

LAFAYETTE COLLEGE
LGBTQ ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview of
Gary Miller
Conducted by
Carolynn Van Dyke
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Lafayette College

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CAROLYNN VAN DYKE: Thank you. So, I guess we're officially beginning, and at the beginning of each interview, we ask participants to state their names --

GARY MILLER: I'm Gary Miller.

CVD: -- and to confirm that your participation is voluntary and that you have given [00:01:00] informed consent --

GM: Yes I have.

CVD: -- okay, and that you are willing to have a photo taken for the associated websites.

GM: Yes.

CVD: Thanks, okay, and, we also try to remind all of the people being interviewed that the interview is a story of your time at Lafayette. Please contribute any and all thoughts and stories that you think are meaningful, and the questions that I will be asking, even the ones that seem boilerplate, are just prompts, so, we're not trying to get a specific set of questions answered. Okay? Assuming that you do agree to release the transcript of this interview after you've seen it, any names that you mention will become public, so, let me know as we proceed if you would like any name to be redacted from the transcript, and/or the recording, okay. All right, personal information: What personal pronouns and name do you prefer me to use during the interview?

GM: He, him.

CVD: [00:02:00] Okay. And, Dr. Miller, or Gary, or --

GM: Oh, Gary is fine.

CVD: Okay, thanks, all right. All right, would you briefly describe, if you can, your relationship to Lafayette? That is, how do you define yourself as a member of the Lafayette community?

GM: Well, I was called here or hired here in 1973 as a chaplain. I had actually a dual role. It was called Chaplain of the College and Pastor of the College Church, Lafayette College Church, which was at that point a congregation, Protestant congregation, made up almost entirely of students, and it was a Presbyterian congregation, so the call actually came from the Presbytery, which oversees Presbyterian churches. So it was kind of a dual title, and I served here as Chaplain until [00:03:00] 2004, and then I continued to teach first-year seminars, and I taught a VaST course for a couple of semesters, and that ended I think around 2010 or 2011, so...

CVD: Okay, good, yeah so, a number of roles, the most recent one being, I guess, a faculty member.

GM: Well, yes --

CVD: Adjunct faculty?

GM: -- actually, the role of the Chaplain is, in the bylaws of the College, is considered to be a member of the faculty, but I was reporting through an administrative line. So, I didn't teach actually, initially, when I first came. I started teaching, oh, probably -- let's see -- maybe mid-'80s, taught a couple courses in the religion department, and then [00:04:00] when the first-year seminar program began, which was, what, early '90s, I think, something like that --

CVD: Hard to remember, yeah.

GM: -- I started teaching first-year seminar, and I did that every fall semester, until I retired, retired from even the part-time work.

CVD: Okay. You mentioned then initially that you served in two roles, right, College Chaplain, and Pastor of the College Church. Did those two roles continue, or was that changed?

GM: Actually, the College Church went out of business in 1984, I think, somewhere around there, maybe '85. The congregation had dwindled, and the structure of the church sort of didn't make any sense in an increasingly diverse kind of an environment. We were a Presbyterian congregation. In order [00:05:00] to have leadership, people had to join that, so they had to become Presbyterians, and at that point, maybe six or seven

percent of the student body were Presbyterian, so, it was a little hard to sustain leadership with that kind of model.

CVD: Right.

GM: So, we eventually closed the church, but I continued in the role of Chaplain.

CVD: Of Chaplain, okay, all right, very interesting. Well you've already started to answer my next question, what my next question was going to be, outlining your areas of responsibility as College Chaplain. Many people would be unfamiliar with that role, so, could you kind of talk about what you did --

GM: Yeah --

CVD: -- or what you were assigned to do?

GM: The job description was fairly open-ended, but basically I was responsible for coordinating religious activity, all kinds of religious [00:06:00] activity, so working with the Catholic Chaplain -- initially we didn't have a Jewish Chaplain, but working with the Hillel Society. Eventually, there was a Muslim Student Association formed. So my responsibility was to make sure that anyone's religious needs, any student's religious needs were met, in whatever way was appropriate for them, whether it was on campus or in the community. And then, increasingly in the '80s, there was a movement of students interested in doing

volunteer work, and so, I kind of took on the mantle of coordinating volunteer activities, and that eventually evolved. You know, initially, we had just student employees, and then we hired Sue Ruggles as [00:07:00] part-time community outreach coordinator, and then she became full time, and then it expanded. We got a gift from the Landis family, and then formed the Landis Community Outreach Center. So, by the '90s, early to mid-'90s, a lot of my work had to do with overseeing that community outreach effort. And then of course, to go back to the early part, the Pastor of the College Church meant that I was leading worship on Sunday mornings for that congregation, providing pastoral care for the members of the congregation. So I was functioning as a Presbyterian minister, leading Protestant worship, but also helping to coordinate and generate activity, religious activity, [00:08:00] more broadly. One of the things I did, I can't remember whether it was specifically in the job description, but was to try to encourage as much interfaith activity as possible, so we were doing interfaith Seders, and interfaith dinners, and the Brown Bag Luncheon Program, which kind of became a mainstay of our activity out of the Chaplain's Office, was very much interfaith, and even not specifically religious. You know, we were dealing with a

lot of issues that were maybe more broadly ethical, but not necessarily related to any kind of religious tradition.

