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Rock Wales and Max Wales Oral History Interview

Rock Wales

Max Wales

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[Transcriber's note: The following changes have been made at the request of the Interviewer: pseudonyms are used throughout the Interview, the use of ellipses indicates that material has been removed, names of persons not directly connected with the Interview have been replaced with pseudonyms, some identifying geographical details have been removed.]

Jessica Merrick: Today is March 8, 2009. I'm talking with Rock Wales and Max Wales. Did I say your names correctly?

Max Wales: Yes.

JM: Okay, great. So to start out, I'll just ask you to tell me a little bit about yourselves. Give me a little bit of biographical background information, like how did you grow up?

MW: I'll start while you think! (laughs) You're the tougher one of the two on that! I grew up in Illinois in a small city; I guess you would say—about eighty thousand people.

JM: You're not from Peoria, are you?

MW: No, I'm actually from Decatur.

JM: Oh, okay.

MW: Okay, so you know Peoria? Do you know Decatur?

JM: No.

MW: Okay, Decatur's very similar to Peoria.

Rock Wales: And it's very close.

MW: They're very close. They're about an hour and a half drive, between. So, grew up in a blue-collar family, my father worked in the factory for years my mother worked in the high school cafeteria. We grew up with two sisters and my grandmother—my mother's mother—living with us. I'm the youngest of three. Let's see, what else? I went to school at Millikin University, right in Decatur. And I stayed in Decatur after that I went to work for Caterpillar. That's why I'm very familiar with Peoria. I spent some time in Peoria, but most of my time was in Caterpillar at Decatur. I worked in Decatur for Cat. Then I spent a little time in Hong Kong, because they sent me over there to work in a marketing subsidiary for a while.

Then I finally got tired of Caterpillar, and went to get my master's degree in accounting at the University of Illinois. And then I came back to Decatur again. I actually never left Decatur; I commuted over to Champaign to do the master's. And I went to work for a hospital. I was the controller of a hospital and health care system for about four years and then I went into teaching. I started teaching at my alma mater, stayed there for six years. Was set to get tenure, and then I met Rock. I left Decatur and moved to Fort Lauderdale, where he was at that time. We've been together now almost fourteen years.

JM: How'd you meet?

MW: At a conference. There was an accrediting body for business schools called the AACSB [Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business]. And he was going to the conference. He was an associate dean of Barry University's School of Business. And I was a faculty member. We were toying with the idea of trying to go for AACSB accreditation, so another faculty member and I went up to the conference. It was in Chicago and he and I met. That's the beginning of the next story.

Is that enough biographical?

JM: Sure.

RW: Is that the kind of thing you wanted?

JM: Whatever—I should have maybe said this before I turned on the tape, but whatever is important to you. The way we go about this is I'm taught in ethnography to use inductive reasoning, which means although I come in with preconceived ideas, I try to minimize those and put them at bay so that you can really tell me your story. So, whatever is relevant for you, that's sort of why I'm here. Also, that means if I'm asking questions about community that seem irrelevant or perhaps there's something more pressing—that you want to talk about, then by all means just say, "Well, that's interesting, but let me tell you about this." So make this—sort of feel free to make this your interview.

MW: Okay.

RW: Okay. I was born in Brooklyn, New York. I lived there till I was six with my mother and father. And then my father had a stroke. And they separated, is the best way to say it. I went to live with an aunt and uncle on Long Island. I lived with them until I guess eighteen or whatever, pretty much. I stayed in Long Island, I guess, about in my twenties. I don't remember exactly. At that point I was in the hotel industry. I had a lot of different jobs, I was a mailman, then I was in the hotel industry as a manager. I was getting my undergrad degree from Long Island—at that point the community college, and then Long Island University-Southampton.

Finished my undergraduate degree and I wanted to get off Long Island. So, I transferred to Connecticut. That's where I went first with Holiday Inn. I started my master's there, at the University of New Haven. New Haven, as they say. I got transferred from there to Baltimore. And then I left the hotel industry, because I didn't like it, after several years. I didn't have a job, I didn't have any income, so I collected unemployment and I went to University of Baltimore and got my master's in business and marketing.

And when I finished that, I was graduate assistant, and they said one of the faculty members was very ill and they wanted me to cover some of his classes my last semester. So I covered some of his classes. And then they said he's retiring and they needed somebody to cover the rest of the—for the next semester. I didn't have a job, still, so I said, "Okay, I'll try it." And that's how I got into teaching.

At that time I was living in Baltimore, and I commuted to the University of Maryland in College Park and got my Ph.D. So I taught at the University of Baltimore for a year and a half and I went to a small, private Catholic college for women [Goucher College] in Baltimore, which had five hundred students, four hundred students, I don't remember.

I was there for two years and then I went to Towson State [University]¹, which is the second largest university in the state. So I went to state school to a private school to a state school. Actually, I went from a small state school to a small private to a very large state school, and I was there for seven years. I finished my Ph.D. in the seventh year and got the job offer at Barry-Miami and moved to Fort Lauderdale and lived there for—well, I was at Barry for twenty years. Then I left last year, and here I am at USF now. Am I forgetting anything?

JM: What have been the major turning points in your life?

RW: Meaning Max?

MW: (laughs) Without a doubt, for a lot of reasons. For me, so many changes. Because I was—

RW: I got you out of Decatur.

¹ Now known as Towson University.

MW: I was leaving central Illinois.

JM: For the first time. Right?

MW: Other than a brief time in Peoria when I worked in general offices for Caterpillar, and a brief time in Hong Kong. Other than that I was—I grew up in Decatur. I lived in Decatur until I was thirty-nine when he and I met. So for me, it was a huge change. I was giving up my job at Millikin, coming down here. We didn't even know what I would do because at that point I didn't have the Ph.D., I just had a master's and I was a CPA [certified public accountant]. At Millikin, that was fine for getting a job as an accounting professor, but in most schools that would not be enough. Coming down here, we had big question marks about, "What am I going to do?" But I also knew that it was the right move for me. So I got down here, looked around for a job for a while but just I couldn't really settle in on anything that I thought was going to be something I wanted do. I was struggling a lot with the notion of—

RW: He came down on Memorial Day.

MW: Yeah, I came down on Memorial Day.

RW: It was August when he decided to stop looking for a job.

MW: Right. Well, actually it was more like July.

RW: July, yeah.

MW: I came down on Memorial Day—moved down, we moved down Memorial Day weekend of 1996, get the right year. We've been together—we'd been flying back and forth between Illinois and Florida for seven months because we met in November ninety-five [1995]. So seven months of flying back and forth. Once my contract was up at Millikin, I was moving. I got down here, like I said, didn't have a clue really of what I wanted to do.

One day he said to me, "You love to teach. Why don't you go back to school and get your Ph.D.?"

And I looked at him. I said, "Can we afford that?"

And he said, "You're the accountant, figure it out."

So I figured out that between what I was getting as a grad assistant—what I would be getting as a graduate assistant—and his salary, and we also had people that roomed in our house because we had a five bedroom house over in Fort Lauderdale, so we rented out a room or two, just to bring in a little extra income. We decided yeah, we could make it. So I went to Florida Atlantic University. Applied to the Ph.D. program there, did that for the

next four and half years of my life, and then stayed on at FAU for a while as a professor, and then ultimately left and I became a professor at Nova Southeastern [University].

So definitely for me, it was everything at once. I was leaving my town, I was leaving my family. I was also telling my family I was gay. I had not told them at that point. And I was coming down here and starting not only a new personal life but a completely new professional life.

JM: That would be a turning point.

MW: Yeah it was definitely a turning point. You figure—you know, all my life was centered in Decatur up to that point. And I never had a need to tell my family and that I was gay until I met him and then it was, “Well, I want them to understand who he is. Not just somebody that I hang around with.” And that turned out to be a not so pleasant experience in some ways and an okay experience in other ways. I don’t know if you want to get into all that just yet! (laughs)

RW: Long term, it was very good.

MW: Yeah, long term’s good.

RW: Short term it wasn’t.

MW: Yeah, I have—I told my parents first. They did not respond well, let’s just put it that way. And I guess looking back on it, I understand it. They came from even smaller towns than I did. They came from southern Illinois. They grew up on farms. At that point they were—gosh, probably about seventy. Yeah, they would have been in their seventies. So it’s not something you typically want to hear from your son, that he’s gay and he’s in love with this guy over there!

(birds making loud noises in the background)

RW: Jeez, what’s got them so riled up?

MW: Something’s got them riled up.

So anyway, my parents didn’t respond well. But I told my oldest sister, and she was kind of so-so. And so then I was down to telling my middle sister, the one between my oldest sister and me, and I called her over to the house and I said, “I need to talk to you.” And she comes over. So I explain that I met Ron and that it was definitely love at first sight and all that kind of stuff. And she said, “And?”

And I said, “What do you mean and?”

“You’re not set, right?”

I said, No.” I said, “Did you think I was calling you over to say I was HIV positive or something?”

And she said, “I just want to know you’re okay.”

I said “Yeah, I’m HIV negative and I intend to stay that way.”

And she goes, “Oh, in that case—I’m really happy!”

So she was kind of the beginning of at least that turning point. Over time, the rest of the family got to know him—parents took the longest. It took them about five years before they were ready to spend any time with him. But once they did, he turned out to be their favorite son-in-law. All the way up to the end, I think, with my dad. But the rest of the family, I told as time went along. Friends I told as need be. Most of my friends were, “Yeah, we knew that ages ago.” And it just never was an issue with them. So there were lots of things wrapped up in that one change.

JM: Yeah.

MW: Without a doubt, that’s my big turning point. (laughs)

JM: Good for you.

RW: Are we still on the same question? I lost track of the question. Is it turning point?

