

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

Lisa
Oral History

Interviewed by
Tami Albin

April 5, 2008

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

Lisa: Narrator

Tami Albin: Interviewer

TAMI ALBIN: Okay so today is April 5th, right on 2008, and I'm here with Lisa. How are you doing?

LISA: I'm doing great.

ALBIN: Good, good. Okay so I will start off this interview like I do all the other interviews which is, tell me where you were born and when?

LISA: I was born in Garden City, Kansas, August 19, 1978. I'm the third child of my family. My mom and dad both grew up in southwest Kansas, and so my dad went off and was in the air force for a while, then came back and didn't take over the family farm which my grandfather had but went into farming for himself and kind of eventually took parts of his land. And so I grew up on a farm in southwest Kansas in the plains and where you can see sunset for miles and miles and miles, and you have to grow up there, I think, to really truly appreciate it because (laughs) I don't think that very many people back here do but—yeah. And I grew up in a really, really great family, I think. I have two older sisters who are quite a bit older than me—one is ten years and one is eight years older. And then there's me and then I have a younger brother who's just two years younger than me. And he and I fought like cats and dogs growing up, totally hated each other. I'd lock him out of the house, he would run away, just all those kinds of things, tormented each other until he hit puberty and that stopped because he was bigger than me and—which is saying something because I'm about six foot tall so—but I was raised Catholic and just a loving family and we went to my relatives for every holiday and birthday and everything like that. And I played sports in high school and my family was always there. So that's something that I've grown to really—I really see the importance of that in my life now. So—

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ALBIN: So what was school like growing up in Garden City?

LISA: Yeah. Well I was born in Garden City. I actually went to school in—we lived in Deerfield, Kansas, which is a smaller town. It's about fourteen miles from Garden City towards the west. And it was really, really small. There were—I graduated with twenty-three students, and I think ten of us had been there from kindergarten through our senior year, and so not a very transient community at all. And it was small and it was, I don't know, I blossomed there. And you just learn how to deal with people knowing all your business. And so you learn the things that you can do in public and things you can't do, which is kind of a good thing maybe.

In high school, like I said, I played—I played basketball and I did—I threw track and I was pretty successful in that. I was really successful academically, was valedictorian in my class. And growing up I was always very aware that something was different, and I think that's a common theme that I hear a lot with some of my friends is that just—it just was different. I think probably my earliest memory of having a true crush I was in third grade and there was this girl, Amber or something like that. And she was tall like me and not everyone else was, and we played—we played together and stuff and she was there and then she wasn't there. And I remember going, Oh (unintelligible). And it was more than just my friend wasn't there because you know friends, you know whatever. But that was—that was probably—she had long, black hair and—I don't remember like her body necessarily at that point but I just remember having a really great time. Hmm, yeah.

And then once I was in seventh grade and my coach actually was just gorgeous. She came in. She was sporty and fun and she had a great sense of humor and (makes noise) I was just like head-over-heels gaga at the time and didn't—I mean, I didn't like make the connection. I would like stay after practice and talk with her. She thought I was a hard worker. No—(laughs) I really just wanted to like hang out with her. And I mean I would like have dreams and, it was a great time (laughs) for me there. But then in seventh grade I went through a weird stage. That was the stage where I like—all my hair was short and I grew out a rattail. And on game days I would wear a tie and a shirt and—and my mom and dad never said anything to me. And I never really got harassed

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at school because like I said, I felt like I was—I was sort of a leader in some ways. And so people were just like, Oh that's Lisa, whatever—whatever she wants to do. And so I was just allowed to be me. And by the time I got into high school I had grown out my hair and was fairly straight looking so I was trying to be straight at that point. But I think it was seventh grade where I really went, Okay I really like girls and the boy thing you try to make up stories—Oh yeah I like Ezekiel or oh yeah I like Josh or yeah. Do you think he likes me? And meanwhile I'm going, I don't give a crap. I don't—who wants to be around these people but—

ALBIN: So you said that you tried to be straight acting when you hit high school so—

LISA: Um-hm—

ALBIN: —so how did you try and do that?

LISA: It was everything. It was from early on when you're like—you're hanging out with your friends and you're talking about boys, so you make up stuff like that, to dressing up in dresses and stuff like that on occasions where you need to dress up, going out and—it seemed like that was the purpose either—whether—small town America, we didn't go to art shows. We went and we drove up and down Main, we drove up and down our Main Street in Garden City which was the big town and you find a guy that'll—that looks nice, that's over twenty-one that'll buy you beer and that's what you do. (laughs) And then, yeah, you just like drive around and you honk and wave and smile and do all those weird little—I don't know, the little dance that the high school kids they learn. And so I was totally engaged in that.

I never really had a steady boyfriend when I was in—like a sophomore in high school was when I was first like kissed by a guy. And once I was kissed by one I decided that that was pretty fun and I could probably learn a lot. And so it became not necessarily something that I was like emotionally drawn to—Oh yeah I really enjoy this because he is this and he is that. I was like, No I just enjoy kissing. And so I like—it was now a mission. I was going to do some sort of little experiment research project on how to kiss. And so I kissed a lot of different people, and I was fine with that. My junior year we had—my memories are really tied up with sports. We had lost in the finals of sub-

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state and it was kind of really traumatic for me. I just—it was done and I wasn't ready for it to be done because we had a really great year and—

ALBIN: Is this basketball?

LISA: This is basketball, um-hm, and so it was March—I think it was March 12th—March 2nd, yeah March 2nd. And I went out with a big group of girls and a big group of guys and had sex. I was totally plastered, didn't give a care in the world. And I know that there are many straight girls that have that experience, but for me I was completely detached emotionally. And I've slept with three men in my life and every experience has been the same thing. It's just been like there and I did it and it was what it was. But it was never satisfying in the way that my experience has been with women so—yeah that was—I think that was part of the straight acting, because then that gave me a story that I could tell and I was sort of part of the group then because my other friends were having those experiences if they hadn't had sex then they soon would. It was—they were leading that up because they had serious boyfriends, most of them. But I was the friend that if their boyfriend was mistreating them or wasn't talking to them or whatever then, Oh well, I'll go hang out with Lisa. And—

ALBIN: Did your family ever—or your friends—ever say, Why don't you have a boyfriend?

