LGBTQ Oral History Project
Introduction to LGBTQ Studies (Spring 2018)
Northern Kentucky University

Daonna Owens: Interviewers Daonna Owens and Alyssa Bowling. Interviewees Terry Bond and Carl Fox at the Crazy Fox Saloon on February 22nd 2018. Okay, so thank you for doing this. So, we’ll get started. Um, how do you all identify?

Carl Fox: Uh, well my name is Carl Fox. Uh, I identify as a gay man. I don’t- I consider myself a 100% homosexual and so I identify as a gay man.

Terry Bond: Uh, this is Terry Bond. I guess, um, I’m bisexual. Um, which does make us kind of interesting and have interesting dynamics but I think it works well in our business and our sense of community as well.

CF: It’s turned out well.

TB: Yes

CF: It scared the hell out of me at first.

DO: Um, when did you all realize that you were a part of the LGBT community?

CF: Well, you know, that’s a little tough when you get back to my generation. I don’t know how much it was for Terry. If you were gay when I was young it was a terrible thing and there wasn’t much information on it, no internet or anything like that, nobody came out so you sort of discovered it on your own. I knew, uh probably when as young as seven or eight that my feelings ran towards other boys and not towards women and this is at a time when boys are now starting to feel something towards the girls at the same time as my friends were looking at the other girls, I was starting to look at the boys. In our society at the time, it was an extreme no no so you didn’t dare speak of it. Uh the first time I realized that I was a homosexual, what they called a homosexual, was probably when I was seventeen. Uh just on the verge of turning eighteen and, in fact, shortly after that period when I figured out what I was, uh that would of been just prior to December 1979 because December 31st 1979 I tried to commit suicide. So that’s how I know, it was the realization I think that I was homosexual that sorta pushed that. I knew something-does that make sense?

DO: Yeah

CF: I think I may have answered too long

TB: No, it’s interesting cause um, we’re separated by eight and a half years, um which is pretty substantial on some levels cause he was a child of the 50’s, I was 60’s. His parents were older when he was born, mine were in their teen- eighteen, nineteen. Um, and he came out much earlier and I came out when I was almost thirty um but I think, uh I know awareness even probably as a kid as well, uh to me it was biological plumbing, you know it was innies, outies, it didn’t really matter-

CF: All about plumbing.

TB: It was more about what somebody has up here in their head and their heart more than, you know their gender. Um, and that kind of realization, the interesting thing about bisexuality which
is it’s own little thing, and has its own issues, um you can pass a lot more than someone who is gay or lesbian or transgender. Um, and but the whole issue of is it a chosen lifestyle, is it this that or the other, I didn’t choose to be bisexual but when it comes to the gender of the person I’m going to spend my life with, who I’m going to marry, well yeah that is a choice and that complicates a lot of the structure of the debate that’s gone on now for a couple generations. Um, CF: At the time we were getting together that was an issue to a lot of gay people because the general feeling was there was no such thing as bisexuality, for the longest time I was sort of raised with that belief from my fellow gay people. TB: A couple of the girls I went out with in college, it was funny because they were always, even early on in the relationship, oh I’m bisexual and I was like well I kind of consider myself bisexual too. It was funny because for them it was like hey, and then when I would be equally as honest with them they were like oh okay...it was good for them but not so good for me. DO: Like a double standard? TB: Yeah, in a way but I can understand it wasn’t quite there yet. CF: Keep in mind, I’m curious when you say that if they were saying it to you as a way to entice you- TB: No, no, no! They were just being honest. CF: You understand why I’m asking that? TB: And well it was even a stage- CF: You understand why I’m asking that right? DO: I think so… CF: Is it still...is it still a thing? I mean when I was a teenager it was a thing that if your girlfriend was bisexual you could watch them making out with another girl...so that was a sexual thing. TB: No, no, no Carl. I think it also went through a stage of “is it trendy” CF: Absolutely and that’s what I’m saying here. TB: I don’t think it was that either. I think they were just being honest. CF: Okay well that’s what I was trying to ask. You have to ask yourself was it honest or was it just a way of making yourself seem cooler. TB: But when I met Carl and we started seeing each other I was like yep I’m going to come out because I’m not going to switch genders and pretend it’s not this and it’s not that. And that was when I was almost thirty. Which does have a funny story to it because Carl was always kind of like after the first month or two was like did you talk to your parents, did you talk to your mom? Did you talk? Did you talk? AB: [laughs] TB: So finally when I went back and talked to my mom to say hey look Carl and I are more than friends and she was fine. She was like kind of like, I think mothers know in a way and um DO: They definitely know. TB: when I came back home that night Carl was like well how did it go, did you talk? Did you tell her? Well yeah, it went fine, everything was good. Well what did she say!? And he just kept
[indiscernible speech] do you really want to know? Alright I’ll tell you but her response was isn’t he a little old for you?

ALL: [laughing]

TB: And Carl’s face was like aww

CF: [makes sad face] I was surprised, I had not expected that

TB: So..um

CF: A lot of things but not that

TB: His, Carl’s experience was radically different in terms of, I know he was alienated by a lot of his friends, they kind of freaked out and went away and um he had to rediscover a whole new community. To me, most of my friends were friends I had from college, which was several years earlier and it was all at NKU, a liberal arts education, they are there to widen their horizons so to them it was like great now we have someone we can show how liberal and progressive we are because we can, you know, have somebody in that fold. So my friends were incredibly supportive. It is ironic too that there is a couple of the gay people I’ve gotten to know at Rosie’s, which Carl owned at the time when I said I’m bisexual, were kind of like really? They were just like um yeah give it time you know, you’ll come out of that stage. And I was like well no, I know who I am and know what things work for me and what don’t. And it was always kind of odd because the presumptuousness that straight people had given to gay people, like oh you just chose this lifestyle, suddenly the gay people were turning around and treating me that way. It was like well wait, you didn’t like it when other people were telling you that now why are you turning around and telling me that? And so it took a little while to kind of educate a wider view.

DO: It’s kind of ironic.

TB: It is very ironic and, but we made a lot of progress and strides in that regard. And I can understand because the debate that was going on in terms of nature versus nurture and is it learned, is it a lifestyle choice. Bisexuals kind of threw that a little bit and that makes that debate a whole lot more challenging and complex. And so for gay people who have been struggling for a generation or more, that was kind of like come on, come on, you know so. That was my experience.

CB: It just muddied the question.

TB: But I’m a pretty firm believer in the Kinsey Scale.

ALL: [laughing]

DO: Yeah, we talked about that one in class. We talked about a couple different scales from before Kinsey and after Kinsey. Different versions of it, like how they progressed and everything. [to Carl] So what was your coming out experience like?

CB: Well I came out, it was tough. I was sort of forced out by my sister. There were seven kids in the family, I’m number six out of seven. And so one younger and five older. My parents were, my father was 51 when I was born, I’m number six. And then my mother was 44 and then they had my little brother. My father was 55 and my mother was 48 so I never knew my father without white hair and so they were very conservative. My mother more progressive, obviously than my father, well not obvious to you. But she was still, compared to today, she still would
have been considered conservative. She was opposed to abortion, thought it was murder. She and I were discussing that and I think I was making some strides to help her understand that it is about the person’s right to control their body. Unfortunately she passed. But anyway, when I came out it was tough and my sister and I had a fight. She retaliated by calling my parents and telling them that I was a homosexual and I won’t go into grimmy details of it. And so I was heading over to my parents house and I arrived home not knowing that they had been given this information. So when I walked into the house I was ambushed, it did not go well. It was tough. My mother and I, I didn’t have a good strong relationship with my father, it took time to build and I eventually got to that. But at that time it was not good and that didn’t help. I walked into my parents kitchen and they’re both sitting there and I had come back to the house because I was going to be staying at their house. I had been staying with my sister, we got in a fight. I had driven to their house to stay there, walked in. My parents are sitting at the kitchen table, my mother is just furious. You could just see it in her face. And my father was pacing back and forth, which always meant he was upset.

I had not expected that kind of question. I don’t know what Jenny, my sister, told them to this day. She never admit to it, denies it, acts like I made it all up. I said mom, and my mother immediately asked is this true? My father, all I could remember at this point is him going oh my god I just don’t know what to do. He’s just pacing, like praying or something which wasn’t normal for my father. My mother, she kept demanding is this true, is this true? Well I got angry, so I said no mom it’s not. I heard my father go oh God, thank God. My mother, well okay. I said I was sitting on the floor watching the news with my boyfriend.

AB and DO: [laugh]

CF: Not having sex. That was my first admission to my parents. My father, I just remember his eyes got very wide and he got very quiet for a few moments. My mother immediately, it is true then! It is true! I don’t understand, just get out of my sight! Is what she screamed so I started to turn and leave. And then as soon as I get out of the room, you get back here! So I came back and sat down. My father immediately, what did we do, is it something we did? Oh my God we’re all going to hell. The whole family is going to go to hell, we raised a gay son. I’ll pay any amount to fix you. That hurt. My father always answered problems with money, he worked hard and we weren’t wealthy. But he felt, that was how he showed love. He kept saying on and on, we’ll spend any amount to fix you. And I finally, after being to to get out and leave and come back, I finally looked at them and said you are all going to have to figure it out because I’m tired and I’m gonna go to bed. And I did and the next morning I got up and got a new place and moved out. And it took about two weeks before I would go home. Finally my mother called me up one day and said Carl are you happy? Yes mam, I’m happy. I’m more happy than I think I’ve ever been. I figured out who I am. [quoting his mom] All I ever prayed for is that I would have happy and healthy children. I don’t understand it, and I said I don’t understand it either. She said but I
love you, she said we’ll figure it out and that’s all that matters. I love you and you’re happy. And I said what about dad, what’s gonna happen with him? She said well you know your father is going to take a while, and it did, it took years. That’s how-and it took a long time, we didn’t talk about it much. Slowly but surely my mother and I could talk about it. My father, it finally became clear to me that he had accepted it when I buried Greg, my first husband. My mother was already gone at that time. And my father, his funeral...I had lost it-it became too much. At that time they hated people with AIDS. My husband just died and I couldn’t be honest with the people around you, you couldn’t let them know. You’d lose your home.