CVD: Okay. Yes, I'm going to go back, I think, to the Brown Bag Program later, which I think was a hugely important contribution that you made to the life of the College, [00:09:00] but I think just sticking for a minute on the institutional role that you've fulfilled, I assume that you were responsible to many constituencies then, right?

GM: Yes, yeah.

CVD: To students...

GM: In a collaborative way, with other religious leaders on campus, but also, you know, with, well, with faculty and administration.

CVD: Right, okay. So, on the one hand, I assume that pastoral care involved individual, as well as collective, but individual work with students who would come to you for guidance, right?

GM: Yeah, yeah, I did some counseling, but it wasn't a big part of my ministry. You know, whenever there was a campus tragedy or crisis, or if there was a hospitalization, I usually tried to visit, [00:10:00] and provide whatever presence I could that would be helpful in those kinds of situations.

CVD: Okay, and also, you said you reported through an administrative chain at the College.

GM: Yeah, I reported through the dean of students.

CVD: Right, okay.

GM: Although, with President Bergethon, there was also a lot of direct (laughs) contact with him.

CVD: Interesting.

GM: He was very much interested in the religious life of the campus, and in the work in the Chaplain's Office, so, I did have some direct contact with him.

CVD: All right. All right, and that was pretty early. I can't remember; I know I've heard when he retired.

GM: I think it was around '78, '79, somewhere in there.

CVD: All right. And, what about responsibilities to the Presbytery, [00:11:00] anything outside the College?

GM: Well, as long as I was Pastor of the College Church -- well, I'm a Presbyterian minister, so I always was a member of the Presbytery, which is the kind of regional body, and was under their jurisdiction ... basically under their discipline, if you will, in the sense that, you know, I had to behave in ways that were appropriate for Presbyterian ministers, (laughter) and I played leadership roles at various levels, including national level, within the Presbyterian Church. But when I was pPastor of the College

Church, we had a governing body of students, and they, basically, oversaw the [00:12:00] worship and the activities of the College Church, and I was kind of directing that, as well.

CVD: Okay. All right, one of the major sections of the interview questions for the project as a whole is called "Being LGBTQ on Campus," and here, I'll be addressing primarily your impressions of or experiences regarding students, okay? So, what would you say about the general situation on campus for students who identified as LGBTQ community members during your time here? Long stretch of time.

GM: Yeah, well, it changed rather dramatically from when I first came. In the early years, there was no gay student organization, I don't remember there being any out students. [00:13:00] I'm not sure exactly when this happened, but it was fairly early: a gay student came into my office and said that he was feeling very isolated, very lonely, and wanted some help in trying to find out how to get in touch with other gay students. So we talked about it for a while, and we decided on an approach which wasn't terribly successful, but at least it was an attempt. We had a newsletter that went out, and I published in the newsletter and I may have published it also in the

Lafayette, I'm not sure, that if any gay students wanted to be in contact with other gay students, they could contact me. And then I would screen and make sure that this wasn't somebody playing a prank, or something [00:14:00] like that, and to protect the anonymity of the student who came into my office. And we got one or two inquiries, but that really sort of never went anywhere, but it was sort of an indication that, you know, if you were a gay student in the '70s, you were pretty isolated on this campus, and it would have been taken, I think, a lot of courage to come out. Now I don't remember exactly when that began to change, but I remember one and I'm sure you remember this as well, that one dramatic episode when the *Princeton Review* listed Lafayette as one of the most homophobic campuses in the country, and that sort of brought the issue to the fore, and you probably [00:15:00] remember the open forum we had over in Interfaith Chapel where we just brought people together and talked about it, and why, why was that the case, and as I recall, and you may know this better than I, that was the beginning of the formation of the FLAG group, Friends of Lesbians and Gays, and then it became a little bit easier for students to identify, and at least find some supportive support people.

CVD: Okay. So, all of this, I mean the *Princeton Review*, I believe, was in 1992, that issue of their publication, whatever it was, that branded Lafayette the, I think *the* most homophobic campus in the country, so...

GM: The methodology [00:16:00] on that (laughs) was pretty suspect.

CVD: Yes.

GM: I remember Bob Carman was in charge of public relations at that point, and he was quite incensed by this, and tried to get some information from them about how they came to that conclusion, and the best he could find out is that they just sent, kind of randomly to students, a questionnaire, and you know, there didn't appear to be any scientific sampling attempts, nor a large enough body to really come to any real conclusions, and so it could've simply been two or three people that said something, or... But, anyway, so, it did -- I think that was helpful, though -- it kind of opened up that whole issue.

CVD: Were you personally surprised to learn that the [00:17:00] College had been so identified?

