

Anne Galisky

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By Dave Anderson & Emily Craft

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This oral history interview was conducted as part of the Portland State University LGBT History Capstone course, Winter Term 2013, with Instructor Pat Young.

Introduction

Anne discusses what it was like for her during 1992 when Oregon voters faced the anti-gay Ballot Measure 9. She organized a protest walk from Eugene to Portland, Oregon. The walk was for 'love and justice' and encouraged Oregonians to vote No on Measure 9.

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DA: Okay here we are...once again we are here with Anne Galisky to ask her a few questions about her life... so Anne a... where were you born and when?

GALINSKY: I was born in 1962 in Los Angeles...my dad's family were immigrants from Russia and my mom's family is from the Midwest and she had come to California with my Dad after they met in DC.

EC: ...What made you come to Portland?

GALINSKY: Well Portland is a great town now and it was a great town when I moved here and it was much smaller it was in 1985 right after college I came to visit a friend and just fell in love with it and decided to move here and I've been here ever since.

DA: Is there anything from your childhood that stands out in your formation as a person?

GALINSKY: We were talking little bit earlier about this, it's not a childhood story but when I was a...a young person in college I participated in this long very long walk, a peace walk from... it was called the Bethlehem peace pilgrimage and it went from the triton submarine base near Seattle all the way across the united states to DC and then from Ireland to Israel

DA: Wow

GALINSKY: and the whole thing took 2 almost 2 years and I was on more than a year of that, that was really a formative experience and really taught me how a walk could be a very useful tool in a social change movement.

EC: When measure 9 first came out what were your feelings of the situation?

GALINSKY: So... The Oregon Citizens Alliance... was the organization that was gathering signatures to put measure 9 on the ballot, and we didn't not know what the measure would be called, but we knew it was coming and it's hard to describe how things were then more than 20 years ago we knew we were up for a tremendous battle and I went to some early meetings and it was like ok everybody we're, we're, in for it this is going to be a huge year it's going to matter not just our state but to the whole country if this passes or not and it...there was such a gravity to this struggle...I was scared but mostly I was angry you know that they were.... trying to make the state teach and put forth this message I remember some of the words of the bill 21 years later that homosexuality was abnormal wrong unnatural, and perverse the state school's were going to have to teach that, counselors were going to have to say that, any agency that had any state funding was going to have put forth this message it was so wrong and it was so mean and I knew I had to do something about it. We'll talk more, more about what we ended up doing about it, but I was involved with the lesbian community project and other organizations... and we decided to do this walk.

EC: uh... so I'm guessing that this was the inspiration to the march how did get all your community to actually go along from... for the march?

GALINSKY: So I uh... mentioned the Bethlehem peace pilgrimage you know this quite amazing experience where 20 of us in a core group walked all this way... talking to people about the nuclear arms race, about local justice issues we walked in the occupied west bank we walked in northern Ireland when these places were hot

DA: Wow

GALINSKY: and we were talking to people about the conflict that was happening right there... tremendous experience, so I went to the lesbian community project and I said 'hey wouldn't a walk be a great idea' and they were like ' what are you talking about?'

DA: So the walk was actually your idea?

GALINSKY: The walk was my idea.

DA: Wow

GALINSKY: ...yeah so I said, I mean didn't do it alone but it was my idea and I have done several other long walks ... there's something that's so valuable I think about making yourself vulnerable and asking for peoples help, because we were, you know we could have all stayed home for two weeks, we could have written letters to the editor or done press conferences, but that is not interesting to people yet you can't really show that on the news, there's no picture there's no heart to that, so I said I think we need something a little bit more out there... and some of the folks you know I, that was the organization that I was most involved with so I went to them and said 'what do you think?' and some of them thought I was purely nuts, and they had me make a formal proposal to their board some people were totally behind it, some people...really dressed me down and they said things like who do you think you are, I mean it was like getting a scolding and I...did this formal presentation to their board they asked me to go sit in the hall while they made their decision they decided to go ahead and sponsor it but they asked me too...take on the financial risk and then a ...find insurance somehow for this thing and do a whole bunch of other things, so it was like you know this is going to be really amazing...I think we should do it, but so some of those folks very supportive some...pretty ...I think scared

and uh concerns if we could pull it off we have about six months to organize it, that's not very long and ..scared that someone would get hurt which was, I mean in those days a pretty valid concern...so I could definitely elaborate more...should I keep going...