TB: And that was in 92, wasn’t it?

CF: And I had HIV myself. So you could lose everything, they’d put you out, they’d burn your house down. They had already done it to people. My [indiscernible speech] today are still paid for by Ryan-Wright Care Act and that act was done because they burned his house down to move him out of his neighborhood. This is how the politics were at that time. And so, anyway, my father, on the front porch of our house in Hyde Park in 92 finally-that was in 79. Wait, it was in no, 1980, or 81. That was when my sister brought me out to my parents. And then in 92 is when my father finally accepted it. I could go on but it would just get me upset and then we’d be here for hours. It’s all water under the bridge now.

TB: Well I know there was a question to about religious affiliations and other stuff. So we were both raised catholic and I know my mom is pretty active. There is a catholic group companionite families i think it’s basically a catholic lay group that said screw this your treating our kids poorly. We want the church to start changing its policies and so we asked-that quite a few different people that my mom was hanging out with that group—which was pretty amazing to see, I mean we’re not religious but somewhat spiritual but not religious. Which is a, I mean, cause there are very friendly and embracing religions, I mean we know a number of different people that go to some of the Episcopal parishes around and are awesome, wonderful people it’s just never been our thing.

DO: Yeah. I’m not particularly religious either. Just cause of my experiences with church and stuff but that’s cool that there are people out there who are willing to be kind even if they don’t necessarily agree.

CF: It’s interesting to me because it’s different now, it really is quite different. I was with him when he came out to his friends and family and told them he was bisexual and I don’t remember a single friend of yours walking away.

TB: No. There might be a few friends I don't see as often that may be a little uncomfortable or whatever which may have more to do with them and what they may have going on inside themselves. But it’s fine, the vast majority of them are just awesome.

CF: I sort of screwed up my coming out. When I told you about was when i was brought out to my parents, Mine was a bit, there was another sections to that segment to that. The night that I, December 31st 1979 was when I started referring back to 79 like i said my memories get a little scattered from the brain stroke. Uh December 31st 1979 is when I finally accepted that I was homosexual and I was sitting there, it was New Years Eve my friends were all going out, I had
no plans so I was staying in. I had been drinking, smoking a lot of pot, up until I had turned 18 I was doing drugs, acid, mostly downers—I love those. I never messed with things like heroin, stayed away from that. And so that night, I was probably on, I know I was on marijuana—I doubt I was on anything else, maybe liquor, alcohol— and I was sitting in my room on the third floor of our house in Clifton thinking about being gay. And uh knowing I was 18, I had turned 18 that June of 1979— I’m screwing this all up, it’s my memories. 76 is the year I turned 18, 76 is the year I graduated high school. It was that December 76, December 31st sitting in my room high and drunk thinking about my friends and what they would think of me if they knew I was gay. I was not out to anybody and I was convinced that if I came out to them then they would hate me and they would turn against me. And everyone would hate me and I convinced me that the only answer was to kill myself. So probably around at 11pm I took a razor blade played it all out. I remember the song that was playing I was listing to dark side of the moon by Pink Floyd it was my favorite album at the time. And I took the razor to my wrist there still a slight scar a shadow in my skin you can see it in the bright sunshine. I took it and I looked away and I drew it down, now I had just smoked a bowl, and I thought surely I was gonna feel the warmth of my blood going down when I didn’t feel that was when I realized it wasn't going the way I had thought. I didn’t want to look and I don’t like the sight of blood but when I looked back it was just like a cat scratch. It really hurt. I don’t like pain and so I was like for God sakes you can’t even do that right. So I set down the blade and I lighted up another bowl of pot and I smoked that because I had to think about it because it hurt and I was planning to do it again. After I smoked another bowl I started thinking about being gay. I was raised catholic as Terry said I was raised God doesn't make junk I had heard that many times, you know, that God didn’t screw up. So I had to think about myself did I chose this Anita Bryant was pushing that they all were that I had chose this and therefore it was my fault. I knew that I had not chosen it and I thought about that for a long time after I sliced my wrist. That was what I was thinking about during those dark hours. I finally came to the realization no I had not chosen this it had chosen me I thought about that alot that night when I finally came to that realization I realized it was not me. I accepted that; I accepted myself. Then I decided it was everyone else and as I went to bed I decided that the next morning I would come out to everybody and just let the chips fall where they may. So the very next morning I was talking to my best friend at that time Gustere and when I told him I was gay at first his reaction was fine. That gave me hope well the very next day is when it really started falling apart. It was two day after I had tried to commit suicide. Gus called me, I called up Gus that morning like I always would hey what are we doing to day when I called him up that morning he told me that I was a liar and that he can’t believe that all those years I would lie to him. He told me that I had used him and that he hated me. I remember him saying he hated me he never wanted to talk to me again that I had lied to him. That was my best friend since one year old. My other friends didn’t react quite as badly but suddenly you were not getting any phone calls you weren't being asked to go hang out when you went to hang out well they would all scatter oh I have to run see you later and they would never tell you what they were doing they all walk up like you had snuck up on them or something [Carl whispering] you know that kind of
thing. And so I literally lost all of my friends and that was hard. It took about six months six to eight months to start developing new ones and years to build a new friendship base but that’s how my coming out experience now I what to think about this just a moment I apologize for all the confusion It upsets me very much as Terry knows my memory used to be very I was very proud of it this is the first time I have screwed all that up. I was forced out by Jenny.

TB: Yeah, yeah you got it.

CF: The first time I really came out was to my friends but not to my parents and so when I came out to my friends I lost all them. My parents I was brought out to by my sister right I got that right?

TB: Well and I think that kind of dovetails a bit into cuz when you establish a new community of friendship a lot of that was founded in the bar scene. We are kind of in an interesting point of flux now because of the progress we have made the need for actual safe spaces that are just for our community is kind of faded because people you know were not ostracized people want to hang out with us and make us feel comfortable and everything else and so there’s a great kind of blending and merging of things which is progress but some of the things that get lost is that there used to be a period in which there were quite a few gay bars and lesbian bars that were, you know, pretty much just for that community. You might have one or two people from outside of the community wander in, they’d look at them a little odd but as long as they were okay yeah we’ll let you in. But it was meant to be a safe space because there were so few of them. We’ve entered a strange space now where most of those places have gone, there’s so few of them, and the movement really has been towards a wider sense of community but it’s an interesting flux in dynamic. A lot of the places that were out there, dance clubs and bars, it’s not something I necessarily saw or experienced but hearing from that generation of how significant it was and-

CF: It’s interesting because, you know, thinking about what I just told you about my coming out experience. Because mine was kind of two fold, I came out to my friends first after I tried to commit suicide and I was sort of out with a bang because I told everybody immediately, almost within a week. Except my parents, even my brothers and sisters, everyone of them said don’t tell mom and dad. Especially my sister that ended up telling them in the end. And I think that’s what made it so difficult because I went through that then lost all my personal friends. I was starting to build up a new community of friends by hanging out at Badlands. I found Badlands, a gay bar, hung out there. Found out that my hairdresser was gay and I met him and his lover. He’s the one who got me to start taking better care of myself, working out, things like that, losing weight, what I wore, how I dressed and caring what I looked like. That helped me meet people so I had sort of gotten over all of that when then I decided I was never going to tell mom and dad. I was good with hiding at all of it, had gotten quite proficient at it and then all of a sudden to come over and be subjected to all of that and then to lose my parents suddenly. And have to go through all that anger and frustration again, it was tough. I’m glad that doesn’t seem to be common today, I know it still happens but I don’t think that’s the common way now.
TB: I know you’ve also talked about that even though there were safe spaces there were still bar raids, police would come in and shake the bar down from time to time and shake their finger and say go home.

CF: I’ve been through three of them in my life, I don’t know if you’ve ever been to a bar raid, you want me to talk about that right now? I don’t want to fill up your time, I know we have a lot of questions.

DO: Yeah, if you want, I mean we don’t have to go through all of these, whatever you all want to talk about, wherever the conversation goes.

CF: Well I could tell you about the bar raid, the first time I ever went through one was at Spurs, which was considered a Levi leather western bar for gay men run by Dale Disenger located on Broadway, or no, 8th street. Right around the corner from the Time Star building is now. Anyway, what was I talking about?

TB: The bar raid.

CF: Oh the bar raid. I was in there one night and I was dressed in my party clothes, it was legal but I had leather chaps on and my ass was out is what they would call it back then. That’s important because it was technicallly not illegal, you had to have a one inch strap cover all the spots. I had the legal requirement but you have to understand back then, one as wild as that would be to people here back then they would look at it as illegal, it wasn’t. But it didn’t matter. And everyone else was dressed that way. Anyway-

TB: It was technically illegal for people to dress in clothing not of their gender.

