

Under the Rainbow: Oral Histories of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual,
Transgender, Intersex and Queer People in Kansas

Tanya
Oral History

Interviewed by
Tami Albin

August 20, 2009

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Please note: this transcript is not time stamped or indexed. It will be at a later date.

Tanya: Narrator

Tami Albin: Interviewer

TAMI ALBIN: Okay so today is August 20, 2009. I'm here with Tanya. Thank you so much for agreeing to participate in the project.

TANYA: No problem.

ALBIN: I really appreciate it. I'll start off this interview the way that I start them all off which is please tell me where you were born and when.

TANYA: (laugh) I was born in Dodge City, Kansas January 17, 1967.

ALBIN: And so did you grow up in Dodge City?

TANYA: No. We lived in Cimarron for a little bit. My dad was finishing college actually in Winfield, Kansas. And my mom was staying there when she was pregnant with my grandparents. So I think we lived there maybe the first five years until kindergarten.

ALBIN: In Winfield?

TANYA: In Cimarron.

ALBIN: Cimarron, okay.

TANYA: —Kansas, yeah, sixteen miles away [from where I was born.]¹ (laugh)

ALBIN: And so what was life like living in Cimarron?

¹ Added by narrator during the review process.

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TANYA: Well, I was only—I was only five when we left. I really don't remember a whole lot about Cimarron other than kindergarten. I do remember kindergarten.

ALBIN: What was that like?

TANYA: Matter of fact, I'm still good friends with somebody from kindergarten.

ALBIN: Really?

TANYA: We played college basketball together at Winfield where my dad went to college, so we're still good friends. I don't know, I remember Mrs. Greenwood. I remember a big plastic box we put together. I remember Lisa and I being the tallest ones in the class. Everybody was really short. I think she's 6'1" now so she beat us all. But other than that—we lived out in the country, had lots of cats, dogs, goats. My parents weren't farmers, we just rented a house out there so. I remember riding the bus to school and that's about it (laugh) and then we moved.

ALBIN: And do you have any siblings?

TANYA: One. And she's eight years younger, so she wasn't born yet when we were there.

ALBIN: Right. So what happened after Cimarron?

TANYA: Cimarron, my dad accepted a job in a little town called Winona, Kansas which is up northwest by Colby, and he worked there for a year-and-a-half. So I went to first grade and part of second grade there. And I remember that a little bit more because my sister was born and I wasn't very thrilled, I wanted a brother. And I asked if she could be put back (laugh) and my mother said no, so I had to accept her.² She was pretty little then [in Winona.]³ We had a tennis court next door and that was my big thing was

² Edited by narrator during the review process.

³ Added by narrator during the review process.

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playing tennis. And I used to, I guess, give tennis lessons [my] dad said [for] a quarter a lesson when I was seven, eight years old.⁴

ALBIN: And had you taken lessons or—

TANYA: My dad had me playing [at] a very young age.⁵ So yes I was playing so I was giving instructions to the other kids in town for a quarter apiece I think. And the grade school was right across the street. So I remember having Mrs. Berger as a teacher. And probably the only nasty comment on my report card was from her about defending—(laugh) Anybody that bullied anybody else I was always on top of them and dad said pigtailed flying and carrying on, punching, kicking whatever boy might have been teasing somebody else. So she said I should pay more attention to my studies and less attention to other goings on at recess.⁶ (laugh) So I remember that, and her letting our cat come across the street and jump in the window and sit there with class going on. And so that's about all I remember there. So we moved. Well, I did break my arm there so—I remember though we had to go clear to Hays, Kansas to get it fixed. Had to ride in a car for two or three hours.

ALBIN: Wow, so how'd you break it?

TANYA: Actually an older kid that was my dad's boss' child—we were playing the train on the tall Hershey slippery slides back then. And he wanted me to go and he shoved me and my pant leg was stuck at the top and so I went over the top face first and compound fractured the wrist and the upper arm so nobody would touch it at Colby, Goodland. They just kept sending us down the road until we got to Hays, so they fixed it. That's about all I remember from there. Then we moved to Smith Center, (laugh) Kansas and dad owned his own insurance agency and a sporting goods store. And so I went from second grade through eighth grade there. And mostly remember just being in a real small town again, couple thousand, two thousand—maybe three thousand people there, I don't know, pretty close and we—lot of neighborhood friends. I didn't want to hang out with the girls on the block necessarily because they were knitting and

⁴ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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⁶ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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sewing and so I hung out mostly with the boys and we played football and tackle football and we built forts and we'd drive our bikes to the old lake which is like a couple miles away and take a whole day trek. And there was just an old lake there and then old railroad tracks. And we'd make forts and pretend like we were robbing the trains or doing things like that so—and then we just had a lot of friends on the block that we hung out with, but mostly it was probably the guys that I hung out (laugh) with because they were more rugged and wanting to go do things and not just sit around the house. And then junior high hit so sports started and that was more exciting for me.⁷ And it was a big sports town. I think they were the only team to go 67-0 in Kansas. They just wrote a book about them, [called Our Boys.]⁸ [The coach that is still there taught me how to lift weights and work hard in sports and the assistant coach that is still there was my junior high vocal teacher.]⁹

ALBIN: Oh really?

TANYA: In football, so yeah. And the coach is still there that was there when I was there. And so he had all of us girls lifting weights and working out and things back then so it was very—there was nothing else to do in Smith Center besides probably go for sports more, so a lot of the kids did that to entertain themselves. So—and that's where we—my dad and I started playing tennis tournaments when I was probably eight or nine, in adult divisions because of course he was in his thirties. So we'd play mixed doubles in adult divisions. And we'd go around to different towns and they'd write newspaper articles about the kid beating adults. And so I be nine, ten, eleven, and dad and I would win. Because they'd always say, Hit it to the kid, that she'd miss it. And so if I could get it back then they hit it to the old man and (laugh) he didn't miss it so—so we became known kind of all over that area as just me being so young playing with him I think. And so he drug me around the tennis tournaments all over Hays and Phillipsburg, Smith Center. So we did a lot of that. And then when it was getting close to high school the town wouldn't get tennis as a program. So dad decides to move the whole family to Hays in 1981—I was going to be a freshman—just so that I could play tennis and have a chance at a [college] scholarship which kind of didn't set so well with

⁷ Edited by narrator during the review process.

⁸ Added by narrator during the review process.

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my mom and my little sister.¹⁰ They had all their friends and people there and what if she doesn't like tennis when she gets in high (laugh) school? We're moving just for this reason. And so we did. And they're still there. So it's been what, twenty-nine years or whatever. [My junior high band teacher in Smith Center was a lesbian and actually tried to mess with me, asking me to spend lots of alone time with her, didn't understand why at the time till years later. She made the papers after getting fired for having a relationship with a high school girl student.]¹¹

ALBIN: So did you play any other sports besides tennis?

TANYA: Yes. I played everything—boy's baseball back when they didn't have girl's softball. So I played boy's baseball. [Basketball was a big sport. I played since dad was a high school basketball coach. He took me to the gym all the time.]¹² I was a pitcher on one team and an outfielder on the other. And dad said some of the guys that age still talk about that. (laugh) There was just a few of us girls in those small towns and we'd travel around and play each other. There'd be like—and you knew [some of us] probably (laugh) ended up lesbians. But anyway, there'd be one or two in each town and we'd play baseball. And then when I got to Hays I was like, Wow they actually have girls' softball and—as a sport. You didn't have to play with the boys. And so yeah I played basketball, tennis, track, pretty much everything, anything I could get my hands on—waterskiing and snow skiing and stuff like that. Very athletic dad and a very musical mom. So I was also involved in all the music stuff too.

ALBIN: So what instruments did you play?

TANYA: I had to take piano lessons for nine years, I did guitar lessons and then I was a drummer as far as high school and going to contests and things like that.¹³ And then when I went to college that was a struggle deciding what to major in, was music or become a teacher and a coach or—because I really liked all the aspects of being involved and everything. And so I went for—at the time sports scholarships were more

¹⁰ Added by narrator during the review process.

¹¹ Added by narrator during the review process.

¹² Added by narrator during the review process.

¹³ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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money, so I took the sports scholarships to go play tennis and basketball at Winfield [at Southwestern College.]¹⁴

ALBIN: Wow. Right.

TANYA: So—

ALBIN: And so you said that your dad had been at Winfield. So was he studying to be an insurance salesman or—

TANYA: He got a business degree, but he had his teaching certificate too so—so I forgot we did live in Towanda for a while too, over by Wichita. He taught and coached there for five years. And that was when—yeah I think we moved—we might have left Cimarron and went there and then came back to Cimarron, I went to kindergarten. I think that's how it went actually. So I need to probably rotate back. Yep. Because he'd take me to all the basketball practices everyday and the boys would lift me up and help me shoot when I was like three, four, five. So I was around all the guys then too of course—(laugh)

ALBIN: Right.

TANYA: —(laugh) because he coached them, but—and then he refereed for thirty-three years and now he referees volleyball. So that's his life is sports. And my mother absolutely has no desire for sports. She's more of the reading and watching movies and watching her kids do sports and not understanding a bit of it but enjoying watching us. So yes, they are very opposite. I think I have a little bit of them.¹⁵

ALBIN: So what was Winfield like?

TANYA: Well if we skip high school and go to Winfield that'd be college. Yeah, Winfield was a little bit bigger town (laugh) but the college was I think only about five or six hundred students. So I came from Hays High that had 850 to 900 students to

¹⁴ Added by narrator during the review process.

¹⁵ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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actually a college that was more of a high school. So that was different. I had a chance to go play at K-State tennis but I wasn't tall enough, [to play basketball there also. I wanted to play both.]¹⁶ So I chose Southwestern because my dad had went there, my aunt had went there, her husband had went there, my uncle had went there. And the coach had started talking to me at a young age. And I really liked him and so I wanted to kind of go where I knew him and I knew what his—how he wanted to run his program. And K-State said go there for a year and if you don't like it come up and play for us. But I ended up really liking it there being small.

ALBIN: Right. Right. And they let you—they would let you play two different sports?

TANYA: Yeah, they'd give a scholarship for both. There's not a whole lot probably that go and play two sports but yeah, I did tennis and basketball.

ALBIN: Right. Right. So then well let's go back to high school. So what was life like going to high school in Hays?

TANYA: Well, it was a little scary because it was the biggest town we had lived in. I don't know how many is there now. It's a little bit smaller than Dodge and Garden but not much. Fort Hays [is in Hays] so it had a four-year college there which was different and neat to go watch games and watch theatre or different things you could go do in a bigger town.¹⁷ High school was scary the first day. First day, first class was band. And I think our band was bigger than almost the entire high school in Smith Center. We had like ninety to 100 kids (laugh) in band (laugh) and walked in the back door and everybody turned and looked because here's the new kid. [Everybody turned and stared at me.]¹⁸ We haven't seen her before, so—and the drums were at the back so I kind of walked in and kind of—and it was very quiet and tried not to probably cause much of a stir. But it was really neat. I met a lot of people right away, was involved in the orchestra and the band and the musicals and the choir and stuff.

¹⁶ Added by narrator during the review process.

¹⁷ Edited by narrator during the review process.

¹⁸ Added by narrator during review process.

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So I had a whole lot of friends that were in those groups, as you had peer groups in high school. (laugh) You had your jocks, you had your cheerleaders, you had your—what you called a nerd. And I was a nerd too because I was also in science club. But then I was also in tennis and basketball and all that stuff, so I was in the jock group, I was in the nerd group, I was in the music group. And so in high school they—I guess they said—they did a little survey who was the most involved in the high school, and then there was about thirteen of us that were the most involved in the high school that were doing all kinds of things. So I kind of liked that I could—I loved hanging around all kinds of different people, not just one. Sometimes the jocks would irritate you and say things that were inappropriate about the music group and I'd go, Hey that's my people too, don't be talking about them. And so I just really enjoyed high school.

I knew something was different. I knew something was different from like age seven or eight, but I didn't really like—like Kristi said, didn't know what it was called. I mean, you didn't really speak of that word. So you knew something was different but you tried to fit in like Kristi (laugh) did and you date—you date guys. But of course you're drawn to more of the jock guys (laugh) or the ones that are going to be hanging out and doing things that you like to do as more of a buddy system. I probably dated four or five guys in high school, one of which I'm still real close to. He's a big Amazon, 6'5". He's a mortician. He was a basketball player. My parents loved him, my dad especially because he played basketball. So Jeff and I still communicate a lot on Facebook and everywhere and he finds me where I'm at. He still wants me to marry him and have his children because he thinks they will be huge and athletic. And I said, We'll probably have (laugh) a very short child that has no interest in sports and he still tries and—but it's pretty funny.¹⁹

I mean, he was an usher at my lesbian ceremony that I had. He's very cool with the whole thing and so—and then I go to my ten-year reunion after high school and most of my friends said, Gosh we could have told you you were gay. If you'd have just thought about it Tanya, jeez we kind of always wondered, and we're cool with it. Because I was really worried at the ten-year. Five year didn't really have to say much. Ten year I was already in a relationship. I'm like, Oh. This is going to be not fun, German-Catholic community going back and saying you're—this is what you are. But I was ready to do

¹⁹ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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that. I was going, This is time to be honest and not harbor all that within myself and get it out. And everybody was fine with it. And they still are, or at least ones that aren't we don't—I don't talk to them anyway so yeah.

ALBIN: Right. And do you recall at all anybody in high school thinking that someone else might be gay?

TANYA: Um-hm. Yes. None of them ever—I never had any—like some of these kids that I'm helping now called names or anything. I was just—I was just Tanya and really pretty much got along with everybody. I don't remember anybody saying anything or thinking anything. Well maybe because I was dating guys. But there was a—there was another girl on our team that moved into town. And she was probably when she moved to town maybe a junior, I was like a freshman. And all the girls on the team—Ginger really didn't hide—she wasn't really out. She didn't really hide anything. Very athletic. Very probably masculine looking for that era and just wonderful, very sweet, very nice. But some of them on the team that were friends with her were like, We think she's having a relationship with a woman at Fort Hays and we need to follow her home after practice, see if she goes home or if she goes to this woman's house. And I'm like, Oh we need to leave her alone. Because I'm thinking to myself, Oh God is this what it's going to be like if I ever end up coming out? And so yeah, there were— I mean, nobody disliked her, nobody called her names. It was just more of an interest. We need to know. We need to find out what's up with this girl. She's different than all the rest and she's not hiding it really. And so that was interesting watching her. And like I said, she was a great ballplayer and stuff so I admired her and how she handled herself on the court and very nice, very sweet.

