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Interview with Bob Bennett

Bob Bennett

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K -- ..Hitchcock and Suzanne Nienaber interviewing Robert Bennett in his office at 22 Acland. October 28, 1998 around 3 o'clock in the afternoon. Um, I guess to start off with we'd just like to get some basic, um, biographical information.

R -- ok

k -- about um, I guess where you're from, how you came to Mt. Vernon and such.

R -- Ok. Um, I'm originally from Des Moines, Iowa. My family had been in Iowa for several generations. My family moved to the east coast, to Washington D.C., to the Washington D.C. area, to Northern Virginia, when I was 14. Um, I went through college and graduate school in Connecticut, at Trinity and Yale. And um, this was the first job I've had, I just finished my doctorate when I came, but I came, I got the job in 1967, then came in the fall of 1967, so it's been quite awhile. Uh, it helped me when I came here, and it helped, actually I was interviewed for the job in Toledo. As it happened -- the national meetings move around and I went to Toledo that year. Um, I had been on the East Coast for 10 years at that point, and it helped me to think of going to Ohio, um to....Iowa. Because I am sort of understood Midwestern culture, than I would've otherwise.

K -- um, in terms of your impressions of Mt. Vernon, if you could elaborate or go one about that....I know that's a very broad, um, what you think of Mt. Vernon, what you think they would think of you.

R -- Um, my impressions of Mt. Vernon have probably become more positive over the years. Um, in many ways, it's a very beautiful city, I appreciate its architecture and its history. Um, my partner and I go to a church in Mt. Vernon, and I've been involved in the Mt. Vernon groups in Mt. Vernon. My partner works in Mt. Vernon, at one of the many of his jobs, anyway. And um, we have a number of friends there, and I know that there is a larger gay-lesbian community than one might believe there is. Um, it's interesting -- I appreciate the fact that they manage to maintain their downtown. Um, that um, that they haven't let the Coshocton Avenue mall destroy that still sort of, sense of the town; that planning space is really important. Um, it's also interesting that more and more people are retiring in Mt. Vernon, and a number of them are very interesting. And as I get closer to retirement age myself I sort of appreciate that more and more. It's a, it's a town with enormous dichotomies between wealth and poverty, um, and I, my partner's an alcohol counselor, um, now, and but partly because of that and partly because of other things, um I've seen a good deal of the rural poverty in the county which is really extreme. Um, I, both of us actually are um, among the group who work with the Red Cross, who do volunteer work for the Red Cross as HIV - AIDS instructors, and it's um, disturbing and somewhat symptomatic I think of Knox County, that there is no established system to deal with HIV/AIDS in the county. I think because people believe it isn't here, which is a big mistake. Um, and that's probably not unusual for Knox County. There's a sense in the county that the world's problems are somewhere else, and most of them are right here. I think drugs historically have come from high school to college, rather than the other way around, for instance. So I don't

know, does that kind of -- are there parts of that that you'd like to follow up on? 'Cause that's where I'd start, I guess.

K -- Um, well, actually how was it to come out in the Mt. Vernon area, did you, you came out in the college first, or, ...

R -- Right, and I, I have never really come out publically -- you talked about printing something in the Mt. Vernon news -- I've never come out in the Mt. Vernon news, or in any national, uh, not national publication of any, outside my field, outside classics. Um,

K -- Was this the first place you came out to? Or were you out before you came?

