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Interview with Claire Wilson

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Interview with Claire Wilson
Done By Kate Hitchcock
February 26, 1999

K – This is Kate Hitchcock interviewing Claire Wilson, March 26th, 1999 at her home, um, around – what is it? 5:30.

C – 5:15

K – 5:15. If we could just start off with some basic biographical information, just your age, where you're from, originally, and how you came to Mount Vernon.

C – Okay, let me get rid of this taste in my mouth first. Well, I was born and raised in Mount Vernon, um I'm 49, what else do you want to know?

K – Well, no, that's fine. Um, I guess we can just skip right into the coming out experience and uh, what it was like in this town. What age you came out?

C – Okay.

K – Who you're out to and stuff like that.

C – Okay. Um, actually, when I started to come out, it was in 1980. !980/81. And uh, I wasn't really out – just to some people, who were also gay.

K – How'd you find them?

C – Um, in town.

K – Did you come out to your family at a certain point?

C – No, I didn't actually come out to them. Um, I was sort of in a relationship with someone I was in jail with, um, after jail of course. And she told my brother who was living with me at that time and he lost it and sort of went all over town screaming that we – me and all my friends were lesbians and that it was an abomination before God and um.

K – So she outed you without your permission.

C – Yeah, she told him without my knowledge, or asking me – you know what I mean.

K – Right.

C – And uh, so it was a very, very traumatic experience for me, for my brother, and for my son, who was 10 years old at the time. Uh, and like I said, my brother was going around everywhere, um, I mean he totally lost it, uh, threatened to kill all these lesbians, and when he said that he

meant all my friends – and all my friends were not lesbians.

K – Right.

C – Most of them were straight, but he wanted to kill everybody because, you know, everybody was a lesbian, or queer, and they all needed to die – because we were all abominations.

K – Did he out you to the rest of the town too, or just...

C – Pretty much, he screamed us in front of other family members and, like I partied then, of course I was quite younger, but I partied a lot and uh, and he would come out in bars and start screaming this stuff and he um, followed a friend of mine and I around and this girl he had dated briefly. And he'd follow us around – well, actually he'd follow her around, calling her a lesbian-whore and um, just screaming across the whole bar, and every bar we went in. And uh, we ended up in a fight over it, you know, because she hadn't done anything to him and she really didn't deserve to be treated like that; and we weren't in a relationship, she was just a friend whom I had met through him. And uh, so we got in a fight that night, uh, it probably would have a physical fight – fist fight if uh, the bartender hadn't thrown him out.

K – Really? Bartender threw him out?

C – Yes, because I went out and tried to talk to him uh, which is why I'm not giving my permission for this to be listened to or used because you know, I don't mind being out today, but not at the cost of my family.

K – Right.

C – You know, I don't want anybody, the names used or...

K – Oh, I understand.

C – Anyway, you know, I walked out to him and I said “why don't you just stop this, this is so crazy, um, she doesn't deserve this, she's not even gay, why are you doing this?” Well when I said that, he shoved me and when he did, I sort of jumped at the same time and I ended up in the middle of the dance floor and when I came down I landed in a karate stance, and threw my drink at him and it was half way across the bar and almost hit him in the head and that's when the bartender threw him out.