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The Bancroft Library

University of California  
Berkeley, California

Phyllis Lyon  
Minority Politics in San Francisco, 1964-1996

Interviews conducted by  
Martin Meeker  
in 2005

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Audio File 1 Phyllis Lyon 01 02-23-05

1-00:00:00

Lyon: [off tape conversation] And a lot of them had been thrown out of seminaries. Because I remember one time when we were worried about a riot because of what happened in Watts, some bad things that had happened here. And somebody suggested that everybody in the Tenderloin who could, should wear a clerical collar if they had one. And poof, the streets were full of these queer guys that had clerical collars.

Meeker: Really?

Lyon: Yeah.

Meeker: What the idea behind that?

Lyon: Well, I guess they thought that it would calm things down.

Meeker: OK.

Lyon: Or that people wouldn't hurt clerics, or something. I don't know what the idea was. It was one of those crazy ideas that went over very well. But after the raid on the [Council of Religion and the Homosexual] ball in 1965 -- January 1, 1965 -- [the complaints] brought about a liaison from the police department, Elliot Blackstone, and he became, for awhile there, one of the world's leading experts on transgenders or transsexuals, because there were so many in the Tenderloin. And I remember going down to the dining-room at Glide, because there was this conference going on of transsexuals, and I wandered in and this man with this big bouffant hair-do was talking about the fact that he is an aeronautical engineer but what he *really* wants to do is to be a stenographer, a typist, and I am going "huh?" Because in the women's movement, which was going on, nobody wanted to be a steno, everybody wanted to be an aeronautical engineer or something like that. It was so crazy.

Meeker: In this period, in 1964-1965, in addition to the kind of interesting gender strife that was going on in the Tenderloin, there was a lot of racial and ethnic strife that was going on in the rest of the city.

Lyon: Yeah, right.

Meeker: When you were participating with Glide and, maybe at this point, your participation with the DOB was beginning to taper off a little bit.

Lyon: Yes, it wasn't too much after that, but Del quit before I did. That was later in the 60s.

Meeker: You played a big role in doing that conference in 1966, right, the “Ten days in August”.

Lyon: DOB was part of that.

Meeker: So, you were still very active in DOB at that point?

Lyon: Yes, in 1966.

Meeker: In the couple of years leading up to that, clearly, you were focusing on work with CRH and the DOB...

Lyon: And also Citizens Alert. Citizens Alert got started because of the riots in Watts. Actually, we were planning to do something because of the police out at Northern Station who were systematically attacking gay men and telling them to get out of town and beating them up. So, we were going to have some kind of a method where we watched what the cops were doing -- then the riots happened down in Watts and we thought, whoops, there are other people involved in trouble with the cops, too. So, we shifted and started Citizens Alert, which covered anybody who was having trouble with the cops. There was a minister from Boston, Bob Trees, who was out for the summer to work with Glide and he went mostly with the people that had problems. He went off to talk to the cops about it.

Meeker: How did Citizens Alert work?

Lyon: First of all, what we did was to try to get all the different organizations like the ACLU and the Jewish organizations and so on [involved] and we figured out that it wasn't going to work too well if they knew we were a bunch of gay people so we got Cecil [Williams] to act as the chair of this first meeting. And I remember people kept saying, well, who's putting this together and we would say, well, it's just a bunch of concerned citizens and Cecil's going to see what's happening. He is going to chair the meeting.

[break in discussion]

Meeker: I am interested in the 1960s in general, but I guess, can you just pick up where you were talking about this meeting with Cecil and people asking as the who are you?

Lyon: You want me to say it over.

One of the things that I did at Glide, and theoretically, I was supposed to be an administrative assistant to [Rev.] Ted McIlvenna, but he never had much for me to do and so basically, I answered the phone for him. The rest of the time, I became a kind of switchboard for gay rights; gay people called and wanted to know about this and that and the other thing. I was also the headquarters

then for CRH for awhile. I did all the media announcements, etc. It was kind of neat. Glide paid me and I just worked for the community.

It was a time, also, when I didn't have any problems going on radio or TV as long as they would have me, which wasn't very often. Everybody at Glide knew I was their token lesbian.

What Glide was doing was not the church, not the church at all: it was Glide Urban Center and they started in the 60s because -- at least this is the story I was told -- the tax people, the IRS, came in and said to them, you have got too damn much money. You have got all this money, because they had a lot that Lizzie Glide gave to build the church, and they also built a building next to the church which is still there, which was supposed to be apartments but it wasn't quite tall enough to pay off as apartments, so it became the offices. They also owned the Hotel Californian up the street, so they said, either you start putting that money to work for good causes or we are going to tax it. So, somebody got the bright idea and they started the Glide Urban Center and hired Louis Durham to head it. He eventually hired Don Kuhn, Ted Ilvenna, and Cecil [Williams]. Their whole idea was to explain to other ministers around the country about what happens in an urban setting and how to deal with diversity.

Meeker: You felt like you were being on display, then, for people to sort of come and prod and poke.

Lyon: Well, no, they didn't do that. Our offices were on either side of a long hallway and one time, I heard this guy say, I understand you have homosexuals here and I would like to see one! What was so funny about a lot of it was that that a lot of these guys were gay.

Meeker: What guys?

Lyon: The ministers that came. B. J. Stiles, who is living out here now; he was the editor of the Methodist magazine, national magazine, *Motive*, and I think he got kicked out of that when he ran a piece that we did on lesbians. "The Realities of Lesbianism," I think it was.

Meeker: Can we go back, just to finish off what you were talking about Citizens Alert.

Lyon: As we figured out what we wanted to do, which was to cover anybody that was having trouble with the cops -- and cops were not very friendly in those days, and certainly, we didn't have a very friendly feeling towards them -- and so we decided that we wanted to get more organizations involved and something like the ACLU, etc. But we didn't think they would come to a meeting that was called by a bunch of queers, so we talked Cecil into chairing it. So, when people called to say, "What is this meeting and who's putting it on?" We would say, "Well, it's a bunch of concerned citizens and Reverend

Cecil Williams is chairing it.” So, that's how it happened. We had this meeting and of course, by that time, people figured out what was going on.

