

## Betsy

Q: OK, we're good. This is Mike Howe, from Appalachian State University. And I'm with Betsy Willis, interviewing her on April the 14th, 2010. So, Betsy, would you introduce yourself and -- and tell us a little bit about who you are and, if you're not from North Carolina, how you came to -- to be here or how you came to be in this area, and we'll just sort of go from there?

A: OK. My name is Betsy. And I've lived in the Boone area for about 20 years. I was born in Virginia, raised in Alabama. So I've got this bastard accent.

Q: (laughs)

A: Married a Virginian, so I lived in -- And I've lived in Florida. Anyway. I moved here 20 years ago, when I had a break-up in a relationship, that was just devastating. And I went to a clinical social worker, who said, "Betsy, you need nurturing. And nothing will nurture you better than your grandchildren." And they happened to live in Boone. So I moved up here and rented a place for a year, to see if -- if I could make the change. And then I built me a log cabin, out in [Zionville?]. And I loved living out there. But it was 20 minutes from Boone and I wasn't getting any younger. I'm almost 83. And my daughter had this little

apartment, that -- I have to live in it 100%. I mean, it was a hard move. But I love being in town and being able to just run to the grocery store and back in five minutes, rather than 40 minutes, from where I used to live. So I've had a -- an experience of the rural part of Watauga County, as well as the city, using the term loosely.

Q: (laughs)

A: And I find it's a place that's -- I -- I was raised in an -- a university town. So, you know, there's something about a small university town that is so accepting and so -- I want to say democratic, that really appeals to me. And I have lived in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and it is one closed community, overshadowed by the Army and the rigidness of that kind of place. What else do you want to know?

Q: Well, you know, I think one thing I'd like to know is what -- why did you decide to participate in this?

A: Well, as I wrote you, everybody likes to talk about themselves.

Q: OK.

A: So. (laughter) Being gay was -- You know, my -- When I was a little girl, I remember liking to put on my brother's pants. And I -- and I did it in secret. So somehow another, even at the age of four, I knew that that was not

the right thing to do. And -- But then I led a -- a totally heterosexual life, because, I mean, the -- You had sissies but, you know, it just was not accepted. I mean, it just wasn't even talked about. It wasn't even --

Q: What did "sissy" mean, when you were growing up?

A: "Sissy" meant a boy who liked to do things girls did. And usually they were smart. They would be called a nerd now, right? But -- And we had sev-- we -- I wa-- I was raised during World War II, so we didn't have cars, because gas was rationed and tires were rationed, you know. So we sort of ran in a crowd. And within our crowd, there were two boys I would consider sissy. But we loved them just like we did the others, you know? And -- and when I went out to -- to college -- I came to college in Virginia. And one of them, of all places, went to Virginia Military Institute.

Q: Hm!

A: And so we got together a lot on weekends. And he married and has had children and all. So, I mean, I have no idea that he's even bisexual. But -- and the other -- other one, I think of the same way. But anyway, I think the first time I really was attracted to another woman was -- I was about 15 or 16 years old -- at camp. And I was real good horseback rider. And the head of the riding program took a real interest in me and gave me extra attention and

all. And I just -- I just thought she hung the moon. I really did. And she -- And after camp was over, we went riding together. She set up a program that included others too, that gave us special attention in certain kinds of riding and that kind of thing and different type horses. And anyway, I just -- I just thought she was -- hung the moon. And -- and when I think about it, Mike, you know, I loved my husband and all but it was different. It was a different attraction. And I graduated from college, got married. I was married for 34 years. And --

Q: What year did you get married?

