Special Issue
Listening to and Learning from LGBTQ Lives

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“In People’s Faces for Lesbian and Gay Rights”: Stories of Activism in Madison, Wisconsin, 1970 to 1990

Scott C. Seyforth and Nichole Barnes

Abstract: During the 1970s and 1980s, activists pushed Madison, Wisconsin, to the forefront of the national movement for gay rights. While midwestern participation in gay liberation has not been well documented or explored, the following article traces the role of local Madison organizers in this wider struggle for equality through the use of oral history. Using interviews from a collection of oral histories from the local LGBT community, this article chronicles the activism and political organizing that led to the early election of out officials, the nation’s first statewide gay rights law, and campus protests over the ban on homosexuals serving in the military.

Keywords: activism, gay civil rights, gay liberation, LGBT history, politics, student protest.

Historians and social critics have yet to assess fully the national mass efforts of the LGBT liberation movement. Much of the written history of this movement has been limited to documenting efforts in large coastal cities, leaving the impression—that gay liberation was not happening throughout the country. The Madison’s LGBTQ Community, 1960s to Present Oral History Project provides enriching evidence that there was a thriving and progressive gay-liberation movement in Madison, Wisconsin, during the gay-liberation period. Interviews document that in the 1970s and 1980s Madison was a frontrunner in electing out gay officials, in helping pass the first statewide gay civil rights law in the nation, and in protesting the ban on military service of homosexuals. In these ways, the project shows that efforts in Madison, Wisconsin, were at the forefront of a political mass movement at the national level.

For their generous assistance with this article, the authors would like to thank Troy Reeves, Michele Besant, Joe Elder, the staff of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Archives, the editorial staff and peer reviewers of the Oral History Review, and the many narrators of the Madison LGBTQ oral history project who shared their experiences.
The Madison’s LGBTQ Community Oral History Project was developed by the head of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Oral History Program, Troy Reeves. When Reeves arrived at the university in 2007, he inherited the oral history collection, which encompassed roughly 2,800 hours of recordings within over 850 interviews. The collection included almost no LGBT content. Reeves previously worked as an oral historian for the Idaho State Historical Society. There he created a collection of oral histories documenting both sides of the 1994 statewide referendum, Proposition 1, which sought to restrict the civil liberties and minority status of gays, before it failed in the November election.

Seeing a need for LGBT inclusion in the archives’ oral history collection, Reeves approached several University of Wisconsin-Madison LGBT faculty and staff about creating a local LGBT oral history collection in 2008. A group was formed that worked training interviewers, publicizing the project, and providing outreach to create interest in collecting interviews. Because of the deep connections between the city of Madison and the University of Wisconsin (UW), it was decided not to limit the collection to just university-related histories, but to focus more broadly on the larger LGBT community. Oral history was compelling methodology for this project because it could capture a history that had not been well recorded or preserved and allow LGBT community members to tell their stories in their own words.1

At the time of this writing, the Madison’s LGBTQ Community Oral History Project is the only ongoing institutional program in the state of Wisconsin addressing this historiographical void. The Wisconsin State Historical Society does not maintain an active oral history program and lacks the funding to engage in the kind of outreach and collection development that the project requires. Similarly, current Madison LGBT community organizations (LGBT community center, LGBT political organizations) lack the mission, infrastructure, and/or archival experience to implement or sustain such a program.

Comprising over one hundred interviews and nearly two hundred hours, the LGBT collection covers a wide range of topics, including activism, personal histories detailing family and educational backgrounds, careers, coming-out stories, the construction of identity, and the role of community. The narratives captured in these interviews span the second half of the twentieth century, beginning around 1950 and continuing to the present day. The collection allows researchers to gain a more nuanced understanding of the individuals who played a role in shaping the Madison LGBT community in years past and those who continue to contribute to its vibrancy today. Interviews were planned according to standards and principles established by the Oral History Association and conducted by UW-Archives staff with input from community volunteers and

university students. With several years of successful development and growth complete, the project aims to build on this momentum in order to augment the collection and promote access through digitization and outreach.