JM: Mm-hm.

RW: Yeah, that was probably my biggest turning point, also, because I had been in a relationship before for seven years. It wasn’t a healthy or good relationship, and I pretty much wasn’t looking for a relationship. I wasn’t interested in a relationship at all. I was just working and doing whatever I needed to do. It just kind of happened. It changed everything in my life at that point. It really did.

It wasn’t as dramatic as the things that happened to Max. Because I was already gay—well, I shouldn’t say “I was already gay.” I already knew I was gay and everybody else knew I was gay. All my friends knew I was gay.

JM: How was that process for you?

MW: The process of being gay?

JM: Well, coming out.

MW: Well, that happened over a period of time. I probably knew I was gay when I was twelve or thirteen, but I just wouldn’t admit it. And I was engaged to a woman at one point, to get married. Because I kept hiding it, and then that didn’t work. Fortunately that

didn't work out. And I was upset about that. And then when I got into a relationship with my ex, I was devastated when we broke up. I swore I was never going to get together with anybody ever again.

MW: Then I appeared on the scene. (laughs)

RW: Yeah. And the funny thing is—neither one of us really wanted to go to this conference. I kept telling my boss, “I don't want to go to this thing. This is going to be a waste of my time,” because it had nothing to do with what I was working on at that point, but he insisted. Somebody had to go, because we had to have a face there and all. I said, “All right, I'll go, and I don't want to go to Chicago in the winter.” This was in—

MW: November.

RW: Yeah, November.

MW: November first, second, third, I think.

RW: That's right, November, yeah. It was cold, very cold. I didn't want to go.

MW: And I didn't particularly want to go. But we both got pressed into it. As we said many times, there was a reason why we were pressed into it. That's where I met him.

JM: That's a neat story.

MW: Well, I'll tell you a little bit more of the story on that part. The night before the conference started, we were both working out in the hotel gym, and he's very organized. You would think he's the accountant, but not me. Everything is very organized for him. So he has this clipboard and he's got his workout routine, and he's very faithfully going around the gym and he's going around writing it all down. I'm just watching him. And he has absolutely no clue I'm in the gym! And there weren't that many people there! There weren't that many people at all. He's just clueless.

And the next morning, at breakfast—it was one of those stand around continental breakfast buffets—literally, I picked up a muffin, or something, and he picked up a muffin. We turned around and almost hit each other, and just started talking at that moment.

RW: And the interesting thing is that—remember he said that he had another person that came with him? I knew that faculty member, because he was in marketing, faculty member. I had known him from some other meetings and stuff and it was kind of, looking for food—it was kind of interesting that he was there and we were talking and we were getting together with him sitting right there!

MW: Yeah, they do know each other.

RW: And him sitting right there.

JM: So who lives in your household? Are there are any dogs or cats?

MW: No, unfortunately all our cats are dead. And someday we'll do that again. But the going back and forth with the two houses really isn't nice for an animal. He had two cats when we first got together. And [one cat] was very possessive of him. So when I showed up on the scene, [the cat] was not happy that I was there. He had to get used to me. He did!

RW: The first night we slept together, [the cat] slept between us, and looked at him and was ready to say, "Get out of here!"

MW: "This is my daddy." (laughs) So someday we'll have more animals. But right now it's just us.

JM: And what's your other neighborhood like in Fort Lauderdale?

RW: Fifty-five, 60 percent gay and lesbian. It's a complex similar to this one, but it's not retirement. It's a much younger age—

MW: It's a much younger community—

RW: Much younger age—well, the community itself, the houses are much older. But the people who live there are much younger.

JM: How'd you like the feel of that?

MW: Many more units, though; it's two hundred units. So it's typical of developments in a bigger city.

JM: Much more amenities.

MW: And you've got townhomes, and we're in a villa. And there's a nice pool and there's—you know, that kind of stuff.

RW: A fitness center and a meeting room and a clubhouse. Tennis courts, and—

MW: Fort Lauderdale's a very gay city, so no matter what neighborhood you live in, there are always other gay folks around, and people are gay friendly. Even our old neighborhood where our old house was, I think we were the only—well, no, there was one other gay couple in the neighborhood.

RW: Lesbian couple.

MW: Lesbian couple around the corner.

RW: But for the entire time that I lived in that house—I was there for eighteen years—we were social people in the neighborhood. We would have the neighborhood parties—sometimes two or three a year. Everybody in the neighborhood would come to our house, and people just—

MW: You know? It was Rock and Max's house. It wasn't a big deal in that neighborhood. Even though they were all straight, it was no big deal to them. And then moving into the place we're in now—

JM: Did you seek out a gay neighborhood?

MW: No, not really.

JM: It was just sort of—because it's Fort Lauderdale, it happens to be that way?

RW: Well, yeah. We were seeking out—we had very specific things we wanted. We wanted a small condo, and we wanted a gated community. That was the big thing. We narrowed it down to two. It was one of two, and we finally chose this one.

MW: We were tired of the big house. It was right after we had gone through—

RW: Hurricane Wilma.

MW: Two bad hurricane seasons [2004 and 2005].

RW: Yeah, that's true.

MW: Where, in that particular house, getting ready for a hurricane was a tremendous effort: about twelve hours to get ready for each one, and then another eight or so after the threat had passed. After you do that off and on for six months a year for two years, it gets kind of old. And then we got hit with Hurricane Wilma and had some damage to the house and a lot of landscaping. Which the landscaping place—there was landscape everywhere; it took a real hit. We said “Okay, it's time—”

RW: The house took a real hit.

MW: “It's time to downsize and make our lives simpler.” So [we] sold the house and moved in to the villa over there, which is smaller than this place. And we'd already had this house. We bought this house five years ago—six years, almost six years ago.

RW: Six years, yeah.

MW: We were the second people to buy in the duplexes. They had built the two triplex units. And they were start—they were going to build the duplexes and they weren't even built. We bought from the plan.

RW: We were second by a day.

MW: Yeah, Evelyn and Carme beat us by—

RW: Evelyn and Carme bought one day before us.

JM: They are actually attached to you.

RW: They bought one day before us.

MW: We had looked at the place when it was just the front houses. So before they had decided what they were doing back here and the front, I wasn't convinced at that point that this is where I wanted to be because the—I don't know, the houses just didn't strike me as what I wanted. But I liked the community, because we came over here one time—well, I guess the first time we actually came here, we came with a friend of ours, who is kind of like a second mom to Rock. She's straight. And as we're driving here, she's saying, "Why do you want to live in a gay community? I mean what's the reason?"

Well, she went around to all the houses, met all of the people with us, and as we were leaving that day, she said, "I could live here, because everybody's so welcoming and they take care of each other." And it was just very obvious the kind of community that—if you come into here, you're buying into the notion that if somebody's sick you're going to help out. Anything anybody needs, we all kind of jump in and do that. So I like that whole notion. I just—physically the houses, and then when we found out they were doing the duplexes back here, that was exactly what we were looking for. It was the—

RW: We had looked at the triplexes and decided we didn't like them.

MW: They were too small.

RW: Just for two people, it just—

MW: Can't do it. But it wasn't what we wanted. And this one—because we do so much work from home, we needed the middle room for an office. So as soon as we saw the plan, we said, "That's it. Community plus what we want in terms of the building itself."

JM: What were your first impressions of the community when you went around house to house? Can you tell me what that was like and kind of interactions you have with people?

RW: People were very friendly. People went out of their way. I mean (...) and (...), when we went over to their house, they were getting ready to have dinner, and they were like, "Come and sit and eat with us." And I was like, "They don't even know us." And there were like ten people there.

MW: We didn't even tell them we were coming.

RW: No!

MW: All we basically knew—

RW: We tried to make an appointment but nobody ever called us back, so we just gave up and said, “I’m coming over.” Kind of like what you did. I just drove over!

MW: It’s like we said, this was one man’s dream, and there’s never been a separate developer or anybody external. It’s all been internally. So we don’t always handle things well. (laughs) But we just drove up! And there was a guy sitting on his porch, who’s since passed away. He was sitting here on his porch. We just drove up and said, “Hi, we want to know something about the community.” And for the next four hours he took us to every single house he could.

RW: Showed us houses that were for sale and that were vacant.

MW: Met all kinds of people, and just sat and talked to them. We met (...) and (...). (...), I think, had just had open-heart surgery.

RW: Because he was lying on the couch. And they dragged him out—

MW: Yeah. And I remember thinking how—

RW: They dragged us into his house and I was like, “We shouldn’t be at this guy’s house. He should be resting, you know.” They dragged us in and said, “No, you’ve got to see this house!”

MW: But it was clear that everybody was there to help out, too. And that’s what sold me. Just that—while a lot of the people in the community do have children, we don’t. And a number of us don’t. And we wanted to be in a community where if something happened as we got older, there would be other folks around to help. The more time we spend here, the more time we see that. It’s a really, really, really nice aspect to this whole community.

RW: Yeah. Kind of says it all.

JM: That’s great. How has it changed since you moved in six years ago? Have you seen—?

RW: Well, we really didn’t move in six years ago. We really—I really moved in here in August, this past August.

MW: Right, because we used it as a weekend place for about six months. Then we actually rented it out for a couple of years. And then when we sold the house in Fort Lauderdale, we decided we wanted to have this place so that if we felt too closed in over in Fort Lauderdale we could come over here and spend time. And so we started using it

more and more. And then when he got the job at USF, then we went ahead and finished off the things we had left to do in the house.

RW: Still are. But anyway, since I've been here mostly full-time since August, the sense of community is stronger, because people know that I'm here. Just going outside, everybody chats, and we talk. It's a different feel than living in Fort Lauderdale and owning here. It's a different feel from that. People are just—I don't know how else to describe it other than it's a community and people are very comfortable here. And I'm very comfortable here. It's funny because I was comfortable in our condo in Fort Lauderdale, but I'm more comfortable here than I am there, because there you don't really—

MW: You don't get to know people as well.

