

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH KENT HATFIELD
FOR THE
RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY
NICHOLAS MOLNAR
and
GERALD CARLUCCI

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY
JANUARY 6, 2012

TRANSCRIPT BY
FANTASTIC TRANSCRIPTS

Nicholas Molnar: This begins an interview with Kent Hatfield in New Brunswick, New Jersey on January 6, 2012 with Gerald Carlucci and Nicholas Molnar. Thank you for coming in today, Kent. I told Gerry that he's very well prepared for this interview. I said that he can lead the interview today. We'll sit close so you don't have keep swiveling your head.

Gerald Carlucci: To begin, can you tell me when and where you were born?

KH: I was born in Altoona, Pennsylvania, September 17, 1959, but at the time, my parents were living in New York. We were out visiting my great-grandparents.

GC: In Altoona?

KH: Well, actually, they live in Mount Union, which is a really small town, but the closest hospital was Altoona.

GC: What were your parents doing in New York City?

KH: Well, my real father was in the Army and that's where my mom settled while he was doing his duties in the military.

GC: Where did you live in New York?

KH: 1065 Grant Avenue in the Bronx. My uncle owned the building and so there was four--it's a four family house or apartment building. All four apartments belonged to family members.

GC: Can you tell me a little bit about your parents?

KH: My real father, I don't know too much about him. I've had a total of four contacts with him. First one as a three-year-old. I was at my grandmother's in Washington, DC. They told me to go around front because there's someone there who wants to see me. I ran around front, saw somebody in a uniform, which later on, I realized was an Army uniform. He had his hat over his face and said, "Get away from me kid. I want to get some sleep." So, I went back in the back to play. Then the next time, I was about eight when he called to say that he lost three thousand dollars that was supposed to be for me. I was sound asleep when he called, so I could care less. Then, he called back the next morning and was trying to talk to me, but I was running late for school. So, I didn't want to have anything to do with him. Then, the last time was I was about twenty or twenty-one. I was in the Army stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. The Red Cross called to say that my father was dying. I thought it was my step-father who's the only person I've ever known as my father, but when I called my mom, she's like, "No, it's your real father." So, I said, "Oh, okay." So, just to have closure for myself, I flew back home to Belleville, New Jersey so I could talk to my mom. Then I went to Philadelphia and went to the VA Hospital. He was dying of cancer of the brain. So, I don't know if he actually saw me or not, but he had told my mother at one point that I would probably end up

either in jail, on drugs, or dead. So, when I went to see him I was in full dress uniform. I was a sergeant at the time. As they say I was standing tall when I walked in, but he was unable to speak. I personally think he recognized me. I think he knew who I was, but I proved to him basically that he's an idiot and I did well without him. So, it was more for my closure that I had gone to see him. I explained the situation to the hospital staff, because it was a whole other issue with them. Some woman was claiming that she was my mother and I was using that time for vacation, because she did not know I had stopped by and the hospital staff honored my request that they not say anything to his side of the family that I was there. She in turn, called back to the Red Cross. The Red Cross called my unit and they were about to put me as AOL [Absent Over Leave], but my commanding officer knew better and he called my mom. She again explained the whole situation ... "All right. We're cool." So, I saw him for about maybe an hour, talked to the hospital staff. They kept me posted. I went back to the base and by the time I got back to the base, he passed away. So, I'm glad that I got to see him before he died. I was happy because I had my own closure. As a kid, we would be playing superheroes or whatever, and you have that--one superhero has that one super villain who's their enemy. I was pretending like that was my real father. So, in a way, I had a lot of anger because I did not know who this man was. Oh, yes, and am sorry. At the age of fifteen, I tracked him down. I'm like, "If I'm fifteen, you can't track me down?" It's not like my mother was making it a secret to his family. They always knew where I was. But now, my mother, on the other hand, well, she's a very strong black woman who was raising her son by herself. Fortunately, we come from a very tightknit family. We're raised to honor our family. In fact, as you can see, I'm wearing a family sweatshirt. It just happened to wear out that way. We have a family reunion every year. My mother along with the rest of my aunts and uncles who are technically my great aunts and uncles. They helped raise me, gave me my family values, and gave me the foundation that I've built on from there. My mother, in the '60s, worked for American Airlines. So, as a child, as long as I got a B+ or better on my report card, I could travel. The higher my grades, the further I could go. So, as a kid, I was spoiled in that respect because we have family all over the place. Other kids were talking about going to grandma's house or going to their cousin's house. I'm talking about going to--well, as an example, we went to Trinidad over the Easter break. It got to the point where I wasn't embarrassed about doing these essays at school, it just was annoying because the other kids were like, [scoffs] "Where'd you go now? Where'd you go now?" I was just like, "Okay. You know what? I'm over you people. I can't help it if I'm fortunate." But I'm never one to try and throw it in people's faces, but my mother felt that the more I saw, the better it is for me, because one, we were raised--well, in the '60s, we were still fighting civil rights and my family was never one to badmouth another culture. Basically, we were raised we're no different than anybody else and just because they feel--"they" being the white people at the time. If whites can't deal with us or want to badmouth us or want to hurt us, we should not go down to that level; we need to be stronger than they are. I've always, believe it or not, at the age of three, when they did the March on Washington with Martin Luther King [Jr.] and everyone else, we were there. I remember his speech. I do remember him saying he wishes white children, black children can play together. That's always stuck with me. He's always been my greatest hero. So, that also helped, but I didn't know it at the time, but I knew, somehow or another, it became a foundation of me growing up. I've always

had a mixed culture of friends. I've always gone to schools that were mixed. Growing up in New York, that's easy. Let's see. What else? Anything historically, taking place in the '60s. Oh, I was supposed to be talking about my mother, wasn't I?

NM: That's okay.

GC: It's okay.

NM: We can always come back. I wanted to follow up. Was your family involved in the Civil Rights Movement?

KH: Some of them, yes. My mom was helping out. She worked with Jesse Jackson for a little bit, which is why she hates Jesse Jackson and I'm not too thrilled about him either. We knew him before he put that doctor and reverend on his name, as he's toking up in the '60s like everybody else was. I'm not sure who else helped on it, but I know we were involved in it. We had to be involved in it, because we're fighting for our civil rights. Now, my mom wasn't as much into it as she probably could have, but she did her thing. I know other relatives, they did what they could. We all did. As a child, I remember it. I [partook] in certain things because your parents are there, so I had to go, too. I think it was my grandfather that actually took me to the march, but I know she was also a big help. He was a very quiet man, a very strong man. He was a Marine during World War II and everything, but he insisted--he would take us to different functions of civil rights. My great-grandmother, she was Navajo. She made sure that I understood the Navajo and Blackfoot family as well. That's part of my culture.

GC: I had no idea.

KH: Yes, I used to--could speak Navajo, but I don't have the practice anymore, because there's no one really to talk to, but my great-grandmother and I used to talk about it and it's always been a fascination of mine, along with history. My mom is very big on family. She's very big on being old school, raising your children right. If you needed to get whacked, you could whacked. Respect is something that's very important. To this day, I'm fifty-two years old. I still can't curse in front of my mother. If I say "hell", I have to apologize. That's just me, because it's my mom. She sometimes forgets because we're adults. So, sometimes she'll forget and if she gets angry, she'll curse. All I have to do is say, mom, and she'll turn around, "Oh, I'm sorry." Just out of respect. It's no big deal. It's not like I haven't heard it before, but it's just a respect thing we have. What else? She's basically, going to school, all my education that was her. She forced me to do this. She forced me to do that. Because of her, I've taken what she taught me and expanded on that with the traveling, with the going to other cultures, absorbing other cultures, as I call it. When I go to another country, I'm not a typical American tourist. I know that's not my country. I know I'm a guest. So, that means I'm going to try to speak the language. That means I'm going to definitely try to immerse myself in the culture, with the food, with the drinks--well, not necessarily alcohol, but I want to immerse myself. This is all from my mother. This is the type of woman she is. She is also very protective of her family and her friends. At the age of seventeen, I remember

being on Amtrak, coming home from DC. We timed it as which train I will be on. It's like a three o'clock train. I got on it. We didn't know that the ticket that I had was only good after 6:00 PM. So, I'm on the train. This conductor basically threw me off the train in Baltimore. Okay. It's no big deal. I've already traveled by myself and I'm seventeen. So what? I have to wait in the station. I call my mother up to tell her which train I'm going to be on and what happened. Five, maybe six minutes later, I'm being paged to the station master. The reason being, my mother called and said, "You cannot put my child who's under age off a train when I told him to be on a certain train and you people did not tell me about the ticket." So, I get there, and the first thing out of the station master's mouth is, "How old are you?" I'm like, "Seventeen. Why? What's going on?" "Yes, you're underage." They stopped an Amtrak train that wasn't scheduled to stop there, put me on it, and told the head conductor, he has to turn me over to the station master in Newark when we got back. I was embarrassed, but I wasn't. I was like, this is my mom. I have to deal with that. Then, she was waiting in the station with her foot tapping. The station master next to her and a cop. This is a woman you don't mess with. This is also a woman--I've seen her forgo things just to make sure that I have things. She did whatever it took, but she also took care of her family, her mother. Her aunts and uncles, basically, she was raised with. So, for the longest time, she used to call them her brothers and sisters, which confused me, since that was her grandmother and that meant that they were her uncles. But once we realized the story, because my grandmother left her with my great-grandparents to raise here there, rather [than] DC. I never found out the whole story about that. So, that's where Mount Union, Pennsylvania comes into play, because my great-grandparents had a farm there. My mom worked there and all that. Went to school out there. Then from there, she met my real father and then they ended up moving into New York in the Bronx. My mom's had several jobs there over the course and then she met my stepfather, they remarried and in the latter half of '73, beginning of '74, they moved me from New York to New Jersey, which to me, was a death sentence. Well, to me, I'm like, I'm being moved out to the country. I know New York, even though I traveled to my great-grandparents farm or out to Albuquerque, New Mexico to visit my uncle out there, wherever, but it's different when you're moving somebody out of a city that they've known all their life, to the country. So, I didn't talk to my parents for basically a year, other than "Yes, ma'am," "no, ma'am," and "yes, sir," because I was angry. My mom knew. She was like, "Mm-hmm. Go ahead. I'm going to wait," because eventually--she knows how I am. Eventually, you're going to come around and I did. Then what, graduation day, I got slapped after I gave her my--excuse me, her diploma. She got her diploma and then I got slapped. I'm like, "What was that for?" "That's for the year of hell you gave me when I told you, you were going to like it out here." By that point, I had made quite a name for myself in the high school and town. I was the first black class president. Senior class president, I should say. I was very well known in Boy Scouts at the time. So, she was right. What else?

NM: You mentioned that your great-grandparents have a farm. It was them in Altoona. How far back do you know about your family history and could share what you know?

GC: Your lineage.

KH: My lineage? We go back to the early 1800s. Most of it's by voice. My family, we have a family website that gives us the history and we have books where we have our family tree history, dating back to slavery. Basically, somewhat into the slavery period. Again, most of that is not necessarily actual documentation but family word of mouth. It's been handed down because obviously, another period, there were no real records of the different families and how they were torn apart and stuff, except by word of mouth and that was with every black family. Husbands, wives, children separated. Wives were basically raped, whenever they [white slave owners] felt like it. Like I said, we can date it back to probably--I want to say 1882 or somewhere in the 1880s, we can go back to. That all depends on who we talk to, but yes, we have family books with the dates and the family tree and how the family grew from there.

GC: Do you have family stories or memories?

KH: Do I have family stories or memories?

GC: Yes, from the past.

KH: I have so many.

GC: Any famous relatives?

KH: Famous relatives, no. I don't think any of us were really famous to the point where they would be of historical note.

NM: I was wondering how did your great-grandparents end up in Altoona with the farm.

KH: Well, they were actually in Mount Union, Pennsylvania, which is about fifty miles from Altoona. How they ended up with that is not really known and that's not something we ever really discussed. I just knew they had a nice sized farm and they raised their nineteen children.

GC: Nineteen?

KH: They had nineteen children. Well, somebody had to work the fields. They had vegetables. They mostly grew vegetables, which they bartered with the neighboring farms. I remember going there. We'd be riding the Greyhound bus. We'd always leave at midnight, catch that midnight Greyhound, going to Philadelphia. Mom, she would sleep. I wouldn't, because we were always on that double decker Greyhound, so I'd sit up front on the upper deck with her and I'd pretend like I'm driving. Then, we would get to Philly. We would switch buses. Around about 5:00 AM, just at the crack of dawn, we'd pull into Lewistown, which was the nearest stop for both the train and the bus. We'd pull in there and I always loved, as we came around the corner to see that 1952 Ford Pickup, which was my great grandfather's. We get in there and there's always a basket of vegetables in there. Actually, some fruit. On the way home, we'd stop at this farm here, get fresh meat, and give them fresh vegetables. Then, we stop at the next

farm, get fresh eggs, give them vegetables also. Then, we get to the house. My grandmother, she'd be making breakfast. We'd eat. Then, she'd make me go in and take a nap. No sooner than I--it felt like no sooner that I had fallen asleep, they're waking me up for lunch. They believed in three big meals a day. I'm like, we just ate. I'm not hungry. But you had to eat. Then, you get up and go help out on the farm and the fields and stuff like that. If they weren't doing that, then I was out playing with the kids or beating up on one particular kid.

NM: So, when you went to the farm, there must have been a lot of children to play with or grandchildren, children your age?

KH: Well, I didn't have to go that far to have my cousins who were my age and stuff. They all lived--my cousins Dwayne, Darrell, Freddie, they belonged to my Aunt May and Aunt Nettie had Pia. They lived upstairs in the building that we lived in. So, the four of us boys, basically grew up together. My cousin Pia or we call her (Mulet?). Her first name is Pia and her middle name was (Mulet?). As a kid, she hated her first name, so we all started calling her by her middle name. Anyway, she grew up with us. Then, there's my cousins Ronnie and Donnie. They were also around my age. We all grew up together. We all lived either on the same block or not far from each other in New York. At one point, my Aunt May, my mother, one of my other aunts--I can't remember her name because she died young--and my grandmother Ruth Bratton, down in Washington, DC., [were] all pregnant at the same time. So, my cousin Darrell, my aunt Darlene, my cousin Ronnie and my cousin (Marcella?) were all the same age. We're all maybe a month or a week apart, but they were all pregnant at the same time, went into labor basically the same time. Then, I have my cousin Dwayne, my cousin Denise and my Uncle Johnny, they're all a year before us, but they were all pregnant again at the same time. I don't understand why, but that's just how it worked out. So, we always had relatives close by. As far as in Pennsylvania, yes, if they came with us, then I would have kids to play with. Otherwise, whatever the kids were in the neighborhood, I played with them.

NM: I'm just so interested in this farm. The farmers in this area, was it a mix of whites, blacks?

KH: As memory serves me, we were the only black family that were farmers there that I ever saw. Everybody else was white. It didn't seem to matter. I never saw any issues, any problems. They seemed to all get along, typical farmers. They look out for one another. Yes, I didn't see any issues. I've rarely actually--even growing up in the '60s, I rarely met up with a lot of prejudice. I had one teacher in grammar school who was prejudiced I could tell, and only one kid. Other than that, no one else really showed it. I never really got jumped or anything like that. I remember my block was one of the safest blocks in the area. None of the kids on our block were ever involved in gangs or anything else like that, but then the gang situation was totally different than it is now. Like I said, I never let that bother me or I just ignored it. If you're standing where kids will try to test you, want to jump you, something like that, but I was always a scrapper. I was able to defend myself. With my cousins, all being in the same age, same classes,

again, we didn't have problems, because they knew who we were. If somebody wanted to mess with one of us, they knew they'd have to mess with the entire group. We could fight with each other, but you can't, because we will protect our family. I remember my block, even the parents looked after the kids. If I was at this corner and did something wrong and one of the parents saw me do something wrong--well, there didn't even have to be a parent. Somebody who lived on that block, if they saw me doing something wrong, my parents knew about it. My mother knew about it. Yes, they could beat us and then I got home and I would get another beating. That's just how the neighborhood was back in those days. You looked after the kids. You made sure all the kids were okay. You had the authority to discipline said children and then you notify the parent that, "Oh, I did this, and your child did this." They would take care of it. So, I would either get-- Then once, I hit like eight, my mother stopped hitting me because I stopped crying. She was beating me one day and I said, "I'm never going to cry again." So, she found out the art of punishment. Not time out. Punishment. She cut my travel. She cut my allowance. She made me stay in the house, do work, whatever. If people are out there partying and stuff, like, playing stickball. I couldn't do that. I had to be in the house. If she didn't have anything for me, I'd have to help my Uncle Leo in the building, doing work, whatever. So, and at that point, I was like, "You know what? Beat me. Okay. Get it done and over with." Punishment? No, that hurts. That's worse than being beaten. So, again, that was different times. Old school times, which I think still works to this day. What else?

GC: Can you tell us a little about the neighborhood? I remember I mentioned to you when they built the highway, how that changed the neighborhood maybe in your opinion?

KH: Well, we weren't too far from Yankee Stadium, the original Yankee Stadium. So, what they call 161st Street used to be the borderline between the South Bronx versus the North Bronx. The South Bronx was bad. Not super bad, but you could tell things were started to change and the buildings were starting to get run down. You were starting to have a higher crime rate on the South Bronx side. So, as long as that stayed on, the other side of 161st Street--say that's the bad side of the railroad tracks; we were on the good side. The only time we went onto the bad side, was when we went to Yankee Stadium. The cops all knew us, so before they put the big wall up there, the number four train, we could stand on the platform and watch a game, if we didn't go inside, but there were only a few of us that could do that, otherwise the cops would shoo everyone else away, unless they were waiting for the train, but they would leave us alone because they knew we were good kids and this was good, clean fun for us. We're just sitting there watching the game. My Uncle Richie loved baseball, so whenever he could, he would take us to the game. As slowly as the South Bronx started moving up, my Aunt May and her family moved north. We went up to what they were calling Popham Avenue. So, my mother and I went too. Again, this is basically the family helping each other out. The school was right across the street from us. That was my first public school. Before that, I was going to Catholic School, Saint Angela Merici. I remember getting into a lot of trouble there, but that was my first one. By that point, my mom starting dating my stepfather and then my Aunt May and Uncle Richie--again, the South Bronx was slowly working its way up. So, they moved up towards Fordham Avenue. By that point, we moved to

Jersey. So, on the weekends, I was still coming into New York because I was heavily into the Boy Scouts and I was saying with them up on Aqueduct Avenue, as much as I could just so I didn't have to go back to New Jersey. Then, once I started eighth grade and then went on into the--eighth grade, at that time, was in the junior high in Belleville. Then, the rest of it, you'd finish out at the high school. Knowing how hard it is for a new kid in a new school--so, when we moved to Jersey, I went to my classes, but I wasn't going to be a typical kid that went into the--I call it a mess hall, but the dining hall, and have that whole uncomfortable feeling because you're the new kid, you don't know where to go, [where] to sit, who to talk with. I just asked the teachers, "Look, can I put a desk out here in the hallway during my lunch and I'll sit here and do my homework?" They thought I was crazy, but they agreed. I did that for about a month. Sure enough, my plan work. Because the idea was, rather than me trying to make friends with these people, let them come to me and make friends with me and it worked. Eventually, they were like, "Well, why you out here? Come on in here and hang out with us." I started hanging out with them. After that, I made my friends with the kids and stuff and made it easier for that transition. I refused to tell my parents that, but it worked out for me better that way.

NM: I wanted to follow up because I just made the connection, but your grandfather was in DC.

KH: Right.

NM: He was in DC?

KH: My mother's parents lived in DC.

NM: He served in the Marines in World War II?

KH: My grandfather, yes.

NM: Did he ever talk about his experience with you?

KH: No, my grandfather was what we call the strong silent type. He barely talked, but when he did talk, he mumbled. Have you ever seen that cartoon where the hillbilly bears and the father's always mumbling? You can barely understand it, but his family can understand him. That's my grandfather. He mumbled, but we could understand him. Like I said, he was very strong, very silent type. He came in. he did what he had to do. I never confronted it, but I thought maybe something had happened during the war, but nobody ever discussed, other than we know he was a Marine, we know he was in World War II, but basically, no, he didn't really discuss much and then he did pass away at--well, he passed away probably in 1971, but he'd been working all his life. As I said, he would take me to Arlington Cemetery. He introduced me to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. He was the one who took me to the March on Washington and there were other things that he helped us with and taught us, but yes, he didn't talk much. The house that my grandparents lived in, he built. He was on the construction company that built all

those houses in that area and he had the corner lot. As far as I know, all my life, we've had that house. We still do have that house, even both my grandparents have passed away. We've still had that house because of the kids living in there now.

NM: I want to make sure we get on that, because once again, the African American experience during World War II is much less documented.

KH: Right. It would have been nice had he talked about it, but it's not something that we wanted to really push. As a child, too, I didn't really want to know that aspect of it.

NM: You mentioned that you had joined the Boy Scouts. Was this when you were still living in the city?

KH: Yes.

NM: Could you tell us about some of the extra curricular activities that you did. You mentioned you played stickball. You joined the Boy Scouts, as well.

