

UNCOVERING THE ROOTS OF LGBT PRESERVATION

The Reminiscences of

Ken Lustbader

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Ken Lustbader conducted by Interviewer Liz Strong on March 20, 2019. This interview is part of the *Uncovering the Roots of LGBT Preservation* oral history project.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The views expressed in this oral history interview do not necessarily reflect the views of the New York Preservation Archive Project.

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Session: 1

Narrator: Ken Lustbader

Location: Manhattan, New York, NY

Interviewer: Liz Strong

Date: March 20, 2019

Q: Today is March 20. It's a Wednesday, 2019. My name is Liz Strong. I'm here with Ken Lustbader for the New York Preservation Archive Project's oral history project on LGBT preservation. So Ken, just to begin, tell me when and where you were born and a little bit about your life growing up.

Lustbader: Sure, I'm just going to first start by saying that we are in my apartment at 37 West Twelfth Street in Greenwich Village, New York, and in Apartment 2E. I say that because, as a preservationist, having the documentation of where people lived and when they lived there is really critical. As an aside, my partner, now husband, Jay Kidd, and I moved in here in 2004. So, we've been here for a while.

Q: And you were saying before you moved here, you had done some research on the building for graduate school, you wrote a paper on it—

Lustbader: I was at Columbia [University]'s preservation program between 1991 and 1993 and in the architectural survey class—at the time it was taught by Robert [Arthur Morton] Stern. I think it was 1876–present. He assigned a paper to compare and contrast the Butterfield House with the Beaux Arts Apartments, which are on the Upper East Side. Because I lived down the

block from here at 101 West Twelfth Street, I knew this building, and I jumped at the opportunity to research it because it was always a building that had a distinctive appeal architecturally. I thought, “Oh, what a great opportunity to research the history of the building and compare it the Beaux Arts Apartments.”

Q: And that made you want to live here?

Lustbader: Yes.

Q: Why?

Lustbader: I wanted to live here before that, but it really gave me a leg up when we started looking to move in the early ‘00s—I said, “I want to live in this building.” The brokers were all like, “Don’t you want to look around?” I said, “Not really. I want to live in the building. I know the floor plans are great.” So when we found the apartment and put together our co-op board application, I included my paper on the building. [Laughs] It was really nerdy.

Q: That’s so shameless.

Lustbader: But it created a wonderful opportunity. The board, at least, thought I was interested in the building, and I clearly had a leg up in terms of knowing its history, more than they knew its history.

Q: One more question on this subject.

Lustbader: Sure.

Q: What excited you about the architecture or the style or the place?

Lustbader: Well, although it's located mid-block in a historic district, Greenwich Village [Historic District], the building was completed in '62. It's a modern building but fits so well into the block itself, but has its own distinct architecture. I always found that to be appealing because it was an anomaly that was pleasantly placed in the location, and felt great. And subsequently, doing all the research for the building itself helped when I moved in since I became active on the board. I helped with their window research. In fact, Bill [William J.] Conklin, who was one of the designers, the lead architects on the building, he came up here about six or seven years ago before he passed away to talk to us—and we included architect Françoise Bollack, who was helping us at the time on the interiors—about the design of the building. It became somewhat fetishized by many people who live in here as well as myself.

Q: Awesome. So, back from the detour, tell me about your early life growing up.

Lustbader: Very mundane. I grew up in the suburbs of Long Island in Valley Stream near JFK [John F. Kennedy International Airport]. I went to public school, elementary school, high school. That was about it. I had a very regular suburban mall-rat existence growing up, primarily in the 1970s, two blocks away from the Green Acres Mall.

Q: Tell me about your family. What were those people like as characters?

Lustbader: They were characters. [Laughs] I had a small family: my mother, my father. They were first-generation immigrants. My father was born in 1919, went to World War II, and that clearly had an impact on him. He came back, was an entrepreneur, started a shoe store company, retail shoes. He subsequently bought buildings related to the shoe business.