LISA: I don't remember them ever saying that, yeah. I kind of alluded to—you kind of say, Oh who do you like? Who do you like, and stuff like that. And I remember several times my friends not going behind my back but sort of working on my behalf to try to get so-and-so to ask me on a date or something like that. And I think I only went on one true date in my life and it was sort of a pity date, I felt sorry for the guy (laughs) and so I went on a date with him and it was awful. But it—I was just like, Ah whatever, I don't care. It really—I was completely detached from it. (laughs) I thought that was funny. But yeah my mom and dad—I think I was a good kid and I think that my parents trusted me a lot and so whenever I would go out I would joke with them, like, Okay I'm going to go get drunk and have unprotected sex. See you later. And they'd be like, Okay whatever. My mom is hysterical. She's very much a joker and my dad is a farm guy, he works really, really hard and loves my mom, so there's that. But they never really

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questioned me that way. Whenever I did come out eventually—my mom looks back and she goes, Yeah, duh, hello. What the heck was I thinking? Like well it wasn't even in your sphere of thoughts so I'm sure she didn't go, Oh yeah my daughter's gay, when I was twelve. I'm pretty sure she didn't do that.

ALBIN: Did you have any images growing up that you also used as frames of reference, like images in the media or of women?

LISA: Um—when I was in high school I think—I think I remember hearing that Melissa Etheridge was gay, but I don't remember liking her music because she was gay. I just remember buying a lot of her music. I don't remember actually making a connection to I am gay until I had my first experience with and had a girlfriend in my senior year, the very end of my senior year in May of high school. And once that happened, then just open the floodgates because I—then I started going, Okay surely there's books out there, okay, where are they at? And maybe it's okay to be called this. But we used—I mean, we didn't call each other fags. I don't remember any of that language or any sort of reference of that. We said, Oh that's gay. I remember saying that a thousand times, and kids still say it today. And it's now taken on to meaning, Oh that's different, that's silly or stupid, those kind of things, and that's what it meant when we were young. But no—I don't know if I was sheltered from that being in southwest Kansas and not really having desire or access for a national media. I don't know if that was it or just my parents—I think they knew what was going on in the world but we never really talked about those kinds of things at home necessarily so no, not really.

ALBIN: So how did you meet this girlfriend that you had your last month of senior year?

LISA: Well—

ALBIN: This is in your class of—graduating class of twenty-three?

LISA: Twenty-three, right. She was a year younger than me actually. She moved in in January. And—

ALBIN: She moved in the Garden City area?

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LISA: Yeah, she moved into Deerfield. She had—well she was originally from Oklahoma, and her parents—she was—her—(unintelligible). Anyways, her mom had her when she was like sixteen and her mom was from Deerfield. And so she moved up to Deerfield with her aunt actually because her and her mom were not getting along. And it turns out they weren't getting along because—Kate was her name—because Kate had, at the time, gone through sort of a really bad coming-out process and her mom did not accept it at all and so shipped her up to Deerfield to live with her aunt, (laughs) and turns out she shipped her up into me, (laughs) so that wasn't really successful but—(laughs) in hindsight. So she came up and she arrived in January and she tried out for basketball and she was on our team. And she wasn't very good but she was athletic enough to get by. She was really, really great at softball, which we played together in that summer. That was like the summer of love, that was great. But she came in—she had a short haircut and just—ah, the most hazel, nutty, chocolate brown eyes you've ever seen in your life.

And like I said, my senior—by my senior year I was straight girl, but only externally. And so I was very feminine a lot more than I am now certainly, not comfortably feminine but certainly feminine. So she and I—I think that she was drawn to me that way because she was not feminine and sort of the butch-femme role that kind of—I still kind of say, Oh I'm a little more to the other side. Anyways, she and I hit it off and we became really good friends. And in track she and I were both throwers and so we threw the discus and shot put together, and I kicked her but in shot put and she kicked my butt in discus, and we kind of were competitive a little bit. And then coming back from a track meet in Minneola, Kansas, which is just south of Dodge City, Kansas, we—she—we had a really good person—another friend. Her name was Cheryl. And we were sitting on the bus and she and I were sitting in the same seat. And I had brought my pillow and I have—had—I still have king-sized pillows, the really, really long pillows. And so we had a pillow on top of us. And then our friend, Cheryl, was sitting on top of us. This is bus safety to the max. But Cheryl was on top of us and so our hands were down beside each other on our leg. And all of a sudden we were holding hands. And it was like, Whoa, that's interesting. And then we weren't just holding hands but we were like playing with each other's thumbs. And so it wasn't just our hands were accidentally touching and together, no this was holding hands, and that was a big deal. And we

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were just going down the road and I'm just—my mind is racing, racing, racing, racing and I'm sure hers was too. But we're—the most casual of conversations with Cheryl and joking and laughing and whatever. And then the bus stopped. Cheryl got off in (unintelligible) and we had just a split second of a long moment. And I turned to her and the first thing I said was, I have so many questions. (laughs)

In hindsight I'm like, That's what you said? I have so many questions. Not, Oh my gosh, what's happening or Wow or, Holy molly. No. I have so many questions. So—and she teased the hell out of me for that for a long time. But that was like the end of April and like a week later or so she and I kissed and didn't—tried to figure out how to do whatever it was we were feeling. We just wanted to be naked together all of a sudden. She—I knew that we were supposed to make out and I knew how the boy-girl thing worked and—and we just really experimented and just kind of—for once I had that emotional connection and it was like, Holy molly, this is really good. And—and it was perfect because she was my best friend then and so my parents were like, Yeah she can come over and stay the night, no problem. I was like, Yes. Every high school kid should be a lesbian because heck it's easy that way. No, I'm joking, but—and then that summer was a summer before I went to college and she and I were still together and we played softball together and we hung out together and we were not apart at all and I just had a really, really great time, just talked and talked and talked. We went into the Hastings in Garden City and bought a really bad lesbian novel. And it was awful. I don't even remember what it was about. But that was sort of—that made us nervous to think about that. She cut out things in the paper. We started paying attention to the paper and she cut out things in the paper and we would read them, about so-and-so is gay or Elton John kind of things.

ALBIN: So what year is this?

LISA: 1996.

ALBIN: Okay.

LISA: It was a year before Ellen came out and so there was still—there was—that kind of started to brew just a little bit. I remember finally being in tune with that, being

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attuned to that, and just really going, Okay this is really who I am. And we did the young love, first love thing of, We're going to be together forever and here's what our house is going to look like. And of course we're going to have kids, are you crazy? And we'll figure out how. We didn't want to live in Deerfield, Kansas for sure because no one would understand us. And so it was a really, really great summer. So that was the end of April when we got together, and then in May I graduated. And we went away for our—we have a senior trip. A lot of small communities do. And we went to—my whole class went to the Lake of the Ozarks in Missouri. And I came out to my senior class. And that was odd, and that made Kate very, very uncomfortable.