And—but then a lot of the Fort Hays basketball players started hanging out at our games and that's when—and she knew them all and they would—(laugh) And so several of the girls were coming to watch her for various reasons. And then that's when some of them started noticing me when I didn't even know they were noticing me, knowing that [I am] going to be [gay].²⁰ Someday she's going to be. And that's when they would track me down to the convenience stores I worked at and whatever and would come in. And I didn't know this until later when I was invited to the gay parties

²⁰ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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when I was already in college and I'd come back home—Oh we knew about [about you, they would say]—we watched you and we this and that, and I was like, ew.²¹

ALBIN: Yeah, how did that make you feel knowing that you were kind of being—

TANYA: I don't know. You're kind of going—well now you think of it and you're going, Well that would be probably cool, but back then I remember telling my mom—my mom was the only one I could ever talk to about it because my sister was so young. When I went to college she was ten.²² My dad was, umm. That's always been a struggle, still a struggle at times, the whole gay issue. My mother, on the other hand, I would tell her, These girls are coming in and they're buying just a piece of gum and they're like taking the change and dragging their hand against mine, real slow. And I go, Mom it's creeping me out. Or we'd go to Dairy Queen and one would work there and she'd like—and I'd go, That's one of them. And (laugh) mom would go, It's okay. Don't freak out. And I'm like, What are they doing? And so I was clueless obviously. And mom was maybe picking up on it, maybe not, I don't know, but she was supportive.

And later on I said, You guys were the creepy ones hanging out. (laugh) You were twenty-one or two and you're coming and checking out a sixteen, seventeen year-old. They go, Well there's not much in Hays to go (laugh) look at, we'd come watch you guys play basketball. So it didn't probably bother me [too much, just at the time I didn't understand it.]²³ I was just nervous, I was scared. Sexuality was something I was really probably trying to stay away from. I had the boyfriend that was the big basketball player at the other school and I was a basketball player and they're like, Oh you guys need to be together because—and so we went to all the proms. I went to five proms in high school. [I never had sexual relations with a guy though. Just kissing, holding hands etc. Don't know how I got by with not going further but I didn't.]²⁴

ALBIN: Oh wow.

²¹ Added by narrator during the review process.

²² Edited by narrator during the review process.

²³ Added by narrator during the review process.

²⁴ Added by narrator during the review process.

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TANYA: Yeah. Two [boys] at TMP [Thomas More Prep-Marian] at the Catholic School and then (laugh) my own at Hays High.²⁵ So I had to wear a dress more than I ever wanted to. And these guys they knew if they ever tried to do more than kiss I was going to beat them up. And Jeff still has a scar on his head from that, from trying to do— (laugh) and I—bam. And so—and that's why Jeff still laughs today. He goes, I still have that dent right there where you hit me. I said, Well. So I mean they were okay to hold hands with and kiss and dance with and probably hide who I really was and everybody else thought it was—they're dating, they're having this great time. And the guys really didn't know. They were clueless, most of them were. They go, We had no idea other than you just were obviously this proper girl that was not going to go and do whatever. (laugh) We knew not to push it too far. And I said, Yeah, I said but little did we know why I didn't want you to push (laugh) it too far, because they were just buddies to me.

ALBIN: Right, right. So your boyfriend was at a Catholic School?

TANYA: Yes.

ALBIN: Okay.

TANYA: Yes. Which all—back then Hays High kids hung out with the TMP kids. We played each other in games, and Hays was a small enough town that we dated amongst each other. At Hays High—there was a lot of Catholic people at Hays High too. But if their parents wanted them to go to the TMP School they did where they had to pay to go and it's more of a private school, little bit smaller than Hays High.

ALBIN: Right. And so was your family religious at all?

TANYA: Um, well—everybody was married right there down the street from where I live now at the Methodist Church, baptized there in Cimarron. All my aunts and uncles, mom and dad. It's interesting because my—you talk about the Mennonites out here with the prayer caps and the dresses and the beards, we're descendants from them on my dad's side. My great-grandfather married a Koehn who—the Koehn around here are known, big Mennonite name. And because they married and they were of kind of a

²⁵ Added by narrator during the review process.

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different Mennonite background, each of them, she was kind of booted, excommunicated out of her religion when they got (laugh) married so there went the Mennonites. And then my Grandma and Grandpa Jantz once they were excommunicated they kind of became Methodists. And so my Grandma and Grandpa Jantz were Methodist on my dad's side. And then on my mom's side my grandfather was Catholic and my grandmother was the daughter of a Jehovah's Witness, but she wasn't Jehovah's Witness, her sister was. But two of the kids out of three decided not to be. But that was interesting too, having a great-grandmother as Jehovah's Witness. And so when grandpa kind of got kicked out of the Catholic Church for not marrying a Catholic they became Methodist. (laugh) So we had everything in our background.

And mom and dad—we went to church all the time. I remember church probably mostly at Smith Center, because that was second to eighth grade year, and going through vacation bible school and cooking out and doing things. And yes I went through the—at thirteen you go and you accept Christ and all of that. But they weren't pushy, they weren't pushy religious people. We went to church every Sunday but they were just your normal parents, as far as that goes. It wasn't crammed down my throat. My mom was always, God won't give you more than you can handle. She still says that. I mean, she's religious and spiritual. And when [I] went to Hays in high school we went every Sunday.²⁶ And if I was caught partying out on Saturday (laugh) night or whatever and mom would find out she goes, You're going to church in the morning. I won't tell your father but you better be up and ready to go. (laugh) So we'd do that. And I said, But all my friends are Catholic and they go on Saturday night. Can I start doing that, and then I go out and party and I don't have to get up Sunday? (laugh) She goes, No. So I was one of the few Methodists probably on the basketball team in high school. It's just a huge Catholic population in Hays.²⁷ [My mom is the one that one that walks the religious talk the most, she was in hand-held bell choir at church for ten years in Hays.]²⁸

ALBIN: I've heard. I've heard.

²⁶ Edited by narrator during the review process.

²⁷ Edited by narrator during the review process.

²⁸ Added by narrator during the review process.

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TANYA: Very. Very big Catholic population. So yeah, there was like a couple of us that weren't Catholic, but we'd go with our friends to the Catholic Church because they had to go on Saturday night. And we're like, Can we get this over with because it's time to go hit a party or do something.

ALBIN: Right.

TANYA: So—but dad is funny because dad kind of still to this day likes to throw it at ya, the religion thing. And I don't know, I consider myself—I suppose I'm still Methodist. I mean, our Methodist minister in Cimarron's on my Facebook page. He's pretty funny and he knows that I am. [We communicate often and he is a very open minister. He] would try to like to get me going again.²⁹ But there's [a certain percentage of the population where] I can hear the uproar, Oh my God.³⁰ The lesbian's coming to church, the sky's going to fall in. So I don't go right now but I consider myself probably a spiritual person. But I really don't know that I believe 100 percent what's in the Bible. I believe its stories told and things change and—so there's a part of me that has the religious background with my grandmother, Grandma Jantz very religious Methodist. Never missed a Sunday, had pins to prove it, and cooked for every funeral, cooked for every wedding, big part of the church.

And that may be where my dad gets some of that. But it's like he'll live his lifestyle totally different from the church but then he's kind of like some of the ones around that wants to use certain parts of the Bible to suit himself, and that aggravates my sister, my mom, and me, so—(laugh) So we kind of tell him what we think quite often and try to shut him down on some of his talks on religion. He's one that tapes Reverend Schuller every Sunday. They don't go anymore which amazes me. I had to go all those years and then they don't actually go to organized religion on Sunday, but I would consider them spiritual people. And I don't know if you'd say God-fearing at all, pretty laid back. My mom's very laid back. She's kind of like my grandmother. She's not going to offer you advice. She's going to— If you come to her she's going to tell you what she feels but she's not going to push anything she feels on you. [Dad's a great guy, too. He just

²⁹ Edited by narrator during the review process.

³⁰ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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forgets to put into practice what eh reads and listens to at times. He is very Republican and mom is Democrat which makes his life kind of uneasy, ha!]³¹

ALBIN: Right, right.

TANYA: So that's—my comfort zone has always been her or my grandma on that side. Yeah, because that grandma actually came to my lesbian ceremony—she was in her late seventies, and was walked down the aisle, and I still have that on videotape.³² I don't like to look at necessarily the wedding but looking at her crying and being there and us giving her a rose and she telling my partner she's part of the family now and you can't get rid of us. And for her age to come all the way to Wichita from Cimarron and go was just a major thing for me, because my other grandfather was passed away. But the other two grandparents it's like I hadn't—I hadn't told them I was gay. I think my mother told her parents. And then before my grandfather died he was very sick with congestive heart failure, I was probably about—I'd moved back to Cimarron when I was twenty-five. And I think I was twenty-eight or so when he died, it was 1995. So it's been fourteen years ago.

And he was funny how he told me he knew I was gay (laugh) because I didn't know he knew. And I'd hidden all my relationships, hid everything, because family was very important to me and I didn't want to lose them and I thought I would if I told who I was, so I kept it quiet. And I had to pick up my grandfather from the hospital in Dodge here and drive him back to Cimarron. And he asked me on the way home and that's sixteen miles, Do you have any Melissa Etheridge, which shocked me, he's like (laugh) seventy-six. And I was like, Really? And he goes, Yeah your Aunt Linda listens to that "Come to My Window" song all the time. Do you have that? And I said, Yes I do. (laugh) So I popped the CD in and we're listening to it. And he goes, You know, she's from Leavenworth, right, she's from Kansas? And I said, Well yes grandpa I do. And did you know she's a lesbian? I was like, Well yes (laugh) and I about choked and wrecked the truck. And I said, Yes I do. And he goes, Well you know that's just all right. And that was all that was said. And it was all that needed to be said I guess. And I stayed every night with him for the next month or so and helped my grandma take care of him until he

³¹ Added by narrator during the review process.

³² Edited by narrator during the review process.

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passed away at home. But it was okay. It was his way of letting me know that, I know and it's no big deal, and I love you and your grandmother loves you and it's—don't worry about it.

But then when I had to tell my Grandma Jantz, (laugh) the religious one, little five-footer, two-hundred-miles-an-hour farm wife and I thought, uh. And my Grandma Sauer said, You're not going to invite me to your ceremony without inviting the other grandmother. She goes, That's my stipulation. I will go but you at least have to give her the opportunity to go (laugh) and tell her. And I went, Thanks a lot. (laugh) So—and this is a woman that had lived in Cimarron her entire life, my Grandma Jantz. And I was like, Oh no. And so I said, Okay we're meeting at your house at two o'clock on Friday and you're going to be there too. If I got to do this you're going to be there. Okay fine. And I pulled up and there's my Grandma Jantz's (laugh) car. I didn't want to go in, I didn't want to talk. And they're sitting in there doing this. And I told my Grandma Jantz a couple days before I needed her to go to Grandma Sauer's house at two o'clock on Friday. Well why? She was one of those that had to know an answer. And for two days I avoided her like the Plague until this event. And we get there. And I'm sweating and joking and they're having small talk. And finally Grandma Jantz is like, Well why did you bring me down [here?]³³ I mean, I love seeing your grandma but what's going on? (laugh)

So I looked at my other grandma and she's just smiling, rocking in her chair just eating it up. And I'm like, Oh you're killing me. [Grandma Sauer is] just a tease and kind of smart butt and we were soul mates.³⁴ And she owned a business in town and I had owned a business in town. She had played basketball in the thirties at Burdette and was in a uniform and I had her class ring and I had her letter off her letter jacket. And we were just best friends, as much as you can be [with a] grandparent, or grandmother and granddaughter.³⁵ But I'm looking at her and she's just loving this. And I have to tell her and I choke it out that my partner and I are more than just friends. We have a relationship like you and grandpa and blah-blah-blah. And she goes, Oh you're lesbians. (laughter) I said, Lesbians? And she—well yeah that. Because she was very

³³ Edited by narrator during the review process.

³⁴ Edited by narrator during the review process.

³⁵ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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direct and to the point. Well yeah. And then they started—she started asking how we have intimate relations. And (laugh) she was curious about that because you weren't a man and a woman so how would you do things? And my grandmother—the other grandmother sits back and starts laughing. She goes, Yeah and I'd like to know that too (laugh) just making it worse. And I just didn't know what to say, Like you and grandpa do. I don't know what to tell you there. And it just went from there. And I think I went blank. I don't even know what the rest of the conversation was like. And then it was over.

And she goes, Well if I can get a ride I'll go to the ceremony. And it ended up my aunts didn't go. I'm close to them but we don't talk about that. It's one of those things we don't talk about [with dad's side of the family, the gay thing.]³⁶ But it's one of those things, that maybe, them living in the same town [they may be a] little embarrassed [if] people talked.³⁷ So they didn't go. I think they thought it was more important to maybe go to a state volleyball deal or something instead of my ceremony. So they didn't go and I was fine. My dad did not go, but he sent a blank videotape and a banner saying (laugh) congratulations, but he wouldn't go. I think he was afraid of what other people might think more than himself and how I would feel him not going. But my mother walked me down the aisle. My sister was my maid of honor, I guess you'd say. We wore tuxes—she wore [a tux.]³⁸ And my two stepdaughters stood up with us too and everything was fun. Grandma was there and my mom's sister was there and her kids and— And so you've got kind of half the family that was okay with everything and still are and then the other half that's kind of, We know but we don't speak of it. And to be back in that town that I never thought I'd be in was kind of different too because we've got a whole different dynamic now with my job and my profession and a different respect from the community for that, but then there's always the underlying tones of the few people that are snickering, She's the lesbian doctor in town.

ALBIN: Right. Right.

³⁶ Edited by narrator during the review process.

³⁷ Edited by narrator during the review process.

³⁸ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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TANYA: Because that's how [some] describe me.³⁹ [Most people are great with me.]⁴⁰ Are there any doctors in town? Well there's the lesbian one up the street. (laugh) And it was like funny because that was like the last thing on my list of what I was. And I was like, Wow I'm identified as that first. Not even the woman doctor up the street or the—because at that time there was no medical doctors in town, I was it as a chiropractor. I saw everything from skin lesions to this—what's wrong with my little pinky, or what's this fungus in my nail? And I'm like, I'm really not a medical doctor. Well, we don't have anybody so you've got to tell me what this is. So I was kind of the only one in town to look at anything medical. And there were so many people that came to me because of my knowledge and who I was and then there were so many people that didn't come to me because of what I was. So it was really hard. But I think living in Cimarron when I got with my partner and finally I became more out after I had been there four years. Kind of hid it for a long time and really still hide it from a lot of my patients probably as far as, Don't ask don't tell. I feel like I'm in the military sometimes. I can only talk about certain parts of my life, because a lot of my patients are Mennonite and a lot of them are very conservative.