A: '48. And I -- I certainly was interested in various women, who became just very close friends, during my marriage and all. And -- But then the -- my husband -- I look back on it now and I know he was depressed. He ended up killing himself. So I was senior warden of the -- one of the Episcopal churches in my town. And we got a young woman priest as a curate. And soon as she arrived, the rector of the church went on his vacation and said, "Betsy, get her settled in," and all this. Well, it was just -- Here was Charles suffering from depression. But, I mean, he was just -- he was not present. And here was this young woman, who represented the mystery of my faith, I guess you -- Anyway, it was a deep, deep connection. And it was really

risky. Here she was just being ordained as a priest in the Episcopal Church and -- Anyway, I remember asking her, "What do you expect from me?" And she said, "Betsy, all I want from you is that you're beside me every night and every morning." And I thought, "God, that's asking too much of me. I," you know, "can't do that." But I did. And Charles moved out. And she got a call to a church in Fayetteville. So we moved down -- down to Fayetteville together. And her church was -- I would call it a friends church. It had -- it had Army. It had civilians. It had gay people. It had very rigorously straight retired Army. But it was -- it was perfect for accepting both of us. And I was there with her about ten years. And, you know, mental health just played (laughs) a big part in my separations. Because she just changed --

Q: Oh.

A: -- after about ten years. I still look back on it, though, as -- Certainly the first eight were just -- I'd never been that happy. And -- and she -- I don't know -- she gave me something that I really needed and has -- It's helped support me as a single person. When I moved up here, my -- I had never lived by myself. I moved from my mother's home to my husband's home to Lucy's home. And I -- when I went to the grocery store, I didn't even know what to buy,

because I didn't know what I liked.

Q: (laughs)

A: So I was just sort of a lost soul. And -- But anyway. And then I connected with a group of women here who were starting a spiritual sort of program. And some of them were gay. Some of them weren't. But the -- it was all -- we all had some of the same hunger for somebody knowing who we were. And so we developed a program from that, which we offered to women, gay and straight. And -- and it's been going on for about ten years.

Q: Wow!

A: So. But it's -- it's been my lifeline since I've been up here. So. And I'm going to (inaudible) to go on.

Q: Sounds good.

A: It's -- Yeah.

Q: Well, if you don't mind, can I ask you, from that time when you were married --? So you had -- you had had the attraction to the horseback riding instructor. And then you met your partner that you went to Fayetteville with.

A: Yeah.

Q: So was there a point in that time where you realized something about your own sexuality? Or was that just that catalyst, when she came to town? Or --?

A: I had -- I had real close friends that I knew I liked

better than others. But it wasn't any -- I mean, I wouldn't -- I just wouldn't go there, I don't think. And I think it was when Charles sort of let the relationship, in his depression, was when I grabbed onto Lucy.

Q: Mmm hmm. And you had had children, by then?

A: I had one daughter.

Q: OK.

A: Yeah.

Q: Did she go with you to Fayetteville?

A: No, she was already married by then.

Q: Oh, OK.

A: Yeah.

Q: OK.

A: Yeah.

Q: All right.

A: Yeah. I was -- what? -- 54 or something like that.

Q: And was that a surprise for her, or your family or friends?

A: You know, I don't know, because I -- Well, it wasn't a surprisi-- It was a surprise to Mary, my daughter, because Charles -- I said I was going to tell her about it and Charles said, "Oh, don't. Please don't." So I didn't. And she was with him one day and said, "I'm furious with Mother, because she didn't tell me about herself and Lucy." And he said, "Oh, that's my fault." He -- Somehow another,

it was almost like I cut off all my friends. Because I would have -- I would have phone calls from people who were out of town that knew I was separating from Charles and they would leave messages that say, "Are you crazy? What are you doing?" And so I just shirked away from -- And -- and what I found -- what I found out is that, you know, I left them. They never left me. Because all of those old relationships have been renewed and --

Q: Wow!

A: So. And I've talked to most of them very openly about how things were and all. So that's been nice. But it was like my own shame or something -- As long as I kept all my past out of it, then I wouldn't be so conscious of my own shame, something like that. And I probably wouldn't have ever left Lucy, except -- First of all, the -- the clinical social worker also -- She -- Lucy was going to her too. And she said, "Betsy, Lucy has some serious issues. And I think you ought to look at you all's relationships." That was when it was beginning to suffer anyway. And I don't know -- I don't know where I'm going with this. Lucy was 19 years younger than I. But there's almost like, to me, Mike, there's a -- that the spiritual sexual component is closed. I mean, I don't know. It's one of those mysteries that I just recognize as a mystery. But to me, her being a



priest, I think, played a role in the attraction.

Q: Hm.