RW: You don't get to know people as well. And that's the way it is in South Florida. It's a different—I lived there for twenty years, and if we hadn't made the effort in that house to invite the neighbors—

JM: It wouldn't have happened.

RW: Nope, you wouldn't know anybody. That's what it really boiled down to.

JM: Okay, wow.

MW: Whereas here, it's a give and take all the time.

RW: Yeah.

MW: I'm thinking about the women next door to us. One of them has cancer, and she's in the hospital at the moment. We had Evelyn over for dinner, her partner was over for dinner, and she said, "I have to leave for a minute because I've got bread baking for Josephine across the way because Josephine's sick!" And she left! She went and got the bread and walked it to Josephine and when she came back—we had a friend visiting with us, and she said, "I'm just amazed at you guys." And I said, "Yeah, look at Evelyn. She's got a partner in the hospital, and yet she thinks to take the time to bake bread for somebody who's sick over here!"

JM: That's incredible.

MW: It is incredible. That would never happen in Fort Lauderdale.

RW: Oh, no.

MW: People just don't get to that level with each other.

JM: What do you think it is about this community that enables people to act in that way? What fosters that sort of sensibility?

RW: I think it started that way in the beginning, and I think that's what (...)’s dream was originally—the guy who started this whole thing. A lot of it comes from the fact that we see people who are coming from the Midwest, which is a different attitude than the people who live in South Florida, which come from up North—New York and New Jersey. And I can say that as somebody from New York. It's a different attitude. You don't think about your neighbors and the people who live near you. You just—they're over there and it's nice that they're over there. But in the Midwest, where he's from, it's completely different. Everybody knows everybody and knows everybody's business. And everybody knows our business around here.

MW: Kind of a self-fulfilling prophecy, I think, because when people come to look at the units, they see how we all are. And if they want that kind of a community, they'll buy. If that isn't what they're looking for, then they don't buy. Because you've got to figure—where we're located, we're not in a real urban area. And so some people that are used to bigger cities might come here and visit and say, "It's nice, but I need something that's go more going on." They don't want to drive to [nearby city] to go to a cultural event, or go to [nearby city] or [nearby city] or whatever. They want to just have it right there. But if they come here and they say, "Well, granted, I have to go to [nearby city] for culture or whatever, but I really like the community," they buy. So we just keep bringing in more and more of the same kind of people. And that's what's done it for me. I think we just continue to attract the same type of people.

JM: So you think—is it safe to say, then, that you feel that most people here, or maybe everyone here, sort of fosters that sort of sensibility?

MW: I would say most.

RW: Not everybody—most.

MW: Not everybody, but most. Most of the people came here for that reason, to one degree or another. I think particularly back here—I don't know about the front so much, because we're not as close to the people up front—Allison and (...) and (...) and some of the others we know. But back here, definitely it's—I'd say that's a pretty high priority item for most folks.

JM: Why do you think there's maybe—it sounds like sometimes people in the back have their own events, and people in the front have their own events. Why do you think that is?

MW: We try to cross over as much as we can. But part of it is this was a real small group at the very beginning. So they kind of got pulled in up front, but then as this group grew and we started doing some things that were just specific to us—I don't know; there's crossover, but—

RW: Part of it, too, is I think the people up front are of a different—little bit different mindset. Many of them were closeted for many, many years. And people back here aren't—weren't—as closeted. And they're also a little bit—most of them are a little bit older.

MW: Yeah, I was just about to say the same exact same thing.

RW: They're a little bit older up front than they are back here.

MW: And—I'm trying to think if anybody up front still works.

RW: Joseph, I guess.

MW: Katherine and Josephine.

RW: No, Katherine and Josephine. Joseph, but that's—

MW: Whereas back here, the age is a little younger. And most of us are still working.

RW: Yeah.

MW: So I think there's a little different dynamic, in that sense.

RW: Some of the things that are issues for us, they look at that and say, "Why is that an issue?" because there, they sit at home all day. (laughs) You know? And somebody who's working—what's an issue for us is not an issue for them.

JM: Right, right. What about the issue of being—you said you think perhaps maybe the people in the front are more—on a whole, maybe they're a little more closeted?

RW: I think they were more closeted before they moved here. I don't know if they still are. But they certainly were before they moved here. And I think some of them have opened up.

MW: You still have some of that residual—you know, it's hard. If you've lived your whole life closeted—

RW: And there were—

MW: Coming here would have had to have been a big step for some of those folks.

RW: Yeah, and also being in a town that is not—how do I say this? It's certainly not an opening town, a welcoming town.

MW: It's not a real liberal atmosphere.

RW: Right, that's what I'm trying to say. It's not like Fort Lauderdale, where it's welcoming for gays and lesbians. [This town] is not like that.

MW: Yeah. It's an odd location for this kind of community. But after saying that, I still think that we've been pretty lucky. We don't—we haven't had any incidents, really, of homophobia, and I don't detect it out in the community. You know, when we go out to dinner—obviously two guys going to dinner, and they occasionally will say something like, “Is this separate checks?” you know, because it just doesn't click with them that we could be a couple. But I've never detected, really, any animosity. And yet, I did worry a little bit about coming here. Knowing what it was like in Illinois, in smaller towns in particular, to come to a place like this is an odd area to put a gay community. But, you know, it works! It works for a lot of reasons.

You watching the ducks?

RW: There's two of them on guard; all the rest of them are sleeping.

MW: Our whistling ducks; there like—they got to be forty of them out there.

JM: They are on guard, aren't they?

MW: And they do—they took—they do have a couple that are on guard, while the rest of them are sleeping.

RW: That one just opened their eyes; he heard you. He's like “Uh-oh, what are they doing?”

MW: Want to know if the food's coming.

RW: Yeah.

MW: We feed them every morning.

JM: Oh, okay.

So, we were talking about how you feel in the community and I was wondering—obviously you're very involved, and you're working and that sort of thing. Are you involved in any sort of community organizations or religious, or anything like that here?

RW: I am extremely involved. There's a marketing committee. We're doing the website, which kind of has been dumped on me to make sure I'm the overseer, if nothing else. Making sure that everybody's doing what they're doing what there supposed to do, back to the organization aspect. And we have a flyer that we're going to be doing, and tomorrow people are coming over to stuff envelopes and stuff of that nature, and mailing that out.

MW: To promote the community.

RW: Pardon?

MW: To promote the community.

RW: To promote the community, yeah. And of course tonight, (laughs) we have a meeting here. Well, the time that this is done, it will be old news, but we've hired an attorney because we've been here seven years—the developer started seven years ago here. And the issue has been—we don't have control over what goes on in our community, because the developer still has it.

MW: The developer, meaning the separate corporation. But it's still made up of people who live here.

RW: Who live here, and in the front.

MW: It's not external. We're at a point where we're tired of running to them for everything. (laughs) So we want to be our own community. And at seven years, legally we can—

JM: You mean in the terms of like—

MW: Legally.

JM: Improvement for your home, like what you are allowed to put in your yard, that sort thing, or—?

MW: Right. Exactly.

RW: So we can make our own decisions about putting plants in our yard—so our community can, without having to go to somebody else for permission.

JM: Right.

MW: Yeah. Right now, there are like three groups within this community. There's the [Community] Condominium Association, which is the people up front. Also the [Community] Villa Association, which is the people back here. And then there's the [Community] Inc., which is the development company that's still building everything. The Inc. is made up of us.

RW: It's made up of six people, three from back here and three from up front.

MW: But right now the Villa Association is still technically under the wing of the development company. So if there's an issue that we have, we have to go to them to get approval, and so forth. So, anyway—

JM: So it sounds like perhaps some disproportionate power going on.

MW: Yes.

RW: So we are heading that up. And most of the people back here don't know what the meeting is about. They have some inkling what the meeting is, but we've hired an attorney, and they've looked through our—he has looked through our documents and said, "This is what you can do on April 5, 2009," which is when the seven years are over. We are informing everybody back here what the options are for the future.

MW: It's typical of—Rock and I have kind of been the catalysts to most things that happen here. When we go to our association meetings, we have a tendency to talk about the same things every month, and we never do anything. But we just complain about marketing. "We're not doing enough marketing. We are never going to sell the rest of the units (inaudible)." (inaudible) marketing.

(plane noise in background)

And one of the meetings, I looked at Rock and he looked at me, and I said, "Challenge grant²," and I instantly thought of public T.V. or public radio where somebody says, "If you raise this much, we'll throw in that much." And so that's exactly what we did at the association meeting. We said, "You raise this much money, and we'll match it—dollar for dollar." And then we went to the front and essentially got them involved too. So we raised enough money to finally start doing marketing stuff.

RW: Didn't help a lot, but it helped a little.

MW: It helps a little. Every little bit helps. And then did another round of challenge grants, and got that going. We've sat around forever saying, "Gee, we need to hire an attorney and get some legal advice." And so we finally said, "Screw it!" We hired the attorney.

JM: Are most things self-initiated? Is there maybe, you know, this portion of the grant goes towards a sort of fund for everyone? Is there anything like that?

MW: Well, we pay a monthly maintenance fee, which covers all of the insurances on the buildings—

² In a challenge grant, the grantee must complete some sort of requirements (the challenge) before the grant money is dispersed. The challenge could be anything, but matching funds, in which both parties contribute an equal sum, is one common requirement.

RW: Cutting of the grass, that kind of stuff.

MW: Ground maintenance and so forth.

JM: But nothing extra?