This article will detail a small section of the collection pertaining to the political work of local LGBT advocates involved in early efforts to elect out gay officials, pass the first statewide gay civil rights law in the US, and start a national discussion about the military’s ban of homosexuals.

**Beginnings of a Local Movement**

The organized, public gay-liberation movement in Madison began in the fall of 1969, just months after the Stonewall Rebellion in New York. Several men and women gathered at St. Francis House, the liberal-leaning Episcopal student center near campus, to form the Madison Alliance for Homosexual Equality (MAHE), the first public gay and lesbian organization in the state of Wisconsin. “The first time I went there, I had to circle around the building three times before I could get up the nerve to go in,” said early member Jim Yeadon.² The group started primarily as a social group, meeting weekly in the basement of the Episcopal student center, holding consciousness-raising workshops and occasionally organizing larger functions in the upstairs sanctuary. MAHE member Judy Greenspan recalled these times, saying, “Those of us who came out then came out with a lot of baggage, a lot of homophobia, and a lot of self-hatred. Every time I would speak, I felt like I peeled away one layer of self-hatred.”³ By spring of the following year, MAHE had grown into a more politically active organization, holding teach-ins, dances, media appearances, and its first public protest. In the fall of 1970, modeled after the Gay Liberation Front in New York, the Madison group changed its name to the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and announced its mission to “promote interaction and solidarity within the gay community and to raise the consciousness of the straight world to the problems of sexist oppression.”⁴ As GLF participant Michael Bemis remembered, the organization created a sense of belonging and a feeling “that we had a place in the world and that we weren’t so afraid of being exposed as gay men and women.”⁵

² James Yeadon, recorded campus talk, 2009, OH #945, digital audio file (hereafter DAF), Campus Voices Oral History Program: Madison’s LGBTQ Community, 1960s to Present (hereafter CVOH Madison), University Archives and Records Management (hereafter UARM).
³ Judy Greenspan, interviewed by Scott Seyforth, 2009, OH #1420, DAF, CVOH Madison, UARM.
⁵ Michael Bemis, interviewed by Bennet Goldstein, Scott Seyforth, and Sam Fauble, 2012, OH #1256, DAF, CVOH Madison, UARM.
In Madison, Politics Is the Business of the City

Like the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in New York, the local GLF group used “zaps” or public demonstrations to call attention to issues of injustice toward gays. An example occurred in spring and summer of 1971 when only one bar in Madison allowed gays to congregate and no bar in Madison allowed gays to dance publicly. The GLF and the newly formed lesbian women’s group, Gay Sisters, staged a series of demonstrations to “liberate” straight bars in Madison to allow dancing by gay couples.

Judy Greenspan, a founder of Gay Sisters, recalled, “We used to go to bars and claim them, make them gay and take some space on the dance floor, particularly bars where we’d hear that a couple of men went and were asked to leave the dance floor.” For Greenspan, these activities reflected how “we were young and we liked to dance, and we liked to be in people’s faces.” Gay Sisters and GLF members would go in groups to straight bars where gay male couples had been asked to leave the dance floor and dance in same-sex pairs. As a result, bar owners often turned off the music, arguments broke out with straight patrons, and occasionally fistfights were instigated by straight bar patrons.

Fig. 1. Members of the Madison Gay Sisters, ca. 1971. (Image courtesy of Judy Greenspan.)

Perhaps the most noteworthy zap-like form of direct action developed as a challenge to the 1972 Madison School Board ruling that allowed principals to ban the Gay Liberation Front from speaking to sociology classes in public high schools. Activists decided to use the electoral arena to bring attention to the ban by running an openly gay candidate for school board since the policy was not only against education, “it was against free speech. It was against students learning maybe about themselves.”

