LGBTQ Oral History Project

Introduction to LGBTQ Studies (Spring 2018)

Northern Kentucky University

Interviewee: Margaret Hutchinson
Interviewers: Kennedy Nickells and Ana Ocasio
Interview Date: March 10, 2018.
Location: Margaret’s home. Berry, KY.
Length: Approximately 1 Hour in 2 Parts

Part 1

KN: Okay, my name is Kennedy Nickells. I am sitting here with Margret Hutchinson. First, we’re going to start with where you’re from, Margret.

MH: I’m from Grant County.

KN: When did you first discover you were LGBTQ and did your hometown have any impact on you?

MH: I’ve always known I was born this way. It wasn’t a choice. So, I’ve just always been like this. It’s not a choice, or a decision I made.

KN: But you identify as lesbian, or queer?

MH: Lesbian.

KN: Lesbian? [Pause] Did you ever keep your sexuality a secret? If so, for how long?

MH: Yes, until I was out of high school.

KN: Why did you keep it a secret for so long? It wa—

MH: It was hard enough going through school, just being an awkward teenager.

KN: What persuaded you to come out?

MH: So I could finally be myself.

KN: Did you receive any negativity?

MH: Oh, of course.
KN: Like what?

MH: People are always going to disapprove and have their opinions, but I had to be who I am.

KN: Did you receive any positivity?

MH: Yes, people were very supportive, as well as very unsupportive.

KN: Would you say you had more supportive people in your life or more unsupportive people in your life when you came out?

MH: More unsupportive.

KN: How did your parents react?

MH: My mom was okay with it. My dad and I still kind of have a rocky relationship.

KN: Are you able to bring anyone around to family functions? Or does it still feel out of place?

MH: I do bring people around, uh, and everyone is very nice, but it is a little awkward.

KN: When did it…”spark” that you preferred women over men? When did you “know?”

MH: Like I said, I’ve, just, always been more attracted to women. I’ve always liked women and it was never a choice. It was just a—What made you decide to like men? You just like them. There was no “spark.”

KN: Have you ever had a relationship with a man?

MH: Yes.

KN: How old were you?

MH: I was in high school.

KN: Is that kind of when you knew you definitely preferred women over men?

MH: I pretty much already knew, but I used the man as, pretty much, a tester. Just to see what would happen

KN: When was your first kiss with a woman?

MH: When was your first kiss with a man?

KN: …I was probably twelve or thirteen?

MH: Um, I had my first kiss, uh, probably at sixteen at a party with a bunch of girl friends.
KN: Did you guys tell anyone? Or was it just more of an experimental thing that night?
MH: We did not tell anybody.

KN: How did it make you feel when same sex marriage was legalized?
MH: I thought it was, uh, a great move forward for everyone just to be happy, just like everyone else.

KN: Do you plan on marrying? Anytime soon?
MH: Sure, if the right person comes along.

KN: So, currently, right now, you would say you’re single?
MH: Yes.

KN: Did you remove others from your life that didn’t accept you?
MH: I didn’t remove them, they removed themselves from me. I would always accept them back if they wanted to.

KN: Do you have any LGBTQ family members?
MH: Yes.

KN: What were some specific experiences you had in school when you knew you were a lesbian?
MH: At school dances, when boys and girls were dancing and I decided I would rather dance with my best friend sitting next to me than the guy across the stadium.

KN: How were students in high school that were quote-unquote “out.” [Pause]. The students in high school that identified as lesbian or gay, how were they treated?
MH: Uh, they were treated poorly.

KN: Could you say that is why you didn’t want to come out in high school?
MH: Of course! It was hard enough just to be myself.

KN: How did your coworkers treat you?
MH: My coworkers were fine with it.

KN: What about the job you’re at now?
MH: They’re all completely fine.

KN: Tell me about your first relationship with a woman.
MH: [Pause] It was different. Uh, because I finally felt comfortable, but going out in public was very awkward and I was shy. I was afraid of what other people thought.

KN: Did you show any affection toward each other in public?
MH: No.

KN: To this day, would you? Or—
MH: Yes. I am more comfortable with myself now.

KN: [Pause] How old were you when you had your first relationship with a woman?
MH: When I first dated a woman? Or when I first had a relationship?