But then there's a lot of them that once I started raising my stepdaughter, who I considered my daughter since she was eight years old and she's twenty-one now, the community kind of had to accept us. We went to every parent-teacher conference, we went to every volleyball deal as the parents that help bring the food that set up everything. And we were just finally known at Tanya and so-and-so. Well, there's no difference, that's just Tanya and so-and-so. And so—and where we went it was like, Well where's so-and-so? You don't have so-and-so with you? And so we got more accepted in town and probably because of Alex, because of her. And then she was very outspoken. Was asked to speak at that little school about gay marriage and how she felt about it when the vote was coming up in Kansas. Her teacher asked her, Would you like to speak at this? We will not let anybody else speak in the class. This affects you the most in this town and we want to know what you feel and how you feel about it. And she didn't even tell us she was doing it, in high school. She was probably a sophomore, junior, current events class. And she stood up and said, Well I don't like it that my parents don't have over a thousand rights that your parents have and they can't

³⁹ Edited by narrator during the review process.

⁴⁰ Added by narrator during the review process.

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visit each other in the hospital. And all the kids were like, Wow we didn't know that. We thought they were married. We didn't know they couldn't get married. So she really helped open up a lot of kids' eyes. And the kids just thought of us as just everybody else in town. And actually they've come to us with more questions and concerns than they would their own parents probably because we're a little more free to answer their questions and raised Alex in such a way to where she felt free to ask questions. So yeah, she's always been open and verbal. Any bashing that may have went on she pretty much kept it to herself and stopped it. And she's been interviewed, she's been— She was the one that got me into KEC [Kansas Equality Coalition]. She goes, We got to join this group. So-and-so I work with at Boot Hill's in it and he's whatever and he's bisexual, and you need to get in it. And then about the same time Ann sent me an e-mail about it. And it was like, Wow, okay, need to get in this group and maybe be a little more out. So she's the one that probably drug me out of the closet more.

And like I said, I don't tell anybody in town that I am, they all just know and they don't seem to have a major problem with it. And those that do don't come to me or see me and those that don't have a problem they don't think anything of it. They'll ask me how to vote on the gay marriage amendment. Did I vote right? Because it was— I said, It was worded funny, wasn't it? It was hard to tell whether to vote yes or no. (laugh) I go, Yes you voted right. I'm like, Thank you for that. And they're like, Hey no problem. It's not fair. And these are farmers and feed yard guys and truck drivers and people you'd never guess would support us. So I think in that way our relationship helped change that community. Because my mom said, I cannot believe you've been there that long. I couldn't believe you stayed there a year, that the town didn't run you out.

Because even African Americans couldn't be in [Cimarron] past six o'clock when she was growing up.⁴¹ They were ran out of town. So a gay person being in my field, being [fairly] out, [basically not screaming out of the closet, I am just being myself in a town which is fairly conservative,] being seen by the community was to her a major thing.⁴² She goes, I still don't believe that the people my age that still live there come to you and they don't think anything of it. I said, Well I guess I've just been me and they got to know me first. And they realized I'm not so bad, that I'm not a pedophile, that I'm not a

⁴¹ Edited by narrator during the review process.

⁴² Added by narrator during the review process.

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creepy person. And so mom was like, You've really surprised me. And dad doesn't really say anything about it too much. (laugh)

ALBIN: Right. Right. So were there a lot of African Americans living in the area or—

TANYA: No and there still aren't (laugh) over in—not in Cimarron. There's only two that are half Caucasian and half African American. And they were adopted, raised, and they live there. A lot more Spanish and Hispanic now in this area, more so than anything. But—and I don't think it's they feel that they'd be unwelcome. My friend, Lisa, her child is half Caucasian and half African American and her—the father of him tried to come live there and be with Lisa and he just felt uncomfortable. He goes, I'm the only one in the entire town. (laugh) I go, Welcome to my world. (laugh) There's not very many of us either. He goes, I see what you mean. And he went back to Chicago. He's like, I can't. So I think it's not a factor of whether they would be bigoted against it. I think it's more of a factor that somebody wouldn't feel comfortable. There would not be enough of their race around here probably to feel real comfortable, kind of like we feel a little uncomfortable out here. Because there's so much of yourself that you really have to—you don't have to hide. I mean, we could walk up and down the street holding each other's hands. But do you really want all that trouble necessarily that it might bring? And you're like, Eh, probably not. And so you're not maybe as loving and open.

Because there's part of me that always with my father probably had to [hide]—when they didn't know.⁴³ My mother told him (laugh) (unintelligible) She was good at that because it was no big deal to her. But growing up you had to have straight A's and you had to excel in sports and you had to excel in music with him and probably the community looked at you differently with a higher regard. So if you were very accomplished then the gay thing could be down here, it'd be quiet. They won't notice I'm gay if I excel in all these things. And so that was probably me doing that a lot. And then in college I (unintelligible) college, not even at a college that can be—(laugh) you can be open. I got to be pretty low-key here but then we all met under the radar there. There was a—there was probably ten of us maybe out of six hundred (laugh) that we knew of. So then we had our own little community and our little group. And then certain people that knew that were straight and—but knew not to say anything or make it a big

⁴³ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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deal. And it was kind of known and it kind of wasn't. Because I came out when I was right about—right when I was about nineteen, probably eighteenish to nineteenish. My first gay bar was nineteen. And I was “Sherry Spruce” and I was 5'2" and I was 130 pounds (laugh) on that driver's license. [Funny, cause I'm 5'10".]⁴⁴ We found it in a parking lot. So I was her for a couple of years until I was twenty-one.

ALBIN: And so where was the bar?

TANYA: Our Fantasy in Wichita. It's still there, but it's changed so much. Back then it was awesome. You had the country side and the rock side and the outside part with the volleyball nets. And it was just two hundred gay people at it every weekend, every Friday and Saturday night, at least. And all the basketball players from all over—Bethany and Bethel and Southwestern, all these—and we'd all meet out there Friday nights. You only had games Saturday nights so we'd be out there Friday nights and hook up and talk and communicate in our little secret language, secret world. Of course that's when you had the Rainbow Flag and only people that were gay knew that's what that meant. Now everybody knows. But back then that was your little symbol on your car, Oh they are, they've got the flag. And so yeah in college it was like wow. I dated a guy in college, 6'9", big old basketball player guy, sweet as could be, farm boy (laugh) in Winfield. He played basketball for the JUCO[Junior College], like nine miles away. So there was another basketball player, somebody I can relate to. And bless his heart. He tried, I tried and I was like, This just isn't it.

And then Shelly here she came out of nowhere and—because I'm like—there was a girl on the tennis team that hit on me. And she was a little thing. And I remember [her] flipping back [my] seat and there she was.⁴⁵ I was like, Whoa. And I flung open the car door and I ran like twenty blocks to the campus to Shelly and Carmella's place. I said, Oh my God this girl just tried something. And they're like, It's okay, it's okay. And I go, No she's still coming after me (laugh) and I was scared to death like I was in high school. I'm like, What is this? And then Shelly had to sit me down and go, Okay this is it. And I go, What's the deal with these gay people and this and that? Because I was

⁴⁴ Added by narrator during the review process.

⁴⁵ Added by narrator during the review process.

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still kind of freak[ed out].⁴⁶ I wasn't against it but I was like, What is it? And she goes, Well we got to tell you something too, we're gay. And I was like, Ah, they're everywhere. The whole dorm was filled with them then. And then they said, Oh so-and-so and—I'm like, Oh my God they are too? And they go—and that's when I think I had my first (laugh) (unintelligible) as far as somebody actually touching me and I was like scared to death. And that was when Shelly and I ended up together for almost five years. And we're still friends to this day. She's a teacher and very cautious on of course that because of her job, and—but she—that's when I first came out was when I was nineteen. And then there was a whole thing of hiding that from the family for a few years. You had to [separate] at Christmas and kind of go to your own families and you couldn't really say, That's my friend, my roommate.⁴⁷ That wasn't my girlfriend. So we went through that for a long time. And if the family found out would I lose them? Because at that point nobody knew for sure.

ALBIN: Right.

TANYA: I think my sister is the first one I told.

ALBIN: And so if she was eight years younger she—how old was she when you told her?

TANYA: Let's see, I think I was even out of Southwestern. I think I was up in chiropractic school in Kansas City. So I was probably about twenty-two or three maybe. So how old would she be, fifteen?

ALBIN: Um-hm.

TANYA: And I remember she had found a letter that my father had wrote on how disappointed he was in her for accomplishments. Why he wrote it, I don't know, why my mother had it I don't know. It hurt her. She was crying, she was very upset because she wasn't the jock or she wasn't—she quit music, she quit—I think she said, I was so tired of getting compared to you and hearing how you and dad had to argue at every

⁴⁶ Edited by narrator during the review process.

⁴⁷ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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dinner table about him telling what you did wrong in sports that I just said, I don't want this. And I said, I understand that. And I said—but he'd wrote some really bad things. And mom kept it in like her sock drawer and Tami needed some socks for something and found it and read it and called me crying, because we've always been really close. And I said, I'm going to come back this weekend and we're going to talk. And I think we even grabbed some beer. (laughter) She was fifteen but she was well versed in beer, she's from Hays. All German kids know how to drink a beer.

So we went out and we sat at the old airport and we talked. And I said, You know, I'm not as perfect as he thinks I am and this is why. Shelly and I are more than friends and this and that. She goes, Oh I already knew that. (laugh) She was—Oh, well heck. I said, We'll see then. If he finds out (unintelligible) heck I'm going to go to the bottom of the list, you're going to go right up to the top. Don't—I said, He's being a jerk. He's—I can't excuse or explain what he did but—so that's who I told first and then I think my mom came shortly after, (laugh) because she was always pushing me with the guys going, You need to probably do more than hold hands with Jeff. Give him a kiss once in a while or something. He's [going to break up with you.]⁴⁸ And I go, Well that's okay. We can break up then, that's not me. Because I remember he tried to make the moves one night. That's when I hit him with something nearby, ran out of the place, (laugh) drove home and freaked out to mom, He tried something. And she goes, Well you've been dating a year-and-a-half Tanya. He's—(laugh) He's probably—and I'm like, Oh I can't believe you're telling me I should kiss him and this or do more than whatever.

And so we went out one night and my friends—and my mom went. My friends were always dragging my mom out. She [is] cool.⁴⁹ So they were dragging her out. She didn't drink much. That night she drank quite a bit. And she saw Jeff's brother and stuff. And she's like, You really need to get back with Jeff and just was Jeff, Jeff, Jeff. And finally I just, outside of the bathroom at the Horseshoe in Hays, Kansas (laugh) which is a dive bar I set her there—I held her there against the wall and I go, It's not going to ever happen. I said, This is why. And she's like, Oh? And so the next (laugh) morning she's making fried chicken and she's a little hung over, which she had never been in her life, and feeling nauseous. And then I walked in and she goes, Did I really

⁴⁸ Edited by narrator during the review process.

⁴⁹ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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hear what I thought I heard last night? Was that really—I said, Oh that I'm whatever? And she goes, Yes. (laugh) She goes, Let me go throw up here real quick. But then she came back and she goes, Okay, we just—we'll have to deal with your father later. She goes, I've always kind of known. I always just kind of wondered and it's okay. Because he was one, you can't bring these girls back to Hays and you're not going to sleep in the same bedroom. You're—and so mom put an ultimatum to him—Either you'll accept her for who she is and her partners or I will divorce you and you're gone.

ALBIN: Wow.

TANYA: So he kind of—err, in his own gruffy way, has come to accept and—to a point. We don't go there too much, but when I went through my break up he was very supportive. We need to get you out of that house. We need to get you this, we need to— So in his own way he was loving and caring. But then I also knew that that was—that was just his way and mom was the one you could go talk to about everything. [He is steadily coming along though. I think he realizes if he wants me in his life he has to accept me⁵⁰ for me, you know?]

ALBIN: Right. And so you were how old when you had the conversation at the dive bar with your mom? (laugh)

TANYA: (laugh) Probably—probably—I mean, it was probably six months after I told Tami so twenty-two, twenty-threeish, somewhere in there. And then shortly after that she's probably spilling it to her parents, in a way. And then two or three years later I'm not knowing they know and then grandpa does his thing. And then grandma was always fine. But she's one of—she's the one that still watches the lady from Canada, the sex lady.

ALBIN: Sue Johanson.

TANYA: There you go.

ALBIN: Sex with—*Sunday Night Sex with Sue*.

⁵⁰ Added by narrator during the review process.

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TANYA: Yes. And she (laugh) watched her every Sunday night until she passed away, and she was almost eighty-seven. She goes, It just fascinates me what these young people do nowadays and what things you can buy. (laugh) I'm like, Grandma. She goes, It just does. And she watched *elimiDATE* and *Blind Date*, and she was just a riot and so loving and caring. And we were just like— I mean we were just intertwined. It was like we were each other. And so losing her was like losing your biggest—your best friend, your grandma, your everything. And so she was probably my rock and why I stayed in Cimarron as long as I did, because I took care of her the last four years of her life—go get her medicine, go get her groceries, do this, do that. And if her Life Alert went off at three in the morning run down there and she'd accidentally hit it. What are you doing here at three? It's three in the morning. (laugh) Your Life Alert went off. So yeah, she was everything to me. And when she died that was—that was kind of when I was just kind of, Okay I'm here in Cimarron because I have a business. I'm not here because I really want to be.

ALBIN: Right. Right. So you had mentioned that you had gone to chiropractic school. What did you have to study at Winfield in order to qualify to be able to go to chiropractic school?

TANYA: Well it's basically the same thing for pre-med, pre-vet. I mean, we go to college forever, seven years. I think it's longer now even. There's Part 4 of the National Boards now. There was only three when I went.

ALBIN: Wow.