R -- No, in fact I wasn't even out to myself when I came. I was 24 when I came and I hadn't figured myself out. So, it took awhile. Uh, and I didn't, let's see, I had another partner who moved here, I moved here in 1967, her moved here in 1973. We had been involved with each other for 4 years at that point, but he was in Connecticut, um, so we were commuting. I was doing most of the commuting. He was much older than I, and was a Kenyon alum. Uh, class of '47. And um, it's sort of interesting to compare his attitude toward being open with what happened to me. Um, when he moved here I was 30, and I began telling friends of mine that I was gay, and um, everybody, nobody was particularly surprised at that point, but, he was really bothered by the fact that I'd done that. Um, and that was generational with people of his period. He was born in 1926, I was born in 1942. But it is also the case that he, um, he'd had a fairly interesting career before we came here. He um, had worked for the embassy in Paris for a number of years. He worked for an international education foundation in New York, he worked for Yale, as a sort of second-level administrator. And he had great difficulty finding employment here. And I know part of it was the anti-gay prejudice. Um, so you got a point, in some ways. Um, I didn't really come out publically to the campus, although I'm sure a number of students figured it out, because I was living with this man, and a lot of them knew that -- until about the time I got involved in my present relationship. We um, which was about 1982, so it was, I was about 40 by then. Um, and by the end everybody knew about that for various reasons.

K -- What do you think actually spurred the actual coming out at that time?

R -- Um, just because everybody knew about it anyway. Um he had been married to somebody, but everybody knew, and it happened to be the year that there were 13 divorces on the Kenyon faculty. It was a very tumultuous time, including ours. So uh, and after that, a few years after that I began, I got, I was very involved, I had been involved really in the '70s, but got involved in the early '80s with gay-lesbian student groups which became more um, formal, I think in the late '70s and early '80s. Uh, there was only one, which kept changing its name to include more people. It turned out to be ALSO, but it was, you know. And that was a very tight-knit group of students, uh in the early '80s, and through them, through some of them asking me to teach gay and lesbian studies courses I began doing that -- I can't remember the dates -- but it was about 1985. No, well no, I did divinity (?) degree until '86 and it was after that, so it was probably about '86 or '87, um, and I taught them pretty regularly since then. Every year or two. Um, that was the most public coming out I have had, and that was scary. It was surprising to me how

frightening it was to do that, although it, it got, I expected it to be a nice little seminar with 6 people and the first year I taught it I had, 39 people or something like that, and this big class and didn't know what to do with them. Um, and got a lot of support from my colleagues. I know there has been some anti-gay feeling among the faculty, but I don't know it directly. My colleagues have genuinely been enormously supportive. And the college in general has been pretty supportive. Um, Jerry Irish was the provost who um, under whose direction, and Donna Scott was the affirmative action person, who established, at least in some quarters, the policy that one of the things we don't discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation. And that was in place by, about '82, '83, something like that, and that meant a great deal. Um, it meant a great deal that we finally go domestic partner benefits last year, well as of this academic year. It meant a great deal to me personally because its, it saved us a lot of money. Um, because my partner had to get insurance through um, somebody else, through a group that he worked for. Um, and that's very...And there are increasing numbers of gay and lesbian faculty and staff. I think it's much harder to be an openly gay student here than it is to be an old...I think life in the dormitories is very difficult. It's too bad. The ones who can do it are gutsy, and a lot of them leave. An awful lot of them leave. They don't ever graduate. And I talked to an awful lot of students who figured themselves out but didn't want to be very open about it while they were here, but they come out later. And part of it is just, some people just don't figure themselves out until later, which I didn't, but some of them did.

K -- Um I wanted to follow up on your comment that there's a larger gay community in Mt. Vernon than most people would expect. Do you wanna go on about that a little bit? Where you would find it? They type of groups....

R -- Um, its, I don't know of a public place in Mt. Vernon that you would go to find gay or lesbian people now. For 4 or 5 years there was a lesbian support group that met at the congregational church. I don't think it's still going, but I may be wrong about that. It had a, I don't know, it was called something like Women in Comfortable Clothes, or something, so or comfortable shoes, so it kinda disguised its nature but not very much. Um, let's see -- the bar called the Office used to be known as a gay bar. I did -- somebody tried to pick me up in the Office. I think I've been in there maybe three times, and I walked in there once -- this was a long time ago. Uh, but that's the only thing I know about the uh, accuracy of that. Um, otherwise there's really no public place. There is a gay bar in Mansfield, there's another one in Newark, so those are places that you can go to meet people. But nowhere directly here. So most of gay and lesbian life here is um, in peoples' homes. But it's pretty extensive. I know an awful lot of gay men who grew up in Centerburg; I've become aware, there are a number of gay, and I think lesbian people on the maintenance staff here, uh, I don't know most of them. Uh, there isn't much connection between them. I know who a couple of them are, but there's no connection between them and the rest of, and the rest of the staff and faculty, which is kinda too bad. They've never figured out a way to deal with that. But I met people at parties locally, you know. So most of the gay life that I know about goes on in peoples' houses, apartments.