KH: Right. We were in the Boy Scouts. I was in the Boy Scouts. I joined that basically because my cousins Dwayne and Darrell joined. So, of course, I had to follow suit. Basically, we didn't have a lot of things like they do nowadays. Basically, what we did was we just played on our street. The stickball was on the corner, where we could run the bases. We'd play that. We'd play football in the street. It was usually touch football. Sometimes we were allowed to go up to the park and stuff and then we'd play it there. We had played some basketball. We played some basketball, but we played tag. We did a lot of bottle caps and yo-yos. What else did we do? Other than that, my mom would take me to Long Island, downtown to Rockefeller Center. We'd go ice skating. We went to the Van Cortlandt Park. We would go to the Bronx Zoo. Van Cortlandt Park, we would go horseback riding. There was horses where they had a specific trail. As a kid, you think you're in control of the horse, but the horse knows the trail, so he's just going anyway and you think you're doing it all. The Boy Scouts, we got to go hiking and camping. We'd do the different trails in New Jersey and in New York states. Some camp would be for two weeks or even a week. We'd go up to Ten Mile River Boy Scout Camp up past Monticello, New York. Eventually, once I was old enough, I would actually work on staff with them, and I'd spend the whole summer there. I still did the trips, like to my Uncle Bobby's out in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I'd be out there for a month or so. He'd put me to work at his gas station or we'd go out to the different reservations at the time, or again, I would go to Mount Union, Pennsylvania, help out on the farm. It all depended on the time frame or whatever, where I wanted to go. Spent a lot of time in DC. As I said, every historical event that happened in the '60s, it just worked out, I was at my grandparents' in Washington, DC. When both Kennedys were shot, I was in D.C. When Martin Luther King was shot, I was in DC. First man shot into space, again I was in DC. The first mission to the moon, I was in DC. The landing on the moon, I was in DC. Just worked out that way. There were a couple things that happened, where, yes, I was at home in school and I watched it on TV with all the other kids, but the major stuff, yes, I was in DC. The riots, I was in DC. I remember flying

home by myself. Then, my grandfather taking me to the airport, even with my mom one time, going to the airport during the riots and you can see Washington on fire. I remember getting on the airplane and we were flying up and you could see the whole way up from DC to New York. You could see the fires burning in the different cities. I don't really know what was going through my mind other than, "Why the hell are they doing this?" I couldn't make sense of it.

GC: What were those riots?

KH: The shooting of Martin Luther King was one of them.

GC: The city just rioted over that?

KH: All the cities, all over the nation rioted, because they just killed a man who believed in peace and all they wanted was equality. He was nonviolent. Malcolm X's group, in that they were the more violent ones, the Black Panthers, yes, they were the violent ones, but not Martin Luther King. All he wanted was equality for everybody. He felt that it could be achieved in a nonviolent way. He basically was the symbol, the focal point, the glue that held the black community together. Because of that, the blacks said, "Okay. No, you ain't going to do this and get away with it." So, they rioted. The fact that it was a white man who actually shot him, again, that just sparked all the riots and the fire bombings and stuff. I couldn't understand. I was like, "Okay. Yeah. I know you're angry and I know we want to fight, but you're destroying your own homes, your own community. Why do that?" During that period too, there was still a lot of illegal arrests. The police were still harassing blacks, profiling. So, yes, there was a lot of injustice going on, but at the same token and a lot of people don't really necessarily know this yet, but there was a very, very small group of gays who were also trying to tack onto that and try and get equality, but they were so minute that they never really made anything until the '70s when they had Stonewall, the riots at Stonewall. [Editor's Note: The 1969 Stonewall Riots took place in retaliation to a police raid on the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in New York. This event is considered the catalyst for the gay rights movement.] Also, it started with men in drag that were fighting the police.

GC: They used the Civil Rights Movement as an example.

KH: Right.

GC: So, it would make sense. The women's movement, too.

KH: The women's movement. All the basically followed the equality movement from the black community, but again, all of that was also tacked on, but you really didn't know about it because it was more the black community. They were the most boisterous about it. Then, yes, the women's [liberation] came along, but it was pushed off to the side. They moved themselves off to the side so that they could get recognition as well, but it's all still part of the whole group.

GC: Was sexuality talked about in your home? Did you know about the gay community?

KH: No. Sexuality was never discussed other than the birds and the bees, but we never discussed anything else about that one way or the other. I knew that there was something different in the latter '60s. Once I started turning eight, nine. You're going through that puberty stage, I knew there was something different about me; didn't know what it was. Now, my mom had gay friends. One of her best and closest friends and was my babysitter, he was gay. His name was (Skee?) and I have to admit, once I became a teenager, or preteen, I was noticing the different friends, and well, wait a minute, something's going on here, but I also noticed the changes in me. My mom had this one couple, it was a salt and pepper couple, black guy, white guy. I stayed with them a couple of times, for the weekend, mom wanted to go [away] or whatever. I stayed with them. Now, unfortunately, I don't remember the black guy's name. The white guy's name was Life. You can't forget that name. That's his name. I'm like, "Okay. Life. Whatever." But I knew that I was drawn to him. I'm not going to say attracted because I didn't know what it was, but I will say I was drawn to Life more than anything, but I also noticed that, okay, these guys are actually, I'm guessing, must be doing something together because when I stayed over there, they were telling me that I was staying in Life's room and they were going to share the bedroom, but the room that I was in, they had dust. So, you could tell that nobody lived in there. Even as a kid, I could figure that out. But the thing about it is, what made me want to hide my sexuality back then, one, because I knew I was different; I was afraid that I was the only one in the world like this, there was something wrong with me, but the black guys were always very effeminate. The white guys seemed to be the real butch ones, playing football, whatever. I didn't want to be effeminate. I'm like, "That's not me. I like playing my sports. I like camping. I don't want to be that girly-type." So, because I didn't want to be that, I was resenting (Skee?) even more and more. Because of my stupidity, that's basically what it was. Not knowing. My stupidity--I created my mom and (Skee?) to have a rift and they stopped being friends because of me, because I was angry at this man. He was something that--he represented to me something that I didn't want to be and he scared me. So, I was angry at him. They separated. I'm sure they probably were still friends, he just didn't come around, around me. As time grew on and grew on, I'm like, "Wow." I was falling more and more for white guys than black guys, because like I said, I was afraid of the black guys at the time, because I didn't want to be the feminine one. Maybe that's how my taste was at the time; I don't know, but I did know that mom worked full time at a rehab center. She would make me come down to the rehab center to listen to the drug addicts and their stories. That's her version of scared straight. She did not want me on drugs. I would go down there and I looked at these people and listen to some of their stories and I'm like, I'm not going to do that. I never even smoked pot as a kid. My cousins were smoking pot. My parents, they were smoking pot. Me? No. I was the goody two shoes one. For the longest--drinking? No. I had, at the age of eight, when my mom sat me down to teach me the facts of life, I had permission at the age of eight to smoke, to drink, as long as I did it in the house in front of her. Well, there goes the fun of taking it, doing this. I can't sneak it. Why should I sneak around when I can do it right at home and who wants to do it in front of their mother? So, I never did. It worked for me.

It worked for her, but I can't say if that would work for anybody else, but my mother was very smart. She knew how to manipulate me very much to get me not to do things or to do things. She could have stood there and yelled and said, "No, you don't do this, you don't do that," which is just telling me, "Go ahead and do it." She used reverse psychology and it worked. So, growing up, the feelings that I was having for guys, I was burying, and it became to the point where I wasn't showing emotions at all. My mom used to call me her little robot, because I wouldn't show emotions. I was afraid to let emotions out. I still had a good time. I would still laugh, but [being] affectionate, I really wasn't. Yes, I've given my mother all kinds of [scares], typical boy, climbing up on and swinging on the china cabinet, having all the dishes come down on top of me, where all they saw was my head. She thought I was dead and I just had a little cut on my leg. That was it. Playing football in my grandmother's yard in DC. Getting ready to tackle my uncle when he suddenly does a ninety degree turn, I'm already airborne heading right for the car and I hit my eye on the car bumper. At the time, my mom was wearing elephant bellbottom pants. These things were huge. They said that she didn't even use the stairs. She just hopped over the railing because all she saw was me lying in a pool of blood. I was kind of knocked out, but kind of still conscious and them rushing me to the hospital. I think it was six or seven stitches that I needed over my eye. They said, "Yeah, head wounds bleed a lot more and look worse than they really are." What else have I done to scare her? Basically, that's [it]. I really wasn't too bad of a kid. You got hurt, typical. I remember going home on a Sunday after the weekend being in New York for Boy Scouts and the bus got into an accident. I never did tell you that. Anyway, the bus that I was on got into an accident. The first two seats at the door and the two seats right behind the driver, I found out that they call those the "death seats." Didn't know that. Reason being, whenever the bus gets into an accident, those people in those seats are the usually the ones that get hurt and it's true to form, because as I'm sitting there, I'm by the window, I had an older woman next to me, and then later on, I found out that that was her niece sitting next to her who was also older and then another woman sitting there. They were behind the driver. We hit the guard rail coming off of the [Route] 495, getting reading to go onto Route 3 West. As you come around, you see this massive drop and all I could see was the guard rail coming up and us hitting it. I saw the woman going out that was on the aisle behind the driver, going out and getting caught between the bus and the guard rail. So, I look to my left. Don't know how the bus driver was on the outside, but I looked and he's there, running alongside, trying to stop the bus as it's sliding. I look back, the woman's gone. We finally stopped, some how or another, and getting my wits together, I get myself unhooked out and the Boy Scouts training kicked in. I'm helping people out. There was one woman, she was really trapped. The woman that was next to me, she was really trapped. By that time, the fire department and everyone else got there. I'm giving her first aid and staying with her until they can get her cut out of the wreckage. I must have said I was in the Boy Scouts and whatever to keep her calm. So, somebody overheard it and they ended up telling the Boy Scouts. So, I got the life saving award from the Boy Scouts. That's when I also found out at the hospital that this woman who was killed was her niece and she was sixty-something and this woman was eighty-something. So, that was the first time I got a life saving award. Because of that, I got to speak at the Waldorf Astoria and I'm scared because I was talking in front of five hundred people for the Boy Scouts. The only thing that saved me was there was a pro

football player from the New York Jets, Bob Tucker. He was sitting next to me. That was the only reason I wasn't too afraid, because I just kept staring at him. I honestly remember [thinking], "He's hot." [laughter] I just had this crush on him. Again, I quickly suppressed that. This whole time, I'm having all these gay feelings, but I was suppressing them. High school, obviously. I was dating girls in high school. They're having multiple orgasms and I'm like, "Okay, whatever." Once I go home, then I think about the football team and I would go from there. Let's see. I remember also in high school, the five super jocks. I won't give their names, but they were the five super jocks. I remember one day going into the locker room and they were picking on another guy who's very big into performing arts, theater, and the whole bit like that. Obviously, he was gay. Again, it wasn't really something that we talked about. They didn't have words. People use gay. We didn't really use words like that. Anyway, I remember walking into the locker room as they were shoving him around. I'm like, "What are you doing?" "Oh, we're going to kick his ass because we think he's a fag." "Did he tell you that?" "No, but we feel he is." "Oh, okay. Because you think he's different from you, you're going to kick his ass? But all of you are Italian and so is he. You all are white and so is he. So, where's the difference? So, let me ask you this. If you're going to kick his ass because you think he's different." Should I say ass or butt?

NM: It's fine.

GC: Whatever. [laughter]

KH: "You're going to beat him up because you think he's different than you? Where's it going to stop? I'll tell you what, I'll take all five of you on. If you can kick my butt, than you can kick his. If not, you're going to apologize to him and you will never do this again." They backed down. They're like, "We can't fight with you." I'm like, "Why? I'm more different than he is from you." They were like, "No, no, no." Well, years later, another friend of ours who we graduated with me, who was gay and I finally came out and told him. So, we were really good friends. I was home on leave, because I was in the Army still. Home on leave. He's like, "I want to take you to this club." Okay. Went to the club. Who do I see in the club? Four out of the five. The leader was the biggest queen there is. He's standing out there in a tight, tight t-shirt ... I'm like, "Oh, you got to be kidding me?" I walked over there and their faces just cracked. They were like, "Oh, my god, Kent. What are you doing here?" "I could you ask that question. Remember when?" So, come to find out they were all gay too. At that point, I was like, the ones who yell the most or act up the most, tend to have a secret in their closet and ... they are too. They're just afraid to come out or for whatever reason, they're jealous because said person came out and they didn't. So, I firmly believe now that all these people who scream--and I don't care what it's about. If they're screaming about gay marriages or they're screaming about gays and lesbians, yes, somewhere in their closet, they have skeletons. My grandmother always said, clean up your own backyard before you go knocking on somebody's back door. I guarantee if you look in these people's closets, oh, yes.

NM: I wanted to ask, because you're definitely aware your family is participating in the Civil Rights Movement. How aware were you of the anti-war protests against the Vietnam War during this time?

KH: Very much. You could not not be aware of it because of all the different demonstrations and everything, the riots at Kent State. Basically, the majority of the people felt that we should not be in Vietnam. They felt that it was something that we had no business over there with. Men were refusing to go to the draft and they were rushing to go up to Canada, get out of the country, which was against the law, obviously. We saw it every day in the news, about Vietnam, people being killed and the atrocities that the Vietnamese were doing to their own people and to the Americans who were being shot down and then put in prison and the bamboo sticks. Yes, very much aware of that and also at the time, one of the hottest movies when it came out during that period was *The Green Berets* with John Wayne. They were the closest to portray some of the things that were actually going on, what the green berets were up against, what the military were up against at that point. Then later on, you have, well after that period, you had *Apocalypse Now*, demonstrating how much it messed up a lot of people's minds. I knew about people who were over there in Vietnam, who came back, and had issues of flashbacks. Slightest little sound may bring back flashbacks of whatever. At the time, there were some killings because of that. People would have flashbacks and they'd kill their spouse or their children. Police had issues, sometimes had to stop people from doing that. You had a lot, a lot of wounded veterans that were trying to fight for their rights. There were Americans that were spitting on these people, calling them child killers and stuff like [that]. It's not the soldiers' fault. They didn't ask to be sent over there. They were ordered over there. They were doing their duty because their government said you are being drafted, you have to go here, you have to go there. They didn't deserve what they got when they came home. Then, of course, because we didn't win and because they never did declare it as a war; it was merely a conflict. So, because of that, they really didn't get treated right. They didn't get treated like the veterans from the Korean War or World War II or even World War I. Those people came back, they were honored. They were given a ticker tape parade. What did these guys get? Nothing, but people spitting on them. Nobody wanted to do anything to help them out. It was wrong. Yes, I know all about that. Not much I could do about it.

NM: In your community were there people who were drafted or who had served in the military?

KH: Yes. My Uncle Russell was a Marine. He's also gay. He knew before he went in. In the beginning he was [bisexual], but he knew really he was gay. Fortunately, he did not have to serve over in Vietnam. I've had other family members who were in the military during that period also, but they didn't get sent over to Vietnam. They either stayed stateside or they were sent to Europe. Later on, I knew of friends' fathers who had been over there. Basically, they wouldn't talk a lot about it, but they would say, "Yes, I was over in Vietnam," or whatever, whatever. Especially when they found out that I enlisted, they were like, "Thank God that there's no conflict going on at this time. I'd hate to see you go into combat. Nobody should have to go into combat." They really felt

bad about it. When we built the Vietnam Memorial down in Washington, D.C., that meant a lot and to go down there when it first opened up--even now, to go down there to see all the names on the wall, to see the reaction of the Veterans who survived that, grown men standing down there crying, just watching that. The Japanese from World War II. You see them, they have a big ceremony about the bombings of Hiroshima. They still honor the people, but they're different. It's the Asian culture where they will always honor that and I respect that. We basically do the same thing on December 7th at the Arizona memorial in Honolulu where we still have those. In some cases, I think it's great, because we're honoring them, but in some cases, I'm like, "Yes, but you know what? It was still making it bad for the Japanese," but it's not. The whole point is that we're honoring those who lost their lives, for whatever reason.

GC: After seeing all that, what motivated you to join the military?

KH: Back in the days of high school, there was a stupid test that we'd take. It would make no sense. Where it basically told you what your career in life is going to be. Mine always came out two things, military or social worker. Since I wasn't a bleeding heart, I said, I'm going into the military. That, and the fact that I wanted to prove myself away from my family. I needed, for myself, to be able to know that I can make it out in the world and the military was the best way.

GC: Not going to college?

KH: That was going to be later on in the game plan to go to college, but knowing I could get the GI Bill. Most important thing was I didn't know really what I wanted to do and military was top of the list. It was either that or be a Greyhound bus driver. So, I chose the military.

GC: Do remember anything about your recruiter or going to the recruiter, asking questions?

KH: I went to the recruiter. I said, "This is what I want. What can you do for me?" I basically, knew what I wanted. The one thing, they had the delayed entry program. He basically, really didn't have to sell me on it. I knew what I wanted. My mind was made up and that was it. I don't want to hear anything. I had to wait until I turned eighteen, which was my senior year, because I didn't want my parents to know. If I was seventeen, I would have had to get their permission and everything. I'm like, "No, this is my decision." My mother raised me to be my own man and that's exactly what I was going to be. I wanted communications. So, that's what they got me. I was thinking long term. What can I utilize once I get out of the military? What is going to be something good? Don't put me in no infantry. I'm not stupid. I have a mind. I'm intelligent. So, I wanted something where I could utilize that. The way the Army works though, sometimes you just got to go where they tell you to go. They did train me in communications, which is what I want, but once you get into the military, they can send you anywhere they want. They can make you do anything they want. So, when I went through my basic, the entry was in South Carolina, Jackson. Then, they bussed us over to Fort Gordon, Georgia,

where I took my basic and AIT [Advanced Individual Training]. AIT meaning the schooling that I went in for, communications, which coincide after the basic training. Once I got into AIT, it was on a self-pace base. Essentially, you progress as fast as you want or as slow as you want. It wasn't a challenge to me. Within a week's time I had finished the courses. They were like, "Are you sure?" I said, "Yeah." They tested me and everything. So, that was to be a voice communications specialist. So, they said, "All right. We're going to train you on radio teletype." Two weeks, I was done with that course. So, now they've got me well trained, sitting around waiting for orders to go. So, they had me doing stuff in the barracks and everything else, while my coworkers or friends were still going to schools, getting their stuff learned, whatever. I got my assignment to go to Korea. I had two weeks leave before I could go. So, I came home. Went to Korea. Got assigned to an engineering battalion, headquarters company, where I became a COMSEC Custodian, which meant that in the field, I would handle all the communications, both voice and radio teletypes. Microwave was still in its infancy, so I didn't have to learn the microwave yet. Inside, when we were back at base, I handled all the documentation. The classified documentation, would be put in a safe and we worked shifts. You'd work twelve on and then twenty four off and you'd switch. I came off of night duty and then I would be off until the following day where I'm on day duty. It just worked that way. We did that seven days a week. If you had alerts, which we always had, we'd either practice running to your battle stations on the post or sometimes, we'd actually pack up the vehicles and move out to the field. There was a time when President Park Chung-hee was killed. He was the President at the time of South Korea. Our division was put on maximum alert, thinking that the North Koreans were going to come over and try and invade South Korea. This was something we basically had to prevent and this was something that we had to deal with every day because we were the front line defense of stopping the North from invading the South. My life expectancy was 3.5 seconds because I'm in what they call the rat rig. It's a big communication vehicle. So, it's very easy for them to lock in on my vehicle and destroy it. So, that's why my life expectancy was 3.5 seconds. Later on, I also heard that if we were overrun, our security was--once I destroyed all the classified documentations, the MPs [Military Police] had authority to shoot me and kill me, because they didn't want the information that I had getting into the hands of other people in North Korea. I'm like, "Oh, no. You mean to tell me I have to watch my back and I have to watch my front? I don't think so." If I see any of you all behind me, I'm shooting you." The military does stuff like that. It's not known or commonly known and a lot of people don't believe it, but yes, they can do stuff like that. I will say this. I was eighteen when I went over to Korea and it was one of the best things that happened to me. It was definitely an eye opener and definitely a life changer. I never really covered my stepfather, but let's put it this way. It was difficult when my mom married my stepfather because I was an only child up until that point. Then, all of a sudden, I have six brothers and a father that's taking my mother's attention. So, yes, I was jealous and yes, I didn't like this man, but going over to Korea, by the time I came back, I had a whole different value on things, a whole different value on my life. I reevaluated everything. From that point on, my stepfather has been elevated to my father. My step-brothers are my brothers; they weren't my stepbrothers, they're my brothers. From there, the family grew and my life has been very blessed and I'm very happy about it. The military did do a lot for me. Don't get me wrong. Korea was tough

