

**D. J. Watson**

Q: Today is April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2010. This is Kathy Staley with Joey Watson. Your first name is actually Daniel, right? OK, could you say your name, your age, where you're from and what you do now?

A: Daniel Watson. I'm 22 and I've lived in Banner Elk and Boone forever. I was actually born in the old Boone Hospital before they relocated.<sup>1</sup>

Q: What are you doing now?

A: I'm a full time student now at Appalachian State University.

Q: The question I have first, it's kind of broad. How did you first learn about homosexuality? Where did you hear about it first?

A: Probably middle school. At the time I was in middle school calling people gay was like the big insult to everyone type deal. And I didn't know what it meant and I looked it up. I was like, "oh, OK." And like I already knew at that point that I was gay, I just didn't quite know the terms for it. I didn't know at all what to call it but I knew it was there.

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<sup>1</sup> The old Boone Hospital is located on Appalachian State University's campus. The building is called Founders Hall and houses Human Resources.

Q: You had already developed crushes on other boys? OK. How would you describe your own coming out experience? It started in middle school evidently.

A: It was slow in middle school. Like I didn't really tell anybody in middle school because I didn't know what to call it. Because it was like eighth grade when all that happened. But in high school it was just mostly like friends that I told. That's pretty much all. My family still is clueless, I think. But yeah, pretty much everybody knows now except the family.

Q: What schools did you go to?

A: Avery High School and Banner Elk Elementary School.

Q: How did your friends respond when you were telling them in high school?

A: Honestly, none of them really cared that much. It was mostly "OK" type response and they went on. I've never actually had a negative reaction to that.

Q: Did it ever get beyond your group of friends where more people knew about it?

A: Yeah.

Q: How did that happen?

A: I mean I pretty much wasn't that in the closet about it. I was like yeah, I'm here.

Q: And yet your family never found out?

A: I don't know how that one happened. [Laughter] They just didn't. Especially since I went to school with like so many of my cousins. Because my mom's side of the family lives within the same area, like within five minutes of each other pretty much. So all the kids --

Q: So your family's pretty much from Avery County for a couple of generations back?

A: Yeah. My grandma lived in Kentucky for a long time but she moved down here after my grandpa died.

Q: Did your family grow up going to a particular church or anything like that?

A: Not really. They've changed churches a couple of time. Not like religion but just churches that they go to depending on where they've lived.

Q: Did being raised in a church affect how you felt about yourself as you were coming out?

A: My parents actually weren't church-going people so I wasn't actually really raised like mega-religiously. Like my grandparents tried to take us to church when they could but my grandma lived in Kentucky most of the time that I was growing up so I saw her like maybe at Christmas if we drove up there and maybe when she came down. She came down rarely just because neither of them drive that well. Actually my grandma doesn't have a license any more. And

then my other grandparents were just too old to really take care of two young kids and trying to go to church with them so that never really happened. But my mom occasionally would go and take us, either/or depending on who wanted to take us, but other than that we never were like big religious people.

Q: So it wasn't discussed at home?

A: No.

Q: Has your family ever talked about gay people?

A: Not really. I'm trying to think of anything and no.

Q: You were in high school when "Will and Grace" was on and Ellen [DeGeneres] came out probably a little bit closer to middle school. Was that ever discussed at school or at home?

A: Honestly I didn't know about either of those shows because we just had a regular bunny ear [antenna] TV so we didn't get any channels. We didn't get satellite until I was in high school and then I watched Cartoon Network all the time.

Q: How would you describe the overall attitudes of the teachers and students at Avery High School?

A: Students, like I said, I never had any like intent-fully homophobic remarks. There were homophobic remarks but they weren't like... it was part of the whole gay and fag deal where they just called everybody that type deal. So it

wasn't like intentfully [targeting me]. And as far as teachers go I never had any problems with them.

Q: Did anyone step up and support students that were coming out?

A: Honestly, at this point I actually only know of five or six people that came out of my high school that were actually gay. So there wasn't a huge gay population there.

Q: Are these people inclusive of lesbians and bisexuals?

A: 3 gay boys and 2 lesbians, and one bisexual girl.

Q: Describe the high school, what size it is and where it's located.

