

Paul Fukui

SR 11438, Oral History,

By Heat Smith & Frank Palacios

Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest (GLAPN)

2012 February 22



FUKUI: Paul Fukui

HS: Heat Smith

FP: Frank Palacios

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This oral history interview was conducted as part of the Portland State University LGBT History Capstone course, Winter Term 2012, with Instructor Pat Young.

Introduction

Paul Fukui, Operations Manager of the Q Center in Portland, Oregon was interviewed on Wednesday, February 22, 2012 at 2pm in the library of the Q Center in North Portland, Oregon. Paul discusses his work at the Q Center as well as his life as an artist.

Session 1
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FP:: Okay. So my name is Frank.

HS: I'm Heat Smith.

FP: If you don't mind, please tell us your name and where you grew up.

FUKUI: Sure. My name is Paul Fukui. I grew up outside of Philadelphia; Pennsylvania in West Chester was the name of the town where I grew up. It's the county seat of Chester County. Just north of the Mason-Dixon if you care.

HS: I grew up in Indiana, so yeah.

FUKUI: Great.

HS: So we had found that you had moved from LA to Portland, and so what made you decide to move from LA up here?

FUKUI: Well actually, there was a Bay Area in between, so I left LA in '97, and I went to LA from Boston. I was in school in Boston, but I grew up outside of Philly, as you know. So yeah, I've had this circuitous path through the United States too. But LA, okay, so the reason I left LA had to do with the reason I went to LA. The reason I went to LA was because I needed to get as far away from Boston as I possibly could. [Laughter]

So if you know anything about Boston, you know why. But LA is both geographically and culturally about as far removed from Boston as you can get in the

United States. But yeah, I had been in art school in Boston, and it was time to kind of explore and see what was out there in the world. Leave the academic world behind and go into the real world, and I wanted to live on the West Coast, so I decided well, maybe a warmer place would be good to start with. So spent three and a half years in LA, and while I was there I worked at the gay and lesbian center there.

This was in the mid-90s and HIV/AIDS was still catastrophic. Not that it still isn't, but it was intensely affecting the LGBT community at the time. There's an onsite outpatient medical clinic there, so I did healthcare administration. I was the operations manager for the clinic there and was there for about three and a half years. And then my partner at the time, he's still my partner, he was in academic computing, and he wanted to go into industry. So the whole dot com thing was starting to HS up in the Bay Area, so we moved to San Francisco so that he could work in industry for a few years, so that's what we did.

San Francisco was a lot of fun and quite the ride. It was an amazing place. San Francisco's a beautiful place. But when he decided that he was done with industry, the way he was done, he wanted to go to art school the way I'd gone to art school. So I couldn't very well say, "No, Sweetie, this is stupid. Two artists in the house. What? Are you crazy? No, no, no." But we decided that Portland was probably more viable in terms of the economics of doing something like that. His dad lives here in Milwaukie, so there was a family pull, so we decided that it was time to leave the Bay Area and come here. So that's why we came, so that he could go back to school.

HS: That's awesome.

FP: That's awesome. Will you just explain what you do for the Q Center?

FUKUI: Yes. I'm the operations manager here as well. I also have another title, which is community outreach manager. I think of my job as being sort of minding the shop and then leaving the shop sometimes. I don't know. It seems like on the whole it's probably a half/half proposition, but it's sort of intensively busy in house sometimes.

We just had our big winter gala fundraiser on Saturday, so it's a lot of work around that and a lot of cleanup now after it. But then talking to people in the community is part of my job too, which is a lot of fun. So I love both parts of my job. So yeah, paying attention to all the details of running a community center like this and then paying attention to community and how conversations happen in community and getting to jump in and participate in that too. So that's what I do.

HS: Okay. So recent –

FUKUI: And I'm happy to go off script here if you want to.

HS: Thank you.

FP: Yes.

HS: Yeah. I'm like uh.

FUKUI: I'm more than happy to . . .

HS: I feel really like . . .

FUKUI: If you have follow up questions, please feel free.

HS: So recently it was announced that SMYRC was now under . . .

FUKUI: Yes.