DA: oh sure

GALINSKY: so...so the lesbian community project they said yes and I said ok, so we started talking about a route and we thought lets have it end in June at the Portland gay pride parade...we talked about walking the whole state south to north so we went down to southern Oregon and met with some of the ...queer youth leaders down there they actually said please don't do it here, someone is gonna to get killed and so we listened to them and we said ok you know, we will take you're you're opinion ...in those days and still today Portland kind a has a reputation for going, just saying we're all of Oregon and the reality of Portland is a lot different then the reality in eastern or southern Oregon, so really they were like...you know start in Eugene don't start in southern Oregon we would wanta to participate we would wanta to help you , but... but we are going to have stay and live here after that and we're really worried for our safety.

So that's how we decided well lets start in Eugene, we didn't have a ton of symbolic reason it started in Eugene...this sort of symbolism of walking through the whole state we decided not to do because of this you know the one on one meetings, but the greatest population of Oregon we walked through areas with the greatest population...and the Willamette valley and it was a 2 week walk about 15 sometimes I think we walked about 20 miles a day we took one whole day off ... it was a 2 week walk...part of we what we organized and this is with the... all volunteer you know asking...friends and acquaintances will you help we... this is before a...people were using the internet much, believe it or not this is...this we had one big giant clunky cell phone that someone brought for part of this , this is like the olden days... but we did old fashioned organizing in those 6 months and we went to communicate organizations all through the Willamette valley we told them

what we were going to do and we asked them to help and they could help in very tangible ways like housing for the night, making a meal, walking with us, you know donating a few dollars it was a very low budget and it was a very low tech.

We had one of a vehicle that we used to transport everybody's luggage otherwise we were just walking...and some tremendous and lasting relationships happened because of being vulnerable asking for help...it was so I think it was so helpful because it was so physical...it wasn't ...sign this letter of support it was can we stay in your union hall...I know later we'll talk about you know the most exciting things that happened, to me the one of the most tremendous moments was when the president of Oregon's farm worker union Sipriana Ferrell, he since past he said yes to our request 21 years ago, he said yes you can stay with us in Woodburn at the farm workers union hall, he totally went out on a limb, the churches in Woodburn wouldn't have us, but the farm workers union would and they not only housed us, they marched , they came out to the highway and marched us in...

DA: Wow

GALINSKY: I'm...its still moving to think about it...Ramone Ramirez who was then vice president of Pecocon [Note from student: Spanish name, not sure of spelling] he is now the president of the farm workers union and I know that he still talks about it and he was one of the people who came out to the highway and marched us in, that night every night if you can imagine this we walked 15ish miles, then we had a community meeting every single night...

DA: wow

GALINSKY: Where a... people spoke, at this particular evening well over 100 people were there farm workers, it was translated English to Spanish, Spanish to English, it was

one of these moments where it was sort of like ok everybody ask all the questions you've been wondering so they got to ask all their questions about gay and we got to learn all about the farm workers union and what they were doing and about their lives, it was very...it was a huge group but it was also very intimate and we were in their hands our safety was in their hands...every single day of this 2 week walk we had to call the police

DA: wow

GALINSKY: As we were planning it we got death threats...this is hard to imagine now...I got death threats on my phone... we called... obviously called the police one of the things we did in advance was we were in touch with the state police and the city police of each jurisdiction that we were going through we let them know ahead of time what we were doing and sometimes they would check on us , but along the way we got things thrown at us eggs you know...it was very tense, it was very tense and...you know there was a decision to make, should kids come, people wanted to bring their kids and you know I was working with this small committee of volunteers and we decided you know except for the two big city days Salem and Portland we wouldn't have kids come to march they could come into the evening events and there were some of flak that I got from people because of that, I was not up for putting... children lives in danger...