for us, because we were in the division, 1st Infantry Division. With 1st Infantry Division, we were only assigned there for a year. When Park Chung-hee was killed, I ended up staying an extra six months because we were on alert. If you lived down in Seoul, we were North of Seoul, anyone who was assigned to Seoul or below, you lived in a country club, totally different than the way we were living, but their assignments were two years. They could have their spouses over. They could bring their cars over. We couldn't do any of that, because we're ... The history of it, because my division--I should say my battalion's history, our C Company, which they handle the bulldozers and stuff. There was a tree right over this bridge that was in South Korea. At the time, North Koreans could come over, the military could come over that bridge and stand on that side of South Korea. South Koreans can go to the North, just over that bridge. Well, our company was tasked to cut this tree down. When they went to cut the tree down, the North Koreans took offense and ended up killing two of the guys who were taking [that] tree down before our guys were able to respond and force them back across the river. Hence, they opened up Panmunjom, which is where all the meetings take place. Panmunjom is three buildings essentially on the 38th parallel that cross over into North and South. Inside the main building, the North Koreans always had to be elevated above the South. It got to the point where they were like, "Okay. We can't do this." Your seats are on the ceiling. "No, we can't do this." So, they all agreed everything's going to be on one level. So, what they did was they built a building on the North Korean side that's part of the complex, but it's probably the size of this room, that's how wide it is. It's two floors. Nobody uses it, but it's there because it's bigger than what is on the line. So, now, if there's no meetings going on and you have a tour, we can go into the center building where we can actually go over to [the] North Korean side. The North Koreans are still on their side, on the outside, looking in. You can't touch anything in there. If you touch anything, that can signify war. They can go to war over something as trivial as that. That's the kind of mentality we had to deal with. We were constantly finding tunnels being dug, where the North were trying to get in. On the South Korean side, there's only one town that's right there by the border. Those are the only people in that town like the males, do not have to serve in the military. They have to be careful as to what kind of music they play and the whole nine yards like that, because the North Koreans can hear it and they'll say you're spreading propaganda. Yet, the North Koreans are always blasting stuff to that one town, all kinds of propaganda. The kids and stuff, you have to be very careful, because that whole area's also surrounded by mines. So, they have to be very careful. One road in, one road out. So, it's interesting. Here I am, an eighteen year old kid, looking at this for the first time. Yes, I had traveled, but at that point, I had only been going to Europe and Mexico, Canada. I hadn't gone to the Far East yet. Going to the Far East, it was like going to a whole other planet, as far as I was concerned. We took off at night. When we landed, it was daylight and you're coming in for a landing to rice fields, huts with TV antennas sticking out of them. We first landed in Japan to refuel. It was different, but not quite as different. Coming into Korea, and then driving through Korea, that was a lot different. You got ditches along the roads for everything because of monsoons. Even the barracks, you had a ditch. Soldiers would be coming home, they'd be drunk, whatever, and they'd fall into the ditch or you'd be in line formation and you'd see people's faces all messed up. "Ah, the ditch monster got you, didn't he?" It was hard for the guys because they're missing their families, they're

missing their friends. I remember too, one of my friends, he had just come over and his daughter was two weeks old. So, he was there for a year, but during the course of that, his daughter is getting older and older and his wife was sending him pictures and stuff, and keeping him up to date [with] what she's doing. The whole time he's getting more and more depressed over it. We were hanging out together, best friends, the whole nine yards. Then, he started going down to the villages and hanging out with the hookers. For five bucks, you could get laid. Thirty dollars on base, I had a man who would come in, do my laundry, clean my room, shine my shoes, and have somebody in the mess hall who would bring me my food and then take my food away from me. An eighteen year old, wow. For thirty bucks a month? Come on. You're living in a prefab building, but it's comfortable, it's warm, air conditioned. When you look outside the window, on the other side of that gate, there are people living in poverty, in huts, or hooches is what they're called. They have a hole in the ground as their latrine. That was also heartening. I had my parents and family sending food, clothes, whatever, so we can donate to the people outside. Each military base had an orphanage that they adopted and they would help take care of. I had two little boys that the whole time I was there, I would give them stuff, take them out, because you had a lot of what they called Amerasians. These are children who one parent is an American and the other parent is Asian or Korean. My understanding of how the Asian culture works or used to work, say, in Korea. So, if you're pure blood Korean, you were in the center. You were the center of the world. Then, it spiraled out. The further out on the spiral you were, the less important you were. You were like an ameba would be to us. So, these Amerasians in the Korean society at that period, they knew they weren't really going to be anywhere high up on society. They were going to be the drudges or they were going to at least have a harder time to make their life go better. So, it was always important to try and help these kids out as much as we could, which I donated a lot of stuff. Anyway, getting back to my one friend. Also, he was also helping out with the orphanage and that was hurting him. I could see that he started drinking more, doing the drugs. He started hanging out with the kitchen staff, which really did way too much drugs and stuff. I mean, I hung out with them too, but I wasn't doing the drugs. One of the guys was convincing him to go down and play with the hookers. I'm like, "Dude, stop. Why are you doing this?" Yes, I went down there. I had one club that I went to. But basically, I told mama-san that I had a girlfriend back at home and I didn't want to do this. So, they nicknamed me, "Baby-san." The girls were told they can dance with me, they can sit down and talk with me at the club. I had a specific table that was mine and if somebody was sitting there when I came in, they'd make them get up. That was my table. I never messed around with any of the girls there, but also, by that point, too, I was becoming more and more true to myself about being gay. Yes, I did have a girlfriend back at home, but we were on the outs essentially. She knew we were because I'm here and she's back there. So, my one friend and let's just say his name was George. He was getting more and more into destroying himself. I'm like, "Look, dude." I wrote him a note, essentially is what I did. In my note, I was like, "I'm realizing that I've actually fallen in love with you and I'm not going to sit here and watch you destroy yourself. I may have just ended my military career and I just ended our friendship, but you know what? I do love you. You're my best friend and I'm not going to watch this." I left a note and walked away. Later on, he told me that when he read the note, he came over and he wasn't sure if he wanted to kick

my ass or if he wanted to break down and cry. We didn't see each other for about a week and then finally, we did run into each other, one of those situations where you just happened to run into each other. He broke down, started crying. He told me what he was doing. Because of me, he started going to AA [Alcoholics Anonymous]. He was going to counseling also. He never told anybody about me saying that I was in love with him. He's like, "I don't know about that part." I said, "I don't know about that part either, but you're the first person I've ever [admitted] that to," and made me start thinking. So, he had me go to a couple of AA meetings with him. The first meeting was a powerful one, because they were telling a story. I guess, the two of us associated [it] with ourselves. It meant a lot. So, I continued to help him as best I could. Where possible, I was hooking him up so he could talk to his wife on the government's expense. Just use the radios, tie into a main line and he could talk to his wife. He would do that and it helped their marriage, as far as I knew, at that time. Eventually, I got sent back to the States and we kind of lost track. Came home. It was one of the best things coming home or best homecoming. We landed at Travis Air Force Base and then we had to make our way down to San Francisco for our flights. Coming home, we took a cab. There was like, four of us. There was a limo, but they call themselves a cab. I remember on Pacific Coast Highway number 5, headed down and there were two chippies [California Highway Patrol] that saw us, because we're hanging out the roof, you're just really glad. Anyway, they saw us. They were talking to us as they were riding alongside. We told them where we were going, where we just all came from. So, they told the driver to follow them. We had a police escort to the airport. It was great. When we landed at Travis, once we had wheels down, you could hear in the background, somebody started singing "God Bless America." By the time we got to the gate, the entire plane was singing. It was an amazing feeling. That was also right after they started flying the DC-10s again with the pylon that fell off of the Americans Airlines one in Chicago. [Editor's Note: American Airlines Flight 191 crashed shortly after lift off from Chicago O'Hare International Airport on May 25, 1979. 273 people were killed, making this the deadliest aviation accident in United States history.] They had a year to test it and try and work it out. Well, they just started flying again. The flight that I picked was on United. It just so happens it was a DC-10. I've never been afraid to fly, but most of the people had opted not to fly on that plane; they took other flights. I'm like, "I'm going home. I don't care." I remember they upgraded us from--there's like eight of us and they upgraded us from coach and put us all in first class. I'm sitting there. We're waiting on a runway for Oakland tower to clear out their airspace so we can take off. We start to roll out. I remember looking at the engine and for the first time for a few seconds, I was actually afraid. Talking to the Pylon, I didn't come all this way for you to fall off, so please, please, behave yourself. We took off. We landed. It was cool. My girlfriend at the time and my best friend picked me up at the airport. I didn't tell anyone else I was coming home. They were sworn to secrecy. Flew home, had to have a pizza at my favorite pizzeria. Then, we went to my parents' house. My father was not home. Nobody was home except for my mom. I come walking in. She was upstairs in bed watching TV and not thinking--because remember, my mom has a gun to protect herself. I see the TV light on. I go upstairs and I'm like, "Mom." She's already positioned herself in bed, where it looks like she's sleeping, but she can still see out the corner of her eye; she's ready. I'm like, "Ma, wake up." Freaked her out that I was home. So, she's like, "If you ever do

that again, I will shoot you.” Then, she got this freaked look in her eye. I’m like, “What?” “When did you come home?” I was like, “Just now. Why?” “Two days ago Timmy said you would be home.” Timmy’s my cousin who’s special. I call him special, but he’s--I’m not sure what the word would be. He’s autistic.

GC: Does he have autism?

NM: Developmental disability?

KH: Yes, he has a mental disability, but we always said that he was special. Because in a lot of ways he is. He has immense sight that most of us ignore. We have it too, but his is out there. He knew I was coming home. He knew exactly when I was coming to visit him. That’s not the only time. He’s done that before. So, mom was like, “Oh, my god. You’re going to go?” “Yes, I’m going tomorrow to see them.” “Well, don’t freak out your Aunt May.” I’m like, “Okay. Whatever.” So, sure enough, my Aunt May was freaked because she was like, “Oh, my god.” But it was a good trip. I got to see everybody, then I went to Fort Hood. Fort Hood, Texas is essentially where I finally came out. Still hadn’t been with a man or anything. I still had feelings. I was still, I guess, trying to find myself. But I got out to Fort Hood. It turns out a friend of mine who was in basic training and AIT, he was following me throughout my career. He was like a month behind me. We both had the same assignments and everything. It just worked out that way where he actually followed me to every duty station. He might not be assigned to the same company I was, but he’d be assigned to the same battalion I was. So, by the time we got to Fort Hood Texas, a month later, he’s followed, gets assigned to the same infantry unit I’m in, but again, he’s in a line company; I’m always assigned to the headquarters company. He was gay. There was no hiding that. But nobody really said anything. We had a couple of lieutenants over the course, that you could tell were gay, but again, nobody said anything about it. Nobody did anything. So, I guess the don’t ask, don’t tell was in there ahead of time, but then there were other time where guys were caught having sex. That’s when they would lower the boom on them and throw them out of the military. I always felt bad about that, but then I’m like, “You all are stupid. Go off post or we’re on the largest base in the United States. There’s deserts out there. Go out to one of the trails. Go camping, whatever. You don’t have to do it on post where people can see you.” Anyway, (Steele?) and I got an apartment off post. We still had to maintain a wall locker and a bed, because we were single, but we did have permission to be off post. So, we were still tight friends and everybody used to joke, “You’re husband and husband or husband and wife.” That sort of thing. We joked about that, but it didn’t really mean anything. So, one year, we had war games over in Germany, where the whole division went over. We were going to be there for a year. Not a year, I’m sorry. A few months. We were simulating actual war with Russia. So, the first half of it would be as if we were already there and we were having the war games. The second half of it was to be as if we just flew over from the States and we’re relieving the crew that’s already there, the NATO forces that’s already there. In that phase of it, we were doing a line front, where we playing the bad guys going up against the Germans. We were supposed to let the Germans win. My battalion commander was like, “Bump that.” So, he changed the operation plan not realizing that the reviewing

stand was right there by us, was on our right flank. So, we came in and pushed through the German line. We pushed so far ahead, half the division was behind us. We were so far in enemy territory that they called the games; we won. So, the best part about that was they cut the whole thing short. So, while we there, we were set up and everything. We were in this little village called Wolfenbüttel and we had the German nationalists. They were hanging out with us. The kids and stuff, we were playing with them. I remember helping a little old lady with her grocery bags. I put her in the jeep and her bags and then drove her to her house, which was on the way up to the camp. So, after that, every day, she'd be outside and she'd have strudel or something for me as I go by or she'd come up to the camp looking for me to give me stuff. She's trying to introduce me to her granddaughter. I was like, "No, no. I'm going back to the States. No." Then, one night, the order came down. We're going to have to go back and we're getting rid of-- putting everything back in storage and we're flying home. All the ammunition that we had taken out though, we had to waste. We can't put it back. It's all tracers and flares. Nothing real. It looked like the Fourth of July that night because we put on this big old show for the nationalists and for the kids and stuff. So, we're firing off all our weapons and our tracer rounds. Like I said, it looked like the Fourth of July. Everything was just exploding everywhere. So, then, we came back to the staging area, where we cleaning everything and putting stuff away. At night, people were able to go into town, go drink, whatever, whatever. I was always on the courtesy patrol, meaning that I would ride around in a jeep, pick up our guys before the MPs did, if they were wasted or whatever. So, this one particular night I remember taking a couple guys down to the tent area, and then my lieutenant came in, all flared up and everything. You could tell he had been in a fight. So, I take him to his tent. By the time I get back up the staging area, the MPs were there. So, here I am, twenty, and I know I got to protect my guys. They're looking for my lieutenant. I know they're looking for my lieutenant, but they didn't specifically state a lieutenant. They said, "We want you to go get the guy that you just took down." So, out of the two guys that I had just taken down, I brought them up, but they weren't the lieutenant that they were looking for. Next thing you know, they're all in my face, talking about I'm obstructing everything and I'm freaking out because this is the first time I've ever done anything like that. So, they put me in a jeep, take me down to the MP headquarters. They stick me in a room that doesn't even have a door. They just stick me in a room. You'd swear there was a force field on it. I wasn't moving from that room. I was so afraid that I was going to be left over in German, go to jail in Germany, while the rest of my battalion flew out the next day to go back to the States. So, whatever happened, I mean, I know I was scared. Whatever happened, they were talking, whatever, whatever. I guess my lieutenant came in, confessed. He heard what I had done. The command sergeant major came in. He had this look like my father would have whenever he was pissed and I knew I was in trouble. All he did was say, "Follow me." That's all I did. He didn't say nothing else. I followed him out. We went back to the base. Took me to my tent. He's like, "At 0800 you better be in front of the colonel's office." I got no sleep. 0800 hours in front of the colonel's office. They make me sit there the entire day. Nobody said anything to me. I'm freaking out. Someone's walking by, doesn't look at me. Nobody's looking at me. That was the worst thing I ever felt because it's like, okay, everybody's ignoring me. I still have no idea what my fate is. Finally, it's time for the unit to go to the airport. That's when the colonel finally said

something to me. All he said was, “You drive. Move.” Okay. I’m driving. I’m fine. I’m still holding my breath. We talk on the way over to the airport. He tells me how disappointed he is. I’m like, “Okay. I’m really sorry, but I was taking care of my lieutenant.” He’s like, “Yeah, I understand that. I appreciate that because you do look out for your people. That’s one of the reasons why I made you a sergeant. But you are going to have pay for this.” “Okay. Am I being left here?” “No, you’re getting on a plane.” I still wasn’t satisfied until the plane had wheels up. It’s Northwest 747 200 Class Series. I’m sitting in first class. Wheels up. Now, there’s nothing but military people on this plane. We get wheels up. I start breathing and I realize--I’m like, once I’m on this airplane, I’m on US territory. So, they can’t touch me now. We came back to the States. Since we had to wait for the rest of the division to come back and it’s going to take at least a month, they gave us a week off. So, (Steele?) and myself, we said, “All right. We’re going to plan a party for the guys in our section. No wives. No girlfriends. Just the guys in our section to say thank you for doing such a great job for us.” That was cool. We had it at our apartment. The guys decided that they were going to hogtie me to a chair and they were going to get my drunk or stoned, whichever came first. I’m like, “I’m not drinking. I don’t drink.” Then, they started blowing pot smoke in my face. I’m holding my breath, whatever, whatever. After a while, you can only do so much and you get that contact high. Now, mind you, I also studied meditation at that point. So, I’m trying to go into a meditative state, so I don’t get the pot smoke and all that. I was wasted. I couldn’t do nothing about it. So, at some point, everybody had left. Let me jump back. Before this, like two or three months before we actually went to Germany, I came home and found (Steele?) having sex with a man. Did not know how to deal with that. I remember every emotion going through my body, from hatred to jealousy to envy to lust. All of it. I went back. Once he realized I was there and he threw the guy off of him, whatever, whatever. So, I went back to the base and stayed on the base for three days. He still had to come to me with reports every day, which made it uncomfortable, but I would never look at him. About the third night, I had a dream and I woke up in a sweat and my face felt like somebody had slapped me. My dream was about my mother, grandmother, and great grandmother telling me I was wrong, they never raised me to be prejudice against anyone and I need to correct this. It was such a strong feeling of a dream that I needed to do something about it. So, I took some time off. Took a leave of absence, basically for two days. I asked that (Steele?) be let off an extra day. While he was on the post at work, I went home, cleaned up, went shopping, made all his favorite dishes because he’s from the South, so I know how to cook. I parked my car around the corner. He came home, stopped dead in the door because he knew that one, I could break him in half, two, his military career was in my hands, because all I had to do was blow the whistle and he would have been thrown out. I’m like, “Look, we’ve been friends for too long and I’m not going to lose a friendship over this, but I need to understand what I saw.” Ulterior motive, along with keeping the friendship, now I had somebody who was doing something that I’ve always wanted to think about doing and it was my in without trying to expose myself what this was all about, where these feeling [are] coming from. So, we had a nice long talk about being gay, being in the military and what it was all about to be with a man. He took me to my first gay bar down in Austin, Texas, and I remember I stood there at a attention the whole night with my back up against the wall, checking it out and I’m realizing, oh, wait, there’s a lot of military people in here. You

can tell by the haircuts. I'm like, that's a marine, army, Army, Air Force. I'm thinking more and more. Okay. So, then, he's introducing me to other gay military people-- Army, I should say and one or two Air Force that were also assigned to our post. So, getting to know them and everything and studying more of the whole scenario, I'm looking at it from a scientific view, not from an emotional view, because I'm still not ready to go [to] that point. Now, this brings us to the party that we're having where once everyone had left, they had untied me and then it was just (Steele?) and I and he gave me a toke on the pot. Well, I think they call it shotgun. He did a shotgun and was blowing still in my face. So, he's like, "Here, I want you take a whiff of this." I didn't know what it was until later on, amyl nitrate or aka poppers. So, I took a whiff of that and I swear to God, fifty nuclear explosions went off in my head. I passed out. I woke up and he's still swears that he never tied me to the bed, but I woke up to him giving me head. I'm like, "No. Stop, stop, stop." I couldn't move my arms. Maybe I did, maybe I didn't, but I was screwed up. I'd never had that feeling before with pot and all the rest of that. I've always been in control. I climaxed, passed out again. The next time I wake up, he's in bed with his head on my shoulder. Then, I realize who was in the bed with me. I jump out of bed, which was the worst thing I could have done. The explosions came back. I'm standing there holding my head, talking about, "I'm going to kill you when I feel better. Why did you do this?" Blah, blah, blah. So, he wasn't feeling too well himself. We got cleaned up. We still had all this time, on vacation basically. So, we decided to drive down to San Antonio. That's where his boyfriend lived, who was a civilian. So, we drive down. That's about a hundred and twenty miles away. We get down there. The whole time in the car we're talking. He's like, "Look, I've known that you are. You just haven't come out yet. I've wanted to do that anyway. I figured this would bring you out." "No, you don't ever do that again. I will kill you if you do that again. I'm still not ready to make that leap." So, we get down to San Antonio. We get to John's house, which is his boyfriend who's this six foot five cowboy. Effeminate, but okay, whatever. You're his. Nice guy, though. I really liked him as a friend and stuff. So, he's like, "Oh, you guys are on time. I'm about to go across the street to [my] neighbor who had just gotten over mono." I didn't know what mono was. He's like, "He's no longer contagious." Whatever. He's taking him chocolate cake. I didn't care. I did know I needed to use the restroom real quick, but we were like, "Oh, we're just going to go." So, we go over there. There's John, (Steele?) and there's a couple steps up. So, when the door opens up, I don't see the person who opened the door. I just see their backs. John walks in. (Steele?) walks in. Then there's Greg, the guy who lived there, standing there blond hair, beautiful body, golden tan and the thing that came to my mind was, the cartoons where the sun [is] shining down and the birds are singing, people are falling in love. Here was somebody that somehow or another, knocked down all those walls, all those force fields I had [up]. He just knocked them all down. I'm just like, "Oh, my god." I'm staring at this man like he's a god. This is a god. What do I do? I'm freaking out. All this is going on in my head. I walk in. We all go into the bedroom because that's where his TV was since he'd been sick and stuff. So, he was sitting on the head, on that side. I'm sitting on the head on this side and foot. Every time he opened his mouth that was my excuse to look at this man. I'm like, "Oh, my god. I can't get--" Cool. We were only there for five minutes. Now, mind you, on the way over, they kept insisting that they wanted me to meet this man. We're there for five minutes and then we leave.

