

Dr. Edward B. Segel

SR 11121, Oral History

by Lisa Brandt Heckman

Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest (GLAPN)

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SEGEL: Dr. Edward B. Segel

LBH: Lisa Brandt Heckman

Transcribed by: Lisa Brandt Heckman, 2007

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This oral history interview was conducted as part of the Portland State University LGBT History Capstone course, Spring Term 2007, with Instructor Christa Orth.

Introduction

Dr. Segel is currently 68 years old and a Professor of History and Humanities at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, specializing in European diplomatic history. He was born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts, and began the process of coming out as a gay man only after his arrival at University of California, Berkeley in the mid 1960s.

Dr. Segel has been involved in numerous gay social and political organizations both in Portland and abroad, including Gay Men Together, the Right to Privacy/Pride PAC, the St. Catherine's Society, and the Cookboys, to name just a few. He enjoys writing comic verse, especially parodies of Gilbert & Sullivan, and has written lyrics for the Portland Gay Men's Chorus.

Interview
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LBH: The following interview was recorded on May 22, 2007.

Okay, uh ... let's go ahead and start. My name is Lisa Brandt Heckman, and the date today is ... May 22, and we are here at Dr. Edward Segel's home in Portland, Oregon. And...could you please tell me when and where you were born?

SEGEL: Oh. Boston. December 25, 1938.

LBH: Okay. That's the same year my dad was born. So what brought you to Portland?

SEGEL: Oh. Well, I was teaching at uh ... the University of California at Berkeley, but I didn't publish, so I perished; the story is quickly told Reed College here was the only place that uh, offered me a job at that point. That was in 1973, so I came here, and um ... got tenure here, and I've been here ever since.

LBH: And you plan to stay here?

SEGEL: Yeah.

LBH: So why don't you tell me a little bit about growing up in Boston.

SEGEL: Oh. Well Boston was the ... the main thing I think of with regard to Boston is that um ... as one of my instructors in college put it, Boston is an ethnic museum. It may still be, but it certainly was back then. Uh, people were very conscious of um ... their ethnic uh ... identity ... uh ... the main groups were the Irish, the Italians, the Jews, and then of course the Yankees, the old families. Uh, and politics and other things revolved

around that kind of difference. Um, I went to college at Harvard, so I really left Boston um ... in 1960. and wasn't at all out then. I didn't really come out 'til I was uh ... well, in my late 20s — late 20s to early 30s. I was out really for the last year or two that I was in Berkeley. Um ... But, and that process continued once I came here.

LBH: And can you tell me a little bit about how that came about? How you came out? Was there something that triggered it, or ...

SEGEL: Well, in Berkeley, actually, in a way I'm embarrassed to say I started to see a psychiatrist because I... I had begun to come to grips with being gay, and decided I wanted to change, which even then was a rather old-fashioned thing to do.

LBH: In what year was this, about?

SEGEL: Well, say 1966 or so. And then had um ... a very small amount of um, uh ... experience with other men then. Um ... and the real coming out was actually ... I was on leave in London in 1970, '71, and um ... uh, that's where I really turned the corner. By that time I had gotten my Ph.D, and um ... was feeling more independent, and decided that I liked myself the way I was and did not wanna change. So I had very ... I had uh ... I fell in with uh ... an organization of gay men in London, had a boyfriend in the residence hall I was in. Um ... so that was a v... that was a ... a major milestone that. So when I came here, I was already out, but I was already in the process of being out. And I wasn't entirely sure how out I wanted to be at Reed, and then it... I realized that um ... at least some of the gay Reed students knew I was gay, because they had friends in Berkeley who said to them, "Oh, well, there's this young assistant professor in the history department c-c-coming to Reed and he's gay so look out for him." [LBH laughs] So, there was no point in uh ... in uh ... you know, concealment.

And when I went to the bars downtown, when I first got here, I ran into uh some of the gay Reed students down there, so, you know, there was not, as I say, there was no point in ... in any concealment.

LBH: Right. Right. What was this organization that you talked about in London? Was this a formal organization, or...