I did feel personally responsible, so it was... enough for adults to sign a release and for us all to agree to do this together when we not only thought it was possible it was likely that we that something would happen...we had a...a...non violence training the night before, well the whole day before the walk started and I remember the night before that training a very experienced...non violence trainer had been through a lot in his life already... the united church of Christ minister , he woke up screaming in the middle of the night, we were sleeping in the same room, afraid you know of what might happen to us. So I'm just telling you this to try to give some of the ambience of what we were doing, what you know and that it wasn't just going for a stroll through the Willamette valley ha

ha ha ...um....I really do think that it changed people...a lot of you know small towns we had to go through a lot small towns, a lot of folks didn't know what.. queer people look like and we were just you know we would have a little meeting, have lunch stop and have a break and they were like 'well... but, but are you guys gay' and we're like yeah, and.. and they just look like oh my god you guys but you're so normal and you know... nice and you know not scary...

EC: Did you have any straight supporters at all?

DA: Absolutely, we had some straight supporters come walk with us the whole time...One of those is...a...Kelly Weigel who's the executive director now of the western state center, a lot of folks who are very involved in...in...social change work had something today in Oregon had something to do with that that was kind of that was the sort of formative struggle of our generation and in Oregon at that time you couldn't be on the fence about this issue, that was in a way a gift that the Oregon Citizens Alliance gave us... the catholic church had to choose a side and they chose our side, the Oregonian printed an editorial not on the editorial page but on the front page of the news paper, that said no on 9, I mean this was...the most...tense and in some ways the most crucial thing that I have seen happen in this state with regard to...accepting a whole a part of our population and people would I mean... everyday you would see people with buttons that's that either were a pink triangle or would say um...straight but not narrow, I mean everyone was like, you had to be weighing in on this subject everyday, for all those months it was mostly...I think we heard about the number, I think we got the number in early July...wait...it might have been late June, but I think we had the number by the time the walked happened until November. You know nobody knew what we were doing when we started we had a press conference but right away a local stations got a hold of it then all the networks, all the national networks came out and they, and they filmed it and so then it was national news...

DA: Wow

GALINSKY: And we were you know... to get...it such a different world because of the internet now I've been working a lot with the undocumented youth movement and their so lucky that they have you know twitter facebook and... email for crying out loud....um

DA: Just the organizing must have been a huge challenge?

GALINSKY: Yes, fortunately it was all within you know 150 miles of here and so I did a lot of road trips, we did a lot of things to make it as accessible as possible I had a friend who...used to wheel chair I asked her to come with me on the whole route not, not on.. in her chair but to look at all the places we were going to stay, and all of the roads, and to see where it would be possible for someone in a chair to participate a , you know we were trying to do it right, we were trying to do it as right as possible...so we had what I was talking about you know about being vulnerable and asking for help we, you know we had three meals a day and 14 days to take care of so... the community fed us the whole time...

DA: Wow

GALINSKY: Uh That night I was talking about in Woodburn at Pecoon... the synagogue from Salem came, I can't remember the name of that one and they brought the dinner so here was like, this is like the world I want to live in you know where the farm workers are standing shoulder to shoulder with the... Jewish community who are standing with the queer community and sticking out for each other and I think that those relationships had last many of them the actually people forged relationships then...um...yeah

DA: So that sounds amazing you managed to inspire all the communities that you went through one way or another.

GALINSKY: Well I think that the human to human connection you know your just like, we ask people to walk along with us just you know walking along just having a chat with someone, that's a great way to get to know someone. Also when some when that bullies are picking on someone and they were picking on us...many many many more people came to our aid, so we had you know a logging truck would drive by and we're like are they about to throw you know soda at us, but they were giving us a thumbs up and honking and so we got lots of cheers and we didn't know what was going to happen every vehicle that went by.... Thank god it only lasted for 2 weeks ha ha ha

DA: You must have been exhausted at the end of every day?

GALINSKY: We were exhausted mostly emotionally...there were a couple of intense things that happened one is that on...highway going into Salem... we... there were...we had car accident our support vehicle was rear ended and it was the one day that everybody say go to take your break, go do your calls or whatever and come back and get us, and then I went ahead to the lunch stop and they were late and then drove back out and there were all these emergency vehicles and I was like what is going on, It was...the person who was driving was the minister at the time of the Metropolitan Community Church. He was okay, thank God, but that was really...really nerve wracking...but people would join...all along the way, and some people were there for the whole time. One...beautiful man...older gentleman came to walk us. He stayed for a few days and... then one day some of our supporters came and they were like we have to tell you something. Shoot, it would be helpful to have his name. I'll get that to you...We have...we have to tell you something really serious that we just heard. He went home after walking with us for a few days and had a heart attack and he died, and so really the last thing he did was march for other people's rights.

