1983 and you joined the firm. Was that immediately or when was that?

KM: No, it was '85, I—

AW: That was '85, okay.

KM: Yeah, I stayed with the labor law firm for a couple years and then I joined the law firm in '85.

AW: Okay, and before you joined the law firm though you had become part of the National Lawyers Guild?

KM: Yes, yes.

AW: Right, okay. And so I guess in just those years, from 1983 to 1985, AIDS comes on the scene I know. And I guess it's interesting to—How do you remember those early years of the epidemic? And specifically whether or not AIDS was something that impacted either you as an attorney, as a lesbian. I mean gay men in particular, obviously, were heavily affected by it. Where did it register in your life in the earliest years, if at all?

KM: I remember—I think it was when I graduated in 1983—that I ended up with a whole stack of literature about the AIDS epidemic. And I remember lugging it around with me. I remember having it in my car and going to St. Louis with it and I was going to stay with friends one weekend and I was going, “I’m going to read all this stuff this weekend.” So I was trying to educate myself. And the Guild, at that time the National Lawyers Guild was very—Because there weren’t any other organizations yet in the early ‘80s, the very early ‘80s. And so the National Lawyers Guild was involved in the AIDS epidemic. They were trying to do legal work. And I remember going to a conference and having the distinct feeling or realization that some things needed to start happening. Things needed to start happening legally back in Missouri.

And I’m afraid I’m foggy on all these details but I did come back and try to get some kind of a—I was doing this on my own pretty much at this time I think. I thought, “Well”—I don’t think this was—This wouldn’t have been PTPC [The Pink Triangle Political Coalition] yet, I don’t think. This was some kind of—I’d run across a statute about how to change a regulation or something and so I was trying to get a petition together to change a regulation of some kind. Like I said, it’s very vague and I just remember feeling like I was alone doing this and trying to get my friends to sign this petition and not being very good at being able to articulate or persuade people to do this. And I think I did manage to get enough of whatever I needed and sent whatever I wanted to change into the legislature somehow, some legislative office I think, and said, “Here, can you do something about this?” And of course, they didn’t, whatever it was I was trying to change. So it’s not so much what I was doing, but I was having that feeling of frustration and knowing that things needed to be different.

AW: Right, so as an attorney—And I’ve actually got some talking points if we need, specifically from our last conversation, but some of the challenges for either gays and lesbians or people with AIDS that—I mean obviously, your legal work was more encompassing than those issues, but do you remember some of the particular challenges that gays and lesbians in the 1980s faced that you were helping with? And then also maybe this is an opportunity to talk about GOAL and what was maybe going on at that time and then what GOAL was.

KM: Right, so I did think about that as you were asking me the question. I thought, well, when I first—I remembered when I first went to work for Slough Connealy they were already working with GOAL, which was Gay—what’s the, Organized for Liberation. I don’t remember what it all stands for.

AW: Gay Organized Alliance for Liberation.

KM: Oh, it's G-O-A, Alliance for Liberation. So they were already around. They'd been around for I think quite a while by the time I came on the scene and started working with the firm in '85. So at that particular time, it was my assignment to work with Cathy Connealy. She gave me the assignment and we were trying to get hospitals to agree—In the Kansas City area, getting hospitals to agree to honor powers of attorney so that if one partner of a homosexual couple, one partner was in the hospital and if the other partner had a power of attorney saying, "Here, my partner has given me this power of attorney. I get to be in the room. I get to visit. I get to make decisions. Will you honor this?" And so that's what we were trying to do was we were trying to get the hospitals to agree to honor those things. And so my job was to—I think the powers of attorney—I may have worked on drafting them although I think they already had some good drafts. And we would send the powers of attorney and we would send a cover letter to these—And I would find out who to send it to and try to talk them into saying that they would honor these darn things.

AW: Okay.

KM: Which now, of course, again, is also pretty commonplace but back then it was not commonplace and most of the hospitals said, "No, we're not going to just carte blanche say that we're going to honor these things. We're going to do it on a case-by-case basis."

AW: Right, okay.

KM But again, it was a lot of education. It was a lot of—Even getting a no, we've done some step in educating and I doubt very much if I thought that at the time. I was probably mad and depressed that these people wouldn't do this simple thing. It was too much a bureaucratic snag for their legal department to deal with. But we were educating. Those were steps. It was all very slow, slow progress until it wasn't. It was very slow until it wasn't. Yeah.