SEGEL: Yes, it was called The St. Catherine's Society. I had been told about it by a gay friend in Berkeley. It had been founded by a half dozen gay Anglican priests who wanted a social venue that was respectable and other than the bars. And I think — uh, my memory is it was also sponsored by ... a foundation whose name just flew out of my head. I might remember it. Um ... the foundation that had lobbied for the repeal of the anti-homosexual, anti-sodomy laws that had happened in London in 19... in England in 1967. Uh, and this group met in the h... every Saturday or Sunday night, for beer, dancing, and cucumber sandwiches in the hall of a semi-monastic foundation endowed by the Queen Mother, hidden away in the east end of London off the commercial road. And the foundation was the...semi-monastic foundation was the Order of St. Catherine. Um ... and so we called ourselves the St. Catherine Society. Uh, and it had ... and it... I ha...I don't know if it still exists. The need for it is much less now but uh ... then when there was still an important social stigma and so on, uh ... it served a very useful purpose and I met a lot of uh ... really quite nice uh ... uh ... gay men through that organization.

Now when I came he- here to Portland, um ... thinking about this the last week ... one organization that um ... fulfilled the same function for me that was very important was Gay Men Together. This was uh, a group that met every Wednesday night, 7:00 at Smith Center, room 230 or 231, in PSU. It was not a PSU group; my memory is that it was nominally sponsored by a women's organization at PSU so we could get a place to meet but we- and there were some PSU people involved in it, some undergraduates or graduate students, but it really wasn't a PSU group. And it was very interesting; it had

already existed for several years before I arrived here. And there was a small [collective?] of about a half-dozen men who would meet once a month, once every six weeks, and plan out the agenda so there was a topic every meeting. Um ... coming out on the job, coming out to one's family, dating and so on and so on. Uh, and for, I w-1 attended for a number of years. I think it broke up by the middle um ... of the 1980s. But it was there that I met uh ... most of the guys who were my friends, actually, for many years after that. And it was clearly something that grew out of the counterculture atmosphere of the '60s. There were ... it had ... there were signs there uh that it came out of that kind of milieu. Um ... and that was my major um ... um ... gay contact for the first few years here. I would say that there would be anywhere between ... I don't know, 20 and sometimes 40 guys there, or more uh, at a gathering and uh ... if you remind me afterwards, I'll give you the name of uh ... then a young guy ... um ... who was a real... uh, fireball of an organizer. And he really revived it in the early '80s, and then he went on to do something else and then it sort of gradually fell apart as these things do tend to.

LBH: Are there any particular individuals that you recall from either of these groups — either that guy, or the one in London, that uh ... that stick with you — you remember anything about them, or ...

SEGEL: Well a lot the people I knew in London have sort of they faded away. Um, a lot of the guys from um ... the GMT group are still friends of mine, and as I say, they, they make up one large cohort of layers of friends that I made here. I'm also fairly political, so ...

LBH: I've gathered that from doing my research on you.

SEGEL: Yeah. [LBH laughs] I was ... I got involved ... I've forgotten when; maybe in the middle '70s, with the Portland Town Council which was then the only gay political group in town. And I have been trying in the last day or so to remember ... my mind has —

has gotten quite foggy as to the dates when the Portland Town Council somehow fell apart, and there arose in its place the Right to Privacy PAC. And then in due time, that fell apart; it went bankrupt, uh, and, um ... its role was taken over by BRO. Basic Rights Oregon. And I uh, and I do remember ... um, well, it's very funny. One friend of mine, Ben Merrill, M-E-R-R-I-L-L, um ... [laughter] Ben uh was a lawyer, um ... and the connection there is that near the end of the Portland Town Council, there was a meeting of — I don't know, six or eight of us in Ben's then-apartment, where were sort of trying to find a mission for the PTC and really couldn't. And that was sort of a milestone in its demise. Now I'm thinking of Ben because a week ago Monday was Reed's commencement, and Ben got an M.A.L.S degree — Master of Arts and Liberal Studies. And si-... and uh and I wa-... it was my job ... my bit role uh, at the commencement to put the hood on his head around his head over his head uh, for that degree. So as I say, Ben and I go back a long ... a long time. Um ... someone who was very important uh ... but I have forgotten chronologically where to put him ... is Jerry Weller.

Jerry was a real fireball of an organizer. And, and, and I think ... I don't think he was connected with the PTC; I think he was connected with the Right to Privacy group. But there were problems, and my recollection is that Jerry had problems getting along with some of the lesbians. And vice-versa. [LBH laughs] And that was one of the major things behind its breakup. But I'm ... as I say, I'm having a hard time um ... which is bad for a historian, but I'm having a hard time remembering exactly when that was, but I'm sure you can find that out from other things. Just Out has...has a lot of records of this kind of thing.

LBH: Now why do you suppose that would be, that they didn't get along?