MW: But, yeah—well, there's reserves, but that's intended to quickly replace the roof or something like that, you know; you're building towards that. So there's not a lot of excess [money] sitting around for us to decide, "Hey, let's go do marketing," or whatever. So it usually takes somebody to get everybody to throw in some extra. And that's essentially what we've done. We get people to throw in extra.

But it's kind of in our nature that after a while—some things should happen. We talk to enough people and they say, "Gee, I really wish we'd get this done," and we finally just say, "Okay, how do we get it done?" That's just the way we are. I think most people appreciate that. There are maybe a few that don't. (laughs)

RW: They wanted me to be president of the association this year or—well, starting in April. I said no this year.

MW: Some year down the road I'm sure he will, but—

RW: I think they're going to convince me next year is what it sounds like. But I don't know; we'll see. (laughs)

JM: What's your take on the best way to market this place? What do you think you should be putting out there in your professional materials? You know, is the selling point that "This is the first gay and lesbian retirement community"? Is the selling point "Come meet us and see how nice everybody is"? What sort of—?

RW: Trying to get people to come here. Once they're here, making sure they meet people. That's the biggest thing. It's not just meeting Joseph, who's the real estate agent, and having him show them the unit.

MW: That's not enough.

RW: That's not enough. They've got to do more than that, and they got to do—even if it's dinner. Invite new people to come and see it, invite them to people's houses and have dinner with five or six, ten people, whatever, and get a feel for what's it like. That's really what—as you were saying before, it's what sells this place. That's why people want to be here.

MW: It's not the house. It's not the community that sells them, or the physical community, or where we're located. At one point in time, maybe it did. We were the first, and we're close to beaches and close to cultural events and so forth—

RW: I don't think that's going to do it anymore.

MW: But now there are other communities in the country, and we're not the only one.

JM: Other places that have pools and tennis courts—

MW: Right, exactly. And so we're competing, and we're no longer by ourselves. We're competing against other communities, so we have to convince them that we're unique. And I think we are, I honestly do.

JM: Do you ever look towards the other gay and lesbian retirement places to sort of compare the way they're going about it, or are you so different that it's irrelevant?

RW: We would like to go the way they are, but they're much bigger than we are, is part of the issue.

MW: And all of them have been done by external developers.

RW: Yes, that's another issue. But they've also gotten money, like for the tennis courts, from Billie Jean King. But that's a public/private kind of—we looked at all that. And people here say, "Well, just go to Billie Jean King and get some money from them." But we can't.

MW: She's not going to give money just to the community. It would have to be some way that it reflects on her.

RW: And she's done this as a public/private partnership where she's making money. She's getting money out of the deal, and she would just have to hand us a check—and she wouldn't get much recognition for that with seventeen houses back here and whatever up front, twenty-something. Forty houses, that's how much recognition she'd get. There, she's getting hundreds and hundreds plus people from the local gay people, from the local community, to come in and use those tennis courts. And they rent them, and that's how they make money on it.

JM: So you're a little disadvantaged by the size of this place?

RW: Yeah, and in that regard—when you asked about looking toward other communities, in that regard it's a disadvantage. But it's an advantage because it's smaller.

MW: Oh, yeah.

RW: I wouldn't want to be in a two hundred-plus—

MW: I think our size is actually an advantage.

RW: Right, right.

MW: When people get here—if that’s what they’re looking for. Once again, you can’t sell them on something if that’s not what they’re looking for. But once they get here and see how people are, ultimately I think that’s why people buy. The latest two guys who bought over there, they bought in last December. And it just so happens the day they were here, we heard that they were from Long Island. And Rock was from Long Island, so as they were looking at the house next door, Rock went over and talked to them. He said, “Hey, I’m from Long Island, and by the way, did you know that the women that live in that unit are snowbirds—they only live here six months a year—but they live on Long Island!” So he hooked them up. When he got back to Long Island, they all went to dinner together. So it was a matter of getting to meet people and realizing you had connections. And they ultimately bought.

JM: Sounds like everybody really takes it upon themselves to get involved and do those things, the dinners and that—

MW: For the most part, that’s true.

RW: For the most part.

MW: And we do a lot of social things as a group, our annual boat regatta that we do out on the pond here, and some of those kinds of things that we do just as a community. A couple of years ago on Valentine’s Day, we decided we wanted to go out to dinner. We thought we’d invite a few couples. Well!

RW: Ha!

MW: Once you start inviting somebody here, you never know when you’re going to stop! You get to the point where you just invite everybody—front, back, doesn’t matter. So we ended up with twenty-five or twenty-six of us going to Valentine’s Day dinner—not this past Valentine’s, but the one before it [2008]. And then it’s like, “Well, where can we go with that size group?” We ended up going to the Amish restaurant in [nearby location]!

RW: Which it turns out—I didn’t know it then, but one of my students at USF, it’s his family’s restaurant.

JM: Oh, okay.

RW: And he didn’t know. Most of my students don’t know. I’m sure my students don’t know at USF. But it was kind of funny.

MW: But your students at Barry certainly did.

RW: Oh, all the students at Barry did, yeah.

MW: In fact, most of them knew me, or a lot of them did.

RW: Yeah.

MW: So we all go in there. And I don't think anything was noticeable with us as a group, because we are pretty split between lesbians and gay men. So if you looked at how we looked, we looked like straight couples! But then when we divvied up the checks, you know, the waitresses went around and said, "Who's on which check?" It was like the two of us, and then the two women next to us, and the two guys next to them, and so forth and then you can tell.

RW: They still got it wrong, though. Because there were four on one check, wasn't there?

MW: No, they did fine there. They did fine there.

RW: I thought they screwed it up. One place they screwed it up.

MW: Yeah. But we do that. We like to go out and do things. I think that's another part of the community. Once we move here we don't just stay to ourselves. We do try to go out and do things together. That helps.

JM: Is it mostly like you just described, where it's split half and half, or are there times where mostly guys get together, just like women doing something separate?

RW: The Saturday night movies.

MW: Saturday night movies is women. It's girls' night out.

RW: It's somebody up front who has—

MW: Although for New Year's 2008, we got invited to New Year's at one of the women's house over there, so we go there and we're thinking, "Well it'll be about half-half like usual." Well, it turned out it was eight lesbian couples, one straight woman, and us. So (laughs) it was the women and the two of us! And it was fun! We had a great time, and actually got invited to go again this year. (laughs) They were turning it into a pajama party and we said, "That might be a little bit too much."

RW: And they ended it at ten or something. Ten thirty—didn't even go to midnight.

MW: Oh, yeah—well, they were early birds, so—

RW: So we went to [nearby location] with some friends.

JM: Do you like that it's co-ed here? If you had the option, would you prefer an all guys' community?

RW: Nah.

JM: Or are you happy with the set up?

MW: If anything, we're probably closer to a lot of the women than we are to the men here.

RW: Yeah, that's probably true.

MW: I think the blend is really good. Although it's funny—in southern Fort Lauderdale, a lot of gay men don't want to be around lesbians, and vice versa.

RW: And it's funny, most of our friends in Fort Lauderdale are not lesbians. They're mostly gay, mostly guys.

MW: Right.

RW: We have a few lesbian friends, but not—

MW: Once again, I think that goes back to—people, even though you've got lots of folks around you there, you don't really get close with very many people. And the people you get close to tend to be same-sex.

RW: Yeah.

MW: But here, just because we're always seeing each other—you walk out the door and see somebody walking the dog or whatever—you get to know people.

JM: So you have more lesbian friends now than you did?

RW: Oh, yeah.

MW: Definitely.

JM: That's interesting. It does seem that—I know in the natural world or something like that where you don't have an intentional community like this, that there's a little more—

MW: There is.

JM: Segregation.

RW: There is.

MW: Yeah.

JM: So I just wondered if that played out at all once you got here.

MW: I haven't felt it at all. If anything, it's just the reverse. Yeah, I think there's a natural mix there that doesn't happen otherwise.

JM: How would you describe the neighborhood as a whole and the kind of people who live here—their backgrounds and that kind of thing?

MW: Educated.

RW: Educated. Stop taking words out of my mouth; I was just going to say that! (laughs) Other than—the first word that comes to mind is educated. That's what I was going to say.

MW: The number with people with doctorates as a percentage of the people who live here is pretty amazing.

RW: Did you know Allison has a doctorate?

JM: I didn't know that.

MW: Allison does.

RW: From his school.

JM: Okay, she didn't mention that.

MW: So does the woman next door, Evelyn. She has a doctorate from my school. Beatrice has an Ed.D. Abigail has a Ph.D. And there are two or three others up there.

RW: And what does (...) have?

MW: (...) has a Ph.D.

RW: Yeah.

MW: Yeah, it's incredibly heavy on doctorates, and even if you go below, the people at the master's level! People are well-read. They stay up on current events. They're engaged politically. It's just a—not the typical community where people want to go and hang out at the bar. I think that's the reputation a lot of gays get, that we just hang out at the bar and try to pick people up. In Fort Lauderdale, that was probably true. Here, it's not the case.

RW: Yeah, it's very different.

MW: People are interested, intellectually.

JM: Interesting, too.

MW: Yes.

RW: Mm-hm.

MW: Backgrounds? Ernest and Max D., who live over there—he was an expert in China, and something with intelligence.

RW: And he was in the C.I.A. for twenty years or something.

MW: And Ernest was also in some other governmental agency, but I don't remember exactly what. Their backgrounds are incredible. And then you look at what people have done since they've retired—Beatrice and Josephine traveled the country in their mobile home and have seen things that the rest of us would never see! You look at where they've traveled to now—Africa, you name it. They're everywhere. Pretty incredible, in a sense.

RW: Yeah, it really is.

JM: Interesting. So even though there seems to be a level of homogeneity in terms of class, education and that sort of thing, everyone's representing different interests.