AW: Right, right. Okay, that sound? I don't know what that is. I'm just going to make a quick adjustment just to be safe. I want to turn down the mic just a tad bit and then I'll ensure that—Do you hear that or whatever?

KM: Do I hear what? Oh, is somebody—Oh, that little noise?

AW: Yeah. I don't know what that—But it's—

KM: I don't know what that is either.

AW: It's okay.

KM: Oh, we know what that was. Geez.

AW: Okay, for the person transcribing this, this is just a small break. Okay, and I just turned down my decibels so that—And then I can just turn you up later, so we're fine.

KM: It's my computer. That's what it is.

AW: Oh, is it?

KM: I think it's my computer making—I think it's the tower here.

AW: Oh, okay, well, again, I don't see it registering so we're fine. So okay, we're back. So in 1987, I understand that you went to the March on Washington and that was a big turning point I would imagine in your activism. And if you wanted to maybe talk about what it was that led you to go there and then what happened while you were there and then what happened immediately when you came back in 1987. □

KM: Okay, well, things were changing, obviously, and somehow I heard about the March on Washington and I had a friend from Springfield who wanted to go. And so Glenda said, "Let's go. Let's go do this," and so I did. But before I left, through the woman's bookstore—I can't remember. Was it called the Phoenix at the time? It changed names so I didn't remember which name it had. I remember where it was. It was on 39th Street just immediately west of Main. So that was the location. I remember going in there for these meetings of people who were going to go to the march. And we were going to start lobbying legislators about gay and lesbian issues on a national level. So that took some organization, and so there were—I don't know, there may have been as many as 20. I don't know how many went. But several of us lobbied. Maybe a dozen even, or eight or twelve people actually took clothes, packed clothes so that we could dress up a little bit and go up on Capitol Hill and meet with the staffs of our senators and representatives. So that was a big deal. It was a big deal to do that, that organization, like that.

And then because of the great thing that that was—it was such an inspiring, inspiring event—when we came back, some of us wanted to stay together and continue to work. And I made a very good friend out of that, my friend Scott Neely, who I'm still friends with. He moved from Kansas City a couple years after that, unfortunately. So we got to work and start Pink Triangle Political Coalition. That was the activist group that we came up with in 1987 to start trying to do some political work and do some changing of some laws and also to just have a presence. GOAL by the time had faded, I think. I think they were gone by 1987 and I don't think there was anything else like—Well, there wasn't anything else like PTPC. There wasn't an activist, political organization like we wanted to be. So it was, it was a very big sea change for me. It was a very creative, fun time.

AW: You come back and you form the Pink Triangle Political Coalition. And I'm going to—From an early document that we've got from PTPC, four things that I had seen listed as issues that you wanted to tackle in that year on both the local, well, state and national levels included an anti-discrimination ordinance, a sexual misconduct statute, amendment to the Missouri Adult Abuse Act, and compassionate AIDS legislation. So if you wanted to talk about the goals of Pink Triangle Political Coalition and particularly the ways in which maybe you remember how to go about tackling both—well, I say both—all the national, state, and local—The question that might be better phrased is:

What challenges were posed in where to put your energy?

KM: Well, the age-old problem of having way too many broad goals and not enough people or the skills to even do that. This was before—Even though AIDS was going on, there wasn't ACT UP yet so there were just—it was all kind of piecemeal and trying to make any legislative change was difficult. We didn't have, I think a lot of it was just the talent and enough people. We just had to learn by doing. I remember going to Jefferson City and lobbying. And we had so many different things that needed to be changed. Remember that the sodomy laws were still legal. Those were still on the books. That's the reference to the sexual misconduct statute that you made. And that was a big priority. How are we going to legalize being able to love each other? Gee. It was a huge deal and there was tremendous, tremendous, of course, pushback.