We get outside and all of a sudden, I don't know why, it just came out of myself, "Why are we leaving? You wanted me to meet this man." I'm trying to think of every way of going back in there to see this man, talk to him, and I don't know why, but I do know why. I was still trying to play it very cool. Well, (Steele?) is just grinning from ear to ear. We get back into John's place. I go to the restroom, come out. John is hanging up the phone, "Okay. We'll send him right over." "Who's going right where?" (Steele?) is grinning at me still. I'm like, "Why are you grinning at me and who's going where?" "Well, we told Greg that we want to have sex, but don't feel right with you being in the house." So, you're going to go back over there with a piece of chocolate cake." "You just sent him chocolate cake. Why am I going over there?" They're like, "Don't worry about it," as they're pushing me out the door. I'm still trying to be calm, cool, collected, without reverting back to that military or the drill sergeant mode. Now, for the first time in my life, I'm freaking out because I'm going to meet some man, a person. I can ask girls out with no problem. I've met their parents with no problem. Now, all of a sudden, I'm afraid of somebody? Where's this coming from? So, I'm trying to figure this all out. I go to knock on the door, didn't even hit the door. He opened the door right away. So, I go in. Again, we go back into the bedroom. We're sitting there. We're talking. I've already thought of at least ten different ways I can kill him or injure him. This is all running through my head, but at the same token, I'm sitting on the bed excited, nervous, and I'm sitting at attention on the bed. So, we're talking, watching TV. Greg keeps shifting. Every time he shift, he gets a little bit closer and closer. I'm sitting on the edge. Finally, he's like, "Look, will you relax? Take your shoes off, stretch out on the bed. Just relax." You could iron your shirt on my back, that's how tight I was laying on my stomach. I'm just like, still at attention. Again, he's moving closer and closer to the point where his elbow is touching mine. Electricity is flowing through my body. I know he can feel that I'm trembling. I'm still like, "What do I do?" I can't kill him. I can't hit him. I can't move over because I'm going to fall onto the floor. Thank god the phone rang. It's (Steele?). So, we're talking. He's talking about he wants to show me his wedding dress. What? I knew none of the terms. I never knew about drag queen or men wearing dresses. Knew nothing about that. I'm like, "What are you talking about? No, I don't want to see you in no dress, whatever." Greg takes the phone. "(Steele?), don't come over because we're not going to answer the door. As a matter of fact, you know what? Don't even expect to see Kent tonight. Better still, you won't see him until it's time for you all to go back to the base." He hung up the phone and I'm thinking, "Okay. Intriguing. Somebody's actually trying to take charge of me." I'm used to always being in charge. This is intriguing. Maybe I'll let it go and see where it goes. Well, he goes in, locks the door, turns off all the lights, comes into the bedroom, starts lighting candles. Puts on Anita Baker, one of my favorite singers. The rest is history. My first time. I'm thinking, "Oh, my god. This is what I've been missing all my life. What am I going to do with this?" I saw this man for about a month. When we went back to the base, the girl that I was seeing at the time, it was just a casual thing. She was also in the military. I'm like, "I don't think we can see each other anymore." She's like, "Okay." She was cool with it. We were just sexual partners anyway, nothing big about it. From then on, it was like, okay. I need to really understand this and Greg kind of helped me with that. (Steele?) kind of helped me with that. I still kind of distanced myself from (Steele?) a little bit, because once I started realizing you have the different terms and the different

definitions, okay, I don't want people to think about that, calling me that, even though we're just roommates and whatever. I made sure that nobody in the military knew, unless I was sure their status. So, basically, I still wasn't having sex, but I would go down to Austin and hang out with some of the friends that I made there in the clubs and stuff. They were showing me the ropes and telling me about different things. So, I was learning more and more, and gradually, I was meeting people and started fooling around with them just until I got--but, I was making sure that they were all civilians, never would I date a military [man] at the time. Then, slowly, I started seeing things. My eyes were being opened to different people, watching their mannerisms, watching out for the codes. I didn't know this, but they had secret codes to know that, oh, yes, I'm gay. Then I found out about the codes that they had like, during World War II and all that. Used to be, they would say, "Are you a friend of Dorothy?" from the Wizard of Oz. I never understood that term, but if you said yes, you're a friend of Dorothy, that meant you were gay or lesbian. Then, there was a movie called *Common Ground* and it was on Showtime. It was very good and I can't find it any place else because it took place in a town over three generations. The first one, a young girl, she went into the Navy, but she got thrown out because she was gay. Her commanding officer was gay, but nobody knew about it and she saw her in this bar for gays, turned around and walked out, but that's why she got thrown out was because she got caught by the MPs and the commanding officer was like, "Okay. You're out, because you're not going to expose me." That was basically what was going on in the Army at that time for me. We knew who in our area were gay and you would hang out outside the place. You never really associated with each other on the base, because you didn't want anyone to find out. Once you were off post, yes, it's one thing. I noticed, too, once I was off-post and we were at peoples' houses, whatever, that whole culture turned into a different--that's when I first met some guys who were dressed up in drag. I'm like, "Oh, no." Didn't want anything to do with that, but I also realized that long-term military career I can't have because now I'm going to be true to myself and I don't want to have to be hiding myself in the military. I want to stop lying to everybody. The hard part was when I came home, how do I tell my family. That was my biggest fear, because I was learning how people were being rejected by their family, their friends, and I didn't know how to deal with that. The military, I could care less about. My time was almost up anyway. So, I applied to work for the airlines, got it. Was going to be a flight attendant. Yeah, right. So, when it was time for me to leave the military, I did, but my commanding officer recommended that I join the Reserves active rather than go into the Reserves inactive. I'm like, "Okay." One weekend a month, two weeks during the summer. I can deal with that. That's not how it worked out, but I could deal with that. So, I left the military, went to the airlines and started working for the airlines. Was very happy because I love flying. I love airplanes. I could meet a more variety of people. It also allowed me to explore my sexuality. It helped me to see other cultures. I would travel to other countries. I met a lot of people going to different gay clubs. Basically, still just acting the way I normally did. This was just another side of me. There are many sides to me. Everybody, but this was just another--the way I was treating--was another side of me. It's not who I am, it just makes up part of who I am. Again, it was still an issue. How do I tell my family? I remember realizing my one uncle, my favorite uncle's who's gay, the marine, he and I became closer and closer. My family knew the minute I came out of the military from having all these girls calling to

only having my best friends who are males calling. They knew who these guys were. Maybe two of them were gay, the rest were all straight, but my family knew something was going on. I didn't know that they knew. They weren't saying anything to me. My mom started asking my Uncle Russell, her brother, who is gay, "Do you think Kent is gay? Is he finally coming out?" I didn't find out about all this until later on down the line, but he's like, "I don't know if he's gay. You need to ask him or better yet, just wait and let him say something to you." So, time went on. We have family reunions every year. I'm talking the entire family. We've had from the lowest amount of eighty-five people, to the maximum amount of 375 people at these reunions. One particular reunion, my uncle brought his lover. Now, we all knew (Jerry?) was his lover and nobody really said anything about it. We just accepted it. Well, my grandmother wanted a picture of all her kids and the grandkids, whoever was there. (Jerry?) was standing next to her. She's like, "(Jerry?) get in the picture." "Oh, no. I can't. I'm not part of your family." This is a southern woman we call "Big Mama." She came around with a right hook, took (Jerry?) down. We're all standing there laughing. She's standing over him, saying, "If you ever say you're not part of my family, I will beat your butt." We were like, "Okay. That's it. The monarch has spoken." (Jerry's?) now part of the first wives club. So, even when they broke up, (Jerry?) was invited to every family function, but that also told us or at least told me, well, wait a minute, my family's more accepting than I think. Maybe I might not have as much of an issue as I think. But it was still sometime before I even said anything. Finally, my family came out to me. My one brother and I, we were down in Cancun, [Mexico] and we were having an argument. Basically, I don't know what it was all about, but at one point he's like, "What is your problem?" I'm like, "You really want to know what my problem is? You really want to know what my problem is?" He's like, "Yeah, what? You're going to tell me that you're gay. We already know you're gay. That's another thing. I'm pissed off at you for lying to me about that. You're cutting us out of your life. We don't care. We love you. You're our family. You're our brother." Took out the [wind in my sails]. I was just like, "What? Wait. You guys knew?" "Yeah, we've known ever since you came home from the Army. Mom said not to say anything to you because you need to be ready." All this time I wasted. They're like, yeah. Ever since it's been--instead of them worrying about me finding a nice girl and settling down, they're trying to find a nice guy for me to settle down with. The most embarrassing thing is when your grandmother is trying to fix you up with her priest, or in this case, her reverend. No. He's in DC. I was raised Catholic. That collar thing, no. That's a no, no to me. I'm going to burn in hell for a lot of things, but not that. So, from that point on, yes, it's made my life a lot easier. I really don't have anything to hide. I work at a gay bar here in New Jersey, which we'll get to. My parents love to come down and hang out there. Their friends love to come down and hang out there. They're like, "We have more fun at a gay bar than we do in a straight bar." A lot of my straight friends say the same thing. They love to come down and go and hang out at the gay bars. I'm like, "Cool." Shall I take it from there with the gay bar?

GC: I still have questions.

NM: Yes. There's so much.

KH: You all got to stop me because I'll keep going.

NM: No, no.

GC: It's great.

NM: I have so many questions, back to Korea, but why don't we just backtrack a little bit while it's still fresh. You mention Fort Hood and when you're going off base to a gay club and there's a lot of military types. Was there ever a fear that there might be a crackdown? The military might get overzealous with that type of club?

KH: The problem with that is these clubs were civilian clubs and they were not on a military base. Military really had no--they can't justify going into this place. Basically, the only thing they could get you on is if you were actually having sex with a fellow soldier or military personnel. Then they can get you for fraternization. People are thrown out because of fraternization more so than because they're gay. Later on, yes, if they admit to it being gay, then the charges are turned into because you're a homosexual, you're being thrown out. But the way they were getting around was you were fraternizing, but the problem with that is if I were straight and I started fraternizing with a female soldier, you can't throw me out for that or you will not throw me out because of that, because it's quote/unquote, "the norm." So, in the beginning, before people actually starting fighting it, they would tend to stay away from that, using the term fraternization. In the beginning, they actually were and then afterwards, they were changing it up because they could be sued, even though they're the military where you're not allowed to sue. You're considered government property. They could also use a term like you're having sex with another soldier that you're damaging government property. So, you could get in trouble for that. We were not really afraid. At least, as far as I know, my circle of friends, we weren't afraid of MPs coming in. Yes, they could go in and check out to see who's there and then watch you on base, but that's why I made sure--at least in my case, I made sure that I never did anything on military property. I waited until I was off post. That's why I have my apartment off post. They can't do anything to me because of that. You cannot prove anything.

NM: Were there a lot of overzealous MPs on the base looking to toss out people? Also, were there people who were tossed out?

KH: No, not in my case. I didn't know of the MPs going after anyone or the detectives going after anyone. Yes, there were people who were let go because they were having sex on the post with a fellow soldier, a couple women that I know of, a couple of men that I know of. Then, too, I also know of some people being discharged because they were having an affair with say, an officer's wife. They were being let go for whatever reason. I've only [partaken] in an Article 15 [of the Uniform Code of Military Justice] one time. An Article 15 is a form of punishment less than a court martial that the military has. Each branch calls it a different thing, but with an Article 15 in the Army, depending upon what you do, yes, they can strip you of your stripes, they can put you in prison. They can't send you to [United States Penitentiary,] Leavenworth from an Article 15.

You actually have to have a court martial before you'll be sent to Leavenworth, but there are certain charges also, where they can send you to Leavenworth. If you're AOL, where you've gone missing or you've just left without permission and they catch you, they can bring you back for an Article 15 and they can send you to Leavenworth for that because you deserted the military. If it's wartime, they can even forego that and just put you in front of a firing squad. The only ones--like I said, there was only one person who I know of who got discharged for being gay through an Article 15, was because he had had enough and didn't want to be there, so he stated that he was gay. So, by stating that, you've falsified your initial documents when you enter because at that time, they were asking you, "Are you gay? Have you ever had gay sex?" If you say, "Yes," they will not let you in, but if you say, "No," you just lied on your documentation. Technically, I lied, but I didn't because I had not had sex with a male. I didn't know what it was to begin with. So, yes, technically, I lied, but technically, I didn't lie because it didn't happen until afterwards. Hence, me leaving when my tour of duty was up, but still staying in the reserves, it's a gray area. As far as witch hunts, no. I did not see it happen. I have heard of stories of it happening, usually at the academies, the different academies. Sometimes, I've heard it more so in the Marines where they do a witch hunt, more so than the Army or the Air Force. Even the Navy, they may do the witch hunts. You heard more stories though about the Marines and the Navy than you did the Army or the Air Force. They're in closer quarters, obviously, on the ships. I've heard of guys being raped on the ship, but no first hand knowledge of it. It's all hearsay.

NM: I have a few follow questions. This is backtracking to your time in Korea. Had you at any point thought of pursuing a career in the military?

KH: Yes. I was enjoying myself in the military. I could have seen myself doing a full term and getting out at the age of forty and saying, okay, I've served my country. I guess, you might say that I'm old school. The old school romantic, meaning I'm very proud to be an American. I take my oath of serving my country, protecting my country and my fellow Americans. I take that very seriously. Yes, I would have loved to have stayed in the military, but I also know that that would have not been the right path for me. If I could have been openly gay, yes, I definitely would have stayed in.

NM: Another follow up question. It goes a little bit back probably about forty-five minutes to an hour ago, but you mentioned that you had these tunnels. So, back in Korea, you mentioned that there was these tunnels. I wasn't clear. Were these from North Korean refugees building tunnels to try to cross into South Korea?

KH: No, these were--well, it could have been, we didn't really necessarily know who built the tunnels. We just found these tunnels coming from the North. Had I thought about it, I would have brought in pictures. I have pictures of one tunnel that was found, where it looks like the old mining tunnels with the old cart, railroad cart that they put the stuff in. Basically, we found something like that. Usually, when we find that, we seal it up, but we take pictures and then we seal it up. But we don't know. A lot of times they don't know if someone came in, already came in, a spy or whatever, but spies would not use that way. There's other ways for them to come in. But it's definitely possible

invasion or possible somebody trying to escape from North Korea. It was never really told other than okay, we found it here, this location. Check the area. That sort of thing.

NM: I have a lot of follow questions about Korea because you mentioned a lot of things that people who served in Korea don't really talk about, but you mentioned that there were AA meetings.

KH: Yes.

NM: Was this organized on the base by the military?

KH: Yes. The military does take care of their own. Alcoholism, drugs, they know that's a big problem. Here are men and women that are away from their families for a long time, stress that they undergo whether in wartime or in peacetime. There's a lot of issues and people are people. Soldier or not, sailor or not, airman or not, you're still going to have people who are going to have issues. They provide a host of programs to try and help people, which is very good about it. They even have a Boy Scout--while I was in Korea, as I said, the people from Seoul on down, they can have their dependents over with them. My unit, they found out that I was a Boy Scout leader and still registered in both New York and New Jersey. So, for two weeks, I had the children, the male children of a couple of dependents from Seoul where they formed a little Boy Scout troop of their own and so, as a Boy Scout leader, I operated a summer camp for them on one of the Army bases down in Pusan, where essentially I helped them with the merit badges that I was qualified to teach the boys in and to also play camp counselor for them, letting them go to the beach, go swimming, everything that we would do at a normal summer Boy Scout camp, we did for these kids and I was the one that was in charge to do it.

NM: What was the name of the town that was near your base?

KH: In Korea?

NM: In Korea.

KH: Dongducheon.

NM: You mentioned that you went into the town, into some of these clubs and that you were the baby-san.

KH: Yes.

NM: Were there a lot of these types of clubs in town?

KH: Oh, yes. There was a whole strip full. At least, fifteen to twenty clubs where any of the military, all the different posts and stuff. The division headquarters was right there, so they could go into that. We also had, and I didn't mention this, that there were curfews. So, you could be out until 11:00, 11:30, and then you have to be back on your

post by midnight, because at midnight, there's a curfew for everybody. You can't be on the streets unless you have specific pass to be on the streets or you're patrolling. Same thing with Korean nationals. In that area, they were also restricted as to after midnight they can't be moving along. The police will pick them up.

NM: You mentioned there's a whole strip of these clubs. Can you talk about some of the dynamics? Were some of clubs where primarily African American servicemen went, where some were white servicemen? Was there a club that was known for X or Y or Z?

KH: Yes. There was some clubs that strictly the black guys would go. Some clubs, it was a mixed club. There were other clubs where only the Korean nationalists would go. We had serving with us what we called ROK [Republic of Korean Marine Corps] soldiers. These were KATUSA [Korean Augmentation To the United States Army] soldiers. Essentially, by our standard of military term, they would be reservists. Their families were very [affluent] and they would buy their kids' ways into this, because every male member in Korea has to serve two years in the military. If you come from an [affluent] family, you didn't want to be with the regular military. Regular military for the Koreans was tough. They could teach our marines how to be tough. Their idea of training, martial arts, which would be Tae Kwon Do. They'll have a silhouette painted on the side of a wall, a brick wall and you see them kicking this wall, hitting this wall. You wouldn't see even the marines doing that. We'll hit dummies, but we're not hitting the side of a brick wall. You'll see the ROK soldiers, they'll be in formation and the command sergeant major or the sergeant will come down and if you did something wrong, they'll just haul off and hit you. Whereas, in the US military, they can't hit you. That's against the rule. Years ago they used to be able to hit you, but we stopped that, being so-called civilized. Anyway, the KATUSA soldiers worked side by side with their American counterparts. There were a lot of issues with that because in some cases, as long as it's not a restricted area, the KATUSA soldiers wouldn't do anything; they'd just sit around. For a lack of a better term, but the term that was used, the only time we saw them was during meal time and it was like roaches. You don't see them and then you flip on a light and then all of a sudden they're there and it's like roaches, just scattering. So, if you didn't get to the mess hall early enough, you weren't going to get any of the good stuff, because the Korean soldiers were there before you. My section was a highly classified section. So, we did not have any of them working with us. But yes, we had them working with the motor pool. We had them working with the security staff. You had them in the armory. I shouldn't say for the most part, but there were times when yes, you'd get some good ones who actually worked with the people in their different sections and stuff. Like I said, because of my section, I really did not have them to work with. I didn't really have any Korean nationalists or I should say KATUSA soldiers as friends. All my friends were the civilian workers that were on post. Or when I went into town to the different clubs, yes, you had people would go to different sections and stuff. There were two clubs I went to, one in particular, but there were at least two clubs I went to. It was also known that if you want to find out what your division is going to do or what your particular unit's going to do, go downtown and check with the nationalists, because a lot of times, they'll know before you will. Secrecy was not necessarily that great, but obviously there [was] classified stuff that didn't get out there, but I had one man, he

found out about his being DEROS [Date Eligible for Return from Overseas] back to the States because he was at one of the stands--like we have hot dog stands. Well, they have shrimp stands. His orders were in the paper that his shrimp was wrapped in. That's how he knew he was coming back to the States. Well, how did these orders get down there in the first place? Stuff like that would somehow slip out. The military definitely takes care. They had tours of Seoul. One was considered the Walker Hill tour, where we get on a bus, and you have to be in dress uniform, not necessarily your class A's, but your class B uniforms. They take you on a tour of Seoul and you get a dinner out of it. You see a show. We went to the palace down in Seoul. So, yes, they do try to give you opportunities to see and understand the different cultures. They do take care of you physically, mentally. The big thing in Korea at the time was we had a bell outside our (med lab?), so whenever you went on sick call. Outside their office, they had a bell. However many times that bell rang was how many people had cases of VD [venereal diseases]. I remember one day they were ringing that bell like it was crazy. We're like, "What the hell?" It turns out our colonel and command sergeant major had slept with the same girl and they both came down with VD at the same time. Not a good thing as an officer, commanding officer no less. To be the highest ranking officer and the highest ranking noncommissioned officer, that had to be embarrassing, but nobody liked the two of them anyway, since the meds were ringing the bell crazy like that to let us all know. What other questions?

NM: A lot of these things are interconnected. You're talking about in these clubs there's sexual relationships with mama-sans, with Korean women, prostitutes. Was there ever any fraternization between officer and enlisted and civilians in the town?

KH: Yes, I would have to say yes, that was going on. Mind you, that was also a year and a half where I was celibate. Didn't want to do anything. Didn't care to do anything, but I knew people, yes, if they were having sex all around. Whether they be officer, civilian, they were having it somehow, someway. In some cases, the military stayed with the military. In other cases, they were going downtown and getting it. I mean, it was there. It was cheap and readily available. When you first go over there, you can't go off post until you've gone through a few training classes. Then, you have to have a sponsor when you finally do go off the base. You have to have a sponsor take you out and they'll show you around town. You don't go in blind. Fortunately, or unfortunately, my sponsor was my captain. So, he showed me the ropes. He was a really good guy, but even him, he tried to hide it or be very discrete about him having relationships with one of the women, but he did. We knew about it, but nobody said anything. You have a certain code that you went by.

NM: What I said is interconnected because you worked at this orphanage and there were some Amerasians as you call them. So, was this a prevalent problem where there are these children of American servicemen?

KH: Yes.

NM: Could you tell us more about working with these children? Raw numbers, any information you could talk about working in this orphanage.

KH: Well, there were thirty to forty kids in the orphanage we were dealing with. As I said, I had two boys that I was in charge with where I would take them to the movies. I would take them down to Seoul whenever I could do things with them. They'd come on base. We'd watch TV or whatever. We'd have picnics for the kids. We did whatever we could to try and help them with as much as we could. As I said, I've had my family send clothes over, so we can donate clothes and they've sent books, food, all these different things over, where we could help out. Not everybody helped out. Some people just didn't want to be bothered. I helped out because I felt sorry for these kids, but then I would do that for just about any orphanage if I could.

NM: (Gerry?), do you have follow up questions?

GC: Just one on that. Do you know what happened to any of them? Were there being adopted and sent to America?