GM: Well, I thought Lafayette was probably typical of other colleges. I didn't think we stood out in any way. I didn't think there was any reason for us to be number one in that category. I'm not surprised that the issue could

have been raised by some kind of method of surveying. So, anyways, you know that, that, I think, affected in some ways some of my other work, and it may have been that the initial... That sort of opened an invitation for people to identify themselves through my office. I always had a kind of arms-length relationship to the evangelical group on campus, the Lafayette [00:18:00] Christian Fellowship, and I don't have any direct evidence, but I always felt that, the fact that I had sort of identified myself as at least a sympathizer with a gay student, put me at some distance from them. I'm sure there were other things as well, but that always kind of, it was kind of in the back of my mind that one of the reasons that they never invited me to meetings and where I was ... never really hostile to the Chaplain's Office, but never really supported the kind of ecumenical work and interfaith work --

CVD: That's --

GM: -- was related to some extent to that, because I know that I heard [00:19:00] secondhand information that some of the students had heard kind of antigay discussions among Lafayette Christian Fellowship, so...

CVD: Wow.

GM: But, yeah, that's more of a surmise than anything else.

(laughs)

CVD: Well, it's a very interesting one. I mean it indicates that there must have been some sense among the student body, maybe not all students, but generally, that there was some tension over the issue of gay students and being gay, yeah. Yeah. You mentioned the one student who had come to you for advice about contacting other gay students, and that was pretty early, I think you said. I mean, it was well before the 1992 opening up.

GM: Yeah, yeah.

CVD: Okay.

GM: [00:20:00] Yeah. I found out later that one of the students who was very active in the College Church came out. This was well after he'd graduated, but, he was one of our elders. That was the student leaders in the church, and you know, I'm glad at least he felt comfortable worshipping with us, and didn't get any negative --

CVD: Were you in touch with him after he'd --

GM: No.

CVD: -- graduated? Okay.

GM: No. I can't remember even why, how I found that out. I think maybe it was -- you know the alumni notes in the back of the alumni magazine? I think maybe several years later, he just decided he would come out to his classmates through that mechanism, but...

CVD: Wow.

GM: Yeah. But it must have been a tough time for students.

CVD: [00:21:00] Yes.

GM: Yeah, I mean, you know...

CVD: I mean, one of the questions asked of particularly the students who are interviewed, the alums who are interviewed, "Was the LGBTQ community visible?" And I think you've already answered that indirectly.

GM: Yeah, as far as I could tell, no.

CVD: It was not. Yeah.

GM: There were places on campus where students could gather and talk more personally, and one of them was The Gourd, which was a coffee house in the Chaplain's Office. That would have been a place where a gay student might have felt free to come out with sympathetic people, but again, I think either the numbers were very low, or it was such a hostile environment that students just didn't seem to be able to [00:22:00] have any way of getting in touch with each other.

CVD: Wow.

GM: So, yeah, it was a different time.

CVD: Aside from students coming out as gay or lesbian, were you aware of any tension around gender identification, you

know, students who seemed to be not quite gender-conforming?

GM: Yeah, I don't remember experiencing that at all, no.

CVD: What, if anything, was your perception of the role of Greek life, on the Lafayette experience for students, especially around these issues?

GM: Yeah. Well, again, I don't have any direct evidence, but I think it would have been a very hostile environment for a student, if the student came out. I'm sure there were gay students in probably all the fraternities at some point, [00:23:00] but, I don't imagine that it would have been very comfortable for them. I was just playing pickleball with Barbara Young, and she mentioned that one of the -- I didn't recall this, but one of the male tennis players came out, and I should have asked her at what year. I think she said it was kind of early, but I'm not sure. And she said, "Teammates accepted him," and she said, "Actually, it became public in the *Lafayette*," and I don't remember that at all, but... And I don't remember when that happened but...

CVD: Well, it may have been after you had retired, but...

GM: Well --

CVD: She --

GM: -- no, it couldn't have been, because she retired I think before I did. Yeah, I'm sorry, I take that back, because she could have heard about it even [00:24:00] after she retired. But yeah, I would think that that wouldn't have been a warm environment for people. I don't know about sororities. You know, we didn't have sororities until, what, in '77, or something like that.

CVD: Certainly, certainly after '71 when women were admitted.

GM: Yeah. The first year that I was here was the year that there were women in all four classes.

CVD: Oh my goodness, wow.

GM: So we were still in the midst of the transition, and one of my early responsibilities was to chair the Title IX Review Committee, when that legislation passed. There was a requirement that every institution that received federal funding, do a review of gender equity, and for whatever reason, I got selected to chair [00:25:00] that committee. It was Jane Curry, Barbara Young, John somebody from engineering, and a fourth person and I can't remember who it was. At this point, I don't think we had any students on the committee, which... No, mm, I take that back. There might have been a --

CVD: Someone from the dean of students' office maybe, or...?

GM: No, I don't think so, because I was sort of representing the dean of students' office.

CVD: Okay.

GM: Well, anyways, we did this comprehensive review, and submitted a report which had 47 recommendations, of which -- and we're probably getting off the topic here, but --

CVD: No, that's good; no, it's fine.

GM: -- of which about 20 of them had to do with athletics.

CVD: Aha, yes.