SEGEL: Oh, I think it was just temperamental from my ... my memory of it. But it.. as I say, Jerry was a real fireball; he did a lotta good, but I think he liked to run his own ship. And now and again, it's been pretty good, actually, but now and again, I have seen signs

over the years of a little friction or uneasiness between the gay men on one side, and uh lesbians on the other. For a time um ... the Right to, Right to Privacy — we changed our name to Right to Pride eveg- eventually — um, the offices were carefully split between men and women, but it tended ... the organization as a whole tended to have a rather male tone. BRO — at least in its early years — tended to have a um ... female tone. And that was an issue I do remember very well. In the summer of 1997, there were a couple of real controversies ... over whether we would have — we, the gay community — would try to put a proactive ballot measure on the ballot - anti-discrimination measure. And some of the women in BRO were really pushing that. And some of the men in um, you know, had been involved with the Right to Pride PAC were very skeptical about that. There were a couple of rather stormy meetings. One was in ... um ... I've forgotten the office building ... one of the office buildings, possibly PGE downtown during that summer. And then um ... the other meeting later on was a quite crowded meeting at MCC. And I remember as I walked out of the first meeting, I was standing near ... um ... I just forgot her last name ... Jeannie, who was the executive director of BRO, and a rather strong personality. And I took her aside and I said, "Look, this argument about whether to have the ballot measure or not, this is turning into ... beginning to turn into a ... a gay man versus lesbian argument, and that's not good." I said, "Get some men out front on your s..." I was skeptical, but I said, "Look, get some men out front on your side, so it's not just women making the case for it." I don't think she took my advice. Uh ... and I remember at the second meeting, in ... the big meeting at MCC, a number of people including Bonnie ... uh ... Bonnie from Love Makes a Family.

I wanna say Bonnie Tucker, but I'm not sure I've got the last name right. [LBH NOTE: CORRECT NAME IS BONNIE TINKER] Um ... got up and said — she was very polite. But she says, "Look, y'know, with all the resources we would have to put into um ... this ballot measure, small organizations like mine are gonna suffer." And Barbara Roberts was there. And she got up and she was very polite, and she said, "Look, there's never been a case in this country where a proactive anti-discrimination measure has carried."

Now there was a young woman from the state of Washington who was responsible for ... had a big hand in getting a similar measure on the Washington ballot for the f-f... the coming November. And she was very enthusiastic and so on and so on. Well, what happened was that that ballot measure in the state of Washington lost by 60 to 40 per cent... the following November, so that put paid to ... that was the end of that...

that business. I've since been hearing a few rumbles about that... uh, some proactive ballot measure. Well, now they've got the negative one coming ... presumably coming up. So the scene is different. But um ... oh, I do remember ... I was the ... the faithful lieutenant of George Eighmey, E-I-G-H-M-E-Y. George had been in the legislature for several terms, openly gay lawyer. He had been term littermit... limited out. Um ... and George really led the fight against having that ballot measure and um ... Jeannie uh ... and some of her allies gave rather a hard time to George and me and some others we came in for um ... a certain amount of abuse that summer because we were open about our skepticism. But I have to say ... uh not with George, or I hope not with me, but with some of the other men, there was a certain uh ... anti-lesbian undercurrent. You heard that a little bit if you listened carefully. So that was ... that was unfortunate, but that... these things happen. You know.

Oh, as long as I'm giving names [LBH laughs] not connected with this, connected with the GMT. The young ... then-young fireball was Andy Mangels, M-A-N-G-E-L-S. Uh, Andy came in; he was then I think, oh, something like twenty. Uh, and just whipped things into shape and kept things going really for a year or two, and then as I say, went on to something else. He became a uh — uh, gay cartoonist. That still may be; I've lost touch with Andy over the years. Um, but he is certainly someone you would want to interview if you're getting any material for local gay history. and then while the PAC was going, for a number of years, it may have been ... I haven't checked; it may have been like ten years — Charlie Hinkle and I — you know Charlie.

Charlie Hinkle and I - gay lawyer for Stoel Rives - Charlie was extremely active in um ... the ACLU, both on the local level and the national level. Charlie and I would put together a table for the annual um ... fundraising dinner of the PAC usually in October. Now that was a major uh — social event of the year. Um ... I remember talking to Charlie a few years ago, that we have sort of missed it. Uh, because the, the, the political activities performed an important social function. Yeah. Uh, I'll mention two other social groups. One still exists, and one doesn't. Their ... their membership overlapped. One was a gay potluck group, The Cookboys. Um, it's been going over twenty years. The guy who really runs it now is Phil Joslin, J-O-S-L-I-N. I'm not sure he'll appreciate if I give you his name [LBH laughs] not because he's private; he just doesn't want to be bothered.