- Meeker: How did they respond once they figured out who was putting it on?
- Lyon: It was OK.
- Meeker: Who came? What kind of people?
- Lyon: There were representatives from the poverty office and from the ACLU. I can't remember who came from the ACLU. It wasn't Bessic(?), and he was a little suspicious.
- Meeker: Did he feel like you were impinging on their territory?
- Lyon: No, I don't think so. He just thought it was a little strange that queers were doing these things. There was not a lot of awareness on the part of most people about gay people or any of the various orientations.
- Meeker: Were there representatives from the racial and ethnic communities?
- Lyon: I am sure. I would assume that Youth for Service -- I can't remember his name...
- Meeker: Orville Luster
- Lyon: Orville, yeah. I would assume he came because he got really involved in all the organizations like that. Eventually, we made little cards with our phone number on them and passed them out.
- Meeker: Also, about the same time, the summer of 1964, the HRC, the Human Rights Commission, was established.
- Lyon: Really, in 1964?
- Meeker: Yeah. Do you recall, I mean, just being an observer, a reader of the newspapers.
- Lyon: I don't remember, Martin, it getting started. I guess I just sort of felt it was always there.
- Meeker: Do you recall the protests at the auto dealerships and the Palace Hotel?
- Lyon: Yes. That was before we got involved in -- that's what HRC came out of, because we read about them in the paper.
- Meeker: Do you remember when HRC first hit your radar screen?

Lyon: No. I was trying to remember yesterday who was the ED there in the early days, and I can't, for the life of me, remember.

Meeker: There were a couple of them. Frank Quinn.

Lyon: Yeah, Frank was there first. He became a really good friend over the years.

Meeker: Has he passed?

Lyon: Yeah.

Meeker: Whether or not you remember when you first kind of thought about or knew that HRC to exist, I always wondered, you mentioned the California Hall incident in which police basically harassed this fund-raising ball and I know that afterwards, a bunch of ministers got together who were part of CRH...

Lyon: CRH, yeah, it did exist. The ball was to raise money for CRH.

The ministers, the next day, had a press conference at Glide. Del and I were at the ball and taking tickets, actually. Seven of the ministers met the next day and a picture of them was on the Chronicle's front page and that picture went around the world and Ted [McIlvenna] started getting letters from people who said it was the first time that they had ever heard a religious person say anything nice about gay people. But then Ted was bitching because there wasn't enough secretarial help to answer letters. Del said, "Why don't you volunteer to do that?" I wasn't working then, but I said, "Oh, I don't know." So I called about it and I said to Ted, "If you dictate into a Dictaphone or something, I could come down and type up these letters." And he said, "Do you want a job?" And I said, "No!" But he said, "Come down!" So, I went down and I ended up as a part-time worker. I had a typewriter and a table in the corner of his office. That was early in the year of 1965.

By the time June [1965] came around, which was apparently the time that they hired people, I had made myself indispensable so they hired me and so I stayed there until we broke off from Glide in the 70s.

Meeker: So, that's the genesis of Citizens Alert ...

Lyon: From Glide. CRH came from Glide and the work that Elliot did with the transgenders came from there -- plus the fact that during the Summer of Love, we had all the hippies in the world coming down there.

The Urban Center did a two-day event for the hippies and I said to them, "You're nuts. You are going to have far too many people here and they are just going to tear the place apart. You can't do it!" They said, "Oh yes we can. Everything will be just fine" This was Lou Durham.

The first thing we saw when we went up to the third floor, which is where the church office was, and somebody stopped us and said, wait a minute, you have got to see this, and so we entered the sanctuary from there and there was a naked man lying -- they had a railing around the altar and there is this naked man lying on this. It was a real strange thing.

So, Del and I showed up the afternoon of Saturday and parked the car and went in and up to the church office, and Lou was as white as a sheet. People were fucking in the elevator, they only had one elevator; they were showing dirty pictures down in the dining-room; there were far too many people and the fire marshals had come and said, "You have got to get rid of these people.!" So, they eventually began to get some of them to go away. Whatever radio station it was that everybody listened to in those days started announcing, "Do not go back to Glide on Sunday. The event has been canceled." So, they did survive, but it was just really incredible.

Meeker: This sounds quite a bit different than when the DOB offices were like five years before, right?

Lyon: Yeah.

Meeker: In the ten years between the foundation of HRC and the beginning of the Gay Advisory Committee, do you remember any efforts to bring issues of sexual orientation before the HRC?

Lyon: I don't know that we did. I don't know that we thought they could do anything or that we were familiar enough with the HRC. Although I think Del spoke on police issues before the HRC committee on police issues. Also, we were in some ways working with members of the Board of Supervisors to see if we could get a nondiscrimination law passed in the city.

Things just kind of puddled along and we tried talking to people like the mayor, for instance, who, in those days, was John Shelley, Kevin Shelley's dad, they wouldn't even talk to us. They didn't want to have anything to do with us until the police thing at the ball, and then after the story in the paper, where the ministers said, "The way the city is treating their homosexual citizens is disgusting, and terrible, it's awful." Then I guess they realized they had to do something. So, Shelley told the police chief to appoint someone as a liaison to the gay community, and that's the first notice we ever got that they knew we existed. That was a bit step forward.

Meeker: Can you think of the next step after that, of recognition of the gay/lesbian community by the city?

Lyon: Well, we didn't have as much trouble with the cops and Eliot [Blackstone] was there if we needed a permit to have a party or something and he was there to see that we had traffic cops. I think they had one of the first Castro Street

fairs, or maybe it was Halloween, and we managed to make sure that although there were cops there in case there was any problem, they weren't in sight so they hid off somewhere but they were close enough they could be called, if needed. So, there was stuff like that.

We got to know a lot of people. This is a small city and there were a certain number of Democrats and they were always at the same place at the same time and went to all the same events and you got to know people.

We knew Phil Burton from when he was still in the Assembly and he and John O'Connell were buddies and they were good leftists. So we asked about getting a law that would stop discrimination against gays/lesbians and their answer to that one was they couldn't do it: We needed to get the church involved. They couldn't do it because -- they were doing a lot of stuff, good stuff, up in Sacramento but as far as they were concerned, they never told their people, their voters, about what they were doing. If they had, they wouldn't be up there anymore so they wouldn't be able to do anything for us.

When I say we, I mean Del and I, brought up the issue with Phil, but there were a lot of us that were doing this, trying to see what we could get out of people.

- Meeker: I wonder how the idea of including sexual orientation in antidiscrimination statutes came about? Were you aware of...
- Lyon: Somebody must have been aware. Maybe some of the lawyers. We had Rick Stokes and David Clayton and Herb [Donaldson] and Evander Smith, all of whom are involved in the movement.
- Meeker: Was there discussion about sexual orientation or gay/lesbian kind of being analogous to blacks or Hispanics or something along those lines?
- Lyon: I don't think so [sotto voce].
- Meeker: Was there discussion about sexual orientation or gay/lesbian kind of being analogous to blacks or Hispanics or something along those lines?
- Lyon: There was. We did finally come up with that. For a long time, nobody thought of us as a minority group.
- Meeker: Do you remember in what context that discussion started to happen?
- Lyon: No, but it must have been among a few people and it must have had something to do with CRH or with Citizens Alert or DOB, or SIR [Society for Individual Rights], when it got started.