DA: Wow.

GALINSKY: And everybody, of course, had gotten to know him and love him and like, we were just like, oh my God, and the car accident had just happened a few days before and we were all pretty shaken up! You know, every day having to call the police, and so... and I was worried about what would his family say, and what would they think, and some of us who were in the core group of the walk went to his memorial when the walk was over and his son said this is what he would have wanted to do. This is what he wanted... would have... how he wanted to end his life. You know was... spending it with people like you, and at his memorial there were all these buttons from decades of activism, so I believed him. I believed him.

DA: Did you at any point ever feel like you couldn't finish the walk?

GALINSKY: Oh no! No, no, no! There was no...

DA: Never any question?

GALINSKY: No, no. We were gonna... if we started it we were gonna finish it, and once we started organizing it there was no way we weren't gonna do it. I didn't know how many people were gonna join. You know... If it would be like five or six, or if it would be twenty, but I think there were probably like twenty five who went the whole way, and... gosh, on the last day, there were...there were hundreds. We...we spent the night at Reed College then walked into...into town and the funny thing is we had timed it. We had done that walk so we would know how long it would take to get from Reed to downtown for the beginning of the march, the Gay Pride March, and... But we didn't know we would have hundreds of people and we did not know that the police were gonna block traffic for us, so we had...police bicycle escort, and we got there way early...(laughter) because they kept stopping traffic. So they, by the time we got there we were so many people that

they had to close off an entire block of Old Town just to put us somewhere while... the parade route got started and we got to walk at the front of the parade. It was very cool.

DA: Nice.

GALINSKY: It was a huge parade that year. Maybe the biggest I've ever seen. The stakes were so high. It was, you know...and so many allies were there. It was incredibly moving.

DA: So this must have felt like something that was even bigger than just the March...

GALINSKY: Oh...

DA: ...once you take into account all...all, everything that was involved.

GALINSKY: It was, I mean it was way more than two weeks. It was, it was all of the relationships that started, I mean, and many of them had been... formed already, but then they honestly continued to the present day...People did more than they thought they could do, because they had to, because you either had to be... sticking up for what was right or you were cooperating with what was wrong. The vote, when it came in November, was really close, but our side did prevail. Even the victory party for Measure 9, I remember in the parking lot it was at... Montgomery Park, they were checking under all the vehicles for bombs.

DA: Wow.

GALINSKY: It was a different time. Unbelievable. That shaped the state we live in. That organizing work, the ally work...the risk taking, it really, I think it really shaped our, our, the progressive movement in Oregon.

EC: I mean, you kind of talk about like a lot of intense moments. Do you have your own personal favorite memory of it, besides it being the whole thing?

GALINSKY: I really, really liked when Sipriano put his, the president of PECUN, put his arm on my shoulder and showed me an empty office at the... farm workers union and said this can be your headquarters. (laughs)

DA: Nice.

GALINSKY: It was so old school and it was so awesome....There was a lot of laughing. I mean the folks who would do something like this had to have a good sense of humor. It was a nutty thing to do. We laughed a lot. One of the people on the whole walk was a woman named Ellen Goldberg, and she was hilarious, and she would, you know, so...people were throwing things at us from cars and one day they were throwing eggs at us and of course she said you know I really wanted eggs today...(laughs) but I needed to be more specific. I wanted eggs cooked on a plate. (laughs) You know I'll never forget that was so funny....So I remember...how funny people were, I remember how brave they were and I also loved when there were some....young people who came right around Salem when we were having...you know, with that car accident had just happened. People were so kind to us...and we still had a week to go and...so I will...I will never forget the really common, you know, kindness. You know, like sleep here, have a shower here, and it meant so much because I knew that each act of hospitality had risk with it for them.