And the ordinance, the local ordinance, of course, eventually became the thing that got everyone's attention and energy and the thing that actually happened. But that was not in 1987 or '88. That wasn't happening yet. We were still trying to find our way. And I think we probably—we had an education arm too. We were trying to do some education. I know we wrote a booklet, a pamphlet about homosexuality that we eventually disseminated to the state legislature. We did that and that took a lot of work. I think we got a little grant to do that. On the national level, I don't remember so much what we did on the national level. We probably did letter writing and maybe we reached out to our senators and our representatives. But what sticks in my mind, really, is the state stuff that we did.

AW: Right, and then would I be correct in—I think we talked about this before, but that *Bowers v. Hardwick* was in 1986, and was that an impactful moment? I mean, as an attorney and that ruling with the sodomy law? Was that something that inspired you to—Fight back is what's coming to my mouth, but I mean—How did you interpret *Bowers v. Hardwick*?

KM: Well, it was a setback of course, and we—I remember demonstrating down at the old federal courthouse, the PTPC, and I don't remember—I don't think we had ACT UP yet. I think it was just still PTPC demonstrating against the decision, and—

AW: My apologies! [*phone rings*] That is me. So for those watching, I had to turn off—And it's even a scam. My phone now tells me, "Scam Likely," which is—

KM: Oh my gosh.

AW: Yeah, when I get these calls. Let me see if I can put this on airplane mode while we're—because we're about to get to some exciting stuff. Airplane mode, okay, and now I go out. Am I still recording? And okay, so it's back on, my apologies for the person transcribing this. Okay, so I've got to gather my thoughts again real quick.

KM: We were talking about *Bowers v. Hardwick*.

AW: Right, right, and then—But you had also started talking about—So Pink Triangle Political Coalition was formed in 1988, or actually maybe even the very tail end of 1987, but definitely by January of 1988 you're around. And I know that ACT UP/KC came into existence in the late summer of 1988.

KM: Oh, so that soon? Okay.

AW: And what I do remember—and I have footage of you on the news, actually—was National Coming Out Day in October of 1988. ACT UP demonstrated outside of the FDA building and you were interviewed by the news that day for—But it was also, it was National Coming Out Day so it was interesting because that day they were doing a demonstration about AIDS but it was also National Coming Out Day. And do you recall at that point now, by the late '80s, and Pink Triangle Political Coalition's in existence, and we already talked about how one of the goals listed was compassionate AIDS legislation, so the ways in which you felt—By the late '80s AIDS was impacting—How was AIDS a gay and lesbian issue at that time?

KM: Well, gay men were dying. Our friends were dying so it wasn't—It had to be an issue. It had to be. We had to stand together and do whatever we could. I remember even back getting ready to go to the March on Washington in '87 that there was the quilt and that I think some lesbians here in Kansas City had helped put together the quilt that memorialized the area deaths even then. And of course it was majority gay men and so it was a galvanizing experience also. And it was frustrating. It was anger producing. I remember being so angry at the media and some of these conservative people about blaming it on gay men, further stigmatizing.

I remember having clients. I remember going to a hospital and trying to I think have somebody sign some, like a power of attorney or a will or something. I remember dealing with that. I remember Good Samaritan Project getting founded. I had a good—One of my close lawyer friends that I made during that period of time, Jeff Hiles, was a very, very big advocate of Good Samaritan Project and he and I worked on things together too. He was a wonderful man. He's been dead many years now but he was a great person and very, very active.

AW: Right. And when it came to, and this is something you had said to me in the past, that—You once said to me that you felt as though “the AIDS epidemic pushed all of us out of the closet,” is the way that you had said that. And I know there was a push at that time to get people to come out. And do you think that AIDS became a motivating factor in trying to get people to come out of the closet? I mean for lack of a better term, I guess.

KM: Yes, I do. I think that it also gave us something very concrete to deal with. It wasn't, “Oh, we need to get some statute changed. Maybe people don't feel the effects. We've lived our lives this way for so long. We don't need anti-discrimination protection.” But this was, like I said, people dying and so we united. And I think that people did feel like, “Now wait a minute. I mean I have to say something. I cannot be silent anymore.” I mean that whole thing, “Silence equals death.” It's very powerful. It was a very, very powerful statement and it applies to a lot of things but right then it was about AIDS. And that was true. We couldn't stay silent. We couldn't stay tucked in our little comfortable places passing, for lack of a better phrase. We couldn't do that any longer. We had to stand with our gay brothers who were under attack. Their physical being and their very existence was being attacked. And by connection, we were too because we shared that. I mean lesbians shared that. Other gay men shared that. We all shared that issue.