RW: Much more so than what we've seen in Fort Lauderdale, for sure. Because in [the community] where our condo is, we've got all kinds of people there, but not all similar as far as education.

MW: Certainly not that high a percentage of folks that have gone on for advanced degrees.

RW: Right.

MW: And not the same level of interest in what's going on in the world.

RW: Right. Many of them are much more interested in what they can do at the bar on Saturday night.

MW: (laughs)

RW: Who they can do at the bar! (laughs)

MW: They're not interested in the environment. And a lot of folks [here are] very interested in the environment and are trying to do something, not just talk about it. I'd say that's a good way to describe how we're different.

RW: Yeah—(...) and (...) are from New Hampshire, and they've only been here for—

MW: A few months.

RW: A few months, but they've owned about two years, I guess, right?

MW: Longer than that, I think; they've owned for quite a while, but they just never came down much.

RW: Well, anyway, he was very high up in political arenas in New Hampshire. He met with the governor—

MW: Talked to the governor regularly.

RW: Met with the governor all the time, and had the governor's private line and stuff. It's just the kind of thing that you see here that you don't see in other places. New Hampshire's a small state, I guess, so meeting with the governor is not as big a deal as in New York or something, but still!

MW: But still, I think it's pretty incredible.

RW: Yeah.

JM: Earlier you mentioned that you had to rent out for a little bit? You had to rent out today; did the association or the board approach you about any sort of rules on renting? Or was it up to you to rent to whomever you want?

MW: There was some concern, I think.

RW: (...) and (...)’s concern; they have concerns about everything.

MW: He's referring to one couple who tend to be concerned about everything.

RW: They are.

MW: And then they get away.

RW: Yeah.

MW: I think there's always been some concern about do we allow straight people. Well, we have a straight couple that live over there—and in fact, he was the vice president of the association one year—and she's a sweetheart. So it took a while for people to get the notion that sometimes there are going to be folks here that are straight.

And when we rented out, actually, the first people we rented out to was a gay couple. And then we had a straight guy for a short time, about four months, and then a lesbian couple. And it's been very odd, because all we did to rent it out was put a sign in the yard. We tried advertising in publications and got no response at all. We put a sign in the yard, and we get phone calls!

The first thing I would say when people would call was, “I have to explain to you the type of community this is. It is primarily gay and lesbian. So you would have to be comfortable in that environment.” And I would occasionally have a person say, “No, I would not be comfortable, and I won’t consider it.” But just by happenstance, we ended up with the two longest term renters we had in here were gay or lesbian.

RW: And the lesbians were very connected in the community. I mean, they would have all kinds of luncheons here!

MW: They used to refer to this as (...) and (...)’s house. And I was like—“Not really!” (laughs)

RW: They since split up, unfortunately.

MW: Yeah, that’s sad. But they would have stayed here longer, but we wanted the house back.

RW: Oh, sandhill crane.

MW: Oh, yeah.

RW: Just flew in. Sorry. (laughs)

JM: How do you feel about that there is a straight couple living here? Is that something that you’re happy to welcome, or—?

MW: Perfectly fine with us.

RW: I mean, we lived in a straight neighborhood in Fort Lauderdale for twenty years almost. It’s no problem.

MW: I’ll give you an example. A year after we were together, we had a commitment ceremony in Fort Lauderdale. And the couple that stood up with him, two of our best friends, were a straight couple. My sister, obviously straight, and my best friend from high school, also straight. So (laughs) we had everybody standing up with us was straight.

RW: And the majority of the people out there.

MW: Most of the people who came to the ceremony—

RW: Were straight.

MW: Were straight. On our reply card we had three options. It was, “Yes, I’d love to see two men get married;” “No, I know I’m missing the social event of the season, but I have

other plans,” or something; and the last option was, “No, I’m liberal, but I’m not that liberal.” (laughs) Only one person checked that of all the people we invited! Like a hundred people at the ceremony. So obviously, we’re used to being around straight people. And I certainly don’t have a problem.

RW: “Used to being around straight people!” That’s an interesting statement! (laughs)

MW: Well, yeah. It’s kind of like (...) and (...), friends of ours who run a restaurant in—

RW: Fort Lauderdale.

MW: Fort Lauderdale—a lot of places describe themselves as being “gay-friendly.” They describe their restaurant as “straight-friendly.”

JM: I think that’s really fascinating. One of the things I’m interested in about the way this community seems to operate is—when you talk about community within identity politics perspective, you would talk about how community—in order to be inclusive, it’s necessary to be exclusive. You keep certain people out in order to make certain people feel comfortable. But what I’ve noticed through conversations with people who live here is that you sort of achieve this interesting and impressive, I think, balance of having inclusion but sort of not having too much exclusion. It really does sound like it’s sort of balanced in that people feel comfortable because it is gay and lesbian, but they also feel comfortable with the couple that’s not.

RW: Oh, yeah.

MW: Definitely. It took us a while to get there, I know. I think when (...) and (...) were looking at buying, it was an issue at first. But—

RW: Legally, you can’t exclude people, and that’s the bottom line. It would be just like us wanting to move into a straight community and we’re saying “We’re gay.” and they say, “You can’t come here because you’re gay.”

MW: Right. And that was the logic that was used to try to turn people around—the few that were a little reticent, we said, “Well, think about if we were doing just the reverse; how would you feel?” I think after people got accustomed to (...) and (...), and saw what they were like, it’s a non-issue. It really isn’t. If people buy into the type of community we are, so be it. I don’t think any of us can have a problem with that.

JM: It’s really neat.

RW: So you ready to buy? (laughs)

JM: In a few years.

RW: (inaudible)

JM: Can you tell me about some of the parties and functions you have here, maybe one of your favorites in particular? That you can think of.

RW: I think the boat regatta is my favorite.

MW: The boat regatta is always fun. Because we all have our remote control boats and—has somebody told you this before?

JM: Yeah.

MW: Yeah, so we go out and do that. Cookouts—I mean, we'll just do cookouts. We did a cookout for Labor Day and Memorial Day last year.

RW: We did.

MW: We typically do the grilling, and everybody else brings something along with them. So, you know, it's just a chance for people to get together. We'll sit around at tables outside, and not have anything in particular we're doing.

RW: We should get ready for—we should do Memorial Day for—talk about Memorial Day and get it on the calendar, because we won't be here Labor Day.

MW: That's true. Allison does a Halloween party every year, and she does a Christmas decorating party. Because, you know, with her disability she needs help, so Christmas decorating is a big deal. Everybody goes in and decorates her house. So there's some things like that which are pretty cool. Most of what happens is pretty informal. People just decide, "Hey, let's all go to a movie." And the next thing you know, there are ten of us going to a movie or whatever; it's not necessarily planned.

JM: So you have the calendar, but it's not really your main—?

MW: We have a social committee and a calendar, and there's always stuff on the calendar. People coming in and giving concerts—that seems to be a big thing up front; they're very tuned in to the musicians in the community, or they have people coming in doing concerts and stuff. So those kinds of things on the calendar get very formal, but some other things are informal.

RW: And unfortunately because of your schedule this semester, we haven't made a lot of stuff, because we haven't been here for that much. Well, we've been here but we haven't been here at the times these events are. Seems like every time there's an event—and Mardi Gras we were in Fort Lauderdale, where we're spending most of the weekends.

MW: It all depends on my teaching schedule. So this semester I teach an undergrad class that's every Wednesday night so I have to be over there every week, whereas other times if I'm teaching graduate classes we do them on weekends, so I can actually be there every

other weekend. It procured towards working adults, and most of them have families. So during the week it's tough for them to do anything. So Friday night and Saturday are when we do classes, and we do them every other weekend. So in that environment, I can be here most of the time, just go over there when I need to, but right now it's—I'm over there probably 50 percent of the time and here 50 percent.

RW: And it seems like every event that they've had here has been the 50 percent that we're over there! (laughs)

JM: So what's probably going to sound like a funny question for you, and I'm sure it's phrasing it correctly will probably goof it up, but—you seem to be one of the youngest couples here, maybe?

RW: Well, we're not now, since the new people bought.

MW: (...) and (...) are probably our age.

RW: They're probably our age, but they're not going to be moving down for years, I would think.

MW: (...) and (...) are probably our age or a little younger, (...) probably a little younger. But yeah, we're on the younger end of the spectrum.

JM: So how does that feel, or is that—?

MW: Actually, I hope that's something that repeats. I hope that when we get to the older level, that there are some folks that are like we are now. Part of that is kind of selfish. (laughs) In that last season when people were worried about hurricanes and they wanted to make sure that all their shutters were working. I'm young enough and able enough. I can go around and work on everybody's shutters. So when Evelyn and Carme's shutters were locked up by having those little mud daubers [wasps] get in the tracks and they were having trouble cleaning them out, well that was no big deal for me to clean that out. So I hope someday when I need somebody to clean out my tracks, there's somebody around that can do that. I would prefer that we always have kind of a mix. But you know if will work that way or not, but I figure I'm doing my time now.

JM: And you don't mind doing it.

MW: No, not at all. I'm glad I have the ability. It's kind of like Allison, you know, she's not able. Well, I say she's not able, and yet she does so much. I don't know how that woman manages to do all the things she does. But when she needs help, she's not afraid to ask somebody, and people jump in and help. Fine by me being the younger one for a time.

RW: Doesn't faze me that Max is younger than me by eight years. I'm older than I look.

MW: (laughs) You're younger than you look!

RW: I don't know—something! (laughs) Something like that. So it doesn't really faze me that much. I really don't think about it. I think more about it when I'm in Fort Lauderdale, I think, because it's such a younger environment. And you feel like—

MW: There's more emphasis on it.