K -- Do you find a lot of people go into the city, like Columbus or something to find....

R --- yeah, yeah,...a lot of people do. But a lot of people -- our travel agent, who is somebody I

hope will be interested in having you interview him, grew up in Mt. Vernon, lives in Knox County, I think his address is officially Gambier, lives near the Grove Church, and works in Columbus, and runs a travel agency called Alternative Travel Services, which is billed as a, an agency particularly catering to gay people, although it is lots of other people too. And he's I don't know, a lot of his social life happens here. I mean he's um, he's a pretty private person, and he's single, um, but he doesn't, he's not somebody who goes to bars. Um, we know several gay couples a lesbian couple who are connected with the college, who live and work in Knox County, and tend not to go to Columbus all that much. So um, it varies, I think. Some people sort of make their lives here. I sing in the Columbus Gay Men's Chorus. For us it has, I mean we're getting older, we're not sort of like, looking for nightlife, but it is important to us to have a community of gay/lesbian friends, and over the years a lot of them have been somewhere else. And some of them of course.....

K -- Does that draw from several areas, or...

R -- Uh, it draws mostly from Columbus, but it draws, there's one guy who comes from Parkersburg, West Virginia. Uh, and uh, another guy that comes from up, I forget where it is exactly, but it's a small town north of Marysville, um, so it, I go about as far as most people do. 50 miles is a long way to go to a rehearsal. Most of them live in Columbus, but some of them...

K -- Are there any other groups that have that meaning, or like, that bonding together?

R -- um, in Knox County, or for me?

K -- for you, or in general that you know of.

R -- oh. My partner and I are Episcopalians -- my partner's an Episcopal priest among other things, and um, yeah, that's pretty interesting so uh, we've been pretty active in the Episcopal gay group Integrity, which has a chapter in Cleveland and we at various times have been very involved in that. We're not very much, but...There's another chapter that's forming in Columbus, um, and it's an national organization that's been.....Um, uh, in Columbus there's a group called 50+ which is for older gay and lesbian people, and um, a lesbian couple who are good friends of ours write, run the newsletter, and another friend of ours who also is a retired Episcopal priest, he lives in Columbus, uh and was president for a while. We've done some things with him.

K -- So you found comfort with the religion, or it supported you.....

R -- Uh, that's a long, complicated story. Uh, the Episcopal church has done better than some other churches, but it could be a whole lot better. It's gotten better recently. Uh, it, how comfortable people are depends a lot on who the bishop is, and we happen to have a pretty good bishop along this issue -- the last one wasn't there. And the bishop came in about five or six years ago. Um, my partner has had a very difficult time finding work as an Episcopal priest, although at the moment -- he's never been a chief pastor, a rector they call them in the Episcopal church, and that's because of the anti-gay prejudice. Um, but he uh, at the moment is the interim

pastor at Coshocton, which is working out very well; he's done a number of interims, which is, you come in after the pastor leaves and do sort of grief work, and get the parish to look at who they are and think about what happens next. Um, he hasn't done one for quite -- actually this is the first one he's done since 1993. But uh, this one's worked out well. So, yes and no, I mean I have a love hate relationship with the Episcopal church, with Christianity in general, but I'm pretty active, we're both pretty active, so...

K -- You think that it's been a gradual change?

R -- Yeah, yeah, it has.