There was this interesting little clash between the women and the men because we were all so different. There was a lot of sexism and still is. Some of the guys at SIR were really good. Bill Plath, and his partner Dick, and Larry [Littlejohn?] and Allan, and we had a lot of good friends among the men.

(background instructions)

- Meeker: Do you remember the men and the women in the movement thinking about the concept of minority in a different way?
- Lyon: No, I don't. I think that we all knew what we knew when we said we were a minority group. Not everybody agreed with us. I remember early on, when we didn't know too many gay men, finding this guy who was this awful racist and wondering how in the world you could be a racist like that when you were part of a misunderstood minority yourself? But there was a lot of that, and I'm sure it still exists too.
- Meeker: I wonder, at the time, how you might have defined minority?
- Lyon: I don't think we ever did. I think the term was being used and we just added on to it and maybe this is another minority group that is being discriminated against.
- Meeker: So, discrimination was probably at the core of what it meant to be a minority.
- Lyon: Because people were still getting fired from their jobs and so on. Yes.
- Meeker: Well, let's then go up to 1975.
- Lyon: Is that when the advisory committee...
- Meeker: That is when I guess the resolution was passed in June 1975, and the very first meeting of the Gay Advisory Committee to the HRC happened in October of 1975.
- Lyon: Yeah. There were three members.
- Meeker: There were three members.
- Lyon: From the very beginning a member of the commission was named chair of the committee and we were appalled, the three of us, because we thought it was going to be *our* committee. (laughter) What was he doing? I can't even remember who it was, but it was a person who was -- it was a guy -- and he was certainly liberal and he wanted to understand and he wasn't going to waffle. But it's always been that way. A commissioner chairs the committee, all committees, some commissioner does that. And I think at that time they had 15 members on the commission.

- Meeker: So until you were appointed a commissioner the following year, this other commissioner who had chaired the committee was Eduardo Sandoval?
- Lyon: It could have been Eduardo, yeah, I think it was.
- Meeker: What do you remember about him?
- Lyon: He was a really nice guy. He understood. Well because he came from a minority group too.
- Meeker: Did he represent any other groups that you could recall? Was he representing a religious group or a labor group also? Or was he primarily there to represent the Latino Community?
- Lyon: Gee, I don't know. Probably the Latino Community.
- Meeker: OK.
- Lyon: The HRC itself, over the years has been a place where mayors could pay off supporters by putting them on the commission. And we had a lot of trouble at times getting quorums because we had commissioners who didn't really give a damn about what the commission was doing. They just wanted to be called "the honorable so and so." And actually towards the end, Esta Soler and I managed to get the supervisors to cut the number of commissioners from 15. We wanted seven, and I think it was Dick Hongisto who wasn't going to go that far, but they did change it to 11.
- Meeker: Why did you want to change it from 15 to 11?
- Lyon: Because we couldn't get a quorum. The way the commission worked then -- they've made a lot of changes now -- if you had a complaint and you wanted to find out, you held a hearing. For the hearings, you had to have X number of commissioners on the panel and we did some late at night so that everybody could get there and I remember one series of hearings when I was chair that we were down in the basement of City Hall at night. We also had some old guys on the committee, Joe -- good Chinese Chef -- and a black guy who was older. During that set of hearings, Joe would sleep through them, and Chester died afterwards. I swore that was what killed him. That was why we decided that we needed to make some changes and eventually it came about that what we did was we just picked one person. For instance, it was Enola Maxwell who held the hearing with Pacific Bell for not listing gay organizations in the phone book.
- Meeker: Were these hearings, were they committee hearings? Were they held at committee or commission?

- Lyon: They were commission hearings. They were pseudo legal trials in essence. (laughter)
- Meeker: Well, you had the power to subpoena, correct?
- Lyon: Yes, we always had a member of the city's attorney's office there to keep us on the straight and narrow as it were.
- Meeker: OK. Let's go back to the formation of the Gay Advisory Committee.
- Lyon: I forgot who pushed that, do you recall?
- Meeker: No. I mean, a lot of these things are not recorded. (pause; interrupted by phone) How did the Gay Advisory Committee come about?
- Lyon: I don't remember. Somebody pushed it. Somebody got the bright idea and somebody asked a supervisor, or maybe it was a supervisor. That was before we had gay supervisors.
- Meeker: I guess what I was saying is that some of these things are not communicated so well in the meeting minutes. And hopefully through the memories in interviews, you get to some of these issues.
- Lyon: Have you talked to Larry Brinkin down at HRC?
- Meeker: Yeah, actually I've met with him several times. He didn't really come on the commission as a staff member until the 1980's.
- Lyon: Yeah, I knew that, but I figured he might know. The other person you might want to talk to is Grant Mickins.
- Meeker: Yeah. He's on my short list, because I know that he was around at this point in time. Yeah, he's definitely somebody that I want to. And there's probably a couple of commissioners, and maybe at some point you can suggest a few.
- Lyon: Golly, Sister Giles? Is still around I think.
- Meeker: She is. She was on in the 1960's as well.
- Lyon: Yeah. I think she's still alive and I haven't seen her in a long time, but we don't go out a lot as we used to, to various things, so we don't see people. I haven't seen Grant for awhile and I'm wondering how he is too.
- Meeker: Well, supposedly they're going to have a 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.
- Lyon: Oh, really?

Meeker: A year late I guess.

Lyon: (laughter)

Meeker: Now that I remember, there was a resolution by supervisors, I believe [Quentin] Kopp and John Molinari considering expanding the number on the commissioners to 16, of which there would be an officially designated member who was a representative or associated with the homophile community. And they even use the term homophile.

Lyon: Kopp?

Meeker: Yeah, which seemed strange to me, because I never really imagined him as a friend of the gay community.

Lyon: He wasn't.

Meeker: Yeah.

Lyon: That's interesting.

Meeker: But then through that, I guess the compromise was instead of getting the board of supervisors to approve a 16<sup>th</sup> gay commissioner, they were going to establish the Gay Advisory Committee. I'm wondering if you know any of the back story about how your name got in. Did you apply for it? Were you nominated?

Lyon: I don't think so. Well, theoretically, the commission itself could have started the Gay Advisory Committee, they didn't need the Supers to do it or anything. They could have decided how many people and who and so on. I don't know. I certainly was no friend of Kopp's, but we were on good terms with Molanari and Hongisto.

Meeker: Did you know any of the commissioners when you were appointed to the Gay Advisory Committee?

Lyon: I don't know. I may have. If Enola was on, Enola Maxwell, if she was on then, I would have known her.

Meeker: Where would you have known her?

Lyon: From politics.

Meeker: From politics, in what way? From working with the Citizen's Alert? Or Democratic politics?

Lyon: Democratic politics.