In hindsight I would not have done that. That was sort of a mistake because gossip spreads and spreads and spreads. And she had a whole nother senior year that she needed to get through. And that was difficult for her. But—so we were—it was one of those things where we were just at the senior trip, we were sitting around playing cards and laughing and joking. And it was sort of a, Have you ever done this, or have you ever done this? And my friend, Consuelo looked at me and was like, Have you ever kissed a girl? (unintelligible) and I went, Yeah. And they're like, What? Oh my God you have to tell me. What? My friend Taylor and I wrote notes back and forth to each other on the bus and we talked about it. And so my whole class, or most of the class—there were some that didn't really pay attention to what the rest of us were doing, that didn't really care. But then word, whenever we came home I know it kind of spread around.

ALBIN: And had you said anything to your parents at this point?

LISA: Nope. No. My parents are still completely—completely out of the loop. I think that—my dad says that he had an inkling. He didn't walk in on us necessarily but you know how you just—he'll—whenever he comes in the room and we're—yeah, jerking around and then he's like, I was pretty sure something was happening. So I graduated, went away that summer and then actually did—my freshmen year in college was at Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska, and went away and was so, so, so homesick. And just my relationship with Kate was kind of floundering because I didn't have money to call home all the time and she was not a very good letter writer, and that was really before e-mail really took on so that we communicated that way. And our friend, Cheryl that sat on the lap, Kate kind of fell in love with her. And that was sort of

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the replacement. And we broke up over Thanksgiving, so we were only seven months in, but in hindsight that was okay because she and I would not have lasted. We just—but she—so we broke up in August, I think it was August. Whenever I moved out and moved away and was going to college, I kind of felt like, Okay high school's behind me.

So I decided to throw out all of my old letters, old notes, old everything. Pictures and all that I kept but just my high school days I decided to throw that out. And we lived on a farm and we didn't—we burned our trash. And so my mom was burning trash after I left and threw it out one of my notes fell out. You know that note I was writing back and forth to Taylor on the senior trip? My mom found that. And she never, ever abused my privacy growing up. But I don't know if something caught her eye or what, if she was just curious and it was there and I was throwing it away. So anyway she read it and that's how she found out was by that note. And I think a week later she got onto Prozac (laughs) and—no, I don't know that it was that but it hurt her really bad. It took her a long time to kind of recover. And I remember my sister called me.

I did come out—that summer I worked for my sister and I did come out to her. It was one of those things where she—this is my ten-year—sister that's ten years older, Bonnie. She—I worked for her and I went into the office one day and was like, I think I need to tell you something. And she's like, What? And I was like, You know Kate? She's like my girlfriend. (laughter) And she's like, Oh okay, and was very supportive. Do mom and dad know? No, they don't know. And I don't remember exactly how the conversation went exactly but I know it went okay. And my sister has continued to support me and been pretty cool with it in general. And so then whenever I was off in college, I don't know if Bonnie brought it up or my mom brought it up. Anyways they were like hanging out having a piece of pie one day or something and I came up and they both came to the conclusion that they knew the same thing and so they had to talk about it. Bonnie called me and said, Mom knows. And my heart just broke, because my mom is the best thing ever. And so I was really, really upset. I remember coming home.

She didn't tell dad at first, I don't think. But then once I did, we talked and I told her I was really, really sorry. And she's like, It's going to take some time to figure out this thing but I still love you. You're still Lisa and you're still my daughter and that'll never, ever change. And so that was her way of saying, Just give me some time and some

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space and we'll be fine. And then once she was fine she told every member of my family, extended for five or so levels, and that's the history of that because now they either deal with it or they don't. And my mom was one of those people that's just like, Let's just get it out there and if people have a problem then they can stay away or I don't want them talking behind our backs. Because we do that with a cousin that I do have. We're pretty sure that she's gay but nobody's ever said anything. And so it's like this big unknown and you don't ever really ask about Susan, my cousin Susan, because she's a little weird.

ALBIN: So how was your dad when your mom told him?

LISA: Cool. Yeah, he was like, Okay. Yeah I'm pretty sure I knew that, kind of thing. Yeah he was all right with it. And she told my brother also. It's interesting. Whenever I was home—I don't remember if I was home for college or if it was that summer. It might have been that summer. I remember I was working around the house and my brother came in or whatever like that. And he kind of accused me of being gay or he did something. And I was like, Jeff that's stupid. I'm so sick of people. And I totally denied it, totally denied it. I was embarrassed by it and stuff like that. And I'm just like, I don't know what people are saying—and then my mom told my brother after I was away and once everything was cool. She told him and he took it really hard also. And again, I think that had to do with he was in high school. He was just a sophomore when I went off to school. He was a freshman when I was a senior. And he had to deal then with it too. And that's another reason why I was like, I should have just kind of kept that under tabs a little more, mostly because of Kate had to be there another year, my brother had to be there another year. And it's not like they were taken out and lashed and beat up and talked about every day and completely excluded. I mean, it wasn't anything like that. It's just, That's one more thing that they had to deal with. And it was in direct connection to me and my big mouth and feeling like I needed to get it off of my chest—here's who I am. Now you guys have to deal with it. And that was harsh.

But—yeah, my dad was cool. He—and to this day, he and I will watch movies and be like, Oh yeah, Jodie Foster, (makes noise), Jane Seymour. He and I—I got my taste in women from my father, that is for sure. Now that's not to say that my current partner, Susan, she's nothing like my mother. (laughter) That's not at all but—but he and I—and

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he'll make little jokes to me. And it feels kind of—like I have some straight guy friends in college and they'd ask me weird questions and things like that. And it was just—it was just cool. And I think that's how my dad is. He's just like, Whatever. It don't matter. He's fine.

ALBIN: (laughs) So what was life like at Creighton? You were homesick?

LISA: I was totally homesick but I was challenged. One of the drawbacks of going to a small school is you don't have a lot of opportunities academically. I was offered a basketball scholarship that I declined. It was for a community college. And I declined that because I wanted—I was smart and I wanted to go do the smart thing and really focus on academics. And I thought at one time I wanted to do something in medicine, and Creighton has a really excellent doctor—a medical doctor kind of program. And so I went up there. And it's also a Jesuit Catholic University, it's a private school. And I thought that that was just like the coolest thing ever. It's like in the Midwest. I don't know in the east coast maybe everybody goes to Harvard and Yale, and Creighton was a big deal at least for us. It was kind of on that sort of level. So the fact that I got accepted and had a good scholarship and went away.

I was really—really challenged. And so that part of it was really exciting to me. And I got really involved in my academics. I didn't get very involved in student life, and I think that that mostly had to do with the fact that I was very homesick. I'm just not really—my sister—my second oldest sister who's eight years older than me, she had already had three of my nephews by then and she was getting ready to have the fourth. And I also have a niece who's—so she has five children, and she's like, Go forth and multiply kind of girl. But she lived in Omaha. Where I was at school she lived just outside. And so I went to her house every weekend and was totally tied to my family. Yeah and so the social life/personal life kind of stuff just kind of faltered my freshman year. But that's when I really decided—really, really got back on board academically. I felt I was really challenged.