K -- Um, besides the discrimination in the church was there any other times where you or your partner, anybody you know has experienced um, discrimination or any like, aggressive acts toward....

R -- Uh, somebody carved 'faggot' on my door once. On my office door, in ascension. Uh, and it was the day after there had been a pride march and there was a rally in front of Old Kenyon, and I spoke at it. Uh, I tended to put those things together. Um, it was very interesting; probably about '88 or '89, and um, I was a sexual harassment advisor at that point, and I reacted exactly the way people do when they're harrassed. I decided that it was all my fault and if I just hadn't been so public this would never have happened, and felt very guilty, and then for a couple of days I didn't tell anybody, and then I thought, oh this is really stupid. And I started telling people and the Collegian put it in the next article on the front page, and the then provost wrote me and said 'did you authorize this?'. He found it scary I guess, but I thought it was a good thing to happen. Uh, the person who was then the chaplain, we don't have a chaplain anymore, but the person who the chaplain told me that it must have been a faculty member because they spelled faggot 'faget' and the students all know how to spell it. It was funny, and anyways it was funny. That was not dangerous, or difficult. Um, um, when I was quite young, I was beaten up, once. Um, I was about 30. Not here, I was on vacation somewhere, but that was pretty scary. Uh one of the things that I remember as um, kinda of a scary part about this county is, Liz Keaney, who used to be the um, dean for academic advising, the position that Jane Bartendell has now, and who left to go to Quaker Divinity School at Earlham, um, this is I think the second year she's been away. Um, told me about having a rainbow flag on her car, and driving through I think town, through Mt. Vernon, and having people, and them pull up next to her, and yell at her, make what she felt was verbal threats. And she went home and washed it off, crying. And I finally put a rainbow flag on my car, about six or eight months ago, and uh, I, you worry about whether that could result, that something like that could result in violence. There's a lot of support in Knox County, but there's also a lot of, I think real prejudice. It's an interesting mixture.

K -- Do you think rural prejudice is any different than other areas?

R -- I, I would say one, it kind of, it doesn't feel a whole lot safer than the way they describe Wyoming. And, which is on everybody's mind now. I don't know if you know, but if you've noticed, you should have this in your report, that editorial that was done in the Mt. Vernon news, after Matthew Shepard died. If you don't find it, it was last week I think, if you don't find

a copy of it, let me know, we've got copies at home. What, an editor named Blackburn, I think his name is Chris Blackburn, wrote a very supportive editorial saying um, this guy could've been anybody, it could have happened to anybody, this is you know, hate crimes are a terrible thing. It's the most supportive thing I've ever seen in the Mt. Vernon news. Um, because although gays just get mentioned more and more, because they pick up more and more national items, but the local stuff has uniformly been vicious letters to the editor about, which are religious. They don't feel dangerous, but they promote a difficult um...atmosphere. Um, very few people hang rainbow flags around here. There are no gay businesses in Knox County. It's a small town and you don't feel safe as you would in a city, although in many ways you're safer. I think there are a lot of places that are worse.

K -- Do you go out openly with your partner, in Knox County or Mt. Vernon?

R -- Oh yeah.

K -- Yeah? You've never experienced any.....

R -- Uh, one time we were working in the garden in front of our house and somebody yelled 'faggot' or something like that at us. That was in, I can pinpoint it because we'd only lived in that house for 6 months. That was in '84. But that's, we haven't had that otherwise.

K -- And the status of you and your partner? You've been together, it's a monogamous relationship.....

R -- Yes, and it's been um, let's see, we had our 17th anniversary...

K -- Did you have a union?

R -- We had a, after we'd been together for about five years we did a commitment ceremony at home. Uh, ..

K -- Did you get a priest or anything, or did you just....