RW: More emphasis on being twenty or thirty, and here it's no big deal.

MW: Age is a non issue for most people here.

RW: Well, (...) and (...) are young too. I mean, (...)’s going to be sixty-one, too.

MW: Actually, the people who are buying recently tend to be—

RW: Younger.

MW: More our age group, and like I said, some of them are still working. So we're definitely different from the early people that bought way up front. Because they came here already retired, and in some cases had been retired for quite a while. So it is—

RW: That's what I think I was talking about before, about the difference in mentality between up front and here. They're an older mentality than we are here. That's what I was trying to get to. That's why it's a little bit different. And the whole thing about, "Why is that an issue?" Well, it's an issue, because we're working and we're younger and we want this to be done this way, not the way you do it! (laughs) Whatever the issue is.

JM: I think you touched on something interesting earlier when you were talking about how for some people, living here might be a different experience because of the age that they came out in.

RW: Yes, that's true.

MW: Yeah, I think so. Very true.

RW: People up front—some of them are nervous about in [the local town], because it's not an opening, welcoming community. They're still in the closet, some of them.

JM: There's a sociologist named Dana Rosenfeld and she does work in that field, and she talks about how even though somebody who came out in the late sixties [1960s] in sixty-eight [1968] and someone else came out in seventy-one [1971], they have a completely different orientation to what's appropriate, in terms of style or the way that you conduct yourself, the way that you—how "out" you are, that sort of thing. And that really creates

rifts among communities because some people are, “This is how I am and I’m proud of it,” and other people are a little bit more reserved.

RW: Right. Some people put the big flag out front, and other people don’t want anybody to know that they live there. Yeah.

JM: How do you think that plays out here? Or does it? Do you see ideals about style or appropriateness clashing?

RW: Back here, it’s not a problem at all.

MW: I think the only time we ever see it play out is usually when we talk about marketing.

JM: Yeah, okay.

RW: Yeah, that’s true.

MW: Some of the reticence about marketing early on was, the more attention we draw to the community, the more likely it is that something could go wrong. Somebody could come in and be malicious or whatever. So I think there was much more concern with some of the folks up front about that whole thing.

JM: Where do you tend to market, though? Because there’s a difference between marketing in *The Advocate* and marketing in the [local newspaper].

MW: Yeah! (laughs)

JM: So, where are you sort of—

RW: Well, that’s the issue, that there was no money for marketing, so marketing wasn’t done. And when we started really pushing marketing and putting money into marketing, we tried marketing in Fort Lauderdale. We did some research on this and looked to see where the people came from, the people who live here. We tried to market to big markets that they were from, who live here. And we tried to market to big markets that they were from. And Florida—believe it or not, many people from this community came from somewhere else in Florida before they came here. So they may have lived in Ohio, but they moved to somewhere in Florida and then they moved here. So we tried to go after other areas in Florida. Some minimal success with that.

MW: We went through the Gay and Lesbian Community Center in Fort Lauderdale, their newsletter. We put an ad in *The Advocate* a couple of times, a few other gay websites, that kind of thing. We had ads out on—

RW: And other gay publications around the state. And then we went to other publications in other areas.

MW: Mainly what we're doing now is actually to churches.

RW: All the gay-friendly—MCC, Metropolitan Community Churches, all gay-friendly churches. All churches that are—there's a term for it, but it means that they're gay accepting, that—the church has a different word, but it—anyone who is gay accepting.

MW: Community centers.

RW: GLCCs—Gay and Lesbian Community Centers. And Jewish community—Jewish— Where you going?

MW: I was going to get the flyer for her.

RW: Oh, Jewish—gay Jewish synagogues. I don't know how you say that either, but places like that.

MW: This is the flyer they're giving. So we're asking that they put that up on their bulletin boards or wherever people would see it.

JM: (looking at flyer) This is—I mean, obviously you're the marketing guru, so you're trying to convey a sense of—you're active—

MW: Yes.

RW: That's the whole thing.

JM: Sort of young, and we're retirement but we're doing stuff.

RW: Right. We're not sitting around in our rocking chairs! That's the whole idea. And this is going everywhere—we're trying to reach all those places I mentioned—

JM: Can I keep this?

RW: Sure.

MW: Yeah.

JM: Thanks.

RW: We are trying to reach all those places that I mentioned in Canada, and throughout the fifty United States. Well, all but Alaska and Hawaii, we don't have—actually, I don't know if I have Alaska and Hawaii on that list, I'll have to look. We've got 990—we are going to send those—990 mailing labels; we're going to send those, too.

MW: Obviously, we target places where we expect gays and lesbians to see it. May not be exclusively gays and lesbians, but where people would be open to that. We're not going to advertise in the local newspaper, that kind of thing.

RW: The closest thing we've done locally is in [nearby city] where they have the [city] Pride. We've done— we've had a booth two years and we are going to be in the [city] Pride—what do you call that thing? It's not a newsletter for the Pride, but it's—

MW: They put that booklet together.

RW: The booklet; what do they call that thing?

MW: I don't know.

JM: I know there's a lesbian yellow pages?

RW: Well, no, it's not the yellow pages; it's something specifically for the Pride, for the [city] Pride.

MW: They put that little booklet together that's got ads and—

RW: I can't remember what they call it.

JM: I know there's a lesbian yellow pages; it's ProSuzy.

RW: Yes. We're on the website for them. She has a website, too; we've already been listed—well, I don't know if we still are, but we were.

MW: We have from time to time. Basically all those.

RW: And we're on another one too, which the name escapes me now, which is a national one listed under the state of Florida for gays and lesbians, but I don't remember the name of it now. We've tried all of those things

MW: Part of the—obviously part of the problem is the market. We missed the market. We—in my opinion, if we had done this marketing back when Rock and I bought, if we had been doing that heavy duty marketing, this place would be filled by now. We would be done. But they were not really willing to put the money into marketing, and now we are at the point where of course, home prices has fallen and we are more insecure about the jobs. You know, the economy is an issue, so trying to sell houses in this market is tough. But if you hook one or two people with this mailing, there's those two units and the two next to it or whatever. So slowly but surely, we'll get it done.

RW: And the cost of this mailing is miniscule compared to what it would cost for an ad in *The Advocate*. Even really, if we can get one ad in *The Advocate* one time, and this mailing we are going to reach, even if half of them throw it away, we're going to reach

five hundred places. And if we get one person out of it, it's worth it. If we get one sale out of it, it's worth it.

MW: We're planning on doing two rounds. We had enough flyers printed up so we can do one round now, and then we'll do another round down the road. So hopefully we'll pique some interest now, and if the economy starts picking up and the more interest picks up in buying homes, then we'll get the rest of it done.

JM: It's certainly the kind of thing you remember. It's uncommon. (inaudible)

MW: And frankly, some of the other gay and lesbian retirement communities have struggled as well. Some of them have never completed their projects. So they are in as bad or worse shape than we are. So we may be able to get a few folks who might have thought about going to New Mexico or—

RW: Arizona.

MW: The one in Fort Lauderdale—there was supposed to be one in Fort Lauderdale, but it never materialized.

RW: There's actually supposed to be two in Fort Lauderdale.

JM: It seems like some of the other ones that I looked at, anyway, are really much more expensive.

MW: They are.

RW: That's another issue, too.

MW: Yeah. And the ongoing expense would be quite a lot more, because they're bigger facilities with more amenities and you've got to pay for those somehow, because they are common expenses. Here we've managed to keep the common stuff down to a minimum. So I think our maintenance fees will always be a little lower as well as the price to buy.

JM: Did you—when you started this whole marketing campaign with the flyers, did you poll or ask around the people who lived here how they found out about it? And what did you find to be—?

RW: We did that two years ago; we asked everybody in both front and back. That's why we decided we'd start in Florida first.

JM: Was it mostly from the web, or was it mostly word of mouth?

RW: Mostly—well, you have to realize this has been seven years we've been here. I think they started here on the front it's been how many years?

MW: Ninety-seven [1997] was the first house. So we're looking at twelve years.

RW: And twelve years ago, people didn't look at the web for things.

MW: Not as much, anyway, that's for sure.

RW: Well, it was only ninety-five [1995] when the web really came into being and people weren't looking. Two thousand, 2001, 2002 is when we start to see people really using the web for more investigative things. So it's hard to say—and they're all in their sixties and seventies and eighties, and they certainly weren't looking at the web!

MW: Well, actually our first exposure was an article in the *New York Times*, or something like that.

RW: So we didn't look at the web, either. We found it reading—

MW: You found it reading—yeah, I think it was the *Times*.

RW: It was the *New York Times*.

MW: Or something.

RW: *Wall Street Journal*.

MW: And you kind of—

RW: It was the *Wall Street Journal*.

MW: Was it?

RW: It was an article in the *Wall Street Journal*.

MW: We didn't even know where it was located. All we knew was it was called (...), and it took us a while to track it down.

RW: Yeah, yeah.

JM: What was your reaction when you read that in the *Wall Street Journal*? Were you surprised by it?

RW: I thought that was exactly what we wanted. I was ready, and I was hoping it was near Fort Lauderdale, actually. But I didn't know I really liked living in Fort Lauderdale. I did there at the time. (laughs) I've changed since then.

JM: You talked about some of the—I guess we can assume some of the problems that, you know, being too public, marketing towards [the community]? Do you think your

local presence is felt in any way? Do people—do you think the city of (...) knows about this place?

RW: I doubt it.

MW: We're still under the radar. We haven't done anything that would draw attention to us, other than through marketing efforts, which are targeted. We don't in any way make waves or do anything that would get publicity this direction. I guess over time it happens a little bit.

RW: [The cable company] people.

MW: Oh, yeah, when [the cable company] people come out to do services, they realize. If they come enough times, they start to put together that two guys are in this house, two women are in that house.