GM: And it generated a fair amount of controversy, and got [00:26:00] some pushback from the athletics department, but also from the president's office, (laughs) and from the dean of students, who was somewhat uncomfortable with some of our conclusions. But one of the things we'd looked at was, do men and women have same access to different programs, and I think at that point, there was a section I believe on fraternities, and I think there was a recommendation that if there was interest -- the argument had been in the early days of coeducation that women weren't interested in sororities, and you know, it was probably men mostly saying that. But one of the things that came out of that report I think was that, if women were interested in forming sororities, they should be encouraged to do that, and then

of course, they did. So [00:27:00] that was, I think that report was '77, something like that.

CVD: Before my time here.

GM: Yeah.

CVD: Yeah. Okay. Another question having to do with student life: What, if any, resources were in place to support the physical and mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQ students, or the community in general? Go beyond students if you wish.

GM: Yeah. I think that probably the best resource was the counseling center.

CVD: Mm, okay.

GM: And of course, there were faculty members. I don't remember the earliest faculty members that came out, but there were faculty members who at least indicated to students that they were comfortable when talking with them about those issues, so I'm not sure. There were a number of faculty members, both gay [00:28:00] faculty members but also straight faculty members, who had individual conversations with students. When this Brown Bag Luncheon Program started, one of the early programs, we invited -- I can't remember his first name. His last name was LoGiudice.. Does that mean anything to you?

CVD: LoGiudice?

GM: Robert?

CVD: Yeah. Yeah, it does, yes, uh-huh.

GM: I think his -- no, wait a minute. I actually looked this up. My annual reports always had an appendix. Yeah, they always had an appendix --

CVD: Yes, at the Brown Bags.

GM: -- of our programs, and for some reason, not all of them were copied, but, okay, it was Joanne --

CVD: Oh, Joanne LoGiudice .

GM: LoGiudice, yeah right. She did a program for us in 1977 [00:29:00] on homosexuality, and that may have been an avenue for people to find fellow gay students and...

CVD: Right.

GM: Yeah, but that was the earliest, I think.

CVD: I think then that would have been then about three years after I think you started the Brown Bag Lunch Program? I'm trying to remember.

GM: Yeah, I think it was probably my second year here, so I think maybe '74, '75, were the first brown bags.

CVD: Right.

GM: Yeah.

CVD: Yeah, and that, I mean that program has continued. I was telling some people last night that you were the one who actually started the brown bags, and they were --

GM: Yeah --

CVD: -- amazed.

GM: -- (laughs) I sort of lay claim to that, but, the idea actually came from the geology department. [00:30:00] They were doing brown bag programs, and I thought, well that's -- they were actually literally brown bag programs, but what we did, as you know, was to lay out a luncheon spread, and kind of popularize it, and also kind of laid claim to Friday as being the day when our programs were, so that, as other departments began to do similar kinds of things, then for the most part, they avoided Friday.

CVD: Right. Yeah, and I hadn't known that about the geology department, but I daresay their brown bags had to do with geology.

GM: Yeah, yeah right, yeah.

CVD: And yours were quite different, so, do you remember why you decided to start that?

GM: Well, we're looking for any kind of opportunity for us to address theological and ethical issues, and to use [00:31:00] the tremendous resources we have here on the campus, in a kind of broader way. I mean, one of the things that we were able to do is to bring in people, mostly faculty members, but from a variety of different departments, and have them talk about issues of general

interest, and not just their specialty, and, so it gave us, you know, a vast resource of different topics that we could explore together, and one of the things I wanted to do was to make it topical, so that if there was something happening in the news, and we had somebody on campus who had some expertise that would be relevant to that, we could address it. So yeah, that program started and as you probably remember, it started in The Gourd, which is this room that had seating for maybe 15, [00:32:00] 20 people, maximum. And then after a while, we'd set the food out in the corridor; and if The Gourd filled up, then we'd move to the chapel, which had seating for about a hundred; and then eventually, it got to the point where we just put the food out in chapel, and we began to draw larger numbers. But yeah, and that program was just so open-ended, I mean, so flexible that we could do lots of different kinds of things. So I'm, or you'd spoken in that program a couple of times.

CVD: Yes, right, on different things, yeah. Yeah, I think it was, as I've said, a tremendous contribution to the life of the College, and it continues, and people don't seem at all uneasy about the title "The Brown Bag," even though it's not that anymore, yeah.

GM: Yeah.

CVD: [00:33:00] Was the open forum on homosexuality that you sponsored after the *Princeton Review*, was that part of that same program?

GM: Yeah.

CVD: The Brown Bag Program, yeah, and that was very well attended.

GM: Yeah.

CVD: Do you remember any other important public moments when LGBTQ issues were debated or noticed?

GM: Not offhand. We did do some other programs. Let me just check my list here again. This is not directly related to homosexuality, but when AIDS became known as a hazard, I invited Wesley Kozin who's the infectious disease specialist at Easton Hospital, [00:34:00] and he came in 1986 and did a program for us on AIDS. You said -- yeah, you're right, the forum on homophobia was 1992. We did a program in '96 on homosexuality in the church, brought in a woman from Metropolitan Community Church, over in Allentown. I don't have her name right here, but... And then [Professors] Helena [Silverstein] and Lori Gruen did a program for us on same-sex marriage in '96.

CVD: Right, wow.

GM: I think the homosexuality one was in the spring semester, and the same-sex marriage one was in the fall semester. So,

these were issues that were coming up in the media, and tried to address them if we had the resources [00:35:00] to do that.