R -- That's a long story. Uh, because, we didn't as it turned out. Because Jerry is an episcopal priest he wanted a bishop to do it, and asked one of the bishops who's sort of an assistant bishop, if we timed it partly because he was leaving, and he'd ordained Jerry uh, who was at that point married, so the issue had not come up for Jerry, and was very supportive. Um, and the current bishop -- his boss - the bishop of the diocese wouldn't let him do it. Um, we thought somewhat halfheartedly about getting some other clergy person to do it, and then we decided instead to have the whole congregation do the parts that a clergy person would ordinarily do. We did the house blessing -- I don't know if you've ever been to an Episcopal house blessing, but it's a trip. There's a little liturgy that you do in each room, and we had a different person lead the liturgy in each room, so my best friend from seminary did the guest room 'cause she'd stayed there a lot. Um, my senior colleague was a good gardener to the garden. My Jewish colleague Carrie Ann Mills did the front door. It was, um, it was very eclectic, it was very nice. And then we, it was

pretty traditional, I mean I'm an ancient historian and he used to be a medieval historian, so we read (?) as the sermon, and we sort of adapted the Episcopal marriage service. Without too much adaptation. But the whole congregation did the clergy part, and then we did a communion, of course. It was great. I'm glad we did it that way, although I wouldn't have expected it beforehand. Uh, it was kind of an interesting act of defiance that feels very celebratory.

K -- Were you, um, active in getting the regulations passed to have your partner accepted in the the Kenyon, um..

R -- Domestic Partner Amendment? Yes, very, I was very active in that. There were 7 or 8, 6 or 7 or 8 of us that were, and I was very involved in it.

K -- How long had you been fighting that?

R -- Oh, 10 ro 12 years. And it happened, the reason it happened it because Rob Odin supported it. And what he did was gradually win over trustees support for it. I'm really appreciative...

K -- You mentioned there's a gradual change in Kenyon and in your church. Um do you find the same for the Knox county area? Just the change....

R -- I think so, I think so, I mean part of it is getting older, but I think it's easier to be, it's a little easier to find sympathetic people, to trust people.

K -- Do you find more people coming out sooner, because it's more comfortable - I mean you came, you said the generational gap between your first partner.....

R -- Oh yes, certainly, certainly nationally, and I think here. I mean certainly. Certainly it's easier for a 19 year old to come out than it was when I was 19. I think part of the reason I just didn't think about it was because nobody was talking. Well it's funny, nobody was talking much about it, and yet one of my best friends tried to kill himself because he'd fallen in love with another guy and the other guy wasn't interested in him, and I knew it. I mean I knew all about that and I didn't, I just didn't incorporate it. It's funny. Um, but, there's, the visibility of gay/lesbian life I think makes it much easier for people to consider being out. But at Kenyon, and it's probably true at a lot of colleges, it's such a goldfish bowl that so many people just don't do it. I think they feel a version of what I feel about coming out to others in Mt. Vernon. It's it's too difficult. Some people, I think there a number of students who come out to their group of friends, quite a few.

K -- Do you find that there's a difference...I'm sorry...

S -- I was just gonna say...

R -- no, go on

S -- she has the list of questions. Um I was just gonna say, I was thinking about the last

interview we did, um, it was a bisexual couple, you know, they live in Mt. Vernon. And one of the girls brought up that there's this certain tension they live with, like on a daily basis due to the fact that she's not really sure, who is she out to. I mean, because she's saying that Mt. Vernon people have the tendency to put on certain blinders, and some of them can totally be unaware, and she's worried about what the consequences might be when they actually do find out. Do you have any of those concerns?

R -- Sure. Yeah, I think that's always true, I mean there's always people with strong blinders. My mother was one of them actually, you know, who died last summer. Yeah, and it's, it is also complicated that once you come out to somebody you don't control anymore, I mean you never know who knows. And even if you don't come out, sometimes people guess wrong....So I can imagine that somebody out there, somebody young, might find that a difficult situation.

K -- Did you find a difference in like, the perception people of had of you or how they treated you when they found out that you were gay?

R -- Um

K -- In terms of your friends, your family...