CF: Yeah it was illegal to wear a dress. And so your in the bar it was a regular Friday night I think Friday or Saturday night probably around 11:30 the place was busy. We were all having a good time and I liked big guys thank God. They may have saved my life that night honestly and I assure you that's not an over statement. And so I remember how it all started, I was standing there talking to them, we’re just having a good time, music is on. Not expecting anything, all of a sudden you hear that front door open. When the front door open everyone looked, who’s the latest person walking in the door, you know you're curious. It’s like a squeak, you’d hear the door even over the music. We looked over and all of a sudden realized these were cops coming in the front door. That mattered back then, and it still does. If you saw cops come to the bar and you were having a good time you might go hey what’s going on? Oh there’s a cop! Everyone’s freaking out, why is there a cop. Well they immediately kept pushing in, there were about six or seven of them, they were all in their gear. Not riot gear, just their hat on, batons out, flashlights. They are coming in with a purpose, no smiles, not friendly. Immediately the house lights come up cuz they ordered them up. Turn on the house lights, step away from the registers, that’s what they were telling the people at the bar. And then I noticed people were starting to get up against the wall and the guy I’m talking to sort of slams me against the wall cuz we’re close to the wall. And he sort of just pushes me up against the wall, and by that time my drink is over at the bar. I wasn’t standing there holding it. We’re standing-

[interrupted by phone call, phone stopped recording]

[started recording again]
CF: saying you fags, and they aren’t being nice about it. And they’re calling you fags and everything else. The house lights are up, they made them turn the music down, the bartenders are now lined up against the bottles, flat against the bottles. They had to get away from the cash register. You don’t have to have your hands up but you can’t have your glass, you have to put everything down. Hands by your side. We’re up against the wall, they tell us everyone up against against the wall. They want your ID’s out, so I go to get my ID out and everyone is pulling their ID out. So you’re standing there with my ID out, so you can’t really hear and the officers starting down at the end asking all these people while the other officers are looking around and going through the bathrooms. They were looking out on the patio and down in the basement was a leather shop, so they’re checking everything out. They wanted to make sure everyone was up and in that main bar room and up against the wall and have their ID’s out. So they got everybody rousted and now you can see that two or three different officers were working down the line, you can’t hear exactly what they are saying at first, but then you can hear fag and all kinds of nasty remarks that aren’t necessary. And then they get up to me and I was a mouthy individual at that time, a lot more mouth than I had ass to back it up. So he got up to me. He snatched, they didn’t take...they didn’t ask, the ID from me. You didn’t dare ask and they’d hit you or hurt you. Take you away and you knew it. He shined his light on my ID, Carl Fox huh? Yes sir. So Mister Fox, does your mother know you’re a fag and that you hang out in fag bars? They shine the light in your face and you’re not really supposed to answer him. I’m gonna answer him. Big guy next to me knows I’m going to answer him, and I was like yeah and next thing I know the guy next to me has his hand against my face. Literally hurting me, he’s pushing me against that wall hard, it’s obvious he’ll smother me. What I don’t realize and what it took me years to understand is if he didn’t shut me up they would have probably drug me out of that bar, they would have beat me up, that’s a guarantee. They may or may not have taken me to the precinct, I may or may not have made it home that night. I didn’t understand that then, I was a young mouthy individual. I didn’t like being called a fag so I was going to tell him so. And I was standing well-[reenacts talking with a hand over his mouth]. They laughed, they loved that, they wanted that. They wanted that man’s hand on my mouth, they wanted to see me, they really didn’t want to beat me up. They wanted me to know that I couldn’t say a goddamn word and you couldn’t. They went through the whole place, I remember somebody had run out of the patio and they ran after him. That person, I don’t remember seeing again. I don’t know if he lived, died, whatever. Probably got arrested and got a ticket, probably survived. They weren’t quite that bad but you don’t know. People did die back then, oh yeah, they’d find them in parking lots. You never heard why. So that’s a bar raid, I went through two more of those. Twice at Spurs and once at Just Friends up by UC.

AB: So did you know other LGBT people, like when you were young?
DO: Like outside of the bar scene.
TB: I didn’t really, occasionally there were stories in the press. It was funny, I was studying in Mexico in 87 for college. I guess maybe like David Bowie had come out as bisexual or something at that point. It was a spanish paper and I could just read bisexual and blah blah blah,
and I was like oh wow! It was just one of those things that caught my eye. So I mean I think there is a strength from knowing other people in the community and having role models and other stuff. Um, and so to me that’s why it’s important to be honest and be in part of the community that we are.

CF: I would say for me, you have before I came out and after I came out. That would be the two different times for me. Before I came out the only persons that I would have known, me and a couple of the other guys from the neighborhood would fool around. But I think that’s very common, you hear about that. Boys will be boys type of thing, at a certain point before you find girls. A couple of those guys turned out to be gay or bisexual, one was married and had children so I guess he’s bisexual but the others, years later, didn’t want to discuss that. Like it never happen. So you know in that sense I suppose they were. As far as celebrities or anybody else, no. I mean that was absolutely taboo, certainly the only person I would have looked at at that time and thought—was Liberace. He was very popular, my parents would watch Liberace on tv. And I’d think that was so strange because I’d look at him and obviously to my mind he was obvious he was gay, but he was not out and I know there was sort of this whole big deal about how romantic he would be with women. And the whole romance thing of even his act, which I thought was very strange because it was like why are they putting on this whole act. It’s obvious, isn’t it obvious?

ALL: [laughing]

CF: So you know, that was before I came out. And after you come out you start to discover all the different things about that time. Liberace was sick from AIDS and died even though he battled almost to the end to keep all of that under rapps. It was well known by that time so that confirmed what I had believed before then. The only other thing, like you said, David Bowie or certain rockstars. There were certain songs we would sing, but they weren’t, there were only a few people, I don’t know really how to describe this situation. It was interesting back then, you could get away with being bisexual or a homosexual in only very certain circumstances. Liberace could get away with what he was doing and everybody, if you talked in a deep dark corner where you were just guys being guys, well you know he’s gay. Well you know, I know. But up front everyone would say oh no, he’s very romantic, likes women. That was accepted, that’s why he could have chandeliers mounted on the front of his car. It was part of his show, it was that whole routine that made him wealthy. That’s what’s so weird, so twisted, about that whole thing. I didn’t understand it then, it was hard to understand. And then you had people like David Bowie, Mick Jagger. There were questions when I was in high school, were they bisexual? Mick Jagger, there was something about the way he moves, something about the way he wears his clothing. The low riding jeans, it was also very British. So you had—

TB: Elton John

CF: Right, so you had to be foreign, British or French. And there was a question about maybe you were having sex with guys. Maybe you’d done it once, whatever, but nobody ever said. You didn’t know for sure, that too was accepted.

TB: There was kind of an esteem to it but as long as you didn’t push it.
CF: And you could not talk about it, it was so weird! So weird, isn’t that strange to you? It seems so strange to me that those seemed to be the only instances where I could look back and go yeah they could get away with it. They weren’t beating them up, the rest of us no way and I knew nobody that was out and about and was okay with it. It just simply did not exist and then like I said after I came out I could see that. And then of course things started to fall, and now where we are now, knowing LGBT people, no [laughs]- anyway I went on and on.

DO: How do you feel that LGBT representation in media has changed since you were growing up?

TB: I think it has gotten much better, there is always progress to be made. It’s been interesting in my lifetime to see different thresholds met. Even in some of the shows where it’s like eh, this person is going to be the one to cross this line, alright. But in hindsight, it’s like damn that took a lot of nerve and a lot of verb and emph...someone like Ellen or uh the Will and Grace show.

[Interuption: bar phone rings]

TB: I’ll be right back, I’m going to grab the phone.

CF: I have to say in my life it’s been extremely interesting. You have to understand that when I first started watching tv, that would have been probably that I remember, would have been the early 60s. Heterosexuality wasn’t even discussed, married couples portrayed on things like Mary Tyler Moore, slept in separate beds. Or not Mary Tyler Moore, she was single. Uh, Dick Van Dike Show, they were married but they slept in separate beds. Couldn’t show them sleeping together, and so when you look at all that and by now a days you can have them kiss. So when I looked to the media for me it was difficult as a kid growing up trying to find anything. And you know, I was looking for it you bet. You bet!

DO: Yeah

CF: And so, but you know, then when they first started showing it, usually it was negative. Weather it was outright or just implied-

DO: Like a microaggression type thing?

CF: Just that they were, homosexuals were going to be your drug addicts, homosexuals were going to be alcoholics, homosexuals were going to be the ones in broken families. Homosexuals were going to be the ones who wound up in the gutter, wound up in the wrong location, wound up dead on the street. You know that was just part of that connotation and so that’s how it was portrayed in the media. And when I was a kid it was something to be ill, to be afraid of ect ect.

TB: Had to be the villain.

CF: Evil. And then you had a certain point, I guess in the 70s, when you could feel the change. About the time I was coming out, I guess around 1976 when I came out to my friends, you could start to feel a little bit of change. Now what was that in the media? I don’t know. The news started talking to us, you’d start seeing people like us on Phil Donahue. And talk shows started talking to homosexuals about, because 1969 had happen, Stonewall Riots. We were aware of that even here in Cincinnati. But it was, you didn’t know exactly what had gone on because it wasn’t in the news. It wasn’t reported. If there were books about it I didn’t know where those book were, whatever they were even called. You couldn’t look it up on the internet. And so there was
no way to research what was going on there, you just sort of saw what was on tv. And you could feel a little difference, and now all of a sudden they were talking to people who may have rioted on Phil Donahue. If you happen to see that, but maybe you were at work or you missed it, there wasn’t as many reruns even at the time. And so you had to be watching to see certain things, that’s where it first started to break on media. I think I noticed, like in the news though, and we went through a lot of that. Still a little bit today, it was worse back in the day. I’ll use an example to try to explain. When the marriage debate was going on and Terry and I first got together, we met in 1996. So around the year 2000 the marriage debate, at that time we were contacted by the local media for an interview. This is what lead to us getting the death threat and they wanted to ask us what we thought of gay marriage. Well I’ve been advocating for that right for 40 years. That was my right, we discovered that now the Supreme Court has ruled, that means that right existed. It didn’t just show up now, they just denied mine and they would not protect my right. My right existed, we always have to remember that, it existed the day I was born. I knew that, the Supreme Court finally recognized it. Well when they would interview you, they wanted to ask us about marriage, well it was all nice and everything else. By that time at least they were using what I would call common people. But that little segment, whenever they needed, if they were talking about a gay issue or something on the news after that, well they had our 30 second clip. They wouldn’t even play the sound, the sound wouldn’t match what they were talking about, maybe they were talking about some gay issue. Well they needed an image on the tv channel 5, they’d run that 30 second clip. There’s our faces up there, and someone would say saw you on the news again. They needed a token gay couple. Now media does that, and we aren’t alone, that’s common. I didn’t understand it till then, well suddenly I get a letter about that time all that anthrax letters first started going around, way back when. This is ten years ago, fifteen years ago when we got that letter.

TB: That was in 2003 I believe.