TANYA: So I was a biology major with a chemistry minor.⁵¹ I think I was a little short of my minor there, but then I picked up the biochem up at chiropractic school, Biochem I and 2 to finish my thirty hours of chemistry. So as a biology major I was not going to be a chiropractor. Ever since I was five I was going to be the female Grizzly Adams in the woods with the cabin with all the animals, every animal (laugh) possible and probably do wildlife management, veterinary, that sort of thing. And so—but since I was so much into sports in college I had to go to the chiropractor all the time And my dad believed

⁵¹ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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you go to the chiropractor from a young age. And he went to [the same chiropractor when I took] his [the chiropractor's] place, my parents did and my grandparents did, [too.]⁵² So for every injury, unless you're absolutely bleeding from every spot on your body you go to the chiropractor for it and you get adjusted and let the body heal itself and suck it up, you're not hurt that bad. I mean, that was him. He was ugh, very hardcore.

And so I was probably a junior in college and my chiropractor said, You know you really ought to think about chiropractic school and go up and give it a visit and check it out. And so I did. And then a friend of mine— Well actually a girlfriend I was dating at the time, (laugh) her ex was in chiropractic school up there and she showed me around. And she goes, You really ought to think about it because it's different than medical school, it's different than being a veterinarian. You get to work with your hands. You're not writing prescriptions, giving shots. With your athletic background you will like the fact that it's a movement type of a job. You're moving joints and you're doing biomechanics and physics and things like that. You'll— I think you'd find it very interesting. So I kind of at the last minute in college, getting a B.S. in Biology and decided to go, carried on and then wrote my letter to the chiropractic school and got accepted, and did that. But yeah, I think now you have to have a four-year degree in either biology, nutrition, something along the lines of what you're going into with chiropractic. But it's changed in the seventeen years (laugh) since I've graduated. And this month actually a week ago today was when I started practice seventeen years ago so it's been a while.

ALBIN: Wow. And so you were seeing Shelly?

TANYA: Um-hm.

ALBIN: When you were in chiropractic school?

TANYA: We broke up while I was in chiropractic school. And probably part of that reason was it was a very intense program. You take on average of thirty-three hours a semester and none of it's speech or whatever. It was all biochem and venipuncture and

⁵² Edited by narrator during the review process.

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x-ray physics and gastrointestinal, urinary, diagnosis. It was all medical stuff, a very intense program. So Shelly was teaching and had free time in the evenings and free weekends. We were no longer having to study together and play basketball together. And so our dynamics of I was still in the trenches and she was—it kind of just went and she started seeing somebody else. And she just ended a fourteen-year relationship and just had that happen and so I've been trying to help her through that via texting and e-mailing and such. And she's, I'll never get over this. And I go, You know, somebody else I know had to get over this. (laugh) Same thing was done to her. And she goes, Oh I still regret that. We should have never broke up. And so we're still good friends. And the partner I had for ten years wasn't too keen on it, couldn't talk to them because it was an ex.⁵³

Yeah, went from Shelly and then I went to several in chiropractic (laugh) school (*unintelligible*) college. That was the eighties. You dated everybody on everybody's team, briefly. (laughter) It may have only been a night or two but you—you briefly made your rounds. That was a hundred pounds ago, I was a lot thinner. Yeah, you were—yeah. We just—everybody dated everybody, especially at those small colleges. You might have dated everybody's ex-girlfriend and made the circle around and that's just what you did. And we didn't think anything of it. The AIDS crisis hit what about 1985 is when I was remembering hearing about it on TV and such. And of course it supposedly wasn't going to affect women [as much,]⁵⁴ so women were still doing what women do. (laugh) And that's when you started having guy friends that you started losing and different things, like this is serious, this is something we need to—and I was coming out right about then. I came out in January of '86. So that changed the dynamic of—and then chiropractic school, I really didn't have a whole lot of gay guy friends, didn't really know any.

They were probably pretty closeted at my college up there. I'm sure they were there, it just wasn't—they definitely weren't going to be as open as us girls. It was okay for girls to be jocks and athletic and still be straight so they always wondered whether you were or not. A guy being a little more feminine probably or effeminate was definitely going to be busted and there was going to probably be a lot of criticism and all that. So probably

⁵³ Edited by narrator during the review process.

⁵⁴ Added by narrator during the review process.

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chiropractic school is where I met some of my first guy gay friends. And actually there was like four of us that hung around and did everything together at chiropractic school—we ate lunch together, we dissected the bodies together, we did everything, studied together. And we didn't even know until we were almost through chiropractic school that three out of four of us were gay, we kept it that quiet.[Our other best friend was a female married to a Pentecostal⁵⁵ preacher with two kids. She was fine that we were gay.]

ALBIN: Wow. And this is in Kansas City?

TANYA: Yeah. Well it was 1989 to 1992. And we were out to probably everybody else in Kansas City. I mean, we were going to the gay bars, we were out and going, but in that professional school you still had to worry about some things. Because we—and we would take clinical psychology and they'd talk about Freud saying everyone is born what is it bisexual or—and through experiences and whatever you become who you are. And that's when the instructor was talking about, What if you have some patients that come into your office and they're a gay couple and they hold hands in your waiting room? What are you going to do? Well some of the guys in the class, Well I'd kick them out. I wouldn't have them in my waiting room. I'm not going to treat some fag. And here's—I was sitting in the class. My two gay friends decided to be sick that day.

And that's when my mother and my sister decided to come visit was that particular day we had that talk in that class and I was like, Oh, I hope they don't—my mom doesn't raise her hand. And she did because they were talking (laugh) about the Freud thing and she's—Oh no, she's going to ask a question. And I'm slinking down because not all the guys in our—we only had twenty-seven in our class in chiropractic school there. They were small classes and we did trimesters so you had a new class coming in every semester. And a lot of the guys were just these macho Italian guys from New York and New Jersey and all macho and machismo. And so you really didn't tell anybody except maybe somebody you were really close to. And mom raised her hand and said, I've got something to comment. (laugh) And that's when she said for the first time ever that she had had a lesbian experience when she was like a freshman (laugh) with her best friend in a barn and kissed this girl and they were best friends. And I'm like, Wow. And I

⁵⁵ Added by narrator during the review process.

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mean, my face was red, mouths dropped, my sister's mouth dropped and we're like— Could you have not told me that when I told you I was gay and maybe helped me a little bit? Well, I didn't think of it, Tanya, and it was just a thing. And I'm just, Wow. The meekest of people comes and there she goes right in the middle of my class to say it for the first time.

ALBIN: And what was she doing in class with you? (laugh)

TANYA: Well they—some of the parents or siblings or something would come up and visit, visit Kansas City there from Hays and they were real—pretty liberal. I mean, they let her come—she was fascinated by the cadaver. She goes, I want to see one. I want to see what you do. Because she always read *Psychology Today* and she always had (laugh) this—everything came out of *Reader's Digest* on how to fix everything. And I'd have to tell her some of that stuff was probably not true mom. (laugh) And she goes, But it says it in *Reader's Digest*, that's how you fix that. No. So we—so they let her come in as a visitor pass and go to classes with me that day and my sister. And then we took her to the cadaver lab and my buddies and we took her to lunch. And so yeah, she was having a blast.

ALBIN: Yeah. So was cadaver lab right before lunch?

TANYA: Yes.

ALBIN: Okay, (laugh) because you've mentioned it a couple of times in that order.

TANYA: They always do that to us. They always did that to us. And yeah, and everybody knew when you were in your first year of chiropractic school because you worked on the same dead body for a year. [Great smell to us after lab.]⁵⁶

ALBIN: Wow.

TANYA: And then the brain the next semester and neuroanatomy and neurophysiology and stuff, when you slice the brain up. And yeah she wanted to go

⁵⁶ Added by narrator during the review process.

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down there and see them. And then we had to go eat lunch. And our lunch choices were Popeyes Fried Chicken or Pizza Hut. And everything looked like that body. The hamburger on the pizza, you're like, ew, and the cheese and it's gooey and ew the sauce is—you're just ew. So a lot of us lost weight that first year. And then you had to wear the lab coat. And so you just smelled of formalin the rest of the day.

So everybody—Oh you're in cadaver lab, stay away from me. Go down the hall. We're like, But we can't help it we smell (laugh) like this the rest of the day. It was like at 10:30 to noon or something like that. We're like uh. And then we—I had a little Ranger truck at the time and I would take that lab coat off and tie it with a rope through the buttonhole in the back of the pickup and let it air out all the way to my apartment and then leave it out there (laugh) because you just—you had a couple of them and you're like, I'm not even dragging this into my apartment because then you just smelled of that formalin. But I mean it's the greatest experience you could ever have to look at the human body in an entirety from—every square inch of it. We had to dissect the entire body. So that was awesome.

And it gave you a new sense of how we're made and why we're made and how we work. So we tend to look at people like without their skin a lot of times I guess. (laugh) A patient, How do you remember all that? Well I just see—I'm seeing your arm without the skin working right now. And they're like, Well that's weird. And I go, No. I go (laugh) that's helping me to figure out your problem, why it hurts when you chop wood. I'm thinking of all that, how it's working. And so to me it's a very interesting job to have. It's very rewarding because you get rid of people's pain they've had for years in maybe one visit. And I'm competitive enough that I want to fix it as quick as possible. I'm not one of those that make you come back forty times when you only need two. And they know that in that town so they respect that I'm not just going to have them come back for fun. I'm going to try to fix it and fix it fast, because it's going to aggravate me and frustrate me if I can't fix it. So it's a challenge. So, I do like my job. I don't like the paperwork but I like the people and every day's going to be something different, especially in a small town. The old farmers come in—I've pulled a leader today. I'm like, What's a leader? Well it's this thing right here. I go, Oh a tendon or a muscle? Well that's my leader. I pulled a leader today. (laugh) So I had to learn to speak a whole new language in Cimarron which was kind of fun and entertaining. I'd have to go

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to Dr. Ellis when he was still (laugh) alive, What do they mean by when they said that? Oh, they mean they have a headache or they mean they have a—Oh, I get it. So it was really interesting and fun. And even my own grandmother had called it choiropractic, you're a choiropractor. I said, I don't direct music grandma. Chiro—chiropractor. And she goes, Oh. And the next minute she would say Choiropractor. (laugh)

ALBIN: That's really cute.

TANYA: And battrey. It wasn't a battery, it was a battrey. So my sister and I use that, You have any battries laying around? But yeah, the way they talked with the German accent a little bit. And they say I still have that probably being from Hays. We still talk—Kristi—Kristi Stremel and all that, yeah. It's funny. We spell Hays H-a-y-c-e. Going to Hayce this weekend? (laughter) It's not Hays, it's Hayce.

ALBIN: That's funny.

TANYA: So yeah.

ALBIN: So yeah—so you mentioned this incident where your mom kissed someone—

TANYA: Randomly, yeah.

ALBIN: When she was a freshman.

TANYA: Oh made out in a hay—[haystack] in the barn.⁵⁷ It was an isolated day she said. (laugh) It was just one of those days. And I said, You guys just stayed best friends? Yeah. It was just— It was an experimental thing. She goes, I understand this whole Freud thing that probably unless you're told differently you could probably go whatever.

ALBIN: Wow.

⁵⁷ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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TANYA: So she just really—for someone who—they—I was at their wedding. It was one of those deals that she (laugh) she was in eighth grade when she started dating dad and he was—he's two years older.⁵⁸ She was like a sophomore. And they dated all through high school. He was the quarterback, she was the homecoming queen, right? And then it was their freshman year in college. She was at Fort Hays, a music major and he's at Southwestern and somewhere in the middle oops here I am coming along, not married in the sixties, need to get married quick, (laugh) and so probably six months before I'm born, here they are doing this wedding. And they definitely weren't compatible. They should have probably (laugh) never married. They're still married forty-two years later or—yeah, forty-three, I'm sorry. I'm forty-two so you add one, (laugh) forty-three. And it's amazing their dynamic and their relationship, and that's probably formed how mine have been probably, watching them. I don't want to be that so I better do this. (laugh) Because he's all out with his sports and gone all the time and doing his thing, golfing. And she works at Wal-Mart twenty-five years, does her job, does it very well, comes home, wants to watch her soap opera that's been taped by my dad who begrudgingly does it everyday. And she watches it, eats her popcorn and stays home. So there's—I've got a lot of both.

I like to get out amongst friends sometimes but I like to do what she likes to do too, stay home a lot. So they're an interesting couple. And my sister still lives there in Hays. She went to K-State for four years and graduated and has a little guy named Payton who's eleven now. And he makes me rainbow cookies. I delivered him at a birthing center there in Topeka and—yeah, I got to deliver him and cut the cord, and so we're very tight. And she only has one child. And so she's dating and hoping to maybe have one more quickly. But— And then I've got Alex that I raised, and so it's a pretty small little family with just the four of us and then these two grandkids. But it's pretty interesting that she lives there with them in the town and I'm two hours away. And it's like, I'm so glad I'm two hours away Tami. She's like [teasing,] Yeah you're the lucky one.⁵⁹ I get to be here all the time. (laugh) The good and the bad. I was like, Yeah, I get to go up there and have fun on the weekend then leave. So— But I love them both

⁵⁸ Edited by narrator during the review process.

⁵⁹ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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very much but very differently. [They are both great people and do love each other—just in a very different way.]⁶⁰

ALBIN: Right. Right. And so what happened after you graduated from chiropractic school?

TANYA: Four days later I was in Cimarron because Dr. Ellis was very sick and dying of emphysema and cancer. And he had called me the whole probably last year of school, thanks to my Grandma Jantz, the religious one, telling him I was getting ready to graduate (laugh) chiropractic school and he did not want his practice to die in vain. He'd been there since 1956. And I'm still in the same office. It's old, it's avocado green chairs. It's pretty retro now. And it's nothing special. People definitely don't come there for the esthetics, they come there for me and my Maine coon cat that's at the office.

ALBIN: Nice.

TANYA: So that's kind of how it happened. I said, I tell you what, I'll come help you for six months, because he swore he was going to get better. And I'll come help you out, I'll get to see my grandparents, it'll be great. I went out there and did my intern—or preceptorship they call it. If you finished all your requirements early, if you had four weeks, six weeks until graduation, you could go work with a qualified doctor and observe his clinic and go back and graduate and go wherever. Well, he qualified. I thought, this is a great opportunity to go see my grandparents that I'd lived away from when I was so busy with school and sports and I didn't get to spend that much time with them. They were—they lived a couple hours away from me growing up. And I thought it was going to be great. And then he goes, Will you come out and help me for a while? And I go, Well I'm taking my Colorado boards, and that's where I want to be is Denver. [Thinking to myself,] I thought, I need to go someplace and be gay, really, and not have to hide myself.⁶¹ [He said], Okay.⁶² I'll be better in six months so let me get through this. And he didn't get better, he got worse.