AW: So this will probably be a good transition into the—I'm sorry [*scoots chair*] I'm moving over because I want your eyes at a certain level—the ordinance that gets introduced in Kansas City and your joining the Human Rights Ordinance Project. As we shift into talking about that, do you recall anything that you did personally as an attorney—I don't know if you would have—regarding the debate surrounding AIDS-specific civil rights issues, civil liberties issues? So for instance, a lot of people were pushing for quarantine and people were talking about mandatory testing and was this something that, as an attorney, ever manifested itself in any specific ways? Or was this more broad goals that you were trying to combat on the state level? Does that make any sense? Or I guess just let's talk about it as far as just when it came to an ordinance that got introduced, the anti-discrimination ordinance, right? □

KM: Yes, yes.

AW: Yeah. That in Kansas City was not only going to add sexual orientation, it was going to make AIDS an official handicap status. So people felt those two things had to be addressed at once. Maybe you could just tell us about how is it that you came to join the Human Rights Ordinance Project and what do you remember about the initial ordinance that did not pass and the testimony and that experience?

KM: Okay. Well, it was kind of just a transition from Pink Triangle Political Coalition to the Human Rights Ordinance Project because the emphasis became the ordinance. So that became the driving force and that's where all the energy went. And so the energy that had been around PTPC just got directed to the ordinance. And looking back, I think that PTPC was more diffuse. I mean this was just one thing. HROP was going to do this one thing. Get this ordinance passed. And so it was easier to work on because it was so discrete. And that's just what happened and I think that happens with organizations. I mean organizations come. Organizations go.

So as a lawyer, I must have been involved in looking at ordinances. What were good ordinances? What had other cities done? I believe I was part of that probably. I don't have any real clear memories of that but it was just the whole, what was happening at the time. We kind of lived and breathed it. And Cathy Connealy, who was part of my law firm, was also very, very involved in this. And so she and I did a lot of this together, but then she also did a lot of it on her own. She ended up working with HROP and then HRP probably more than I did eventually. But that first ordinance was—I remember how vitriolic the opposition was. I think I was amazed at how people were so up in arms about this.

And it's kind of the same outrage I think I was feeling in general about the whole response to the AIDS epidemic. It was just—On a micro-level it was right there in my backyard. It was right there in my City Hall. And we would arrange for people to come speak. We worked with all kinds of different—We tried to form different coalitions, have different churches come in, ministers from different churches talk, business people. We tried to get a wide variety of people who would come in and testify. We would talk to the city council and say, “No, this is okay. We can do this. This isn't going to hurt anything. This is fine.” And that's a very simplistic way of saying it but that's what was going on.

And then there was the horrible opposition on the other side. So it was quite—The whole thing took a lot of energy and a lot of time and lots of phone calls and lots of planning. And we weren't successful the first time around. We didn't make it.

AW: Right, and actually, to backtrack just a bit. I just remembered that you were also on the mayor's commission for hate crime—

KM: Hate group activity.

AW: Hate group activity, yes.

KM: Yes.

AW: And I think that was formed in June of 1988. I don't know when you would have joined exactly but I do know that you probably would have been involved in that building up to the ordinance that we were just talking about. So what was that group and how did that maybe provide examples as to why such an ordinance was necessary?

KM: Well, it was Berkley who was the mayor at that time. And that's a good example of a vehicle, hate group activity, well, everyone's against hate group activity. And of course, there was still, as there still is, which is when I think about the mayor's committee for hate group activity. How that still is so—We still struggle with that today. So I think that here we were in the late '80s working on this problem and we're still working on this problem. It's one of the more—Well, very frustrating to have to deal with. But anyway, back then there were some people in town. There was—Lenny Zeskind is still around and he has always fought white supremacy, the Klan, Klan Watch, all those kinds of things. He's one of the big, internationally known people around that topic. And then there was a minister at was it St. Stephen's?

AW: Would this be the Reverend Mac Charles Jones?