CF: And so in 2003, I’m opening the mail and I owned this place. Terry had a different job, this was part time work for him, he had another job. So I opened the mail one day and get the letter and all of a sudden I realized the return address is a swastika. It says wendepunkt under it, I had no idea what that meant. I knew it was German, dropped it. The first thing I thought in my mind was anthrax. So I called the police, they come up, they-you want to hear this story? I guess I should ask because it’s a little bit long. But it goes into-

DO: You’re okay.

CF: The police show up and they come in and I show them the letter. They said have you opened it? I said hell no, I didn’t open it. They looked at me, I said I don’t know what’s in that letter. Mind if we open it? I said no as their standing at the other end of the bar. I quickly sort of backed up and came up the steps and they are looking at me like I’m crazy. They were looking at me like why are you running away. I’m holding my coffee, I’m up and he’s like looking at me and I go just like this, you can open it I don’t know what’s in that letter. I’m gonna stand up here. ALL: [laughing]
CF: They thought I was silly. And then they opened up the letter, taps it out on the bar. Nothing comes out but the letter. He looks at me like the idiot that I was. He opens up the letter and starts reading it while immediately I see the blood drop right out of his face. This police officer in uniform says do you want to press charges. I said is it a threat? Oh yeah, it’s a threat. So he handed it to me, it was a mimeograph copy, or xerox. Mimeograph copy, you can tell how old I am!

TB and CF:[laughs]

TB: It was carved on a stone tablet.

CF: [mimicking]It was carved on a stone tablet.

ALL:[laughing]

CF: It was a copy, a xerox copy, obviously used by the white supremacy group that put this out, a hate group. It had a statement on one side and a Christian cross on the other, superimposed over the cross at the juncture of the two bars, was a swastika.

TB: An Arian cross.

CF: Please?

TB: An Arian cross is what it’s called.

CF: Yeah, an Arian cross with a swastika which said wendepunkt on it. Then there was a big shadowy figure underneath the wording that was basically the image, the outline of the image of a gentleman holding a gun. And the gun is pointed at you. Now underneath that image it said, instead of this bud's for you, which was the advertising at the time. It said this bullet is for you. And then the wording, it went through you have been singled out as an enemy of the human race-something like that.

TB: Actually I probably still have a copy of that on the computer somewhere.

CF: It goes on and says you should keep an eye out behind your back, we have an eye on you. Basically that they were going to kill me. It goes on and on.

TB: Block letter, kind of strange.

CF: It was awful, it was awful. And so they, as they are leaving with the letter I asked them if they were going to contact the FBI and they said no, you’re welcome to. Well I did, and so they started doing the investigation and-

TB: We called the FBI, turns out that there were actually two similar letters that were sent prior to that. One to a federal judge in Ohio, and an attorney over here in Kentucky that got one.

CF: He had seen us on tv and that’s why-

TB: with the same lettering, same profile, everything. So the FBI already had a working file on whoever had sent this and so they wanted whoever it was because it was sent to a federal judge.

CF: For clarity, the letter came addressed to Carl Fox.

TB: Carl with a K.

CF: With a K, Carl Fox, care of the Crazy Fox Saloon. Addressed to our address. Not to our home.

TB: To Washington Ave, with an R, Warshington [laughs]. But um, about-
CF: You laugh now.
TB: About a week later we got a phone call from a reporter, Mike Rutledge I believe, from the Kentucky Post. Who was doing his job and a really great guy, um very down to earth. But his job was to check the police blotters to see what was going on in different cities and he say Newport had this neo-nazi death threat and so he called us and said hey what’s going on with this. He’d already seen the letter and everything else. He said I gonna run a story so I’d really like to have your input. I was like ugh, if you’re gonna run a story...so we sat down and talked to him. Our idea was just to let the police do their job, we let our employees know. We weren’t going to make a big deal of this, just keep an eye on things. But if they were going to run a story, sure, we’ll sit down and we’ll talk. And that came out on a Wednesday, on a Wednesday paper. And two days later we were doing our bar shopping and we came home and we got a phone call from our bartender saying you need to get down here right now. What’s going on? Just come down, it’s not bad, just come down. And we get down here and literally the bar is filled with people.
CF: Packed.
TB: And it’s all people from the neighborhood, they had seen-
CF: Strangers, a lot of them.
TB: We had been established now, our business, probably at that point four to five years. We were working on it bit by bit and it build a lot of bridges in the community. But there were a lot of people here, we had no idea, we had never met. A lot of people who had never been to the bar but they saw about the story and they were like no look you’re a part of the community. We even had a beautiful letter written by one of the city commissioners-
CF: City Commissioner Jan Neptual [unsure of name], a letter saying
TB: Saying look you’re part of the fabric of Newport
CF: I hope that you, we saw what happen and we’re very sorry. We hope that you don’t sell and move which is something we considered. And he said we consider you part of the puzzle-
TB: Fabric, I think it was fabric.
CF: Fabric that makes up Newport and so we want you here. I was very moved by that.
TB: And uh, at some point during that event that we came down, a couple pulled Carl aside and said we started putting together pledges for a reward. And I think that got up to like $1,500 or so, but at the same time they were putting a million dollar reward for Osama Bin Laden, this that and the other. So it was very wonderful, it was very touching. Carl was in tears, all the things he had gone through over the years, he never had a community rally around him like this. And you know, it’s a good story, it’s an awesome story. But the thing I love is that it actually gets better.
CF: First off, I told him at the time, I said when they said they put this money together I said I appreciate it but you’re never going to find this guy, they never do. I’ve been through this too many times, time after time. We’ll be here for three days telling you all the times I was in court trying to defend my rights and assaults and everything, you name it. That’s how I knew it was a waste of time, so that’s what I told them. And I told them you should take that money and buy some street trees or plants for the neighborhood. We like it here, you should do that. And he literally looked at me and said Mr. Fox we can think of no better way to spend that money, and it
still makes tear up today. I can find no better way to spend that money, and I thought it was foolish but that meant something to me. It turned out-
TB: It turned out about nine months later out of the blue we get a phone call from the field agent from the FBI, said we know who did it, we’ve gotten all our stuff together and we can’t tell you anymore information because we are picking him up tomorrow. We’ll call then. And so the next day we get a phone call, we meet up with the field agent and it turns out that they’re someone who lives in Ohio or West Virginia. They are very nebulous about where it was who had grown up, his family, especially his parents, I guess his father had run with neo-nazi’s so he knew that scene and those people. He had a couple kids and he wanted to be able to take them on vacation, so he was checking the police blotters for rewards and stuff. Saw where this was, the description, everything else and was like I know who did this. And all he wanted to do was have money to take his kids on vacation. So he called the FBI, said here is who I think it is. And the FBI said look well look, do you think you know him well enough to meet up with him, wear a wire and talk to him so maybe he’ll say something? Well sure, that moves the reward along a little faster.
So he ended up meeting with the guy-
CF: Wore a wire.
TB: Wore a wire, and met with him for a while and eventually the conversation came up about these death threats and the guy was like yeah, yeah it’s me. I’m surprised it never really caught up with me, oh well.
CF: They’re so stupid.
TB: It turns out the guy who sent this death threat was mid-fifties, sixties maybe. Kind of small, curmudgeonly guy with a white beard, like a small version of Gandalf or something.
ALL:[laughing]
TB: An itnerarite landscaper-
CF: Living in a trailer.
TB: Half Jewish-
CF: Half Jewish.
CF and TB: Sending Neo-Nazi death threats.
TB: And so clearly he has issues and problems and-
CF: I’m gonna give you a little warning on this too.
TB: So he ended up getting two and half for interstate terroristic threatening. One thing we had asked is it possible at the sentencing to go and read a statement. So Carl and I put together a statement, Carl was able to read it in court to basically let a couple things out there. One, we hope this guy gets some help, he needs help.
CF: He needs help, Jewish…
TB: Ugh, I don’t know what’s going on that would cause all of that to happen that way. Um, beyond that we wanted him to understand that the reason he got caught is that our community rallied around us. They’re the one who put the reward money together.
CF: His intent to sow division, his intent to try to create a battle if you will, his attempt to tear us apart did just the opposite.
TB: Yeah.
CF: It drove this neighborhood together.
TB: And we knew definitely we were in the right place doing the right things.
CF: So that, you know, the question was how did that change over the years. So that’s a good indication that we’ve gone from back when I owned Rosie’s and we were attacked many times. Terrible stories I could tell you about a terrible day, I went to court against this one individual that was just horrible. You know, you would contact the media back then. You have to understand, one, this part is still true. If they don’t think they can sell a newspaper or an advertisement during their tv shows they’re not going to bother with that story.
DO: Yep.
CF: It can be the most just or unjust story in the world needing desperately to have media attention, unfortunately they are nothing more than a job that’s got to pay the bills. And luckily they find our homosexuality interesting now, our rights are interesting, but at a certain point sometimes it wasn’t. You couldn’t get them interested, you had to be dead, you had to find Matthew Shepard hanging on a fence to get them to write a story. You know, you being fired from you job cuz you were gay, that’s no story and they’re aren’t going to take it up. Even if the law was for you they, without the media- And you have to understand there was a time when I went into Kenton County prosecutor, taken into an office, closed the door and said Mr.Fox the prosecutor himself thinks you’re a fag and has no interest in protecting your rights, he’s not going to do anything about these people who are attacking your business. You need to stop coming down here. I was told that by the assistant Kenton County prosecutor to my face in a county building! I’m a taxpayer, a business owner, now who do you turn to when that happens? You turn to the media, I turned to the media, I had no witness to it so there’s no interest in it.
[bar phone rings again, Terry leaves to take the call]
CF: And they aren’t going to do an investigative report, they’d do an investigative report if you were black and denied housing back in those times. They did that back in the 60s and this would have been in the 1990s. In the 1990s they had no interest in the Kenton County prosecutor, or the assistant prosecutor, telling me to my face in a closed door office without a witness that the prosecutor, Gary Amundson-I’ll name that son of bitch-
AB: [laughs]
CF: though I was a fag. I got other stories about him but that’s how the media has changed. And how important it is now I want to give you one little warning. This is important, I’m glad it’s on tape. The thing to keep in mind is that these Neo-Nazi’s and other stuff, they used certain tactics try to spread their thing and they are still out there. It’s still happening today and so you always have to be aware of that and know that at times now they can be hidden. They can be Russians, bots, whatever. All kinds of words I don’t understand, but keep in mind that’s still out there. We may have come a long way but they can still use media outlets and other things so always do your research. Always look deeper into that, be wary of that. Especially with Nazi’s becasue they still exist. This ain’t a fairytale, this isn’t boogie man from way back, they still exist. White supremacists still exist and they are out there so be aware of it.
TB: When the Neo-Nazi letter came I just kept thinking in the back of my head, I grew up on Indiana Jones, and it was like we’re fighting Nazi’s! We’re still fighting Nazi’s! [laughs]
CF: And this is the other thing I wanted to point out, I’m glad you said that. Wendepunkt, on the outside of the letter, it was over the cross. That means turning point, turning point. Those are interesting words, those two words, turning point! Google that, see what pops up. Just on the news in the past week, a group calling themselves turning point, a Christian organization. Big white guys talking badly about these students who are being used by the liberals. There’s different turning point organizations, they are popping up all over. This guy that’s raising so much rucus on these campuses across the country right now talking about white supremacy. You know, that big thing down in Charlotte, what’s the name? He’s still in UC, he’s going to come over to UC and speak. Look at how many groups called turning point. Now I first heard those two words put together like that as an organization, I first heard that when we with the FBI investigating that death threat because Wendepunkt meant turning point. You look into that and all of a sudden you found all these right-wing organizations in this country but going all the way back to the 30s. You have to be very careful today because just last week I’m watching the news and they are going well this group called turning point and they are speaking the Nazi language. They are trying to convince you, no we’re not Nazi’s.
DO: That’s a “thing of the past” is what they always say.
CF: Don’t you find that interesting, you have to be aware of that. Wanted to be sure you got that on your tape. Keep in mind when you’re talking about the press because the press, they don’t understand. I wish I could talk to the CNN reporter the moment I heard them say this group called turning point, holy crap! Do you know what turning point means? Look it up! Because there’s the media, and they were talking about this group like they- they didn’t necessarily think they were a great group but they considered them legitimate! They were speaking to the white conservative aspect of it, never knowing that those words turning point and that’s in the media and that’s why it’s important why you understand how the media is used.
TB: Um, kind of moving things along in other directions…um because one of the things we’ve been involved with for quite a while and it’s part of the businesses, especially this one and Rosie’s before, the mission that we have. That’s probably why you’re interviewing us, that’s why we were grand marshals in the parade, um because there was a sense and Carl can probably speak to this, is that we got to a point as the community where you needed outreach. Where you needed to build bridges with other areas and other elements of the larger community and have allies because if you’re part of any minority group you have to have allies. You have to have friends who will speak up for you and stand with you and if you learned anything from the women’s movement, from the African American experience, is that you have build that really wide base and bring everybody in to stand with you and for you. And so there was a real movement, and I guess kind of in the 80s and the 90s to start creating environments that were mixed. When Carl started Rosie’s in 90, there was also a place called Carol’s Corner—
CF: I’m gonna let you tell this story your way and then I’m going to tell you a little secret.
TB: But I mean there was a definante need to build those bridges and have places that build those bridges.
DO: Places that were intersectional?
TB: Yeah!
CF: Like Carol’s Corner Cafe, where gay people and straight people could all come together and have lunch, have dinner, have a drink, have a nosh because nobody cared.
TB: Because again, traditionally, the earlier gay and lesbian bars tended to be fairly exclusive and didn’t necessarily try to reach out beyond that a lot. There was a second wave that kind of came along to say look we need to start-
CF: If you keep in mind, it was not unusual if you were a flamboyant person like Liberace, that you weren’t loved like Liberace. You just lived here in Cincinnati and you were just Joe Schmo. But you were flamboyant, you wore fancy clothes, you were just out there. You could be denied a table, you could go into a Green Derby down the street. McDonalds, you could go to a McDonalds, maybe they didn’t want you there. They would tell you get your faggot ass out of here. And there wasn’t any law against it and they would speak to you that way. Absolutely would in some places, depends on the neighborhood predominantly. So you have to keep that in mind that you couldn’t necessarily do anything you wanted then and they would deny you service. That’s one thing you didn’t always know, they might tell you but you didn’t always know.
TB: There was also another similar confluence that came together at the same time which was kind of the worst period of the HIV/AIDS crisis. Um, which it was horrifying, it was devastating. A whole generation of lost voices for our community, but some of the things that did come out of it was that the community got built because of it and it gave a feeling of compassion and empathy that didn’t exist before. So suddenly you did have people in the straight community saying look we have to stand up for these people, these people are our family members and friends. So part of it was creating a space where these people could come in and feel comfortable as well. And so it was an interesting blending and it kind of pulled all of those things together because you had to because that is what it took to combat that. And the resource it took to care for people um, and so it’s a testament to the community that ended up being built out of that. Then ultimately led to the marriage issue and I think it was the strength of the community that had come out of HIV/AIDS, the struggle of that.
CF: You couldn’t hide.
TB: That allowed marriage equality to go forward.
CF: When you are getting sick in front of people and you are getting sick with unusual illnesses, so I mean it’s not like you had regular heart disease. Heart disease, you can be straight and have heart disease. But you couldn’t straight and have neumic pneumonia, it just didn’t happen. Did not happen. Now the only reason you had that neumic pneumonia, that’s that AIDS. Early they would say gay cancer and all kinds of different stuff. Thrush, the white coating on your tongue, the only reason you had thrush...you had that gay disease. And so, it’s so different then than now. I don’t know if there is really any way to really show all of that quite frankly. It’s
really interesting to watch. But I knew as a kid that there was a lot of us, regardless of whether or not if figured out who I was or what I was, I knew I wasn’t alone. There was a certain point that I knew that. Well then by the time I came out, at least to my friends, before my parents. Now you know there are more of us, this was before the internet, but I just knew from all the different people I was meeting. So I started feeling, right before the AIDS epidemic, I already had this opinion in my mind that the only way—I wished, it seems to silly now, I literally wished all gay people or anyone who was out there carrying on at night in dark corners who weren’t being honest about it, everybody that was hiding in the closet. I wished that everyone would come out of the closet, especially after I came out. Because still coming out was dangerous when I first came out to my friends and so I wished that everyone would come out and that they would literally all turn pink for a day. When you woke up in the morning and go scrub your teeth, you walked in and looked in the mirror, all of a sudden all your skin is bright pink. It was because you were either gay or bisexual and in 24 hours you’d be back to normal, but the beauty of that is everybody knew. You no longer had that closet, that closet was gone, boom done! And why did I want that? Because I had already discovered in my own life through my friends, there were one or two, and my brothers and sisters who said I don’t care, I love you. Who before they knew that I was gay were talking badly about other gay people, well suddenly they knew one. They weren’t going to be nasty to your face, that’s how I felt about it back then. They didn’t necessarily love you, they just weren’t going to be nasty to you face. That wasn’t polite.