HS: Official program of the Q Center.

FUKUI: Yes.

HS: And we would like to know why do you think this was an important move for the Q Center and SMYRC and the community? What benefits will come from that?

FUKUI: Sure. Well, SMYRC is a – I confess I’m not entirely familiar with the history of SMYRC, and I don’t know how long it’s been around, but my understanding it’s been around for quite some time, quite a number of years. And it’s been housed at a number of different programs during the course of its – Phoenix Rising. The name Phoenix Rising comes up. Cascadia’s the most recent one. My understanding is that these are mental health providing agencies and that SMYRC has somehow found a home within these agencies in the past.

Cascadia, as you probably know, went through bankruptcy a couple of years ago, and as I understand it, they were looking to streamline their operations and their programs and SMYRC was one of the programs that didn’t quite into what their vision for themselves for the future was. So basically they were looking for a new home for it. I think we all just felt it was, like Logan said, it’s sort of a no brainer. SMYRC belongs here. Q Center has the ambition to provide a variety of services to the broad spectrum of the community, and as a relatively young and relatively small startup organization, building these sorts of programs over time organically is a good thing. If there’s also an opportunity to bring it in house all at once, if it’s viable, I think it’s a great idea. I think it’s exactly where SMYRC needs to be, so I’m thrilled.

FP: Yep. So I was thrilled when I heard the news just 'cause I've been looking at the Q Center and SMYRC. Are there any other programs that Q Center might be thinking of maybe adopting?

FUKUI: So that's a great question, and no. No, there's nothing that's cooking right now, but who knows what the future would bring. Let's see. We have four program areas: arts and culture, health and wellness, education and training, and advocacy. Now, SMYRC, I think, fits into either – well, they fit into a couple of them. Health and wellness because there's a mental health-counseling portion of the work that they do, and education in that one of the missions of SMYRC is to provide academic opportunities to at risk youth, so definitely there's an education component to that.

But there's also advocacy. I think it's important that the needs of queer youth get addressed and that there be sort of broad community conversations around the needs of queer youth. Why are these kids in the streets at all I think is an important conversation to have, and that if organizations like Q Center can advocate for the welfare and the well being of young LGBT folk, that's part of our role too. So does that answer your question?

Oh, so what others. Oh, so I was getting back to the programmatic stuff. Elders, seniors. There are a lot of challenges that LGBT seniors face as well, so I would like to see more robust programs for LGBT seniors here. My fantasy is to have a large enough facility where there could be apartments for seniors and onsite staff to make sure that they're living well and getting their needs met and that this facility would be within walking distance of a general store or transportation or all the kinds of things that seniors would want to have access to but don't necessarily want to drive to.

I have ambitions for the arts and culture piece of what we do. I'd like to see the many, many cultural things that LGBT folk are involved in. I'd like to see those well represented here in the organization, whether through arts programs, music programs,

film programs, you name it. I'd like to see all these things really robust, well staffed, well funded, and well attended.

FP: So if I can follow up to your question. I've done classes on aging, the Baby Boomers basically. Is the issue of gay elder people big? Is there a big population here in Portland?

FUKUI: Well, I don't know about Portland. I don't know about Portland. I can't answer to the demographics regionally, but my impression is that this may be changing because there are so many younger LGBT folk who have children nowadays. But a lot of older folks either don't. They tend to not have children, and they tend to not be partnered, and they tend to not be married. And so they don't have family structural supports, and they tend to not have the financial structural supports. Now, that's not everyone for sure, but there's that tendency. And so getting old is a challenging thing for lots of queer folk, to be sure. Yeah.

HS: Yeah. I completely agree with that. So the conversation about SMYRC kind of sparked the curiosity, and I apologize for not knowing this. Do you, as the Q Center, partner with Outside In and some of the youth homeless shelters to provide any programming or partner in any way to kind of do the advocacy, the health and education, just any kind of outreach?