⁶⁰ Added by narrator during the review process.

⁶¹ Added by narrator during the review process.

⁶² Edited by narrator during the review process.

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I was there for my preceptorship. You're supposed to observe him, and the first day there he called the school and asked if I could adjust the patients, if I was covered through his malpractice, because he just didn't have the wind or the energy. And they said as long as he sat in the room. So here I was adjusting his patients. They didn't know what was going on. There's this girl coming—(laugh) Yeah and I'm like—and then my grandma's going, That's my granddaughter. Oh Lord. So I'm there and just going, Wow. And these people are saying leaders and things I don't know. I lived here when I was five but I just—I come to visit here for Christmas. This is not someplace I want to live at all. But [I] love the people.⁶³ I mean, you can't help but love—especially people in western Kansas, southwest Kansas, just very endearing, very loving, very giving. I—I probably worked the first couple of years and was given zucchini and bread—because a Mennonite lady might come in with six kids—I need them worked on Tanya and I can't afford it. Okay, I'll take those. Sure, I'll take cookies and whatever you've got. That's fine, whatever you want to do. And so I did a lot of free care. I still do a lot of free care (laugh) and—to anyone that needs it. I mean, I feel like they should all—everybody should be pain free as much—whether they can afford it or not. So still at this level—this many years later, my major passion is making people feel better and try to fix them as best I can.

So here—he gets sick, he dies and I'm like, Oh. And the patients were like, Don't leave. And I'm like, Oh. And my grandparents, Don't leave. Oh, I got to go though. I got to be me. I got to go and— So one thing turned to another and it's seventeen years later. I still keep my Colorado license. I just renewed it again in July, just on the thought that maybe someday that I'll be out there. Because it's not the people here. If I could move my practice to Colorado I would do it. I'd take my patients with me in a heartbeat. But I miss— I like the mountains, I like the water, I like to still jet ski and tube. We have to drive an hour-and-a-half to a lake. We have no mountains nearby. (laugh) So I miss the nature part of it. I don't like the wind out here. I don't like the heat and the smell of feed yards most nights, just instantly when you open the front door, ugh. That's the smell of money, Tanya. Well it's not my money. It's like, Jeez it stinks out here. And they're like, Oh come on. I'm like, hah. So (laugh) there's a part of me that just hates this area and there's part of me that absolutely loves it.

⁶³ Added by narrator during the review process.

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ALBIN: Right. Right.

TANYA: It's nothing to do with the terrain probably, (laugh) other than people come out here and they're like, Wow. I go, Oh they're about fourteen miles away. And she goes, Wow. From your porch even. Other houses don't even block it. She can see forever. And you can see a storm rolling in. [You can see the elevator fourteen miles away from my front door.]⁶⁴ I'm like, I've seen this my whole life, it's (laugh) boring.

ALBIN: Right. Right. So for the past seventeen years you've renewed your Colorado license every year?

TANYA: Luckily Colorado renews every two, so—

ALBIN: Oh okay, so the past eight.

TANYA: Yeah. I've renewed it and paid the money, sent all the paperwork in. This year I was on the last day of the last chance you could because I couldn't find my little card they sent me but I made sure I did it, yep. And then Kansas renews every year. So yep. But I don't know. I may end up out there, I may not. There's part of me that probably thinks I'll end up in Hays. If something were to happen to my father I'd probably be right there in a heartbeat to take care of my mother and maybe relocate up there. Because I have—there's so many people up there that still know my family and know me—Oh why don't you come up here? We want you to come up here. And I said, I just can't leave what's going and—because when the break up did happen after that, that I thought was going to last forever, then I had to start all over and buy a house and—two-and-a-half years ago. So you're like, Oh financially wouldn't be a smart move to sell a house when you're just buying it and I've got this—you got patients. Oh God, I'd have to move my tables and— So part of me kind of likes to keep things the same (laugh) doesn't want change. So I don't know. I don't know what it'll bring.

ALBIN: Right.

⁶⁴ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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TANYA: (laugh) [In Cimarron] everybody trusts everybody with everything.⁶⁵ You don't lock the doors. I haven't locked a door in seventeen years to my house. That's probably not good to say but—

ALBIN: (laugh) But you haven't given your address, so—

TANYA: That's exactly right. And you might lock a car occasionally in town, but you leave your money out there. You just don't worry about the things that people in the bigger town worry about constantly. I can walk down a dark alley in Cimarron to take my trash and I don't worry about that. In Kansas City I was broke into twice, in Denver I think once my vehicle. And it's like, Jeez. Why would somebody do that? Here nobody would think about doing that.

ALBIN: So did you work in Denver for a while or—

TANYA: No, I just always wanted to go. And then my good friend in chiropractor school that was one of—that was gay, he went right out there. And he's like, Man as soon as you get your little six months done come out here and we'll practice together. And I just was always fascinated with Denver. I loved it. I liked the eclectic nature of it, the people. I liked the Boulder area, the college scene that things are different. You had your artistic side, you had your—just everything was at your fingertips in a town like Denver to me. And it wasn't too far away from mom and dad, to stay close, and the grandparents. That's why I picked Kansas City for chiropractic school. It was the only one in the state. Well it's in Missouri but— So basically forty-two years I lived in Kansas except for the occasional—right over the line in a couple of apartments when I was in school, but pretty much forty-two years here.

ALBIN: Right. Right. So you've mentioned a couple of times this break up that you've had. So how did you meet that partner?

TANYA: That partner (laugh) came to me and I was friends with her aunt, who is a wild and crazy character. They talked me into bowling when I moved to Cimarron. I was like, Bowling, how boring can you get, a bowling league. Oh, I'm going to hate this

⁶⁵ Edited by narrator during review process.

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town. (laugh) Nobody plays tennis? No. Nobody plays basketball? No. You can play on the guys' town team. Well, probably too fat for that right now out of shape. So bowling was it and so this person was a niece to the friend of mine and she was married at the time to a guy. Matter of a fact, Alex has a sister, an older sister, who since the break up has not spoke to me. So um—and she lives in Arizona, is married and has a child. She's seven years older than Alex, so she'd be about twenty-eight now, yeah she'd be twenty-eight. And—but Alex and I are like that, still just as close as ever. But I raised her in the home the whole ten years and the older one, Ashley, lived with her father most of the time except for one year she lived with us. So she was—her and I were close but not as close as the one that I was raising.

And so here came this person. And one night after bowling—you always drank before bowling, a couple beers, that's what you should do. And then you bowled and drank and have a few beers. (laugh) I found out you drink a lot of beer in that little town. And then you go to the VFW and drink again and have some appetizers at like ten. And all the women would go. There'd be like forty women [in this bowling league]—we had an eight-lane bowling alley, we still do.⁶⁶ But all these—most of these women would go out to VFW. It was just women's night out. And this—like four years—yeah I had been there so I was about twenty-nine. We also always got tickets over here to Dodge City Days to the big concert. So they'd always bring Dolly Parton or Kenny Chesney, somebody here. I wasn't into country either, I just wasn't that way either. (laugh) Don't really like country music either but what do you do out here? You go to that and you drink beer and you have fun.

And I took my grandmother and my mother. And this was the grandma (laugh) that watches the Sue Johanson a lot. And so we go and the friend of mine that older that I bowled with, she went and her niece went and her husband. And it was when Alan Jackson was playing. And my mom and my grandma were sitting there drinking a beer with me which cracked me up because neither of them really drank, but they were with their bag of beer. They give you an ice bag with some ice in it and six beers for however much. So I had my bag of beer and they're each drinking a beer on either side of me. I'm like, This is funny. And they're going, Alan Jackson's so hot, he's got a nice butt, he's got these long legs. My grandma's going, He's a tall drink of water. My

⁶⁶ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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mom's doing the same thing. I'm like, ew. But here was— And I can probably say her name I guess, Julie was up there dancing and doing her thing and all that and like— And Lee had got us all tickets so we're all in the same area. And I go, Well you guys can watch him, I'm going to watch this, because she was doing quite a bit of stuff. And I was like, Wow. And mom and grandma were like, Whatever, she's straight, (laugh) you can look all you want. And I go, I don't care. You guys aren't getting Alan Jackson tonight and you're still looking so I'm looking. And after the concert she followed me all the way out to my vehicle. And she's leaving her husband in the dust and she's just keeping tracks up with us and talking my head off—You need to hire me to work for me. You need to do this, you need to do that. I'm like, Okay who is this? And I found out, I think a little bit earlier it was Lee's niece but I didn't know her, she was from Garden City and had just moved to Cimarron. And I kind of blew it off that night. And I looked at mom and grandma in the car and aha say a straight girl. She's keeping up awful fast. (laugh) Aw whatever, she's just being friendly. I go, Okay whatever.

And it wasn't—like a couple weeks later go down to the bowling alley and she's there and not bowling but just sitting with her aunt. And I'm bowling. And I'm trying to talk to her to say hi and she won't look at me. She won't look at me at all, won't talk to me. I'm like, Damn. She was awful friendly the other night and now she's not talking at all. So we all go to the VFW. And I think most of the women went off to another room to play pool or something. And I'm sitting there with her across the table from me. And she goes, I know about you. I was like, You know what? And she goes, I just know. I'm like, Well, there's a lot of things to know so be more specific. Well, I know you're gay, and is there any place we can go talk when everybody leaves? And I said, Well, I suppose we can go talk somewhere. And we did. And we ended up talking until probably about six in the morning. She had to call her husband say, I'm out whatever. And we just talked and that was it. Because I said, I don't do this. You're married. I'd seen my parents go through that with my dad doing that to my mom and I'm like, I'm not into that, breaking up things. And I don't think you really know what you want or who you are. You're just experimenting, kind of fishing.

And so time went on and she supposedly had this revelation that she'd known she was gay since she was like seven and got married at seventeen, had her first child, Ashley then, and then here eight years comes along Alex and their— Her and her husband are

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more best friends. There's not really a relationship going on and so they divorced amicably, and her aunt sets her up with the first cowboy that comes along. And so they were together four years and she's like, I'm really— I really think I'm gay. And so she really thought she was gay. I mean, she was a flag-carrying, in the KEC, you can ask the rest of them, doing—flags on her car. I'm like, Oh, don't do that in Cimarron. She goes, I don't understand why we can't hold hands. And I go, Well, you just can't. You're just coming to terms with this. I said, I've lived this, having to be under the radar. And for Alex's sake, that was living at the house, we had to watch it because kids will tease, parents will say things. And so she comes back from Arizona, I think, from seeing her oldest daughter and tells her husband, I want a divorce, out of the blue, the second one, and he was gone.

And here she comes after me. And we had long talks about that—are you sure you are, and sure you're not bisexual? Are you sure—are you sure this is what you want because I'm not going to get into a relationship, especially with a child, and get really close to you and this child and then you decide two years from now this is not who you are and I lose this child, especially the child probably, because I'd always wanted kids, I just didn't know how I was going to get there. And so ten years later I thought we were—everything was going good. We'd covered all the rough spots, Alex was heading off to college and six weeks later it's like, I'm done with you and I'm not going to see anybody, but I really don't know who I am anymore. And then come to find out she'd been messing with this guy the whole year and some people in town knew, some didn't. And it's funny the sheriff goes, I think we were the last two in town to know Tanya. I said, I think so. (laugh) It's one of those deals where you're going, Wow. And all my friends had been gay all along or what do they call it, gold key?

ALBIN: Gold star.

TANYA: Gold star.

ALBIN: Yeah.

TANYA: I was a gold star, one of the few I guess (laugh) from what I've been told. And they're all going, Wow we never saw this coming. And so it was really hard because we

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remodeled the place, we had this place, we had been paying on it ten out of the eleven years she had had it, and my name was added to the deed. We did everything together as far as each other's power-of-attorney, the whole nine yards. And to have it end was really hard, and then to have it be right there six, eight blocks away everyday. So that's been real hard. And it's been real hard on my daughter because she—she was trying to come see me and her mother would say, You go see her and I'll take the car away, or you need to forget about her and move on and move onto other things. And Alex is like, I can't, she's my parent, she raised me.

ALBIN: And she would have been about eighteen at this point?

TANYA: Yeah.

ALBIN: Yeah.

TANYA: She was a freshman at K-State, and would come back. And of course being in the small town we were everybody—Well Alex's car was at Tanya's or— She'd try to come by for a couple of hours and her mom would call her, Get away from there. And Alex was really torn. That child was—has still been torn. She has handled it remarkably well for a twenty-one—now. And finally told her grandmother if mom doesn't stop this nonsense of me seeing Tanya's family, my grandma and grandpa and my Aunt Tami and my cousin Payton—I mean, these are her—that's her family—she goes, I will no longer speak to my mother, I'm done. This is the way it's going to be. And finally I think Julie's mother has talked some sense in her and said, You'd better back off. Tanya's not going away and Alex is not letting her go away and you're going to have to learn how to deal with this dynamic that you created. (laugh) I didn't ask for it, Alex didn't ask for it, but it was there. And actually Alex is— We're— I— She's more like me and my family than her own [biological family, most days.]⁶⁷ And she was a drummer like I was, she was in sports, she was—played in the marching band at K-State, played at the Cotton Bowl in high school, the drums, played at the Texas Bowl, drums, with K-State. She was a jock but yet she was very girly, very, very girly. I did bring that in so you could at least have a visual but—

⁶⁷ Added by narrator during the review process.

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ALBIN: Oh great.

TANYA: But yeah, that's her—very, very active, very sweet, loves everybody, loves animals, just—nobody can be bullied around her or she's sticking up for them and nobody can be called fat, gay, stupid. She's on them like a— Way different than her biological side probably and more like me as far as that goes, very sentimental. Might not cry much but I probably do inside a lot. Little things would get me. And with her, definitely she's my world as far as that goes.[She is very accepting and has always said she was raised by two lesbians regardless of her mother's sexuality now. She is getting her criminal justice degree in May 2010 with a minor in psychology at Washburn.]⁶⁸ And she's just awesome. She's done wonderful things and leadership things, and got up and spoke at K-State on gay issues. And still is in KEC, even though she doesn't get to go to the meetings, she works all the time or goes to school, but very involved in— And she still says, I was raised by two lesbian mothers. No matter what my mother says she is now, she goes, That's what I know. And so at the wedding she's like, You're going to be, if you're okay with it, up there with my dad and my mom, but mom's partner is never going to be my parent, now that she has. And I want you to have a flower and I want you to sit up front and I want you to be my parent. And I went, Oh, how's your mother's side of the family going to feel about this? (laugh) It's going to be a struggle next summer because that'll be the first time we've probably been trapped in that type of a setting together in—since '06.