- Meeker: What was your involvement with Democratic politics at this point in time?
- Lyon: Well, we were two of the founders of Alice [B. Toklas Democratic Club], and we've always been Democrats. So we got involved early on with the Democratic Party, even before we found any lesbians to get to be friends with, we worked on Adlai Stevenson's campaign here.
- Meeker: OK. When was Alice founded?
- Lyon: '72.
- Meeker: So you would have been involved in that organization for three or so years before you were appointed to the Gay Advisory Committee.
- Lyon: Yeah. By that time also, a lot had changed in the way people saw us. DOB had two major conventions here, one in '60, one in '66. And the Mattachine Society had been working busily, pretending not to be a queer organization, just being interested in the issues that homosexuals faced. In fact, when we had our first DOB Convention here, it was at the Whitcomb Hotel, which is now the Ramada Inn on Market Street. And we advertised it as the first Lesbian Convention and Mattachine got really upset; Hal Call got really upset and wrote us a letter and said, "If you're going to call it a lesbian convention, we're not going to come!" (laughter) It wasn't that they weren't lesbians, it was because they didn't want to come to something that was listed as being a homosexual convention. So our chapter president here, Jaye Bell, wrote him a letter back said, "Well, I think if your members dress correctly, they wouldn't be mistaken for lesbians." (laughter)
- Meeker: (laughter)
- Lyon: And hardly any of the Mattachine came. But we had more people at our convention than had ever come together for a gay non-party event. 200, something like that.
- Meeker: Was this the '66 one?
- Lyon: '60. And that's -- Frank Beach, from UC-Berkeley, he's the one that discovered, I think, that there were lesbian seagulls and other animals. He was very well known. He wrote a book, whose name escapes me totally, on animals and their sexuality. In the book, he indicated that there were a lot of homosexual activity with animals. Not people with animals, but animals with animals.
- Meeker: (laughter)
- Lyon: And we got him to come on one of the panels. We had a lot of trouble getting women onto the panels, because they were afraid that they'd be seen as

lesbians, but we didn't have any trouble getting men to come because they knew that they wouldn't be. So he came, and he came with another man and he stayed for the entire program. We had a lunch and we had a dinner banquet. And it was years later that we discovered who that other guy was, he was with the CIA.

Meeker: Really?

Lyon: Or he was sent by the CIA. But what his job was, was to figure out how lesbians were different from other women. Of course they couldn't, because they weren't. One time -- this all came out much later -- but the CIA rented a house over in Marin County, and they were going to have a big party for gays and lesbians, and they were going to spray LSD in the air and see how it affected them. It turned out that it was such a hot day that they had to have all the windows and doors open, so spraying it didn't do any good. So they wasted all of that time and money and so on.

Meeker: So they actually hosted this party?

Lyon: Yeah. They did a bunch of stuff like that. Trying to see how we were different.

Meeker: (laughter)

Lyon: OK, we're going far a field, aren't we? I have a tendency to do that. (laughter)

Meeker: I'm wondering maybe if you could talk about the relationship between the Gay Advisory Committee and the larger Human Rights Commission. The extent to which the commissioners valued the input, and the ways in which that the Committee tried to influence the thinking of the commission.

Lyon: Well, I was on it for just this one year and then Pat Norman took my place and I went on to the commission, thanks to George [Moscone]. Although, I have to say, what I really wanted to be on was the Police Commission. But Jo Daly was working with the group that was making suggestions to George about who should be on what, and she also wanted to be on the police commission. So I think she threw me over into the HRC. Later Diane appointed her as the first gay person to the Police Commission. But anyway, after I became a commissioner, then I became a chair of the Gay Advisory Committee. But I don't remember too much about what we did, which seems -- well, it was a long time ago. There must be something in the minutes. I don't know that we did a lot. We did hold some hearings I know, where people talked about how they were discriminated against, and we put out a little booklet. Somewhere there should be copies of those, just like the same hearing that Larry [Brinkin] and the others did on old lesbians and gays a couple years ago I guess. I was trying to think of members of the commission that would have been frowning about lesbians and stuff like that, and the only person I can think of that made

a fuss occasionally, was Rabbi Weiner, who was Diane's Rabbi. It rubbed him the wrong way. He didn't think we needed all of this attention. But a really big help was -- my thing on names is getting worse and worse. (laughter)

- Meeker: Maybe just describe the person.
- Lyon: Japanese American. Yamagu -- Yama -- a dear friend. I've got his picture in one of my albums. (laughter)
- Meeker: How did he help?
- Lyon: He was always supportive. He was always supportive.
- Meeker: And what did that mean, to be supportive?
- Lyon: Well, he voted for whatever we were doing. He agreed with me if I said something or other. The same was true of Enola Maxwell --
- Meeker: OK.
- Lyon: -- who became a really good friend.
- Meeker: Is she African-American?
- Lyon: Yeah. She's Sophie Maxwell's mom. She died real suddenly, maybe six months ago or so.
- Meeker: Oh, OK. And what part of town was she from? Do you recall?
- Lyon: Enola?
- Meeker: Yeah.
- Lyon: Well, they were -- not Bayview, but African Americans were always from Bayview whether they lived there or not. She was down in Bernal Heights, I think, more.
- Meeker: What do you mean by that, that they were always from Bayview, whether they lived there or not?
- Lyon: Well, because that's where all of the African-Americans lived. And I think they felt a community, whether they were living in there or not, in those days.
- Meeker: So that's, whether they resided there, that's where they identified as being from, because that's where the community was located.
- Lyon: Well, that's where most of it was. Because a lot of it was in the Western Addition. But then, way back in the 1950s, the redevelopment commission

wiped out the Western Addition, literally. Just tore everything down. And they were going to redevelop it.

- Meeker: And so, I'm wondering if you can just describe your relationship with Enola Maxwell, the kind of issues you worked on together, perhaps. I mean, it sounds like she was a support to you, how were you a supporter for her?
- Lyon: Well, we all -- well, I shouldn't say all, but at least everybody I worked with and so on -- were supporting nondiscrimination for everybody. You know, certainly in hiring and in firing and housing, and all of these issues, came together.
- Meeker: What about the issue of affirmative action? I've noticed, in the notes, that there seems to be a willingness to include sexual orientation in the antidiscrimination ordinance. But then, there seems to be some confusion about what groups covered under antidiscrimination might also be eligible for affirmative action.
- Lyon: I don't think we all wanted affirmative action in the gay community.
- Meeker: Do you remember there being a conversation about that?
- Lyon: Yeah, I think, vaguely. I think it began, you know, to get, "OK, do you want affirmative action, too?" And some people, obviously, would. But most of us said, "Well, no, not necessarily." Because not everybody wanted to go out and say, "Hi. I want to take this job, and I'm a lesbian." You know. People were still reluctant to come out.
- Meeker: So, one of the arguments against it was --
- Lyon: You'd have to come out, or it wouldn't do you any good. So what's the point?
- Meeker: Yeah. Because racial categories and gender categories were obvious, or at least apparently obvious, to employers.
- Lyon: Right.
- Meeker: Right? But there was less of a willingness to self-identify. Were there any other issues involved?
- Lyon: I don't think so. Exactly --
- Meeker: Do you remember any --
- Lyon: I think that, basically, we thought it wasn't going to be any help. And the people that really *needed* affirmative action were the people of color, who had been, you know, put upon for so long. We had never had trouble getting jobs,

for the most part. It was keeping them, or the stress of not coming out -- you know, hiding who you were.