Kate and I broke up in November and that was really, really hard. My sister knew then, and I was really, really afraid that she would not allow me to be around my nephews and things like that. And she was like, Oh that's silly. Like my mom said, You're still

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Lisa. Nothing's changed really. She's very Catholic, my oldest sister, Elizabeth is. And by that I mean she like sings in the—she's like the song leader in her church and the blah, blah, blah. She holds a lot of leadership positions, and she's like the Republican of the family. (laughs) So she—I went with her and Kate and I broke up and she could tell that something had gone wrong and so I confided in her a little bit, not a whole lot. I wasn't as close to her as I was to Bonnie growing up. But then Christmas came, I went home for a month and that was fine. I finally got over it, just bawled and bawled and bawled and bawled and bawled, and then came back to school. And I decided I really didn't want to be a doctor. I had done really well in chemistry, which is kind of the weed-out class. And so the opportunity was still there. But I fell in love with calculus (laughs) and mathematics in general. I just really went, Yeah I really like this. And so I decided to come to KU where I had the opportunity to do engineering or some other kind of thing because Creighton's pretty small.

And so I was going to transfer and then I heard about a group while I was at Creighton. And it met off campus and it was like a youth—a gay youth kind of group. And they met on like Sunday afternoons I think. And so I started going. And I went a couple of times and that's where I met the second girlfriend, and her name was Leslie. And she and I met, we went out and then we started dating. And so Kate wasn't forgotten by any means but that made life a lot easier. I was less homesick for sure. I was allowed to be a little more social. Leslie was from that community so she knew a lot of people and we went out and we hung out and we—she and I got to know each other a lot. And then I moved down to Lawrence in June, I guess that would have been, of '97, and Leslie followed me. She came with me. And she and I lasted another—she and I were together for about a year so that was like—would have been like March to March or so. And yeah we had—it was fine. She then like cheated on me and broke my heart and I went through it again but she—we moved down here and I started going to school in the summer and then I almost flunked out the fall of my first year because of her and I's relationship. It was just kind of consuming my time. And I was trying to be an engineer and that's the time is something you need for studying.

So then I decided, Okay well if you can't do it you teach it right, so I decided to be—okay well I'll be a math teacher. And it felt like I kind of settled a little bit because I wasn't successful that fall semester, but—I'm trying to remember. I think—I got involved

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with Q&A, with Queers & Allies—that fall is when I think I first went to my first meeting. And then by the next February I was like the treasurer or something and then life really changed. After Leslie and I broke up, I moved in with a couple of friends in their little one-bedroom apartment and (laughs) it was the two of them and me and then they—we got another kind of straggler who came to visit from Utah who decided to stay for months (laughter) and months. So there was the four of us in this little, tiny, dinky apartment. We had a great time but that's when you could really talk about, Okay what does it mean to be gay and what does it mean to be lesbian. And I was exposed to ideas about feminism because Karina, the girl in the group who was sort of our mom in some ways because at that time I was also really going through some gender identity kind of things—Am I a boy? Do I want to be a boy? Is that really what it's about? Am I a lesbian or am I—I'm going through all those questions. And she took care of us and she was a women's studies major going on to law school. And so she would come and be—she was very, very bright and would kind of introduce us to these ideas and say, What do you guys think of this, wanting our perspective of it and—her girlfriend/boyfriend, a girl named Kate who went by Jack. And Jack was sort of a mentor for me for that period, that semester of my life.

I looked up to him a lot and we all had really short haircuts and didn't wear jeans. We wore pressed pants and buttoned-down shirts and really learned those butch ways. We'd always carry a lighter, open the doors and sort of a respect thing and what today could be conceived as just sort of role play kind of things. But it's also how to treat a lady. And so that was good. Susan—my current partner Susan, she doesn't mind that I had that training. (laughs) She's fine. But it did feel like a training in some ways. They were really involved with Q&A. Jack was the president and Karina was something else, and so we did a lot of stuff in there. I got a fake ID (laughs) and we went to Kansas City to the bars on the weekend, because I was the youngest. I was just a sophomore and they were probably three or four years older than me. And so it was a really great kind of blossoming time really, had a good identity search and had a lot of questions, some of them being answered, some of them just being asked for the first time, and so that was good.

ALBIN: So what type of events were you involved in on campus with Q&A?

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LISA: Well we had a treasurer and then that was like in February I think I said. And then in April was the first Pride week that I experienced anything sort of remotely like that. We had—Kate Bornstein came into town, who's a gender-rights activist, and it was my job to go with Karina and pick her up from the airport. Oh my God, wow. That was intense. That was intense. And then we took her to this dive for lunch and she loved it. It was great, and just like soaked up every word that she said. And that was good. So I was really involved with that. And then the Brown Bag Lunch Drag in front of the union, that was an eye opener. To this day that is a life-changing event. We were like, Oh yes. You really feel like you're part of a community that's accepted at that event, in particular, and have a great time and everybody's smiling and laughing. And some of the straight people are uncomfortable but they still feel pretty positive. That's also, I think, probably one of the first times I saw Fred Phelps. I went, Holy, moly, that is evil right over there across the street.

And so those kinds of things—it was during that spring semester that the student senate on campus decided to have student senators for particular organizations. And so like for example the black student union—was it the black student union? No. It was—anyway it was the African American student group on campus. I cannot remember what it was. They got a group. There was a group for just about every of the minority populations and Q&A was one of them. And so I was the first Q&A senator that was elected. And so my junior—what would be my junior year of college, I got into student senate as the Q&A senator and that's—from then on that was my organization. I went to Q&A certainly and did a lot of events there but I'm student senate and I felt like was definitely where I wanted to be. I was really involved in finance and funding student organizations, and I led a lot of—not led but was a major participant in a lot of revolts against like the blood drive who we felt discriminated against gay people, because if you have had sex with a man who's had sex with a man who's had sex with a man, or something like that, since 1969 then you can't give blood. And so we did that. And I—I just really blossomed there. Those are the kids that pay attention to the world. And so just sitting around the students in an office you hear a lot of different ideas and a lot of people talking about some really great things, and so I continued to really feel more empowered in some of my viewpoints and how I was interacting with the world as a gay.

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By then I was pretty sure I wasn't—I didn't want to be a boy. I enjoyed—I enjoyed being a woman too much. I just couldn't get over—I certainly could imagine being really, really masculine physically and stuff like that but just going through that change didn't never—did not ever feel comfortable. And so just having my body completely change that way, it never really felt comfortable for me. And so I discovered that you could really have sort of boy feelings. And I mean—and it's more just like I'm sort of masculine tint to the world—where maybe my hair is shorter, I can dress in pants always. I haven't worn a dress in a long time; I think since maybe my first job interview, seven years ago, I think I wore a dress then. But I was really exposed to a lot of different things then, just really, really smart people. And smart people have really good ideas, I think, so that just let me do that but, it was good from then on in student senate. I really enjoyed that.