KH: Some were being adopted, yes. Yes, some are going to America. Some are going to Europe. Some are going to different parts of the world. Others were not being adopted because of their age or their disability if they had a disability. Some were being sent to other locations for schooling or whatever reason. They'd go to other foster homes in some cases, but a lot of them were stuck in the system until they became adults. Then they had no choice where they would go. Once you hit a certain age, they just, "Okay. You're gone. You're done. We can't help you any further." So, some of them get lost in the system. Some of them get put on the streets. I don't know this for a fact, but some were even sold into slavery. Some of the girls were shipped out. Try not to think about that because it was not something I could do anything about. So, you try not to think about it. I think that's probably why I chose two boys instead of girls. It's my way of hiding from the fact that, god forbid if something happened to these girls, there's nothing I can do. I would not want to think of the girls turning out to be prostitutes. The two boys, I lost contact with them probably in the '90s, but they had gone to school and one became a dentist and the other one had actually made it to becoming a lawyer. So, they did well for themselves.

GC: Did they stay in Korea?

KH: They stayed in Korea.

GC: Lived through the Orphanage the entire time? Were they adopted?

KH: They got adopted by a British family that were living in Korea. I think they worked for the consulate, the British consulate, but they had been living there--when I lost contact with them, one was in Dongducheon--not Dongducheon. I can't get the name right, but he was down south by the lower portion. One lived on (Geojedo?) Island, which (Geojedo?) Island is like [what] Fire Island would be to New York. That type

deal. It's a vacation spot for the Japanese. You find a lot of fishing villages around that island. So, he ended up there and he just commutes back and forth to the mainland to do work.

NM: Do you want to take a short break? Are you hungry? Does anyone need to use the restroom?

KH: I'm fine. You guys go for it.

NM: Do you need to use the restroom?

KH: I'm good.

NM: I have to use the restroom.

[Tape Paused]

NM: This would be more looking back because you said that you came out afterwards, in Fort Hood, after Korea. Much like there was a gay community off the base, was there something like that in Korea?

KH: Not that I was aware of.

NM: You weren't aware.

KH: I don't know. Definitely military-wise, no. That was something that would probably have been very well underground. I wasn't looking for it and definitely, in our division, that's not something that you would let know. Like myself, I kept it all hidden. Even though I hadn't come out yet, it was still hidden.

NM: Do you have any follow up questions on Korea?

GC: Yes. Did you have any interaction with the North Koreans, the Koreans that were trying to escape North Korea?

KH: No.

GC: Any incidents that happened with North Korea?

KH: No. My short stint over there basically the most that ever happened while I was there was the killing of President Park Chung-hee when he was assassinated, but again, that was an indirect thing. I was there. I was in the right division or the wrong division and we got put on alert, but nothing significant of that happened on, shall we say, my watch while I was over there.

GC: What were you told about North Korea, if anything, from your command?

KH: Well, basically, we were told the general information. You're over because of the North Koreans versus the South Koreans. Some of the stuff we learned, we learned day to day talking to the Korean nationalists who worked with us. There'd be times when we were out on patrol. I didn't tell you this, but I told you one time about the tree, the sacred tree. We were on maneuvers and we were in full combat gear. We stopped at a shrine, which according to legend, two hundred years ago, three hundred years ago, someone tried to cut down a tree and the sky darkened and blood was coming out of the tree. There was thunder and lightening and they call it the "Bleeding Tree." It's a shrine where they honor this tree. We were there in full combat gear and I had this feeling of I had been there before, during the Korean War or whatever, but I had this feeling I had been there before. What was fascinating or impressive to me was there was an older gentleman who you knew was there during the Korean conflict and he just came up and he thanked me. I couldn't understand why he was thanking me. "Because of the freedom and the safety that your people provide," is what he told me. That kind of made me feel really good. There were other things, other times where little things kind of make you feel good or appreciate it. I can't speak for everybody else, but I know I did. That was significant for me.

GC: Was there any other interaction between you and the South Koreans and the civilians? Were other people happy you were there? How were the perceptions of you?

KH: Interesting enough, yes, some of them were happy. Some of them just--all right you're here. You're an American. If they got to know me--because some of the soldiers, they act like they own everything--typical, and I never did. I know we were talking and at one point one of the myths that the Koreans had about black people was they felt at night we grew tails. I was like, "Excuse me?" It turned out that another American soldier had told them, "Oh, yeah. They turn into monkeys and they have tails," but we were able to disclaim that, obviously. One of the traditional things that we do to fellow soldiers when they first get there, we take you out and you have to eat Korean food. Our biggest fear is that they serve *kegogi*, which in Korean means dog meat. That's like a delicacy to them. So, when they ordered for the first time for me, they ordered *bulgogi*, which is a sweet beef. They ordered kimchi, which is cabbage that's been fermenting under ground for six months. You have two types. You have your winter and you have your summer. The summer's warm or hot and the winter is even hotter. It's definitely an acquired taste, but I seemed to like it right away, which kind of pissed some of the guys off because they thought that I was going to get sick and I didn't. That's also the first time I used chopsticks. I had no problem with that. I took to it naturally. Then, we had repelling training on (Geojedo?) Island. Basically, what it is during the morning we do repelling off of a cliff, climbing the cliff, creating a rope bridge over a cliff and getting over the rocks and the ocean below us. That was the kind of training that we have. We would do that in the day time, I mean, in the mornings and then in the afternoon, we'd have the afternoons free and we were able to go to the fishing villages, go down to the beach. I remember going with a friend. We went down to the piers to watch the fisherman. These fisherman were getting ready to go out to, I guess, get their nets in for the night. I said that we would be back--they wanted us to come with them. They said

they would have us back on the pier at five o'clock. So, we went out with them and they were teaching us how to do their fishing and we had a really good time. They were talking it up and they have this drink, it's an alcoholic beverage called *jinro*. Supposedly, has everything in it, including embalming fluid and you can drive your vehicle with it. Well, yes, they were drinking that and my friend was drinking it with them. I'm like, "Okay. Whatever, whatever." It was a great time. They took us out. We helped get the nets in, the fish. By five o'clock, we were back on the pier, which was amazing. They were like, "Anytime you want to go out, we can go out." There was other times while I was there, we were on the beach, we had the beach to ourselves. Then, some of the nationals would come over and bring us food or drink while we were on the beach. That was really nice. We thought that was very nice. They didn't have to do any of that. They made you feel welcome. It was not something new or different to me, because like I said, I've been to other countries and as long as I act as a guest, I've never had a problem, language barrier or otherwise, and I've always been treated with respect and vice versa; I treat them with respect. So, I've always had a good time. So, this was just another extension of it. It was definitely an experience, the repelling off a cliff, three hundred foot cliff, and here you are being taught to walk down facing down, instead of bouncing down the wall, like you see most people do. No. We had to learn how--well, we did that too, but we had to learn walk down in case the enemy was below us, we can shoot as we go down. That was scary. Then, you had to learn how to carry somebody on your back in case they were wounded to go down this cliff and then to go across the rope with the rocks below you and keep your nerve. This was all part of our training.

GC: Was this cliff significant where it would be a place where North Korea would penetrate?

KH: It's nowhere near North Korea. It's in the ocean. It's an island, so it's nowhere near North Korea. The people living on that island would not have to fear any reprisal or anything from North Korea unless they came in across the ocean. The only way we got there was we were flown in on C-130 by the Air Force. Then, they dropped us off and brought us back.

NM: The period after Fort Hood, when you're in the Reserves for a few years, but you're also working at the airlines, is that correct?

KH: Yes.

NM: Do you have any follow up questions for that?

GC: Actually, I have some more questions about your time at Fort Hood. What were you doing in Fort Hood?

KH: I was assigned to a mechanized infantry unit, headquarters company. Again, I was still doing communications, and I was working in the battalion headquarters office. So, I picked up work as a secretary essentially. I worked in what they considered the S3 section, which handled communications and it also handled some of the security aspects

for the division, meaning getting intelligence reports and stuff. That was just one of my duties. Then, at one point, our general came in and fired everyone in the motor pool. He wasn't happy with our motor pool. So, they had to re-staff the motor pool. At one point, indirectly, but basically it was an order, my colonel wanted me to go down to the motor pool and work there. I have no idea about tanks and armored personnel carriers or anything else like that, but he sent me down there to get the paperwork straightened out. So, I went. Keeping true to myself, the officers essentially, the lieutenants, [who] are second class lieutenants and first class lieutenants, I worked a lot with them. Their staff sergeant that they brought in, who was going to be my boss, they were afraid of him as well. I had one lieutenant, he was so afraid of me, when he came into my office he threw up. I'm like, "Geez, [is] my reputation that bad?" Typical military. You have your people who are slackers and you have your people who are gung-ho. I was not a gung-ho one, but I was one that got the job done, which is probably why the colonel sent me down there. So, I was also motor pool sergeant, where I handled all the reports there. Then they cross-trained me in NBC, which is [nuclear, biological, and chemical] warfare. That meant that I was responsible for all the gas masks, making sure they were operating properly. I was responsible for training or retraining everyone [on] how to use the equipment for NBC, putting on their chemical suits, how to utilize the syringes, with certain chemicals in there to help protect you from radiation and help protect you from certain chemicals. When it came time to go to the gas chamber, I was the one inside the gas chamber making them take their mask off, say their name, rank, serial number, that sort of thing. Then, seeing how long they can stay in there holding their breath. It got to the point where I can be in there all day and it wouldn't affect me. It's basically riot gas. All it is, is it's a chemical that irritates the skin, the throat, the eyes. After a while you do build up an immunity to it. The trick of it is that when you get home or back to the barracks, you have to immediately wash your clothes and yourself in cold water. One weekend or one night, a couple of us had gone out and I can say this now because I won't get in trouble. We went out and they wanted to stop at this redneck bar. We did, but the locals didn't want us in their place, so they kind of threw us out. Mind you, again, I was assigned to an infantry unit mechanized. Not the brightest people in the world. I say that with great respect. These guys wanted to go back in there and fight them. I'm like, "Guys, one, use your head. We're in Texas. Take a look at those trucks. They all have racks and they're holding guns." In Texas, it's also legal for them to carry concealed weapons. Let's be smart about this. There's more of them than there are of us. I just happen to have two canisters of riot gas in my car. I wasn't supposed to, but I had it. Anyway, I said, "Come on. Follow me." I got the two cans, took it to the air conditioner intake valve, popped the gas canisters and let the intake suck it all in. Got in the car and we were waiting to peel out of there. Everybody came crashing out of there, throwing up, coughing, crying, reacting to the gas, and then we peeled out. I said, "That's the first attack." They're like, "What are you talking about?" "Well, you know how we're supposed to wash up in cold water. When they get home, what's the first thing most people do? They take a hot shower. When they get in that shower and turn on that hot water. All it's going to do is reactivate the chemicals. That's the second attack. They go to wash their clothes because none of them are wearing white clothes. They're all wearing dark colored clothes. That means they're going to use warm to hot water. There's your third attack. So, you're going to hit them or you're going to hit somebody

in their family. In the meantime, we get away scot-free. So, there wouldn't be any fingerprints on the canister because the canister would have burned so hot. Any DNA or any physical evidence would be gone. All they'd know is they came somewhere from the base."

GC: [laughter] That's hilarious.

KH: So, we used to do stupid things like that. Fort Hood, I'll admit there was one time the division headquarters had gone out into the field. Essentially, they were doing their own little set of war games where they were going to see how fast they can set up a command post, move the command post and such. So, they had different people there. Well, I was assigned from my unit to be the communications for them. One of the communications sergeants. Actually, I hadn't made sergeant yet. We were out there for five days. For five days, I did not get any sleep because I was the only communications person out there. So, that meant I had to work day shift, night shift and being the young, dumb, private first class, I didn't say anything until that fifth day. All bets were off. I had just made it into my rack and they're like, "You're late." You got to come out here and do your thing. Well, I came out pissed off, screaming, cussing. I was the lowest ranking man from a two star general on down. I'm cussing them all out. Essentially, I was like, oh, no. This colonel came over. I don't know why, but if you check military personnel, especially Army, they may be from Boston, but somehow another, they pick up a Southern drawl. Don't ask me why. This colonel comes over there with the deepest southern drawl I've ever heard asking me what was my malfunction. I basically pointed to the bulletin board with the names as to what your duties are. I said, "Look under communications. Who is it for the day shift? Hatfield. Night shift? Hatfield. Hatfield. That's only me. I'm the only Hatfield out here. I don't care if you send me to Leavenworth. I really don't. I need sleep. So, you people can play your games all your want, but I'm getting out of here." The general calls him over. The next thing I know the command sergeant major's telling me go get my gear. "Fine. I'll go get my gear." I'm coming out. As I step outside the APC [armored personnel carrier], which is the command post vehicle. The two largest MPs I've ever seen take up either side of me. The command sergeant major's like you will follow these two soldiers and do exactly what they tell you. I'm hearing in the meantime, a helicopter start up. Okay. It's a Huey. I'm like, "Oh. Either the general's going somewhere or I'm taking a trip." So, the MPs escort me and yes, we're getting into the Huey. Now, for those of you who don't know what a Huey is, it's--if you've seen on some of these war movies or Vietnam where the sides of the door open and they have the guns out there and the guys are sitting sideways with their feet hanging out, that's a Huey. The only thing they have--there are seatbelts, but the only thing that they have to hold you is one little latch where all you need is your little finger and just flip it up and it automatically disengages so that you can have a quick egress out of the helicopter. Chopper pilots are nuts. They fly tree level. They have a tendency to turn on their sides and they love it. Mind you, Fort Hood is the largest base in the United States. The majority of it is desert, wilderness. I'm making sure my hand is on that belt because I don't want them dumping me out. Anyway, we get back, we land in the quadrangle between our company's barracks and the next battalion's company barracks. Who's waiting there is the entire command staff of my battalion, the

colonel, two majors, the command sergeant major, a captain, and a lieutenant. We land, the one MP reports to the colonel, signals, we march over, they get back in the chopper and they take off. The rest of the staff just circles around me. The colonel is right here in my face. He's shaking his head. I'm at attention. He's shaking his head at me and he's like, "You have got to be the luckiest man in this world." "Excuse me?" He's like, "Only you can cuss out a tent full of field grade officers and get a five day pass out of it, but before you can collect on that pass, you're confined to your quarters for the next twenty-four hours." "Hey, fine with me. I'm going to bed." I must have slept for about a good eighteen hours probably. Anyway, I wake up. I'm hungry. I had a two man room. I go to go get something to eat. I can't leave my room. They had a guard on my door. "Don't worry. We'll call and get you something to eat." They went on orders. Now, mess hall was closed. They were under orders though to get the duty officer and they'll go off post to get me something to eat unless the mess hall was open. Then they will go to the mess hall, get me food. I'm confined to my quarters for twenty-four hours. So, they went and got me food and drink. After the twenty-four hours was up, I had to go report to the colonel. Then, he was like, yes, I was serious, you do have the next five days off. Have fun. I left. I was like, "I'm out of here." Got my car, got off the base as quickly as I could, but they knew they were wrong because they should have had at least two of us. I should have said something a lot sooner, but at the same token, someone else should have noticed that I was the only one. But they did get back at me for that also. We had what they call organizational day. It's the anniversary of the creation of our battalion. Well, a few months after that, they're making preparations to have this big outdoor party for the kids and the families and troops. I thought they were joking. A couple people came over. The colonel wants to have a clown there, so he wants Ronald McDonald. You have to get him. "Yeah, right. Whatever, whatever." Well, unbeknownst to me, he was serious. It was two days before this party was [to] kick off, the colonel actually comes in and says, "So, did you get Ronald McDonald for the party?" I'm like, "You were actually serious?" He's like, "I told you. People told you, didn't [they]?" I'm like, "I thought they were joking." "No, I'm serious. So, either you get Ronald McDonald or you put on a white face." Ronald McDonald had a party that week or that day and I couldn't get him. My lieutenant came in with a clown costume and one of my subordinates came in with makeup that he got from the theater on post. I'm like, "Dude, I can't wear makeup from a theater. It's going to be--I'll be outside. I need outside make up. First of all, I don't need this clown outfit. I'm not dressing up." I ended up dressing up, putting on a white face. I could not stop laughing and it took at least four of the biggest meanest guys in our unit to even get me out [of] my room. I had this stuff on. I'm laughing so hard. I'm not coming out. There's no way I'm going out there making a fool of myself. They brought me out, kicking and screaming, but they brought me out. It was a 105 degrees. The makeup was caking. Kids were afraid of me and the adults were laughing their butts off. I was so mortified. There's a picture of it still floating around somewhere. I think my brother has it. Yes, it was definitely their way of getting back at me. In the military we like to play games on each other. One time we were in the field--now, Texas, when you go to bed, you have to be very careful if you're in the field or even at home, because you might have a scorpion in your bed. You might have a rattler or a copperhead. We're out in the field. It's been raining. I checked my bag before I got in it. There was nothing in my bag. I woke up from a dream that I--

first of all, I was dreaming about this one episode of *The Rifleman*. That's a western before your time. Anyway, he was in his bedroll and he's woken up because there's a rattlesnake in his bedroll. That woke me up because I have a snake wrapping itself around my ankle. I'm praying to God that it doesn't rattle. I'm praying to God that it doesn't bite me. I'm praying to God that my heart will start back up once I get out of this. I froze, like I'm supposed to. Very quietly, very gently, I kept calling my tent mate's name, over and over and over. Eventually, he'll wake up. He did. He's like, "What? What is your problem?" I said, "Keep your voice down, but I have a snake in my sleeping bag." He thought I was kidding. I'm like, "Jim, please. Get up. Get the medics. Get help. But there is a snake in my sleeping bag and whatever you do when you get up, do no repeat, do not touch me or my bag." He jumps up and he's hollering, "Snake, snake, snake." So, everybody's waking up, coming over. "What's the matter?" "Hatfield's got a snake in his sleeping bag." "So, where's Hatfield?" "In the sleeping bag." "Are you serious?" They're yelling this. They are yelling. We're in those two men pop tents. They throw the pop tent off and now all of a sudden, there's all kinds of lights shining on me. All I can do is look up and I'm frozen. My heart stopped. My breathing stopped and they're all like, "If that were me, I wouldn't be in there." I'm like, "Will you keep your voices down?" Very calm. Very collected. "Keep your voices down and get me out of this." Now, they're arguing out of who's going to open up the bag. "Well, I ain't opening that bag. What if it's a rattlesnake?" "It hasn't rattled, so it's not a rattlesnake." [Whispers] "Please let it not be a [rattlesnake]." So, eventually, Jim, my tent mate, he was going to open my sleeping bag. Before that, I hear, "Click, click, click, click, click, click." They're lock and loading their bolts on the M-16s. "What the hell do you guys think you're doing?" "If it's a rattler, we're shooting it." "No, you're not. I've seen your shooting scores. You're not shooting me." Turned out it was nothing but a grass snake. So, they're playing with the snake. It's peeing on them, biting them. Meantime, I'm still lying there, trying to get my heart going, get my breath going, compose myself. Finally, I get up, put my stuff in my bag. They're like, "What are you doing?" "I ain't even staying here no more. I'm done." I get in the jeep and I drive back to the barracks. Two days later, the major comes in and he's like, "We're going to be marching back in. The colonel wants you back out there to operate the radio and stuff." "You got two other guys out there who can handle the radio." "No, the colonel wants you. Get your butt out here. Besides, we've taken care of [the] guy who put the snake in your sleeping bag." "Excuse me?" "Oops. I wasn't supposed to tell you that part." "Somebody put that snake in my sleeping bag while I was in there?" "It was meant to be a joke. We've taken care of it." "Oh, no, no, no. No, no. You did not take care of this. I am not a Hatfield for nothing. He's like, "You are not to do anything. No feuding. No nothing. You are not to do anything." "Uh-huh. Sure." So, everyone was under orders not to tell me who did it. I found out who did it. I waited three months. His birthday was coming up and I waited. In the meantime, I was went to a pet store to buy scorpions, where they had their pinchers removed and the stingers removed. I got about a dozen of them. He came into the barracks drunk as a skunk. Fell on his bed. I, in turn, sneaked into his room and poured the scorpions on him. He woke up. Now, the side of the building we were at was the noncommissioned, the sergeant's rooms. They were all two man rooms and most of us only had the room to ourselves. But when you come out the door, you have to make a right and when you get to the end of the wall it's a short hall.

You have to make a ninety degree turn to the left and then a ninety degree turn to the right to put you in the main portion of the building. He came out of his room, bounced off the wall in front of his door, ran down the hall, forgot to turn left, face first, smacked the wall, bounced off of it, broke his nose and was unconscious. We were rolling. Then, some of the guys took him over to the hospital. The rest of us cleaned up the scorpions and such. The colonel was not happy. He had us in his office that morning. He was threatening to give us an Article 15, one because we disobeyed an order, two, I damaged government property because he broke his nose, and he was looking at a host of other things. He was not happy. So, then, he's like, "All right. Fine. You want to be Hatfield. You want to have a feud. I got a guy coming in. He was AOL. You are going to be responsible for him until we can give him his Article 15." "Okay. I really didn't want that to happen, but it's better than what could have happened." Turns out the kid that I had to monitor, his last name was McCoy. Oh, real funny. You're going to give me a McCoy to take care of. Well, in case people don't know, there's an old feud in the South, the Hatfield's and the McCoy's. The feud actually has been going on for almost two hundred years. It went from where they were shooting each other, killing each other, to court battles. It's now since been settled, but it's a well known feud about the Hatfield's and the McCoy's. So, anyway, I had this kid. I'm responsible for him now. Okay. You were AOL. You gave yourself up. I'm going to give you a little leeway. I'm not going to lock you up. But you will be monitored and supervised whenever you leave your room. Well, when he decided he was going to go AWOL again. I'm responsible for him, so I just lost a prisoner. Not happy. Grab the MPs. We went to his last known location, which was some trailer park and it turned out he was with some forty year old woman. He was what? He was twenty-one or twenty-two at the time. He was shackled up with this woman in a trailer park. She had four dirty kids, a dirty trailer, and she was in her forties. They were stark naked, in the bed, having sex when myself and the two MPs walked in. I was not playing. You are coming back with me, handcuffs and all. So, we brought him back. He went through his trial. The colonel still wasn't finished with me. He had so many dirty jobs for me to do afterwards. But that was some of the fun I used to have.