FUKUI: Yes. I would say that we're connected to and we partner with, whenever we have opportunities, with any organization in town that's gonna advocate for queer issues. I know that SMYRC, given that we're one now, I know that SMYRC has run a program for I believe it's trans youth at Outside In. That's gone on for a long time. They lost that funding I think, so I don't know what the future of that's gonna be. I think it's been driven by volunteers the past couple of years. Forgive me for not knowing, but I think there's a lot of opportunities. I'd like to see it grow.

HS: I think there was something with OHSU and trans youth as well, so that could be.

FUKUI: We also partner with an organization called TransActive here in town. TransActive is primarily involved with families of folks who have trans-identified little children. Helping families to look at their options for helping their young children self-identify.

HS: That's good.

FUKUI: TransActive.

FP: So earlier you mentioned that you've gone to school for arts.

FUKUI: Yeah.

FP: Personally when I've googled you, there was your art online, but on your biography for the Q Center there's nothing mentioned about your art and your passion for art.

FUKUI: My art. Right.

FP: How does that background influence your job?

FUKUI: Sure. And there was another question here. My work displayed at Q Center. I have had my work displayed at Q Center, actually. At the old location Inner Southeast. I get that question later. All the noise. [Laughter] We use that as a gallery space. We use the gallery space here too. That's part of our arts and culture program.

We turn the gallery space over. We try to turn it over once a month, and I think I showed my paintings there in '08, late '08. That was fun. It was a two-person show. And then I've brought tidbits of things in on occasion. That's not mine, but I've had a couple of my things in every now and again. How does my artwork inform my work here?

FP: Influence.

FUKUI: That's a great question. Well, like you, I have a day job, right? And I've got a show coming up in May. I'm not thinking linearly in this_. Artists don't do that. [Laughs]

HS: Completely fine.

FUKUI: I have a show coming up in May at a gallery in the North Park Blocks. It's called Cock Gallery, and it's a project of PF Soriano. And it'll be in May, and it's in the Everett Street Lofts, and I don't know that he has a website up quite yet. His first show is gonna be in March. Well, he had kind of a soft opening early this year.

I think he's got a bigger show coming up in March. Pretty big one in April. There's a fellow named PF Dahlquist who did that, who's now a Seattle based photographer quite well known in the region. He's gonna be showing in April, and then I follow up in May. But to get to your question.

Yeah, I mean I guess I'm an activist in addition to being artist, and so I call Portland my second tour of duty on the queer activism thing. My first being LA. I don't know that I'm gonna do another, quite honestly. Who can say what life will bring? But my heart is in this work, and I feel like this is important, and I feel fortunate to be able to do it. So yeah, is that it?

HS: Yeah.

FP: Yeah.

FUKUI: I feel lucky. I get to come here every day. [Laughter] I get to talk to you about queer stuff.

HS: And we are fun people.

FUKUI: That's right. And it's a privilege. It's a real privilege to watch something like this grow and to watch a community change over time. It's funny. This is maybe off topic, but I'm noticing something happening. This organization was incorporated in '05. It's now 2012. We're going on seven years. I don't know if you're superstitious like I am, but it's kind of a magic number.

I notice that the expectations are shifting. That the community's expectations for the community center are starting to shift, and we're finding some distance between our start up grassroots days. There's an expectation of a new level of maturity for the organization. I'm just noticing that. I'm just noticing that. I think that's a good thing. I think it's natural. I think it's inevitable, assuming we do things right and well, and I think it becomes the next plateau upon which the organization can take the next steps.

FP: Progression.

HS: Okay. If you could book your dream event or fundraiser for the Q Center, what would it be?

FUKUI: What would it be? Well, I think our winter gala is a lot of fun, but we're just now doing the post analysis on the gala itself. So I'm actually thinking about how would I like

to see it better. It's fun to do a winter gala. It's kind of fun to get dressed up, but boy, it was kind of chilly in that space. So I keep thinking wouldn't it be fun to do it in a tent? But no, it would not be fun to do it in a tent.

This was a fun party, to be sure. It was much more of a dance party, but for me there's an element of romance that I'd like to see in it. I mean if you're gonna wear a gown, you might as well get twirled across the dance floor. That's my feeling. So I would just love to see us incorporate some real kind of romance into that event.