Phil is a college classmate of mine, Harvard class of 1960. I discovered him here t- about little over ten years ago. We hadn't seen each other f- it was 1994; we hadn't seen each other for the 34 years since commencement. Um, and I met him at the group and he eventually i...is now the ... became the organizer. We meet once a month in somebody's home, anywhere between — again — twenty and sometimes 60 guys there, and there's a culinary theme each month and so on; it's really very nice. Uh, and that's still going. Uh, then there was the Rendezvous Group. The Rendezvous Group was a ... once-a-month dining out group. Um, f- it was meant for ... gay business people, gay professional male group. Uh, it had — and again, sometimes a large attendance. The one who really — well, he may have founded it, but he really ran it for some years — was David Gemant, the uh, j- openly gay judge. But when David became a judge, he said, "Look, I've got these other responsibilities and I can't really handle this anymore." So a couple of others tried to handle it, and as often happens, it sorta fell apart; it died, which is too bad. Uh, David is now touring Europe. Um ... but at some point, you might want to interview him. because he'll know a lot about um ... local gay history.

LBH: Okay. How's ... what's his last name?

SEGEL: Gemant, G-E-R-N-A-N-T. He 1- he used to have a g- a g- lovely house in um ... down south toward Milwaukie. Uh, but now lives uh, has an apartment near Lloyd Center. Um, and Charlie Hinkle ... who you also want to uh ... uh ... you'd also want to interview - are you doing anything with Seattle at all?

LBH: Not that I know of.

SEGEL: Okay. Uh ...

LBH: I mean, the archives are Pacific Northwest, so ... y'know ... for this class, we're focusing on Portland, but I would think that for the archives, since they're just supposed to be Pacific Northwest, I'd assume...

SEGEL: Well, it came to mind um ... I've ... I personally have not really ever done anything really with the gay scene in Seattle; I've been there too seldom. But there was a very sad incident, which I'm sure you could find out about on the web. I've forgotten what it was — it could be at least ten years ago, maybe 15 years ago. I was listening to the local television news one evening, and they said that a judge in Seattle had committed suicide; he'd shot himself. And there was some talk that it had to do with some gay connections. And the next day, the Oregonian carried the story, and they had a picture of the judge, and I did a double-take. He was then ... uh, uh ... well, this was, uh ... fifteen years ago; he must have been in his 50s. And he was graying and had a beard, but beneath the gray hair and the beard, I recognized a friend of mine from college. Gary Little. I think he was Class of '62. Neither of us was out then. He'd been a judge in Seattle, but he'd been ... cautioned ... more than once by whatever was the judges' disciplinary body. Uh, not to see socially some of the young gay men who appeared before him in court. And he did. And he felt he was just innocently mentoring them, but this ... the rumors were this had a somewhat more scandalous side. And then it turned out the ... uh ... Seattle ... probably the Post-Intelligencer, I'm not sure — was gonna come out with a

big story about this, and the night before the story was supposed to come out, Gary committed suicide. And as I say, this struck me not only because of its content, but because I knew the guy! Now I hadn't seen him for the - whatever, 40 or so years since graduation - 35 years, probably, since graduation. Um, but it was um ... it was sort of a shock that somebody I had known back then had experienced ... this. Um ... so where are we? I've been wandering.

LBH: That's OK — you wander all you like, [Laughs] Maybe I should get some of my acronyms straight while we're here.

SEGEL: Yeah.

LBH: We've been tossing lots of them out; I wanna make sure that I... uh, what was the group that, uh, Andy Mangels was associated with?

SEGEL: That was Gay Men Together. GMT.

Oh, and somebody else ... you should talk to a good friend of mine. Tom Ruckman, R-U-C-K-M-A-N. Well, again I've forgotten when; I could check, but Tom can tell you — it could be ten years ago. Tom — who's a film buff — got the idea and organized a gay men's film discussion group. And we met once a month, and he would have an agenda of gay-related films or gay-related TV shows; similar things. Um, we had problems finding a space we could use. We s-... wandered from one year to the next from one coffeehouse to another. Oh, this was originally ... originally this was sort of sponsored by CAP, Cascade AIDS Project. Because they had an activity going then called ... I think it was called Men Talk. Neighborhood groups whose function was to raise AIDS and especially safe sex awareness among men. And with a lot of these social groups that they sponsored, we got past the safe sex talk very quickly, and the other things w- th-... I think this may have been originally under their ... aegis ... but then it quickly became

independent. And then of course, Tom decided to go to ... som- ... Tom switched careers. He decided to go to PSU graduate school to get a um ... teaching certification uh, so he couldn't do it anymore, so that sorta fell apart. And in the last year or two, it's become revived on a um ... much smaller scale. Now we get maybe ... six or eight guys. Again, in the old days, we would get — on big nights — thirty or forty. Sometimes we would meet in um ... 3 Friends Coffee House, which is on southeast... 12th, as I remember. A couple of blocks away from uh Old Wives' Tales. And um ... then sometimes we'd use the glass ... little glassed-in room in Old Wives' Tales. You know the room I'm talking about in ... if you've been there?