GC: Are there any traditions? Even in Korea, were there initiations or traditions that you had to go through?

KH: Every unit has their own form of initiation or section that you have to go through. As I said, in Korea it was the food. Our unit was basically--they would pick what they would think is the most gross food ever and you have to eat it. When you're overseas and you're about to come back stateside, there's a thing called "short timer." Someone would call out short and then you would count off how many days you have left or how many hours you have left before you come back state side. So, that's a tradition that they used to have. We took it a little bit further. Outside my barracks was a fire hydrant, not connected to anything. Why would we have this fire hydrant? Nobody knew. So, we took the fire hydrant, brought it into our room and decorated it. We called him "Short Timer." So, whoever was short, would have Short Timer in their room. He would have a *Playboy* and a *Penthouse*, a bottle of beer and a bottle of sloe gin, a cigar--and we painted the face and everything and we have a cigar hanging out of his mouth. Well, one time we

forgot about him and it was a surprise inspection. The captain came in, saw it there, shook his head, saluted him and walked out. So, we were like, ball-busters. Now, this is all in Korea. So, we were going to be real ball-busters. There was a song that was out at the time that was really big called "Short People." It was called "Short People." So, our first sergeant was a short person. He stood a whole five foot five. One day, we took the legs off his desk so it was down low and we raised his seat up. He wasn't happy, so we reversed it. He wasn't happy. But one day, there was a big battalion formation. It was in the quadrangle, which is huge. So, we had rigged up Short Timer, the fire hydrant on a pulley and a dolly. When the colonel started talking, he had the whole formation. We were at parade rest. Somebody flipped a switch. Here comes Short Timer coming across the quadrangle. The colonel saw it. He just looked at everybody, called everyone to attention and called us all to salute. As Short Timer goes by, we all saluted. He was getting ready to leave anyway. There goes Short Timer. That was some of the stuff we did to keep morale up. *S.W.A.T.* was out, the TV show *S.W.A.T.* The theme for their show was on. We had an alert and we were playing that over the loud speaker. Actually, I was playing that over the loud speaker as everyone's running up to the armory to get their weapons for this alert. I knew we weren't going anywhere. That's why I did it, but everybody busted out laughing, as they're running to get their equipment and stuff. I kind of got in trouble for that one too, but hey, it helps out. What else? Questions?

NM: (Gerry?) mentioned this previously. When you were at Fort Hood something happened with Cuban refugees.

KH: At that time, there was the Cuban boat crisis, where there were a lot of Cubans coming across in boats or rafts or whatever they could screw together. There was such an influx of refugees coming over that the government was putting them in basically, camps. Army National Guard camps, Reserves camps, wherever they could to house them until whatever decisions were made. We were assigned to monitor a group in Oklahoma. Was it Oklahoma? Yes. At any rate, there was an incident where they started to riot, essentially. We were called to respond and calm everything down. I had my men head on over and deal with it and when we pulled up, I saw a flash of metal, but it turned out it was a shiv. I saw that this guy was getting ready to stab one of my guys and I fired. Not thinking, I just drew and did what I was trained to do. They said I came probably within three centimeters of the heart. I didn't kill him, but he was badly wounded. I didn't think anything of it. I filled out the reports and stuff like that. I didn't necessarily get in trouble because I was defending one of my people, but they did send me home a little bit earlier, after the investigation and everything. That's actually the first time I fired a weapon at anyone. As I said, the individual wasn't killed. I went back to the base and had nothing else to do with the crisis, the boat crisis.

NM: This is a decade previous, but I know that a lot of times units in Galveston, if there were hurricanes or natural disasters, sometimes the military would be called to assist.

KH: The National Guard would be the first ones called for that, because that's a state action. The federal military would sometimes be--the Reserves would be called to help

them out and then sometimes yes, depending upon the area, the regular military will be called out to help out as well. I did not see any action such as that.

GC: Going back to your experiences in the club scene in Fort Hood, was it just Austin or was it the town you're in that you can go to?

KH: None of us would ever really go out in Killeen. I don't think there was even a place in Killeen itself. I never really went out to hang out in Killeen. Either I stayed home or I was on the base or in one case, I would go over to one of the sergeant's house and hang out with his wife and kids and that's another story, interesting story there. Otherwise, I would drive down to Austin or San Antonio. Austin was sixty miles south of us and San Antonio was a hundred and twenty miles South. So, if it was just for the night or the day, I would go to Austin, but if I had the whole weekend, I would go to San Antonio.

GC: When you would go, you would recognize people?

KH: In some cases, yes.

GC: There was an unspoken code or understanding don't talk about. This is two different worlds. When we're here, we can be friends, but when we're back, we're just not going to associate with each other?

KH: Well, it depended on how close friends you were. If you're in the same battalion and the same company, then, yes, you're going to socialize. You have to, because this is also somebody that if you go into combat with, they're going to be watching your back and you're going to be watching their back. If they're in another battalion, you may not associate as much. It all depends on the situation and it depended on the individuals. You definitely did not make reference to being gay or anything of that nature. Sometimes you might slip, especially guys that dated or whatever. It might slip, but it played off like horseplay, like sports, hitting a guy on the ass or something like that. You can get away with [it]. It all depends how good you were with covering things up. Sometimes that was the fun part of it. How much can you get away with covertly in front of people. If you want to hide something, sometimes, the best way is right there in plain sight.

GC: What about the people in your unit? Did they know?

KH: Only one person knew.

GC: The guy (Steele?).

KH: My roommate, he's the only one that knew about me.

GC: Did you think anybody ever suspected anything or would you ever think that they would turn you in or treat you differently?

KH: I don't know. I had a good reputation, an honest reputation, but a lot of people were afraid of me.

GC: Why was that?

KH: Because I was tough. I wasn't afraid of anyone. I wasn't afraid to step up. There was one guy in basic training. His nickname was "Rabbit." He, for whatever reason called me "Cupcake." His nickname for me was "Cupcake." We didn't like each other, but he wouldn't step up to me. I could not beat him down because he is a fellow soldier and I would have gotten in trouble, but I found other ways because I was appointed the squadron leader. So, I was in charge of everybody. So, if there was dirt details, I would give him dirt details if he really pissed me off. He was the only one that suspected, I guess. I don't know. But I just knew he did not like me. I will admit, later on, down the line, I saw him--where were we? I saw him at another base, and this was years after we had gone through basic together, but I did see him and I know he recognized me, but he didn't say anything to me, but I also noticed that I was higher ranked than he was, which led me to believe either he did something where he didn't get promoted as quickly as I did or he didn't go overseas. If you go overseas in the military, then you'll get promoted a lot quicker than somebody who stayed stateside.

GC: What about the NIS, their opinion of homosexuals in the military or they felt they were a threat to national security?

KH: I have no knowledge of anything like that. As I said, I never had any issues with MPs or any of the investigation divisions doing any search on me or anyone that I know of. I was never questioned about that. I know because of my security clearance, I know the FBI had to do a thorough background check on me.

GC: So, you don't think that is a justification at all? You don't see a problem that just because of their sexual orientation, they would be a threat?

KH: Basically, the only ones, in my opinion who are saying that are the right wing, the so-called Christians who are saying that and I guarantee you, as I said, those who speak that much louder are the ones who actually have something in their closet. I firmly believe that any of these people, the only reason they're saying that is because they don't want to be caught, but I guarantee you, the only difference between them and a gay man is a six pack of beer or a bottle of JD [Jack Daniels]. I bet you they can be turned. Are they a threat to national security? As long as the military's been around, for centuries, there have been gay men and women serving in the military. I see no reason why they can't be open. They're on the police force, they're open. Are they are a security risk? Whether you know they're gay or not, they've been doing it all their lives. They've been doing it as long as there's been history of man, we've been in there. So, who's to say? All I can tell you is just because someone's sexual orientation, religious orientation, does not mean they're a threat. Who are they a threat to, other than somebody who has something to hide?

NM: You mentioned basic training. Was the transition from civilian lifestyle to the military lifestyle, was that a tough transition either mentally or physically?

KH: Not for me. I come from a military family. I have lots of male members of my family that were in the military. Being a Boy Scout also helped prepare me for being in the military because it's basically the same thing. My mental mindset was I've always wanted to be in the military and I went to Catholic school. So, basically, I was in the military anyway, just a different form of it. Up until that point, basically, all my life was in one uniform or another. So, no, it did not affect me, but I can tell you yes, it does have an effect on a lot of people. The day of arriving at the base, the drill sergeant will come onto the bus, basically tell you what you have to do and then he'll tell you, you have ten seconds to do it and eight of them are gone. So, you see these kids jumping out of the bus windows as well as going out the door trying to get to do what the drill sergeants are telling them to do. You'll see them standing there with the fear in their eyes, on their face, as the drill sergeants are all yelling and screaming at them, making them do pushups. Me, on the other hand, I had to do pushups because I was laughing at the whole scenario. One in particular where they had this--he must have been six foot five, black guy. I mean, really dark black guy. On the ground, on his back, with his legs and arms in the air, kicking and screaming, "I'm a dying cockroach. I'm a dying cockroach." To me, that was the most hilarious thing. I'm still laughing and the drill sergeants were yelling and screaming at me and it didn't effect me.

NM: Do you have any more questions about Fort Hood?

GC: Yes, you left Fort Hood in 1987? How long were you at Fort Hood?

KH: I was at Fort Hood from '79 when I came back from Korea and I was there for two years. So, '79, '81, is when I left there. That's when I went into the Reserves and came home to work for Continental.

GC: I don't exactly when in the '80s the AIDS epidemic [happened].

KH: Actually, it started in the late '70s.

GC: Late '70s.

KH: In '82, latter half of '82, it started kicking off, but they were calling it the gay man's disease and they really weren't sure anything about it.

GC: GRID. Gay-related immune deficiency.

KH: Right. They didn't really know anything about it and they were still trying to learn about it. I remember the second guy I ever was in love with, we only spent a week with each other, but the chemistry was there and stuff, but I remember I was at home and him calling to tell me that he has AIDS and he's going to die. I had no clue what AIDS was. All I knew was this was somebody I was expecting to spend a lot of time with. I was

even planning to move to Texas to be with him and just commute out of there. But five hours later, when I got out there, he was gone, lock, stock and barrel. He had moved. So, at that point, I took it upon myself to try and learn what this was all about, because he's telling me he's dying. I need to go get checked. I never did get checked, at that time, but over the course, all of a sudden, I'm losing friends during that whole period of the AIDS crisis and I'm trying to figure out what's going on. I didn't necessarily curtail--it was not like I was sleeping around a lot, but I was out there. I wasn't doing the drugs. I was clubbing like everybody else was. I was always having sex, but from day one, whether it was with a male or with a female, I've always used protection. My mom raised me to use protection and I've always used it, but I still didn't know. Being a snot-nosed kid still, I was out enjoying life. I'm free. I work for a company that's paying me to travel, to meet people. Let's face it, I'm in my twenties. I'm at my prime sexually and everything else. You got all these hot men out there, whether it be male or female, you got out there, the guys are going to do what a guy's got to do. As the AIDS crisis got thicker and thicker and more and more of my friends were getting sick and dying, yes, I kind of stopped. Looked at everything and what am I doing? I was getting tested. Still get tested every six months. My doctors all seem to have the same opinion. You need to chill, relax, because you do everything that's right in the first place. You've been doing that from day one, just keep doing that. The chances of me having AIDS is limited, but it's still that chance. Did some casework helping [the] AIDS crisis, working for that. I look at these kids nowadays, and they think, just because there's all these medicines and people living longer with the disease, no. You still need to take precautions. You still need to use protection. Ever since I came out, fully came out, any of the new kids that come out or new people period, whether they're straight or gay, I'm always yelling at them, they need to use protection. One, you don't want to get somebody pregnant. Two, it's not like in the old days where if you came down with VD, syphilis, something like that, you go get a penicillin shot, three days later, you're okay and you go back out there. No, the stuff out there now is killing you. Stuff out there now is staying with you for the rest of your life. You still have to be careful. As time went on, like I said, I learned more and more. I tried to educate everybody else about it. I tried to educate my nieces and nephews, my friends, and people who were stupid and have no clue who were rejecting other people--"Oh, he's got AIDS or he's got HIV. I can't touch him. I can't touch her." What are you stupid? Yes you can. That's not how you catch it. Why are you disowning people like that? Sometimes it's hard because once people actually find out that they have it, they'll pull away from you even though you're trying to be there for them to support them. They'll pull away. It's hard. It really is hard. Like I said, I've lost two people that I was very much in love with to AIDS. In both cases, they pulled away from me ashamed and they didn't have to be ashamed. That's not how I am. They know that. Okay. You and I don't have it, but why would you want to move away from me? The last one's case, Terry. He knew I knew, but he didn't say anything to me. Here he is, this big old body builder, we've been friends for decades, we even tried to be lovers, but he was always jealous of me, which I didn't understand. We even pulled away. He started seeing somebody else and when I did run into him one time--he pulled away from me for six months. The next time I saw him, I knew. I could see just in his face. He lost all that muscle build and he knew I knew, but he still would not say anything. I honored it, but I knew. When he passed away, his boyfriend at the time

called me to let me know and he finally told me then. I said, "I knew." I knew a long time ago. You can't know somebody for that long and not know what's going on. Yes, I lived through all of that and it was hard watching your friends die all around you and you know there's nothing you can do about it.

GC: In your knowledge or what you saw, was there any education, warnings that the government was giving to people, explaining the disease? You said you didn't even really know about it or could understand it yourself.

KH: The majority of the government wasn't doing anything about it because it was the gay man's disease. So, they were second class citizens that nobody cared about. Then, gradually, gay people were starting to come out and fight. You had your civil rights movements of the gay community, fighting and then you started seeing more publication of it once it started spilling into the straight community. Now, straight people are getting it. So, then, they started showing publications because the straight world was now getting it.

GC: Do you think that the gay community took it upon themselves to educate each other when the government wasn't doing really anything to help them?

KH: There were small pockets that were trying to do so. But unfortunately, during that period and even nowadays, here are people who might as well say have a license to party. That's all they wanted to do. They went to work to support their habits of partying. That was the thing to do. You'd go to the different clubs. There were so many clubs. There were bathhouses. There were all kinds of bars to go to. There were cruise spots for anonymous sex. That's all they wanted to do, have the drugs, have the alcohol, dance, party, have sex. That was the thing to do and that was what everyone did. There was no Internet. There were computers, but a computer like nowadays? No. Just take your iPhone. What this thing could do back in those days, the computer would have to be as big as this building. So, did they care about what was going on? It's not affecting me, no. It's just like everybody else. If it's not directly affecting me, I don't want to know about it. We put our heads in the sand and that's what the gay community was doing.

GC: Do you think that they were ignoring it because they just didn't want to face it or they wanted to continue the carefree lifestyle that they liked?

KH: There's umpteen million reasons. Those are two good ones, but I guarantee you, there are thousands more out there. Thousand more reasons that they either ignored it or failed to--until they started having their friends die or until they were infected. Yes, they were ignoring it. They just wanted to party.

GC: There's a thing where a lot of people who were still in the closet who were infected and once you're infected, you're obviously outed because of the disease. Did you hear of any stories where family members would abandon them?

KH: Yes. Oh, yes.

GC: Do you know any of those stories?

KH: Family members would abandon them. Their jobs will fire them. This is why they fought and are still fighting for equal rights in that respect as well. They were losing their homes because of it. Medical staff wouldn't even go in to to give them proper medications because they were like, "Oh, I'm not going in there. We have no knowledge." Or they'll go in there with full body chemical suit just so that they're not infected. God forbid if your blood came out, if you were bleeding or anything, nobody will want to touch you, your lesions. Whole families were leaving people by themselves to die alone. Again, there were a small group of people that would just come out and do what they can to educate people, change people's mind, learn as much about the disease and help them. Even today, a lot of people if they find out that you have AIDS or HIV, they back away from you. Some even have herpes, and again, they back away from you. I have to admit, there have been--I only knew one person with herpes and they told me about it and I didn't know much about it, but I know even being safe about it. I didn't want to have sex with him, but this was somebody who tells me--this tells me that I really wasn't that close to that person. If it's somebody that I know I love, like anybody else, you'll do what it takes to help them, but yes, that's the way I look at it.

NM: You mentioned that before going into the military that you had thought that you wanted to do something that you could apply to civilian life and you used the GI Bill benefits. Were you able to do that afterwards?

KH: Well, I still can. Yes, I did take a couple courses in the travel industry where I was actually looking into opening up a travel agency, booking cruises and working with hotels and eventually, working in corporate America as a travel consultant, but again, here is where the Internet came into play and also, here is when the timing wasn't quite right for me. I did take courses, but I'm realizing, okay, I don't need to go that route because things are changing. You can see the change in the wind. The explosion of the internet changed a lot, both in the professional world, in the gay community, in the straight community, dating-wise for people, hooking up, whatever you want to call it, but you could see that that changed a lot for everybody. The bars, they were losing people. The majority of people go out to clubs are going to be shy or so they say. They're shy. They don't want to be the first one to go over and talk to somebody. They want people to come over and talk to them. I can't tell you how many times I've heard that over the years. I'd be like, "You need to do something. Somebody needs to do something because otherwise you're going to sit there singing the would-have, could-have, should-have blues. I'll admit, in the beginning, I was shy. Then, I'm like, why? They're no different than I am. If it's meant to be, it's meant to be. So, ever since then, it was a conscious decision on my part, I'm not going to be shy and I'm not. So, I tell people, "Ask me whatever, but if you want to know the truth than talk to me. If not, don't ask the question."

GC: Why Continental Airlines? How did that come about?

KH: It just happened that it was. I sent my application out to quite a few airlines and they picked me up.

GC: Was it because your mother was in the airlines?

KH: My mom worked for American [Airlines]. Yes, that helped me too.

GC: Did you say, I would like to do something like that?

KH: Well, I've always been fascinated by airplanes and the airlines. Yes, it did help that my mom worked for American and then I was exposed to it. I liked it. I can jump on a plane and go wherever I want and think nothing of it. Obviously, with Pan [American World Airways] in their heyday, loved Pan Am. Would have loved to have worked for them. Continental interviewed me. Midway Metrolink [Midway Airlines] interviewed me. Technically, Midway hired me first. Then, Continental. So, I rejected Midway because they only flew to a small amount of places. I went with Continental because they were a major airline. Whereas, Midway was just a regional. Continental had more equipment to work with and they flew everywhere. So, yes, I would go with them and obviously, they were paying more.

GC: Your experience in the military, did these companies see that as an asset?

KH: No. The airlines are the only ones who, unless you're a pilot or a mechanic, everything else for the airlines, they don't care necessarily what you did in the past. One day, they may be looking at the smile. If they like your smile, "Okay, we're going to hire them." Or the hair color. They may pick something like that because they have such an influx of people wanting to work for the airlines. They can pick and choose however they want. They don't necessarily go by your background. Like I say, it could just be your eye color. "I like your eyes. Okay. We'll hire you." Later on, yes, it came down where, okay, are you a language speaker? They look at that [and] could say no, you need as many language speakers as you can. Can you read? Can you write a different language? How many languages can you speak? That helps. That comes into play. When they hired me, I had not put down that I spoke any other languages, but they still hired me.

GC: I remember you telling me that there was a pretty large gay community in Continental Airlines.

KH: Well, in any service industry you're going to have--and entertainment industry, you're going to have a large gay community. Obviously, restaurants, movies, theater, travel agencies, yes, you're going to have a lot of the gay people in there because--I don't know why, but there's a lot of people in there. Airlines, I always have to say probably for a lot of the same reason I joined because I want to travel, I want to meet people, immerse myself in different cultures. Basically, everybody wants to travel and they know with the airlines you can travel, either for free or a lot less. What they don't realize and I didn't necessarily realize as well, having now been on that aspect, I just knew from

my mom, "Oh, we can get on a plane and go," but it can be hard and over the years, as more and more people started traveling, it got harder and harder because the airlines weren't sticking to the rules a lot and they weren't sticking behind their employees. The customers were getting nastier and nastier. Ever since deregulation, they were fighting to get the people to come to their airline since all the carriers offer the same thing. You have a choice of carriers, but they all offer you the same thing. So, people are--then you get your obnoxious people. You get your nice people. Over the course of the years, I've had all of them. I've all types of people. Running joke is for the stupid people, there's a gremlin. When they walk through the door, he shoots you in the head and they lose their minds. So, we try to be nice and say, "Okay. The gremlin got to you." Then, there are others were like, "Yes, you're just an idiot or an asshole." All right. Sit down. Shut up. We'll take care of you. If you're a gate agent, they'll try to do whatever they can as quickly as they can to get the person out of their face. I was never one for that. If you deserved it, I helped you. If you did not, I'd be like, "They'll be able to help you." If you're going to be nasty, I'll look at you and be like, you know there are a couple of people you never should piss off. One, anyone who works for the airlines, you shouldn't piss them off. You know how luggage disappears? Anybody serving you food or drink, you shouldn't piss them off. You never know what will end up in your drink. Visine had to change their formula, because a lot of people were getting sick from the Visine being put in their coffee and you lock off the lavatory. Montezuma's Revenge. Got you.