Meeker: Interesting. So it was really antidiscrimination ordinances that would prevent people from getting fired --

Lyon: Yeah.

Meeker: -- rather than opportunities to get a job.

Lyon: And housing, yeah. You could get kicked out of your apartment if they found out you were queer. You could -- all kinds of things. And that's still true in a number of states. In this country that Bush keeps saying is so democratic, and "Everybody has a right to not be discriminated against." He says those words.

Meeker: Right. Right.

Lyon: But anyway, the -- I've forgotten what I was going to say. It probably wasn't important. Maybe it will come back.

Meeker: Well, I wonder if you have anything else to say about the process of being appointed. And, I mean, whether you knew what happened behind the scenes or not, I'm wondering, did somebody give you a phone call and say, "Listen, you know, we want to move you from the GAC to the HRC full commission after the election of Moscone"?

Lyon: No, no. No. No. Because --

Meeker: I mean, how does -- I guess because, you know, I've never been there. So I don't know how it works.

Lyon: Yeah. Well, first of all, the Mayor makes the decisions.

Meeker: OK.

Lyon: He appoints, or she appoints, people to all of these various commissions.

Meeker: OK.

Lyon: And I think George Moscone was the first mayor to bring together a group of citizens, and say, "OK, now people can apply to be on this commission or that commission. And I want you guys to read their things, and then tell me who you think would be the best person." So, and I think that was it. Now, we had been very much involved with George, and so had Jo Daly -- a woman and lesbian. And so, it wasn't surprising that we would put in for that. And I remember one of the things he said to us -- because he appointed Del to the Commission on the Status of Women later -- was, "OK, you've been on the

outside fighting for this. Now you're going to be on the inside, and you've got to figure out how to do it!" You know, which was true. I mean, it was a lot easier to just walk up and down and scream, than to figure out how to make stuff happen.

Meeker: Well, can you talk a little bit about that transition? I mean, what was it like going from being on the outside, to being on the inside?

Lyon: Well, it was strange, to begin with.

Meeker: Well, in what way?

Lyon: But, for the most part -- well, it was strange, as I said, in that we were used to complaining about what was going on, and making noises about what was going on, whatever it was, and wanting somebody to make changes, but now we were in a spot where we were going to make the changes. And then you had a different way of doing things, and figuring out how to do it.

Meeker: What was Jo Daly's role on the commission? Was she a staff person?

Lyon: She was a -- yeah. She was a CETA person.

Meeker: CETA. What was CETA?

Lyon: CETA was -- C-E-T-A, that's -- it was a program that the government had, the federal government had, to pay people to do good works, I think. Because I know the Commission on the Status of Women had a whole bunch of CETA people working for them. And Jo's position at HRC, again, was as a CETA person.

Meeker: Do you know what her position was?

Lyon: Well, she was an assistant to -- or, she was not in charge of the Gay Advisory Committee, but she was the staff person for the Gay Advisory Committee.

Meeker: And so the committee members, along with the commission members, weren't really paid for their service, were they?

Lyon: The commissioners weren't.

Meeker: Yeah. I mean --

Lyon: Well, now, wait a minute. Wait a minute.

Meeker: -- you got paid, like, \$15 or something to go to a meeting.

Lyon: Yeah. Something like that.

- Meeker: Yeah.
- Lyon: Yeah.
- Meeker: But there wasn't a salary.
- Lyon: No.
- Meeker: So Jo Daly's position would have been a salaried position.
- Lyon: A salaried position. Yes.
- Meeker: Do you remember the process by which Pat Norman was selected to replace you on the Gay Advisory Commission? I mean, since you weren't, you know, privy to the conversations of your being appointed to these various positions, I'm wondering if you played a role in getting others appointed to the Gay Advisory position.
- Lyon: Could well be. We were good friends. We met Pat very early on, when she came to the city. And so we had known her for ages. And she would have made a whole lot of sense, since she was replacing me. You know, she was an [African-American] woman, and a lesbian, too. And there were two guys -- you know, it was still a three-person thing. It's expanded incredibly.
- Meeker: Yeah.
- Lyon: And it did expand, you know, over the years.
- Meeker: Why did it expand?
- Lyon: Well, I think because we discovered there were bisexuals, and transgenders, and all kinds of variations and so on.
- Meeker: Which seems to be, sort of, a model in microcosm of something that was going on, on the larger commission overall. In which, you know, when it was first formed, there were representatives of labor, business --
- Lyon: Right.
- Meeker: -- the Jewish community, African-Americans, and Chinese-Americans, and Latinos. Which now -- there seem to be all of those representatives and more. When you were appointed as the first lesbian commissioner, or gay commissioner overall, did it seem to you like there was a sense that now the city was recognizing this new category?
- Lyon: Well, I think so. I would assume so, yeah. Because, again, see, we had been instrumental in helping George win, very active politically.

- Meeker: Once you were appointed to the HRC, did it seem like you were appointed to a position that was meant to be for a gay man or a lesbian?
- Lyon: Well, I don't know if I thought of it that way. It seems -- I'm trying to think -- pretty much so that ever since then, there's been somebody [gay on the commission]. Like Theresa Sparks was on, not so long ago. She was the first transgendered person to be on the commission. But there probably was a gay person on the commission at the same time. And I think that it's something that is in the minds of whoever's doing the appointing, or suggesting appointments, and so on, in all of the commissions. Because Theresa's now on the Police Commission, right?
- Meeker: Mm hmm.
- Lyon: And that's a first. And Jo Daly, who was appointed by Dianne, was certainly the first gay person on the Police Commission. And she was followed by Wayne Friday. Now there's not a gay person on the commission, but Theresa's there. But it's a small commission. And it never used to have any women. So we had to fight like crazy to get the Board of Supervisors to pass something that said that there had to be at least one, if not two, women on all of the big commissions, like the Police Commission, and the Civil Service Commission, and the Airport Commission, where there had never been a woman. So that was a big fight.
- Meeker: And that became explicit -- do you remember when that was?
- Lyon: No.
- Meeker: OK. Did you play a role in getting that done?
- Lyon: Oh, yeah.
- Meeker: How did you do that?
- Lyon: Well, I wasn't so much involved, actually, as Del was. There was a big women's organization -- not organization, group, a group of women -- that came together and decided that what we needed to do was to keep track of what these commissions were doing, in terms of what they were doing to or for women. And so people volunteered. And Del volunteered to track the Police Commission. And so she went to all of their meetings. And other people took on other commissions, too.
- Meeker: Was this, like, a nongovernmental group, like an activist group?
- Lyon: Yeah. It was an activist group.
- Meeker: Which one was it?