My mother worked, when she met my father, as a nurse for various doctors in Brooklyn. One was an OB/GYN. The other was a neurologist, who gave electric shock therapy, and she was the nurse for that. There was a lot of quirkiness and fun and familiarity with them. But my father was somewhat like Captain [Georg] von Trapp in the sense that children had certain obligations to be diligent, do homework, and be responsible and have integrity. It was all good.

Q: Siblings?

Lustbader: One older brother who has nothing to do with historic preservation but has a definite interest in New York City. I should just preface this all by saying they were very classic suburban Jews, coming to New York City all the time. We went a lot to see theater. We had theater subscriptions when we were kids at the Public Theater, at the Manhattan Theatre Club. I was really fortunate to see *A Chorus Line* at the Public Theater when it was Off-Broadway. I got a love of New York City and architecture by osmosis through them.

Q: That's fantastic. Through the shows?

Lustbader: Through my parents, and through being able to be so exposed to New York—going to Broadway, going to anything Off-Broadway, having dinner here. It was not a foreign city to me at all. My brother and I would come in, at age eleven and thirteen, alone. My father would give us some money to go to TKTS and buy tickets, to go out to lunch, and see a show in an afternoon on a Saturday or Sunday, and go back to Long Island on the Long Island Railroad. We were rather let alone to our own devices to enjoy the city. I would look at out of my high school window on the third floor—I'll never forget—Valley Stream is about twenty-two miles away and I could see the World Trade Center site from that window, and I would say to myself, “That's where I'm going to live. That's where I'm going to live.” I always wanted to live in Manhattan.

Q: And now you do.

Lustbader: Yes, yes.

Q: Tell me a little bit about the family business. Was that a part of your life growing up?

Lustbader: The family business was definitely a part of my life growing up. My father really identified as a father, as a provider, as someone who didn't want to work for someone else, and made sure that he was the father figure who took care of the family through the business. I worked there every summer, in the stores or in the office. Then, basically, when I went to

college, the default was going to be: go into the family business, that's where you're going to work. And I really didn't—beyond going to college—think I was going to do anything else other than work in the business, which was sort of an uncomfortable situation because I didn't know if that's what I wanted to do. But it was what I was supposed to do.

I went to college and studied economics because my father thought that was closest to business [laughs] and I did that at a liberal arts college, which was absurd. Then I went to work for the business.

Q: So, if you're imagining your future in shoe stores but you're also developing this love of theater and architecture, how did you imagine your interest in architecture having a place in your life? Did you imagine it to be a hobby?

Lustbader: I had no idea what it meant to integrate the two interests, or the multiple interests. I went to college at Vassar [College]. It had a great art history department. I took a bunch of art history classes. They had Richard Pommer teaching an architectural history class. I took that. Jeh [Vincent] Johnson had a [architectural] drawing class, a drafting class, which was two semesters. I took that. But at the time, I never thought I could go to school for architecture. I just thought, "Well, it's nice to have those skills."

When I went to work for the family business, that was what I did. But we were opening lots of stores. I would look around at stores and I remember getting distracted specifically in Paterson, New Jersey on Main Street, which is a historic district, and getting lost in the building on the

upper floors, which were closed off, trying to figure out, “What was going on here? What was this building?” I was finding papers, boxes and boxes of receipts from the early ‘20s that I was pulling apart, sort of mystified that there was actual documentation. “What does this mean?” That led me to this path of knowing that there were other interests and trying to integrate the two.

Q: I’m curious about this moment in New Jersey. What kind of building was it? What kind of store did you uncover?

Lustbader: It was located on Main Street—I think it’s 240 Main Street. It’s a building probably built in the late nineteenth century and it was called the Elbow Shop. A colleague of mine actually gave me a whole history of it and you can find it online now. But it was a multi-story building that was built as a commercial building. Ground floor, retail. Probably the second floor had some retail, and the upper floors were the offices. What I found in the offices were all these receipts. It was a little findings shop. But I’ll never forget, the staircase was removed and it was brought upstairs. It was this ornate staircase that led from the first floor to the second floor.

