

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

Shari T.
Oral History

Interviewed by
Tami Albin

February 25, 2009

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

Shari T: Narrator

Tami Albin: Interviewer

TAMI ALBIN: Okay, so today is February 25, 2009, and I'm here with Shari. Thank you so much for participating in this project.

SHARI T.: You're very welcome.

ALBIN: The first question that I'll ask, that I always ask everybody which is, Tell me where you were born and when.

SHARI: Cleveland, Ohio September 29, 1969 in a Salvation Army booth Memorial Hospital to a 16-year-old unwed mother who was giving me up for adoption. Then seven weeks later I was adopted and lived in Ohio for three years but was adopted by native Kansans and so I've been in Kansas ever since, so since I was three, and I don't remember anything else. (laugh)

ALBIN: What was your childhood like growing up in Kansas?

SHARI: Maybe fairly typical, I don't know. My dad's a minister but he didn't become a minister until I was like—second grade he went to seminary. And so we lived—my mom and I were alone during the week and my dad would go to Kansas City. We lived in Park City at the time. And then once he became a minister then we kind of moved around every three or four years or so. My mom wasn't overly nice to me. Sometimes she liked to hit. So it was bad in that regard and I still struggle a little with that. But otherwise fairly—only child so I was kind of by myself and (laugh) learned how to entertain myself, and my friends, wherever we happened to be at the time, and just did girl scouts and 4-H and whatever.

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ALBIN: So what was school like if you were moving around every three to four years?

SHARI: School is my strong suit and so it was always very easy for me. I'm a bookworm so it always was my gift.

ALBIN: And what about high school?

SHARI: Oh, I went to four different high schools. We started out in Harper, Kansas, which is like—population less than a thousand now and that was pretty awful, but my freshman—part of my freshman year there. And then actually I was sexually assaulted and went to Menninger when they were in Topeka and stayed there for nine months, and so I went to high school there, a couple different places while I was up there and then moved back to Harper. And then we moved to Andover for my junior year which was ever so much better than Harper so that's where I graduated and went my last two years. High school was a struggle probably. I drank a lot and did not run with the correct kind (laugh) of friends, drove my parents nuts and drove myself nuts in the meantime. Yeah, it was good to get out of high school. (laugh)

ALBIN: And when what did you do after high school?

SHARI: Went to Wichita State. Actually right after high school I went to Finland and I was supposed to stay a year as an exchange student. I hated it there. It was awful. I stayed two months. I came home. And we've since found out that I have a little touch of that seasonal affective disorder. It rained all the stinking time. I mean there were like five days out of two months where it was sunny. And we're not talking thunder boomers with exciting stuff. Oh no, no, no, this was just the gray drizzle, the constant clouds. And it was 32 degrees September 22, 1988, the day that I left. It was cold. I don't like cold. So I came home. And then I started at Wichita State in the spring and the next year. Went through several different majors, finally ended up with criminal justice and graduated in May of 1993 single and six months pregnant (laugh) actually. So very soon after college I had my son, my oldest son. But, I liked college. College was good. I met lots of people from lots of places, and in fact it sparked in me a love of the Arabic language and I am presently taking an Arabic language class. So all these years I've been thinking about it. But culturally I miss it because I really liked having all that world

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education. The school was fun too because I love school, but just to have that much diversity around me was so much nicer. Newton's pretty white bread. So I miss that.

ALBIN: So when you graduated and you're six months pregnant did you get a job right away or did you have your son or—

SHARI: I had a job at the time and so I just kind of did my thing. I was off for a month, that's all I could afford to do and then I went back to work and I've kind of been— My plan was to be a cop, and being a single parent maybe getting shot at for a living isn't the best of options. So I've been floundering around ever since trying to figure out what I want to be when I grow up. And so I've done a lot of secretarial stuff and just kind of hip-hopped (laugh) back and forth with jobs and call myself the Jane-of-all-trades.

ALBIN: Right. So how did you manage being a single parent?

SHARI: I lived with my parents. They were nice enough to let me stay. And so my oldest, he's very attached to my parents because I lived with them until I got married and that's only been five-and-a-half years so he was almost ten when we left. And they're—my dad's retiring this year. They're moving back to Newton.

ALBIN: That's great. And where are they now?

SHARI: Harper. They're back in Harper.