LBH: Yes.

SEGEL: Yeah. Well, sometimes we had more guys that could comfortably fit in that room. Um ... and then we used um ... for a time, a coffeehouse whose name I've forgotten, on uh ... southeast Division. So we had problems finding a space that would really work for us, but again, this fulfilled an important social as well as - in this case — cultural purpose. I'm not sure where to go.

LBH: Okay. I'll look at my list then.

SEGEL: Have you spoken to David Kohl, K-O-H-L?

LBH: He has been coming into our class and working with us.

SEGEL: Okay, yeah, right. Right. He knows all about MCC.

LBH: Yeah, is that Metropolitan Community Church, you mean?

SEGEL: Yeah. Yeah.

Now someone in town who uh ... was connected with MCC when it was just barely organized uh, I mean, you'd sort of stretch the definition a little bit to call it a church ... um, and he was sort of the minister there, and he went to Hawaii for some time, and now he's retired and back in town. Oh, for God's sake ... I'm getting middle-aged enough that I forget names. Um ... Denis Moore. I think that Denis spells it with one N. Um ... so if you want something about the early days of MCC, he would be uh ... a good person to see. Um ... um, I know I've got his name and phone number somewhere, but I cannot find it. My information retrieval system is breaking down on me. [LBH laughs]

Anyway, he's ... as I say, he's um ... back in town and retired. Um ... oh, and someone who was the — as I re-.. remem-... someone who's very important — is Steve Fulmer, F-U-L-M-E-R. Steve was one of the founding members of the Gay Men's Chorus, and he's still involved in the chorus. But besides that, I think — and here, I wasn't close to that, so I'm not sure — I think he was one of the people who helped to found the Cascade AIDS Project. So he's got two really important foundations to his credit in town. And he's been here ... I think as long as I have or longer. I wouldn't be surprised if it were longer. So he's also someone who would be you'd ... you would get a tremendous amount of information from, I think...

LBH:... are there two guys that founded that? The Chorus?

SEGEL: Well, another one ...

LBH: Because I wanna say that Michael is interviewing two ... two men that he said were ... had founded the Chorus together, or but I have no idea what their names might be.

SEGEL: One must have been Steve. And the other one is still there ... and naturally, I've forgotten his name ... too. He used to be the choirmaster at MCC as well. Um ... Gary Coleman.

LBH: Yes, I've heard that name. I'm sure that must be one of the ...

SEGEL: Um ... yeah, he's given here as having joined in '80, which is really when it started. And then um ... yeah, Steve Fulmer was '80 too. I think ... '80 also. I think those are the only two here ... well, there's one or two others who go back to 1980 who are still members. And one or two from '81 or '82. But those two, Steve and Gary, are the um ... really major um ... um ... they're the really major um ... founders who are still around so far as I know.

LBH: So why don't you tell me how you got involved with the chorus.

SEGEL: Well, I'm not a member, actually. As I like to put it, I have a serious disability: I can't carry a tune. [LBH laughs] From the beginning, really, I knew people who were in the chorus. And then back in the uh ... early '80s, well, it was around '83, '84, because I like to write ... uh, at that time I wrote a lot of parodies of Gilbert & Sullivan ... and I was friendly with Steve Fulmer, and he knew that. So he had me write a couple of parodies for the chorus, which they sang at one of their concerts. It was in Lincoln High School, I remember. And then I didn't do much else for th-1 always went to their concerts and so on; I knew some of the guys there. But beginning roughly — maybe um .. a half-dozen or so years ago, um ... I began to write some lyrics more regularly for them. Like there's a song that they use um ... um ... "We Gather Together." They've used that often as sort of the opening number, the overture for their holiday concerts in December. I wrote that, and then I did a Johann Strauss thing from Die Fledermaus, and that... the Fledermaus and "We Gather Together" they put in their CD, which came out um ... uh ... I think it was the end of 2003. And I've written some things for them since. There's something in there