A: My graduating class was 99 people. And that was one of their biggest graduating classes ever. The sad part is it was supposed to be 157 at the start of my senior year. So between my senior year and graduation we lost that many students.

Q: To drop out?

A: Just dropping out. And it's in the middle of nowhere, literally. It's somewhere between Banner Elk and Newland. Closer to Newland. But it wasn't a large school.

Q: Did it have a lot of activities, band, music?

A: Yeah, it pretty much had all the major sports and extracurricular stuff.

Q: Just a very small number of people?

A: I mean there was a lot of people there but it was separated between four grades so all the classes were like maybe 200 when they came in and they just massively shrink by the time senior year rolls around.

Q: Did you know of the other gay students while in high school?

A: The two that I actually found out about didn't actually come out until after high school. I mean we didn't have a GSA [Gay-Straight Alliance] or anything like that.

Q: How did you find out about these two people?

A: Talking to either them or people that knew them after High School.

Q: Was that something that you had heard of when you were in high school?

A: Had no clue what it was.

Q: Did you have a computer at home that you went on the Internet?

A: We had dialup so I wasn't like a major Internet person back then.

Q: So you weren't finding other places. Did you know about SAGA or any of the other gay groups in the area?<sup>2</sup>

A: I didn't know there was such a thing as a gay club anywhere.

Q: Do you think you would have gone if you had known?

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<sup>2</sup> Sexuality and Gender Alliance (SAGA) is Appalachian State University's LGBT student organization.

A: Probably. Because like I said, I had no idea about anything at that time.

Q: What was your, like in your mind's eye, what was your idea of what being gay meant?

A: I mean I really didn't have one. I was just like I know this is what I like but I don't have any way to gather information on it. So I was like I'll just go with it for now.

Q: Did you ask anyone for guidance?

A: I mean there really wasn't too many people that I could ask. Like there was a point that I understood what it was but I didn't really know how to go about like asking someone anything. I mean most of high school I was just like I know I'm gay but that's about all I know.

Q: Could you talk about what Avery County school's sex education courses were like and how you feel like it prepared you for your future?

A: The only sex education class we had was in middle school and it wasn't like a class. It was like a two- or three-day event where this lady came and took over a class and talked and she was a bit on the extremist side, to even the point that holding hands was sexual. So I'm not sure how well she actually covered that.

Q: You don't have vivid memories.?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did they talk about HIV prevention?

A: No.

Q: Or transmission?

A: No. It was like they probably mentioned HIV in passing in the STD section that she covered but they didn't really go in depth on that section.

Q: How did that make you feel?

A: Honestly, I was in middle school. I was just like, this is boring. And the lady was really, really out there.

Q: What do you mean?

A: I mean she even considered like holding hands with someone to be sex. Not even just like foreplay or anything like that, it was literally sex to her.

Q: Do you know what her training was?

A: Couldn't tell you. I think that's all she was trained to do was be a sex ed teacher but... It's been so long ago I couldn't really even tell you what she looked like any more.

Q: I was wondering if you recall any specific instances where you or other specific students were targeted for anti-gay behavior?

A: OK, to explain this probably I have to like explain the school situation. We were split up into like, there was a group of gothic kids, there was the football players, there



was the cheerleaders, and then you sort of had everyone else that didn't really fit anywhere. But there was no actual boundaries. Like in high school I was like sort of a gothic kid but not completely and then one of my best friends was a cheerleader that was like super pink and, you know. So there was no like boundaries in the social structure of the school. It was just sort of like, "there's not that many of us so we can't really do that, otherwise we won't have any friends" type deal. So that didn't really affect anything.

And then like most people were pretty like tolerant of each other because of the small group structure that the school had. I mean like everybody sort of, we had a really horrible cafeteria. It was too small for all the students to actually sit in so they had to open up hallways around it and like lounge areas for lunch period just because there were so many students going to lunch. So my friends usually were out in the lounge area by the drink machines and the football players would come and sit with us and the cheerleaders would come and sit with us so it was like just meshing of social structures. And as far as I know, there was no like targeted bullying or even bullying to that matter.

Q: In high school when there were parties were there people who were making out with same sex people just as a matter of being in the moment/imbibing in alcohol and drugs?