ALBIN: Where is that on a map?

SHARI: (laugh) Wichita K-42 and then it hits K-2 that goes directly south. It's kind of out in the middle of its own little nowhere. It's equal distance between Enid, Oklahoma and Wichita, so just—it's nowhere basically, out in the middle of desolation.

ALBIN: Right. So how did you meet your husband?

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SHARI: Online, Match.com. Yeah, he lived in Buhler, which is twenty-five miles east and not too far from Hutchinson, and we met on Match.com and had, oh gosh twenty-four days of dating and then we were engaged.

ALBIN: Wow.

SHARI: (laugh) Yeah. And then we got married. That was September 1, 2002 we got engage and then we got married July 4, 2003. And we would have done it sooner except that I have family and friends from out of state and one even from Canada who was going to be there so we wanted to do it in the summer so there wouldn't be any kind of travel and things with the weather.

ALBIN: Is that where the Saskatchewan pillow is from?

SHARI: Yes. Our honeymoon actually that's where we went.

ALBIN: In Saskatchewan?

SHARI: Yes. Love Saskatchewan. (laughter) We were looking for a honeymoon place and I'm online and going, Yeah well—we were looking at the map. Well Saskatchewan would be a nice distance away. I've never been there, okay. And I'm looking for cabins and stuff. And I see this one and oh the pictures look great and the pictures of the surrounding area look great. And then at the very end of the little slideshow it gives their contact information. Love Saskatchewan. Okay, we have a winner. So we drove up through Mt. Rushmore and then straight up from there is where this is, and it was like a two-and-a-half day drive.

ALBIN: Yeah, that's a long haul.

SHARI: It was a haul and I don't fly anymore so—(laugh)

ALBIN: So why did you stop flying?

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SHARI: Actually gosh, when I came home from Finland I flew Pan Am, that flight from London to New York. Three months after I flew it, it got bombed and that was the beginning to the end of my flying. And so then I thought, Well I'll just fly domestically. And then right before a domestic flight to Phoenix my dad hands me this *Time* magazine all about the horrible security that we have in this country (laugh) and all this. And I actually have anxiety problems that have cropped up over the years. And I had a random panic attack on a plane and I just—I did the Pavlov's dog thing and I linked them up together. Oh it just—it got ugly. I was coming home from Phoenix and I was—I mean I just had hours to sit in the airport and freak myself out. And so I get on the plane. They're moving back from the gate. And I just all of a sudden—I cannot fly on this plane. I cannot do it. You're—and I get up and I say, Ma'am to the first stewardess, (laugh) I need to get off this plane. And she says, Are you sick? I'm going to be sick if you don't let me off this plane. (laugh) I suppose the look in my eye was crazy enough that she told the pilot to move it on back to the gate and they let me off. So I've been up in a very small craft since, and only because my oldest wanted to get on a plane and—he's a cancer survivor and it was his cancer-free anniversary and so mommy sucked it up for (laugh) the boy for that. But it was just a little bitty four-seater type of thing here in town and—

ALBIN: That was enough?

SHARI: I'm hoping someday that—because I used to love to fly, I mean absolutely adored it, but—and I would like to adore it again, so we're hoping. I've kind of gotten rid of most of the other phobias that cropped up through that anxiety thing. And there's the little one.

ALBIN: How old's he?

SHARI: Four-and-a-half, ornery as the day is long, oh my gosh. (laughter) Woo. It's a good thing he's the caboose on the train because the next one would have come out—bearing horns. Because they—my oldest is the easygoing and then my daughter, she's a handful sometimes and he's—whoa, yeah. (laugh) So just progressively harder to deal with, and I'm not getting any younger. The husband took care of that a couple years ago.

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ALBIN: So then you had your daughter before you were married?

SHARI: Yes. Yes, I did, picked another loser. I had a propensity towards that back in the day, yes. My husband was probably maybe the first or maybe second decent man I ever dated (laugh) and I dated a lot of men so—

ALBIN: So what has your life been like since you've been married and living here?