- uh, peace ... peace lyrics. Um ... that I did for them uh ... last fall. Uh, and I've turned out.. I've become uh, almost without realizing it, also one of their major donors. And I'm on their fund development committee. So um ... I've just gradually gotten more involved ... more involved with them. And they're a very good group. They just won an Urban Pioneer Award the PSU School of Urban Affairs. I was at that dinner uh, a week ago. Last week. Yeah. Um ... uh that's a very important uh ... gay civic institution that's really important. They used to ... once a year — I don't know if they still do this — once a year, they would print in their program the list of their members who were lost to AIDS. And I've forgotten the last count, but it was something like a hundred and ten. Something like that. That was a real loss. The community um ... um ... in lots of ways, in terms of political activity and cultural activity, uh, suffered a great deal from AIDS. Yeah. We lost a lot of uh ... um ... lot of good people that way. Um ... Anything else I can - these are all sort of random things; I'm skipping around.

LBH: That's OK, skipping is fine. Uh, so how did you know Steve? You ... you knew him before you started doing the ...

SEGEL: I'm not sure; he was very friendly with a gay Reed student whom I knew, um ... who was here just as I... when I arrived, so I might have met him through that connection. I think that Reed student was one of the early members of the chorus, too. Yeah. It's hard to figure out um ... how I knew various people because the ... as I was told when I came here, Portland is a small... Portland is a big small town. And once you start to get to know people, you get the feeling that everybody knows everybody else. And um ... our lines of connection um ... uh ... keep criss-crossing. So you know someone in one way, and you meet him in another way. Yeah. That happens all the time.

LBH: So what are some of the differences that you see in the various places that you've lived ... uh, differences in the gay community here and other places?

SEGEL: Well, this is the only place that I've had an extended look at, because when I lived in Boston, I wasn't out at all, and then at Berkeley I was out for say the last two years I was there. And that's part of San Francisco, so that's a different ball game. And then uh ... I spent a couple of years in London, a little here, a little there ... um, and that's also very big. So that's that's uh, um ... not really comparable. And Berkeley, I remember ... it's interesting; people ... form their own um ... their own venues. There was a bar in Berkeley, or it may actually have been just over the line in Oakland, called the White Horse. It was on Telegraph Avenue; it was just a little bit over a mile from the Berkeley campus. And that was in effect the university's gay bar. I think it's changed very much since. I'm not even sure it's gay. But in the days that I was there, it had several rooms: the bar area and booths, and room to play pool, and a dancing room and so on and so on. And as you wandered from one conversational group to another, it was as if you would be wandering from one seminar to another. Because — not everyone there, of course — but a ... it seemed the majority of people there were university connected one way or another. So it had a very academic clientele. And that also made a difference there. You met people th- you ran into people there whom you saw on the campus, or vice-versa. So again, that was a way where the lines criss-crossed. Yeah.

LBH: Uh, is there a ... a formal organization for gay students at Reed that you're involved in, or is your invarv- involvement uh, informal? At Reed ...

SEGEL: A formal gay organization?

LBH: Yeah.

SEGEL: Uh, only for the students. There's they call it now the Queer Alliance. It's gone through various names over the years. Um ... it's much more ... I have to say it's much better organized now than it used to be. For a long time, they'd have some programs in the fall semester and then sorta fall apart by ... by December, January. But

they've been uh, fairly active. I had um ... a gathering here in October while the weather was still good uh .. in my backyard for uh, the gay and lesbian uh students, faculty, and staff. Now when I got here, um ... I think there were um ... maybe three other uh, gay male faculty who were sort of known as gay. Um, and after about... being here about six months or so, I had a ... in my old apartment where I used to live, I had a, a uh cocktail party for my gay colleagues, and some gay friends I had met already through GMT and elsewhere. And my gay colleagues said, "You know, this is the first time since we've been here that um ... the gay colleagues as such have met." And I said, "You guys have been here ten years before I have! What the hell have you been doing for ten years?" you know. Uh, now ... there are um ... let me see ... about uh two weeks ago, I invited the um ... the gay male faculty to come over here 'cuz I had just bought a DVD of History Boys, the movie. And how many did I invite? I think I invited at least ten. So faculty's a little bigger now; it was 90 then, now it's like a hundred and twenty or so, nominally. Um, but there are a lot more um ... gay faculty. And they're all more or less open. Well, open so far that if you um ... look at the staff or faculty directory, people list their spouse or partner in italics after their name, and there ... there are only, I think two or three lesbian faculty. They list their partners and the gay men faculty list their partners. Which wouldn't have happened thirty years ago. I don't remember when it did start, but it has started, so it's basically a very friendly ... a gay ... very gay-friendly atmosphere there. For a ti- for a few years, um, back around, uh, perhaps um ... I've forgotten when ... beginning perhaps uh ... ten or so years ago, the dean of students was an open lesbian. Her partner was a rabbi even. Go figure. Um ... so they've been ... and and when um ... someone, a f... woman friend of mine, an old student actually — was hired - this is some years ago - to be the new alumni director, the official press release from the college named her partner, who was a woman. So um ... uh there doesn't seem to be any problem there, at least not... not in recent years, and if there was a problem in earlier years, it wasn't one that I would have been aware of.