Lyon: I've forgotten what they called themselves. I can find out from Del, though, I'm certain.

Meeker: Was this, like, a Bay Area coalition of women? Or something like that?

Lyon: Something like that. But not like BACW [Bay Area Career Women]. But it was ore like Bay Area Women for Justice, or something like that.

Meeker: OK.

Lyon: Something like that.

Meeker: And the idea was to monitor --

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Meeker: Back to just a little bit about being appointed to the HRC and the sense that there was like a newly created slot for a lesbian or perhaps just like a representative of the gay community.

Lyon: I don't know if I thought that, but it's very possible. One of the things I will say is that I was welcomed with open arms by the entire commission. I had flowers and stuff, everybody was so happy.

Meeker: Why were they so happy? Did they treat you differently from any other new Commissioner?

Lyon: Well, I think they were happy because it was a change that had come about.

Meeker: Meaning that they were recognizing sexual orientation and that a lesbian was given this opportunity?

Lyon: Right.

Meeker: So there wasn't any sense that because now there was a lesbian commissioner they would lose say like a Filipino Commissioner or something like that?

Lyon: Not that I'm aware of.

Meeker: Because I mean I guess there were 15 Commissioners at that point

Lyon: There were, so there were a lot.

Meeker: There was a lot of opportunity. Yes, I mean, I just sort of in the longer run of the Commission in the 1980s and 90s I wonder what happens when, you know, there's a transgender Commissioner and they still want to have a gay

Commissioner, you know, and at what point in time, does that mean a group that had been traditionally represented on the Commission will no longer be represented? You know, I mean if there will be a point in which there is not a black Commissioner or something like that, and how that might play out.

Lyon: Well, it all depends and I'm trying, I don't know who's on the Commission anymore, but I'm sure it's a varied commission. There's a lesbian executive director and that's a whole new one. And of course there was a big scandal prior to that.

Meeker: Were you around for that?

Lyon: No, I was long gone, but I knew Zula and I knew -- I forgot when the scandal was now -- but anyhow, I was not surprised.

Meeker: Why do you say that?

Lyon: Well, because you stay around long enough, you kind of know the possibilities of making things go one way or another.

Meeker: I guess I'm not really that familiar with the scandal.

Lyon: It had to do with a law that says you have to have a minority or woman subcontractor, although right now I think that's in limbo. There's been a lot, not just here but all over the place of people pretending to be [what they are not]. [In one case, someone was accused of] hiring to a black couple and saying that they were the owners of this company when they really weren't. And, that makes it a minority thing or it makes it a women's thing.

Meeker: Did anything like that ever happen in your tenure there?

Lyon: No. But for most of my tenure we didn't have that law. It came along towards the end.

Meeker: What law?

Lyon: The law that says you have to have a minority subcontractor or women's subcontractor.

Meeker: What were some of the main issues that you worked on while you on the Commission? Like some of the main issues that continually came before the Commission that you were involved with?

Lyon: Well, I think mostly it was people trying to get out from under, things that they were supposed to be doing, you know, firing people they shouldn't have fired and not hiring people that deserved to be hired. Those were the most, and I think still are, the issues that came up the most.

Meeker: What was the process by which that generally happened?

Lyon: Well, staff took over. Staff took over, investigated –

[side discussion]

Meeker: You know when I first started studying the Human Rights Commission and anticipate to actually try to do a large comparative study of different commissions across the country, I initially thought that human rights was kind of a euphemism for civil rights. I'm beginning to think maybe now that's not the case, but I'm wondering if you ever remember having conversations or just what your thoughts were on the idea of human rights in the institutional setting of the city government?

Lyon: Well, I guess one really thought of it not just human but also civil rights. I mean we were as close as anything.

Meeker: Well, how are they different?

Lyon: Well, I don't know that they are except that civil rights could be less, depends on what you figure is a civil right I guess (laughter), human rights seems friendlier somehow, that terminology, that means you care about what people are going through and how they're going through it.

Meeker: Kind of humane in some ways?

Lyon: In some ways, yes. Whereas civil rights mean you have a right to have a job, you have a right to do this, you have a right to that, you have a right to have housing, food, and stuff, but you don't have a right to necessarily be happy. (laughter)

Meeker: OK. Human rights included this right to be happy?

Lyon: One would think so, wouldn't you?

Meeker: Do you know if the Commission ever had conversations about what the meaning of human rights was?

Lyon: I don't think so, not that I can recall.

Meeker: Did the Commission ever have much interaction with other human rights or human relations organizations throughout the state or the country?

Lyon: I don't -- Well, there used to be some kinds of meetings between various human rights commissions and organizations in different cities.

Meeker: What were those?

Lyon: I don't really remember much about them, I don't think I ever went to one. If I did, it did not stay with me. But, you know, there's a tendency of people to get together with people of like minds and so on, and discuss whatever it is that's happening that maybe needs to be discussed by a lot of people instead of just a few.

Meeker: Well what was it that was shared by the Commissioners then, I mean you all came from very different backgrounds, imagine you're different age groups, different genders and races and ethnicities.

Lyon: Well what happens is basically is that staff, the staff puts together the agenda for the meetings. We met once a month or once every two weeks, something like that anyway. And we took up whatever issues that were on the agenda; doesn't mean we couldn't have added something, there must have been a chance to say things and so on. Or, that one wouldn't have contacted the executive director and say, "Hey, I want to get this on the agenda for the next meeting." And then there would be discussion, and sometimes there were votes.

Meeker: One of the main activities, from what I understand of the Commission, has to do with dealing with intergroup relations, so, I mean on the smaller level, that's some of the things you talked about, dealing with discrimination, unemployment, but on the larger scale, like the conflict between the Jewish community and the Black community, or in the context of the Castro and Mission Districts there was a conflict I guess in the late 70s and 80s between the Latino community and the gay community. Do you remember the Commission doing any work along these lines?

Lyon: I'm sure staff did. But it's not clear to me that Commissioners actually went out, depending upon who was involved and what sides we're on, and who the Commissioner was; but staff does a lot of work and that's true of every Commission.

Meeker: What was the work that the Commissioners did in contrast to the staff? I mean the staff were full-time employees for the most part I imagine, right, working 40 hours a week on this.

Lyon: And what the Commissioners did was to accept or reject or change what staff did.