To hear Ron McCrea further discuss the 1972 Madison School Board ruling, Judy Greenspan’s run for the board, the 2001 Madison School Board apology, and the current state of LGBTQ issues in Madison schools, go to: Audio excerpt 1. http://ohr.oxfordjournals.org/lookup/suppl/doi:10.1093/ohr/ohv076/-/DC1/43-1_Seyforth_Barnes_In_Peoples_Faces_audio_1

Greenspan volunteered to run for school board on a platform that advocated the passage of a high-school student bill of rights, an end to discriminatory practices against women in education, and the right of gay people to live and speak openly in the high schools. Official school board debates were held in the schools. And as a candidate, Greenspan could circumvent the policy against homosexuals, noting, “They had banned lesbian and gays from speaking in the schools, but they couldn’t ban me as a candidate from speaking in the schools.” During the campaign, there were numerous interviews in local media outlets including television, city and high-school newspapers, and an appearance in front of the school board itself.

Although Greenspan did not win in the primary, her presence on the ballot helped local gay activists spread their message. “For two and a half months, I was in people’s faces for lesbian and gay rights,” Greenspan explained. She elaborated, “It was using the electoral arena to put something out there . . . We were a challenge to the straight establishment, and we were a challenge to the closeted lesbian and gay establishment.” Because of the amount of media coverage Greenspan’s run received, others also recalled the importance of her

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9 Ron McCrea, interviewed by Troy Reeves, 2008, OH #903, DAF, CVOH Madison, UARM.
Fig. 2. One of Judy Greenspan’s posters from her campaign listed her main platforms, one of which was to support gay rights. (Image courtesy of the UW-Madison Archives.)
run. For Ron McCrea, Greenspan’s efforts helped “to raise that issue and get it out there in the public discussion” in a way that was unusual for the time.\footnote{McCrea, interview.}


While Greenspan laid the groundwork for openly gay political candidates in Madison, Jim Yeadon, an openly gay law student, was the first to gain a political place at the table for the LGBT community in Wisconsin. In October 1976, Yeadon was elected by the Madison City Council to complete the term of a resigned councilman from the student district.

Yeadon came out in the papers the day after being appointed.\footnote{Jone Satran, “Yeadon Aware of Close Scrutiny,” \textit{Daily Cardinal}, October 18, 1976.} The twenty-six-year-old subsequently ran as an out candidate for the vacant office six months later. Yeadon built support for his candidacy among the students in his university district by speaking in dorms, fraternity houses, and student co-ops, where he found he was often the first openly gay person students had ever met. “I had some wonderful straight people who worked on my campaign who lived in the dorms who had never met a gay person; they had no idea there was such a thing,” explained Yeadon.\footnote{Yeadon, recorded campus talk.}

Once elected, Yeadon found that as one of the few out elected officials in the country he received mail from both from closeted gay people in search of advice and support as well as from those vehemently opposed to out public officials. “Some really lonely, lonely people thinking they were the only gay person in Iowa or wherever, would write me letters; I’d get these really heartbreaking
kind of things,” Yeadon recalled. In Madison, this sense of isolation was reiter-
ated, with one interviewee remembering “so clearly, during the sixties especially,
but even during the seventies, very often thinking I’m the only one in the world.
That’s ridiculous, but that’s how you felt. And that’s how many gays and lesbians
felt that they were the only ones.” Yeadon also received death threats
throughout his term for being an out gay elected official; “I kept a file at the
city council office, ‘Threats on Life,’ and when one came in I would stick it in
there in case anything ever happened to me,” he recalled.

Yeadon was elected to a full term on the Madison City Council in April
1977, becoming the fourth openly gay politician elected to office in the nation
(the fifth, Harvey Milk, who is often cited as being the first, was elected to the
San Francisco Board of Supervisors in November of that same year). The his-
tory of this movement often excludes midwestern candidates, yet three of the
first four openly gay elected officials were from the Midwest: Kathy Kozachenko
(Ann Arbor, Michigan, City Council, 1972), Allan Spear (Minnesota Senate,
1976), and Jim Yeadon (Madison City Council, April 1977). All of the first four
openly gay elected officials in the US (including Elaine Noble, Massachusetts
House of Representatives, 1974) were elected from districts that included large

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20 Bemis, interview.
21 Yeadon, recorded campus talk.
student populations close to area colleges and universities. The contributions of student activism and educational environments were important contributing factors in the early gay liberation story and were certainly important parts of the political climate in Madison, Wisconsin. Madison was, and remains, a unique city in Wisconsin as it is the seat of the state government and the home of the state’s major research university. The presence of an educational institution that fostered learning, debating, and participating in political discourse contributed to the creation of Madison’s engaged LGBT population.\(^23\)