ALBIN: Right. Right.

TANYA: Due to most of my friends living far away, we're all so spread out, you can't just go over to their house on Tuesday night and go, Man I'm really bummed about this whole deal, I need to talk to somebody. So, like I said all my sister's friends from high school are gay which is funny. And me being eight years older, a lot of my classmates' little sisters were eight years younger also in Tami's class, which was very weird. But it's funny that I'm probably closer to the ones that were in Tami's class than I was—than I am to some of the ones that were in my class, because there's so many of them that were gay. And then I had to shuttle them around and when they'd get in trouble they'd call me—We can't tell our parents. You got to get us out of this deal. We got to—

⁶⁸ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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whatever at K-State, walking while intoxicated. You've got to help. Send some money to get us out of trouble. (laughter) I'm like, Uh. So like Kristi and those guys—I was a poor, struggling musician and Tanya any time I needed a pack of smokes or whatever man you were there with that five (laugh) bucks or ten bucks.

ALBIN: That's a good imitation of her. (laugh)

TANYA: You know and she's like, Man just da-da-da-da and coffee and can I crash? And so my parents are like, That's our other daughter, Kristi's our other daughter. We've had to all protect Kristi because she's been this traveling, struggling musician forever (laugh) and we're like, Are you ever going to grow up? (unintelligible) get a real job and then still pursue music. And so we always tease her. (laugh) You've got to have a fallback Kristi. I know, Tanya and I'm working on that. And that's why she moved to Garden to be with [a friend] who was in Tami's class who (laugh) lives over there and her partner.⁶⁹ And it's kind of funny that all the ones in my sister's class, there's so many gay and so everybody thought my sister was gay of course then. That was the next step. That was the big joke that her best friend who's gay in Hays that they had—supposedly had a relationship and they got married. So then we did anniversaries. And even the gay girl, Norm, Norma, she—(laugh) her mother thought they really were together and came to the anniversary party that we were just staging and giving them gifts. And my mom knew. I mean, it was all a joke. My sister wasn't gay. But when Norm started seeing her partner [that she has] now her mother's—What happened to Tami?⁷⁰ My God you guys broke up? And Norma's—Oh my God we were never together. You really thought that for the last two years, we've been together? And she was like, Well yes. And she's like, No. (laugh) So that was the big joke in town about them getting married and Norma's sister married them in a bar in Hays and it's been— So it's been a big joke that we've gotten Tami the—what is it, the underground lesbian (unintelligible) all this stuff. And so Tami's gone to countless gay bars and two-stepped with women that they're like, Wow. She's pretty funny. And then mom's gone to so many gay bars and stuff too. And then Alex, that's where she wanted to go for her eighteenth birthday was to Fantasy.

⁶⁹ Edited by narrator during the review process.

⁷⁰ Added by narrator during the review process.

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ALBIN: Wow.

TANYA: We were like, Okay. Because you could get in, not drink, or whatever. And so here's all of her adopted aunts taking her to a gay (laugh) bar. And she's eighteen and she's just like, Wow. The thump, thump—the music and she's like, I want to dance. We're like, Go find you a little gay guy over there. They're all—she goes, They're all so hot. They're good looking. We're like, Yeah but you can just dance with them, that's about it. And Alex is like, Dang. So that's where she wanted to go for her birthday which cracked me up.

ALBIN: That's really funny.

TANYA: It is funny. So yeah she's pretty open.

ALBIN: That's great. So you tried all these different—what was the one you called, Lesbotronics?

TANYA: Lesbotronic was one, Yahoo! Personals, I don't know there's three or four. My aunt's the one that sent them to me. She goes, You need to go on here and just put yourself out there and don't really look to date or—but just—you're all alone, you lost your kid to college six weeks ago and now your partner and—and I didn't really know where to go in town. I had—we had six cats at the farm and we had the dog, we had—I had to find a place to go. And dad had just put grandma and grandpa's house on the market. And I'm like, I better just go there. That's not really the house I want. But six months later I bought it because you're in that fog and you're like, I'll just buy this because then I don't have to worry about moving (laugh) and it's mine, mine only and no one can take it and I can have my animals and I can do whatever. So yeah it—I don't even know where you were at but we—yeah, I moved over there and—Oh, so my aunt says, Yeah you need to start just looking. So it's probably a year of being single or so. And she goes, Just try it and talk to some people. And so I did and—[I met someone, we dated for a year and a half and broke up.]⁷¹

ALBIN: Right.

⁷¹ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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TANYA: So then there's a big war, the three of—all of us. My mother, of course, picked purple, I got to be against your father. So they have the house divided and she wears her purple K-State as much as she can to irritate him and he wears everything KU. And he has every signature of every basketball player that's ever played there and frames and builds this and builds that. But then of course he's a big Ian fan because he's from Cimarron, and made me a big K-State thing with him on it and all of his accomplishments to hang in my office because I worked on him all the way through, and—through high school and grade school. And so he goes, I'll make this one K-State thing but it'll hurt me to do it, but I'm going to let you hang this in your office. And so he hung it there. Now everybody's like, Cool, that was cool. I said, Yeah about gave my father a stroke to make it but there it sits.

ALBIN: Right. Right. So you're going to tailgate?

TANYA: Um-hm. Yeah we have redneck washers and everything.

ALBIN: (laugh)

TANYA: We're not as sophisticated as the KU people we've decided—(laugh)—all my family that's the KU people are more sophisticated when they're drinking and tailgating. We definitely got a ball cap on and then Shelly comes from Topeka, she's a big K-State fan, and we all tailgate and washers. My mom travels right along sometimes with us and then we take her out to Aggieville and she like, Oh Jell-O shots. They taste so good. There's no alcohol in them. And ten later she's like on the floor. We're like, Mom you don't drink. Oh yeah, that's right. But that didn't—they tasted—there's no alcohol. I'm like, Yes there was. So we leave dad at home as much as we possibly can because he would drive us nuts and he would run down K-State the entire time he was there (laugh) so we leave him at home and he goes with his buddies to the KU games and stuff and rubs it in our face now every time we lose which is pretty often now.

ALBIN: Right. So do you know— Are there any other— Besides you are there any other gay people in Cimarron?

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TANYA: Yes, there's another couple. They've been together for quite a while. They're not out as much. (unintelligible) knows the one is and—because she has a job that—she's out there in the public quite a bit. And that's what's funny is that everybody thought we were the only two lesbians in town back when so of course we were seeing each other, (laugh) and we still think that's a big joke. Tanya must be with so-and-so because they're the only two in town, so you only date ones that are in close proximity to you, that's how gay people work. So but yeah she's been with her partner, oh gosh, probably a couple years before that, probably about five years maybe. Her partner works here in Dodge and they keep pretty low profile in town. I mean, she's got family in town and (unintelligible) and she's very active in it but that—talking about that part of her lifestyle on record would probably not be something she would do. So—and we don't like hang out all the time. We know each other. We've known each other since college days, played softball against each other and stuff and we're friends and stuff and—but like joining KEC or something would probably be a little step too far—

ALBIN: Right. Right.

TANYA: —and stuff like that. So there's—and I think there's—someone else said, Oh I think there's another lesbian couple in town. I go, really? (laugh) So I think these are—I think there is another couple in town, they've talked to me and stuff. But they're way younger and so they've chatted with me and I'm like, Okay they probably are. But I hang out with all straight couples, I mean, we do. The big burly—big burly Brian, ride motorcycles with him and the dentist and his wife, we go hang out and ride motorcycles with him. And then Brian's a big old hay farmer guy kind of with his bib overalls and, Tanya y'all come up and put some grease in that jet ski and—good old boy type thing. Most of the guys and people we hang out with are just regular folks that grew up there and they knew my grandparents, they knew my aunts and uncles, and they went to school with them and so we hang out. But do I hang out with the "it crowd" in town that supposedly is the affluent (unintelligible) town? Not really. I hang out with just everybody that's just regular folk like you want to do. And small towns are so cliquish, it's like high school. Oh Lord, it's like high school. And it's funny to sit back and observe that, being one of the few gay people in town watching these straight people because you're like, Wow they have so much drama. And here they think we are going to ruin marriage and we're going to ruin—the United States is going to go down in flames. And

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I sit back and watch and I'm like, Wow it's interesting to watch all these straight people (laugh) in town.

And my mom always called it Payton Place there—somebody's divorcing somebody to date their best friend and this—I go, It's so true, [but that's all small towns.]⁷² I said, Mom my gosh you ought to see what's going on in town. So we were a big topic when we broke up, the other one. Oh that was hard in town because then every patient wanted to ask you about it, How you doing? What's going on? How can she be gay one minute and not gay the next? It really confused the town. They got so used to us that when one went to guys, or back to guys or something, they were like— Now you got to explain this whole thing over. It's like, Well why do I have to? Why aren't you asking her? I'm still me. I've been this way my whole life and I'm still here the same way. I said, I'm confused. I said, I have no clue. So that was a major deal in town. It was just drama deluxe that I did not want to be in. And so I just started making jokes about it, I mean, that's all you can do. Well, I don't know. He has no teeth, he's ten years older, I don't know. And they go, Yeah not very attractive. He's— Ew, what the heck was she— I don't know. You'd have to ask her, don't know. So, (laugh) you lose people you were treating for years because of it, because they're like, Oh we've got to side with her. And you have the ones that are still coming into you, Man my cousin can't come in anymore because his wife would kill him because she's friends with her. I'm like— But he really wants to come see you because you're the only one that can fix him but he can't. (laugh) Like why? What did I do to them? And so it's been kind of funny the last few years.

[Section removed by narrator.]

ALBIN: Right. Kind of like tonight when (laugh) Robert was making a joke about his arm.

TANYA: Yeah, Robert, yeah, with his little arm. And I go to Hays and my dad farms me out to the neighbors—Oh well Joe, Tanya's coming to town this weekend, she'll fix that. And it's like, Oh. So yeah my job—I went from being a very calm, happy person kind of being calm but yet having to be very competitive and that kind of thing growing

⁷² Added by narrator during the review process.

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up having my mom's probably yin and yang, (laugh) dad very hyper, push, push, push and mom's over here, Oh I was just so happy to watch that basketball game tonight. You girls looked good in those new outfits. What was the score? I'm like Oh, okay we were the team—yeah. She goes, It took me a little while to figure out which goal you were supposed to shoot at and stuff. I mean that's mom. And dad's over there, You guys screwed up so incredibly bad tonight. He'd be the one that everybody in the gym could hear yelling at not only me but the other teammates—What the hell did you throw it over there for? (laugh) I'm just going, Please shut up. So I was always the one that wanted—don't draw attention, don't say anything and he was always saying something and mom was just, I was just so happy to watch you. Your racket matched your outfit today and your shoes looked nice and it's like, Thanks mom. (laugh) She didn't even care if you won. She didn't care and dad was all, You got to win. He was banned from my high school tennis matches. After a couple of years my coach said, You're done. (laugh) You need to not be anywhere near the meets. So he'd hide behind trees in the park. (laugh) In like Salina, we'd play in the park. And all of a sudden I'd spot him halfway through the day and he'd be bopping around a tree, trying to watch me still play but knowing he's not allowed to come over there because (laugh) he'd make me incredibly nervous and yell and be just ridiculous.

When we won the state championship he wanted to sit down that night and go over— He had X'd and O'd every time we missed a shot or made a shot. And he wanted to go over that the night we won the state championship, my partner and I. And I was like, Wow you really can't just say, Good job, go have fun. (laugh) He was that— He's that intense on sports. And mom went. And she didn't get to watch me play much. She worked a lot of Saturdays. And she goes, I should have went and watched everything, now I regret that. I should have been there watching. And I said, Yes, you should have (laugh) and kept dad clear away. And then in college we had—a Methodist minister was our coach, and he was so cool. Both my coaches in high school in tennis were very opposite of my dad. And they may not have had to even know much about tennis just as long as they were calm and—so thanks for showing up today to practice you girls. It's kind of drizzling out. Coach Paulin would be that (laugh) way, the minister. It's raining out a little bit and I'm just glad you girls decided to show up today. And dad would have said, Get out there in a hailstorm with thunder and lightning and you're bleeding out of every hole and you will play today. And so it was—I probably excelled a

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lot more with my coaches because they were calm. And as long as they kept him at a distance I could play. And if he came around then the ball would go over the fence. Oh, I'd be a nervous wreck. So yeah it was—it's quite the difference in the two of them.

ALBIN: Yeah. Now you mentioned that because of Alex you got more involved in KEC?

TANYA: Probably. She's the one that brought it up first and probably within the week Ann was shooting me an e-mail—We'd really like you to be a part of this. And I was like, Hmm, maybe I'd better look into this more. Alex mentioned this. I think she'd heard from, like I said, her buddy at work. And Alex was all for, by God, gay change and equality and nobody should—when we told her we were together— because she was only eight when we got together, barely in third grade and barely eight. I was real worried about that, telling Alex that we're together as a couple. I go, My God tell a child and what do we do? And should we hide it for a long time and what should we do? And Julie goes, I'll—we'll handle this. And I think it was just a few months in. I think it was about January. She says, We're going to talk to Alex. I go, Can I leave? I said, I don't know if I can handle this? (laugh) And she goes, Yeah go ahead leave for a little bit. I'll talk to her first then you can come back. And I guess Julie told her, Yeah this is—we're in this relationship and this—we love each other and whatever. And Alex goes, Oh, like on *Oprah*? She goes, I've seen what gay people are. She goes, Oh, no problem. Everybody should be able to love each other. And she's eight. And here I had sent off to Metropolitan Community Church in Denver on tapes on how to talk to children about it and this and that. I was geared up. I had literature ready to answer every one of those—that kid's questions. And I didn't need a bit of it. In thirty seconds she's like, Oh what's the big deal? And so (laugh) it's—it didn't surprise me she comes home one day when she—we were—I don't know when KEC started out here. Was it '05 maybe?

ALBIN: Uh-huh.