It just sparked my interest in deconstructing what was there then, and reconstructing it in my head. I then was sort of—I don’t want to say miserable—but was itching to do something else and trying to figure that out over time. I eventually went to a friend of mine, Joan [C.] Berkowitz, who I went to college with who was in historic preservation, and had what we call the epiphany dinner, where I said, “I don’t know what I’m doing with my life but this is what I like.” She said, “Well, it sounds like you like historic preservation.” I think I was twenty-nine at the time. She said, “You should go to Columbia and speak to Norman [R.] Weiss. Talk to people

up there and figure this out.” I was like, “I cannot go to graduate school. I’m way too old. My life is over. And I don’t want to take the GMATs [Graduate Management Admission Test].” I eventually went up to speak to Norman and he was like, “Oh, you’ve got background. Don’t worry.” [Laughter] I took the GMATs and I got in.

Q: Tell me about meeting Norman. What was he like as a character?

Lustbader: He was a character, and he was completely nice. “Oh, you know Joan. I love Joan.” I was very naïve. I was non-academically inclined in terms of negotiating conversations with people who were academics, professors—

Q: What does that mean?

Lustbader: People who taught. I had a very quiet undergraduate experience, where I didn’t say much. I just did the bare—I shouldn’t say the bare minimum—I just tried to get by. I was in over my head as a young student. Really, I was the first one in my family who went away to college. My brother went to college, but he lived at home. So I was the first one to really experience this living on your own, negotiating the world, and negotiating academics, and having a voice. What I should say is I didn’t have a voice academically to take care of myself and ask questions. So when I first got to Columbia, it was all like, “Oh my God, I’m intimidated. This is so formidable. It’s Columbia.” Then immediately, I got over it.

Q: Pretty quickly?

Lustbader: Very quickly, yes.

Q: I want to go back a little bit. Before your drafting and art history and college, what were the outlets for you for your interests in buildings, or were there any?

Lustbader: As a kid?

Q: Yes.

Lustbader: Sure. My mother always looked at antiques and buildings. She loved Art Deco architecture and style. I was really familiar with that. My mother, for some reason—she was not college-educated—knew about art and architecture. She went to high school and I don't understand how she had this huge collection of art books from exhibitions and from museums. My husband, who knew my parents very well—we've been together so long—had seen that my mother had reproductions on the walls in the house of various Renaissance painters and other things. He called it the mini-Louvre [Museum].

So I was familiar with this. I would always look at the art books, and she exposed me to that. God knows how she got exposed to it or what the innate interest was. But for myself, I would look at buildings. I was always building things with Legos. I was always drawing. I was pretty artistic. I would draw floor plans of buildings. I would look at architectural magazines.

I did not have any interest in history, though. There was no kernel of what history meant. We came from an ahistorical family. When you asked anything about, where did my grandparents come from? “Europe.” Why did they come? “It was bad.” What country? “I don’t know.” They knew nothing. History was not to be discussed. There was no context of who we were. I still don’t know.

Q: That was going to be my next question then, is how—architecture and design for me is all about creating and envisioning. Your interaction with this building in New Jersey was very much like a detective almost, trying to figure out who this building is. How did you encounter history and how did that go into your interests for design?

Lustbader: I think the encounter with history was more of an intrinsic interest that just sparked out from me—I had no idea I had that interest. I have to say, I always loved looking at old photographs. I’ve always found the tangible contrasts of old and new really interesting, but I never had the vocabulary or the self-awareness to say, “Oh, I like history.” It was more, “Oh, that’s sort of interesting.” And that becomes a specific interest, as opposed to, “Oh, if I have that interest, I can then therefore say that I like history, or I like social history, or architectural history.” There was no vocabulary. No one spoke that way in my family. So I think the experience in New Jersey was more of an innate attraction. “What is this? What does this mean? Why do I like ephemera?” I don’t know! Joan was really helpful in saying, “Well, there are people that study this.”