Meeker: Outside of the once a month Commissioner's meeting that I guess could sometimes go on for several hours, what kind of work, what was a normal month like for you, if you could say there was one?

Lyon: Well, I don't know, remember I'm working a job at the same time, so.

Meeker: Where were you working?

- Lyon: At the beginning I was working -- where was I working? At Glide. No, by that time, Ted McIlvenna, [name?], and I had left Glide and started the International Museum of Erotic Art on Powell Street and took the National Sex Forum with us.
- Meeker: Was that a public museum?
- Lyon: A public what?
- Meeker: A public institution? I mean, not owned by the public but it was publicly opened? The museum?
- Lyon: Oh, yes.
- Meeker: I've never heard of this before.
- Lyon: Oh, really. It basically, you know that's a big, it's the Art Institute now, on Powell Street, up from Sutter, yes, it's a big castle like building. And Ted had made friends with Fiona Marshall I think, an heiress of the Marshall Field fortune and I don't know really how it all came about, but the, oh God, Rudy, oh no, anyhow this couple, very well known, had a lot of erotic art.
- Meeker: Were these the Krohnhausens's?
- Lyon: Yes, the Krohnhausens's, thank you. And that's what the museum was all about was their art. And we also did the Sex Forum which was a series of workshops and so we continued to do that. We had been doing those in Glide's basement since '68. The problem with the erotic art museum was that we could never get the city to allow us the kind of tax relief that other museums got. And they just eventually got too costly and so we moved over to Franklin Street and started The Institute for Advance Study of Human Sexuality, which is still going.
- Meeker: And that was your day job then?
- Lyon: Yes, up until '89, by that time I was through with it. When did I leave the HRC, around '87 or something like that, or '89, because I'd gotten in a big fight with Dianne.
- Meeker: Really?
- Lyon: Yes.
- Meeker: Do you want to talk about that?
- Lyon: Well, remember the issue around the USS Missouri? They wanted to bring the Missouri to the waterfront and turn it into a museum or something and that

was fine with some people but it was awful with people who didn't like war, which was a lot of people. And Dianne thought that was a great idea, she thought that was a real fine idea. So she sent a person to the Gay Advisory Committee. The Gay Advisory Committee was dead-set against the Missouri and she, and at that point Esta Soler was the Chair of the Commission. Esta is a lesbian too.

Meeker: Was she out as such?

Lyon: Oh yes. She's currently the Executive Director of the Foundation Against Family Violence, which is a national institute and they're building a building out in Presidio to house it. She had \$100 million -- she's got a lot of money from somewhere thanks to Nancy Pelosi. Anyway, so, where was I?

Meeker: You were talking about the Missouri.

Lyon: Oh, so anyhow we voted in the Gay Advisory Committee to go against that and take it to the Commission to go against having the Missouri here and the next thing we knew, Dianne said she wasn't going to reappoint Esta to the Commission because of the action that we had taken. I said, "That is absolutely ridiculous!" I called her, we had her home phone number, and I spent at least a half hour on the phone with Dick, her husband, because she was exhausted and she was asleep on the couch and he wouldn't wake her up. And I couldn't get her to change her mind so I resigned too.

Meeker: Out of protest?

Lyon: Out of protest.

Meeker: Did she ever call and try to get you back?

Lyon: No, we did have lunch with her and Nancy Achilles, the four of us at Delancey Street after she ran for the Senate I think, but before she was sworn in. Anyhow, but it is just almost impossible to get to her anymore. And besides we're mad at her now for other things and so on. We found out in 1995, when we were in DC for the President's Commission on Aging, that she had a brunch, Dianne had a brunch every Thursday morning so we signed up for that and she came around and she spotted us and she said, "Oh those are my two oldest and dearest friends!" And we don't know if she meant we were oldest because we were old or because we were oldest because she'd known us for a long time, because we basically helped her in her first campaign for office. But anyhow, that's about the last time; oh no, she invited us over to a -- this was a number of years ago, though -- she had a fundraiser going at her house here, her home, for the gay community, somebody was putting on a fundraiser and she invited us to come. At which point Dick was saying, "Yes, you're the ones that I knew if I couldn't convince you that I really wanted to

marry Dianne that she wouldn't marry me if she didn't have your OK," and I don't know what that meant. People remember things in strange ways.

Meeker: I guess so. I'm wondering if you can talk a little bit about the relationship between the Human Rights Commission and the other commissions in San Francisco and if there were, if there was ever any sort of conflict or collaboration over areas of interest and maybe if you remember any issues you worked on, like the relationship with Commission on Status of Women or the Police Commission, Civil Service or something?

Lyon: One time Dianne did have a party at Tom Horn's house over here on Rockland for all of her gay and lesbian commissioners and staff, like Peter Navarro, that was very interesting, I danced with her (laughter). And Peter got totally drunk, but it was an interesting party. And as far as the commissioners, the various in sundry commissioners on various in sundry commissions -- some of us knew some of them on some of the other commissions and some of us didn't. But by and large since mostly they were political appointees we did know others. And there wasn't a whole lot of coming together around issues. The Commission on the Status of Women ran into a lovely little problem with the woman who was appointed as the executive director, an African-American woman, Dr. Katherine Smallwood who took what was a really great functioning staff and screwed it totally. And the Commissioners decided they wanted to get rid of Smallwood and of course that created a big to-do around the African-American community. There was a hearing, a public hearing, and Cecil [Williams] was there snarling at Del. She was chair at the time and it just was a big fuss. I've forgotten how it ended. I think they finally did have enough votes to fire her.

Meeker: Do you recall what it was that she did that upset the other Commissioners?

Lyon: It was the way she was treating the staff: sometimes you give some people a lot of power and they don't use it very well and other people do great. But, she was losing staff people by the barrel-full really and that's what made them want to get rid of her. It's the same thing happening Lyon Martin [Women's Health Clinic] recently. The executive director, an African-American woman, was doing strange things and all the medical personnel left. And I thought the board of Lyon Martin was never going to do anything because Daretha was black and that doesn't have a damn thing to do with it when you have somebody who's not functioning correctly and you need to get rid of them; that's what boards are supposed to do. But it can sure be a problem.

Meeker: Well what is the best way in a situation like that or in the Commission on the Status of Women were the board to deal with something when you're also dealing with other issues having to deal with...

Lyon: It's really difficult. And Cecil [Williams] later apologized to Del and said had he known what all the issues were he would never have said what he did, he

would never have supported Katherine but presumably all he could see at that point was black. She's Black.