CVD: Yeah. The speaker I remembered -- I was going through the same records I think you were, annual reports, and the speaker that I remembered very visibly was a clergywoman named Jane Spahr --

GM: Yes, right. She's -- yeah.

CVD: -- who I think was had a congregation in New York State, am I right about that? You were talking about someone just from Allentown --

GM: Actually yeah, now that I'm thinking about it, the Allentown Metropolitan, that may have been a different event, but Jane Spahr, yeah. As I recall, this was when the Presbyterian Church was beginning to deal with the gay ordination issue, and I believe that she had been ordained by a Presbytery, and then there was a church court case about it, and she was kind of one of the leading-edge people [00:36:00] in our denomination. We were, through that period, we were dealing with the issue of gay ordination, and then eventually, that passed in our denomination, and then more recently, the issue of gay marriage, which has now been resolved, but, yeah, the church was going through a lot of soul-searching on these

kinds of issues. We did have, again, some conversations in there, and I think, again, that was probably one of the reasons that the evangelical folks weren't entirely happy with the kinds of things we were doing.

CVD: Okay, and so, their perception of your position on those issues as far as you know was not based on anything specific; there were no particular discussions, [00:37:00] but it was just a sense that you had of coolness toward what you --

GM: Yeah, right.

CVD: -- were doing.

GM: I'd get the signals when I'd hear either directly or indirectly that students didn't consider to me be Christian.

CVD: Oh! My goodness.

GM: A student might say, "Well I go to a Christian fellowship," (laughs) as opposed to coming to worship with the College Church. There was that sense that there was a pretty clear definition of what a Christian was, and that organization had its own views about sexuality, and also about leadership, you know. They have never had a woman president of the Lafayette Christian Fellowship --

CVD: My goodness.

GM: -- because that brand of evangelicals don't [00:38:00] believe in women in leadership. Now the women, titular leadership, they certainly rely on a lot of women leaders, but not holding an office in which would seem to be superior to that.

CVD: That must have been difficult for you to deal with.

GM: Yeah, I mean, we just kept each other at arm's distance. I tried to invite them into our interfaith councils, and to be a part of our discussions, and we occasionally had -- I remember we sponsored a debate once on the inerrancy of scripture, or something like that, but for the most part, they just weren't terribly interested in involving themselves with other religious groups. We were just kind of on different tracks.

CVD: Were you [00:39:00] aware of tensions among students over that issue? I mean --

GM: Yeah, there were people that came to the College Church when it was in existence, who had been to the Christian Fellowship and decided it wasn't for them, and I'm sure there were a lot of students that the opposite had happened, that they'd come and worshiped with us, and then decided that that wasn't their brand of Christianity. But, yeah, there wasn't any overt tension for the most part, but there was a kind of sense that we were playing in different

ballparks. Those students could come to my office and use vans and this sort of thing to get to worship, but they didn't really consider me to be a Christian leader. I was kind of, someone [00:40:00] who could provide resources for them.

CVD: Did that change over time? I mean, this would be, I guess, asking you to generalize in a very large way, but that sense of distance between the Christian Fellowship and other students, or --

GM: I don't think --

CVD: -- them at you --

GM: -- it's changed much at all. I just had a conversation with [current College Chaplain]Alex [Hendrickson] about that, and what's happened now is actually, there's some other evangelical organizations forming that are less conservative, and so there's a little bit more --

CVD: You mean on campus or --

GM: Yeah.

CVD: Oh, wow! Fascinating.

GM: And that, in my time, it was pretty much Lafayette Christian Fellowship, which was very conservative, or, be involved in Chaplain's Office activities and worship with the Protestant community, either on campus or in the community.

CVD: Okay. Wow.

GM: Yeah.

CVD: Was there, [00:41:00] in your memory, any, I want to call it pushback, any sense of supervision over your role on campus from the synod, from the Presbytery, from whatever organizing...?

GM: Yeah, no, not from the Church. I was never put in what would have been an awkward position, if I was asked to perform a gay marriage. That would have, back in the '70s, '80s, and into the '90s, would have been an issue where I would have had to make a decision, and then I could have, you know... I mean, people did. In our church, people [00:42:00] were defrocked because they had made that step before it was considered legal. But I was never put in that kind of position. In terms of supervision from the College, no. I think generally, the administration was supportive. I wouldn't say, you know, in the early days, it was an issue that was of a great amount of importance. The first president I worked with didn't regard anyone who sought counseling -- he was in conflict with [00:43:00] the director of the counseling center, because he felt that if anybody needed more than three sessions of counseling, they either should leave campus, or they should get their help independently off campus, and it led to, I think it led to

the departure of the first director of the counseling center that I worked with, because he was told he would have to start charging students after the third visit, and he said, "I can't do that," and then he was gone. So, but, you know, my direct supervisor, Herman Kissiah, for most of my time, and then later, Jim, Jim Krivoski, were generally supportive, and then in later times, [00:44:00] really became more active in supporting, overtly supporting the organization, gay organizations, and hiring of gay staff, and that sort of thing. But it was not... Nobody was out looking for, "We should hire a student, somebody on the student services staff, who would be openly gay and would reach out to gay students." That didn't happen until probably the last decade or so, I would think. But yeah...