A: I actually can't answer that question because there weren't a whole lot of parties during my high school. And if there were it was private and they only invited like super close friends. And also because it was a mostly redneck type town place. Most people didn't really throw parties. It wasn't really like a party-type high school.

Q: What do you mean by redneck?

A: It was mostly like the hunters that wore all camo all the time type students and stuff like that.

Q: What were the females wearing?

A: [Laughter] Camo. It was almost entirely redneck-esque mountain type people. There were some more like high class richer girls from like private communities and stuff but it wasn't a huge number.

Q: How many elementary schools are there in Avery County?

A: Zero.

Q: So it's Kindergarten through eight?

A: I went to Banner Elk elementary school which is like right outside my house pretty much. And then as far as in Avery County, I don't really know of any. Because there was like Cranberry elementary school and Banner Elk elementary

school and they went to Avery Middle School. And at the time I don't think Cranberry had a high school, or they were building it. Rebuilding it or something.

Q: So these were people that everyone had gone to school with basically K through 12?

A: When you actually hit sixth grade, there was like a divide of students that came from different students but that was pretty much overcome really quickly, just because there were so few people actually going.

Q: OK, that makes sense.

A: I think my fifth grade graduating to sixth grade class was like 62 students. So it wasn't like there was a huge amount of students migrating. And most of those were kids that I actually went to pre-school all the way up with.

Q: Did you feel a significant pressure to conform to certain behaviors? If so, how did you respond to this pressure?

A: I mean that's hard to say because I don't conform to any standards anymore and never really have. I just sort of do whatever. If it's not in the standard then I don't care. So I can't really answer that question properly.

Q: So you're a nonconformist all the way around?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you feel like other people were supported in being nonconformists?

A: Yes. Especially when you got into the goth crowd, it was like no one really conformed to anything type deal. And I mean I went to school with two lesbian couples that had been together for like three years already when we got there. And I mean no one messed with them at all.

Q: Did the teachers know that there were these couples or was it something that the students kept from the teachers?

A: If the teachers knew about it, they never openly acknowledged or voiced opinion about it.

Q: Could you think about these couples and think of how this affects your previous responses? For example, did you befriend these couples and use them as mentors?

Q: It sounds like it was hard to find any information.

A: I could have probably went to the counselors but my counselor was a little weird.

Q: So they didn't open themselves to conversations?

A: They probably did but they were a little too enthusiastic about everything.

Q: How did you start developing an idea of what gay life is like if you didn't have any guiding you in high school? When did that start developing and how did you go about it?

A: I don't really want to say that I developed anything in high school but I sort of settled things with myself. Because you know, the whole time I was like what is this,

what am I doing, what am I supposed to be doing? And then I really didn't figure things out I guess until college when I actually had other people to talk to and get information from and all that good stuff. Because my high school on that entire sexuality section was a very dry place for information. We didn't have a big library either. It might have been like six of those book shelves out there, maybe, worth of books. It wasn't very elaborate.

Q: Where did you go in college to find out? You were living in a dorm or were you driving back and forth between home?

A: I lived in a dorm and I went to Club Expo and found at the time BGLAD.<sup>3</sup>

Q: BGLAD stands for the Bisexuals, Gays, Lesbians and Allies Advocating for Diversity.

A: Yeah, that big mouthful of a title for a club. And started going to those meetings and meeting other people and I was like "OK, I understand what this is now" more than I found out from other places. That was when I started figuring it out is like the first day of college.

Q: Did you go to anything else like the counseling center's counseling group, or just the SAGA Thursday night meetings?

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<sup>3</sup> Club Expo occurs during the first week of fall classes and is where student organizations set up booths to advertize their clubs to incoming students.

A: It was mostly SAGA. I've never really used the counseling center here for non-stress related breakdowns.

Q: How did you conceive of what gay culture was like once you started meeting people?

A: Honestly, I was overwhelmed for like the first two weeks. I was like this is a lot of gay people. Because honestly, I'd never met another gay person ever at that point so I was extraordinarily overwhelmed.

Q: What was the male-female ratio?

A: The first couple of weeks it seemed pretty -- honestly it was maybe three sixths and two sixths and females to males. Like the females didn't like overrun the males but there seemed to be a couple more of them in there. And then now it's sort of all females and like four guys.

Q: At SAGA, you mean?