Throughout the 1980s Madison was home to the largest number of out elected officials internationally. In 1989 Madison was home to 50 percent of all openly LGBT elected and appointed officials in the country.\(^24\) By 1993, Madison accounted for just 3 percent. This decrease resulted not from a loss of offices in Madison but from an increase in the number of out elected officials across the country, rising from fourteen to a hundred and thirty.\(^25\) Longtime out Dane County Board member Dick Wagner described access for gays to the Madison political system as “incredibly open compared to many other places. That’s why later on we had more gay and lesbian elected officials here than anywhere else, because the power access was so open compared to New York where you had to work in ward politics and Democratic clubs for years and years, or Chicago where you had to have a mega war chest as an alderman to run.”\(^26\) Others reiterated the importance of political engagement, noting how activists “used all of the tools and handles of reform that were available to us. And this meant . . . we would use the political process.”\(^27\) Since the mid-1980s, approximately 10 percent of the Madison City Council and County Board have been out elected officials.


\(^{24}\) Madison out elected officials in 1989 included: Richard Wagner, then Dane County Board chair; Madison Alder Jim McFarland, (District 8); Dane County Supervisor Earl Bricker (District 9); Madison Alder Ricardo Gonzalez (District 4); Dane County Supervisor Kathleen Nichols (District 2); Dane County Supervisor Tammy Baldwin (District 8). Wagner was elected to the Dane County Board in 1980 (District 6) and Nichols was elected to the County Board (District 2) in 1982. They both came out in 1983. Baldwin served as Dane County Supervisor (District 8) from 1986-1994. Madison elected Jim McFarland, an out Republican, for District 8 Alder in 1987. Gonzalez was the first out elected Hispanic official in the country. Bricker was a Dane County Supervisor in District 9 beginning in 1988, and had earlier served openly on the staff of Wisconsin Governor Tony Earl.


\(^{26}\) R. Richard “Dick” Wagner, interviewed by Troy Reeves and Vicki Tobias, 2008, OH #904, DAF, CVOH Madison, UARM.

\(^{27}\) McCrea, interview.
First Statewide Gay-Rights Bill

Over a decade of gay-liberation organizing in Madison and Milwaukee culminated in the early 1980s with an initiative to pass the first statewide bill that would ban discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment, housing, and public accommodation. The success of the bill was due, in part, to the efforts of two people: Leon Rouse and David Clarenbach. Rouse worked from outside the political system, including organizing clergy and gays around the state, and Clarenbach galvanized support for the bill from both political parties within the legislature.

Rouse, an openly gay political science major at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, worked for over two years to help pass the version of the bill that he first helped draft in May 1979. The bill came at a time of national antigay backlash led by Anita Bryant, and Rouse realized that it would need support from religious leaders if it were to be passed at a statewide level. Rouse involved Archbishop Weakland, of the Milwaukee Archdiocese, who helped get the proposal discussed at the October 1979 meeting of the Greater Milwaukee Conference on Religion and Urban Affairs. The Committee for Fundamental Judeo-Christian Human Rights emerged at this conference. Led by Rouse, this committee helped organize Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Methodist, and Jewish religious leaders to garner support for the legislation and to write letters of support for the bill to their representatives.²⁸

Within the legislature, one of the main sponsors of the bill in the assembly was Clarenbach, a Democrat and a progressive legislator who was first elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly in 1974. Clarenbach and others worked to organize support for the bill from both political parties.²⁹ According to Clarenbach, it “took the efforts of many individuals and organizations to get the gay rights bill passed, including people from different political partisan viewpoints, from the religious community, people from the gay and lesbian movement who may have wanted to take a more confrontational approach.”³⁰

An interesting topic that emerges from oral histories of the LGBT community is the idea of the role of outness and straight privilege in the political arena. According to Rouse, “Some of us were speaking for us, but not perceived to be us.”³¹ These efforts allowed some closeted gays in positions of power who were perceived as straight to lead straight people to become more welcoming of gay people. An example was Clarenbach, who was out within parts of the