Hang on, I have a story there. This was probably two years into the student senate. At that time Emporia State's president just decided to take sexual orientation out of their nondiscrimination policy. Her name was Kay [Schallenkamp], something like that, anyways, just arbitrarily. And she decided it didn't need to be in there and she was the president, she could.¹ And so that was kind of a backlash. That was a major thing with Q&A because—and also with Emporia_State's gay student group. And so I approached our student senate president, which at that time the student body presidents of all of the Regents universities, they had a little group that talked to the board of regents that went and presented. Our president at the time was sort of the leader of that group. And so I approached him. His name was Corb Maxwell. And Corb and I had a conversation and it was getting to be student senate election time. And I was like, I would really like to run with your group and here is what I want done. And he and I talked a lot about we wanted to go to the board of regents and have at the board of regents level a nondiscrimination policy which wasn't in place at the time. And so he's like, That sounds really good. I don't think it'll be a problem but it could be.

I was really good friends with Chris Robinson at that time. Don't know if you've heard her name. She's kind of a—I don't know, a staple. She taught a lot of people about who they are and how to be in the world. But she and I talked a lot about it and she actually was like, That's—it's sort of a pipe dream and I don't think everybody will go

¹ Added by interviewer during the review process.

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with that. We should start smaller, grassroots, blah, blah, blah. And I was like, I think let's try it. And so Corbin and I we really worked together. And he did a lot of it. He was—he was a really good politician guy. He kind of got the lingo and the way to present things. And we got that passed. And so that was—that was a really significant sort of a milestone for me. I felt like I really did something good and I worked really good with a number of people who also were working towards the same thing as I was. And so that was really big. I had an AP reporter call me at my house and wanting to do an interview. And I was like, Yeah sure. And so I felt important. And then about three days later my sister called me and went, Why didn't you tell us? And I was like, What? And she's like, Well there is a news article in the *Garden City Telegram* about (laughs) Lisa. It's like—the headline was not this but it could have been—Local Girl Who is a Big Fat Lesbian Does Good. (laughs) And so the paper outed the hell out of me. And luckily my family knew, all my extended family knew. And so it wasn't a big, big deal but there I was in the paper. And my friends joke to this day—they joke with me a lot.

We were just talking about it last night actually that—the article started with, Lisa, Deerfield High School graduate had an instrumental part in doing this nondiscrimination policy thing for the board of regents. And the next line was like, Lisa, a lesbian, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And it seemed like every time they referred to my name they're like dyke, Lisa, Lisa the lesbian—just keep on going on and on. I was just like, Oh my gosh. I thought—when the AP reporter called I thought, Kansas City, Topeka, Lawrence, that will be important in those papers maybe and it'll just be a small article. But never did I think—it was like page three in the first section. And so I still have that article. And so that was—it was like, Okay. Well there you go mom and dad, aren't you proud?

ALBIN: So how did the people in Garden City react to that?

LISA: I don't think I've ever really got a lot of flak from it. I know that one of my aunts called my sister and was like, Did you see the paper and blah, blah, blah, blah, and this stuff. And they were like, Yeah, whatever. I think my mom fielded a few questions and she was like, Yeah we know. It's not a big deal. She's still Lisa. Who cares? It didn't matter to her but I think that then a lot of the gay people in the community decided that it was okay to tell my mom and dad (laughs) that they were—

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ALBIN: So this is in the Garden City area?

LISA: Yeah, in the Garden City area, yeah. One of the people that my sister graduated with all of a sudden started like really talking to my mom and—yeah it wasn't a big deal. Really, it kind of just fizzled out as soon as it fizzled in so—but for a couple of days I thought I had royally pissed off my sister because she was like, You should have warned us, you should have told us this. And she'd always been pretty supportive, but it's easy to be supportive too when I'm not there. And so—but yeah, I don't remember there being any major backlash against my family or anything like that. If anything, like I said, I think it was then there were other people that could seek out my mom and dad and know that it was okay just to be themselves around them, so that was actually maybe a good thing. (laughs) But I was out in my paper. Not many people can say that they were (laughs) so I guess I should feel privileged (laughs) from that. I don't know.

ALBIN: So what was life like on campus, kind of being this out person with classes and—

LISA: The only time that I really remember like feeling discriminated against or harassed or anything Chris Robinson and I were downtown and she and I were walking—we never dated or anything like that so we weren't holding hands or anything. We were just walking. And I guess we both had short hair maybe, I don't know, whatever. And a car drove by and they screamed out the window, Dykes, something like that. And she and I both looked at each other and went, What the heck was that? That was kind of the weakest thing we'd ever seen—heard but, whatever. And so—and that was it and then it was done. I didn't ever feel threatened or like my life was in danger or anything like that. That was really it. In my education classes I don't think I ever spoke about being a lesbian in those classes mostly because there's still a really big stigma with gay people and teaching and so that made me a little nervous.

ALBIN: So what is the stigma with gay people and teaching?

LISA: We're going to recruit people. We're going to recruit those kids and they're such—their minds are just ripe with being influenced and so they don't want gay people

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being around them. For goodness sake, it might turn them gay themselves and blah, blah, blah, whatever. That's not how it happens so—I don't know really what it's about but I'm sure that that's what some people think, that I'm gay because someone told me that I was not because I really am, or I was behaved into it which is kind of ludicrous to me. I don't remember choosing gay, I don't know why I would. I mean, honestly if you had a choice I think most people would choose an easier road. But—so those classes I really didn't and—but I wrote papers.

So my professors knew and they never said anything to me about being gay and going into education. They never said anything. I think it was kind of assumed that I would never say it to a principal that I was applying for a job for. But again, I wasn't like counseled to not say that or anything. It was just sort of me paying attention to the world knowing that anywhere you can still be fired for being gay. And I'm pretty sure that they would take a really large offense if—again because of the stigma attached to education. I think I had heard in the media—there are always reports in the media about teachers getting fired specifically because they are gay. And so for some reason that didn't deter me though. I still finished my program and decided to go into teaching and did that after I graduated.

And I went to like the smallest, whitest community (laughs) on the planet it seems like in Gridley. I don't know. The other parts, though, of school, my other classes, my math and computer science class, everybody's different. (laughs) They're all weird and dorky. But then I took like women's studies classes where we would really talk freely about those kinds of ideas. And I took a class that was—it was like—what was that? It was like my third English class, the sophomore English class. And it was—it had something to do with like gender identity issues in literature. And so that was sort of interesting to be able to read and talk about those kinds of things. We hosted a conference the year after Leslie and I broke up. We hosted a conference in the fall and that's where I met Sabrina, my third girlfriend, and—(laughs) Yeah, it was—just keep the door open. (laughs) She and I—she and I hit it off really well (telephone ringing) at a conference. Do you need to get that?