R -- Had a lot of trouble with my family, uh especailly my mom, my parents, which turned out to be my mother, although I realized....my parents always presented a united front and I never really figured out that it was my mother's problem. Um, well, pretty much it's gone pretty well with my friends. I think, I don't , I don't -- it's been so long I've sort of forgotted what it's like to not tell people right away, because.....

tape 1, side 2

I haven't presented myself strongly as a straight person in some ways, and so when they.....it's different if you're 23. You remind me, and in fact one of these women, this woman may be, might be, couple I, um....A young woman contacted me about a year ago, who was a Nazarene student, and I think still is a Nazarene student, and found it very very difficult [...] grew up in a really small town south of here, you know. She's kind of an interesting example of how difficult it is to be young.

K -- Um, do you find that there's a different experience with being a gay man versus being like a lesbian woman, I mean coming from a gay.....

R -- Oh yeah...I see more gay men in Knox county -- it may be just that I've got blinders on. I don't know of very many lesbians from the county, um. Life is safer as a man than as a woman, in general, and I think lesbians have more reason, accurately, to be afraid of violence. Worse things can happen to them. Um, that, um,....there's the generalization that um, people tend to accept lesbians easier than they do gay men. Women don't mind so much and men don't feel so threatened as they do by other men, so, I mean so in that respect, in my opinion, it's simpler, it's

easier for women to hide, I mean for two women, two 40 year old women that live together are less suspect than two 40 year old men living together. There are a lot of differences. I mean, in some ways it's amazing. We don't actually talk to each other. Um, gay male culture is so sexualized today in a way that lesbian culture isn't, and the fact that lesbians have been so, among the people have been so, helpful, self-sacrificing, is great, impressive.

K --Um, where do you see yourself in the future -- Do you see yourself staying in Mt. Vernon with your partner, or...

R -- Uh yeah, I think I'll stay here until I retire, which'll be I think another 10 years, um... We like to be here. We've talked a lot about retiring somewhere else, and the older I get the less I imagine that we're gonna likely to do that. I mean the main thing that bothers us is the weather in the winter, and I think it's likely that we might go get somewhere warmer in the winter. But uh, that just sort of changed a few months ago. But I think we're pretty likely to stay here. And in many ways it's a very comfortable place. We, we miss having a more active gay life. We do, we do talk about moving to Columbus.

K -- Do you find a lot of people do?

R -- Uh, yeah, and my partner is working on the um, getting himself certified as a therapist, um, he's been working as an alcohol counselor for sometime, and he's working on the state certification, which is the LPCC classification, and he would like to work either in a private practice, uh, it's the masters level, he has a masters in counseling. He'd like to work either in a private practice, or in some sort of mental health clinic in Columbus, because he'd like to work with a population of gay men. And in fact he's running a group for gay men in Columbus this winter as part of his fieldwork -- finish this program. If that happens we might move to Columbus, and I'd commute. Columbus is really a very good city in which to be gay or lesbian. There's a, it's very politically active, uh, it has a very rich kind of culture, um, so...But living here, there's always, you can drive. Uh, it's it feels increasingly more like sort of, suburban Columbus. I mean, I think we both really like our house, which is an old Victorian, about 1870s house, and the safety, and the open, the fact that you can see cows, and...all the stuff that's pleasant about living in the country is very appealing, so I don't know what we'll do, but, that's one of the things we talk about. We talk about moving to Key West, or, no we really do, or uh, well for a long time we thought about moving to the beach outside Wilmington, North Carolina, Wrightsville(?) Beach, which my partner grew up in Wilmington, in small towns around there. He has a lot of family in North Carolina. And when we were there this September I sort of realized that's, there very little gay culture there, and I just don't wanna move someplace where I don't find it, so I would imagine that being important if we were actually....

K -- Is there anything you think we've missed, or that you wanna add?