KN: When you first had a relationship.
MH: In my twenties.

KN: Have you ever been a part of an LGBTQ club or community? Or do you just keep to yourself for the most part?
MH: I mean, I have friends that are in the community, but I wouldn’t say that I have a…group that I hang out with.

KN: Do you ever participate in political protest or advocacy?
MH: No.

KN: Did you have any LGBTQ friends in your past, before you let everyone in your life know that you were LGBTQ?
MH: Hm?

KN: Did you have LGBTQ friends before you came out, saying that you were LGBTQ?
MH: Yes, but they knew.

KN: They knew, just others didn’t?
MH: Yes.

KN: Describe your family. Do you have any family members that are LGBTQ? Are they accepted, or not? How involved are they with your family?
MH: I have two aunts, and they are very involved. We’re all a tightknit family.

KN: So, when you say you were born lesbian…elaborate on that just a little bit more for me, if you can?
MH: Well, when I was born, I didn’t decide one day, when I turned thirteen, that I liked women. I was born, just like when you were born. You grew up and you decided, you watched, and you liked who you liked and I like who I like.

KN: When you were growing up—Right now you seem like a very well put together woman and many lesbians identify as the quote-unquote “lipstick lesbians” or the quote-unquote “butch lesbian.” When you were growing up, would you say you liked to dress more tomboyish? Or did you still prefer to look more feminine?

MH: I just liked being myself. Some days, I liked to go outside and play basketball and roll around in the mud with the boys, but other days I liked to wear a dress and go out. I just like to be who I am—no one persona.

KN: [Pause]. What did your parents say when you were growing up, about gay, lesbian, bisexual, or trans people?

MH: My mom was okay with it. My dad said it was an abomination.

KN: Did the neighborhood or community where you grew up—in the neighborhood or community where you grew up, where there any perceived LGBTQ folks in the community? And how were they accepted?

MH: There was a few that were picked on, uh, but in my community, there wasn’t too many that were open until they move out of the town.

KN: [Pause] So you said that your birthdate, before we started this interview was 1969. So how was it in the 70s and 80s when this was considered more on the abnormal side?

MH: Well, it was a little terrifying. I mean, it’s what took me so long to finally accept who I was. I didn’t want to be different, or be judged, or go out to a movie with my girlfriend and be stared at the entire time. So, it was definitely awkward and scary time, but luckily I am able to be who I am now and be comfortable in relationships.

KN: Okay, we’re going to take a break right there.

Part 2

KN: Okay Margret, we’re going to start on the second part of your interview. So, were you raised in a particular religious or spiritual faith?

MH: Yes.

KN: What did your local spiritual or religious leader say about being LGBTQ?

MH: It’s against the Catholic religion to with the same sex.

KN: Would you still consider yourself Catholic today?
MH: Yes, I do.

KN: Are you involved in a religious or spiritual community still?

MH: Yes, I am now.

KN: Do you attend the church services every Sunday?

MH: Yes.

KN: Have you ever taken any girlfriend with you?

MH: No.

KN: Why not?

MH: I never had a serious enough relationship where we went to church on Sundays.

KN: Do you think that being— that perceiving yourself as Catholic causes you to struggle with having a quote-unquote “same-sex relationship?” [Pause] At times, do you ever feel—

MH: No, it did when—years ago, but now, with the new Pope, he has made it more comfortable for people like myself and others to be who they are, to know that God loves us all no matter who we love or what we look like or what we do in life.

KN: Now, you being my great-aunt, I remember growing up and hardly ever hearing anything about you being a lesbian. I didn’t really know much about it until I was older, around fifteen or sixteen years old. And I had only seen you bring around one lady, and I had no idea that was your girlfriend. So, I would like to say that you’re comfortable with your sexuality, but do you if there’s a reason why you haven’t been in a serious relationship?

MH: I just haven’t found the right person, or the right person hasn’t found me yet.

KN: [Pause] Do your employees/employers, bosses/coworkers say anything to you or ask you uncomfortable questions about your sexuality?

MH: No, never.

KN: Have you ever felt threatened at your workplace, because of your sexuality?

MH: No.

KN: [Pause] How comfortable are you discussing your sexual orientation or gender identity at work?