TANYA: Yeah like January or February or something. We were like the April meeting or something. We were pretty close to being right at the beginning. And Alex is like, We've got to go. We've got to get equal rights for gay people, this is ridiculous. And

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there are kids getting teased. And I got teased. I got called a lesbo, I got called this, I got called that at the swimming pool. And half the time she wouldn't tell us because she'd know I'd go beat them up. But she'd handle it in her own way. And by the time high school was over every kid was coming to our house. But the first two or three years when they'd have a sleepover, the few parents that would let it happen, because Oh my God we're pedophiles, we'd remove any picture that involved (laugh) us together for quite a while until—and then we let Alex decide when things could be coming out—when certain pictures, family pictures could be brought out or whatever. God forbid you hide everything you think of that some other kid could go tell their parent and then Alex would never have a playmate again, so—and then slowly but surely she told all of her friends and then the ones that were good friends stayed friends and the ones that were teasing her weren't teasing her so much anywhere because they got to know us.

And we coached her ball team for five years in Cimarron and I sponsored it. So we were out there, coaching it together, girls softball from age fifth grade through when she was probably sixteen. And the parents were fine with it. We had kids coming up, very religious parents—My daughter won't play unless you guys coach her, because none of the other coaches would let her play. She wasn't very athletic. And I believed—after growing up the way I did—Dad goes, You only—if you don't want to play to win you need to play intramurals where they don't keep score. If you play somebody you play to win, jugular, kill them. I was like, But that was a really nice girl I played. He goes, Well you should have killed her 6-0, 6-0. Why'd you let her get a couple games? Well, I didn't want to hurt her feelings. I let her win a couple games (laugh) just to make her happy. I didn't want her to go home crying. He's like, No you don't do that. You never let them win. So I—with Alex I was exact opposite. I'm like, Okay. When we coached her she was a damned good shortstop. She had an arm to kill and—but loved pink nail polish and this, and I went, Oh.

She was a cheerleader in seventh grade and we thought, Never could the lesbians produce a cheerleader. And when she called and said she got it I was at a conference in Kansas City and Julie was with me, and we just went, Whatever. She wanted to go with a little friend in sixth grade to try out for seventh grade cheerleader. She won't get it. (laugh) She was kind of a little nerdy. You look at the pictures now and you're going, Wow. Sixth grade you're going, Oh gosh there's no way. There's all these preppy girls

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that are going to get it. And she calls and says, I got it. (laugh) I went, Oh we got to be a cheerleading mom and do the pleated skirt and hand pleat it and wash it and pin it and hang it and learn cheers and help her. Oh God. And Alex just got the biggest kick out of me doing the junior high cheerleading songs and stuff and doing them with her and going through and getting them memorized because we've got to do them well if we're going to do them. And so—(laugh) that poor kid having two lesbians raise her in a little town of two thousand. She's the one that ought to be interviewed (laughter) because that kid can just go, Oh I've been there, done that. I was raised by lesbians. No big deal. What's everybody got to fuss about it for? So—

ALBIN: So had you been politically active in anything prior to KEC?

TANYA: Not really. And even in high school being involved in all the things I was, I didn't—student council, ew, why would I want to do that? Now if they asked me to do a hundred things for them, yah I'll do it. But did I really have a desire to be student council president or be—No. And in college—I mean, I just always tried to stand up for what I thought probably my mother's teachings were (laugh) to be morally correct versus dad going, Okay everybody should have equality. It doesn't matter who you are, if you're black, white and Hispanic, everybody needs to be treated equal. What's the big deal? So I was always very strong. If someone asked my opinion I would definitely give it.

And in a town [this] size [or any where] you had a lot of racial slurring.⁷³ In my office or something I actually had a guy say—I said, Oh yeah it's my birthday in a couple days. He goes, Oh it's on N-Day, Martin Luther King Day. I just looked at him and went, Wow. He was like eighty. Ooh, jeez I'm not hearing—this is not going to work because I'm not going to be able to take it. I'm going to say something. But as far as being in anything like that, just being involved in a lot of things I was, but I never really—the thing I didn't like about—(laugh) And they asked me to do the vice chair thing when Lou Ann left. I went, Oh—because I told Ann I said, Man I am so busy at work and trying to keep my house up and do things I need to do that I—I don't know if I'm going to have the time that's needed and deserves to help you. And she goes, All's you got to do is say yes or no and help me when I have a question. I just need support. I've got the time to put into it, you don't, but I need your input. I was like, I can do that. And so they asked me

⁷³ Added by narrator during the review process.

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to do that, what was it, last year I think? It was before—it was when I was single too. (laugh) I was like, I've got way more time now. But wanting to do it— The only thing I see going to some of those—like the big meetings like they have every month like at Topeka and Lawrence and wherever is a lot of the—just the BS that goes on at that upper level. It's like, You guys talk about so much stuff that could be settled in five minutes that it drives me insane, especially when the guys get going. You're like, Oh God. And even Ann will say, Oh—so that part I don't like because I'm like, We could do so much.

And the reason I really wanted to do it more was for the kids, not for myself because I was okay with who I was. And other adults I figured at our age, forty, thirty, you better figure it out and figure out how to be comfortable with your own self. They don't, to me, need as much help as a whole as these kids in high school that are committing suicide over it. They're getting kicked out of their homes because of it—that are going to school daily and hearing derogatory comments at them just because they're gay. That's the part that I wanted to help because I loved kids so much, I was like, This is wrong. And it was probably the second-grade teacher saying, I needed to mind my own business because I was stopping the bullies, because that was just me all along. I just went like, That's not fair, and if it's not fair you need to quit doing it. And so when Alex asked me, because of her friend being bisexual and what he was going through at the time, and some of the other kids I knew from town that really couldn't come out but some of them couldn't help it. I mean, they were just very effeminate. You're like, Oh bless, they're going to have a hard time. They're going to have such a hard time here. And then some of them started coming to me and asking me questions and—How do I tell my parents, or how do I handle living here? And I'm like, Oh I'm not qualified for this. This is more of an Ann thing. She's the clinical social person not me. (laugh) And so that's why I did it was more—because we were doing the anti-bullying in schools and were focused more towards that and—or maybe somebody's that's lost their job because of it and it's like, That's wrong.

And I was hoping by having a professional career out here for as long as I have and surviving and not being burned at the stake, so to speak, that maybe people would listen and go, God I've respected her all these years. I should really respect that 17-year-old that's walking around like that, that maybe I could help that way; use my job to

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help smooth it over for some of the kids. Because there's been an enormous amount of kids come out of Cimarron that are, more than probably the national average, I would say. I don't know if there's something in the water, but there's been a lot.

ALBIN: And so do you think that is—there's—so do you think there's something that's going on in terms of ways that people are accessing information that are allowing the kids to say, Hey that's me or—I mean, have you noticed—

TANYA: Well I definitely think kids nowadays having things we didn't have such as cell phones and Internet and access to watching any movie they want on their computer, Netflix things like that. You know your local grocery store isn't going to carry *Salmonberries*. They're not going to carry your movies that we had to smuggle in. Oh, you got an underground tape of—what's that first one we all watched? (laugh)

ALBIN: Either *Desert Hearts*—

TANYA: *Desert Hearts*—

ALBIN: (laugh)

TANYA: And the other one that was so badly acting—

ALBIN: Oh, *Claire of the Moon*.

TANYA: The long—yeah, *Claire of the Moon*.

ALBIN: Oh it was such a bad movie.

TANYA: Oh it was terrible acting but you're going, I got to watch it because it's the only one out there. Kind of like the books you were talking about. I had I don't know how many Naiad Press books. But out in Cimarron it's like, God you got to read something. I'm going to order this and have them smuggle it in by plastic to the post office and go home and read about what other real lesbians do because we can't do it here or (laugh) there's nobody to do it with, out here. We'll read about it.

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ALBIN: Right.

TANYA: So I think definitely the kids—yeah because talking to all the ones that I know—there's several that I know and talk to all the time, not only—and look at Ellen now. I mean, you've got Ellen, you had Rosie, you've had—we've had so many celebrities come out and it's fine. So they're watching—they're reading magazines about it and they're— yeah, they can get on Facebook. And they're—because of, I think, all of the media accessible to them they—heck they know kids from a hundred different schools because they've met them at a debate tournament or a music deal or a sports thing. And so back when we were growing up you only knew the kids you went to school with. Your parents didn't let you call long distance to some kid over thirty miles away, that's costing money. So kids nowadays, Heck they don't even date anybody from the same town anymore. My little cousin that just graduated that's going to KU, he's eighteen and my other cousin, she's eighteen she just graduated from over there, heck she has a boyfriend from Holcomb and he has a girlfriend from Dodge. And so I think kids can meet each other more. And I just think that's—with us it was a totally different time.

ALBIN: Right. Right. And have you noticed since you've—I mean you've lived in Kansas all your life. Have you noticed politically things changing in Kansas towards GLBT issues or—

TANYA: Politically? Probably, I haven't seen (laugh) them change a lot, especially in our area with—we've got—we've got a pretty staunch—our politicians in our area have pretty much said their piece and you're like, Wow I can't believe they're still there. Maybe more eastern where you guys are at you have—you've got your Tiffany Muller, you've got—you've got the, what is it, Topeka has passed their domestic partnership laws, stuff like that there you see a little bit of change. But what I've noticed, like I said with my friends in Wichita or wherever, I don't see them caring much to get out and do much. I talk to them and I'm like, Why don't you go to Pride? And, Well it's boring. And I go, Well it's boring because nobody's there. If you guys would—if everybody'd go then—I got interviewed for the Wichita paper being at Gay Pride and I was from

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Cimarron there. They asked, Can we interview you? And I go, Yeah. And then here it was on the front page of the second part of the *Wichita Eagle* on Sunday.

ALBIN: Were you expecting that? (laugh)

TANYA: No. And there I was right next to the only picture in the paper was a drag queen on a float. And I go, There's our typical depiction of who we are. And so part of me being more political is going, You know, we are everybody else. We are raising kids that aren't ours, or that are ours, and we are taking responsibilities that maybe some other people haven't and we are paying taxes and we are mowing our lawns and we are out there struggling, arguing over the grocery bill just like you are. And I'm tired of you guys all thinking we are on the fringe, we are this 5 or 10 percent that are always shown on the news. I said, We need to be depicted as there's just as many crazy gay people as there are crazy straight people. Kind of the old thing there are just as many great Caucasian people and not so great as there are, especially out where we're at. A lot of people are still very racial and you have to go, Why? It's because you don't know anybody that's African American. Well no I really don't other than watching basketball or football. I'm like, Um-hm. Same thing. You don't—you know us gay people. We're around, you just don't know [who] we are.⁷⁴ And you need to realize we are teaching your children and we are the principals of your schools and we are your doctors and lawyers, and we are out here. And I wish more would come forward. I understand why they don't but—and I haven't like stepped out and said it in town either. It's just people know. It's been one of those things that's just kind of evolved over seventeen years.

ALBIN: Right. And do you think that—because I've been talking to other people who live in rural locations and they've been saying that it's a method that seems to work, also partially based on their personalities just is kind of, Just meet me and get to know me. Oh and then by the way I'm gay, as opposed to kind of flag-waving, card-carrying.

TANYA: Especially out here. Because people just don't do that anyway with their own lives. They don't throw stuff out there and they're not flamboyant about that they're a lawyer or they're a doctor or they're a whatever. I went to work in jeans and a Polo forever until I started wearing scrubs because I didn't have to iron. It was easy. And

⁷⁴ Added by narrator during the review process.

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they're like, Oh you look so professional. And I'm like, Yeah I know I didn't the first ten years. (laugh) And so I think if you throw yourself out there in anything and say, Well I'm this. I'm not going to talk to you because you're a plumber. It's kind of the same thing as being gay. If you just—once they knew all my grandparents and aunts and uncles and they know they're okay, well then they couldn't have produced this niece or this granddaughter that's so evil that we predict or we see on TV that we think gay people are. And then they gave me a chance and started to get to know me for me. And then slowly over time, You know my daughter Alex that I'm raising? Oh you're— Yeah, I'm raising a stepdaughter and this and that. Then they'd ask, How's Alex? And then slowly but surely, How's Julie? And then slowly but surely, What are you guys doing? And so it kind of just wasn't thrown at them, it was just kind of mentioned to certain ones I knew I could trust and then ones I didn't know I could trust, you just don't say anything to and they can make their own conclusions.

And I think that's kind of— I've seen Cimarron change big time in seventeen years. People that you would never think would accept a gay person are really changing. And they've asked a lot of questions. And I think I've put myself in a way to where they felt like if they were the last patient of the night and they're like, I've really been wondering about this. I've always wondered about this. And I'm like, Okay. And it might be an 86-year-old lady. My granddaughter's gay out in Denver. I just want to let you know that and it's okay. You're like, Wow, I would have never guessed. And so stuff like that, I think that's what changes a community. And I've always— Alex tried to get us interviewed for LOGO, sent all the stuff off. It was—they were doing a special on children of lesbians and gays. And she goes, By God I want to do that. And they did do a small town regular family, quit showing the extremes and show a regular family. They came back and said we were too normal. They would not do [a show on us because we didn't have enough drama in our daily routine.]⁷⁵

ALBIN: Wow.

TANYA: They said, You don't have any trouble. We want drama on our TV. We want fights and action and—and Alex was like, Wow. That really hurt her feelings. She's like, They need to show us. I'm like, Well. So we were all, let's go for it. And we answered

⁷⁵ Added by narrator during the review process.

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all of our questionnaires, Julie and I did. And they asked a fifty-page questionnaire on each of us and sent it all off for Alex because she'd read it in like *Curve Magazine* (laugh), Oh look they're doing a whatever. And she was probably fifteen, sixteen. And she goes, We ought to do a documentary on us. We ought to do something showing people. So this is probably why I'm doing this, probably for her going, Alex I'm going to show you I'm not scared to validate who I am because I've always told you to be who you are. And I've told these kids in town to be who they are and be proud of who you are, and don't let anybody run you down, and do what you are going to do—succeed and if you want to come back here great. If you don't I understand. And your parents will be okay with this someday, and you are fine. And if you need to leave you can come stay with me. If you need a place to go we've got people to call. And so that's why I got involved in it is because you've got so many great people with Lindy and Warren that are straight couple allies that would do anything for any of us. And they go, My God we never knew gay people before but now that you're our friends we have more fun with you guys than the straight people. You guys are fun.