Q: How did you meet Joan?

Lustbader: We went to college.

Q: Was it a class you had together?

Lustbader: No, it was a very small school, and Joan was from Long Island and I was from Long Island. We'd see each other and say hi. It was very much a small, intimate school that way.

Q: Yes. The other question I wanted to ask is as you're headed to Columbia, do you know that means you're going to be departing from the family business? And what was that decision like?

Lustbader: Oh, yes. I departed from the family business, I think, in '89, 1990. I basically said I needed to take off a year and figure this out. That was a difficult task, leaving. I'm just going to say this on tape because I can't believe I'm talking about this crap on the tape. [Laughs] It's so personal and what relevance does it have to preservation?

Q: Trust me. Go with me on this.

Lustbader: With that said, for those listeners, yes, coming from the family business was a difficult break to make, especially from a Jewish family where your father told you, "I started this for you. How could you do this to me?" And my mother saying, "You're killing your father." And my father saying, "Well, I may have to disinherit you." I had an older brother who got off scot-free and was never involved in the business.

Q: What?

Lustbader: My brother knew from the get-go he was not going to work there. So it was a huge issue and it took a long time. Then the happy ending was that I left and basically within three to six months, my father had retired and said it was the best thing I ever did.

Q: [Laughs] I'm glad it worked out.

Lustbader: It definitely worked out.

Q: Obviously this is something that mattered to you and you had a clarity about it at that point. Can you describe standing up for yourself as this being the path you wanted to at least explore?

Lustbader: Yes, no one understood it in my family. You're going to graduate school to get a degree in historic preservation? What are you going to do with yourself? What does that mean? I think because Joan was a conservator there was some sense that I was to learn specific skills. My friend Ginny Binder, who also went to the Columbia program, and who also went to Vassar, was a conservator.

I went into Columbia at the time when it had sectors: planning, history, conservation, and design. I went in saying I'm going to be the conservator. I wanted a skill set. I thought I didn't have a skill set because I went to a liberal arts college and worked in this family business. God knows

what I was going to do. So I went in there thinking I was going to have that skill set and focus on the conservation sector.

Q: You went in thinking you need a set of skills and need to turn it into a career and a trade—

Lustbader: Correct, yes. Like a vocation.

Q: A vocation, yes.

Lustbader: But that quickly got changed.

Q: Tell me about how it got changed.

Lustbader: Dan [Daniel M.] Bluestone.

Q: I was just looking for his name. There's a professor. Tell me about Dan.

Lustbader: Have I said this before? How do you have that?

Q: When we talked on the phone.

Lustbader: Oh, okay. I forgot that part. [Laughter] I started the program and you have certain core classes you have to take. Daniel Bluestone was my professor, and I think he was a professor

in Theory and Practice of Historic Preservation, and a documentation class.

The documentation class—let me just say something. The summer before, starting in September—this is ‘91, so say in August of ‘91, I’m in California, in Los Angeles, and I go and drive to Ojai, California, and I’m somehow having lunch with these two older women, and I tell them I’m going to Columbia’s preservation program. The woman asks me—I’ll never forget this—“Oh, so you’ll probably be doing archival research.” At the time, I looked at her and I flubbed it. I don’t even know what the hell she’s talking about—archival research? What does that mean?

So put that aside.

I started in the program and I have Dan Bluestone, and we have to do archival research. I’m like, okay, here we go! Basically, it just changed my life in terms of understanding history, and what it meant to research history, and the sleuthing around that one can do to document history. It was great. I became—I don’t want to say obsessed—really vigilant and thorough in terms of the assignments in class. It was a job. And I think having worked for so many years in a business, as an older graduate student—an older graduate student that was fortunate that didn’t have to work during graduate school—I took my two years there as a job. Any assignment, I really did as thoroughly as I possibly could. It was exhausting. I was never done researching. It was fun. I loved it.