We did a video interview in a small town north of Eugene...with a Catholic nun and she was a beautiful interview. She later called and said I can't, that can't, that can't be shown anywhere. She was so scared of what would happen to her, to her community...so I think the risk and the sacrifice that the people who gave us hospitality gave, that just made it even more amazing when they made, you know beautiful meals or made us comfortable for the night or came out to the edge of town and walked us in clapping...you know those

farm workers clap, and...I was very relieved when we got to Portland. For that hour we were waiting to get into the march, I had to write a speech really quick about what I was gonna say when we got there and I remember...just being very moved and we carried a picture of the gentleman who we lost, and...and we read all the names of the towns that we passed through and...it felt like we carried all those people with us to Portland to be a part of this celebration, and honestly I'll never forget it. I'll never forget that hospitality. I'll never forget what they did to make us safe.

DA: Is there anything you would have changed?

GALINSKY: ...What would I change...I would...I think we made good decisions. I think to not have children on the highway was a good decision. It was dangerous, as we found out. We did not, you know, if people were calling in death threats and throwing things at us, who knows what they would have done...with a car or with a gun. What would I have done differently? I don't know...it was just what it was. It was just what it was. I don't have any big regrets about it. Personally it was really taxing on me and it took me a long time to recover from mostly the stress of someone getting hurt who I felt responsible for. And that's kind of a personal thing, that I have an overdeveloped sense of responsibility. Everyone signed up. Ya, I do think we gave people an opportunity to stick up for somebody else and that kind of thing you can translate to another group...so I am proud of that.

EC: What do you think the future holds for you today?

GALINSKY: I don't have any walks scheduled in my life, (laughs) but actually...a good friend of mine, Jaime Limon Guzman, is a leader of a, in a group called Oregon Dream Activist, and he's an undocumented young leader. He and some friend's and colleagues and family members recently did a walk from Portland to Salem and I went and had a meeting with them about, you know, basically the same route going in reverse, half of the

way, and I said here's what I would do and not do, and stay with people. That's part of it. Don't go, you know it'll be uncomfortable. You'll sleep on the floor, but go and stay in their... You know union halls or schools or churches, because then they'll need to...to care of you and they'll feel responsible for you, and that's what we need to do for each other, I think...

So and... what I'm continuing to work on today, I'm a documentary filmmaker... Our first feature length film is called Paper: Stories of Undocumented Youth. It came out in 2009. It gonna be on public television this spring and we're working on another film Called Fourteen: From Dread (?) Scott to Vanessa Lopez, about the fourteenth Amendment and birthright citizenship in America, looking at the past and the present. I'm a long, a life long social justice junkie. I can't stop doing this. It's really fun. It's really hard work. It's really worth it. It's so inspiring when people stick up for each other, and it's so simple. It's not complicated at all. It's just like... you see something wrong say something, and go way past your comfort zone and that's what people did...way past. And you know, when you feel like you've done something brave you're like, oh, I can do that, and then you can go an another step further next time. It's amazing what people did, and what all those people who walked for two weeks did. It was just tremendous.

DA: So how much did the March actually inspire what you do now?

GALINSKY: It was sort of in a continuum of...of things that I did before and things that I did after. Yeah. Absolutely! I...I'm a person who does not love meetings. I love people but I don't love meetings, especially meetings that go on for a really long time (laughter), but ...so, that's just a, you know, a personality quirk, but I do love being part of social change and I do think that change is possible, not just political wins, but actually people changing. I mean now that we're talking about...gay marriage at a federal level, really? The Supreme Court is gonna look at this? Really? I thought...twenty one years ago I never would have thought...I was just, we were just please don't kill us, you know. Let's just start

there. Please don't teach that who I am is perverse...wrong. I mean can you imagine? So...yeah. It's extraordinary that you can, I went to the Republican and Democratic conventions this past year the four years before that, listening to the speeches at the Democratic convention, I mean there was hardly a speech where someone didn't say blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, and who you love. I went really?!? Incredible! And then also talking about that other subject that's very dear to me, which is the...the rights of...of undocumented folks. Honestly. Every other speech or the same speech, who you love, where you come from, your citizenship status. I was like okay. Both the conventions weren't the same that way (laughs).

DA: Yeah. I bet.

GALINSKY: Any follow up questions?