A: And -- and I haven't had that -- I mean, it was like -- People talk about "the love of my life" and all and I think that that period, when we were so together, was so satisfying that I don't -- I don't -- I haven't been attracted to anybody since. And we're still in communication. We're good friends. She's in bad physical shape -- down in Alabama. And I talked to her last night.

Q: Wow.

A: So we're still connected some.

Q: Hm. So that relationship ended and you came to Boone --

A: Right.

Q: -- and stayed here. I guess, what have you found different about being here than being in -- in Fayetteville? What is life like for you as a person who identifies as you do? Do --? Lesbian? Do you identify as lesbian or --?

A: I don't broadcast it or anything. But, I mean, I haven't hidden it. I mean, I talk openly about Lucy. I mean, it just -- it sounded like -- If I had a false tooth, I wouldn't go right -- (laughter) you know, [all sum?]. It doesn't seem important, you know.

Q: OK. So it's just a -- a characteristic but it's not, for you --

A: Right.

Q: -- sort of like a primary characteristic.

A: Right.

Q: OK. So is that sort of the way you interact with the world here and the same when you were in Fayetteville --

A: Yeah!

Q: -- that it's just sort of --

A: Yeah, yeah.

Q: -- second --? OK.

A: Right. It's like -- But what's happened here is, me being a single person -- I mean, I realize now that I gave -- that being a partner of Charles and Lucy both, were crutches for me. And so I think that was what was so fearful about being on my own, was I wasn't enough of a person to exist without that crutch. And I found out that's not true. And -- I -- I'm of the generation where all nice, quote, unquote, young ladies married -- got -- got married, had children, and lived happily ever after. So the -- And most of my friends got married before I did. So it was the way to go. And I wonder, to this day -- My mother was such a Southern lady. I wonder, to this day, if she'd been alive, would I have been able to make the cut.

Q: Mmm. So she had already passed?

A: Yeah. Yeah. Because the -- the -- it was such a huge no-

no. That's it. That's --

Q: Hmm. So what's your connection to the community here? Do you -- do you feel connected to the local LGBT --

A: No.

Q: -- community at all or --?

A: Not particularly. No. I have many gay friends but they're just -- but they're connected either to the -- I went to the -- I had a young friend from Fayetteville who's gay come up one weekend, years ago, and we went to the, I think, MMC Church.

Q: Mmm hmm.

A: But I wasn't particularly dr-- St. Luke's is - is such a great community, for me. And it's, you know, a real mixture of street people, university professors, you name it. You know, it's a real hodgepodge. And --

Q: (clears his throat) Excuse me.

A: So -- so the -- the MMC Church was the way -- only way I knew of that community. And the women I met there or guys -- That's been years ago, though. I didn't feel particularly drawn to them. And -- and this -- this [Newman?] community that I was in just answered all my needs, all friends and all.

Q: Hmm. So you have other gay friends here in this area. And it sounds like you're saying that you all sort of -- this

is an aspect of your personality or your person but it's not maybe a key element, like it is --

A: No, no.

Q: -- for some people. OK. So would you say that was what drew you together? Or did -- was it just it happened to be part of it but other things connected you?

A: I think it was other things. Through the community of St. Luke's, the priest at that time offered several weekend kind of courses. And I met this woman at one of them who was a spiritual director. And I felt like that was what I needed. And so I spoke to her about -- about that. And she said, "Betsy, I'm getting together a group. Would you like to be a part of that?" And it was a wonderful group of mixed women. And -- and it was -- it was a -- it wasn't a therapy group but it was an in-depth sharing group. And that just grew and grew. And I'm still in it. And it just seemed like it became easier for me to socialize in these group settings. And now I'm in too many of them.

Q: (laughs) It sounds like you have a very strong need for significant sort of intimate relationships with women --

A: Right.

Q: -- but not necessarily on a relation-- romantic or --

A: Right.

Q: -- sexual relationship kind of -- of dimension. It's just

that connection to other women.

A: It's -- Yeah.

Q: Hmm.

A: And something else that might play into that is my father was a tobacco buyer and so my -- He was from Virginia. My mother was from Alabama. But anyway, during the growing season for tobacco, he didn't have any work to do. So we would always go to Alabama to visit my mother's -- my grandparents. And while we were down there the year I was six years old, he was invited to go on a fishing trip with some local men. And he drowned.