Q: So, tell me what history is?

Lustbader: Oh, God.

Q: Please.

Lustbader: For me?

Q: Yes.

Lustbader: Well, there's two aspects of it. What I fell in love with was maybe not the interpretation of history or the analysis at first; that came second. It was really the documentation of history, and especially with building history—how you research building history—through census records, building department files, photographs. I had no clue about that originally, and this was a whole new area of inquiry for me, and of my mind.

It was just fun to leave no stone unturned and fun to be intuitive that way—something that I had never experienced in the shoe company. Intuitively, I had this knack to think that if this is leading here, that could lead to there. For me, the archival research component of history was compelling and fun, and completely satisfying.

I think on the interpretive side of history, that's obviously more challenging and nuanced. That was the second part of it. And putting those pieces together, with Dan, was fun because he would challenge me—here's the raw data, that's great, you've got it, but how do you synthesize that and how do you use your mind, and knowledge of other components or other narratives, to make

what you found into a cohesive argument and analysis and thesis of what you're saying? That was something that I never had to do, because as an economics major, you're looking at graphs and interpreting them that way. This was intuition, subjectivity and objectivity, with documentation, but it was a whole new way of thinking. It was amazing.

Q: Essentially, you have to have a voice.

Lustbader: Yes, yes.

Q: Which you said you didn't feel in undergrad.

Lustbader: True.

Q: What do you think is distinctive about your voice and the way you speak for these records that you were finding because they don't speak for themselves?

Lustbader: I think for me, it was just the intuitive nature that I have a skill here, and an interest that I didn't know existed. Dan Bluestone was sitting there—I think it was '91, probably '92—when I was debating, do I do history or do I do conservation? I'll never forget it. I think we were in Buell [Hall] and he said, "Do you want to have a tool kit, like a little bag of tools that you can tinker around on buildings? Or do you want to be an historian? I think you should go the historian route. Why are you playing it safe? Just go for it. You're enjoying this. Do it." I took the leap and he was my thesis advisor.

Q: What was he like as a person? He's obviously so pivotal in this story.

Lustbader: Again, I was so intimidated by academics, and people who were really smart and had achieved masters degrees or PhDs, and here's this guy who was brilliant and could synthesize information and present it, and he was talking to me and dealing with me as a peer and as a student that clearly was showing some promise. Clearly, I was a good student and got what we were doing, and I knew that. It was the first time academically that that was being acknowledged. I had a really great comfort level with him. He had a great sense of humor. We had a really nice sense of humor together. I felt very at ease with him academically and personally. I felt really lucky to have that.

Q: So you worked with him developing your thesis. How did the idea for your thesis come about?

Lustbader: So '91, I was at Columbia. I'm thirty years old at the time. In 1988 (1987, I met my husband), I was an out gay guy but not politically active. In '88, I started volunteering for GLAAD, which is the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation. I get very active with that. I become more politicized in LGBT or gay and lesbian visibility at the time. I worked on a US Postal Service stamp cancellation, doing the first one there. I worked on getting the Empire State Building illuminated for the first time in '89, for the Pride Parade. And then just sort of got into understanding visibility and politics. It was not just what I was doing, but it became part of my psyche.

Then I go to Columbia and we're sitting there. Dan Bluestone is talking about preservation as a tool to teach multiple narratives. It can teach narratives such as economic history, cultural history, social history—not just architectural history. I'm sitting there in the class, hearing about the Underground Railroad and the locations on the railroad. I'm like, "Well, what about LGBT history?" Or "gay and lesbian history" at the time. I would always pipe up saying those things. "What about Greenwich Village? What about Stonewall [Inn]?"

It just was on my mind as an issue. I thought I could do something about that and I think—I should look at them now since I probably still have them—you had to write these journals or these pieces reflecting on what you read in class. I think I was always saying, "Well, you could tell this history, or gay history through this way." So I started thinking about a thesis topic, and thought I should write it about gay and lesbian history using Greenwich Village as a study area.