RW: And there's only pictures of guys in the house.

MW: Yeah. So they start to figure it out. Like the attorney we hired, I don't know that he's ever represented a gay couple before! (laughs) Yeah, he obviously does now. So you start to realize there are people in the community.

JM: Is there a concern for sort of keeping anonymity, or is it a nice thing that you're opening up to the community and doing—?

MW: I don't have a problem with it, because I figure the more people we get to know us, realize we're no different than anybody else. That's the biggest problem I see in this country right now, is that people think that we're not like them. And we are! We're just like any other couple. It just so happens we're two guys. Other than that, I don't think we're any different from my sisters and their husbands or anybody.

RW: Oh, we're very different than your sisters. (laughs)

MW: We get along differently.

RW: We get along, we don't fight! (laughs)

JM: I had another maybe funny question, but I was wondering—this may be a generational thing as well, like when you came out, the way that you orient to what's the latest style of being in the world. But I was wondering—there are so many words people use these days to identify themselves these days. Do you have words you prefer and are comfortable with?

MW: As far as referring to each other or referring to people—?

JM: Well, even like, I guess, in also referring to—you know, people—a lot of people have talked about reappropriating and reclaiming words that have before in the past were difficult, like people say “queer,” and they feel empowered in saying that. Do you have a preference about the kinds of words you use to describe yourselves?

RW: I’m gay, and I’m partnered. I’m in a relationship. Those are the kinds of words I use more than any.

MW: I would always say—if somebody asked me, I’d say I’m gay. I don’t use any other way to describe it. I do tend to say gay and lesbian. I don’t say homosexual or anything like that. I would say gay, and if people ask me about relationships, we typically use the word partner.

JM: So you don’t say spouse since your ceremony?

RW: Sometimes. It depends.

MW: And we actually had another ceremony. We’re legal in Canada.

JM: Oh, great!

MW: We got married up there. So even up there it was a little odd, because they were still under the process of changing the forms. Because the forms were—

RW: Husband and wife.

MW: Or bride and groom, or something. They changed it so now it says partner. In our ceremony, the minister referred to us as partners—in both of our ceremonies, commitment ceremony ages ago, and then the wedding in 2004. So partner is the word we typically use. I don’t typically use “spouse,” or “my other half.”

RW: The word “queer” in my mind connotes something very negative, and I prefer that people don’t use it. In fact, there’s a store in Fort Lauderdale, a bread store—

MW: Oh. He said “faggot,” though, didn’t he?

RW: He said “faggot”?

MW: He said “faggot.”

RW: “Faggot,” that’s right.

MW: That word—to me, that one is still offensive.

RW: That’s right, he used “faggot.”

MW: And a lot of young gay guys do use the word “faggot.”

RW: Well, he wasn’t gay. He was straight.

MW: It was a straight guy doing it.

JM: That definitely changes the meaning right there, so—

RW: Yeah, he was straight. And he was talking about someone who came in the store and was giving him a hard time. He was complaining to the person who gave him a hard time, his boss, who happened to come in the store. And he kept saying, “He’s a faggot,” and he did this and he did that. And I finally went up to him and I said, “I really find it offensive that you’re using that word, and I really would appreciate it if you wouldn’t.” And he said, “Well, he was a faggot! And he was this—” And he kept saying it! So I finally wrote to the guy’s boss. I sent a letter.

JM: Good for you.

RW: I said, “I find this really offensive.” Especially since that store is in Wilton Manors!

MW: (laughs) Where most the people coming in the store probably were gay.

RW: Yeah. Because—you know about Wilton Manors? Wilton Manors is kind of like San Francisco or Fort Lauderdale. It’s the gay community in Fort Lauderdale. It’s a small little city.

MW: It was the first city—

JM: Apparently he didn’t know where he was.

MW: It was the first municipal government that had a gay majority—you know, a gay mayor, gay city council, everything.

RW: It’s probably 60 percent gay the whole town.

MW: Whole town, if not more.

RW: If not more, yeah. And the store was across the street from Oakland Park, but it’s in Wilton Manors. For somebody to be calling somebody else a name that was inappropriate—

MW: But you talk about reclaiming words—there are young gay guys who will use the word “faggot.” And they use it to refer to other gay guys. I personally don’t like the word.

RW: Other gay guys, yeah.

JM: I know a lot of—

MW: I personally don't like the word.

JM: Girls will talk about themselves as “dykes” and things like that, so suddenly it seems rising in popularity.

RW: And I don't understand it. But I'm of a different generation, I guess. I know what a lot of people went through to not have to be called that. And for us to call ourselves that—I guess it's like black people calling themselves the N-word. And they do that all the time, too. They went through years to not have that happen. I don't know. I don't get it. But it's not for me to get, I guess. (laughs)

JM: That's interesting because I think, what—well, I agree with you, and why I find it problematic is I think even if you can somehow for yourself feel it's a reclaim and empowering word, you using it justifies for anybody else who hears you. “Oh, well, I know a gay person who says that word, so it's okay.” Right?

MW: Exactly.

JM: So I don't like it, either. How do you feel about the word “husband”? Is anything that anything you would ever use?

RW: We've used it occasionally—not all the time.

MW: We've used it, yeah.

RW: Not all the time.

MW: We've used it for cards at Christmas or birthdays. (laughs)

JM: (laughs) Ones that are already pre-printed: “For my husband.”

MW: Yeah. I will typically—a lot of the times I'll buy him cards that say “husband.” I don't know that we typically use that phrase for each other. I know a lot of gay guys who do say “my husband.” I say, “my partner.” I don't know why I do that, to be honest. Just seems more natural.

RW: Yeah.

MW: Probably because when we first got together the notion of us actually being able to legally marry seemed so remote that partner was the logical thing for us.

RW: Mm-hm.

MW: Now that it seems like a more realistic option, then maybe we would start using the word a little more often.

JM: Are there any negatives to living here—things you'd change if you could?

RW: (...) and (...)? (laughs)

JM: (laughs) Neighborhood politics.

MW: Every community.

RW: Every community has its curmudgeons.

MW: To be honest, I absolutely love this place. I love the house, I love the neighborhood, I love the people in it. I don't think there are any negatives.

RW: I can't think of any, other than the fact that we don't have a pool or a community center and stuff like that; that's about the only thing.

MW: Physical facilities—there are some things there that could be—

RW: I can't think of anything else, no. I really can't. And the fact that we're in [this town] recently has become a positive for me, and I didn't think it would be. Not so much [this town] but just the area—that it's so much more rural and quiet. After coming from Fort Lauderdale which is so noisy—

MW: He gets down there to see me, and he's like, "It's so noisy over here!" (laughs) You get back over here and you realize how quiet it is here. But then coming from the Midwest, this is like home for me.

JM: Right, right, with better weather.

MW: Yes, exactly. When I drive around here I feel like I'm driving around southern Illinois, which is where I'm from. You see the cows. It's got that rural feel.

RW: Country roads.

JM: Do you think that's a turn off to anybody who came here from a bigger city?

MW: Without a doubt.

RW: Well, that one guy who said he wasn't going to buy here—he came for a weekend and he said there wasn't anything to do. He was bored, because he's from the city and he's used to going to shows and going to bars and going to the gym every day of the week.

MW: This is certainly not the right place for a lot of folks. They're the ones that need that city life. But that's just the urban/rural dynamic playing out all the time. For me, living in New York City would never work. I love to go to New York for a few days, but I could never live there. Other people can come here for a few days but could not live here.

JM: Sounds like that kind of contributes to what you were talking about—he was talking about the community functions so well maybe because of the self-selection process.

RW: Yeah, that's probably true.

JM: Coming here and looking for the same things.

MW: I think so. Definitely. You don't end up buying here if you're motivated by the noise of the city and you want to be able to go to a gay restaurant or a gay bar.

JM: At the same time, you're close to [nearby city], and—

MW: We're close, only [a short distance] from [nearby city]. We can be at [a particular gay bar] in [a short time].

JM: I forget you're a lot closer than [nearby city].

MW: I mean, you just literally—[the bridge] is right there. So we get over the bridge—and we're both baseball fans, so it's good for us to see the [local team] play. [Nearby city] is right down the road. There's lots of plays and concerts and all kinds of stuff there. Really, all those sale points that they were using in the beginning about “first retirement community” close to all of this stuff, worked for us. I think it still works for a lot of people, but not for the ones from the big cities. There's no way we're going to win them over with the community.

RW: If you want to get something to eat at ten at night around here, you have to drive a ways.

MW: It's a challenge! (laughs)

RW: Because [this town] closes at eight most places, and a few at nine. At ten, there's nothing open. It's not [nearby city] and it's not [nearby city].

MW: But you get used to that. And as you get older, people tend to eat earlier, anyway.

RW: Yeah, that's true.

MW: It's not an issue.

RW: Eating at five is a big deal for some people. (laughs) Not for us, but for some people it is! (laughs)

JM: That's funny. I actually—when I went to Mardi Gras at Josephine and Beatrice's, you know, they said “Oh, yeah, come over; we'll have people from three to five.” And I sort of thought, “Yeah, three—”

MW: Mardi Gras, three to five.

JM: I really thought oh—'cause I had another party to go to and I was at the apartment party and thought, “I won't make it, just plan on not being there.” Five o'clock, people were out. (laughs)

MW: If you say three, they show up at three. Oh, they do.

JM: I was really surprised by that. I thought, you know, “Three to five, well, it will go on all night.” I was giving her a hard time, I thought. I was saying, “I thought you meant five AM? What is this?”