But it's pretty, and it's sparkly and fun and gives people a chance to kind of get out of their jeans and put on something fancy, so I like it actually. And I like that our community's very represented there. If you think that you're gonna wear a dress and outshine any other dress in that room, you've got another thing coming because the ISRC is there. The tiaras are two feet tall, so it is sparkly and bejeweled and fabulous.

HS: Is there a celebrity –

FUKUI: I love that.

HS: Oh, sorry to interject. Is there a celebrity that if you could get them to come, like who would it be?

FUKUI: Oh gosh.

HS: A dream celebrity.

FUKUI: Probably Michelle Obama. If we could just get her to come in and shake hands and say hi to everybody, that would be fun.

HS: That would be fun.

FUKUI: Be a lot of fun. Hillary Clinton would be fun too, but we had Chelsea Clinton there. Oh no. Where was she?

FP: She was at the Red Dress.

FUKUI: She was at the Red Dress. Yeah.

FP: Yes. So recently the governor of Washington State signed off on gay marriage. Do you remember where you were when you heard the news and what type of emotions did you feel at the time?

FUKUI: I was probably here, and I was probably busy paying attention to other things when the news came that the thing had been signed. I think the more exciting news for me was when it passed the Senate, I believe. Was it the Senate in Washington State first? It was expected to pass the House pretty comfortably, but that it actually passed the Senate was the biggest deal because the House and the governor's signature were expected and therefore pro forma, so that was the bigger deal for me.

I think it's amazing. It's wonderful, but now the sort of excitement and fear for me is well, if the opponents of marriage equality in Washington State want to put this thing on the ballot, assuming they get enough signatures to do so, will the people of Washington State vote it down? In other words, will the people of Washington State choose at the ballot box to allow marriage equality to continue to be the law in the state? I hope that they will, and I don't think that's ever happened in the United States yet.

I think it's inevitable, but it hasn't happened yet, so I'd love to see Washington do it first. I would love to see that. And it's interesting too, if we're talking about the marriage

equality questions, how it's happening in Washington and California. Very different processes, so yeah. Curious about what can happen in Oregon.

HS: Yeah. We just have to worry about the outside of our bubble to get the votes for that I think. I do love the bubble of Portland though.

FUKUI: Well, the thing about the bubble of Portland though is it is insular for all of us who live here, but my impression is that any kind of communication radiates outward from here. So if there's messaging to be done, it has to come from here. That's one of the reasons I feel like our Q Center's website is such an important communication vehicle because we get feedback from not just all over the state but all over the country and even all over the world. People are dialing into our website to look at what's going on here, so it's important that what we're putting out is encouraging.

FP: Well, I think, like you said earlier, people are starting to see the expectations of the Q Center higher than you guys had set at first, so now I've had friends that are in California saying, "Hey, what community center do you guys have?" It's a reference point for us now. It's, "This is what they're doing. Have you heard they got a new program? This is their fundraising," so I think, like you said, back to the expectations.

FUKUI: Right.

FP: It was Portland at first. Now it's Oregon. Now it's gonna be nationwide that everybody's seeing that expectation from you guys.

FUKUI: Right, right. And we notice that we're the only building based community center between San Francisco and Vancouver, BC right now, so that's a big swatch of territory. It's exciting and huge and at some points a little scary. [Laughter] ..._ ...__ ..._ me. Well,

there are now six of us, and three of us are paying attention to the SMYRC program, and three of us are doing the rest. Yes, so let it grow. Let it grow.

HS: Let it grow.

FUKUI: Yeah.

HS: Yeah, so will you please describe a typical day in your life so what is your life look like

FUKUI: My day oh gosh, my work day.

HS: Just your day in general.

FUKUI: Alright so not thinking linearly.