Q: Oh, no!

A: So at age six I lost my father. And Mother never dated, never -- And he became just this saint, you know. And as I look back on it now, that must have put a hell of a burden on Charles Willis, that the husband was supposed to be the great saint. But anyway, so -- so pleasing my mother was real important to me. In fact, I remember Charles saying, "You and your brother and sister seem to think a hell of a lot about what -- what your mother thinks about you." And he said, "I could care less what -- what my mother (laughs) thinks about me." And he was right. So. So, I mean, the feminine influence, that was powerful.

Q: Well, you -- you mentioned a minute ago that you weren't

sure that you could have left your marriage, if your --

A: Right.

Q: -- mother had been alive.

A: My mother loved Charles. She did. Yeah.

Q: Hmm. So she -- in your thinking, she never had an inkling or -- Do you think she would have responded negatively to that change in your life?

A: Oh, I think she would have, yeah. But, I mean, I don't know. I mean, it's -- it's sort of like I'm not going to go there. And yet I've -- I've entertained, at times, the -- the thought that Mother would have liked Lucy, as she was when I first met her. So, you know, who knows?

Q: Hm! Well, what is like -- what is life like here, for you?

A: It's very easy. These 20 years have gotten me to recognize that I'm a worthwhile being and that what I do and say matters and -- and that putting myself first is not something that's a no-no, that I can't give to others if I'm not fairly balanced myself. So these years here have been a real sort of grounding for me in myself. And -- And it's great, I mean, having my daughter next door. I see her every day. And we probably have got the best relationship we've ever had.

Q: Is that right?

A: Yeah. So that's nice. And -- and pretty soon after I

moved into the apartment a couple of years ago, I had a heart attack, which just reinforced that my moving into town was the right thing to do. So.

Q: And the grandkids are around?

A: Well, one of them's about to get married and, the other one, we hope she does.

Q: (laughs)

A: Yeah, they're there. One -- one just finished at UMC Asheville. And he's working in -- near Newport News. So.

Q: Wow. And so how -- what do you think they think about the time you were with Lucy or, you know, how do they sort of think of you, as their grandmother?

A: Well, their other grandparents, I would say, are fairly eccentric traditional. (laughs) In fact, the last time I went in Peter's room, he had a picture of them that sort of looked like that Gothic thing of the farmer and --

Q: Oh, right. (laughs)

A: Yeah. And then the -- and then he had a picture of me in clown makeup. So, I mean, (laughter) that's -- that's the -- So I think they see me as an eccentric eccentric.

Q: Hmm. But not really a -- a piece of your life they've expressed a whole lot of interest in?

A: I think Mary said that Clara asked her, at some point, was -- when I was living with Lucy, were we connected in any

way. And I don't what she answered. But they never have asked me.

Q: Hm.

A: So. But I would tell them if they asked me. So. But there's -- there's something in -- in that time with Lucy that just -- I mean, I've done -- I've journaled on it for pages and pages and pages. I've kept all her letters. You know, it just -- it's sort of -- it's almost like that's when I really grew into a part of myself that hadn't been alive before then or something. But it's very meaningful to me. And -- and she's just not the same person she was then. I mean, I have no attraction to her whatsoever. And she's in such bad health that --

Q: But it was a very powerful experience --

A: Absolutely.

Q: -- living through it.

A: Absolutely. And -- and once I moved away from Alexandria and we ha-- we lived in the same house together in Fayetteville, it was like I left all that guilt behind. So -- And the -- and the church just accepted us and -- I mean, we -- fortunately -- If we'd been any later doing it, she probably would have gotten kicked out of the church. But we happened to do it at a time when it was safe and into a -- Anyway. And she was so capable at what she did,



so good at it, that all her superiors really counted on her. So she quickly made herself (phone rings) secure.

Excuse me.

Q: Sure.

**END OF AUDIO FILE 1**

Q: There we go. I'm -- I'm still talking with Betsy Willis. I had to stop the -- the tape. Well, let me ask you this, then. So you and Lucy lived pretty openly, out in Fayetteville. And certainly I'm familiar with Fayetteville and, in the '70s, I guess -- '70s into the '80s?