CVD: So, I'm wondering, and this is all speculation, but I'm wondering if someone in a role like yours, who was also a College Chaplain, at Lafayette or any other institution that had had historic relationship with a mainline denomination, if such a person had been defrocked, would the person have [00:45:00] been able to continue as College Chaplain, whether it was that kind of role?

GM: Yeah, I don't recall any incidents of that. But yeah, that would have -- I mean, my job description required ordination, and if I had been defrocked, then I don't know

whether the College would have continued my employment. I kind of hope they would, but -- (laughs)

CVD: Sure, yeah --

GM: But, it was --

CVD: -- might have depended on the period and --

GM: Yeah, right. I mean, I would have had to do it in a non-ordained setting, which would have not changed things dramatically, except I couldn't administer sacraments, perform weddings, and stuff like that.

CVD: Did issues of LGBTQ toleration or difficulties arise in your contact with [00:46:00] other religious life leaders, maybe at local LVAIC institutions, or did you have discussions with other --

GM: Yeah, we didn't. In the early days, we had fairly regular contact with each other, and that kind of faded away. I don't remember that being an issue at all. I know I had some discomfort with the relationship the College had with the Catholic Chaplain. It was, always seemed to me a little -- well first of all, the College never had any role in hiring those people, or even selecting those people. Basically, the Diocese, in the early days, the Diocese would send somebody. And they didn't even [00:47:00] send a letter saying, "This is going to be your new Chaplain." It was just, the person would show up, often with his

predecessor, but sometimes not, and just announce, "I'm your College Chaplain now." So, that always made me a little uncomfortable, and then the setup that we had, where they -- this was after the Newman House was established, but having --

CVD: The Newman House being --

GM: The Chaplain, College Chaplain, lived there, and that made me a little bit uncomfortable, frankly. I mean, this was before the sex abuse stuff in the church became quite as overt, but you know, here we are, the College has got some person that we haven't vetted in [00:48:00] any way. We've provided that person with housing, and then we've invited that person to have students in. I don't think it's something we would have done. I can't remember any other analogous relationship. Would we have a single Jewish Chaplain or Hillel advisor living in house and having guests, students over? I don't think we would have done that, and...

[Section Redacted by QAP Reviewer]

CVD: General question: How would you characterize religious life at Lafayette during your years here? What changes were there?

GM: Well, one of the things that was pretty dramatic -- had already been happening before I arrived, but continued to happen -- was the dramatic change in the religious demographics. We were known as a Presbyterian college much more broadly back in the '40s, '50s. You know, the College had a kind of a strange relationship historically. You probably know this, but it wasn't founded [00:53:00] as a Presbyterian college, and it was in the early years when the College was having considerable amount of financial difficulty that they had -- you know, they had used the First Presbyterian Church downtown for meetings, and a lot of the leadership, well, all the presidents were Presbyterian ministers up until Bergethon, I think. So, that kind of sense that it was a Protestant, Presbyterian college was very pervasive, but, when Bergethon came in, one of the things he wanted to do was to make the student body much more selective, and to kind of move away from the strong identification with the church so that other students, and there was particularly an outreach for Jewish students, would feel comfortable [00:54:00] here. So, we had required chapel up till 1965, but --

CVD: Required chapel, mm-hmm, yeah, okay.

GM: -- and required religion courses. I think there was two years of religion required in the '60s.

CVD: Wow.

GM: So, anyways, that goes back way far, and probably off the topic, but what was happening in terms of religious life, when I came, we were in the middle of a transition from being very heavily Protestant and significantly Presbyterian, to becoming much more diverse, and Catholics particularly were on the rise, and Jewish students were on the rise as well. So, the most dramatic thing that happened, in terms of my religious work, was that I was called as the College Chaplain, and I was a Presbyterian, and I was [00:55:00] supposed to be the, sort of the head of religious life, and it was going to be distinctively Presbyterian. Well, it became clear that, as the student body changed, that the ministry had to be very different than it was kind of initially envisioned. So, that's when we started doing much more interfaith work, and started programs like the Brown Bag Program, which were accessible to students of all religious backgrounds. But yeah, that kind of demographic change was most pronounced, and that continued up until maybe the late '80s and '90s, and then, things became more diverse, not in terms of Protestant-Catholic-Jewish balance, but more diverse in terms of international students and on so, Muslim, and [00:56:00] Hindu students, so, that still continued, I

know. I talked with Alex {Hendrickson} about that the other day, but... So, religious life became not having a required chapel service anymore, but having a very, hopefully, broad set of offerings for students, and providing worship opportunities, and other resources for students of many different kinds of faiths. So, the Interfaith Chapel, sort of an example of that -- the chapel was originally a commuter lounge. It was like they had these overstuffed leather chairs, and when the chapel burned [00:57:00] down in 1965, that lounge got converted to a chapel, and actually, Roald Bergethon gave the -- there was a kind of a sculpture with a Protestant cross, Catholic crucifix, and Tablets of the Covenant, which, sort of symbolizing that becoming an interfaith chapel.