NM: How long did you work for Continental?

KH: Eleven years.

NM: Eleven years.

GC: Oh, wow. A long time.

NM: So, that brings us to the late '90s?

KH: Yes.

NM: At some point, you transitioned to a career in accounting or am I going too far ahead?

KH: Yes, and no. At one point, I had been working for Continental for a long time. Two things happened, one, I was getting sick of the customers because at that point, they had made me a supervisor. This was shortly after the merger between Continental, People Express, [and] New York Air. That was a war zone during that period. Plus, from the time I was eighteen until I left, towards the end of my career with Continental, I hadn't been home for the holidays. I took one Christmas off, realized what I was missing. I'm missing my family during all this time. Holidays had gotten to the point where they meant nothing to me, except for--especially during Christmas time, I'm going to have four weeks of pure hell for a lousy 24 hours worth of fun. Oversold flights, people nasty because they can't get on the flight. You're trying do the best you can, yet

they're blaming you for everything. In a way it was a challenge for me, but also at the same token, I was getting to the point where my temper was getting less and less. I couldn't have that. It's bad for the company. It's bad for me. I had a reputation where they were calling me "Rock My World," throughout the system because I had broken two passengers arms. I body slammed about five FAA inspectors and I flipped a flight attendant. All were justified, so I didn't get in trouble for them, but they were all justified. The two passengers were situations where they were separate, but it was a situation where they were a breach of security in trying to get on the airplane. I didn't know if they're hijackers or not. All I know is I saw you push a gate agent, one who was pregnant and you're coming down a jet way and I'm between you and the aircraft. As long as you're not on that airplane, you don't have hostages except for me. One on one, I got you. Both bases took a swing at me, I grabbed their arm, flip them, and twist it extra hard. Broke their arm, which they can't prove that I did that intentionally, but it was enough to restrict them from going anywhere until the police came. You're in shock; you just broke your arm. You're in shock; you're not going anywhere. You're not going to try to kill me either. So, the FAA inspectors, they were testing the security at the gates and stuff. At the time I was a supervisor. I tried to stop you. I'm like, "Stop. Wait, wait, wait," and you're not stopping, you get body slammed. That's where the football player in me comes into play. When you're inflight training they tell us, especially with hijackers and they tell especially the guys, don't interfere. If anything, if you get hijacked, the males take off everything that indicates you're part of the crew and sit down. Let the women handle it. Every time I went for recurrent training, they always would stare me down. I'm like, "Why are you [people] looking at me?" "We know how you are. You need to sit down." Case histories show no female flight attendant has ever been injured during a hijacking. They don't view you as authority. They don't view you as a threat, whereas male flight attendants, they do. Let's face it; I was in better shape back then. That's one of the reasons why American [Airlines] didn't hire me, because I was too built. I'm like, "Okay. That's fine." So, yes, I will sit down in certain cases, but in a case like that, when I'm on [a] jetway, no. I didn't. I'm not afraid to stand up for the company's right. I will protect the company, but if somebody was deserving and wasn't trying to get over on me, yes, I'll take care of you, but if you're going to stand up there, yell and scream, thinking that you're going to embarrass me, no, not happening. In a lot of cases, I would turn the situation around, too. One time coming out of Miami--no, West Palm. Oversold flight, but we were trying to get out of there, trying to close the door and everything. We were running late. Just before we had the gate agent close the door, there were two people standing in the aisle. So, I'm like, "Wait a minute, we got spinners." But I also notice I have two empty seats in first class. So, I go back. I'm like, "What's going on?" The other flight attendant that was handling it, she's like, "Well, these two, are sitting in their seats and these two have middle seats on the plane. They're not together and stuff." They refused to get out of their seats. So, I said, "All right. I'm going to ask this question one time, one time only. Will you two get up and give these two their seats?" "No, we want these seats." "Okay. Fine you got them. You two, there's two empty seats in first class. Take them. They're not together. We'll work something out after we get airborne." Then, all of a sudden, they're changing their tune. "No, I gave you your choice. Thank you very much. Close that door, let's get out of here. Shut the door. Once we were airborne, we're doing the service and the two in the

back were like, “We want your name. Blah, blah, this.” Then everybody around them said, “Yes, we want your name too because we want to show what kind of assholes these two were. You did your job right. You were going to give them those two seats, weren’t you?” “Yes.” I gave them what they wanted. I did my job. I satisfied my customers. You guys want to take your break for lunch now?

GC: If you’re hungry.

KH: I can either eat or not, but it’s up to you guys.

NM: I think we can wrap it up.

GC: Yes, we’ll try to keep going. I had a couple questions on Continental Airlines. I remember you told me the great stories about your mile high clubs with your passengers. The two really funny stories, I’d love to hear them.

KH: There’s more than two, god. Let’s put it this way. People get on airplanes and they get stupid and they want to do--one, everyone has to join the mile high club where they have sex in the bathroom. One instance was on Continental’s domestic DC-10, where the business class used to be, they put a pub in there. We were the only airline that had that. I was in the pub one day. We were going to LA. The food service was done, so we opened up the pub and people are hanging out. No, we’re going to Denver. It was skiers. Anyway, I saw a girl slip into the lavatory on aircraft left. Then, this guy goes in there also. Okay. We all know what they’re doing. So, we popped open a bottle of champagne. There was a group going skiing and stuff. They were a bunch of ball busters anyway. So, we popped open a bottle of champagne. I told them what was going on. They did their thing. When the latch opened, they grabbed the door and flung it open. There they were, in there together, and we handed them a glass of champagne and toasted them for joining the mile high club. He tried pulling it off until he got to his seat and then he’s doing one of these hide your face from everyone and she’s already ran to her seat, doing one of these, as well. There was another time coming back from Saint Martin on a 727, which is a small aircraft. We were busy going down because everyone went down, but coming back, we were empty basically. Husband and wife get on the plane. You could tell there was tension between them. He looked like he went to sleep. After we were airborne and did the service, he went to sleep. She’s talking to the guy across the way from them, but she would also sneak back to the aft galley to get a bottle of liquor, one of the mini’s and she just downed it right there. No glass of ice or anything. She just downed it and we’re like, “Hmm. Okay. Whatever.” So, we’re sitting down as crew members, because we had already done the service. We’re letting people just chill. We see her going to the lavatory. Then the guy that was sitting across, goes in the same lavatory. We’re like, “Really? You got that kind of balls? We’re sitting right here.” They go in. We kind of see the wall moving. Next thing you know, the door pops open. She’s up on the sink, he’s going down, just eating away. She taps him on the shoulder. He looks back, realizes the door is open, says, “I’m sorry,” closes the door. We’re like, “Okay.” We give them kudos for their game. Next thing we know, we hear this male voice behind us, asking for our names. It’s her husband. He’s like, “I

will be calling you because you will be witness at my divorce.” Nothing we could do. We sat there, they came out. Then, she realized that he was standing there and he’s like, “Thank you. I do have all their names. When we get back home, you’re moving out and I’m getting a divorce.” “But, but, but.” “Done. Simple as that.” She goes to sit down. Next thing you know, she’s crying. We’re like, “What are we going to do? I think I’m going to check on the pilots,” trying to hide from the [couple]. One instance with me, we were working a 7:00 AM flight. We flew out of New York on a Sunday morning during the summer. We were the first flight out. It was like, seven o’clock in the morning. Who the hell is going to be on a flight at seven o’clock in the morning? We only had ten passengers on a flight that held 146 people. There was five of us because the next day we needed an extra flight attendant. Anyway, I’m in the galley in first class checking the meals because we had meals for a full first class, which was sixteen meals. We didn’t have anybody in first class. Everybody’s in the back. I get kicked by this one girl that’s working with us. I’m like, “What?” She’s like, “Look, look, look.” Coming down the jet way was this guy who’s really build, hot. He had on these really skimpy gym shorts and a tank top; that was it. Well, sneakers. We were like, “Oh, my god. I’m doing seatbelt check.” The girl’s like, “No, we’re doing [it].” I’m like, “Whatever. We’ll all do seatbelt check.” So, we get them on. We take off, we do our thing, we serve everyone. We still have a three hour flight to go. It only took us 30 minutes to serve everyone once we were airborne. So, we told everyone, “You guys can spread out, go to sleep, whatever.” We sat up in first class. Had our breakfast and just basically was hanging out there. Every so often, one of us would go back and just check on everyone, see if they needed a beverage. I go back and the guy that was in the shorts and the tank top, he’s laid out, stretched out with raised the arms out. He stretched out. In all its glory was hanging out of his shorts. So, I’m like, “Oh, my god.” So, I hit the call button. Hit it a couple of times. They finally look. I’m like, “Come here. Come here.” Trying to be very quiet. The one girl I made sure I grabbed her mouth before she saw anything. So, we were all like, “Oh, my god.” Mind you, the crew consisted of three girls and two guys and both guys were gay and the girls were straight, obviously. So, finally, I’m leaning over. They’re like, “What are you doing?” I said, “I want to pet it.” They’re like, “Stop.” So, I got a blanket down, put the blanket over him and we ran back up and we were laughing about it. So, then it was coming time for us to get ready to land in San Antonio--I mean, in Houston. I was counting the liquor in the back and he woke up and I guess he realized one, he had a blanket over him and two, he was exposed. So, he goes into the restroom and the girls ran up front. I can’t go anywhere, because I got the liquor out and I still had to finish counting before we land. So, he comes out. He asks for something to drink. I gave him something to drink. He’s hemming and hawing, but he’s trying to figure out who put the blanket over him. I said, “Well, that was me.” He’s like, “Thank you. I hope I didn’t--” “No, no. I was the only one that saw, so you’re okay.” He said, “Good, I appreciate that.” He’s like, “How can I thank you for it?” “No, nothing really. Seriously. It’s all good.” So, by that point, the pilot comes on and says, “Flight crew take your seats. We’re making our final approach.” Taking our seats, I go to sit down up front. So, as he’s getting off, he’s like, “Thanks, Kent. I’ll see you later.” I said, “You’re welcome. Bye.” Then I stopped. I’m like, “Wait. Did I give him my name? I don’t think I gave--” Turns out one of the girls gave him my name and told him what hotel we were staying at because we’re only doing that one leg that day. I’m like,

“Why did you do that?” She’s like, “Oh, he ain’t going to do nothing with you.” “Whatever.” So, we go to our hotel and check in. We get there about ten o’clock Houston time. No, we got there about 11:00. Anyway, we make plans to go to lunch about 12:30. That gives us time to shower and clean up from the flight. Phone rings. It’s the guy from the flight. He wants to take me out to lunch to thank me. I’m like, “Really not necessary.” He’s like, “I’m in the lobby.” Okay. Now, I’m getting a little nervous. Do I have a stalker? What’s going on? “All right. Fine. I’ll go to lunch with you.” So, I call the rest of [the flight crew]. “My uncle came to pick me up. I’m going to go to lunch with him. I’ll meet you guys for dinner.” So, I go to meet him, the guy from the flight. We go to lunch. We have lunch at one of my favorite places in Houston. Now, he’s trying to figure me out. He still doesn’t know whether I’m gay or straight. He’s still trying hunt for clues and I’m not giving him any. So, then he’s like, “What can I show this afternoon?” Finally, I relented. I was like, “Look, why don’t we just go to the Mining Company. It’s beer bust time anyway and I’m sure you’re there any Sunday anyway.” He kind of looked, “You really are. You had me going all this time.” I said, “I know.” So, then, we went there, we hung out, and he came back, dropped me off, and the next morning, I was trying to get him out before the rest of the crew came down, but wouldn’t you know it, they were down already. They didn’t talk to me the whole trip to LA and we had a two hour layover in LA. They finally started talking to me, actually yelling at me because I didn’t tell them about this guy. I didn’t want you to know. This is not like me, because I usually don’t do stuff like that. Not me. Well, when we got back to Houston, we landed at--the first time we were at Hobby Airport, which is like LaGuardia and then Intercontinental, which is like Kennedy. So, we’re there. We come walking off the flight. We’re going to stay at the hotel right there. Who’s at the gate with flowers? I’m like, “Are you serious? Damn. Okay.” That’s just some of the stories.

GC: After 9/11 obviously, the airlines have taken a crackdown on airplane security. Was there a difference do you see from your time in the airlines until now? [Editor's Note: On September 11, 2001 nineteen Al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked four American commercial airline flights, crashing two of them into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, one into the Pentagon building in Washington, DC, and the fourth into a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after some of the flight crew and passengers attempted to regain control of the plane.]

KH: Yes. Well, first of all, anybody could go to the gate, back in those days, meeting people and stuff. Now, you can’t, obviously. A parent dropping off an unaccompanied minor, can still go through. Somebody helping a disabled person maybe, yes, but other than that, security is a lot tighter. The airlines themselves, the aircrafts themselves, they’ve taken away most of the legroom. They’re trying to put as many people in there. The airlines themselves don’t necessarily care about the people. The flight crews, they’re not as friendly or have the opportunity to be as friendly because even the passenger’s attitudes have changed, where they’re nasty. Used to be you could play with the people, joke around, have a good time with them on flights. Now, everybody feels they deserve something. They’re all looking for something. Then, they get very annoyed when the things aren’t going right, especially with the gate agents and stuff. If the flight is

delayed, they're blaming the crews and sometimes you just can't help it. I had one woman--there was a lightning storm, lightning and thunder right over the airport. No planes are going anywhere. The woman wanted to talk to my supervisor because it was my fault I was not letting her plane take off. So, I said, "Okay. The white courtesy phone on the wall there. Pick it up and dial 1-800-G-O-D, and you can talk to my supervisor about this. She started to walk over there until everybody around started laughing. Then she was like, "Ugh." So, she went and talked to somebody, but I didn't see her after that.

GC: That's great.

KH: Yes, the people--like I said, it's definitely a totally different crew. I still have friends who are flight attendants and they're like, "Yes, you did the right thing by getting out, but at the same token, they still are there and I think if my attitude hadn't been getting shorter and shorter, I probably still would have been there, but there are days when I'm glad I'm not there, because they have a lot more ATC [air traffic control] delays. They have a lot more issues with weather and I know the first time some passenger would put their hand on me, I'm going to kill them. Well, hurt them. So, it's better that I'm not with them.

GC: When 9/11 did happen, were you ever surprised that they were able to smuggle mace and I believe the flight attendants were stabbed.

KH: No, I'm not surprised about it and I'm still not surprised--I mean, they can still sneak on, too. When I was working for Continental, this is again, before 9/11, part of the airlines job was to test the security at our terminals. I went through--I spent a day basically going through testing our security. In my bag, I had a dummy grenade, I had a dummy gun, I had a dummy bomb and you could plainly see what it is. One side, I went through about twenty-times. They only sound the alarm once. The other side I went through about the same amount of times, they didn't even sound the alarm. Now, we notified Port Authority police beforehand that we were doing this and how we were doing it. We're required by the FAA to do that. We're not required by the FAA to notify the police, though, but we do out of courtesy. I tested the day shift, got caught, they notified the police. The police were like, "Okay. Cool. We understand. We know." They didn't say anything. When we tested it for the nightshift, they notified the police, but in any case, I'm standing there and nobody believed that it was mine, that I was the one who brought the stuff in to do the testing. Nobody believed it. On the night shift, when they actually called the police and the police come screeching up and running over, I'm like, "Guys, it's me. My test." The sergeant, I guess was over at the control tower. He came over in the squad car and the whole bit. He pulls me into the office. He's yelling and screaming, talking about I'm not allowed to do this, I'm going to go to jail. I'm like, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, no." By the time he finished reaming me out, my boss and stuff had gotten there. We then, in turn--he's like, "We're going to talk to the Port Authority." He's going to his captain, the whole nine yards. He should have never done that, because his captain said, "First of all, they're well within their rights to do that. Second of all, they did notify us. You didn't see the memo. That tells me you're not doing your job."

He got into trouble and had to come back and apologize to me, was required to come back and apologize to me.

GC: What do you think was the incompetency that they would not spot a bag full of weapons? They just didn't care?

KH: I'm saying that because it was an outside source, a civilian source. They're paying those people, what? Two, three dollars an hour, whatever minimum wage was at that time. You're not training these people. That's why we have to do these tests, but yes, there was lack of training, too busy thinking, "Oh, it's Kent," they're not even paying attention because it's somebody that they see every day. They're not even paying attention to what's in my bag. I could have been a loony tune, could have been the one. So, yes, the security needed to be tested and yes, it was bad. Now we have all this other stuff because of all the other issues that's happened, so they're going to be testing everything, but you also have a different type. Now, you have a government agency doing the testing. So, they're going to be checking harder. But still, you can get things through if you really want. There are ways to get things through.

NM: While you're working for Continental, are you based out of Newark?

KH: Eventually, I was based out Newark.

NM: Where were you living?

KH: I was living at home, commuting to Denver when I was flying, but I was living in Jersey and you could commute. As long as I wasn't on call, but if I was on-call, I had a crash pad, essentially. I stayed with my sister in Denver.

NM: So, at what point did you relocate to New Brunswick where you live now?

KH: I came down here late '80s. Sometime in the late 80s. I had a roommate or had a roommate in Highland Park. Moved down here. Was with him for about two years and then his parents decided to move to Pennsylvania and like the good mama's boy, he followed them. Kind of stuck me, but I loved the area, so I stayed. A friend of mine has houses that he rents rooms and I stayed with him for about two months until I was able to get the money situation together and then I moved to Harrison Towers. At the time the rental agent was a lesbian and she wanted to turn the towers into a big gay hotel type deal. In fact, we used to call it the pink flamingo hotel because I would say there was a good 25% of the people in that building that were gay and some of the workers were gay. So, it was really nice to be there. We had a snow storm one time and the state had closed. So, everybody that was gay in that building, even the straights who were friends of ours, the sixth floor on the south wing was all gay, all eight apartments. So, we closed the fire door and everybody came down. We partied on that floor. Shared drinks and the whole bit like that. Then, from there, I came back into New Brunswick. Some friends of mine were being sent to Singapore for two years, which turned into ten years. So, I was

watching their house for them. Then, when they came back, I got another apartment here in New Brunswick and I've been here for a long time. A little over thirty years now.

NM: Wow. I didn't know that.

GC: It was a long time. Why New Brunswick originally when you could have lived pretty much anywhere?

KH: It's centrally located. It was easy enough for me to get back and forth to the airport. My roommate was gay. It just seemed like it was the best thing for me. Like I said, I liked the area. It was quiet. I could get into the city, if I wanted to, easily, whether I drove in or took the train. When you look at it, within forty five minutes, I could be at the beach, which I love, in the mountains, which I love or in the city. So, it fit the criteria.

GC: You came here, you said the late '80s?

KH: Yes.

GC: This looked like a very different place obviously. With the white flight.

NM: The gentrification. Since you've been here, did you notice this gentrification that was taking place?

KH: Yes.

NM: Can you talk about that?

KH: Well, I mean, initially, it was a mixed crowd, but the majority of the crowd was white. Then, over the course of the years you could see the Spanish crowd coming in more and more. I was limiting myself as to what part of town I would go to. Then, I starting seeing an influx of Asians and when I say Asians, I mean, Japanese, Chinese, and then the Middle Easterners, Indian, [Pakistanis], who are also considered Asians as well. You started seeing influx of those. The India/[Pakistanis], you saw more of an influx of those first in Iselin, in Edison, and in Metuchen. I saw more and more of those there. Then, slowly, you could see them coming down this way and going past. Recently, in the last few years, I've seen more and more Asian students, i.e., Chinese, Japanese. I see more of an influx of that--not that. I shouldn't say it like that. But I've seen more of [influx] of that as well. Again, with the Spanish, yes, Puerto Rican, Mexicans, Dominicans. We saw more and more of those as well, but they're on the other side of New Brunswick. Then, you slowly see them all combining. But again, it was something that I never really cared about. So what? It just means--

NM: What about the infrastructure of the city? Has that changed in any way since you've been here?

KH: Yes. For a while there, New Brunswick was falling down like most cities. It was becoming run down. There were a lot of burnt out buildings, a lot of drug addicts, ghetto type people coming in. Then, they started slowly phasing people out, closing them out as the laws were changing. I could see--then you have more and more investors. Obviously, Johnson and Johnson, Saint Peter's [University Hospital] also, Robert Wood and the school [Rutgers University] itself buying up more property and changing things over, trying to get more people, a different class of people in. Then when New York started having the mass exodus of all the yuppies, moving out of New York because it's becoming too expensive, then you could see the city was taking on different challenges to try and change and have better housing so that all these people that live and work in New York come here and can settle here, where it's easier for them to get on a train and commute into New York or catch the bus and commute into New York. You could see the changes in that. The Den had three--this is our third location. The first two were in New Brunswick. One was on French Street where the bank is right now, Bank of America. That whole block used to be a movie theater, a book store, our bar and I think a laundromat or something was there before they tore those down and put up the new building that's there. We then moved to Hiram Street, which is right behind the Hyatt and we had the club there. Then, eventually, you could see them buying up all the restaurants and housing that was there and then eventually tore that down and they were forcing people out. Using eminent domain, a lot of businesses were being forced out. A lot of people forced out of their homes, so that they can build all this new stuff. So, you had some really good businesses, like the Frog and the Peach, that were downtown where you had a lot of young people that would go there and hang out. There was the Roxy and the Melody, where a lot of the college kids would go and hang out. All those were shut down for one reason or another or forced out. Teresa's, which was a beautiful Italian bistro that was right there on Easton Avenue, they got forced out and miraculously, somehow or another, the place burnt down, because they were going to be forced out. So, there's still mystery behind that that I haven't heard about, finding out exactly what happened. I just know it burnt down the night after my brother and I had dinner there. But yes, I've seen a lot of changes in the area.