R -- I think it's a lot easier working for Kenyon, than working for much of anybody else in Knox County. Gay or lesbian people...it's hard for me to think of very many other organizations that would be easier to work for than Kenyon. Um, and I think Gambier is probably a kind of oasis where it's easier to be different than it is in most of the county. But you know, it's getting better.

K -- Yeah, do you um, I was curious actually about your opinion of homosexuality, or, whether you think it was something that was innate, or something that's....I know this is a question we kinda skipped through..

R --Um, the analysis I like of that a lot, I think I've lost it, it was done by Martin Duberman, in a book on gay history, um, which says uh, when you're dealing with the is this um, heredity or is this environment, essentially, is this innate or is something -- it there a choice involved, are you affected by external forces whether inherent, or do you choose...Uh, he said that um, probably people choose the position on that which is most politically useful. And I found that interesting to remember. I find it very difficult to assert that I was born this way, and therefore it's not my fault, and uh, you have to have sympathy for me because of this terrible condition into which I was born, which is a way of expressing that. Because, I, I think people are given their feelings and then they decide whether to act on them, and I think there are lots of people who don't. Um, and I chose to. And while it's hard to imagine not having chosen that, you know, I almost got married, and I don't know what would've happened if I -- I spent several years in graduate school, trying to persuade this woman to marry me, and thank god didn't, but I don't know what would've happened if I had. And my partner was married for a number of years. Um, so, and I know lots of gay men who've been married, and had children and grandchildren. Um, and now there are more options, of course, especially lesbians can have children anyway. Uh, so I do tend to think that there's a strong genetic component, but I also think there's some manner (?) for choice, and I suspect it's rather different for women than for men. I think, I may be wrong about this, but it looks to me as if more women, women find it easier to be freer in their sexuality, and maybe that's societal, maybe it's genetic, I don't know. I mean I know more women, who, you just never know who they're gonna show up with. It's kind of interesting to watch.

S -- I know that you have a few suggestions of other people that we should contact, um, would you like us to like, stop the tape recorder, if you don't want their name on tape, or do you want to just give them to us now...

R -- Well, let's see...I guess what I would feel most comfortable with is asking people to contact you.

S --ok, that'd be great. That'd be really great.

R -- Or asking people if they'd be willing to have you contact them. Um, so I guess what I'd rather do is, well I have a distribution list for gay and lesbian employees, and um, faculty and staff and so on, you may have hit most of them, I don't know but, I could ask them, and then I could ask a few people in the county if they'd be willing and try to get back to you. And you're welcomed to get back to me and nudge me if you want to.

K -- Yeah, 'cause we actually have a three week span in which to do....

S -- Yeah, we're kinda under some time constraints...

R -- When are you finished -- three weeks from now? Oh, so you have three more weeks.

K&S --yeah

R --okay, okay.

K -- um, if there's anything else we wanna question you about, is it okay if we just come back and ask you some more questions.

R -- sure, sure, or email me, or whatever.

K -- Is there anything you wanna ask us?

R -- Uh, why did you decide to do this -- this particular topic?

K -- Um, I personally thought it was the most interesting. And uh, my sister is lesbian, and knowing from what, you know, her experiences, I was just curious about it..

S -- I decided to do this because um, I felt as far as information goes, and basically a large portion of what our goal for the project is to serve as a source of information for Knox County about themselves, and learning about each other. Um, and I felt that this, even though it's probably the most sensitive topic, it's the one that could produce the most change, you know, as far as eliminating some prejudice.

R -- ever since Howard started the Family Farm Project, maybe before that, I've thought it would be really interesting to do some kind of oral history of gay and lesbian life in Knox County., so

K -- And this is just a building block actually, so, with the Rural Diversity center, just build off of different things that we've researched for future classes or whatever.

R -- That's great

K --If people wanna make independent projects off of stuff that's in the archives, so....Well I wanna thank you.

S -- Yeah, thank you very much

R -- You're welcome.

K -- So you'll get back to us with contacts....

R -- Yes now give me your....