In various classes, I had done research on things in the Village, such as the Seventh Avenue Extension that cut through from West Eleventh Street down to Varick Street. That always fascinated me, and what that did to the neighborhood from making it this backwater to an amusement district due to transportation. I had the seeds of early Greenwich Village Bohemian life, which included a lot of what we call now LGBTQ people.

So I said, "Let's try this," and I wrote a summary about this that I actually read recently. I'm sort of shocked how my thesis proposal was so coherent given that I didn't know what I was doing. I have to say, no one else was doing it at the time. I had this intuitive hunch to create the intersection of historic preservation and LGBT history. I was sort of adrift because I was a grad

student, and I didn't know anyone else doing this type of research. That was that.

So I started thinking I could do this as an academic exercise. It was first rejected or—technically, it wasn't rejected. I had to rewrite something. Then it was basically accepted as a thesis topic. I remember Dan saying, “Well, do it, it's an academic exercise. Your life isn't depending on this.” At the same time, it is 1992, say, at this point where I'm committed to doing this. I'm out, but 1992 is a very different period than 2019. I thought, “Am I committing professional suicide? Do I put this on my resume down the road?” All those kind of fear-based things that one had at the time as a gay man in New York, no matter how “out” I was, or privileged, I still was concerned about that. But I was like, what are you going to do? Go for it. I took such a cautious route in my first iteration professionally. If someone doesn't want to hire me because I wrote a thesis on gay and lesbian history in Greenwich Village—and, predominantly, it's a gay male population of people working in the field of historic preservation—then good luck. So, I went for it.

Q: This raises so many follow-up questions. First of all, you raise the issue of visibility, something you were already working on, on kind of a political stage. Talk to me about the importance of visibility in historical narratives and the narratives of built spaces?

Lustbader: Well, I think historic preservation, as a profession, has been historically and contemporarily remiss in not telling the narratives of the less-dominant cultures or unrepresented cultures in histories and communities. That's by the mere nature of the challenges of visibility and legibility of people on the streetscape. So, African American history is very difficult to tell in New York City. The same thing with Chinese American history, and any other social history that

doesn't leave a discernible impact other than architecture.

It's an easy default to go to architecture, where it's very concrete and cerebral, where you can deconstruct a building by looking at whether it's Beaux Arts or whether it's mid-century modern, who built it, the date, who constructed it. Then, you can tease out the social history, or the labor history. Was it the Irish Americans in the early twentieth century who built these buildings, and where the bricks came from, the economics of it, where do they ship these, where are they manufacturing the bricks? Versus social histories that are embedded in the stories, but embedded by people who are living in the buildings themselves, renting the buildings, or the commercial spaces that were occupied under leases or non-leases who didn't leave a very discernible impression on the streetscape. Other than say, Chinatown, where the buildings were sort of layered with visible Chinese-style lettering and things like that.

I think it's really important to push preservation to embed these other stories and figure out other ways to *a*, document them but *b*, interpret them. How do you convey that story to the general public or anyone who's interested in using it as a launching point for additional research?

Q: What do you gain by getting those stories integrated into sources that the general public can access?

Lustbader: I think people want to know their own stories. From the perspective of the underrepresented community, it's really important to know that your history is being acknowledged. It informs where you came from and it informs who you are as a people and so

forth. It's really important on that level, personally, for those intangible benefits of pride, continuity, identity, community, and so forth. The tangible benefits are obviously that the history of the building is preserved, so you can look at it and have this visceral connection by going to a place and seeing it, and really get that you're time-traveling in a sense. You get to see where someone came in and out of, or where this space was, or where they occupied, or where a meeting house was, or an activity took place. There's that tangible presence on the street.