MH: I’m kinda a personal person, so I don’t like to discuss it with a whole lot—with anybody, let alone with people I just work with on a daily basis. Uh, those who are close with me, we talk about going out on dates, but I don’t talk about sexual experiences [laughs] or anything.
KN: Do you have any LGBTQ coworkers?

MH: No.

KN: Describe an example of a social situation when this matter came up, about you being a lesbian.

MH: [Pause] We were talking about going out one night, and I assumed nobody knew that I was a lesbian and I guess they had seen some pictures on social media and they asked if I was gonna bring a girlfriend with me and it just went from there.

KN: Was your last opposite-sex relationship in high school?

MH: Yes.

KN: Talk about the first time you met an LGBTQ person, and who was it?

MH: [Pause] It was my friend, we were college roommates—not roommates, we lived down the hall from each other and we were really close and I had no idea that she was a lesbian until I got to know her more and she started talking to me and I started telling her how I felt and she helped me cope with my lifestyle in different ways. Her name was Maria.

KN: Do you still talk to Maria?

MH: Yes.

KN: Have you ever had any type of relationship with Maria?

MH: No, we’re just really close friends.

KN: [Pause] How did your first kiss with a woman feel? How old were you and where did it happen?

MH: [Pause] It happened, I believe you asked this question before, in high school, at a party.

KN: Oh, I did ask you this question.

MH: Yes.

KN: It was at a party. I’m sorry about that. What did you learn about yourself after you kissed a woman? Did you feel any signs of guilt or anger or were you confused?

MH: I was confused and a little angry that I would have to live my life as a lie…

KN: [Pause] So you said you had—we had talked a little bit about your first romantic relationship with a woman…What did you learn about yourself in this relationship?

MH: [Pause] What was the question again?
KN: Describe—we had talked a little bit about your first romantic relationship. So, what did you learn about yourself in that relationship with another woman?

MH: I learned how to be more…comfortable being myself…

KN: [Pause] Tell me about the places where you felt unsafe, being an LGBTQ person. I know, growing up in the 70s and 80s, as we mentioned before, was a little…more unheard of, uncommon, and a lot of gay men, especially, were hurt because of their preferences. Is there—was there ever a time you felt unsafe growing up? Would you tell me about your experiences?

MH: Well, yeah, because everybody makes it—as a lesbian, as a…sex scene or a porno is not about love, it’s about the sexuality of it all and people made me feel very uncomfortable at parties and social events, daring me and my girlfriends, or the partner I had at the time, or my date to kiss each other in front of everybody so they could just stare.

KN: I know that growing up, even now, in 2018—I’m only 21 and I still consider myself as growing up—it’s more common or more acceptable for there to be lesbians than there are to be gay men, because people perceive that to be “hot” if a girl is kissing another girl. What is your outlook on that?

MH: I think it’s still the same as it was back then; it’s despicable. And people should just know that love is love, it’s not a show, or a movie, it’s who we are.

KN: Is there something in your past that you would have changed, if you had the ability to? Would you have done anything differently or you wished would have turned out differently?

MH: No, not really. Everything pretty much played to key. I wish I maybe would have said something sooner, but—

KN: Do you think you could have found the right person sooner if you had came out sooner? Instead of waiting until after high school?

MH: Maybe.

KN: Was it ever a struggle in high school, being a lesbian?

MH: Well, yes.

KN: Did people accuse you of being a lesbian in high school, before you had come out?

MH: Yes, just for the simple fact that I didn’t date a lot of men. Or, we didn’t go—I didn’t go down to the local restaurant, uh, with the group of guys that everyone thought was cute, or I never dated any of them.

KN: When you were in high school, and you did date a few men, did you almost want to force yourself to like them, so you could be quote-unquote “normal?”

MH: Absolutely.
KN: [Pause] Are you actively looking, right now, to date anybody?

MH: I’m always looking.

KN: At your age, you are 49 years old, currently, do you see yourself—you mentioned, if the right person came along, you would be married. At 49, say if you got married within the next couple of years, would you want children?

MH: No, it’s too late in life for that.

KN: Alrighty, is there anything else you would like to tell me before we end this interview?

MH: No, I think we’ve covered it all.

KN: Alright, I thank you for your time, Margret.

End Recording