A: Yeah. I don't know if that's just the end of the year or having been going this semester.

Q: What about the general student body? Are there parties or things that are not SAGA related that gay students are attending or hanging out with outside of SAGA?

A: Like?

Q: Gay friends getting together so that you are just friends with them, not SAGA parties?

A: Yeah. I usually don't go to the SAGA parties. They usually conflict with my schedule too much to actually go to them but I do hang out with a lot of the people from SAGA in separate locations.

Q: How would you describe the gay male population at ASU?

A: Seems pretty decent. I know quite a few gay male students that don't actually go to SAGA. Just because it either conflicts with something else they're doing or they just don't like how it works.

Q: Have you ever talked to them about what their dislikes about how SAGA works?

A: A lot of them are older students that started in the club. I should say they were students, they're graduated by now, but they didn't like how the club worked. And the club used to have the title of the "Hookup Club" and they still have that idea and that wasn't what they wanted the club for.

Q: What did they want it for?

A: To learn and to connect with other people and not just have a whole bunch of people going there to look for hooking up with somebody. I know a lot of people that left the club because of that name and how the people in the club interacted.

Q: Do you feel like that was going on?

A: I got that feeling after a couple of weeks of being there, that it was a lot of people just looking for someone else to hook up with and leave. It's gotten better though. But we've also lost quite a bit of people, I think by making it not a hookup club for LGBT students.

Q: I've heard that SAGA, which is the new name for the last two years, has seen a decrease in attendance and yes, it is the end of the school year so that probably has a little bit to do with it --

A: Most clubs that I've been to, they exponentially drop in members closer to the end of the semesters.

Q: Right. But you are saying that part of it is the type of -  
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A: I think we lost a lot of people because at one point we were like, "OK, guys, this isn't a hookup club. This is to come here and learn and to interact with people and have a community." And I think we lost a lot of people by doing that --

Q: How did they change it? What was different about the week to week meetings that it was no longer viewed as a hookup club?

A: I think there was a lot less actual social time in the club and it's more of an information and learning and asking questions and informative type meeting rather than say like



a 30 minute meeting and then the rest of the meeting is just everybody socializing type deal.

Q: How has it integrated you into the larger national LGBT world?

A: Like I said, they actually got me into the information itself and from there I've become more involved and more of an advocate for LGBT rights and found out about all the things that people weren't doing that were discriminatory and like all of that. Because of SAGA, I went to the National March for Equality in DC, which was amazing.

Q: When was that?

A: October, I'm trying to remember the exact date. It was a weekend in October of 2009. Now that's going to annoy me.

Q: Describe what took place.

A: I hadn't really thought about going and then about three days before it was supposed to start I got a phone call from my friend Alex and she was going up there, her godfather was taking their whole family and her godfather is HIV positive and has a whole lot of money and he's like, "I want to go out just spending my money and taking people places." And he paid for the entire trip to DC. He paid for all the gas that we used to drive there, he paid for the hotel room which was like right on DuPont Circle and by going up there, and then he bought us all kinds of stuff to

wear for the march.<sup>4</sup> And the march was amazing. There were so many people there. It was mind-blowing, the amount of people marching through the streets on the White House. It was mind-blowing. Especially when we got to the White House and everybody was lining up on the mall and back towards the monument. There were so many people there. And that doesn't include the people standing on the side of the street that weren't actually marching.

Q: Did you march with a group?

A: It was just like the six of us marching.

Q: What else have you been involved with here on campus?

A: On campus I've been involved with the LGBT Center since it opened. I started volunteering the second semester it was open and from there by being the volunteer I've done Day of Silence stuff.

Q: What is the day of silence? What does it mean to you?

A: It's a national protest to show people when a voice disappears how impacting that can be, especially when like myself, going around and knowing like 30 or 40 people from SAGA that were doing Day of Silence, that's 30 or 40 that you don't hear all day. And to me that is the power of Day of Silence is you're walking around and realizing that you're not hearing some of your closest friends at all.

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<sup>4</sup> DuPont Circle is a section of Washington, D.C. that is known for its large number of LGBT residents.