A: '80s.

Q: In the '80s.

A: The --

Q: OK. So given your experience living there then, what do you think your experience would have been like living together here, in this area? Do you think it would have been different?

A: This is going to sound real -- I think we would have moved into -- we would have been with a higher class of people here, that -- that we were part of a -- sort of a fringe group in Fayetteville. And that, yet, that's not true either. But it would -- I would say we would have been more fully accepted here than --

Q: Oh, OK.

A: -- in Fayetteville. So I would nix that last remark.

Q: What is it that you think, about this area, would have made -- would have made you feel more accepted?

A: Oh, I just think that a university environment -- plus there's just -- it certainly seems like, to me, that the -- the mountain people that I run into, if you behave yourself, you're accepted.

Q: (laughs) It doesn't really matter about --

A: Yeah!

Q: -- anything else. OK. Someone else had sort of mentioned that. It doesn't really matter what you do, as long as, you know, you're -- you're not making a spectacle of yourself --

A: Right!

Q: -- doing it.

A: Exactly.

Q: Is that it --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- sort of?

A: Yeah.

Q: OK.

A: So.

Q: Would -- would you say that that is the factor that sort of

attracts people to this area, LGBT people?

A: Probably. You know, there was a -- I don't know how I heard about it. But when I was living out at Zionville, I heard about a community just across the Tennessee line from me that was being developed just for gay and lesbian. And so my grandson and I found our way over there and went and looked at some of the houses and all, just out of pure curiosity.

Q: You're talking about Carefree Cove.

A: Yeah! Yeah. And I was real impressed with the place. But, I mean, it certainly -- I didn't know anything about it. And certainly, I knew people who lived in [trade?] and all and they never said anything about it one way or the other or -- But anyway, I was surprised. I would say it would -- it was a great boon to the tax economy of Johnson County.

Q: Considering the houses and the property.

A: Yeah, absolutely.

Q: Yeah. I visited myself --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- so I know exactly where you're talking about. Yeah. I was sort of surprised to find out about it, as well. It was (inaudible).

A: Yeah, I mean, they don't -- certainly don't advertise where

I see it.

Q: Mmm hmm. Yeah, not -- not very much. Because they're expensive places, for sure.

A: Right.

Q: Hmm. Well, I guess, also, it would be sort of interesting to hear your sort of perception of the community here. So what I -- what I think that I'm hearing is that you have a group of women particularly that you're connected to and a number of those women also, you know, are not straightly heterosexual but that's not really the focus of your relationship --

A: Right.

Q: -- with them. But there's also a fairly active gay community here in Boone, in the Blowing Rock area. But it doesn't sound like you intersect with that community a whole lot.

A: No. I don't at all.

Q: Not at all. OK. What's your perception of that community? Or --?

A: Well, I think, when I -- I connected with the church, it was -- it felt so political, you know, that that's all they wanted to talk about and to -- And I was just so bruised and wounded myself. I mean, I -- you know, I didn't have any fight left. So that kind of existence did not appeal

to me. I mean, I needed to nurse myself, not my gayness or whatever. And I wasn't feeling the kind of pressure that they were. So, I mean, it really is unfair to -- for me to characterize the gay community here in any way, because I just wasn't in any position to give anything to them or take anything from them. So. Yeah, and the peo-- the heterosexuals that I know, you know, this is just not important.

Q: Hm. Well, you -- you mentioned politics. What -- what do you think about this as a political issue?

A: At that time, it was marching down the middle of the street with gay pride flags and that kind of thing, just being seen and recognized and -- I don't even think they were pushing for gay marriage then. Certainly now, I've always been for civil unions. I just think the -- Lu-- the last years I was with Lucy, she was -- she had a lot of operations. And thank God, I mean, it wasn't any problem me getting in to see her anytime I needed to or anything. But -- but if I had run into anything like that, I really would have been incensed. But I never had. So, I mean -- so, therefore, you know, it, to me, was, "I don't need to do that." Also -- I guess it was when I was still living in Alexandria. Lucy had a group of gay women friends that came over to my house one night. And they were talking

about the -- the organization in the D.C. area. And it -- they were complaining that the men had taken it over and they weren't -- weren't getting any recognition. So really, sort of all along, anytime I've had connection with a -- an organized kind of gay-lesbian-transgender, whatever, world, it hadn't come across as anything that I could give to or take from.