SHARI: Pretty good. Pretty good. Pretty stable. That's—if my husband's anything he's stable so—which is what I need because I'm—I call him kind of the thumb that holds my rubber band and I zing all over the place. As long as I come back I'm okay. But yeah, the two younger kids have some mental health issues and that's been a struggle. And my big boy's hearing impaired so some of that's sometime's a struggle. But he's real supportive and real nice and I've learned how it kind of—because I lived with my parents before this and so kind of having my own domain has been nice. (laugh) It's been an interesting ride, mostly pretty good. My poor husband has a lot to put up with (laugh) because he is the straightest arrow that you would ever want to meet. I mean the straightest arrow, just unimaginable. I had my twenty-year high school reunion this year and one of the grills—we were planning it actually and I had told one of the girls, I said, Yeah he is such a normal, straight arrow just—she's like, How'd he end up with you? (laugh) I don't know. Match.com. I don't know. But yeah—

ALBIN: Well, I mean that shows Match.com works. (laughter)

SHARI: It does. We are a success story.

ALBIN: I've never known anybody who's used it so that's good to know. I mean, that's interesting.

SHARI: Oh yeah. I had dated some other guys before I met him that were losers on Match.com so I had to go through the frogs to get the prince.

ALBIN: Right, right, okay. And so prior to that had you ever dated women?

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SHARI: No. No. I had thought about it from time to time when I let those things that were—I kept trying to repress back (laugh) in myself but no.

ALBIN: And so why were you trying to repress them?

SHARI: Not scared of my parents, scared of society. I mean just—and having lived in a place like Harper, that kind of thing is not tolerated. And just—I got this message living around here I think. Maybe if I'd have lived somewhere else that was more open to that, but not around here. I just—and finally two-and-a-half years ago about, it came to me. It's like, You know what, why am I fighting this anymore? This is just who I am, it's how I was made. I can't make it go away. I've been trying for thirty-some years, so all right. I just told my husband. I said, You know what, I'm bisexual. And poor thing, that's another thing. He grew up evangelical Christian. And so the whole, Well you chose this or because you were sexually victimized some brain chemistry changed and made this happen. It really, to his credit, did not take long to convince him and we didn't overly fight about it or anything. It really bugged him for a while, Well, what percentage of you? (laugh) How gay are you? Is it half and half? I said, If you're the only man I ever find attractive ever again, isn't that enough? Well I don't know. Well think about it. I don't know that he ever got back to me on that but it was—that was an interesting haul for about a year. We went to therapy. And for a while I wasn't really sure if we were going to make it through it, but so far so good.

And he's accepted it and I even brought up the whole question the other day because somebody—I used to work with was talking about—we'd had a discussion. And I'm not out to this guy and there's no way I'm going to be, but we had a discussion about whether you're born gay. I'm like, Absolutely. And so he—the other day I saw him and he says, Oh I was talking to my preacher and he's evangelical. And he said, Yeah you can be born gay just as much as you can be born into any other sin. I'm like, Oh my God. Would you just stop? I said, Except that I don't think it's a sin. And so I asked him, Do you think it's a sin? No. Because I was kind of ready for—(laugh) He's like, No. Wow he's come a long way. (laugh) Okay. So I'm glad that we've gone over that bridge and we're still with it because, Oh he's great. He's just great. And at first I'm like, Am I missing something if I don't go out and date women or whatever? But if I did that

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my marriage would go away. And so what do I want? I want my marriage. If something ever happened to him I don't ever foresee dating another man. (laughter)
Down the road.

ALBIN: So is there any kind of like network or community in this area or—

SHARI: Not that I know of. In Wichita yes, but not Newton unless it's underground. I can't imagine—this is—it's a fairly religious community, although I've heard the statistics. Fifty-five percent of Newton does not go to church, which is amazing because we have about a zillion churches. And so that just says that the rest of us can't get along. It's mostly Mennonite. Some of the Mennonites are okay with it and some aren't, but I don't know that there's any kind of really—(laugh) I've never heard of it, let's put it that way. (laugh)

ALBIN: Right. Right. Because I'm just—I'm thinking about how there's such a stigmatization with people who identify as bisexual so I'm just wondering if there's not a network here what type of support network is there in Wichita or is it more of an online type of situation?