GC: Did people recognize that people were being pushed out of the city?

KH: Of course. It wasn't being. ...

GC: No one was really trying to hide it?

KH: No, because they were using eminent domain. They were throwing that word around like there was no tomorrow and forcing people out.

GC: Do you know what happened to those people? Did they try to relocate in the city?

KH: I don't really know what happened with a lot of them. I can tell you what happened with the Den. It's obvious we're in Somerset. We bought that building.

GC: That happened the Den, eminent domain?

KH: Yes.

GC: I didn't realize that.

KH: The Mack Family owned the building that the Den was in when it was on Hiram Street. It was an apartment building, basically. In the basement is where the club was. It was like a storefront that we turned into a club. They used eminent domain to take that whole block.

GC: What's there now?

KH: Condos, which floods every time we get a heavy rain. The Den didn't flood too much back then, but ever since they redid it, it now floods down there a lot. So, I'd say in our case, we were lucky. In a lot of ways. One, the police didn't like a gay club in town. So, they would either take their time in getting over there or they would harass us. Whereas in Somerset, they actually protect us and they're glad we're there, because we've seen that we're not out there to have any problems. They have more problems with the straight clubs than they did with us. They've only come to us for minor disputes. Nothing like they had shootings or stabbings at the Halftime Pub, which is just down the street. We had an issue where the Caribbean Club is now next to us, but this woman who lived around the corner was complaining about the noise and the cops would come out and say, "What are you talking about? We're standing right next to the club and we can barely hear the music. And you're in your house and you're trying to say--?" It turns out it wasn't us, it was the Caribbean Club. So, even the police went down on her and said, "Look, we will press charges against you for harassing. It's not that club. Leave them alone." We've witness robberies and we've notified the police. We've even gone so far down as to go to court to tell them what we saw. So, they know that we're there, we're trying to help out. Also, we're there for the community. The fire station next to us is a volunteer. One guy, I guess he was the manager, he kept trying to do things to the club to make it rough for us there and stuff. The town was like, "Look, they pay their dues. They're helpful. They help the community. We'll pull your charter if you don't leave them alone. So, they stopped.

GC: Why do you think that Somerset was more willing to have you guys?

KH: Because we don't cause problems. That's just it.

GC: Was it always like that?

KH: We've only wanted to run a business and have a place for people to go and have fun.

GC: Or after a while they were, "Oh, wow, these people don't cause any problems?"

KH: When we first moved over there is when we had the initial issues. Like I said, in the beginning when we got there, the cops wouldn't have any problems with us. We would invite them in for coffee, whatever. They just saw we were good people. It's not like we're causing problems. Other people are causing problems for us and they were like, "Well, wait. We know these people. They help out. Hell, they donated stuff to the town. So, leave them alone." If we do need them, the cops are right there, especially now since there are some lesbians and male cops on the force. They're there and they come. They'll eat at our restaurant. They'll come over to the club. So, they all help out now.

GC: Could you tell us some of the history of the Den, how it started?

KH: The Den started back in the '50s. It was a regular bar because it was illegal to have a gay bar. It was illegal for gays to congregate together.

GC: Where was it located in the '50s?

KH: On Hiram Street. I'm sorry. On French Street, was the first location and it was opened by Manny [Emanuel] Mack who is the grandfather of Peter Mack who owns it now. So, it went from Manny to Dick [Richard] to Peter. It's always been owned by a straight family. Manny had a lot of gay customers that would come in. Eventually, during the '60s, once they started the riots and stuff, Manny fought with two other clubs, one in Fairlawn, one down in Atlantic City to have the laws changed, so that gays can meet at this one particular spot or any particular spot. They won the lawsuit, which enabled gay people in the state of New Jersey now to congregate in one location if they want or however many clubs opened up. Once that happened, now the gay community had a space spot and believe it or not, a lot of the gay history of laws and stuff being changed, were done by drag queens, mainly because they were the ones that were out there being more boisterous and they're the ones that are being seen. Everyone else can easily hide it. But once the laws were changed, the Den became very big and it was a small place. So, it was easy for it to grow. Then, when it moved to Hiram Street, again, it was still a small place, but it had a great reputation. It's already been established for a while. Everyone knew that yes, it helped us in passing the laws so that we can go to a gay bar. There were other places in the state that started opening up, Asbury Park. There was like, ten or eleven clubs or bars down in Asbury Park at one point, a bath house down in Asbury Park at one point. Before my time, but those were all there.

GC: So, when was the law passed, do you know?

KH: I don't remember the date offhand, but I want to say it's around 1968 or 1969.

GC: Then, almost immediately, the places started springing up?

KH: I wouldn't say almost immediately, but in the sense--

GC: Slowly?

KH: Yes, they started coming up more in the '70s.

GC: But the Den was the first place in New Jersey where you can go?

KH: The Den, Feathers, and there was a place--I forget the name of the place in Atlantic City. Studio something or another, I believe. But, yes, because of those three, the other places started popping up, other towns and whoever wanted to take a chance, would open up new places. Depending upon the town, they still met with a lot of opposition even though the law was passed. Each town can say, "Okay. Well, we can't stop you from opening up, but we can make it harder for you.?"

GC: Did New Brunswick make it very hard for the Den?

KH: In spurts, yes. Yes and no. Sometimes, somebody who--depends on who was in office, essentially--would make it a habit of okay, we want to do this, do that, or they'll try to raise the taxes and stuff. We just fought it. We stick it out. We fight it. See what happens.

GC: What about the relationship between the Den and Rutgers, if there is a relationship?

KH: Well, there was never really a relationship between the two. Some people knew about us and others don't. Same thing nowadays. Some people know about us and some don't. We have tried doing advertisement and stuff. We put stuff in [*The Daily Targum*] at times. We try to do word of mouth. It was easier when we were in New Brunswick for a lot of the college students versus being in Somerset because obviously a lot of the students don't have cars. Obviously, the drinking age also hurts. So, we never really had an official working relationship, but the word would pass around for people to come over. We still have people who went to Rutgers and never knew we were around. I had two of them on Wednesday night. Wednesday night was their first time at the Den. They went to school here; they never knew about us.

GC: What time period did you guys leave New Brunswick? Was it more well known for Rutgers students when you were located in New Brunswick?

KH: I'd say it's probably about the same.

GC: About the same?

KH: Yes, because you had a lot of people from Rutgers, but we still have a lot of people from Rutgers when we went over there because they were still the people that used to come down here. They knew where we moved to and it was by word of mouth how people found the club back then. Now, it's the Internet. So, I'd want to say you might get more, we have more from Rutgers nowadays because we're also doing the under [twenty-one] that we get more people in there now, but we've done Rutgers parties. The faculties, the English Department, they do their Christmas party with us.

GC: That's interesting.

KH: There's a lot of the staff and faculty that have lunch at Sophie's [Bistro] or have dinner at Sophie's. We do Rutgers parties, where they've even used campus buses to bring the students over to the club and they end up bringing them back at the end of the night.

GC: So, Rutgers would participate with the club or would rent the buses?

KH: It would be students, the gay communities [at] Rutgers. They would have parties or whatever.

GC: So, it would be student organizations.

KH: It's usually student organizations, but they would work out whatever reason, however, to get the buses or usually one bus that will, at a certain time, will pick everybody up, bring them over to the Den and then at another certain time, pick them up and bring them back or they would just drive over with friends and stuff. But, yes, we've had that over the course of years as well.

GC: Interesting. I remember you telling me there's a difference now between why people went to bars back then. Because it was the only place to go.

KH: It was a safe place. It wasn't the only place to go, but it was a safe place to go. Before the advent of the Internet, the only way to meet people is you had to go out, so you either went out to bars and clubs. You went to bathhouses or you went to cruising spots. Example of cruising spots that they used to have on Rutgers alone, Seminary Place, we called it "The Wall." If you were on this end, the upper end of it, close to College Avenue, we were just there talking, having fun, usually after the bar closed. We'd all come there and just hang out and continue the party. If you were at the other end, that meant you were cruising. You were looking to basically have sex. You would find married men, bisexual men, or people who just want to hide. We call them spooks or DLs, down-lows. They'll be driving by. They'll drive through, drive through, or they'll park and then they'll flash a light. You flash a light, whatever. Whatever signal it took, if you found somebody you liked and they go wherever and they fooled around. Like I said, the majority of us sat up on this end and we talked and had a good time and usually by the time you start hearing the birds sing, those who lived the furthest would say, "Okay. That's my time. I need to go home." The rest of us that lived close by, when we saw that first crack at dawn, on the horizon, we all jump in our cars and race the sun home. We called ourselves vampires because we had to be home before the sun was up. It was worse for me because when I was living in Highland Park, the apartment that I lived in, my room was in the basement. So, I really felt like I was going home to my native earth. But again, this was a way for people to meet people. Everybody knew everyone. We had a good time. We looked out for each other. We'd go to the Somerset Diner afterwards. Actually, it'd be mixed. But you'd have a straight club and you have

the gay club and everybody's talking, having a good time. Nobody's messing with anyone or anything else like that. The waitress, the one waitress, I loved her. She used to call me "Ants in the Pants," because I was hopping from table to table so they called me the "International Mayor." I knew everybody. I'd go from table to table talking to people, having a good old time. When my food's ready, she'd be like, "Ants in the Pants, get over here and sit down." I'd go over and sit down. But again, it was all good fun. We'd go to the grease trucks. Some of us would be inside and they all knew who was gay and who wasn't gay and we didn't care. We'd look at some of the college kids and [say], "Oh, you're a drunk straight kid." "Yeah." "We'll see you over at the Wall later." That sort of thing. All in good fun, but again, nobody was out to hurt anyone.

GC: It was almost like a very open community.

KH: Right. It was an open community. Some people, they were limited. They wouldn't go to the grease trucks with us, but they'll go up to the diner or they'll hang out at the Wall, but they're not going to go out in the open. Then, you had the really bad ones. The ecological preserve over on the Livingston campus, that's when you had a lot--what I call the dirty ones, went out there. They're having sex in the woods. Those were a lot of the married men that were going over there, the bi men that were going over there and having sex. My roommate would go over there. He was a voyeur; so, he's over there watching. I'm like, "You're an idiot." I've gone over there a couple times, but I didn't know what was going on at first. I just knew it was a nice, quiet place and I liked the woods and I liked to go to the woods to think. But then once I found out what was going on, I'm like, I'm out of here. Those were just some of the places guys could go, girls could go. That was the only way you could meet people, too. There was a place up in Morristown called GAAMC [Gay Activist Alliance in Morris County]. It was a rap group, where people can go up for support. Usually, there was three hundred people up there. You had different groups. You had your women's group, you had your men's group. Men coming out. You had your twenty-something. It was just basically a place to go where people can discuss their lifestyle or their life and just realize that you're not alone; there are people there. But once the Internet came out, all that got curtailed. The cruise spots went away very quickly because one, they were at your own risk anyway. We had books to tell you where you can go and it lists whether it was a safe spot or spot that's at your own risk. This book covered the United States. There was others that covered different countries. It was basically to help everybody out and tells you what places are good to go, whether bars, restaurants, whether they're gay friendly or not. We had all that. It was a whole network of things. The Internet came out and that curtailed a lot of stuff because now instead of being shy and staying in a bar, doing absolutely nothing, and realizing that when I'm looking at you, I'm seeing the real you, not some [fiction] that you've created on the Internet. This is not your avatar; this is you. As a bartender, many, many people come in. "Oh, I'm too shy." Or they're afraid to be rejected when they go over to talk to somebody. Now, they can sit on the Internet in the safety of their own home and cruise whoever they want, put up a fake picture if they want or no picture, which to me, makes no sense. I can understand you don't want to put up your picture, fine, but don't use somebody else's picture, especially if you plan on meeting the people. Come on. Can't tell you how many times people have come to club to meet for the first time, and they're

like, "You don't look anything like your picture." Yes, could have told you that. I even met some guy trying to talk to me and the picture he had used was of my favorite author. I'm like, "Okay. First of all, that's not you. That's my favorite author. Second of all, he's dead." Why? Has it changed? Yes. It's changed a lot, because now everybody, especially with their phones, they're sitting on the phone. They're in a bar and they're texting each other sitting right next to each other. Hello. Just turn around and say hello. People don't have personal skills anymore. They don't know how to talk to each other. It's a whole other story the fact that kids are being raised by kids. So, again, they've lost people skills. I'm like, we need one EM [electromagnetic] pulse and every last one of these people would lost their mind. They can't even count to ten when they go to give you change. It's like, "Hello? Why can't you use your head?" I mean, yes, I have electronics, but I still use my head. When I'm ringing up a drink, I do the change in my head. I don't have a TomTom or anything, navigation. I use my head. Give me a map. Give me a compass. I can find my way. I know I'm old school, but still, you can't lose these things. These are skills that you should have. God forbid if you're someplace and your GPS don't work. How are you going find your way out? Do you know to look on the north side of a tree for moss or a rock? No. Can you follow the stars? No. How do you build a fire? Can you build a fire without having a match or something like that? No.

GC: That's where your Boy Scout--

KH: Actually, that's where my great-grandmother comes into play.

GC: What about traditions that the Den has had over the years, with the employees, events that they participate in, things that they've created?

KH: We've had traditions come and go, but the main tradition at the Den that is still there, two of them. One, anybody and everybody is welcome into the club. That has never changed and never will. Two, is that Monday before Thanksgiving, the entire staff gets together and have a Thanksgiving dinner as one family. That has never changed over the years. The people have changed, but the tradition has not. The things that we've done has not changed. In some cases, I've seen in all my years there, I see a lot of the staff doesn't hang out like we used to. We used to not only hang there, but we'd go into the city, we'd go on vacations together and a lot of us, we don't do that now, but in this group, I see some of that going on with them. They're hanging out. They're staying at each other's houses and stuff. They're building friendships, which is a main thing. I'm still friends with guys who worked at the bar decades ago. I'm still friends with them. People who used to come to the bar, I'm still friends with them or they moved away and when they come home, they come home looking for me. God forbid if I ever leave the Den, I don't know what's going to happen. I'm not saying that because I've worked there for so long. I'm just saying, a lot of people consider me a fixture there and they specifically come looking for me. I don't know. Plus, I don't know what I'd do if I left the Den. I've been there for twenty-three years, working and I've been going there a lot longer than that. That's home. That's the other thing that has always been. It's always made people feel at home. Not everyone, but a lot of people. A lot of people, it's the

first club they've ever gone to. They feel safe there. We create that environment and I'm glad about that.

GC: I know the club for a little while went on hard times.

KH: Yes, like everybody else, it died out for a little bit, new clubs open up and everybody usually goes to that new club. It's a novelty and then once that club is-- they've gotten their fill of it, they go back to what they know is comfortable, where they're happy. When the state started cracking down on DUIs, a lot of people stopped going out drinking and stuff, because they were afraid to drink and drive. When they started getting comfortable with that, the economy obviously hurt. Usually when the economy is bad, the patronage of bars and clubs usually go up, but in this case, people were worrying so much about losing their jobs or they're living paycheck to paycheck, they just can't afford it. Things are changing a little bit, but even still now, a lot of clubs lost and were closed because of that and a lot of places now, they pick and choose. Whereas the Den used to be open seven days a week. Seven days a week people would go out. During the week, each day it was a different club that had dollar drink night. Monday nights was the Den and Feathers. Feathers is North Jersey, so it didn't really affect us. We had dollar drink night. Tuesday night was Casablanca in Roselle Park. Dollar drink night, people would go there. Wednesday nights, dollar drink night was at Charlie's West up in East Orange. So, you'd go. We would travel to these different spots. We knew everybody, but we would go to these spots because they were dollar drink night or they would have a drag show or they had male burlesque show, strippers. You'd have shows like that. So, you knew this was what you were going for and this is what's going [on]. Then you had your TV shows, *Dallas*, *Falcon Crest*, stuff like that would come on certain nights and people would be there to watch those shows. They'd have drinks and carry on. When *Dynasty* first came out, was Wednesday nights, every man would be at the gay bars to watch that together. When the show was on, you could hear a pin drop, but the minute the commercial came on, everybody's talking, everybody's ordering drinks, they run into the bathroom, the show [would] come back on. [I would] be downtown New York at Charlie's Downtown and I'd be like, are you kidding me? I hated the show. I never really watched the show, but that's what happened. Later on, Showtime, HBO. You had *The Sopranos* on Sundays. You had *Oz*, *Six Feet Under*, and also *Queer as Folk*. Yes, they were all in the bar. Even the Den, they were all sitting at the bar watching these shows. Wouldn't say anything while the show was going on. Then the commercial would go on and they'd be talking and ordering drinks. Yes, changing.

GC: For Clinton, when "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," "Don't Pursue, Don't Harass" came out? Do you remember that moment?

KH: Yes.

GC: What was your opinion? What'd you think about it?

KH: I thought that it might be a step in the right direction, but I wasn't sure. But then I didn't really worry too much about it, because it wasn't concerning me anymore. By that time, I had reached my maximum of seven years with the military and I knew I was safe. They couldn't bring me back in, even if they started a draft. Unless I wanted to go back in, they couldn't touch me. But I never gave it much thought.

GC: At this time, even when you were out of the military, could they ever take away your benefits?

KH: No.

GC: They could never?

KH: No.

GC: Once you're out, you're good.

KH: I was discharged with an honorable discharge, which is the best that you can get. Therefore, I'm entitled to anything and everything that the GI Bill allows. I have my military ID card as proof. I have my DD-214, which is your discharge papers, all of that to indicate yes, I served my country and I still believe in my oath of serving my country.

GC: Just recently, Obama, I think it was in December in 2010 took away "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," where you can be openly gay in the military. What is your opinion on that? I've spoken to other military [people] who say it's still kind of bull, in which they still have to be scared. In fact, I believe there's an organization telling them do not come out because the act could be reinstated and they could lose their positions.

KH: Yes, that is true on all counts. Yes, I do know of people that are still in the military and when that "Don't ask, don't tell," was abolished, I think it's a good idea. Whether it comes to pass, I know our military's not ready yet. I also know that there are men and women that are serving that are gay and are openly gay and their units know about them, and nothing's happened to them, but then I also know other situations where blanket parties were given.

GC: What's a blanket party?

KH: A blanket party essentially is, while you're sleeping, people will throw a blanket over your head and they'll beat the hell out of you. Some have gotten severely beaten where they had to be hospitalized, had brain damage. Some have actually lost their lives from having a blanket party. If they're, God forbid, in a firefight, there can be times where you don't know if you were shot from it, friendly fire or enemy fire. So, as far as if I knew of anyone going in who was gay and I believe--actually, I do know someone that's going in that's gay. He can't hide it, but anyone who can--or even with him, I told him, don't admit it. If you're going into the military, don't admit it. Other countries yes, you can serve openly gay and they don't really care. The British military, you can be

openly gay, but even they don't recommend letting people know. It all depends on the unit that you have. They will beat you. Let's face it. People are prejudice and there will always be prejudiced. On our side, we'll call them rednecks, because as a derogatory remark, you're uneducated, but anybody who's educated and who's comfortable with their own sexuality, shouldn't have a problem with it. But a lot of males, let's face it, are very insecure about themselves. Right away, they think that just because someone is gay, they want to sleep with them or they want to stare them down. It's not the case. It's not the case. It's like anybody else, everybody has their own taste. Some people, they may find you attractive. Instead of getting all upset, you should be complimented about it. As long as they don't put their hands on you, what's the problem? Think back of how they look at women and demoralize women. "Oh, yes, baby. You're hot. Blah, blah, this. Blah, blah, that." That's no different than if a gay man did that to you. You wouldn't like it. So, why are you doing that to women? Again, it falls back to also those that are so upset that a gay man has the audacity to look at their butt or whatever. Why? Do you have gay tendencies? We all, at one point, we're gay and then we hit puberty. You either became straight. You became bi or you stayed gay. Again, all that matters, as long as they're not hurting anyone, as long as they're not messing with children, who cares? I don't care what they do in their bedroom. I don't care what you do in your bedroom. As far as defending your country, hell yes, I think everyone should have the right. I feel personally, everyone should be in the military for at least two years. These guys nowadays could definitely use some discipline. Not only just discipline, you get to see different things. You get to learn things. You might even find that you have some respect for yourself. My opinion.

GC: Do you have any more questions?

NM: No.

GC: Do you have anything else you'd like to say?

NM: That's what I was going to say.

GC: Is there anything we didn't [talk about]?

KH: Let's put it this way. I skipped around a lot. I jumped around, but I've done a lot in my life. We could be here for weeks and I still wouldn't tell you everything that I've done, seen, heard. So, yes.

NM: Maybe at one point, we can follow up.

KH: If you wanted to, you could.

NM: Well, this concludes the interview. Thank you Kent, for coming in today.

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----