Q: Mmm hmm. It's just not -- not the group that you feel a strong connection with.

A: Right, right. And I give to the legal arm of it. Because I think they do good work.

Q: Well, I guess another question that comes to mind is your connection with your church now. Has this issue ever caused any friction for you here, in terms of spirituality or acceptance or people in your congregation?

A: No, none at all. It's a very liberal church here. And the -- the Episcopal Church itself, of course, is breaking down, I mean, causing the Archbishop of Canterbury quite a few headaches.

Q: (laughs) Yes.

A: So. So I guess, within the church, I -- I'm more political about it. The -- you know, the Diocese of Los Angeles has just ord-- consecrated a bishop that's in a committed relationship. So that's a step forward. So within the

church, yeah, I'm pretty political, (laughs) come to think of it. So.

Q: And -- and when you say you're political, what do you mean?

A: I mean I'm -- anybody who represents me gets to know my opinions, so that they get heard on up the ladder, I hope. And I support, any way I can, the -- the recognition of women.

Q: Mmm hmm. It sounds like it -- it's a pretty respectful religion, anyway, towards women. Would -- would that be --

A: Has --

Q: -- correct, at least here?

A: Has become. Right. Yeah. Gee, when I grew up, boys got to do everything, not girls. So. Mmm.

Q: It's a different time now.

A: Absolutely.

Q: Isn't it?

A: Absolutely.

Q: Well, so I've asked you a couple of questions about different things but what else would you like to talk about?

A: I don't -- I don't know. I guess one thing I wonder if is unusual with me is -- is how I hold onto those years, when I was in that relationship and -- and how that is unique in my life and, you know, I don't feel like I need that any

more, that I've got that. And people are always saying, "Oh, don't think about the past." Oh, I mean, I treasure that part! I really do. And I guess another thing I don't like about -- I -- I shove onto the politics is this jumping from bed to bed. I mean, promiscuousness is not my thing. And I -- you know, I am of that generation where sex was sacred. And -- and somehow another, the community -- the lesbian-gay community sort of spoke to me of promiscuousness and -- I don't know where I picked that up. I mean, it might just be my assumption but -- Oh. That's it.

Q: That's it?

A: I guess.

Q: (laughs) Well, that was great! Thank you, very much. I appreciate you sharing your story and -- and your insights and things.

A: Well, do you see any similarities between me and anybody else you've interviewed, other than the --?

Q: Well, I -- I actually have interviewed fewer people than Kathy has. So Kathy has a -- a number of people ahead of me. I would say in some ways but, in others, not, necessarily. I interviewed part of a couple in Asheville and they both had sort of made that connection to each other around spirituality. As a matter of fact, one of the



partners was a minister. And strangely enough, the partner -- the man that I interviewed had been in a very long-term straight relationship with a wife, who had some mental illness issues. And they ended up connecting in a strangely similar way, I guess. But, you know, that's ended up being a long-term relationship, 20 or so years now, I guess. But some of the same themes, you know, at that time not feeling particularly committed to -- or connected, I guess, is the word I meant to say -- to that community but the people that they know, you know, within the community, that there are stronger connections to individuals than to the community itself.

A: Going back to the definition of sissy, I realize also that the two guys I have in mind that I grew up with were autistic.

Q: That's interesting. Hm.

A: And one became an architect and the other one is a ma-- was a math professor at University of Chicago.

Q: Wow!

A: So. And they were gentler than -- You know, I -- I go out here and watch the children when they're out playing and the boys have something in their hands, hitting on something or jumping arou-- I mean, and the girls are sitting sedately at the table --

Q: Hmm. And these are young kids --

A: -- having a tea party. These are --

Q: -- in the daycare.

A: These are knee high. And I would say that the sissies would be enjoying the calmer things -- activities.

Q: Mmm hmm. With the girls --

A: With the girls, yeah.

Q: -- would have been hanging out with the girls instead of the rough and tumble --

A: Right.

Q: -- with the boys.

A: Right. So.

Q: Now were you, as a girl -- were you the -- the girly-girl type of the tomboy type?