SHARI: In Wichita I know they have like the MCC Church. And I know—oh, there's a group that talks about like advocating for laws and things. But that's all I've seen when I even checked into that. And I don't check too much because we're far enough away from Wichita that would be kind of a pain in the butt to drive. And I don't know whether it's strictly—or more so just gay than—the thing I've gotten even searching online is there's just not a whole lot for bi. And it's kind of no man's land, why can't you choose? I don't know. It's just that way. (laugh)

ALBIN: Yeah, it does seem that there's always this pressure to pick one and stick with it, you can't change your mind. That's the way I've seen things kind of presented, which does make it very difficult for people who do identify as being bisexual.

SHARI: Oh yeah and it—I can. I mean I just—I'm attracted to both. And it's funny that—now that I'm okay with myself I can notice the cycle of it, even with my monthly cycle, you know the different hormonal times, I'm attracted more to one than the other. I

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was like, Wow isn't that interesting? My therapist who I go to off and on throughout the years, and I haven't seen her for a while but she's like, Just notice. Don't judge it, just notice. Oh well isn't that—that's actually when I came out to myself was during a time where she said, Just work on noticing things. When you have a feeling don't say, It's wrong, it's bad. Just go, Oh that's interesting. And ever so often through the years I would dream about women, have sex dreams. And so I had one of those during this time. And I woke up and I thought, Okay let's try this. Well isn't that interesting. (laugh) And then it kind of grew out of that. Next time I saw her I'm like, Guess what, I'm bi, check that out, isn't that interesting? (laugh) And I'm actually pretty sure she's gay. We've never talked about it, but I just—pretty sure. I'll probably never come outright and ask her but—I don't know.

ALBIN: Right. So do your children know this?

SHARI: My oldest does. I told him, especially before we went to Pride. (laugh) He was so uncomfortable. He lives here. He has to hear it. And we went through—even before I came out to myself, we went through this deal where in school they would, Oh that's so gay, whatever. And I'm like, Honey I don't like it when you say that. That's derogatory to a whole group of people but it's just—we don't want to be derogatory that way. And I don't know if he says it in school or not, but I kind of doubt it now. But I told him probably not too long after I first came out and he was old enough. And my daughter, I'll tell her at some point too. I'm like, Now you probably don't want to go spreading this. And they're who I worry about, you know if—I'm out to like one local person, a friend, that's it (laugh) other than my husband and my therapist who can't tell anybody. (laugh) But yeah I'm like—what would it be if I was to—I'd love to go wave the rainbow flag at the Pride festival. But if I'm on TV then everybody knows and then my kids take hell for the rest of their school career until they move somewhere else, (laugh) and maybe even then, because for me, at this point in my life, they can all just kiss my butt, but I've got the three to worry about.

ALBIN: So was this your first Pride event that you were at?

SHARI: Yes, this is my first Pride. It was cool. I want to try one of the bigger ones someday too. A friend of mine in St. Louis, she's not gay or bi or anything, but she

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would love to go to Pride. She's (laugh) actually ex-Mormon and because of the whole Proposition 8 thing, she's finally resigning from the church. And that was the camel that broke—the straw that broke the camel's back. Her dad was like a bishop in the Mormon church for years and years and years. Her whole family is very, very Mormon and she found out that they funded that deal and said, That's it. (laugh) I've had it. I'm not going—I'm not even going to leave the paperwork there anymore. She's gone through that. Someday, hopefully we're going to meet at Kansas City Pride Festival, hang out there.

ALBIN: Do you think there would ever be an event where your entire family would go?

SHARI: I would love that and I was kind of hoping last year would be, but my daughter and my husband had a daddy/daughter girl scout camp out that weekend. And I don't know if he'd go or not. He's thought about it and he's more willing to think about it. (laugh) At first it was like, Oh no, not ever, not ever. But I'd love it if we could all go. Take the boys and my little guy he doesn't know anything. And so I want it to be normal for him to go to that and to see that as just—that's just another event we do and that's okay and everybody's okay, because the younger you get them the easier it is (laugh) to instill all that.

ALBIN: Right. And you were mentioning that your father is a minister?

SHARI: Um-hm.

ALBIN: And have you said anything to your parents at all about this?