ALBIN: You know what I'll do? Let me just hang it up.

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(pause)

LISA: So she and I hit it off at a conference there and started dating. And she lived in Springfield, Missouri, she had come up for it. And so—(telephone ringing) (laughs)

[Section edited by interviewer]

LISA: Good. So Sabrina was in Springfield and she was working to be a massage therapist, and she was going to finish that up in May. And she did and then she moved up to Lawrence with me. And have sort of a twisted web in that Sabrina and—has an older sister, Yvonne. And Yvonne and my current girlfriend, Susan, were together. So Sabrina has a sister—the two sisters in that family, they're both lesbian. And (laughs) so then Sabrina and I broke up and Yvonne and Susan broke up. And Susan and I got together so sister-in-laws getting—yeah, that's the weird web of my world. But anyways this conference, Chris Robinson hosted it and learned a whole, whole lot. I went to a leadership academy. It's called LeaderShape. I don't know if you've ever heard of that.

ALBIN: Yeah.

LISA: I went to that and had a really, really positive experience. It was one of those things where you really learn how to focus on a goal and how to really network with people in order to fulfill that goal. So that was—that was a good experience for me. Let's see—I go—we went to Madison, Wisconsin for—it was like a—was it the Midwest Gay and Lesbian College Conference? Something like that. We went up there and just learned a lot about gay issues—everything from forming student groups on campus, to high schools, to what are gays in the military doing, kind of issues, kind of exploration. Talked a lot about politics and—to—stuff like that—to how to be a lesbian in the world, how to be a gay person in the world, how do you get married, why can't you get married, how to adopt kids, how to—and it wasn't like how to like here's your manual. (laughter) It was more just a discussion of the issue—adoption, just everything like that, those kinds of experiences that I had in college. And I know for sure that I was a lot gayer in college than I am currently.

ALBIN: Can you explain what that is?

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LISA: Yeah. I mentioned that the floodgates kind of just spewed open, and that was my identity for a long time. I was Lisa the lesbian as opposed to being all of the other kinds of ways I would characterize myself now. And it's not like—like all the music I listened to was either the Indigo Girls or Melissa Etheridge (laughs) or I don't know, k. d. lang. So I was consumed that way. And then my ear was just so attuned to it on the news that anything I like soaked up. You hear it on the news and then you find it on the Internet and then you find (unintelligible). That's the kind of stuff I would always talk about was being a gay person in the world. That's the stuff I was interested in. When I'd have to write papers, I'd—most of my papers had some sort of a gay theme to them, if possible. Well not in—not in my math classes that's for sure but—(laughs) I don't know. I just—I really, really, really focused, just consumed with that identity of myself. And I kind of—I grew out of that is kind of how I feel. I'm no longer in that phase where everything is about being a lesbian now. Everything now is about being who I am and I'm a lot more than that now, is kind of how I feel. So (laughs) that's what gayer—I was gayer in college than I am now (unintelligible). (laughs) So—

ALBIN: So what happened when you graduated from school?

LISA: When I graduated I—let's see, KU has a five-year education program so I graduated then my next year was student teaching and then I moved down to Gridley. And at that time I was single. Sabrina and I had broken up. It was kind of mutual. We were both kind of growing in different directions. And she stayed here, I moved down to Gridley, which is 90 miles south of here and so I was still within commuting distance. And I came up just about every weekend, especially that first year. But I don't know how it happened. I sort of lost track of that identity. Like I said, I started to become more than just Lisa the Lesbian. I really was—became a professional and was interested in education and how I could serve these students and get into that.

Monday through Friday I was completely—not straight acting in the same way I was in high school. I mean, I didn't like grow out my hair and wear dresses or anything like that. I still was pants-and-a-shirt. I was a coach, and so sort of that because I was a coach I think that it was okay that I wore more athletic things and I was a little athletic

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and that helped me hide just a little bit I think maybe. But I just started—then I was consumed with school.

And I would come up here on the weekends and that's when I would do First Friday, which is the potluck, with all the group of friends I'd have. I'd still come up and play softball with them. I still had my gay and lesbian friends and most of my friends to this day are still gay and lesbian, but it didn't seem like I was as focused. And I think from what I know about other people in college, you kind of like, Okay that's part of me and now not everything that I do now is really focused on that particular issue. And so when I was down in Gridley like I said, I wore a dress to my job interview because I was pretty sure they didn't want to hire a gay person. I straightened up my resume. It didn't really say a whole lot about my student senate experience as a Queers & Allies senator. (laughs) I put that I was in there but—I didn't lie or anything like that. But whenever they would ask me, Well what did you do? Well I was really involved in student senate and the student politics and things like that, and then you just let it die. If they really wanted to know it wouldn't be too hard to find on a Google—or a search on the UDK [University Daily Kansan] website because just bills that I sponsored and things like that would kind of—it would let you know pretty quickly that I was gay.

ALBIN: So did you ever eventually come out at work while down there?

LISA: Nope, sure didn't. I made some really, really great friends with my colleagues, had some really great students. (laughs) There were a couple of students as they were growing up I went, Someday they might grow up to be gay and they might be gay themselves right now and not be telling me, but I always tried to make them feel like they were safe no matter who they were. And that was everything from if anybody made any sort of a comment about fags or dykes or anything like that, which not many of them did—I mean it was a fairly respectful environment down there—I was quick to address it. If—sometimes I would catch some people saying, Oh that's so gay. And my response would be something like, Really? I didn't know that that had anything to do with a man and a man or just make silly comments like that to really draw their attention. There was one girl, she was a senior last year, the year that I left. And she—I'm sure that she wanted to tell me that she was feeling some weird feelings in her life. She was a senior. And it was kind of ballsy of me but I told her, I was like, Someday you're

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probably going to want to ask me a question and if you do find me. And it was just—it was so abstract, didn't really mean anything. And she might know someday whatever. She might remember it, she might not, but I just—I just had a really good relationship with her. I was her coach and everything and I just—that was my last attempt at, Okay I need to just get this out so that if you ever have a question you know that I could be someone that you knew. Because she was not from a very good family and just all those things—strikes against her that I just felt like she needed to know that about me so—so that's really the only—I mean that's the closest I've ever got to anything about being gay while I was down there.

ALBIN: But did you find the space to be homophobic at all in any way or—

LISA: I found it to be sort of—let's see—I was really attuned to it. So I picked up on a lot of people saying stuff about their aunts, and everybody has a gay aunt right? And so there were things like that. But it was just—it was like no emotion was attached. We weren't promoting it but we're really not saying, Oh don't talk about that, and squelching it and things like that either. Hi there.