FP: [Laughter]

HS: [mmm-hmm]

FUKUI: There is an expectation in that because the community center is open to the community and a lot people want to use the community center want to do so in the evening's after work that we're open into the evening's and so I don't feel too compelled to come in get here too early in the morning if there's an expectation that I am going to be here late so I kind of ya know I am a late person anyway I don't do well in mornings that's fine it works out so I get up and I eat and walk my dog and then ya know get here roll in about 10 and there's about 50 emails in my inbox__

FP: [Laughter]

FUKUI: And I go through them and try not to let that take up the entirety of my morning and there are people to talk to and um occasional meetings planning meetings or staff meetings or try to keep those to a minimum but um yeah organize the space calendar events um work on fundraising activities uh I've historically also had to pay attention to some of the financials so taking care of things like that.. Reporting um and so forth and so forth. So. Today let me just today let's see so SMYRC is going to be moving from the current space that they occupy on the 10th of the month so we're looking at ... we've signed a lease in a space so we're looking at uh expanding the bathrooms to make them ADA compliant which means getting architectural drawings...

HS: [mmm-hmm]

FUKUI: And getting them approved and permitted and finding people to do the work

FP: [Laughter]

FUKUI: For nothin'...

FP: [Laughter]

FUKUI: Before the 10th of March and okay so I'm working on gathering those resources the best I can and then we need to rent a truck so I had to take care of reserving a rental and then there are some technical issues around telephones we need to get phone and cable in there and internet access ... so I need to make decisions around that ... so and yeah the board is meeting tonight so they want reports on how we did at the winter gala and they want the financial reports I haven't gotten all the funds in so I don't ... I can't give a definitive answer on that but I have to come up with approximations so ... ya know.

HS: Hmm. What kind of dog and what's the dog's name?

FP: [clears throat]

FUKUI: Ah, my dog's name is Pedro.

HS: Pedro.

FUKUI: Yes, he's a mutt he's a ... [Shows picture from iPhone to HS & FP].

HS: Oh my goodness.

FUKUI: Yeah. He is ridiculously ridiculously cute.

HS: He is really really cute.

FP: Oh my gosh.

HS: Cute.

FUKUI: He's got a pink nose.

HS: Handsome.

FUKUI: So let's see. If there's an event in the evening sometimes will attend but I get outta here around 6-6:30 go home ... spend the evening with my family

HS: That's good.

FP: Um, so what brings you joy about your role um at the Q Center um and then addition um what are your dreams for the Q Center?

FUKUI: Great set of questions. I think they are intertwined. Um my greatest joy is seeing it grow into something that can and does serve the community ... and my ... my biggest hope and dream is that it can do that well and more broadly as ... as the year's or as the day's go by so if there are gaps that we start filling in the gaps ... SMYRC was a big one ... elders are another big one ... where can we fill in the gaps? What are the pieces that are missing? Um We are a rainbow coalition ... and everyone is not served ... either served at all or well served here so how can we ... for me it's always about ... more more more ... what else can we do? What else can we do? What else can we do? Who else can we bring in to do it? Um ... I ... no-ne-not anyone of us does not represent all segments of the community so um we need to partner with our community allies to bring them in and ... and have them then in turn ... provide the offerings that we want ... the community wants to have so ...

HS: So do you collectively as a team here kind of a have a brainstorming session of identifying um the keys areas of like risk or where we're having gaps ... um

FUKUI: I think we are all intensely conscience of where those gaps are ... we are very intensively conscious of it. Um and then the other funny thing that happens ... is that people will approach us and ask or they'll just say ... we see a gap ... here's what we think we can do to fill it in ... one of the biggest success I think um ... here is ... is the offerings around the trans-movement ... Trans-Fem, Trans-Guys, um Gender Query and Northwest gender alliance all meet here um and then in November I think the past couple of years they've done a health fair called Communi-T and so this is all volunteer driven this is with no money and they've done a tremendous amount of good work um connecting up community and ... and I don't know this for a fact but I imagine what life would be like in

Portland and for some of the folks that I've met here ... um ... if these ... if these affinity groups we called them didn't exist ... I think ... I think life would be very different ... uh ... uh ... I ... it just gives me great joy to see ... um ... the folks I know here ... uh ... and the work they're doing ... no, it is not my work ... no I didn't organize Trans-Fem ... uh ... but I am so proud of the fact ... um ...