SHARI: I have not. I plan to someday. Sometimes I'm more tempted than others. I don't know, other than just being honest, what difference it would make because of the life I lead. But I would like to tell them, I would. And the problem with my mom is that her side of the family is very anti, and I know that if she spilled her guts, which she tends to do—the woman can't keep her mouth shut for anything—that I would take crap for the rest of their lives or mine, whichever (laugh) ended first, over this deal. And it's not something I can change and not something I'd want to anymore even if I could. So I just don't want to hear my 93-year-old granny, Now Shari have you talked to Jesus

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about this? (laugh) because she would. There was a point in college where I thought I was Hindu for about a year-and-a-half. I decided that I was going to be Hindu. Oh my gosh, I took it from her. Every time I talked to her I took it from her that entire time. You need to talk to Jesus. (laugh) Oh yeah. And my aunt who lives with her is one of the biggest bigots I know. She can't stand the fact that I'm in an Arabic class with a bunch of Muslims, just hates it, just—actually this last birthday party was the first time in a year that she hasn't said anything derogatory about Muslims or whatever. She makes me—I know she'd be all over that. (laugh) And my dad's side probably wouldn't give a hoot one way or the other. And I will probably tell my favorite cousin who's over on that side one of these days. He's very progressive. He lives in Madison, Wisconsin and he actually refused to get new underwear until there was another Democrat in the White House (laugh) so he had underwear that was like eight years old. (laugh) So when Obama took office he could go right out and buy some new underwear. (laugh) He's just quirky that way.

ALBIN: Well, we all make our sacrifices I guess.

SHARI: Yes we do. (laughter)

ALBIN: So do you think your family will stay in this area?

SHARI: Yeah—

ALBIN: They're settled here?

SHARI: Yeah, we are. And not because of me. (laugh) I'm ready to go somewhere else, but my husband's born and bred middle Kansas and he's going to die here so that's the end of that. I actually, because of my love of Arabic I told him, Get a job in Dubai for a year. We'll go, I'll get fluent. We'll make a lot of money with your job. The kids will have a new and interesting cultural experience, bingo, bango after a year we come home. He just looks at me and laughs and we move on. (laugh) I'm like, But I'm the one who would have to make sacrifices because I would have to cover (laugh) the whole, whole time, summer in the hot, hot desert. Yeah. Yeah, he doesn't see it that way. So— (laugh)

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ALBIN: It was a good try though.

SHARI: It was and I keep poking at him. And I've actually told him that when the kids are all gone on their own, don't need us that way anymore and we can get our wills in order we're going to go do some sort of humanitarian mission in the Middle East, because by then I will be fluent and we're going to go. Even if it's just for a few months we're going to go, so—

ALBIN: And so how long have you been taking language classes for?

SHARI: Year-and-a-half. Well, I've been in the class for just a little over a year. I started on my own because the class was full, and I finally just decided it was time to put up or shut up because I'd been talking about it for years. Got my own textbook with CDs and did that. And then I called the teacher back of the class and said, Do you know of a conversational group, a tutor, something because I'm dropping vocabulary as quick as I'm learning because I don't have anybody to interact with. He said, Well my numbers are down. A lot of people have dropped. (laugh) It's a complicated language, that happens. So I started at my class. It's an ongoing thing; it doesn't end, so I love it.

ALBIN: And so do you think you'll pick up at all anymore with the criminal justice work that you've been doing?

SHARI: No. The only thing I did even remotely similar to my degree was working at juvie home for a year but that was it. Because I'd like—I would have liked to have been like a parole officer or something like that not out on the street, but they want somebody who's been out on the street or worked in a prison and I'm not willing to do either at this point so I don't know what I'm going to do. I'm thinking about getting my emergency sub license next year and substitute teaching, even though I never really wanted (laugh) to be a teacher, but it would be good because I'd be in when the kids were in and out when the kids are out. And you can get an emergency sub license in Kansas with sixty hours from an accredited university basically, a degree. So from year to year you have to renew it but whatever so—I think I'll give it a try next year, because right now I only

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work part time when little guy's in preschool or on the weekends so yeah. I haven't worked full time since I was pregnant with him. (laugh) Some days I miss it. (laugh)

ALBIN: So is there anything that I haven't asked you that you wanted to talk about?

SHARI: Don't think so.

ALBIN: Or anything else that you may want to add?

SHARI: Don't think so.

ALBIN: So have you gone to the bars in Wichita?