KM: Yes, thank you. Thank you, it was Mac Charles Jones. So the two of them were kind of—Along with David Goldstein, who was at the Jewish Community Center I think at the time. The three of them were kind of like the people I believe who kind of pushed this group forward and had a very, very broad representation of people on that commission. And I was the person from the gay and lesbian community, although other people came to those meetings, but I was like the official member. And so that was a very interesting process for me to see how that kind of local group might work. And we came out with some recommendations and I believe that one of the recommendations was to broaden antidiscrimination and to have—I believe at that time, well, there either wasn't a statute or the statute that existed on the state level wasn't broad enough. And so we tried to broaden that or recommended that that be broadened to include homosexuals, I believe. I actually don't remember it very clearly. But that was the kind of stuff we talked about.

AW: Right, and I do recall that the Reverend Mac Charles Jones actually testified during the ordinance debate and gave a very powerful testimony about violence. And so when it came to the ordinance that gets sent back to committee, later on throughout that year rallies are held. In fact, you had told me a story I was just curious about. This was

introduced by Mayor Berkley and Katheryn Shields. And Katheryn Shields' efforts throughout this process—And you had told me a story about right after it failed you recalled her coming back to All Souls, I think, Church. And anyway, the allies on the city council and the ways in which you—Who were helpful, who wasn't, or can you speak to some of the political processes I suppose? Yeah. □

KM: Yeah, I remember Katheryn being very, very involved and I remember a rally that she spoke at one afternoon down by the horse fountain during this process. And then when it failed and there were a lot of people at that All Souls Church that late afternoon, early evening after it had failed and we were all so disheartened. And she came in later carrying her—Long time ago, so her son was still kind of a little child in arms, and she walked in with him and we were just all very, very proud of her and the work that she had done. But it was very moving. Those losses come hard and it's very hard to pick oneself up keep going but we did. We did keep going.

As to the makeup of the city council, I don't remember who all the players were. I remember a lot of work. I remember being very upset with—he was just then a councilman, or was he mayor pro tem?—Emanuel Cleaver. Because Reverend Cleaver was not on board there for—It took him a while. He evolved. He evolved over the years but back then it was still, I think, a very difficult topic for him to be in favor of any kind of anti-discrimination ordinance that included gays and lesbians. So he was kind of either absent or voting against. But that's how I remember it. I remember him—Now he changed. I mean he did change. When he became mayor he had a big commission just on gay and lesbian issues. That was his commission, so he did come around. Just right then, at that—At the time, that's all I had. I couldn't foresee the future. I didn't know how he was going to change. But right then at that moment, it was discouraging. It was very discouraging. □

And I don't remember—We were talking about Dan Cofran earlier. I'd forgotten that Dan was on the council then. I do remember a picnic, probably a Pride picnic, sometime in that period of time, where Dan came and spoke. Oh, I remember we had to struggle over, oh, even getting, what was it, Pride being declared a day. You know how they make special days? And they wouldn't even do that. The city council wouldn't even do that, but Dan—At least that's my recollection though. Maybe they eventually gave in, but. So Dan Cofran came and talked to the picnic that was someplace. And he was very supportive. It was really, again, very validating to see our city council people, those that were on our side, come and talk to us and treat us like we didn't have two heads, you know? And he was one of those people that I remember. I remember that. It was very moving.

AW: I think you were absolutely right in your chronology there as far as Emanuel Cleaver was a council member during that time of 1990, but it leads into the election of early 1991 in which he runs for mayor. But at the same time, Jon Barnett runs as the first openly gay candidate for city council. And I recall, I think you were the treasurer on his—

KM: Yes.

AW: So if you could also speak to the importance of demonstrating—Well, I don't want to speak for you, but that election, to have an openly gay candidate and what that could potentially mean and what it ended up meaning in that election and in demonstrating that there was a gay and lesbian voting block, I suppose. Or what was your role and how do you remember that particular political race?