The broader picture is that it's important to tell people that this history occurred because it informs how people analyze current situations, and how they're going to behave and react to current and future situations. That's what's so compelling now about the work we're doing with the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project. With the recent pushback in the administration on LGBT rights, people should know that there was a lot of LGBT activism in New York pre-dating Stonewall. That gives people a sense of pride and a roadmap on how to behave and react and resist today. That's in a nutshell what we're trying to do.

Q: That's great. The other thing I wanted to ask you is when there are these sorts of underrepresented groups, the change comes—or it seems to come—when somebody from that group has the opportunity to write the history, to tell the history. In the case of your thesis, you're an out, gay man writing this. A closeted person wouldn't have done it. A straight person might not have thought to do it. So, tell me about the importance of your role as who you are in bringing that out.

Lustbader: The fact that I came to Columbia and was completely intimidated academically,

having no clue I was going to study history, and that this spark ignited in me with this interest in LGBT history and documentation of buildings and peoples, was the most exciting moment for me as a person—that I had this intuitive hunch at the time that it was really important to do this. I didn't care if there was no one else doing this. I didn't care if it seemed wacky and out there. But again, it was '91, '92. I don't know; I'm into this! I think again, because I said I was so intimidated and quiet as an undergraduate, I just had the wherewithal as a thirty-year-old to just push this through, and take it and run with it. And I had an advisor who was really supportive.

I was writing other papers about it. I think, for Mary McLeod, I wrote a paper about gay bars and migrations, and defensible spaces, and semi-defensible spaces, and this sort of thing. But I just felt like it was my baby.

Then I lucked out into meeting other people who had similar interests. At the time, I was like, "Hi, I'm Ken Lustbader. I'm writing my thesis on gay and lesbian history in Greenwich Village." I met this group from OLGAD, the Organization of Lesbian + Gay Architects and Designers. And that just solidified my interest in this at the time because I discovered that there are other people that are interested in this. My God, who knew? I had this intuitive idea and thought that was so great. I was really early on and—I don't know, I was alone! I have to say, I'm really proud of myself now that I had this great idea. I look around today and I'm sort of shocked. There are people doing this around the country, and the world—wow! I just had this early on idea and it was because I was at Columbia and had a great thesis advisor and a real great interest at the time.

Q: Tell me about connecting with OLGAD and this group of professionals.

Lustbader: So again, through Joan Berkowitz. She was involved in OLGAD. I don't remember how I first got there, but OLGAD was an organization that was a networking organization. They met at The Center [on West Thirteenth Street] and, again, it was an organization of lesbian and gay architects and designers. It was primarily architects. I think there were some interior designers and then there was a whole cadre of preservation people that formed a small committee, the Historic Preservation Committee. Joan was on the committee, along with Mary Jablonski. And there was Jay Shockley, and Andrew Dolkart, and then Richard Moses, and a few other people—like Richard, who I think was working at the Landmarks [Preservation] Commission then. Jay was at the Landmarks Commission, as was Gale Harris, who was also on the committee.

So, for me, again, it was like: Wow, I'm playing with the professionals and I'm still in graduate school. This is kind of great. I have this niche and what I'm doing dovetails with what their interests are. I just thought it was peachy keen. Wow, this is great. Lucky me. Gradually, I was getting more confident.

With OLGAD, we decided—and I don't remember the timing of it—but we knew Stonewall 25 was coming up in '94, so we said we were going to put together a map of historic sites that were extant in Greenwich Village, Midtown, and Harlem. Jay could probably speak much more clearly about this because he has a memory like a steel trap. But we worked on it, and we were assigned buildings to research. Here I am—I think I did Stewart's Cafeteria—but it was working

with people that were working professionally in preservation. I didn't have a job. I was writing a thesis as a graduate student. It was exciting for me to be history-nerding-out with these people!