And like one of my friends was like, "I don't understand how your silence is doing anything" and I'm like when you know 40 or 50 people doing this and you don't hear anybody talk to you all day, then you're going to notice something. Then I've also been involved with the [National] Coming Out Day and some of the other smaller center and SAGA events.

Q: What are your favorite events that they've done?

A: The Coming Out Day was pretty awesome last year. I was in class like the entire period they did it this year.

Q: What did they do last year?

A: They had a giant closet on the mall and you could like run through it and come out the other side and I think they were doing T-shirts or something and there was just all kinds of fun stuff going on.

Q: How many people were participating?

A: When I was there, there were about 15 people around talking and doing stuff.

Q: Would you say that the gay men's community on campus is pretty well integrated and the different segments are associating with each other pretty equally or would you say there are segments that don't hang out on a regular basis?

A: Like through SAGA and the Center, I feel like they're connected a lot but they don't all interact through those and they're not always interacting with those two, so I

feel like they're sort of spread out a little more and not totally connected but connected a little bit. And like I said, there's been a huge drop in the male population in SAGA and I don't really know a reason for that. But that's something I have noticed is the male population seems to be a little more fanned out than the female population.

Q: What are the various cliques of gay male students at ASU? (example from my undergrad: theatre, activist, gym rats) Which groups do you hang out with?

A: I honestly can't answer this. I don't hang out with a specific group of gay males nor do I really know them enough to label them.

Q: Is there a lot of interaction between the lesbians and gay men?

A: A decent amount. It's not a huge amount but it's there. Most of the time I notice it during the hours I am in the Center and when I am at SAGA.

Q: Do you know of anyone, your SAGA friends etc., experiencing depression or trying to deal with their sexuality by medicating it or other negative experiences?

A: Not that I know of. I mean right now I know of a couple of people that are having some parental problems with them coming out. But other than that I don't really know of

them using or doing any kind of drugs or anything to offset that.

Q: Are your friends getting disowned or just working through it very tediously?

A: It's working through the barrier that the parents have now put up around themselves.

Q: Is that why you have not come out to your own parents?

A: I'm waiting to come out to my parents until I'm like moved out of the house so that I don't really directly have to be involved with them 24 hours a day after I come out. So I guess distancing myself from them first and then telling them. I don't know. I just haven't had that right moment yet.

Q: Do you have a sibling?

A: I have a little brother.

Q: So not someone you've come out to?

A: Honestly, I think he knows because he knows so many people that I went to high school with that knew, but it's never really been discussed.

Q: We've talked about Appalachian State University and the community but I did not ask you why did you choose ASU?

A: Honestly, it's the only college I applied to. There just weren't that many colleges in the state that appealed to me and ASU was close to home so I was like if I don't get in

any other college, and at the time they didn't have such a low rate of entrance like they do now because of the whole winning three championships and the increased applications, so it was, I don't want to say guaranteed that you would get in but it was more than most colleges that you would get in. And I mean I had a good GPA and stuff from high school. But it was mostly because it was close to home and I'd been on campus before and I liked the campus.

Q: Did being in the mountains mean something to you? You wanted to remain in the mountains themselves?

A: I like the nature just because of my religious basis that I've grown into.

Q: Do you want to talk about that?

A: I'm pagan. I'm mostly eclectic Wiccan with a few other things sprinkled in there. And that was something that came around in middle school. just one of my best friends, she was raised Wiccan by her parents so it just sort of, curiosity got the better of me and I asked questions and I got interested and then I was like I'm not that religious now so I like this, and went with it.

Q: Do your parents know about that?

A: I think my mom does because she actually bought me my first deck of Tarot cards. So that's a good possibility. Like I said, my house is not very religious. I mean my mom

doesn't like us using God's name in vain or anything but that's about the extent of the whole religious thing at the house.

Q: They're not bringing you up in a particular denomination with particular dogmatic ideas?

A: I think my mom would like us to be Christian, preferably like Baptist in particular, but it's never been one of those things like she beat it into us with a hammer type deal. So it's a pretty loose religious type deal.

Q: Do you have a fairly open parent-child relationship?

A: With my mom. I'm close to my mom. Me and my dad have the exact same personality so we *clash* horribly when we're in the same house. But when I moved out and came to college it got better, like exponentially better. Mostly because I think of our personalities. We just got on each other's nerves so quickly about everything that it just exploded. And we both explode at the same time because of our personalities so it just never went well. But I talk to my mom a lot more than I do my dad though, still.