And then you've got all the ones in the social work. And it seems like gay people, I've noticed a lot, are all—especially (laugh) women but guys too—we're all geared in the service industry a lot. Seems like 80 percent of us are in teaching or health care or mental health or stuff like that. I think— I don't know if that comes from us living with the fear and some of the different—all the things we went through, struggling that now we want to help other people that are struggling or something. But you notice us probably as a higher percentage, I would say, in those fields more than straight people. We tend to be a little more empathetic sometimes about things that are said about others or things that are done to animals or things that are done to this or that probably because we went through a lot of that stuff growing up. And so that was a big reason getting in this going, Man we've got David that's this and we've got Ann that's that. And unfortunately we have a few people of us doing a lot of work—five, six, seven people (laugh) all the time doing everything. But we've got a pretty big membership of straight allies and gay allies. And I'm not in it as much for—I mean, I'd like to see political change, but I think in Kansas the sodomy law needs to be reversed before we can go any further a lot on gay marriage. I mean, you've got to stop this big thing (laugh) that first of all we're illegal to even be together before we're going to get marriage. So I think

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something like that needs to be changed, and I think sometimes we're putting the cart before the horse.

Like you said I think earlier was, You need to—I don't know, you need to—Everybody needs to come back here and just live, just be yourself and people will change more than trying to shove things down people's throats. Nobody likes that. And so in our group we were always taught, Don't say anything other than, This is not fair. People understand when something's not fair from the playground—That's not fair you took Johnny's toy. People understand that more than, I want to be equal to you. Because then they think you want something more than equality. And same thing about marriage. I love the joke that Jay Leno said the other night, Straight people are really worried about gay people ruining their marriage. Heck, we ought to let every gay person get married and be just as miserable as the rest of us. (laugh) But I don't see a problem with that. And most of the people in town that I treat that are my neighbors are like, What the heck's wrong with that? You don't want necessarily a religious thing, you want a humanity thing. You want the ability to take care of your partner in their sickness and you want to be able to have each other's social security benefits if something would happen, or automatically have rights so we don't have to go to a lawyer and get every right written down on a piece of paper and pay money. Straight couple can go be married for twelve minutes and have more rights than a gay couple being together twenty years and so that's not fair. And so you—I've explained that to people in town that have asked. And I go, It's not fair is it? Well no, now that you say it that way it's not fair. And I said, It has nothing to do with you being a strong Catholic or a strong Nazarene or a strong whatever.

One of my friends was ran out of town for being a gay physical education teacher and coach and she grew up there. All she wanted to do was teach and give back to her community—ran away. They had a petition around town, We've got to get rid of her. And it was a certain religious group that did it. And finally she just quit and gave up, moved to Wichita. And I'm like, Why'd you quit? Why didn't you fight? Why didn't you stay there? Your family is there. Oh I just—if I ever thought that me being gay was going to hurt one of the kids I [taught, she said]—or not [taught], but coached and taught and if it was bothering her enough to talk to her father and this and that for her father to

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get this going, then I thought I'd give up my profession.⁷⁶ I didn't care what the parents thought or other teachers thought, but if it ever hurt the kids I was going to quit. And that's sad. We've lost so many, especially teachers. That's the profession that seems to get hit and they're the most fearful to come out, have a Facebook page with a blank page or a fake name or—they're definitely underground. Because I can't be fired. People could quit coming to me, but I can't be fired. They can and I understand that. So those of us that can speak out about things need to. There needs to be more of it, a lot more of it.

But how much of it political? I don't know. I'm really tore on that nationally and probably state. To me it just should be a done deal. There shouldn't be so much talk about it and there shouldn't be so much money spent researching this or that. It's like, Just do what's right and let people be together who want to be together. I feel like we're probably the last group of people that it's okay to not give any rights to. We're probably it. Like I said, It's still okay to make fun of gay people and overweight people. I said, Well I happen to be both so—(laugh) you kind of get the double sword. But there are just so many people that are afraid to speak up.

ALBIN: So what do you think your— So this is a two-part question, I guess. So what do you think the future of Kansas potentially could be in terms of GLBT rights? Do you think things will change over time?

TANYA: As far as going as far as gay marriage or going as far as what?

ALBIN: Whatever.

TANYA: I think it will and I think it'll definitely happen in my lifetime if I live to be a ripe [old] age.⁷⁷ (laugh) I think we're seeing it change with the group that's maybe thirty and under, not always but I think that group as a whole, as they age. I think things are going to have to change because they're starting to change by state already with Vermont and—Massachusetts, different things. I think eventually it will have to hit here. I think economically it would be smart to recognize us in more legal ways. Economically it

⁷⁶ Edited by narrator during review process.

⁷⁷ Added by narrator during the review process.

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would be smart. I don't know. Kansas—well, I hope so. I wouldn't have been here this long if I thought I was that hated. I really think the more individuals like us in these small towns especially—I think that's where it starts even more than the bigger towns if they just are honest with people and live their life. It's changing. I have seen that community over there, at least 50 percent of them, change their mind in a matter of ten years. And so I know it can be done statewide. And I know people in their fifties and sixties and seventies and eighties that are for equality and fairness. We just can't seem to get a majority of the state. And I think it has a lot to do with religion and I—and that upsets me of why we get certain people elected in this state.

Family values, family values, family values. Well, there's been so many lies that none of the rest of us have family values. I had family values. I didn't cheat on my partner. I was faithful. I raised children that nobody else would. Their dad wasn't giving up money, mom didn't really have [enough to give them all the needed.]⁷⁸ I stepped in and raised two kids that the state would have been raising. Give me the tax benefits for that, didn't get any. Not that I—not that I would trade that for who—what I had with my daughter, but come on. Just living our lives and stuff we should be able to change this state, but we're going to have to figure out how to elect some people that aren't so hardcore probably to the right. I probably don't consider myself one way or the other too far, probably more of course left probably, socially, probably economically more in the middle, I don't know. But we seem to just keep electing these guys that just don't want to let us [live in peace and have any protection under the law.]⁷⁹ There's so many kids in foster care in this state that need a good, loving home, but because we're gay we're pedophiles or this or that. There's just so much propaganda out there still and misinformation that some of these people really believe it. And you've really just got to show them it's not true. You can't tell them it's not true because they're hearing it in church that it's a bad thing, they're hearing it from their congressman and senator, it's a bad thing. And they get elected on those premises—we will keep this stuff out of the state. Well they'll get elected—and it's mostly based on fear. They're afraid of us because they've been told so many bad things. And the more we get out there and let people know [what] we are doing—teaching your kids, we are doing this already, you

⁷⁸ Edited by narrator during the review process.

⁷⁹ Edited by narrator during the review process.

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just don't know we're gay⁸⁰. The more we do that I think it'll change politically. I don't know. Like I said, I'm not a big expert on that.

ALBIN: Right. Right. And so what do you think your future will be in Kansas? Do you think you'll stick around a few more years or off to Denver or—

TANYA: (laugh) I think I'll probably stick around here for a while, unless something would drastically change, family wise probably, if something were to happen to my mom or God forbid or something to where I just felt no ties here except for business or—that's the main reason I'm probably still there and that I really do love most of the people there. There are a few that, Yeah I don't because they're just so hateful, just because I'm gay. They don't look past that. So—but yeah, I see myself staying here for a while because my nephew's eleven. He's just hitting middle school. He's big soccer, golfer, this that. I want to see him do things. I'm the closest aunt or uncle close to him and he would be devastated if I was to take off too. And Alex, I don't know, she might stick around here for a while. She might actually come back here where she was going to escape forever and get away from Kansas and go fight crime in the big city. [She has an internship with the Kansas Federal Probation Board in Topeka.]⁸¹ And so I don't want to be that far from Alex necessarily either.

ALBIN: Right. Right. So there's— So have you ever thought of— Like at any point was there like the idea of like going to San Francisco or New York or kind of a larger—

TANYA: Oh Lord no.

ALBIN: (laugh) Okay, I was just curious.

TANYA: (*unintelligible*) those people would be going, Oh you're crazy. I can— With my job and all that if I really wanted to leave, which I have people whine so much if I leave for like a three-day weekend—but I hurt myself Friday you were gone. So part of me (laugh) doesn't leave because it's like, Oh God I'm going to get yelled at when I get back. So I can hop on a plane and go to San Francisco tomorrow for a week, I can do

⁸⁰ Added by narrator during the review process.

⁸¹ Edited by narrator during the review process!

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that. And here I have good earning potential, more than they think. And I have a way lower cost of living than they do. (laugh) So I can go do things and—if I choose to. That's why I do ride a motorcycle and do boat and jet ski and stuff because there's nothing to do out here. There's no theatre there's no gay bars, there's no—(laugh) There's nothing for us to really go socially do much besides work and your neighbors or whatever. And so would I go there? No. I don't want the pollution, I don't want the smog, I don't want the noise. I don't want the rudeness that accompanied— I've been to Boston, I've been to Houston, I've been to Dallas, I've been to Orlando. I've been all over—Phoenix and Salt Lake City and all around and—but actually I've never been to California. Not that I wouldn't go, I just haven't had the opportunity to go.

But I've been flipped off [in Boston] trying to pull out—I was—I waited thirty minutes for one of those rotary things.⁸² And I'm trying to get out there. I'm flipped off and yelled at. And I'm like, Jeez we don't do that back where I'm from. They'd get out and help push your car out into the intersection—Here let me help you. So no— Would I live there? Would I go visit and go to a musical and a Broadway show and things like that? Sure. But I wouldn't—I wouldn't trade being able to go out in my tent with my air mattress and we've got a campfire and I'm with my straight friends I've had for twenty years and we sit around talking about the kids and we've having a beer, and I can walk two miles in the dark and not worry about having to get robbed or broken into or— I wouldn't trade that part. If I went to Denver at this point it would be like an outer part. (laugh) It'd be away from—thirty minutes from— That would be nice if we could move this area about two hours closer to Wichita.

ALBIN: Right.

TANYA: So we'd be about forty-five minutes from Wichita. You could go in there and do something for the day. But God to go three hours to Wichita almost, to go two hours to Hays, to go what, five hours to Topeka, six hours to Kansas City. You're like, Man I can't—it's hard to do that on the weekend at this age, drive all the way there on Friday and drive all the way back on Sunday. So no, I wouldn't. No, I'd stay in a more smaller area. Maybe 30,000 would be better 40,000, 50,000. Once you start getting—I go to Wichita for the weekend with my friends. I ride my motorcycle there, all the way there.

⁸² Added by narrator during the review process.

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And they're like, How do you take the wind all the way down here? How'd you handle that? And they whine about all the stuff they think I have to deal with out here. How could you live there? You can't even go get a Starbucks. You can't even—(laugh)—you can't go get a coffee. But I can buy a cappuccino machine for my house and I can have it every day. And I have the Internet, I can order my clothes. [If I can't find what I need out here I can order it.]⁸³ I go eddiebauer.com, americaneagle.com, whatever. I can order anything I want from all over the world and have it sent to my doorstep in Cimarron. So why would I need to go fight crowds of hundreds of people in a department store? (laugh) That's what my family says, You do all your shopping with the click of a button. I said, Pretty much. I said, I don't want to drive to Wichita during Christmas season or Kansas City. I said, I've done that. I did that with my sister last year for Thanksgiving, the day after Thanksgiving.

ALBIN: Oh, oh.

TANYA: Hadn't done it for years. But I took my old furniture up to Alex to college to her apartment. And my sister goes, This is the day after Thanksgiving, let's go shopping. (laugh) Oh. We went to the mall where Alex works and I was like, Oh I was never so beat up by the end of about seven hours. Old Navy—

ALBIN: Did you buy anything at the end of the seven hours?

TANYA: Only some stuff for Alex because I had her pick it out in the stores. And I go, Oh you think that coat's cool? Okay. And then an hour or so later when she went to work I go, Okay we got to go get that coat or we got to go get— But as far as shopping for me I go, Hell I wouldn't have the patience to wait in line to buy something. And Tami's like, Wow you're just— And I've changed. I would have had the patience at twenty. Part of it's my age now. (laughter) I have more to do with my time than to fight the traffic, the crowds, the rudeness, the people running into your cars and door dinging. I'm out here parked in two spaces. I don't want a door ding on my truck. (laugh) And you go to these bigger cities and they're just so wore out, the people are. They're strung out and they're, eh. And I go, Why don't you just come to Cimarron for the weekend? Well there's nothing to do. I go, That's the point. Why don't you come out

⁸³ Added by narrator during the review process.

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for the weekend and just hang out? We can barbeque. Oh, that's boring. No it's not. When I go there, Let's go out, one night every—once a year. (laugh) Oh we just went out to the bar last night. But you don't realize I don't live near one. Please go out for me, just so I can see that other gay people exist and we could actually dance together maybe, or hold each other's hand and have actually more than one—more than us in the room (laugh) and actually feel like a couple somewhere. And they don't understand that. They're like, Oh we never really thought of it that way, that you live out there where you can't. They communicate all the time on their motorcycle trips every week and meeting here and meeting there and hanging out with each other and Super Bowl parties and this and that. And we're back here going, Ah, what are we going to do for Super Bowl? It's going to be us and all the straight people again, which is great but I still don't feel real comfortable holding another woman's hand in front of our straight friends or kissing or anything like that. That would feel weird. Because then I also have to treat them on Monday morning, and I go, Ooh. Because most of the ones that I'm friends with I'm also their (laugh)—I work on them.

ALBIN: Yeah, that's (*unintelligible*).

TANYA: So that really feels weird.

ALBIN: Yeah, yeah.

TANYA: And everybody on my block I treat so it's like (laugh) you step out and do whatever and you're like—you're crossing two weird lines there, not just one.

ALBIN: Right, right. Well, I don't think I have any more questions to ask you. Is there anything that you wanted to talk about that I didn't ask you about?

TANYA: I don't know. I don't think so.

ALBIN: Okay. If I have follow-up questions—

TANYA: Sure.

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ALBIN: Can I— I'll check back with you. I don't know if I will, but if I do.

TANYA: Okay.

ALBIN: All right. Well thank you so much. I so appreciate (laugh) you doing this. This is— This has been fantastic. This has— This has been great.

TANYA: Well those guys said it was going to take an hour, that's what David and Robert said. (laugh) We did a lot more than that.

ALBIN: Let's see, yes. I'm— Well I'll stop this and—

[end]