ALBIN: Yeah, she just woke up from her nap. Come here. Come here.

LISA: Oh okay. Love the (unintelligible). And so we didn't really talk about anything really. And so I don't think that they were homophobic necessarily but it wasn't really supportive, and I think that it would have just been weird. It would have been awkward. It was a lot easier to just be Lisa the math teacher with not much, which—I'm not a big fan of bringing a lot of personal life into your work anyway so it wasn't a conflict for me. The teachers that I got close to I have a feeling that they kind of figured it out because they quickly stopped asking me if I was dating anybody or, Can I introduce you to my neighbor or things like that. Like, no, no I'm good. They quickly stopped that kind of stuff. And so I have a feeling that they knew but it was just not talked about, which was fine. I really didn't have a problem with that. I at times felt that I was deceiving them, felt bad about that but it never really came up and I never felt the desire to jeopardize any of it, I think is the biggest thing.

ALBIN: So you're not there anymore?

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LISA: I'm not there anymore. I left at the end of last year. Susan and I up here—she and I had started dating but I always knew whenever I left Lawrence that I wanted to come back. This truly is like the oasis in the Midwest. There's no better place to be in my opinion. I'm also a—kind of a diehard Jayhawk fan (laughter) so there's that. And I came up here and—The Lawrence public schools have a nondiscrimination policy so if I ever felt the desire or need to be out that's a school district that I could potentially go to. Oskaloosa doesn't for sure. And so now at Oskaloosa major homophobia. The students are less respectful.

My colleagues not so much but you can tell by the way—the things that the students say that they don't get called on them. And I felt like I made a pretty valiant effort at the very beginning of school to try to address a lot of the things that they were saying, calling each other just about every name that we would find offensive. There's stuff like that but it kind—it quickly became sort of overwhelming (laughs) and sort of sad so—and there I don't think I would ever feel comfortable about the students knowing that I was gay, which is interesting because now I'm closer than I've ever been to the school that I—where I live is closer to the school and—and so it's a little scary. What if Susan and I are walking down (unintelligible) street holding hands and I run into my students? I hadn't really thought about that, or had to think about that, like my first five years of teaching. I mean it's one thing you see them in the grocery store by yourself, which I often did when I was in Gridley, but completely other thing when they kind of are in your personal space, which is different. And it's one of those things too, and I really think that in education especially there's this stigma that gay people are out to change them and it's the same idea with you don't want gay people around any kids because gay people are pedophiles and that's just ridiculous. Because if they don't think that they'll change you then they think that you're going to abuse them somehow or whatever. And really it's just we care about kids the same way that straight people care about kids. We just want them to grow up and be really, really strong individuals, that's about it.

ALBIN: So you knew Susan from previous because of the sisters. So then how did you meet her again, because you were single for five years?

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LISA: Yeah. Not quite five years but yeah. She and I—whenever Sabrina and I were together and she and Yvonne were together, I mean we had like Sunday dinners together and stuff, and so she and I were very, very good friends. Whenever I started teaching—Susan was a schoolteacher for a while. She taught high school French. And so whenever I started my student teaching, she became my mentor. And I could really, really talk to her about that. And then it became a more personal relationship, a more personal friendship. We could talk about the sisters together kind of thing and we became very good friends that way.

And then she and Yvonne had some hard times and they eventually broke up. It was just one of those things that I—after Sabrina and I broke up and my first year down there I came up and Susan and I would spend a lot of time because again I was teaching and just had a lot of different ideas and issues and things to talk to her about. She's also a sociologist, her master's degree, and she has all but dissertation done, ABD, and—for her doctorate. And so she's a very interesting person to talk to and very easy to talk to about a lot of different things. And so Sabrina and I had broken up and I knew that I liked her a lot. There's a significant age difference between us. She's twenty-one years older than me. And so that's—that was an issue whenever she and I first started to realize that we liked each other. But it was a year-and-a-half ago Oct—so yeah October I guess would be a year-and-a-half ago that we really started—we started dating and where we were both in the space that it was okay, that it wouldn't be too weird for Sabrina and Yvonne or any of our other friends to think of us as a couple.

I don't know, we just really—we have a really good connection. We have—we're both good communicators and so it's easy to be in our relationship. And the age difference doesn't really matter anymore. But yeah we just—it totally developed out of really, really strong friendship. And it's funny, (laughs) she and I talk about that lesbians don't know how to be friends (laughs). And there's parts of that that are true because especially if both individuals are single. Because it's like, Okay well any kind of—anything that I have, any conversations I have or anything, you're interviewing a potential mate. (laughs) And so it's awkward and it's this and that, and if you don't have an immediate attraction to somebody then you don't want to talk to them. And we comment on those kinds of things all the time, which is odd. But it doesn't have to be that way. You can't

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just have a conversation with someone and not be attracted to them and that's just fine.
(laughs)

But yeah we were really, really good friends. And I was—I had been at Gridley for a long time and been by myself for a long enough time. That was probably the longest I had ever been single since coming out and really developed as an individual, and figured out that I wasn't just Lisa the lesbian, I was Lisa the math teacher and the daughter and the consumer (laughs) of goods (laughs) and that kind of stuff. It was good. But—and then I moved up here the beginning of last summer and got a job at (unintelligible). I work in an organic farm in the summer and so I have that to do and Susan has her job and it feels like I'm finally grown up, and feels like I'm finally making a life that closely resembles the life that I thought I would lead when I was growing up. And it's not a straight person's life, it's not that. It's a—I don't know, it's just a life that I always wanted to have. She's part of my family now as opposed to my girlfriend.

ALBIN: Right, right. So now that you're back in Lawrence, are you involved politically in anything? I think you had mentioned you played softball. That's not a political (unintelligible). Well it could be I guess.

LISA: It could be.

ALBIN: But were you involved in anything when you were down in Gridley?

LISA: Not really other than just sort of teacher lounge conversations, and I was the only—not the only liberal but sort of the liberal voice that would come up. Yeah, not— (laughs) Gridley is small enough where on voting day they have the roll and if you don't show up by five o'clock they might call you and say, Hey are you coming because you're like our last five on the list.

ALBIN: (laughs) How big is the population?

LISA: Um, it's less than a thousand.

ALBIN: Wow.

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LISA: Yeah it's really, really small. Really, really, really small. I lived out in the country actually so—and so, no, I wasn't very involved politically down there.

ALBIN: Did you do anything in Lawrence?