FP: That it's happening

FUKUI: That it's happening ... that I ... yes, I sat with the people that founded trans-femme and I encouraged them to do it and I scheduled ... I calendared the time and the space ... ya know I said come on lets do it ... kee-keep going ... ah ah ah-I was there at the beginning and I ... I can only take credit for maybe catching the baby ... but growth from birth to what it is now ... I can't take any credit for ... uh ... but I am totally proud of it. Totally proud of it.

HS: That's awesome. Um ... okay so that takes us back to the old Q Center building and the railroad tracks...

FUKUI: [Laughter]

HS: So Pat was telling us that there were some humorous moments with ... holding a meeting...

FUKUI: Right.

HS: A train would go by and then everybody would kind of mute out. So tell ... tell us a lil bit about that

FUKUI: Right, do you-were you in the old space?

HS: I wasn't unfortunately.

FP: [ut uh]

FUKUI: So it's at Taylor and Water Avenue uh right there and the train goes by in the block just to the east or maybe it's in that very same block on Taylor ... excuse me ... and these are unoccupied trains there are ... there are freight trains and some times there may be 2 or 3 or 4 cars long and sometimes there ... ya know ... you can't believe how long they are ... and so you're showing a movie or something and a train goes by ... so for 5 whole minutes you can't hear a thing ...

FP: Oh my gosh.

FUKUI: That the movie is saying or you're having a presentation or a panel discussion or a something and that's it. Ya know the train goes by and that's it ... the sound occupies the entirety of the space ... there is no talking over it ... there is no amplifying over it all you can do is wait so [Laughter] ... that was one of the criteria for ... for any kind of new space was not having any sonic-any five minute sonic booms during your movie or presentation [Laughter]

FP: So why did you guys choose this space?

FUKUI: Why did we choose this space? Well ... a number of reasons ... uh there was enough square footage first of all to start with that we felt like there was enough square footage that we could grow into ... uh ... Mississippi Avenue sort of an interesting draw I mean its been uh its been changing for the past decade as I understand it or more ... the whole neighborhood has been changing Mississippi being the commercial strip in between ... arrr-in the middle of it ... has been ... ya know ... it's a commercial district ...

Taylor and Water Avenue is a commercial neighborhood also but it's industrial so ... you ... during the day its packed full of people and businesses ... you can't getting a parking spot to save your life until 4:30 in the afternoon and then it's a ghost-town ... and people don't want to go there because ... ya know ... its not sketchy ... but its dark and there's nobody there [Laughter] so even if it's not sketchy it's still it feels kind of ... and all of our city-folk-antenna go up and we don't want to be there ... it's just not very comfortable .. so we decided that the foot traffic along the commercial strip here was an attractive bonus for where we might locate ... um so ... that's a great question so I'll just tack it onto number 12. Why here? Why in Missi—why North Portland? As apposed to uh downtown or the pearl district or whatever ... and honestly those are unanswered questions ... and I think it goes back to the geography of the city itself ... the river cuts right through the middle of it and it and it ... I'm not from here so I can't quite ... so I'm sort-of not willing to buy into but I think my impression is that the river is a great psychological barrier ... and I think it's unfortunate ...

HS: [Clears throat]

FUKUI: And it's challenging for an organization like Q Center ... where do you ... where do you locate yourself in the middle of everything when the middle of everything is in the middle of the water? Really. Um, so . . . If you have any thoughts about...

HS: Well I, yeah, I agree with you with the ... the psychology impact of the river but I would also say that Burnside is that as well...

FUKUI: Yes.

HS: Between the south and the north quadrants um when I first moved here I lived downtown and to me I was ya know ... I just took public transportation or a cab

everywhere ... it didn't bother me what side of town ... but I met ... Queer folk in southeast and in northeast ... that it was kind of like a rivalry sort of thing

FP: It is.

HS: It was really funny to me ... I was like can't we all just get along?

FUKUI: Where are you from?

HS: I'm from Indiana.

FUKUI: Right, right.

HS: So, I mean, I was used to driving an hour just to get to a gay bar ... like ah ... or ... or more.

FP: Right.

FUKUI: In L.A., people drive an hour for sushi.

HS: Right!

FUKUI: And don't think twice.