DO: Yeah.

CF: And so I knew that some people, most people, when confronted with their homosexuality...if they were someone who cared about you, they would accept it. Begrudgingly if nothing else. And so turn pink, all of a sudden you’re going to have all these family members at least going to love those people, they are going to say okay. They’re not going to like it, they are going to tell you everyday you’re going to Hell, that’s what I went through at times with certain people. They had to accept you, they were your family members. Now all of a sudden they have to accept you and that was how I wanted it all to turn out. Well then when AIDS came about and you start to figure out exactly what is going on. I’ve had HIV for 32 years, never been sick, very blessed. I lost my late husband Greg, over 200 friends. I can tell you all about that sometime too. But you know, I knew because of what was happening, I said to people at the time, I literally said to them the sad reality of this is this is going to help us get our rights. That’s before they even came up with a name for it. That’s how early I could tell and people were like what are you talking about. I said you can’t hide this, we’re all going to be pink for a day. Get that kaposi sarcoma and you have great big blotches, you can’t hide it. All of a sudden you got neumi cist pneumonia, you’re in the hospital, the doctor says he’s got that neumi cist pneumonia...he’s gay...can’t hide it. I knew it, I did because all of a sudden people who would have said you know what that boy down the street—and this is how it worked at the time— that boy down the street has that gay cancer, he’s got that gay disease. Well you know, that family got what it deserved, I wouldn’t have gone to that funeral. Then all of a sudden it’s your cousin, oh my cousin has it...how’d he get it? I don’t
know. He was a sinner but I don’t want him to die. They have any cure for that? No, it’s that gay disease, they die because they are gay, God hates them. That’s how it went so it’s interesting.

TB: Um, well probably one of the things, Carl-

CF: You gotta stop me sometimes[laughs].

TB: Is talk about starting Rosie’s and then starting here.

CF: He came up with the idea, they all think I started Rosie’s with the concept that I was going to bring us all together, kumbaya. It wasn’t about that at all.

TB: But you grew into an understanding

CF: Absolutely, and that was part of my understanding already, that’s why I want to tell this story. I knew that people loved you and cared about you, and they’d accept certain things about you, and all the rest of it you’d figure it out in the end. When I started Rosie’s, at that time you had gay bars. If you said you were a gay bar, well I watched the gay bars come and go. It depended on who was popular that week, I never felt like popular person and I wasn’t. So I was scared to death putting all my money into a business that was based on whether you were a popular person. And I wasn’t that type of person, I was afraid I’d lose my money. So when I opened up my concept was, my father had raised us all to understand that-he’d tell us this, these very words. Don’t worry about the color of their skin Carl, what religion they are, it’s money and how they treat you. They got dollars and dollars are green, and that’s the color you worry about Carl. The color of money is green. I remember him saying that at the time when I started Rosie’s Tavern. I remember people saying is it going to be a gay bar, a straight bar? People who knew me well, customers who were already there, I wasn’t out to them. Scared it would hurt business. I ain’t gonna tell them a gay couple just bought this bar, they’d all leave. I was afraid they’d burn it down. And so, you know, the concept was that I could tell people well I’m straight and I got a girlfriend and everything else but I could care less if gay people come in here. I want them to come in here, and so that’s what our outward work was, we’re an everybody bar! A friendly neighborhood tavern where everyone is welcome. I came up with that statement myself and they still use that for advertising over there, I came up with that myself cuz that was just my statement to people. I didn’t, I based it on dollars and cents, I had to pay the rent.