SHARI: I have not. I've tried to—I wouldn't have anybody to go with, and there's no way I could walk in by myself. So, I mean I don't know if I'm too old for these bars or whatever, but—actually tried to talk my husband into it. He's not a bar person anyway and certainly not a gay bar person so—I would like to. I would like to, yes. Yeah. And actually a friend of mine that I graduated with in high school—I always knew he was gay. (laugh) But I saw him for the first time since the ten-year reunion this summer and he and his partner have adopted two little boys and pretty cool and so—

ALBIN: And they're living in Kansas?

SHARI: Wichita actually, yes, amazingly. So maybe someday I can talk him into going, (laugh) I can go with him. But yeah, I'd like to. I'd like to be more involved. Because I just—I have kind of this disconnect. I can read a book or I can go online or something, but there's just really not anybody. And so sometimes I just kind of forget about it, it goes to the back of my mind and then it'll come back and I—I don't even know. I mean, I don't even know where to go with my identity, and it almost feels too late in the game now. (laugh) But I like go on YouTube and watch "The L Word" because we don't have cable. (laugh) That's kind of my outlet now. Go watch "The L Word", okay. I love "The L Word". I usually don't like soap operas. (laugh)

ALBIN: This last season's gotten really bad. (laugh)

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SHARI: I hate Jenny. I just absolutely hate Jenny. She's just so awful. The only thing to look forward to is her death at the end. (laugh)

ALBIN: Yeah, pretty much, unfortunately yeah. What was I going to ask you in relation to that? Oh so have you been able to connect to people online?

SHARI: Oh, very little. I tried—like especially when I first came out there was a group that would help the partners or the spouses or whatever of the person coming out. And he—oh he struggled. So, I was trying to actually find something for him because I was doing okay. I'm like, Whee, I'm free. (laugh) I can finally say this is who I am. And they e-mailed once and then that was it. And he never really—because they're not around here. Nobody's around here. Well okay. It's rough. And at that point I really wanted to move. I'm like, Why don't we go to St. Louis or to somewhere bigger, (laugh) somewhere that's going to have a community so you can get help, I can have an identity, but I know we're not moving so I guess—it's just—it's weird for me right now, I don't know. Because I was so excited in the beginning, Whee, I'm going to go to Pride. And now it's like, Well okay. There's really not anything—anybody. And I had this group of friends online and oh one of them's bi, no, two—two of them. But they're both married to men also. And (laugh) they just don't really think about it a whole lot I guess now so whatever. But that was the group that I came out to first and boy I was scared to death, even though I knew that none of these—these are about the most liberal people you could possibly meet. Still, it just freaked me out because here I sit in Kansas. (laugh)

ALBIN: So they're not even in like the area?

SHARI: Oh no, no. I've met a few of them because we had to get together in Kansas City, but they're mostly back east actually. Yeah, the closest one is Illinois. So—well no, there is one of them in Kansas City. That's why we got there, yeah, but she hasn't—and I haven't been overly involved with the group here lately either. We're all Facebook now so—(laugh)

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ALBIN: So when you came out to them online, how did they react? Because you had never met them, correct?

SHARI: I had. In fact, I had just met them, and that's kind of why I felt comfortable doing it because at least some of them—the core people anyway, I had met, and just for few hours, but I had seen them face to face. And I couldn't stand it anymore. I mean, I just could not stand to only be out in my own home to one (laugh) person. I'm like, You know what—and I think the way I put it was, I'm not exactly straight. (laugh) I didn't even say—I'm just not exactly straight. (laugh) And I wanted to tell you all that because I feel kind of—I met you and I feel kind of close to you and I just—I need to say it. So (laugh) here I am. And they're like, Well that's cool. I'm really glad that you shared that with us. I'm really glad that you felt comfortable enough here to do that. I know that's a big deal, especially where you live. (laugh) It's always judged by, especially where you live. There's a gal in that group from Seattle. She's got probably about one of the most diverse areas (laugh) in the country. But yeah that was pretty cool. I'm like, Wow, okay. And nobody that I've—because I've been very careful—nobody that I've come out to has taken it badly. I have this group of three ladies that I met five years ago, a little over five years ago, and we have our own little site and one of them's Catholic, one of them's very Mormon, and one of them's the ex-Mormon. And there's the four of us. And I'm out to two of them. I'm out to the Catholic girl and the ex-Mormon. Now the Mormon Mormon, I probably never will because she just—I don't see her ever thinking that that's okay and I don't want to get into it. (laugh) So the other two know and they're all right. And I knew they would be. And so (laugh) that's the only—I have to judge it first. I guess I will have finally made it when I'm okay with saying, Yes this is who I am to anybody. But it'll be when the kids are all gone (laugh) and don't have to deal with the fallout.