CVD: Aha! Fascinating.

GM: So yeah.

CVD: Yeah. Wow. Many changes. I would like to go back to when -- specific event in which you were involved, and that was that open forum on homosexuality and, must have been in 1992. Do you remember any details about that, how you publicized it, who were the [00:58:00] important speakers?

GM: That one, I didn't have a speaker for it. I decided to use a different kind of format, and basically, I just opened up a discussion and said, "You know, why are people saying

this about Lafayette, and is this true to your experience, and is it something we need to be addressing?" And so, it just became an open discussion. There was no speaker. I just kind of moderated. I called it an open forum, and it was just kind of people sharing, sharing their points of view. I remember it was pretty well attended, by students and by faculty, and I think it was an indication that a fair amount of people were uncomfortable with having that kind of label being put on our College. I don't recall, maybe you do, whether there were administrators.

[00:59:00] I know the President wasn't there, I would have remembered that. Let's see. At that point, it probably would have been Rotberg, I guess. But, you know, I was pleased that, first of all, that there were that many people that were concerned about it, and that we had a pretty good discussion about it. Students offered evidence of things that they had seen that could have led to people making that kind of judgment, and then we talked about ways that we can make life more open for... So...

CVD: Looking back, someone might find it not entirely expected or predictable, that at that point, homophobia would have been regarded as a phenomenon, [01:00:00] and as something negative, and that a discussion devoted to that kind of

point of view would have been openly announced by the College Chaplain.

GM: Yeah. Well, yeah, I suppose. Sort of a basic tenet of my ministry has always been to open up people to diversity: ethnic diversity, and gender diversity, and sexuality diversity, and religious diversity. We didn't have any diversity officer or anything like that. I sort of took that on myself, and just say, "You know, this is a place [01:01:00] where we can hopefully bring people together, and talk about issues," and, of course, the First-Year Seminar that I taught was around those issues too. It was on community and diversity, and it sort of dealt with the question of how you can sustain a community and make it cohesive when it's dealing with various kinds of differences. So we'd spent the whole semester just kind of talking about various differences and how we formed community around it.

CVD: Was there anything in that first-year seminar -- did you teach the same topic more than once? Okay. Was there anything in those offerings about the students that surprised you, attitudes that they had, views that they expressed?

GM: [01:02:00] No, not really. I mean, those First-Year Seminars, as you know, were self-selected, so, the title of

my first-year seminar was Challenging Differences -- what did I call it -- Building Community in a Diverse Society, or something like that, subtitle, and the students who chose that were students who obviously were open to that kind of discussion. So, I had a pretty good group, and a fairly diverse group. Some classes were more diverse than others, but, we dealt with sexuality issues, but we didn't... I can't recall any time when a student identified themselves as gay, but we certainly, we read a novel that had -- do you know *The Women of Brewster Place*?

CVD: Yes, mm-hmm, yeah.

GM: [01:03:00] It has some gay themes in it, and we talked about it in other settings as well, but yeah, among diversities, that might have been one of the more uncomfortable ones for students. They might have been more comfortable talking about race than homosexuality, or... But, gradually, I think we've all sensed that students have become more open to these kinds of discussions, and I would think a typical group of first-year students at this point would have much less discomfort talking about [01:04:00] homosexuality than students 10 years, 20 years, certainly 30 years ago.

CVD: When you announced the -- I can't remember when this was, but the Brown Bag on Homosexuality and the Church, did you

arrive at that topic because any student seemed to be uneasy about the relationship between sexuality and faith?

GM: No, I think it was just simply that our denomination was dealing with that issue, and I happened to know that Jane Spahr was available, and I just thought it would be an opportunity for us to open up that discussion on campus. At that point, we didn't have any strong Presbyterian presence on campus. The College Church was out of business, so it was really kind of [01:05:00] more, just that it was my denomination, and I had some resources available to me that would make it possible to talk about that, but... Yeah.

CVD: Good. So, let me see my list of general questions. No, I think that's it, aside from other comments that you would like to offer about your experience around these issues here, about changes you've seen.

GM: One of the issues we haven't talked about is of hiring, and I can remember a [01:06:00] couple of instances, and you may have been involved with this actually, where a candidate would call and say, "I've been interviewing for a position," and I remember one instance, I think the person on the phone said, "I am gay, would I be comfortable?" --

CVD: No, I don't remember anything like that. Interesting.

GM: Somebody referred the candidate to me, and I don't know who it was. So maybe you were involved, but it could have obviously been somebody else, but you know, was just sort of saying, "Is it going to work here?" And you know, I was --

CVD: Would you be able to place that roughly in the time continuum?

GM: Boy, it happened more than once, probably not more than twice, [01:07:00] and I would say probably '90s, sometime. We didn't have, as you know, we didn't have very many out faculty members for a long time. And, I'd try to be honest with them and say, "Well, here's the situation: there aren't that many folks who are out here, but on the other hand, I think you will find, among the broad reaches of the faculty, support for that." I couldn't assess whether or not, within the whole question of tenuring and that sort of thing, whether that particular department would be one that would be more or less supportive, whether or not the [01:08:00] environment among the administration would be supportive. But yeah, I did have a couple of those, and actually, after I retired, when my successor was hired, one of the candidates who came to interview, I had known. She was a Chaplain at [redacted by QAP Reviewer]. She came to interview, and I understood she had accepted the position,

but apparently, her partner, [redacted by QAP Reviewer], I think, didn't feel comfortable here, and on the way home, they just decided that this wasn't the right place for them, so they turned it down.