Q: That sometimes is just common in a lot of families that the mom is more involved with the children. Do you have a strong identity as a mountaineer? Not ASU Mountaineer but your family is multigenerational in the mountains and some

people want to escape that and then others want to keep that identity as who they are.

A: Honestly, I'm not a huge mountaineer type person. Most people don't think I'm actually from the mountains because I speak a lot more proper and don't have the accent of everybody here. But it comes out sometimes with specific words. My friends make fun of me all the time because I say "warsh" instead of "wash." So it's not a strong part of my identity but I do love the mountains and I loved growing up here.

Q: Do you think there's any part of having lived in the mountains that have affected your relationships and how you interact in public with people you've dated? And I have not talked to you anything about your dating history so I'm being presumptuous.

A: Not that I can tell. I don't know.

Q: Do many of the couples you know hold hands in public or act affectionately in public?

A: I know quite a few that do. And it's mostly the female couples that do. I know a couple of male couples that do but I know a lot more female couples that are affectionate in public.

Q: Is that because you know more female couples or is it something you think is gender based?



A: Usually it's because I know more females couples because the male couples don't tend to stay together too long. And if they do then, I don't know. They are affectionate in public but they don't like hold hands sometimes. It's a little weird on the male side. It seems like the male couples don't want to be affectionate in public whereas the female couples do. And like I know the male couples when they go to SAGA and stuff they'll be affectionate but then again I also don't consider that like publicly. And then also I haven't really been out with a lot of the male couples to a lot of public places so. It could just be that I just happen to go when they're not being affectionate in public.

Q: Have you been in a long enough relationship that that's come up?

A: Not since I've been up here.

Q: I was wondering if you have found any gay mentors or role models either here or back in Avery County?

A: There are some gay guys that I've went to and asked questions because I figured that they would know more than other people the answer to it. But other than that, not particularly.

Q: Do you know many gay professors on campus?

A: No. I know maybe of two.

Q: Is that something that you think would help the student population, knowing more LGBT faculty and staff?

A: To an extent yes and then to an extent, no. I think it swings both ways on affecting the student population. I think the LGBT students would enjoy it more and want to take their classes more but then to straight students I think some of them might have a problem with it and avoid their classes. So I really think it would go both ways. It would be good on one part but the rest of the student population might not be open to it.

Q: How have you found the general student population, which I really don't like that phrase but --

A: I've not had any problems with anyone since I've been here. I've found that Appalachian has a very, very, very, very tolerant atmosphere. I've never had any problems at all with anyone.

Q: Were you out in the dorms?

A: Yeah.

Q: Are you in the dorms now?

A: For the last year. I'm moving to my apartment in the fall.

Q: How has that been living in the dorms?

A: The first two years it was great and then the third and the fourth have been like "oh, God, I don't want a roommate

again." But that has nothing to do with anything. I just need my own room for a change.

Q: Which dorms have you lived in?

A: I lived in Coltrane for three years and then this year I've been in Cannon.

Q: Is the structure of the room different? Do you think that might be affecting your attitude towards being in a dorm?

A: Cannon is a really nice dorm compared to Coltrane but I've just reached a point it's like I just want to have my own room type deal. To be able to go and shut the door and not have to worry about if I'm disturbing my roommate or if I'm playing my music too loud for the person next door. In a way I guess I still have to worry about that because I'll have people around me but it would be nice to have literally my own room again.

Q: That's very understandable. Shifting gears to a non-LGBT topic, how would you describe the pagan community up here?

A: I like the pagan community here a lot and I've actually been in the pagan community a lot longer than the SAGA community in terms of regularly going and participating in that. But that's also because I've been an officer in the Pagan Student Association for three years and a semester. So going into the fourth year now of being an officer. So

it demands a lot of participation being in the officer positions.

Q: What type of activities does PSA do?

A: We do the annual Halloween ball which the past two years has been a really good success. We've had a lot of just random street traffic coming through, people no one in the club knows. Then we also have the problem of we have people come and like do reports on the club. We have that mass entrance of people towards the end of the year being like we need to do a religious studies paper and then we see them coming back every week because they just like the people there. Like right now, we have a student in there who's 100% Christian but comes to the club for the people. So it has a really capturing -

[Tape recorder clicks]

Q: Hold that thought.