KM: Well, my goal was to be treasurer and keep track of the money and make reports to the state. And it was also exciting. And Jon's a very open, charismatic person. And so he was a good candidate and I thought he fought a good fight and we just lost. Lots of people lose. But it was a beginning. You kind of think of, I kind of think of all of this work that any group does, but our group, in particular—the gay and lesbian community in Kansas City—those that were politically active, and those even maybe not. Every step that we took helped to do things like elect Jolie Justus and others. This has all come about because of that work that was done, GOAL and whatever was done before GOAL. It's all a progression. It always is. And so Jon was first very brave and it was a great thing that he did. □

AW: All right, and then I think that is March of 1991 when Emanuel Cleaver gets elected and it was that year that the Pride proclamation I think really became a major issue as far as whether or not he would declare a Pride proclamation. That same summer though, on the opposite side of the state line, another group holds their first demonstration against the “homosexual agenda.” So the Westboro Baptist Church in 1991 holds their first demonstration and over the next couple years I know starts coming into Kansas City. And do you recall any early experiences, either with Fred Phelps and the Westboro Baptist Church or just when you heard of them, or was there any—Did they impact anything locally that you recall?

KM: You know, actually, I don't have a very good memory of that. I bet, my bet is that if I heard about them I probably was treating them as some crazy fringe group and we didn't have to pay any attention to them. I mean I know that they—I don't remember when they started demonstrating at the funerals of gay men. I don't remember when that started.

AW: Do you recall at all—I know that in—So June of 1993 is when the sexual orientation portion of the ordinance finally does pass. And just a couple months before that, a gentleman named Kevin Oldham had passed away from AIDS and the Westboro Baptist Church was going to demonstrate at his funeral and Kansas City passed an emergency ordinance prohibiting demonstrations at funerals. Do you recall any of that time period? And if not, that's okay. I just—

KM: Yeah, I probably—Unfortunately, as a lawyer, I probably thought that was unconstitutional. □

AW: I think it ended up getting rescinded pretty quickly.

KM: Yeah, I bet it did.

AW: So I mean it was controversial in the sense that I think people were trying to figure out, this has good intentions but—

KM: No, that's not going to fly with the first amendment, so I bet if—I was probably thinking that.

AW: Yeah, okay. But after we get to this time period of the early '90s, I mean there's, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," and all sorts of national issues, but how long did you stay with the Human Rights Project after it becomes HRP instead of HROP, and where did your activism and your own career and life go throughout the 1990s?

KM: Yeah, I remember staying involved with HRP on some level because Cathy Connealy was involved for many years. So I was probably maybe on the board at some point, maybe. But I don't think I was ever—I was never as involved from that point on as I was in the beginning with PTPC and the transition and the first ordinance battle. I may have contributed money. I maybe have gone to some meetings, but not a lot. I also remember there was another group that came along, Four Freedoms, which was doing some—They would concentrate on elections more. And PTPC had done some of that. We had tried to recommend who people should vote for in the elections. And I think HROP did that and I think I was involved in a little bit of that, maybe questioning candidates or something. And I was involved with Four Freedoms, again, just a little bit. I think there were—There were a lot of other people that became interested and took the ball and ran with it and so I think I just kind of stepped back.

AW: Okay.

KM: That's how I remember it anyway.

AW: Yeah, and then we've almost always talked about this scope where we kind of get to the middle '90s and our conversations have always kind of ended there. But in the sake of trying to be thorough, has there been anything then in the last 20 years, 25 years, as far as your own activism, your legal work that you feel is important to address or maybe was inspired from that time? I just want to give you the opportunity to talk about anything. I don't want to just be like, "Oh, it's 1995. We can just stop talking," so yeah.

KM: Okay, well, there was always the National Lawyers Guild. I stayed involved in the National Lawyers Guild and for many, many, many years I would go to conferences and we had a local chapter. And so the local chapter would try to stay up on various topics and we'd have—Sometimes we would have regional conferences here so there was a lot of political stuff that would happen around those areas. And so that was probably more like the rest of the '90s and the 2000s, early 2000s anyway. And of course, at some point there became the marriage movement. Oh my gosh, how exciting was that? I remember—I wish I could pinpoint this but I can't—at some point, I was at a conference. I think Washburn had had it because Washburn Law School used to do, and they may still do, a gay and lesbian legal conference. So they'd spend like a day talking about various issues. And I believe—and I can't remember his name; maybe you know—the gentleman who really started the Marriage Project, Evan Wolfson, is that it? Yeah, I think it was—

AW: Oh, I know of the name, yes. I'm also thinking that there's a Mark Solomon?