²⁸ See Wisconsin’s Escape 5, no. 6 (March 26, 1982): 20, 22–24; for more on the role of religious leaders in the gay-rights movement, see Barbara Lightener, interviewed by Andrea Rottman, 2010, OH #997, DAF, CVOH Madison, UARM.
²⁹ See Dan Curd, interviewed by Andrea Rottman, 2010, OH #1101, DAF, CVOH Madison, UARM.
³⁰ David Clarenbach, interviewed by Andrea Rottman, 2010, OH #1102, DAF, CVOH Madison, UARM.
³¹ WYOU’s Nothing to Hide (July 4, 1987).
Madison community at this time but not out publicly. Archbishop Weakland was a closeted gay man at this time, coming out after his retirement in his autobiography. Clarenbach described the support provided by leaders perceived to be straight but who privately identified otherwise in the following way:

Some people had to be quite sub-rosa and played a very quiet and behind-the-scenes role, even a subterranean-like in generating public support. And I mean by that there were some people who were not out openly as gay and lesbian, yet were supporting the bill and contributing to the cause. Those efforts I still attribute to that of the gay and lesbian community. Because people are gay and lesbian, whether they are out or not. And if someone had to use the mantle of a police officer, or a school teacher, or a minister, or, god forbid, a priest, or a nun, or a rabbi, who for whatever reasons could not be out –those efforts still counted, and were still essential. They were necessary prerequisites to getting the bill passed.

These efforts culminated on February 25, 1982, when Republican Governor Lee Dreyfus signed the nation’s first civil-rights law based on sexual orientation.

The governor centered his passage of the law around privacy, saying, “It is a fundamental tenet of the Republican Party that government ought not intrude in the private lives of individuals where no state purpose is served, and there is nothing more private or intimate than who you live with and who you love.” For Clarenbach, the passage of the gay-rights bill demonstrated the educational process involved in creating laws, and how “laws unto themselves do not change public view[s] towards our community, but they are a vehicle from which social change can take place.”

To hear David Clarenbach discuss laws as a vehicle to assist in social change and utilizing public pressure to get the votes needed to pass Wisconsin’s gay rights law in 1982, go to:


The benefits of the work by Clarenbach and others was felt almost immediately and allowed gays and lesbians more access to the political process. In their joint

32 Clarenbach, interview.
34 Clarenbach, interview.
36 Clarenbach, interview.
interview, Sue Behnke and Linda Rahieri described the positive effects of the nondiscrimination legislation that “really opened up a lot, in my eyes, for us,” noting that they were less fearful that their sexuality would be used against them in their work settings and in their court battle for child custody.37

Within this political narrative, the oral histories of the collection also reveal how individuals at the grassroots level were organizing. These local activists sometimes viewed political figures and their role within the movement in different, sometimes critical ways. Oral histories are particularly useful in showing the opinions and activist approaches to gay rights in Madison throughout the latter half of the twentieth century.38

Campus Activism Ignites a National Movement

The nationwide mass movement against the Department of Defense policy that barred homosexuals from military service began in Wisconsin, based on the new

37 Sue Behnke and Linda Ranieri, interviewed by Pat Calchina, 2011, OH #1177, DAF, CVOH Madison, UARM.
38 See Barbara Lightner, interviewed by Scott Seyforth, 2009, OH #997, DAF, and Barbara Lightner, interviewed by Andrea Rottman, 2010, OH #997, DAF, CVOH Madison, UARM. See also Curd, interview.
protections afforded through the 1982 state gay-rights bill. During the 1980s, the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) in the United States offered military training to college students at over five hundred campuses in exchange for tuition scholarships and the promise to serve as an officer in the armed forces upon graduation. US military policy at the time stated that lesbians and gay men were ineligible to join the training program. This generated a contradiction between ROTC policy and Wisconsin’s new state gay-rights bill and UW campus policies passed in the 1970s protecting students against discrimination based on sexual orientation. Challenges to the ROTC policy surfaced almost immediately. In 1983, Wisconsin State Attorney General Bronson La Follette announced that discrimination against homosexuals by ROTC at UW campuses did not violate state law. La Follette said that state laws “directing maximum utilization of federal resources for state and local governmental units” prevailed. Additionally, the attorney general argued that forcing ROTC compliance with the antidiscrimination protections would result in the loss of state and federal contracts and thus several million dollars. “It is unlikely that the Legislature intended such severe economic disruptions,” said La Follette.39 This policy sparked a decade of activism at UW-Milwaukee and UW-Madison.