HS: Don't think twice. I mean people are people ... I mean to me Portland ... we're all ... we're all lumped into the same bowl ... we're all one community ... and if we can't figure out how to get along ... then we need to step back ... a long ways and figure it out

FUKUI: We're working on it...

HS: So we can move forward.

FUKUI: Absolutely, I couldn't agree more and as a socio-sociological view ... boy it's weird to hear people say, "I never go to the Westside"

FP & HS: [Laughter]

FUKUI: I have a buddy who is from L.A. ... he lives in Portland and he says, "I would never go to the Westside if it weren't for you" [Laughter] ... and whenever I do I get lost ... [Laughter] so you've never heard of a map ... [Laughter] you've never heard of GPS ... so ... that is neither here nor there but the point is ... where do you locate a community center that is actually central? It's a ... it's a I think its an open question. So ...

HS: But I think the art to that is to just having various gatherings ... if you do something outside of the center ... just being really thoughtful of ..._ and having them in every neighborhood ... geographic ... so [mumble]

FUKUI: Yeah, we were just approached recently by park and rec ... was it park and rec? I think it was park and rec ... there's ... they noticed that there is no gay stuff over in southwest Portland (my neighborhood) ... kind of in that southwestern quadrant ... that they call it outer southwest...

HS: Lair Hill?

FUKUI: No, even further out I think.

HS: Okay.

FUKUI: I live in Maplewood but I think there is one called ... uh outer southwest or something ... it's the lowest ... the lowest southwest quadrant of the city ... there's Beaverton, Tigard and Lake Oswego down there, right? Doesn't have much gay stuff out there ..._ they are just noticing ... [Laughter] ... and they want to offer us a little bit of money to take some programming out there ... well what shall we do? What ya gonna do? [Laughter] We'll just have a...

HS: Have a gay nature hike.

FUKUI: I guess so, right? [Laughter] Exactly.

HS: Bring your dog.

FP: It's very interesting that...

HS: We all love a dog.

FUKUI: Right.

FP: How do they come out like you know ... they have a meeting and say ... wait, we don't have any gay stuff here?...

PF & HS: [Laughter & inaudible]

FP: Or did a gay person go up to them?

FUKUI: I keep wanting to say ... well there is ME and I am walking my dog everyday ... whatever.

HS: Yes!

FUKUI: Ya know.

HS: I'm here!

FUKUI: Right...

HS: I am your beacon of hope.

PF & HS: [Laughter]

FUKUI: Right. Actually, I am not the other gay person in the neighborhood...

HS: Well yeah... [Whispers – we're everywhere]

FP: I think it also ... that also goes back to maybe their perspective of what they think a gay people might be ... so though ya know there's a lot of gay people in Beaverton...

FUKUI: Right!

FP: So I think they are hoping maybe an event, like gay event, which is ... I don't know what it is but ... bringing it back to their perspective...

HS: Yeah.

FUKUI: I am not sure we wrote that grant proposal [Laughter]...

HS: I am curious to see what you come up with.

FUKUI: Right?

HS, PF & FP: [Laughter]

HS: If you need any help brainstorming, you let me know.

FUKUI: Dog walking excursions in southwest Portland.

FP: I have one more question, sorry it's not on here ... so our hope with this gay capstone is that we are going to digitize everything and ya know hopefully it's going to go on the website and maybe reach out to some gay person out in rural Oregon ... um ... if there is one message you could give that person ... just listening to the interview ... what message would you give them?

FUKUI: Oh boy. [sighs] oh gosh. well, oh.... I'd like to say something platitudinous and hopeful ... ah ... but I just got off the phone ... just before you got here ... today ... and uh ... a social worker in ... in some rural community in Oregon called me to ask about services for survivors of domestic abuse ... a transwoman was ... survived domestic violence ... and I made a referral here in town and made a connection not to just our organization ... but also to an individual with an organization ... and this person ... this social worker had actually met this person ... so I felt like it was a connection well made and I am hopeful ... um ... that person for whom this social worker is advocating ... will find the services that she needs ... but it breaks my heart that she feels like as a transperson she's gonna have to leave her community and move to Portland I am glad we are here ... I am glad there are services ... um ... it was Bradley Angle by the way ... the organization that I referred her to ... I am glad Bradley Angle is here and is doing the work they're doing and still it breaks my heart that this woman cannot live her life where she is ... that ya know ... I am also happy to see more queers come into my neighborhood but ...

uh .. but uh ... so I ... I .. I wish I could say something hopeful ... move to Portland is not really all that hopeful. So I just hope the world keeps changing ... I hope the world keeps changing ... and I hope it changes fast enough so that ... um ... more and more people all over can ... can ... find their way to living full lives. So that is my hope.