DO: Yeah.

CF: I was terrified as a new business, I didn’t want anybody to walk out that door, gay, black, white, conservative, redneck. Hell we had a redneck group starting to gamble in the Ku Klux Klan, put a white cross on Fountain Square every year for all those years. That was his home bar when I bought Rosie’s, I didn’t know that until months later that I found that all out. Long story, Leo Haggard and the neo-nazi party was coming in that bar and I wanted them coming in. I didn’t know who he was, as long as he wasn’t starting a fight and spending money I needed him in there. I had to pay those bills. I wanted gay people in there too so it was an everybody bar. It was because dollars and cents, but concepts I’d been raised with and what I already decided was I knew if we were exposed to everybody we’d get-

TB: Well your father was a candy vendor, serviced machines throughout the Cincinnati area for what 50, 60 years? For a long long long time and he served everybody and he was very proud of
that, you know across communities at a time in which people still had a way of segmenting
themselves.
CF: My father started selling penny candy in 1929, about a week or so after the crash. Now he
would go into mom and pop stores, it didn’t matter if it was Jewish, black, white, whatever. He
told me this before I started my business, it does matter, he’d say I’d go into some of those
places and they’d go hey I saw you going into that store down the street. A couple n*ggers run
that store, well they’d tell him. Well this is during the 30s and 40s, my father needed that money.
You go down to that store where those n*ggers run that store down there, don’t you? Did you
take candy in there? Oh yes I did. He wouldn’t want to argue that comment they just made, he
might feel badly about them using that word but he wasn’t going to argue that. Oh yes I did. You
sell to n*ggers? Yes sir I do. Jews too? You sell to them lousy Jews too? Yes sir. Well then
you’re not going to sell to me, you better make a choice. Well those people spend money with
me, they pay the bills. I see no reason not to sell to them. Well then you won’t sell to me, that’s
your choice. I won’t be back if that’s what you want. You have a right to feel that way. Get out
of my store and don’t ever come back you n*gger lover. He’d go out and leave. But the other
places, they’d hear about this because they were proud of it back then. I kicked that n*gger lover,
Fox, out of my store. Sell the candy to the other stores down the street, we don’t like them
people. Who was that? James Fox, the candy man. He’d get a call or they’d see him on the street,
you never stopped in my store. There was a store on every corner. Ok well I thought you were,
you got the- eh stop in my store. And then he’d tell me that he stopped in their store and they’d
say so and so down the street, he spreads nasty stuff about you. Well I don’t care what they are
saying about me. I want you to know I want you to come in here because I appreciate that you
don’t play favorites. And of course if you were Jewish and you knew this was going on and so if
you had trouble getting something you contacted my father. Now this is what I was raised with,
that makes a difference how you fight for your own rights. My father didn’t know, I don’t know
if he’d have taught me all that but that’s where that came from and that’s why my father was
successful and that’s how I started Rosie’s. I wouldn’t care where that money came from, why
should I?
TB: Well and what developed at Rosie’s in terms of the mission and the ethic was definitely
firmly placed when we started this, The Crazy Fox Saloon in 99. Our mission is to create a
diverse environment that is safe and friendly and inviting.
CF: Certainly by that time that was definitely my goal [laughs] as much as making money too.
TB: Most prejudice is based on ignorance and how do you combat that? How do you break that
down? That’s with experienced, people getting to know each other and so the next time an issue
comes up it’s not “oh those people”-
DO: It’s more personal.
TB: It’s this one person I’ve gotten to know, we see it time and time again where you have some
hateful republican who is like I hate gay people, blah blah blah. Suddenly their kid comes out
and it’s like oh well um....they spin pretty fast. I think it’s a human problem, at times we have
problems with empathy and ability to feel what others are feeling and kind of put yourself in
their shoes. And so that, our hope, is to help foster that in a wider environment. There are places in the US where that might not be quite as necessary but it’s really necessary here.

CF: And it’s worked.

TB: And it works, I mean the neo-nazi death threat response is part of it to show this is what can happen out of it. Our neighbors loves us, the city loves us, and so we get along with everybody but we work hard to be part of the community in a broader sense.

CF: It’s interesting, you knew it works when you have-a couple years ago in the gay press we had a young millennial who wrote an opinion piece. He was upset that our pride parade had been whored out to all the corporations. P&G had their name on our advertising, how dare they. They had a huge contingent, and all those Macy stars, I remember that was part of it. He couldn’t believe Macy’s, it’s not the Macy’s parade! It’s the gay pride parade!

TB: And all those politicians showed up!

CF: And all those politicians showed up and all they want is to shake your hand and shake you down for your vote and your money. Now I understood-[Terry and Carl laugh] why they were upset, but I was livid. I was like that stupid young man! Doesn’t he understand they wouldn’t even let you in the office. P&G, when I first started going out to Badlands when I was 18 years old, you’d pick somebody up. And yes, I was a little whore and having lots of fun. But you’d pick somebody up, it’s interesting, you’d pick somebody up and you could tell if they worked for Procter and Gamble. Now this is a fact, and I wasn’t the only one who did this. You could tell when somebody you met worked for Procter and Gamble, they wouldn’t give you their real name and they’d even tell you that’s not my real name. You can call me Tom. They would not tell you where they lived, they would not tell you what they drove. You are making plans to go back to your house and this was before cell phones, no GPS and so

[Interrupt: Carl spills glass of water, Terry gets towel]

CF:[laughs] fumble fingers- I’ll keep talking while Terry gets the towel. So you have, you go home have a little bit of fun. You tell him follow me, what car you driving? Oh don’t worry about it, what is your address? Well my address is so and so, well you can just follow me. No I’ll meet you there. They didn’t want you to see their car and they didn’t want to see your car. And if you said well where did you park, uh don’t worry about it. Well I could bring you to your car. No don’t worry about it. Wouldn’t tell you. Phone number, if they gave you a number and it was false. You’d try to call it, wouldn’t get through. You’d never go to their place, you always had to go to your place. Or better yet, they’re the ones who would take you out to a hotel, they didn’t mind spending the money. Why? They were making good money from P&G! They literally would be followed by Procter and Gamble. They would follow their employees during the 60s and 70s, that’s a fact. If you were not married and all of a sudden drew suspicion you would not advance in P&G, and this was all companies were all like that. But this is locally, and so I think it’s interesting that you could literally tell based on how they reacted because they were so afraid their job would find out and they’d lose everything. And now these young people are complaining, how dare they have Cincinnati Macy’s Pride Parade. It’s like you don’t get it, we needed them.
TB: That’s what success looks like.
DO: And also it goes wi-
CF: You couldn’t get anything done when the Cincinnati police are raiding the bars in the 80s, the 1980s. Not that long ago, the 80s were with disco and everyone looks back on it as the fabulous 80s. But they didn’t realize that in the 80s the politicians still would not talk to you, not in cities like this and so when they raid the bars you’d march down to city hall and say look they raided the bar last night. Can we get something about this and they’d say no. Now they are in your parade, they want to shake your hand, they want you to vote for them. They didn’t want you in their office, they were afraid someone would see you come in their office and if you they agreed with you they knew that’d cost them votes with the straight people. They didn’t dare risk that, they weren’t going to come to your parade. I got it but it was stunning to me. That’s when I knew we had made tremendous progress. Now all of a sudden we’re bitching because we have to many damn politicians in our pride parade and Macy’s is giving us thousands of dollars and paid for the security. How dare they. Now their name is on the banners, what a terrible trouble to have. I don’t know why we got on that but I’ll stop.
TB: The idea of having a bar that fosters that environment, serves a purpose in the sense that this is still like the wild west. There is still, this is one of the battle line areas and if you can change things here they can change anywhere. And we’ve seen that and it’s neat to kind of be part of that and again there may be other parts of the country where that would be kind of redundant but it’s not redundant here.
DO: I think when I went to that presentation by the artist at NKU where I heard you all speak I remember you all talking about how a lot of people want to get away to more accepting places and stuff. But that you all believe it is important to stay here and make these kinds of places like that eventually because you have to do the work in places that are less accepting to get to that point.
TB: Yeah, and I’ve been stunned because there have been times where we’ve looked at this area, especially with article 12 in Cincinnati, and other things. It’s just such a long slow slog, slow process but we’ve had friends from different parts of the country and some good friends who lived in Arkansas. We went to visit them in Arkadelphia, that was a very enlightening weekend, CF:[laughs]
TB: and it was like alright because we came back and
CF: If you ever want to feel like you’re in a progressive area go to Arkadelphia, Arkansas. My God.
AB & DO: [Laugh]
TB: And so my heart goes out to folks who are sticking it out there because that’s really really tough, even there things have to be changing.
CF: It’s got to be a little better today than when we got there but my God. It still cracks me up.
TB: So to me our business now is-
CF: First time I felt like we lived in a progressive area. That’s how bad it was there. How long ago was that?
TB: It was probably a decade ago. But um, we’ve had the Crazy Fox for almost 18 and a half years, I guess 19 years. And to me I still love doing this because so many people do their work and hardly get any note or acknowledgement. And there is hardly a day I don’t come in here and someone comes up and says I love this place, you guys, it’s like a living room, it’s a great community. And to me-
CF: It stuff like this, you help me realize how far we’ve come.
TB: And to me as a small business owner it’s nice to know that were able to make a positive contribution to our community and neighborhood and be part of moving things in the right direction.
CF: We worked hard for that.
TB: It motivates me everyday to get up and come to work and it’s a neat thing to be a part of.
DO: When you all were talking about the pride parade it made me wonder how you got involved with that. Like how did you get involved with being the grand marshals, are there lgbtq organizations you are involved with?
TB: The business have kind of kept us on our feet.
DO: What was that like being part of the first parade?
TB: It was extraordinary.
DO: I was there, the parade was good and everything and the party was nice at the park.
CF: It was extremely special.
DO: That was my first pride parade that I had been to.
CF: Very cool, that was my first grand marshal.
ALL: [laughing]
CF: It was nice to be living in the city and then I was- It was very nice. With everything that has happen in my life, you don’t have enough time or tape to put it all down, but I remember. I remember this, with all that...that day, it felt like maybe...not like it was worth it….how do you say it. I was glad that I had managed to survive, to get through all that to get to that day. I was very glad, and I was sad for all those that didn’t. I was sad for Greg, that was a day that I think he would have very much enjoyed. It was a day that you hope for, you hoped there would be a day like that. You’re not supposed to hope that you’re the grand marshal of the parade[laughs]. But then that feeling of being special, it was so normalized now that a fag born in 1950s could live long enough to feel that. That was very special and I think the only thing that was more remarkable about that day is when that child, he was probably in his 20s. 19, who knows, a child to me, looked to be five years old to me. He came up and is standing there off to the side, you have to understand someone standing off to the side probably has a rock and is about to hit ya. Someone is standing there while you’re talking to someone else, you have to keep track of who is standing around. We were at the park, enjoying the moment after the pride parade, I was very excited and bantering on. I saw him out of the corner of my eye and finally I’m like yesss?
ALL: [laughing]
CF: Are you Mr. Fox? Yes, do I know you? No, but I know you. You’re a legend. Those were his exact words, a legend, I was like what and I started laughing. Makes me laugh now, what do you
mean I’m a legend. He said no sir you really are, I’ve been waiting to talk to you. I looked around to him[Terry] you put him up to this! What’s going on here. No no Mr.Fox, he doesn’t know me. I’ve heard about you, I just want to thank you. I want to shake your hand if I may, thank you for everything you’ve done. Stunned me, absolutely stunned me. First of all, how the hell would you, what you work for the courts? Looking up arrest records, how would you know me? I guess there could be a database of you know all the things that went on around here. A black book that actually kept track of it. I didn’t think anyone was following us around, I thought they were just ordering us out of the goddamn courtroom, up the street into our little bars and stay the fuck there until we come down to raid you. You know, and so it stunned me that this kid was seeking me out but then you guy are here and so we’re seeing that more. And that feels the same as that day, it was marvelous feeling, being the center of attention. Being welcomed in the city that I worked very hard to have my first business over there. Maybe the beginning hadn’t gone very well down there with all the attacks and different things we haven’t even gone into here. Then to be back at the head of the parade, it was very nice.