KM: No, I think it was Evan Wolfson, and I believe that he spoke at one of these conferences and he said, “Well, what we really need is marriage.” And that was the first I’d heard of it. I mean we didn’t even talk about that at the marches, the ’87 march and then the one in ’91—

AW: ’93.

KM ’93?

AW: Yeah.

KM: That I remember, that wasn’t a topic that anybody thought was viable. And when I first heard him I thought, “You are crazy. That’s never going to work.” That’s how my mind—And I’m a domestic relations lawyer. I do divorce work. And this was something that I had never conceived and could not conceive. And so then when this actually started its slow, very slow—I remember it starting with Vermont and civil unions. That’s really how I remember the first kind of indication that something really was going to change. And then the very slow progress to where we finally end up today. And so that was all fascinating. And it’s not so much that I did anything with that. I don’t remember doing anything except trying to be aware and to do education to my community. I’ve tried to always do—If I was asked to talk about protections for gay and lesbian relationships I would always try to go give those talks wherever I could and to hand out information and to inform people. I did things like I had a column in—There used to be a paper in Saint Louis.

AW: Right, yeah, and I think your column was called “You and the Law”—

KM: Yeah, something like that.

AW: Yeah, I came across that.

KM: So I always tried to do that kind of thing. So even though I may not have been on any political frontlines, I was still trying to educate. And then once marriage started to creep in—and it did kind of creep in—people would go off and get married in other places or they were living in a state that recognized marriage and then they would move here and they wanted to get divorced. I was involved in a couple of, at least one early case up in Saint Joe about a lesbian couple that were divorcing and that was very—It was the first time any of that had happened that I knew of in Missouri. And so there were some other things like that. And then finally the Bar Associations in Missouri started asking, “Oh, maybe you would come, maybe you’d talk to the whole Bar Association about—Or be on a panel.” They have these multiple panels and you can choose which one to go to. And Arlene Zarembka from Saint Louis and I, we did that a couple different times not all that long ago. So finally, we got to actually talk about estate planning for gays and lesbians. And so there was a lot of stuff that I did over that time.

And I’ll say something else that I did with Jeff Hiles. Jeff had the idea that we—this was before the sexual misconduct, the sodomy statutes were thrown out—that we really needed to sue. We were going to have a lawsuit and we were going to sue to try to end

the sexual misconduct statutes in Missouri. And so he said, “Let’s do this research,” and so he and I did a bunch of research. We came up with a bunch of pleadings. We contacted Lambda, Lambda Legal, their Chicago office, and so they sent somebody here to meet with us and we had a bunch of plaintiffs all lined up and we were going to file this lawsuit. Now it didn’t happen. It didn’t happen for various reasons. It just didn’t. And I think maybe part of it was—this is my take on it—that Lambda didn’t feel like we were a very good candidate, that we would lose and that we would make bad law. It’s always a risk with doing progressive work is you go into the court system and if you lose then you’ve got, you have the potential to make bad law. It’s a consideration. It’s not always—It’s not necessarily a reason not to do it, but that’s a consideration. So anyway, that was another real interesting thing that Jeff and I worked on. So there was a lot of that type of stuff, a lot of it over the intervening years.

And now I just get to have plain old divorces for same-sex couples. It’s amazing. I always said—Once I became convinced that maybe we could get marriage, I always said, “Well, what we really need is divorce,” because as a domestic relations lawyer, that was the problem. When you had same—There were these same-sex couples who had these long relationships. They bought a house. They had all kinds of stuff together, and then when they wanted to split up there was no good way to do it. And there was no—Of course, a heterosexual couple, everything’s 50/50. Well, there was no way—There were complicated ways and expensive ways and the ways that didn’t always work of trying to equate that with a same-sex couple splitting up. It was very difficult and very unfair and when children were involved that could be a very unfair situation. I saw many heartbreaking stories over the years before marriage came around. So I was thrilled about that and now I get to do these divorces and it’s fair. It’s fair. Well, as fair as divorce law is, I mean—

AW: Sure.

KM: You could argue that, but it’s much better than what we had all those years, yes.