FP: Thank you.

FUKUI: Yeah.

HS: I am going to piggyback off of what FP asks ... so ... you're retired ... you and your partner and settled down.

FUKUI: Really.

HS: What legacy do you want to leave? So if someone says ... gosh I heard of that guy, PF and I'm googling him ... what would you like to be known for ... the most...?

FUKUI: That's nice. Um. Well ya know? I'm...my biggest hope for...is that...well right now in my day job... my biggest hope is that this community center can find its way toward stability and ... and ... and growth and that it can fulfill the dreams of the broader community ... again ... like ya know ... with trans-femme ... I was there at the birthing ... I cannot take credit for the adult hood phase or whatever ... same thing with Q Center ... if I was lucky enough to be here during the early years the baby years, lucky me uh ... I'm gonna trust that at some point ... um ... the next set of folks will take it to the next ... the next growth steps ...um ... but sure .. if I can get some credit for catchin' the baby, I'll take it. And ... and I am a painter ... I am a artist so I'd like to ... I'd like to be able to throw that into the collective ring to so... we'll see how that goes. Most .. but ya know ... the motto at the school ... the art school that I went... is that the only good artist is a dead artist ... so

ya know ... well I'm working on it... give me ... give me time .. I'll take care of that for ya.
[Laughter]

HS: But until then ... I'm going to enjoy my life!

FUKUI: Yeah, I'm gonna work on that too! So, yeah that's, yeah...

HS: Thank you so much for your time!...

FP: Thank you very much!

HS Are there any questions or anything you'd like to cover that perhaps we haven't captured?

FUKUI: Throwing add-on? Any other? Any gaps or anything I didn't address ... anything for your project? That I can throw into the mix...

FP: I think we got it...

HS: What do you do for fun?

FUKUI: Ahhh. I love being in my studio. I am an introvert, you see, so I ... I like my downtime and uh I live in southwest Portland so there are tall trees and I've got a garden so I work in the garden ... yeah, I like to travel but it's hard to get away ... uh .. but when I can get away I like to travel...

HS: What's the best vacation spot you've been to?

FUKUI: You know, I've been 'jonesing' Hawaii... I've only been there once but I'd very much like to go there again ... so uh... as lovely as Portland is most of the year ... [All: Laughter] ...

HS: July and August

FUKUI: Right about now.... a little bit of Hawaii sounds mighty mighty delicious... so ...

HS: Any other dream vacations?

FUKUI: Well, hmm... I do like to travel... [Laughter] so ... and I haven't been everywhere so I'd like to go everywhere ... so ... we'll start down the list and check some places off ... I'd like to go to Argentina, I've never been to Australia so I'd love to go to there ...um, New Zealand ya know ... Um, I'd like to go south Asia under certain circumstances I have a friend who is living near the Himalayas somewhere in India.... And it's beautiful ... just looks so beautiful ... I'd like to pay the region a visit.

HS: You've only seen pictures?

FUKUI: Yeah.

HS: My friends have lavish vacations and ... yeah ... I work too much and then go to school ... so perhaps ... this time next year

FUKUI: Right, right, right. Someday in this life I'll have the opportunity to do that kind of travel.

HS: Awesome.

FP: I don't have anymore questions.

HS: Well, thank you so much!

FUKUI: Sure. Thank you for coming!

[End of Session 1]

[End of Interview]

Keywords

Paul Fukui

Q Cente

Trans-Guys

Trans-Fem

Oregon

Portland

Trans

Community Center

Communi-T

SMYRC

Elders

Program

Winter Gala

Art,

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