TB: And part of it too is an understanding of how significant diversity is for our community. I always try to explain to people how diversity should function. Everybody understands the idea of a potluck dinner. Who wants to go to a potluck dinner where everybody brings the same dish? So the idea is that everyone brings something they are good at and you put it all out. So somebody has salad, somebody has a main course, somebody has sides, somebody has dessert. That’s what makes it amazing, you don’t have to eat everything on the table. You know, just eat what you like and sure you like your own cooking but get a taste of something new and different. That to me is what diversity is. The richness of it, hopefully it gets to the point where-like I love what St.Patrick’s Day has become in the sense that you don’t have to be Irish to celebrate St.Patrick’s Day. It’s like oh Smith, everybody is Irish for St.Patrick’s Day. You don’t have to be a part of the LGBT community to march in the pride parade. You don’t have to be black to appreciate Black History Month. I mean all of us have different stories and histories and aspects that contribute to us as a community and a society. I think one of the keys now moving forward is we’ve made amazing strides as a community in the last decade or two. It’s striking but it is vitally important that-

CF: Just in the last two years.

TB: We also have the wherewithal to look around and realize we’re not the last. It’s always going to be somebody else. I mean a hundred years ago it was the Irish and the Italians and the Germans who were on the bottom rung. They had to basically go serve in two world wars to earn true citizenship and intermesh with American experience. And the gay community has gone through this as well now, who’s next? The Hispanic community, is it the women’s movement, is it the Muslim community? And it’s like look, we have a responsibility to

DO:To return the favor.

TB: Yeah, to look around and see who we can help because we have a responsibility to do that.

CF: We have a lot of allies.

TB: There can be a complacency that comes in that suddenly you got yours, all done.
DO: My fight’s over.
TB: But no, I mean and that the thing I think is the unintended consequence of Donald Trump being elected is that it has triggered a cascade of groups now walking together that wouldn’t have happened before. That’s reassuring because that means there is a course correction that will eventually come back.
DO: It’s kind of amazing how many different communities have come together in light of his election. Like as bad as some of the things he’s trying to do are, it’s bringing people together.
TB: It is.
CF: But the thing you have to keep in mind, one I’m very glad to see the never again movement last week. It’s terrible it had to happen this way but I’m glad to see it. I’m glad to see the Me Too movement, that’s...we are lucky we live in a time where we have instant communication. So when I look back to when I was your age we were fighting the Vietnam War. Gay rights and other things, you didn’t have instant communication. You didn’t have this device you could could take a picture of and within seconds it’s shared around the world. The riots at Stonewall started the gay rights movement, you couldn’t watch that on the news ten minutes later. It took weeks, months, years, decades in some cases, for that information to get out. And so now I’m glad to see this. The other side of that though is now people start to believe this and you see it on that phone, it’s so and it is until it’s not.
TB: And that can be manipulated.
CF: and right now we have an awful lot and that’s the one thing that does scare me about the new generation, is...you still have to research. You still have to look at all of that.
DO: You have to be objective when you’re reading.
CF: You have to be objective and have critical thinking.
TB: You have to kick the tires.
CF: Footnotes still matter. And so now we’re finding out that we can’t just assume that story that someone shared is the truth or simply made up by our enemies. They will twist it many different ways, they are already working on this Never Again Movement, I guarantee you. The enemies of that movement are already taking their pictures, they are twisting them, they are coming up with fake bots that are now going to pump out stuff that will be shared and shared and shared. Os as we fight forward in this new area global communication instantly, and everything is now sped up so I’m seeing our rights advance at a pace, I’m even stunned. You know, three years ago when the Supreme Court ruled we had a right to marry, that’s only three years ago. Now if I’m at a grocery store and I say my husband people don’t stare at you anymore. They’re like, oh does he like it? Four years ago if I had said that I might have gotten back “you’re gonna burn in Hell for that”. Right? Right. That’s how fast it is now, how fast it is. Within months of the Supreme Court ruling that we’ve always had that right public opinion surged. At the time of the Supreme Court that ruling, we had to watch these sort of things, the general public was 51%. It had finally just gone over 51% mark felt we had the right to gay marriage. Well the Supreme Court ruled you have the right to get married, three months later 75% of the public felt we had the right to get married. Now we had taken a decade to move from say 45% to 51%, but in three months it went
from 51% to 75%. That’s how important marriage was. That’s how fast things are moving today. Two years ago there was a school shooting, I don’t even have to look it up, I’m sure there was. There have been school shootings every year, you know two years ago there was a school shooting happening. And we had the same response we always have. Can’t talk about it, too early. It’s not the gun, it’s mental health. Blah blah blah. You know this, you can write them down. Just pull out that sheet, and every time it happens you write them until now.

DO: Last semester my-

CF: I mean that was even a year ago, six months ago you had a shooting, what happen? But this time they know there is a change. So this is why I say that global and instant communication is very important.

DO: It just reminds me that last semester, in one of my psychology classes, there was a point where our teacher...I forget what exactly we were talking about but we were listing all the gun tragedies that had happen just in the past couple years and it wasn’t even hard to get a whole board full and people were just naming them off. And I just, seeing them all on that board...it was just like wow we really aren’t doing anything about this. It’s the same cycle every time.

CF: What I love is that they are now answering these people in real time, somebody will post something and they will be like no, we are not actors. No, we are not getting funded by the [indiscernible speech]. I mean they are answering these criticisms today in real time-

TB: And people are cross referencing things so it’s like if somebody responds to somebody, it’s like wait a second your facebook post has two pictures and it just opened. You know their a plant, where are you coming from because you’re jumping into this debate and for all we know you’re a Russian agent somewhere else in the world.

CF: It’s very quick right now and it’s exciting times but scary times too because false information can sometimes be taken for fact-

TB: Just as fast.

CF: just as fast as the truth and that can steer you way off and suddenly you have Donald Trump for president. Because a month before the election nobody thought he was going to be elected, I sat here that night and said no way.

DO: Yeah it was interesting to see the change from “oh, well he’s a celebrity, that’s never going to happen” and then it just...because people ignored it for so long. Oh he’s-it’s not going to happen.

CF: But that’s the power of what’s going on with social media and global communication, it’s on an instant basis. You know, that’s what the power is right now. There is sort of a wave, it’s almost scary, it moves under the surface and you’re not sure where that wave is going. But I do believe that wave can be controlled. I believe you millenials are figuring it out, you’ll figure it out a lot faster than I will because I am-I can’t use the damn phone. And so I have hope.