ALBIN: So the group that had the two women in it who also identify as bisexual, were they able to like share stories with you or like some kind of—was there like a common understanding of, I understand?

SHARI: I think so. There weren't a whole lot of stories. But—now the one gal, she said her husband is threatened by the fact that—he says, I can compete against any man. I can't compete against a woman. So that comes up occasionally in their marriage. But

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they've been married quite a while now and so it's kind of—at this point kind of a nonissue because she's like, But I chose you and I committed to you and that's part of our deal is that we're monogamous. So—but yeah. So she was able to at least give that and then I could give that to my husband and he'd say, Yeah, yeah there's that. Yeah, I can compete with a man, I can't compete with a woman. But yeah he's just like—at first he was like, Are you fantasizing about women? (laugh) Just don't go there. Probably don't want to know. (laugh) Yeah, he was just real freaked out about that. I'm so glad that he's not, outwardly anymore. And once in a while I check in. Because at first I felt like I needed to just have it in his face, to get him used to it. And that probably wasn't the best way either. And almost—for me too because I didn't want to push it back again. I know how I am. Something comes up and then it's uncomfortable, so I'm going to push it back. And I want it to just be okay, be okay. So I would, Oh look at her, she's a hottie. (laugh) Poor thing. And so he just—he's like—I said, Does that bother you? No, not really. Okay. That's good. That's good. And so I needed—and I don't so much do that anymore, once in a while. Not anymore than I'd say, Oh look at him, whatever. (laugh) And I used to be so scared that I would say something like that within earshot of somebody who knew me. Uh-oh. Oh did I say she? My bad. No, no him, with the geeky, yeah. (laugh)

ALBIN: Well, I don't think I have any more questions, but if there's anything else you want to add let me know and I can always come back and we can pick it up. I've had a few of those instances where it's like, I'll probably be back again. (laughter) But thank you very much. I really appreciate you sharing your story with me. I think it's—I think it's great that you are (*unintelligible*) hoping to be—

SHARI: More involved, someday. I need to search that out, just—but I don't know how to do that here (laugh) in this town with these people. And there's probably more people that would be okay with it than I think, people at my church, especially—several people at my Sunday school I've thought about saying something to. But then I think, we're all a bunch of couples in this Sunday school class. What kind of dynamic would that put? I'm always worried about everybody else, that's the thing. And one of these days I'm just going to have to—and actually, I'm in Mensa and the Mensa group did an online survey about GLBT stuff—Do you think we're welcoming? How do I know? (laugh) We've (laugh) never talked about it at a meeting and I haven't been to a meeting in

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forever anyway. But, would you be willing to represent Mensa at some sort of GLBT—oh yes. Yes I would. (laugh) Please let me. And it didn't ask my identification. It just said, Would you be willing to represent a Mensa group? Yep, absolutely. So I'm hoping that they'll decide to be in the parade this year and then that would give me an excuse, (laugh) some sort of excuse. I plan to. My family reunion has a really bad habit about being on that weekend, but we didn't go to the last one because they had it in Missouri and I wasn't going to pay to drive and stay in a motel for something that wasn't all that so whatever. But yeah I'm hoping—hoping to go again. I told my parents I went to Pride and so that was almost—and I told them I wanted my husband to go. They're like, Now don't push him (laugh) not having any clue why I was pushing him.

ALBIN: But your parents didn't ask anything or—

SHARI: No. No. Which I kind of—I was kind of wishing they would. I'm like, Going to Pride. (laugh) Taking both my sons to Pride—gay, Pride. (laugh) I think my parents are just so used to me doing different things. I go to a mosque for an Arabic class. (laugh) Who does that kind of a thing? I'm just one of those people that wants to—so I don't think that they really—most parents would probably go, And why? You're married to a man. Why do you want to do this? But my parents, I guess they're used to me and my quirkiness and need to do things outside typical. (laugh)

ALBIN: Well thank you so very much.

SHARI: Sure. Thank you.

ALBIN: I appreciate it.

[end]