A: I think I was the tomboy type.

Q: Mmm hmm. So you'd have been out in the rough and tumble.

A: Yeah, I would have --

Q: If they would have --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- let you?

A: Yeah.

Q: Or would you have just --

A: I was the --

Q: -- done it?

A: -- youngest of three and it seemed like, to me, I had to fight to -- to get anything I wanted. So --

Q: Well, now, that's sort of interesting. Should have thought to ask this before. You're the youngest of three siblings. OK. Were your siblings around and aware of your relationship --

A: My brother was.

Q: -- with Lucy?

A: In fact, I think my brother was bisexual.

Q: Oh!

A: And my sister may have been gay. I'm not sure. They're both deceased. And we never talked about it. But he -- we were -- I was real close with him after I moved up here. And he lived in Atlanta and -- and was retired from Emory. So we would take trips together and all. It was -- it was great. And -- and my brother talked to me about -- My brother -- apparently my father was a hunting, fishing, golf, and beer drinking kind of guy. And my brother would have gone into the sissy class.

Q: Oh.

A: And he felt that he never measured up to what my father wanted. And I remember he got a BB gun one Christmas. And you know who used the BB gun the most?

Q: (laughs) Is that right?

A: Mmm hmm.

Q: You did. Was he surprised about the BB gun?

A: I think so.

Q: Well, I mean, do you -- do you recall your brother getting disfavored because of his behavior or -- or his way?

A: Unfortunately for him, we moved from -- We lived in Warrenton, North Carolina, when my father was a tobacconist. And when he drowned we moved -- My grandfather -- my mother's father had left some money on a house in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. And it was in the Depression and -- Anyway, he ended up with the house. So when my father drowned, he offered this house to mother. And he said, "You can educate your children there and live free and --" So we moved to Alabama when my brother was in, let's see, six-- He was -- have been about 13. And it was just a horrendous move for him. He really was leaving real good friends and all. Whereas my sister was just such a great personality, she didn't have any trouble moving. She -- So he always blamed it on having to leave Warrenton just -- and his friends. And so he had a hard time settling in in Alabama. And I don't know -- And, you know, the -- the -- we had social clubs then and he -- he didn't get in the one he wanted and that kind of thing. And he was a small man. And most of the girls in his crowd were big women,

big girls. (laughs) So, you know, he -- the physical and the -- and the environment sort of went against him. But once he got in college, he seemed to really enjoy life. Then he went in the Air Force. And he enjoyed that. And my brother was -- if you made friends with my brother, he never let you go.

Q: (laughs)

A: I mean, if you came through Atlanta, you had to go by and see him. And he was just a very social person. And -- So how it impacted his life, I'm not sure what -- you know, which came first, the chicken or the egg. Because that move was certainly trauma-based for him. And he talked about that. And -- And my sister always had women who looked after her. My sister was married, had a child, divorced. And she was -- What I always say, Mother dug the whole and she feel in it. Mother thought, if you took on drink, you were an alcoholic. And my sister could take on drink at it was -- She was a cheap drunk.

Q: (laughs)

A: And so Mother began to, you know, "Your sister's an alcoholic," you know. And she became one. And -- and there was always a woman there to look after her. So what her sexuality was, you know, I never knew. But she never remarried and -- And all three of us divorced. So.

Q: Hm. Did your brother remarry?

A: No.

Q: No? Hm.

A: He had some affairs. I mean, he had girlfriends and -- But he tired of them real soon.

Q: Hm!

A: So I guess I've told my story.

Q: OK. (laughs) Well, we thought we were going to stop a couple minutes ago and then --

A: Yeah.

Q: -- we got right back into the conversation again.

A: Yeah. You've got a [congress?] or something?

Q: Well, I actually have a meeting at 12:00, so I'm OK.

A: You'd better get going.

Q: But -- but I do need to hit the road.

A: Yeah.

Q: But thank you, again. I really do appreciate it. And thank you for participating in the project. I hope that you --

A: My pleasure.

Q: -- enjoyed sharing your story. I think it'll -- will be great to add to our stories.

A: OK.

Q: Thank you.

A: How many are you aiming for?

**END OF FILE**