AW: Right, right. That’s interesting. Yeah, I never thought about it that way but yeah, of course. Okay, two things you just said and I think we’ll be good. I just want to hit on them and we’ll probably wrap up here in just a second—was number one, if you could speak to any memories in particular, who you might have gone with to that second March on Washington in 1993. You had talked about the 1987 march, but kind of maybe book-ending that chapter in the late ‘80s, early ‘90s, do you recall that march and ways in which maybe it was different or similar to the first march? What had changed by then or any memories in that way? Or are they both kind of the same and blur together?

KM: Well, it’s interesting. I probably don’t have as many memories of the 1993 one except that I got to go with Cathy Connealy and she was one of the founding members of my law firm and she was such a great person and she died in 2007. And just even yesterday I emailed somebody and I said, “Well, this would have been a really good question to ask Cathy Connealy and we miss her every day.” And I’m really glad that I got to do the things with her that I got to do. She had a wonderful political view and very, very, very, very progressive. I miss her advice terribly. Well, anyway, that’s a personal side note.

The other thing I remember—and this again is a personal side note—is my friend Scott Neely who I said I met at the time of the march, the '87 march. Well, by this time he was long gone from Kansas City but he came to the '93 march. And so I got to hang out with him some. And I remember him having breakfast with Cathy Connealy and I. I think the march was over at this time. We were getting to leave and we had breakfast and he said, “You know, I met this man standing in line for a restaurant last night and I really liked him and I think I know where he's—I didn't get his address but I think he's associated with a university in South Carolina or someplace. I'm going to see if I can track him down.” And they are still together to this day, from 1993 to 2017.□

AW: Really?

KM: Yes, Steven and Scott are still together. So it's like those kinds of personal stories. I wish I could say more about the politics of '93 but I don't remember. I just don't.

AW: That's okay, because actually the second of the two things I wanted to talk about, to just bring this to a close, was an opportunity, if there are any—There are many great people who are part of this project that I get to talk with but there are also many great people that are no longer with us that don't get to tell their own stories at this time. And so you had actually started talking about Cathy Connealy already but is there anyone in particular that you think their story, or any stories that come to mind as far as—And it's been a while since we talked about particular individuals but like for instance, some of the AIDS activists. I don't know if you knew Mark Chaney or—

KM: Yes.

AW: Yeah, anybody that's maybe no longer with us that—I know this is putting you on the spot right now to think of somebody, but is there anyone that we should be aware of from this time period that were influential to you, I guess, personally?

KM: Well, Mark Chaney was very influential. Mark was very in your face, throwing blood on, fake blood on the city council, that kind of thing.

AW: Right, [unintelligible 01:04:23].

KM: I think there was—*[phone rings]* And that sounds like it might be me but I thought I had turned mine off. But I guess I didn't because it sounds like it's coming from behind you, which is in the closet.

AW: [Unintelligible 01:04:32], but—Oh, it is coming from the closet, okay.

KM: No, it is. I'm sorry. I thought I turned my phone off but I didn't.

AW: No, you're fine. No, but we just might as well let it stop and then we'll pick it back up, right, yeah.

KM: Yeah, stop, yes.

AW: And then actually this is perfect because the sun's about to hit you in a couple minutes, but—So I think we're right on—What time is it?

KM: Yeah, 11:30.

AW: Okay, yeah.

KM: Yeah, we did great. I'm trying to remember the name. There was somebody else. Mark Chaney and—

AW: In the context of—

KM: Oh, AIDS, the AIDS activist, and I can't think of his name

AW: Yeah, there was—Marc Hein, or?

KM: Yes, that's it.

AW: Yeah, okay, okay.

KM: That's it because Marc Hein came from a family with lots of siblings and so I got to know some of his siblings over the years too.

AW: Okay, yeah.

KM: So that's the other person I'm thinking of.

AW: [Unintelligible 01:05:17] again. [*phone rings again*]

KM: Yeah, they're not going to give up.

AW: Yeah, that's all right.

KM: Yeah.

AW: It's all right. Well—

KM: We should just stop.

AW: We'll just stop there. Okay, I'll tell you what. So we're going to bring this to a close and, Kay Madden, thank you so much for your time. I greatly appreciate it.

KM: Oh, thank you, Austin. Thank you for your time, by the way. This is a great project that you're doing. This is wonderful. None of this would happen so I really, really appreciate it. Thank you.

AW: I appreciate it, thank you, yes.