During the 1982–83 academic year, Leon Rouse and another student at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Eric Jernberg, began to pressure the institution to suspend participation in ROTC in order to meet the terms of the new state statute. UW-Milwaukee had been looking at ways to revise its contract with the army since adding sexual orientation to the university’s nondiscrimination clause in 1978. A Faculty Senate subcommittee, which included Jernberg as a student representative, was organized to study the problem. The committee presented the senate with the proposal of removing the ROTC program from campus. The Faculty Senate voted in May 1985 to oust the ROTC program from campus if the armed forces did not change their policy by 1988.

UW-Milwaukee was the first campus in the country to challenge the ROTC program. Disgruntled faculty mounted a petition for a recall vote at another full faculty meeting the following September. At this meeting, the faculty overturned its previous decision and voted to keep the ROTC program despite its conflict with university policy and state law.40

39 “Law allows ROTC bias against homosexuals,” Wisconsin State Journal, April 6, 1983
To hear James Steakley discuss organizing faculty to force ROTC compliance with antidiscrimination protections, petitioning faculty for a special meeting of the faculty, and a description of the 1989 faculty vote, go to:


Similar efforts had been underway at Madison during this same time. In 1984, the Madison Faculty Senate narrowly defeated a move to force the Military Science Department to comply with state and university laws prohibiting discrimination against homosexuals. By the 1985–86 academic year, a student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who was inspired by the Milwaukee efforts, Richard Villasenor, started organizing others to force ROTC to abide by the state law and university policy or leave campus. Villasenor’s efforts interested faculty members, including professors Joe Elder, Michael Olneck, Claudia Card, James Steakley, and others, who formed a group called Faculty against Discrimination in University Programs.

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43 See James “Jim” Steakley, interviewed by Troy Reeves, 2010, OH #1088, DAF, CVOH Madison, UARM; See also “Campus Life: Wisconsin; In Rare Vote, Faculty to Decide on R.O.T.C.,” *New York Times* December 3,
The Faculty against Discrimination group soon gathered enough signatures to require Chancellor Donna Shalala to call for a special full meeting of the general faculty. Other engaged faculty members felt that current university policies should adhere to precedents that found discrimination to be “unacceptable and that we would not ever host an organization on our campus that would discriminate.” The faculty convened on December 4, 1989—by which time Villasenor had graduated—specifically to “vote on whether the faculty would request the Board of Regents to terminate the contracts, because these ROTC units were in violation of the state, city, and campus statements.” The result of the meeting was a vote of 386 to 248 in favor of asking the University Board of Regents to sever the relationship with ROTC by May 1993 unless the program reversed its longstanding policy of barring homosexuals.

The University of Wisconsin faculty vote for the rights of lesbians and gay men and against the military policy was thus the country’s first such university measure; there was a flurry of media coverage, which inspired activism on campuses around the country throughout the spring of 1990. In the year following the UW-Madison vote, more than sixty schools across the country engaged in the movement, making these grassroots efforts an ongoing national news story. In 1991, over 125 campus student organizations participated in the April National Day of Coordinated Action against Discriminatory Policies in ROTC. At the same time, the 148 universities and colleges represented by the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges voted at their annual meeting in favor of the Department of Defense changing its policy barring homosexuals from service. The swell of public support also encouraged many closeted gay and lesbian military members to challenge the ban. Competing bills were introduced in Congress—one introducing legislation to