LBH: Why wouldn't you have been aware of it?

SEGEL: Well, because it's a prejudice you can hide. There are lots of prejudices you can hide ... well, any prejudice. Women, gays, blacks, Jews, whatever. Um ... one can always find a plausible reason to dislike somebody. Um ... and s- ag-... now and again, a straight colleague has told me that years back then, twenty to thirty years ago, they felt they saw some anti-gay prejudice, and I'm willing to believe them, only it was not something that I myself saw. Maybe I was naive, or maybe it was just, uh, well concealed.

LBH: Are there any other changes that you've seen uh, either within the gay community here in Portland, or in the relationship between the gay community and mainstream or whatever you wanna call it uh, over the years that you've been here?

SEGEL: Well, there's much more um ... in the last whatever, ten or fifteen years, much more positive contact. I remember when Tom Potter, as Chief of Police would always- — he had a lesbian daughter — would always march in the Gay Pride Parade. Um ... uh, a student I knew at Reed — gay student — male — was the son of a local rabbi. The rabbi and his wife started to march in the Gay Pride Parade! Um ... so there are still political problems with ballot measures and so on. Um ... I happen to think that the gay marriage thing was very badly handled, both locally by the county, and nationally by the movement, but that's water under the bridge already. Um ... so if... there may be prejudice, but again, it's no longer prejudice that's respectable. Um ... uh, last Thursday night, um ... was a PSU awards dinner in the Hilton. And three ... recipients got the Urban Pioneers Award. Gretchen Kafoury, who is on the city council and the state legislature, she introduced uh ... pro-gay legislation thirty years ago, though, of course, it didn't go anywhere. And then the Chorus. And then ... a development company whose name I don't quite remember ... the Gerdling something company. [LBH NOTE: Gerding Edlen Development Co.] Very progressive development. So, there were PSU people at the dinner - and we all had name tags with our connections -- and there were Chorus people, and there were friends of Gretchen, and there were real estate people for the

development people. And ... there were about fifteen of us sitting at two tables for the Chorus, but the Chorus sang during the dinner, so for the singing, a lot more guys who didn't want to pay \$125 for the dinner came in, so they set up risers at one end of this Hilton ballroom. And you had eighty guys there! Eighty ... which j- just blew you away in a sm- in a ballroom even. And I th- it occurred to me that many of these people, both the PSU and the business types there, that may - for many of them - that may have been the first time they were around openly gay people, or certainly an openly gay organiza- here are eighty gay guys, standing there singing! Um, and they were conducted by Gretchen, of all people, for one of the pieces. Um, so um ... I think that may have been a new experience for many of them.

Portland is the kind of place where that sort of thing can happen. And if um ... people didn't like it, they'd have to be quiet about their not liking it, you see. So um ... there's been a lot of progress that way. Um, back years ago when Frank Ivancie was mayor for a time, uh, there still was the occasional police raid in a gay bar, but then, at one gay function at Lewis and Clark, just briefly, I was introduced to one of Frank's sons, who was gay. So you never know. Um ... yeah.

Anything... anything else?

LBH: What about uh ... what about the political changes? Or how about... how about if you were ... king and got to determine how the next phase of uh, what's going on politically were to occur, how ... how do you think it should play out?

SEGEL: Well, I think we screwed up. If I had had my druthers, what we would have done about um ... gay marriage — both nationally and locally — first nail down domestic partnerships. And then more on from there to civil unions, and not utter the word "marriage." Just not utter the word. People would have opposed the other things anyway, but not with the vehemence that they opposed marriage. So you had the ... the Federal

Defense of Marriage Act, which was foolish, but you had that, and the constitutional amendment here and in about a dozen or so other states, which are ... are now very difficult to overturn because they're constitutional amendments. Um ... and I think we made more trouble for ourselves than we had to that way. So um ... I would've um ... I would've changed that. Um ... now it's interesting that Portland is also a center, I gather, of the evangelical community: there are several evangelical seminaries here; there are evangelical churches; um ... and they're outnumbered, but it means that they form a core of organizations. I would expect - I don't know - that using the conservative churches, they'll be able to get uh ... the ballot measures on the ballot to overturn what the legislature just did. Uh, and I think that that's um ... that's unfortunate.