DO: I think it’s interesting, the kid’s response to that most recent shooting in Florida, how they are responding to it is different. I mean a lot of the school shootings have been at elementary schools or younger children and everything is where their parents speak for them. But now I’ve seen so many stories coming from the students from Florida where-
TB: Yeah.
DO: they are saying enough is enough, we’re not going to be quiet anymore.
CF: A lot of it is simply driven by that phone.
DO: Yeah, and they are instantly able to-
CF: What if we didn’t have a smartphone, what’s called a smartphone, with a camera and instant global communication through the internet? Well I’ll tell you it’s amazing.
DO: They are instantly able to share their stories and stuff.
TB: And at Sandy Hook it took a number of months to a year to so before they started floating “oh maybe this is a conspiracy, it didn’t happen, blah blah blah”. Which has to be horrifying for the parents.
CF: And we’re live streaming this in real time while the shots are being fired. They’re seeing it across the globe on the internet.
DO: There’s no question.
TB: But I mean now within a week there’s already “oh this was all staged, these are crisis actors” and the kids themselves are like-
DO: No!
TB: No, this is us!
DO: We live this, here’s the videos.
TB:Yeah, so I think they’ve caught a tiger by the tail. They don’t realize what they’ve set in motion this time.
CF: And even the NRA, and this really goes back to what we are talking about here, even the NRA doesn’t realize how fast everything is now moving. They’re old like me, they don’t understand new yet. They may hire a bunch of you young folks to teach them, you’re smart. They will, they’re smart and they got a lot of money to do it. But they are getting caught up in that same thing, they weren’t ready for this new reality that we are in. When the Me Too movement suddenly has the power to throw the good ol boys out of their position of power that they never were thrown out of before. Literally a month earlier you could have gotten away with the same thing but something clicked this time finally and I believe that’s what we are seeing in this gun debate. I think that’s what we’ve seen regarding gay rights, I think that’s why now-I mean if you think about it this way when Donald Trump ran for office one of the things that was being put out there was gay marriage. Now he wasn’t going to talk about it because we had already swung past it within two months of it passing. We’d already swung past that, but he could still say there’s still people out there who think that, down in the south and out west in the little cubby holes who aren’t so big on it. And well of course this guy wants to get sued because he won’t bake a cake for those two men who want to get married and they are going to force him to make them a cake. He got elected on that, still he won’t be reelected. If he runs for reelection, which he’ll be in jail I hope, which I mean the next presidential election in 2020...gay marriage is off the table. It wasn’t in 2016. That’s how fast it’s moving and that’s how fast when you get certain rights protected and with this showing that the world didn’t melt down when we said our nuptials, that it all didn’t come apart. Because seriously down in some little poedunks they
believe this. My God you let two men get married or two women get married, well you’re gonna break the Christianity promise and we’re going to have cats and dogs having sex in the fields and it’s going to rain locust, fire and brimstone. Believe me they thought this was going to happen when that literally did not happen. A lot of people were like “wait a second I was told by my preacher the whole goddamn place was gonna come up and burst into flames. I didn’t burst into flames and all of a sudden my cousin Jerry just married that man he’s been hanging out with for all those years. I thought they were just good friends. They didn’t burst into flames. Why you lying to me? Maybe it’s alright, eh who the Hell cares. Jerry and his friend have been fun at the barbeques for years, we just didn’t realize and now we realize”. That’s been the reality and so like you said, just like the kids, we’ve seen it. We’ve grown up with it, your lies no longer work with us. You’re empty things because we have it all instant global, they’re now streaming from the school. Those are not actors. This really is happening, they’re now shooting them, do you hear!? We hear, this is what’s going on today and it’s what they are saying. And so that’s got the NRA scared, it’s got us old people scared. We don’t understand it, we’ve never seen a movement like this.

TB: It’s also important to understand the historical context and I think that’s kind of trying to educate, I think that’s the important thing about interviews like this. Trying to encapsulate history and get some of the context because there are things that are cyclical, there are things that are a variation of a theme. I know a couple years ago when Ken Burns did his series on prohibition, it was a three section show. I came away from it just kind of flabbergasted about how parallel it is so many other debates we are having in terms of rural vs. urban, progressives vs. conservative and all these tensions and how it played out dealing with alcohol. But those same field is still at play on different issues so it’s like what worked for them? How did they get that to work, how do we make this work. I’m always fascinated about how we got out of the gilded age. About how the age of monopolies and robber barons was finally broken to try to get it equalized so that we then could have a middle class. And then things move forward because right now we are in a second gilded age, we are in an area where these corporations now have so much power and political clout that it is walking all over everyone else. And everybody knows it! The question is how do you start turning that, so what can we learn from a hundred years ago that might apply to this. So um my hope is that historical context can help us a lot.

CF: That’s very interesting, and I would keep going about it but I’ve think-

TB: You gotta get going.

CF: I gotta get going.

DO: Okay well we can wrap it up.

CF: He [Terry] can continue to answer more questions if you’d like but I gotta go see my shrink.

DO: Okay.

TB: Yeah you gotta go see your doctor. Do you have your keys?

CF: I think so, let me check. Grab some money for parking.

TB: You don’t have to pay for parking anymore.
CF: I’m glad you said that, I would have headed right over to Covington. That’s right, where am I going?
TB: You’re going to the top of the hill.
CF: Oh up by where we met, that’s right!
TB: Cut across the interstate.
CF: My last appointment was my first time at the new office, I would have driver right over to the old one. I’m glad you said that, I would have been so aggravated for parking. That’s right, lookout point.
TB: yeah, alright, see you shortly. Just come back and get me.
CF: I love you.
TB: I love you two.
[CF & TB: kisses]
CF: Okay kids, see you later! Have fun!
DO: It was nice talking to you. Thank you!
CF: It was nice talking to you, I hope I gave you some stuff you can use.
AB: You did.
CF: If you have question on the stuff I’ve just been rattling out write them down and ask me later.
AB:[ laughs] Okay, thank you!
CF: You’re very welcome, I’ll be back!
TB: Any other questions or?
DO: Um, do you have anything else you want to ask? We covered a lot of it without even-
TB: I could kind of see the flow of the questions so I was trying to like corral Carl into the right direction.
DO: No it’s okay!
DO & AB:[laugh]
AB: I think we’re good.
DO: Yeah.
TB: Okay. Well I know too, um that Carl didn’t get to touch on is well-I’m trying to think of what he said of the first Pride Parade he was in Cincinnati...but it was probably the mid to late 70s and at that point there’s the handful of them and there were more counterprotesters than there were actually people there to celebrate things. So yeah, definitely progress.
DO: I know like, I went to the Northern Kentucky Pride Parade, but I also went to the one in Cincinnati. There were a couple protesters and it was really cool to see the people with the sheets-
TB: The people with the angel wings
DO: Yeah the angel wings, it’s really neat that there’s counter protesters to the counter protesters. To just see that, that’s amazing.
TB: Well I know they had an issue a couple years ago with a religious group that submitted to be a float and they were kind of like alright...and it turned out it was not a friendly group. And so
the other religious organizations in the parade said okay put them in the middle of us and we will kind of surround them. It was interesting because there were some people who were upset but I think the general consensus was that we’re bigger than them. You want to come shout and be rude at our parade-
DO: We’ll be louder.
TB: Fine, you know. It’s kind of sad that you are spending all this time and energy doing this when you could be doing better things. Um, well I guess one story I could end on...which will be kind of funny, um it says a lot. In this room, the Pope and the Devil big heads for Mardi Gras. We made those back in 2000 for the Mardi Gras in Mainstrasse. A few years after that they were in storage in our house and it turns out that Fred Phelps was coming to Cincinnati. And I’m sure you know who Fred Phelps was. And um, he was coming to Cincinnati because P&G had decided to give money to their LGBT group to support some of their events. So he took umbrage to that and him and his entourage which is basically his family[laughs] in their van came to protest P&G. So we’re like, Carl’s like we have to do something! We have to do something! And he’s always been of the mind that if he got his hands on Fred Phelps that would be it. 
[interuption: bar phone rings again] 
TB: I’m not going to get that, it’s all phone solicitation calls at this time of the day. Um, so Carl realized we had these Pope and Devil big heads. Let’s do something with the Pope and Devil, so I said okay. So I figured out, I made a sign for the Pope that said celebrate diversity and something about love...which is kind of ironic for the Pope at the time. Um, but for the Devil I made a sign that said I love Fred, and Fred’s my best worker. So it was like noon on a Monday. Or Tuesday, I think it was a Monday. So we went and parked a couple blocks away, we put on...Carl was the Devil. He was dressed in his red leotard with a tail. And I had white robes for the Pope big head. So we got everything on and you can only see through the slit in the mouth. So we start walking and we get within half a block and as we are coming up you can see that on one side is Fred and a couple people spread out. Lots of police, police on horseback and everything else. And on the other side of the street were probably about a hundred counter protesters. There were a lot of people there to give Fred a piece of their mind. As we got closer a couple police officers ran up and said “oh no no no, you need to go to the other side of the street and so Carl turned around and was like they want us to go to the other side of the street! I’m not going over there with Fred Phelps, no! I’m staying right here! At this point the cop runs out, stops traffic, they literally stop traffic and start waving. And Carl’s like alright, so Carl wonders over and is literally standing right next to Fred Phelps. Fred Phelps is standing on a rainbow flag and maybe a State of Ohio flag with his God Hates Fags and P&G Fags, this that and the other. This curmudgeonly hateful looking old man with his crumpled hat, and I’m thinking ‘oh, oh no...Carl’s standing next to this guy with a stick.’”
ALL:[laughs]
TB: I’m just having this really horrible vision of me dressed as the Pope having to run across the street to pull the Devil off of Fred Phelps. Uh, Carl said it was really funny from his perspective because he was standing there and suddenly he heard a voice and he was like oh! It was Fred
Phelps going “you, you are going to burn in Hell. You, you are going to burn in Hell”. And Carl said all he could think of was “Well I’m dressed as the Devil, I control the knobs”.

DO: I control the knobs.[laughs]

TB: You know, it’s like what the- but suddenly before things got out of hand the police were like “Oh!” They realized what they did. It was supposed to be funny, not that he actually supported Fred Phelps.

DO: Yeah.

TB: So they were like “Whoa, whoa, whoa!” . They stopped traffic and waved him back and so he wondered back across the street. Unfortunately no one got a picture of Carl dressed as the Devil next to Fred Phelps with a sign saying “I love Fred, he’s my best worker”...which would have been priceless. So I love having these big heads down here because I get to tell that story all the time.

DO: That’s a good conversation starter.[laughs]

TB: Yeah! And Carl always joked that if we had the time and the resources that we should just go follow his family wherever they go dressed as the Pope and the Devil and keep counter protesting them. Whatever happens.

DO: That would be really funny.

TB: So that is kind of a fun, kind of epic story for-cuz he’s no longer with us so that’s...oh well.

ALL:[laugh]

TB: I think the trick sometimes is to outlive the hateful people and that we will do.

DO: Yep, that we will do. Well thank you for talking with us.

TB: My pleasure.

End of Interview