44 Martha Gaines, interviewed by Troy Reeves, 2013, OH #1304, DAF, CVOH Madison, UARM.
45 Elder, interview; See also Joseph “Jay” Hatheway, interviewed by Troy Reeves, 2012, OH #1292, DAF, CVOH Madison, UARM.
deny federal funds to any college or university that did not allow ROTC on campus, while the other offered legislation to prohibit discrimination by the armed forces on the basis of sexual orientation.\textsuperscript{52} Controversy surrounding the ROTC policy continued to grow, and by 1992, the issue became part of a national political discussion on gay rights during the presidential election.\textsuperscript{53} Democratic candidate Bill Clinton campaigned promising to remove the ban. Once in office in 1992, Clinton conceded to the military, creating a federal policy that enforced keeping service members in the closet in “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, Don’t Pursue.”\textsuperscript{54} After over two decades of sustained activism, “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” was officially repealed in 2011 under President Barack Obama.\textsuperscript{55}

Conclusion

The interviews that comprise the University of Wisconsin Archives’ LGBTQ collection reveal the stories of the individuals who pushed for new ways of thinking, learning, engaging, and being with members of the campus and wider Madison community about LGBT rights. The oral accounts retold in these interviews also demonstrate how these efforts motivated diverse groups across the campus, the state, and the country to reevaluate ideas of equality, the political process, and power on a large scale. Through the oral histories held in the UW Archives, a more nuanced depiction of the gay-rights movement in Madison becomes apparent as the individual stories reveal the dynamics of the political movement both on the ground and within existing political structures.

The University of Wisconsin Archives holds a multitude of stories about those who helped instigate change, in addition to the stories described here. These include accounts of the organization of the lesbian/feminist communities; the AIDS crisis and responses to it; efforts for marriage equality, parenting rights, and equal protections for gay families; the evolution of the campus climate in Madison; and

challenges to prejudices within the wider educational system within the city.\textsuperscript{56} While the larger story of Madison’s history of the queer-rights movement remains to be written, the LGBT collection waits for future scholars to engage with its rich stories of the individual and the political. The LGBT project at Madison has the ability to share “knowing what’s happened before us, what’s happened in the past, and how hard some of those battles were to fight, and what efforts were made to gain what we have, that we don’t lose it again and have to start over every decade or every two or three decades. And so we protect what we have and we move forward with that.”\textsuperscript{57} This article is an attempt to offer an example of how a local oral history collection can be used to examine efforts in a mass movement and to shed light on the vibrant history of Madison’s early contributions to the LGBT civil-rights movement.

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\textsuperscript{56} Within the UW collection, for more on lesbian/feminist organizing, see Mariamne Whately, interviewed by Kellea Miller, 2009, OH #948, DAF; DJ Wipperfurth, interviewed by Pat Calchina, 2009, OH #942, DAF; Linda Lenzke, interviewed by Leanne Gray, 2009, OH#1000, DAF; Sue Goldwomon, interviewed by Abbie Hill, 2010, OH #1105, DAF; for more on the AIDS crisis, see Margaret “Marge” Sutinen, interviewed by Bennet Goldstein and Sam Fauble, 2012, OH #1286, DAF; and Bemis, interview. In terms of marriage, parenting, and families, see Alix Olson and Martha Popp, interviewed by Pat Calchina, 2011, OH #1124, DAF; Crystal Hyslop, interviewed by Linda Lenzke, 2009, OH #1001. On the evolution of the campus climate, see Alnisa Allgood, interviewed by Jason Orne, 2009, OH #009, DAF; Lori Berquam, interviewed by Paras Bansal, 2012, OH #1257, DAF; Mary K. Rouse, interviewed by Christine Haas, 2012, OH #1284, DAF; Sam Hsieh, interviewed by Sam Fauble, 2012, OH #1272, DAF; pertaining to the education system, see Sue Behnke and Linda Ranieri, interviewed by Pat Calchina, 2011, OH #1177; Bonnie Augusta, interviewed by Christine Haas, 2012, OH #1254, DAF.

\textsuperscript{57} Linda Lenzke interviewed by Leanne Gray, 2009, OH #1000, DAF; CVOH Madison, UARM.