DA: Is there anything you would like to talk about concerning the Lesbian Community Project, perhaps?

GALINSKY: You know what, I'm not in touch with them. I don't even know if it still exists. They were doing great work that was not being done before they did it... Basic Rights Oregon... came out of these struggles with the Oregon Citizens Alliance. You've already, you've already learned about them, I'm sure. You know, organizations... are people. They're just people who decide to get together and do something and I think we have a lot to be proud of in the state of...you know, what we have accomplished not being a big, rich state... we've done so much maybe because we're kind of a smallish state and because we had to stick up for each other. I'm...so, I'm continually so proud when I see the queer community stick up for other communities, especially communities of color.

For example, in this current fight about in-state tuition for undocumented students. A lot of queer folks are involved with that. Basic Rights Oregon is involved with that. So, yeah,

but I'm...my personal, my activism is... is with filmmaking and supporting young people through a ...a project called the Student Alliance Project, which came out of the youth crew that helped work on our first film papers. So, they're so awesome. They're...they, they have each other's backs, and they're the most diverse bunch of folks I've ever seen.

DA: Great...is there anything else that stands out...anything in particular that you would like to talk about?

GALINSKY: Thank you for doing the interview. I really appreciate it. Thanks for listening and...

DA: Thank you!

GALINSKY:...I loved participating.

DA: Your story is very, very inspiring. It's an amazing story.

GALINSKY: Thank you.

DA: I'm...I'm surprised, actually.

GALINSKY: What are you surprised about?

DA: I didn't know how much...how much you've actually done!

GALINSKY: Uh, huh.

DA: I mean, you've done a lot!

GALINSKY: I was trying to keep it short. (laughs)

EC: Well, like in the documentary does like, they only showed like a small part. They only showed like the happy cars, not really the...

GALINSKY: Oh, right.

EC: ... intense parts that you were saying, so.

DA: Yeah. Yeah...and the...the international walk that you did.

GALINSKY: Oh, yeah, yeah.

DA: That really sounds amazing.

GALINSKY: Yeah.

DA: Yeah.

GALINSKY: We...we sort of like...well, I've heard people talk about what it's like to have a buddy from the Army that you always know forever more, you know, even if you never would have known each other in actual life. That's how I...that's how we all are. All the people who did that walk. We're so different from each other. We just had a reunion. That's now thirty years...of the people who did that. We've only lost two folks have died... and...yeah. It was so formative and we learned this important lesson. I learned it. A small group of people can do so much, especially when you have high expectations of other people, and when you're like stick your neck way out and then you say to someone alright come along with me or...or can I sleep on your floor? Okay. (laughs)

DA: That's amazing. I'm from southern Oregon myself. I'm a little bit younger than you. I'm forty five. So, I know what you're talking about when you say that Portland likes to think that it represents all of Oregon, but they don't. You're very right about that. It's two different worlds and I'm amazed that you managed to pull it off without any real violence taking place during the march.

GALINSKY: I am too. And it was so not a guarantee. I...was...so...worried. I don't even know how to attribute that...part of is that, you know, people...bullies are cowards, but they could have hurt someone with whatever they threw out of a car, you know. Who knows how something hit somebody in the head...but really that just didn't happen once. That happened almost every day....it's so great though to keep on going, you know. What they wanted us to do was quit. What they wanted us to do was, you know, shut up so no one would know who we were or identify with us. When one of the tv stations came, national tv stations came, they did an interview, they were walking backwards with the camera and I was walking and you know why are you doing this walk, what's happening, dadada, and I would give the, you know, little answer that we canned, you know, kind of our canned answer. The walk was called For Love and Justice: A Walk Against Hate, and so, I can't remember what our line was, but they kept saying more personal, more personal, more personal. After four times of doing this little walking interview, there's people all around me, I'm like look, I do my laundry, I go to work, I dadada...and I'm a lesbian and I just want to be accepted. That's all I'm asking, and they were like okay, perfect. So then it was like everyone would tease me. Oh, Anne, you do your laundry. (laughs) So, anyway.

DA: Excellent. Well, thank you very much for your time.

GALINSKY: Thank you. Thank you so much.

[End of Session 1]
[End of Interview]