MW: I was shocked the first time we ever had anything here; people showed up when we said to start. I mean, not one person, but everybody! And we were so used to—if we said, “The party starts at seven,” that means 7:15, 7:30 we might get one person come in, and usually about eight or after, people start coming. But we say five here, and they're all at the door at five. Okay, that's different!

RW: It's not bad; it's just the way it is. We get used to it. (laughs)

MW: Yeah, exactly.

JM: If this neighborhood didn't exist, where do you think you might be living instead?

RW: Hmm. Probably still in Fort Lauderdale.

MW: That would be my guess. I think over time we'd probably get less and less—I don't want to say “happy”—well, we probably would have eventually gotten unhappy in Fort Lauderdale, primarily because to me, that is not a place to age.

RW: People do it, though.

MW: It's a very young culture, a lot of emphasis on youth. Plus, driving around Fort Lauderdale is ninety times harder than driving around anywhere here. Traffic is insane.

RW: Even driving around [nearby city] is so much easier than driving around Fort Lauderdale.

MW: As I've told many people, “I can't see myself eighty years old driving around Fort Lauderdale.” I just don't know how I would do that. Here, I don't think twice about it.

But yeah, we probably would have stayed in Fort Lauderdale, but then probably over time, not been as happy.

RW: I don't know where else we would have gone.

MW: We talked about, when I was finishing up my Ph.D.—if I didn't find a job in the area, what were we going to do? We looked in the Northwest. I interviewed out in Oregon and places like that. I'm glad that didn't happen. (laughs) But it would have had to have been some equally gay-friendly environment, I guess. I couldn't see myself moving to Iowa, although I did interview at Drake—or moving to Iowa, not back. I had a job interview at Drake University, and after I interviewed it was like, “Gee I wish that university was situated in Fort Lauderdale,” because it was the perfect university for me, but I didn't want to live in Des Moines, Iowa. You know?

JM: So what are your plans for the future? How long do you plan on living here?

RW: As long as I'm alive.

JM: So this is it. You're pretty settled?

RW: This is it.

MW: This is it.

RW: I can't imagine going anywhere else.

MW: When we bought the place, that's what he had planned.

RW: That's what we had planned.

MW: And we've spent the time to get the house the way we wanted, so yeah, this is where we'll be. I don't think there's any doubt about that part.

RW: We'll eventually, when he retires, sell the place in Fort Lauderdale. That's our plan. It's funny, because we had company and she was asking about what we were going to move from Fort Lauderdale. The only thing we want to move is clothes, really, a few other personal things. But all the furniture and everything, we'll sell it, because we bought everything new here because we knew what we wanted for here. We knew we would stay here. This is it.

JM: That pretty much sums up my questions. But as I talked about before, it's really important to me to get the story that's important to you. So, I was wondering if there's anything I haven't asked or mentioned that you want to talk about.

MW: For my perspective, I guess I'm curious how many of us have relatives who are gay and lesbian. I have a—my youngest nephew's gay, and I've always wondered if there's

some biological reason for this. So I think there probably is some nature versus nurture kind of stuff. But as you talk to other people around here, a lot of other folks also have gay brothers or gay uncles or whatever. From my own perspective, I want to see it better for my nephew than it was for me. I want it to be easier for him. So far it is! (laughs) He came out at sixteen or whatever.

RW: And he went to a Catholic high school, and he came out at a Catholic high school—

MW: In my hometown, which is, like I said, a small (inaudible).

RW: And he came out in the Catholic high school, and everybody at the school knew it and it was no big deal! I mean, I just—

MW: That's great. It's a non-issue.

RW: When I was in high school, if I had come out, it would have been a huge issue—and I went to a public school in a small town.

MW: Kind of funny—we're going back for my thirty-fifth high school reunion [on] Labor Day weekend. Some of my friends from high school know I'm gay, and I'm out on Facebook, and obviously Rock's my partner and all that stuff. I have a friend of mine who was kind of a high school heartthrob. He was definitely not gay in those days, or didn't want to appear to be gay. And is! So we've had this kind of little talk about, "If we both go back, how weird is it going to be that we go back as gay with our partners with us?"

JM: So you've been back for reunions before, but not—?

MW: I was back for my twentieth. I was still living in Decatur for my twentieth. For my thirtieth, we were off doing something else, so we didn't go. And then this year is the thirty-fifth.

JM: So this really is your like coming out.

MW: So this will be my first time I'll be back with Rock. I'm kind of looking forward to it.

RW: One of his old girlfriends wrote to me and said—wrote me an email and said something like, "I'm glad that he's got you." Or I forget how she worded it, but—

MW: (laughs) She took the time to send you this email?

RW: It wasn't just a paragraph—it was like a two page letter she wrote me!

JM: Wow!

MW: She wasn't even my old girlfriend. She was just a friend.

RW: Yeah that's what you say now. It's probably not what you said then.

MW: She and I never dated!

RW: Okay.

MW: We never did. But it's going to be interesting, let's just say—to go back to that.

RW: And she works in the hospital. Remember he was the controller of the hospital? She works in the same hospital.

MW: She and I worked together there.

RW: (...) something. (...)?

MW: Anyway—that's part of the story we really didn't touch on, is how this affects the rest of the family and the next generation. And it's always interesting to me. And how the world comes along to this.

RW: Thirty or forty years from now, this probably won't be any big deal, a community like this. We won't even need it. If you live in Iceland, you don't need it, right? Because Iceland everything is—you know about Iceland, you familiar with that camp?

JM: Yeah.

RW: It's very—they don't have gay bars, because they don't need gay bars. Gays hold hands in restaurants and nobody cares! That would be nice. (laughs)

MW: Yeah, exactly. I hope that someday it's not an issue. It will always be an issue, I'm sure, for some folks. But I'm hoping we get to the point where, to the vast majority of the people in the world, we're just another couple.

JM: How about you, Rock? Anything I didn't ask that you want to talk about?

RW: I can't think of it. I think you've touched on everything. Or we've touched on everything, one of the two.

JM: Okay. Do you have any questions for me?

RW: No.

MW: So when you finish up what's the next step? You transcribe all of this, and—

JM: I'll transcribe it, and then it will be edited, which I'm getting supposed to get assistance from the [USF Tampa] library after I change all the names and that sort of thing. And then it will be sent to you, so you can check it off and make sure it's all right. And then there will be a final copy available in the library, no audio, just the transcriptions with the pseudonyms. And from there and next year, I'll be working on my thesis.

MW: Excellent.

JM: But I'll be showing and sharing a publication with you or something like that. I'll give you back the good news.

MW: That would be cool. That's very good.

RW: That's great.

MW: Well you have one pub [publication] on your vita that's gay and lesbian in here, (inaudible).

RW: It's been cited four or five times. Which I was kind of surprised at.

MW: Gay and lesbian marketing.

RW: It's actually in a—

MW: *Journal of Homosexuality*.

RW: Yeah, it's in the *Journal of Homosexuality*, but it's also in a textbook.

MW: Oh, really? I didn't know they did that.

RW: Yeah, I'll go find it.

JM: Yeah, I'll have to check that out.

MW: His vita, because he had that one line in the vita—he's got several pubs [publications], but that particular one, we actually took it out when he was looking for jobs in a few places. We would delete that publication if there was a place where we thought it might be an issue. Nowadays I don't even think he thinks twice about it; he just leaves it in there.

JM: That's something I think about, but I also think about that self-selection issue.

MW: Exactly.

JM: Yeah, my thesis is going to be gay and lesbian, but if I can't actually go somewhere, that's okay, then I don't want to be there.

MW: Then you don't want to be there, exactly.

JM: So I'm happy they can weed me out. If it's not supported, I don't know that's what I intend on continuing to pursue.

MW: It's kind of like we were talking about Pepperdine University, their law school where Ken Starr is the dean of the law school, and he's the one that's trying to divorce the couples in California, the ones that got married before Prop 8 passed, And I was saying the other day if I was a donor to Pepperdine, I would be pissed, but Rock's comment was, "But then they may also attract a bunch of other donors," you know, the whole self selection thing. People who think that's a great idea are going to want to be there and want to donate, and those of us that don't will be turned off by it.

RW: It's called *Gender, Race and Class in Media: A Text Reader*.

JM: Oh, great.

MW: When did they put your article in there?

RW: They cite it in there; I don't know they put it in there, the whole thing. I think it was cited on three pages. And then actually when I looked at it cited on—let me find it, I think it was cited on three pages. It's pages 215 to 217 of that text. Yeah.

MW: Huh, very cool.

RW: And then of course it's in the—

JM: And what's the idea of that article? Can you summarize it for me?

RW: It's—that particular one is—

JM: Not to put you on the spot. I don't know if you've looked at it in a while.

MW: It was an old article of his, too.

RW: It is; it's really old. "Defining the Lesbian and Gay Community Market Research in the Lesbian/Gay Press."

MW: It's one you did with (...), right? So it probably has a communication spin to it as well?

RW: Yeah, it did. I thought it was cited by four or five; it's only cited by one, that particular one. That was looking at the gay and lesbian press and what some images were,

I think, in that; I can't remember that particular article. I did that in ninety-eight [1998] before it was published in 2000. I don't remember now. It was one of the early ones, but anyway, it's in a textbook. So—

JM: So you're certainly adept to head up this marketing campaign, anyway?

MW: It's what you teach.

RW: But I'm not the chair of the committee. (laughs) You wouldn't know it when I'm the room, because the chair just says, "Okay, Rock, you can run it." That's what she says. I'm like, "But I'm not the chairman! I don't have any notes or anything to prepare." She says, "Just talk." I said, "Okay."

MW: Some of that comes from—we weren't here all the time, so a lot of those positions were built by people who were actually here and then they relied on us as need be, but that's changed now—

RW: Yeah.

JM: All right. Thank you very much. Let's stop the tape.

end of interview