That's unfortunate. Um ... on the other hand, the business community on the whole seems to be relatively pro-gay because they keep ... uh, having domestic partnership benefits for same-sex couples. They don't do that kind of thing for their health. They don't do it for their for out of pure goodwill. They do it because it serves their interests, and they will lose some gay uh, lose getting gay or lesbian employees if they didn't do that. And when you look at, like, in the Advocate or other things, um ... when you look at the corporations that advertise widely — national corporations — in um, in gay organs, um ... uh, it really is quite surprising to see some of them. I mean, um ... Absolut vodka for years and years. What would we d-... what gay film festival could function without Absolut vodka, y'know? [LBH laughs]

And similar things like that. Um, American Express. Wells Fargo. Uh, they're...they just realize they now have to do that. And that's a very positive sign, so ... so things are clearly changing, even though there are, as I say, pockets of resistance here and there.

LBH: So what... why do you think it is that people — I mean, I have my ideas, but I would like to hear yours — of why people do get so bent out of shape when you use the M-word instead of saying domestic partnership or civil unions, or other things like that?

SEGEL: Oh, because the M-word is religious.

LBH: Well, I agree, but. [Laughs]

SEGEL: And it means you're - it means you're giving legitimacy to something whose legitimacy they don't want to accept. Um ... uh ... I think it comes down to that. That marriage is a sacrament. Um ... and allowing — [whispers] gay people? lesbians? queers? — into the sacrament... um ... uh, that violates a lot of things. It's like um ... for example, um ... oh, maybe ten years ago, I attended the wedding of the daughter of a g- of close friends of mine. Outside New York. Jewish wedding. Um ... woman rabbi, reform. That is very liberal. And I'm still not quite used to the idea of a J- of a woman rabbi. Now the groom's family knew she was lesbian. But they didn't tell the bride's family she was lesbian, because the bride's family was s- at least the parents were somewhat religious, and they just didn't wanna rock the boat. So there are ... there are these differences still. Still. Um ... but it's treading on um ... religious ground that is the most sensitive. And you've got a situation now where the evangelicals have this kind of leverage through the Republican Party nationally. And locally. Um ... and so it creates problems that way.

LBH: What was your religious background growing up?

SEGEL: Uh, Jewish. But I'm quite uh ... I'm quite secular now. Although I call myself a High Church Atheist. [LBH laughs] I know a fair amount about religion and, and uh ... now and again I have gone friends to a liberal service like uh, First Congregational downtown, say, which is a very pro-gay ... pro-gay church. Um ... uh ... I can handle religion as long as it doesn't make uh ... absolute claims the way the evangelicals do, or the way um ... uh, the Catholic church does. Um ... but that's - that's another story. [LBH laughs] Anything else?

LBH: I think we've covered a lot of the things that uh ... that I was interested in hearing about. Is there anything that you think I might be missing?

SEGEL: No, not offhand.

LBH: It doesn't... it also doesn't have to be about the community; it can be you personally, or ...

SEGEL: No, I think I've ... I think I've um ... touched on just about everything I can think of offhand.

LBH: Okay. Well, in that case, the ... the last question I would have for you is uh ... when you're thinking of the future historians who will undoubtedly be listening to this or reading the transcripts, what... how would you summarize yourself for them? What would you like them to know about you?

SEGEL: Oh, well it took me a long time to come out. Took me a long time to get used to it. Um ... though that seems like a long time ago, and now I cannot imagine being other than out. Um ... uh there's actually a group within the American Historical Association — there's a group of which I'm a member. Um ... um ... uh ... which supports um ... uh ... the writing of uh ... gay and lesbian history. I don't do that kind of history; I'm ... I do diplomatic history. Uh, but I joined some time ago, and the group has become really qui-... at first it was sort of a small [fish?] thing, but it's become quite respectable. We have a couple of papers at each AAHA convention, and so on.

Um ... so um ... it's ... it is interesting how much um ... gay things are becoming an open part of American life. That is really... if you had tried to predict that thirty years ago, I don't think you would have predicted that. It would have ... that things would have moved quickly or that solidly.

LBH: And what do you predict for thirty years from now?

SEGEL: Oh, you never know. Maybe we'll have a gay president. [LBH laughs] The mind boggles.

LBH: Okay. On that note ... I think that's a fantastic way to end.

SEGEL: Right.

[End of Interview]