CVD: That's fascinating, yeah.

GM: No, I hadn't talked with her about that issue, and I did have breakfast with her, and talked more generally about what the environment was [01:09:00] like here at the College, but...

CVD: Thank you.

GM: But, you know, there wasn't... Its longest, actually, and even until I retired, I don't think there was ever any intentional effort, at least among the student services staff, to either look for a gay employee or, if one identified themselves, whether or not that would have been considered a plus. I think that's changed in the last decade.

CVD: Yes, correct.

GM: But that was sort of state of reality I think, among the student services people. I think we were all pretty open to gay folks, but we (laughs) didn't have any representation, and that [01:10:00] was a, I think that was a loss for the College, and it would have obviously made the environment much more hospitable to gay students.

CVD: Wow. And, I mean, personally, I can't find anything to regret in the successors to your incumbency, so, I think things have turned around in a very positive direction.

GM: Yeah, as far as I can tell from some of these talks.

CVD: I'm getting the sense, from what you've been saying on all different aspects of this issue, that there was a turning point somewhere around the *Princeton Review* year, that before that, there was an acceptance of silence, right? Invisibility.

GM: Yeah.

CVD: And, then there was a kind of opening in [01:11:00] both a positive and a negative sense, and we've made certain progress since then.

GM: Yeah. I can remember -- when was it -- probably late '90s, but I can't be very precise about it, student services staff were dealing with the issues of date rape, and we decided, or somebody decided that at the beginning of the fall semester, we should go into each of the residence halls, and have a discussion --

CVD: I remember that.

GM: -- with students about that, and first-year students were supposed to come to these, but they were very sparsely attended, and I can remember being over in, I think it was Watson Hall, in the basement, talking with just a handful

of students [01:12:00] about these issues, and one student said, "Well you know, you're assuming all of this is going to be male-on-female rape. What happens if it's a male-male or female-female?" And you know, something that sort of really wasn't on my radar, (laughs) at that point, but this student, he was one of the first, and I couldn't tell you his name, one of the first students I remember who arrived as a first-year student, identified himself as gay, was quite public about it, and was in leadership roles in various student organizations, and kind of was a groundbreaker, but it was no earlier than the mid-'90s, I think. [01:13:00] I think until then, that would have been a very unusual and bold thing for a student to do.

CVD: Yes. Yeah, and if it happened before your time and my time, it faded, you know, I mean if there were individual students, yeah.

GM: Yeah.

CVD: Yeah. Wow. Okay. I'll say something in closing which I would like to put on the record, even though it's not directly related to the topic of the interview. Just happened that a couple of weeks ago, there was a big opening, grand opening of the new Rockwell Integrated Sciences Center, and I happened to be talking to a prominent member of the faculty who is still employed here,

and I mentioned someone [01:14:00] who hadn't come to the opening, and that's somebody in the administration, and he said, "Yeah, she is one of two people that I think have significantly contributed to the College in a very positive way, whose contributions have not been adequately recognized, and the other one is Gary Miller." So, yeah. I said, "How interesting that you would mention that, because I'm going to be talking to Gary Miller in a couple of weeks." (Miller laughs) So, yeah. So...

GM: Well, I'm flattered by the comments that you have made, and others have made. [Dean] Chris Hunt came up to me and I don't even know Chris, but he said, "You know, I really respect the work that you did here, and" --

CVD: Chris Phillips, you mean?

GM: No, Chris Hunt, he's the --

CVD: Oh! Oh, oh.

GM: -- dean of students now.

CVD: Okay, okay, sorry.

GM: He didn't overlap with me when I was Chaplain at all. I don't know where --

CVD: It's wonderful.

GM: -- this had come from. [01:15:00] So, anyways, that's nice to know.

CVD: Yeah, all right. Okay, anything you would like to add?

GM: No. In retrospect, I regret I wasn't more involved in helping students in earlier stages of this whole process. In our own family, my [redacted by QAP reviewer] was gay, and that coming out sort of opened my mind to what it's like for a person to be living as a gay person. I kind of, as I look back, I wish that it had been more on my radar, that it was something that I could have [01:16:00] perhaps helped students. For example, that student who was a member of our session in the College Church, four years, and I'm assuming his time with the College Church was not uncomfortable, although I can't be sure of that, but I'm sure that it was not a comfortable situation for him elsewhere. He never said anything about it, and maybe it was because I wasn't open enough about it, but anyways, it's --

CVD: People can --

GM: -- embarrassing.

CVD: People can sense acceptance, and openness, even if it's not verbalized.

GM: Yeah, yeah, but... [01:17:00] Well I've enjoyed this.

CVD: Okay, thank you.

GM: Thank you.

CVD: I have too. Thank you so much for being willing to do it.

GM: Yeah, good, good.

CVD: And I will turn off the recorder now...

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