- Meeker: Is there a way in which the Human Rights Commission kind of perpetuates that tends to not allow that kind of perspective to be perpetuated?
- Lyon: Well I think they would not like to see that perpetuated. I don't recall, well outside the fact that Zula was Black, but I don't think that was something that really entered too much into it. [outside discussion] Anyhow the whole point of human relations and human rights is not to be color conscious in the sense that you don't say, "Oh, she's Black, and she's this and she's that," although you may do that because you want to identify her in a certain position.
- Meeker: How does -- During your tenure there, how did the Human Rights Commission kind of straddle that line between affirmative action which is very color conscious to kind of a civil rights discourse, which tries to be color-blind?
- Lyon: Well, I think, you know, what can you say? Affirmative action, as I think is showing over at UC, is a very important vehicle to move people who have been discriminated against all their lives into and on up the ladder towards being totally self-sufficient and going where no person has ever gone before, you know? I think there was a story in the paper the other day that what UC has now in terms of African-Americans are African-Americans who are not descendants of slaves; in other words, this one guy they we're focusing on was, his parents was Nigerians, although he was born here and he considers himself a Nigerian and an African-American. So that's upsetting some people because the people that were descendants of slaves were the ones that really got the shaft over the years.
- Meeker: I know that some commissioners are appointed either for I guess a 1, 2, 3 or 4 year term.
- Lyon: It varies. I think they are all done on the same schedule because you wouldn't want the entire Commission to disappear at the same time, but yes, and often times, like I was reappointed 2 or 3 times, I've forgotten how many, first by George and then by Dianne a couple of times I guess, and so on. I think for 4 year terms, so I spent almost 12 years, I quit after 11 years or so.
- Meeker: Did you ever have any concern or thought that after the assassination of Moscone that you wouldn't be reappointed under Feinstein?
- Lyon: No.
- Meeker: No? So there wasn't ever any concern with that change that there would be a loss of the gay slot on the commission?

- Lyon: Oh, no, no. Because she was very gay friendly, good God, she called meetings of gays. I kept saying, "God, we could make a lot of money if we just had 'I'm a gay leader' buttons," because she would call the gay leaders and her office would be full. And, you know, anybody and everybody who felt they were a gay leader, and there were a lot of us, went, and she was the most available mayor we've ever had.
- Meeker: Even more than Agnos?
- Lyon: Actually it was Agnos who was against the Missouri and he was the one that did all the bad stuff and she blamed it all on us. We supported Art when he ran the first time. And we did not support him the second time, because Dick Hongisto was running?
- Meeker: Jordan was elected.
- Lyon: We weren't supporting Jordan. It was Dick. So anyway, we went to a fundraiser at Nancy's house, Nancy Pelosi's house, and I remember Art coming, we were sitting down eating on chairs against the wall and he came down and he knelt down and he said, "I understand why you were not supporting me and it won't make any difference," so he got elected and he didn't speak to us, made all the difference in the world. (laughter)
- Meeker: Interesting.
- Lyon: So, anyhow, we thawed out a little bit after he got out of politics, but not much. George was a good friend and Dianne was a good friend. I'll never forget, we had Lucia Valesca with us, Del and I and Jo [Daly] and we had an appointment to see Dianne because we wanted to introduce her to Lucia, who was the head of the National Gay Lesbian Taskforce. And, so we went up to her office and she's sitting there and she was just furious. Remember the politics and the power, gay power in San Francisco, the CBS program? ["Gay Power, Gay Politics"] Well they had been there that morning and the first thing that I think Harry Reasoner said to Diane when they walked into her office was, "How does it feel to be the mayor of Sodom and Gomorrah?" And she threw them out of her office totally, and they left a script behind and she'd been going through the script page by page and she was just furious, and you know, it turned out to be just a fucker, really, and the thing that always has fascinated me, the women, the lesbian community said, we ain't going to go there, we're not going anywhere near those people because we know what they do. And nobody went and spoke. Sally Gearhart was in New York and they found her there and she didn't know what was going on so she went, and she figured it out too, and she said it was the hardest two hours she ever spent in trying to answer their questions in such a way that they wouldn't be able to take a piece of it or something. She said she was just exhausted by the time they got through and they didn't use anything from her.

- Meeker: Do you remember the Human Rights Commission responding to that?
- Lyon: I'm sure we did, because we were used to sending letters to various people about various things.
- Meeker: On a national level as well local?
- Lyon: Yes, oh yes.
- Meeker: Yes. That's about right. I was going to ask you about the political clubs, the democratic political clubs, how close is the parallel between participation in the political club and appointment to a Commission, from your perspective?
- Lyon: Oh, I don't know. I don't think Democrats are going to appoint Republicans unless they're really good or have some kind of whatever, or something like that, you know, real knowledge about something that would be helpful, but there were a lot more Democratic clubs, a lot more powerful ones earlier in the years than there are now.
- Meeker: What do you mean?
- Lyon: There was a great Chinese Democratic club, really powerful, and I don't see much of anything happening there anymore. The Latinos had a good one, there's not much that I hear about from them anymore.
- Meeker: Why do you suppose they don't exist?
- Lyon: Well they may still exist but they're just not doing anything much. I don't know why. Harvey Milk and Alice are the two, well I don't know what the Log Cabin people are doing. We were founders of the Democratic Feminists, which lasted a few years but not too long.
- Meeker: Well, I guess there's a difference between being you know, a liberal and a Democrat in San Francisco and not really participating in these clubs and then being someone who is actively participating in these clubs and, I guess what I'm asking is, was one supposed to actively participate in a club to be deemed eligible for political appointment?
- Lyon: No, I don't think so at all, I think one needed to be a Democrat and to be presumably on the side of the mayor. I mean like, with Gavin now, I mean suddenly we're buddy-buddy. And we supported Susan and as soon as Gavin came out in the run-off, into a run-off, I'm sure Joyce Newsstadt had something to do with it. Anyhow, he called us the next day and said would we support him and we went down to the LGBT center and they had our picture taken with him and they had a press conference and so on. He's been incredible.

- Meeker: So you have no problems supporting him again?
- Lyon: Oh, no, God, he'd have to do something really weird.
- Meeker: Well, do you have anything else that you'd like to add at the end here, any leads you think that I should follow, or questions that need to be asked?
- Lyon: Well I think I mentioned the people; I think that one of the things you need to know is that, most of, I would guess, most of the people who become Commissioners on various Commissions are really there to work, they really have their hearts in it and so on, what I said about earlier, about people who just wanted the Honorable, well, there's still some of those but they're in the minority I'm sure. And it's a real honor to be asked to serve your city and it can be a lot of fun, you meet a lot of nice people. And the Human Rights Commission, here and every place that has one, I think are probably one of the most important [commissions] for a city.
- Meeker: Why do you say that?
- Lyon: Well, because police commissions are important to make sure that the police department is running right but human rights commission is important to make sure the city is running right and what it does and what the inhabitants do.
- Meeker: In what way?
- Lyon: In terms of civil rights and human rights.
- Meeker: All right, well, we'll probably stop there. Thank you very much.