A: Thought holding.

Q: All right.

A: It has a really capturing atmosphere and a lot of people enjoy actually learning about the diversity of religions that we cover in there. We've had everything from Quaker to demon and angel presentations. And we used to do Pagan Pride Day along with another group from I think Winston-Salem. They mostly wanted the club so they could use on

campus space and then we had a fall-out with them because of them just using the students and then making the students to pay to get in. It wasn't pleasant. So we had a fall-out with them so we actually haven't been able to do that in recent years.

Q: Is it connected any with CUUPS [Covenant of Unitarian Universalist Pagans] or any of the local covens?

A: We try to interact with CUUPS but we're not like strictly attached to each other in any way. We have a bit of cross-member participation. We've tried to get them involved in stuff but our events sort of correspond to their own events that they try to have. Like the Halloween event, they try to have a Halloween event near the same time so it doesn't work out too well. Then there's another group called the Hearth which is like the Ostara group. We've interacted with them a lot and they've recently just sort of disappeared off our radar. Haven't really talked to them recently.

Q: Were they primarily community members or were there a lot of students?

A: It was mostly like a private community type organization I guess. It wasn't campus related.

Q: Is PSA primarily students or are there community members?

A: It's almost entirely students. And then CUUPS is mostly the community members with students going to that also.

Q: What would you say would be the primary meeting focus? Education or worship or --

A: For PSA? It's all education based. Every week we do either like a workshop of like, hands-on workshop. We've done wand making and dream catcher making and stuff like that. And we usually have a 45 minute presentation on a religious subject of some kind or something. Like our last meeting was on Tarot and different divination tools and the one before that was angels and demons. It's an educational type deal. We have a lot of Religious Studies majors come there to augment what they learn in their religious classes.

Q: Are there religious classes that have the nature religion component?

A: A couple of semesters ago there was a nature-based faith class.

Q: Was it in Anthropology or was it...?

A: I want to say it was in the Religions Department. And I started in that and it was an overwhelming workload of reading and papers and stuff and it was just too much with the other core classes I had and since it wasn't required it was the first class that I considered dropping. So that was the first class I dropped for that semester. Mostly

because the first day of class he's like, "Go to the book store and buy these 15 books." It was a lot of work for like a 2000 level class.

Q: Have you all talked about the intersections between gay sexuality and paganism in any of the meetings?

A: No, we haven't really brought sexuality stuff into -- we usually try to do general overview type deals because we came to the conclusion we don't actually want to teach a class. We want people to enjoy it and not get burnt out with it and stop coming because they feel like they're coming to a class every week. So we try to keep it fun and entertaining and brief so that they don't tune out and not come back to meetings.

Q: The reason why I had asked you about Radical Faeries is I was trying to see if you had crossed over into the gay male pagan society.

A: I never even heard of them. I was like, Radical Faeries?

Q: Yes, they were created in the '70s by Harry Hay who was one of the founding members of the first gay organization that lasted more than one year in the United States. It's a very interesting group of people.

A: When you first said that, I imagined like the fairies from like Peter Pan running around throwing bombs at people. When you first said that I was like, Radical Faeries?

Q: Yeah, they're not radical as in the Lesbian Menace.

They're radical as in they wear tutus.

A: The basis of that is when you said fairies I was thinking in a pagan mindset and not in an LGBT mindset so I was like, Radical Fairies?

Q: Would you return to your high school reunion?

A: If my high school ever has one, then yes. As far as I know they have never had such a thing. If I get an invite for one in a couple of years then, sure, I will go back if I'm in the country at that time and can make it, then I'll go. But as far as I know they've never had a reunion type deal.

Q: Do you feel more connected to the high school classmates than the college classmates or is it a big --

A: No.

Q: -- mixture?

A: There's a couple of people that I still talk to from high school but for the most part they went everywhere. They just scattered across the country to different colleges.

Q: So do you feel like you'll stay in touch with your college friends?

A: Probably a lot more than the high school ones. I occasionally talk to some of the high school ones across Facebook and stuff but other than that it's nothing huge.

**END OF FILE**