LISA: More. Involved only by ways of paying attention and knowing who the leaders were in those organizations who were doing things and being able to talk and share ideas and things with them. This last summer, before last summer, I went to a couple of meetings, the Lawrence KEC with the Domestic Partnership Policy and was by no means really instrumental in any part of that, but just getting my ideas in there and hearing what they had to say about it. That felt more grownup politics than what I had experienced in college. Because I had really, really enjoyed my time in college and being able to do that, and it was a sort of a—I don't know, it was a no-risk environment. I mean, we were talking about, Okay should we give them two hundred dollars for printing or not? (laughs) Not. Should we have a Domestic Partnership Policy, which has the potential to change a lot of people's lives and have a huge significant impact on them. I feel like I want to get back to that. And that was one of the reasons why I wanted to move back to Lawrence was to reconnect with that side and not be consumed by it, by any means like I was in college. But I feel like I have something to contribute, all the things that I learned, all of the experiences that I've had in politics and getting things done and just the way things work like that, that I would like to do that again. But so far—so far it's still a little scary, being in education, being a high school teacher. And it's not—I don't know, it's more than just potentially losing my job, it's losing a part of my identity as that. Because if I'm not a math teacher than what am I and if I'm not gay what am I (unintelligible) so it's sort of a balancing act. That's sort of a to-be-continued I think in my life, just a bit.

ALBIN: So do you always see yourself living in Kansas in the Midwest? Do you ever see yourself wanting to pack up and go somewhere else?

LISA: We joke about wanting to move to Canada, (laughter) especially with George Bush in the White House. No, I really don't. Susan's family is from Tulsa, Oklahoma and so she visits there periodically. My family is still back in southwest Kansas. So I

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always want to be close to them. I—having all of those—I don't know, being educated—I don't know how to say that without sounding completely classless—but being educated you kind of get exposed to just sort of the ideas of the world. And so I always imagined that it would be just fascinating to live a year in London or Spain or something like that, someplace exotic, not necessarily a beach (laughs) exotic but just someplace like that. But in all actuality, this town—not Kansas in general because I don't know that there's a lot of places that I'd want to, but this town I would want to raise my kids in. I can't see myself living anywhere else. Because nowhere else can you get all of the good things in life in the Midwest, and this—to me this is where it's at. It's the best parts of what I value.

ALBIN: Right. Right. Have you seen Kansas or the Midwest change at all since you've come out?

LISA: Oh yeah, totally. I think that the time—the time when I was coming out you kind of think—Ellen DeGeneres was the big thing. She had come out of the closet and a lot of different celebrities were making the choice to finally reveal themselves. And so it was definitely in the public eye a lot more. And I've seen just the different generation come up, and teaching them every day you kind of see their viewpoint on the world and—and it might not be completely free and clear now but just being around those students and seeing how they don't really care, just be who you're going to be and that's fine. And I don't know if that's the electronic generation kind of where everybody's wired into everything and you get exposed to many new ideas that aren't necessarily what your parents are. I don't know why it is but yeah I definitely think that Kansans and the Midwest in general it's going towards that, in that direction, where they're not going to care very much about those kind of things. They're going to stick to—do what you love and what you value by all means be that, but maybe they know more people that are gay and lesbian. Maybe that's it. Maybe they hear about it and then like I said, hear about it in the news more and so that's why it's okay with them.

ALBIN: Do you think it's easier—I've had a lot of people that I've interviewed say it's a lot easier to come out now than it was for some people ten, fifteen, twenty years ago. Do you think that's the case?

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LISA: Totally. (laughter) Hands down easier. I think—(laughs) Susan talks a lot, the age difference thing. And she's like, You had a freakin' cakewalk, please. She comes from an era where she was a big athlete in college and you did not say the word in the gym. That was like forbidden, very, very hidden kind of thing. It was not mainstream at all. And so she—whenever she came out it was a closet door and she didn't know who else was. We didn't talk about it, you didn't think about it, you didn't hear about it at school at all, even in college. The first time she heard the word lesbian spoken in her class was when she came up to KU in her doctoral program for goodness sake. And so she really has broadened my horizons and made me realize that, Okay maybe mine wasn't (laughs) too bad, especially with the support that I had with my parents. And there are certainly people that are going to be in that sort of a family environmental where it's not going to be easy for them no matter when they are.

But yeah, I mean just the different resources that they have. I mean, most students, I think, have access to the Internet at school, fairly unrestricted time, and so they can just do a little Google search and figure out maybe that there's somebody out there who feels the way that they do, and so it's not as scary and it's not as strange and they don't feel so alone, which is sort of the first reaction is, I'm the only one who feels this way, I'm pretty sure, in all of the people that I know, and what's wrong with me and why me and why this and all those sort of adolescent feelings that you start to feel whenever you're going through that time of your life.

ALBIN: Why do you think—and this is—you were talking about Susan with athletics and not mentioning the word in the gym or in the locker room. Why do you think there's such homophobia in sports?

LISA: Oh, that's a big question.

ALBIN: Yeah.

LISA: We've talked about it some because when she—when Susan was here at school there was a sign up for—I don't remember if it was a Q&A meeting or a conference or a speaker, something like that. It had a lesbian theme and it was posted in Allen Fieldhouse. That was when the volleyball team played in the Fieldhouse still. And we

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were—we went to a thing and she—I mean she literally like almost broke out into a sweat. It was very, very much just engrained that that was not where it was. And even today seeing the girls playing basketball in the WNBA and all of that they—full makeup and everything because they do not want to be perceived as lesbian, even if they are. And so there's still that stigma, that stereotype that they want to avoid, and for whatever reason. I don't know because I'm okay with who I am so why can't you be? I don't know. Because it doesn't sell? Because half of the population is male and males don't want to see really dyky-looking women. They want to see women who like women, now that's fine so long as they look like the girls in the *L Word*. Now that's hot. That's a pretty good idea. You can sell that for sure. But people who—(laughs) who look like Lea DeLaria, for example, they don't want to see them. That—just like they don't want to see people who are ugly. I don't know.

ALBIN: I think a Midwest version of the *L Word* would be very (laughs) interesting in terms of what it would be like.

LISA: Yeah, exactly a bunch of women like in jeans and flannel shirts,

ALBIN: Building a house for someone.

LISA: Exactly. (laughter) Granola.

ALBIN: Yeah. Except my partner would be the one running around getting sandwiches for people she—she wouldn't be nailing anything but she should be—she'll be the Martha Stewart of the bunch type thing. So is there anything that I haven't asked you that you wanted to address or—

LISA: Oh let's see. I don't think so. I think when I was thinking about things to say, I think we've hit most everything.

ALBIN: Okay, and if there is anything else you can let me know and we can always do a second interview so—so thank you very much.

LISA: Hey no problem, that was fun.

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ALBIN: I appreciate it immensely. Great.

LISA: That was good.

[end]