OLGAD also did a panel discussion in January of 1993 on who's going to preserve LGBT history. That again, for me, was really heady at the time. I was, again, in graduate school writing my thesis on this, and it was perfectly aligned with this new field of inquiry that had not been done before. And Jay, at the time, and Gale, were working at the Commission and putting LGBT history in historic designation reports, in individual nominations as well as district nominations. I think New York City (sorry folks outside of New York City)—I think we were really the first people to look at LGBT history and intersecting it with historic preservation, and saying we can use buildings to embed LGBT history in it.

Q: What do you think made it possible here before other places?

Lustbader: I think there was a network of preservationists that were connecting at OLGAD, and Stonewall 25 was there as a sort of skeletal structure. I think that, specifically in New York City, the Village is such an important place for LGBT history. Coincidentally, the Village is a historic district that was designated in April of 1969. So much of it had been protected—as opposed to Harlem, which had a ton of LGBT history, but so much was demolished. Midtown had so many sites and the theaters that were preserved.

There was just this mindset that was there. I think it was just the people on the committee, who were preservation-based, and Stonewall 25 was coming up. George Chauncey's book [*Gay New*

York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World 1890-1940] was coming out. I was lucky because as a precocious graduate student—I don't know how I did this—but I found a copy of his doctoral dissertation and I ordered it. I thought I was going to break the bank buying George's dissertation for twenty dollars. I had it Xeroxed from wherever—I think it was Chicago—and had it mailed to me. I got it and I was dying that I had this incredible resource! The book wasn't out yet, his book, *Gay New York*. So I had this document that I combed through, all the footnotes.

Q: I also have to ask, as you said before, it was '92. It was a very particular moment in time. An organization like OLGAD could easily have been just for supporting each other and for professional networking. It could have been inward-facing and not outward-facing. What made the difference? Why do this map project?

Lustbader: There were a couple of other things going on. People were dropping dead. The AIDS [Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome] crisis was going on. It was a miserable time in New York City. And AIDS was informing everything. That was this sort of other current of desperation, sadness, and loss. OLGAD did this incredible booklet exhibit on the lives we lost of architects who had passed away from AIDS, that I just recently scanned. Andrew Dolkart has a copy and it's incredibly sad and moving. David [W.] Dunlap wrote an article about it that was in the [*New York Times*] at that period. So they were doing that.

Then we have Stonewall 25 coming up, which was this incredibly significant event. There was a huge exhibition being mounted at the New York Public Library. The Preservation Committee did

the other more outward-focused effort for OLGAD, which was this map, that probably was the first map—we think it's the first map that was ever published really related to place-based heritage for intersecting LGBT history in the US. We haven't found anything else, I should say.

Q: Who did you imagine to be using this map? What was the intended audience?

Lustbader: New Yorkers, tourists, visitors, anyone. We printed them up. We got [Manhattan Borough President] Ruth Messinger's office to support it. It was Fun Maps who published it. Manatus on Bleecker Street was the ad on the back, which was a diner with a big gay following. It's great. It still holds up.

Q: Yes?

Lustbader: Yes.

Q: Because you brought up the context of the AIDS crisis, I want to sit in that for a minute. Can you talk about not just how it was impacting the field—you mentioned these people that had been lost—but in your community, in your personal community, how was it being felt? How were you feeling this?

Lustbader: I came of age on the cusp of AIDS; I was in college up until '83. I was not in New York City, but I knew. I read the *New York Times*, which even in '83, there were some articles. I knew what was going on by the time I graduated. I was scared, terrified. From '83-'85, I didn't

know anyone affected. I was gallivanting around with friends. And then subsequently in '87, I met my current husband and we had a group of friends. He had a number of friends that passed away between '87 and '94. There are definitely people in my life that were dying. This Columbia-educated architect, Jeff [Jeffrey D.] Bucholtz, who was a friend of ours, I'll never forget him passing away, leaving New York, dying.

It's tragically sad and incredible that there was an epidemic going on in the city and no one really seemed to care about it in places of power. When you look at the loss now and the age of people who were dying, it's just incredibly sad, depressing, and poignant.

I'm just going to digress to the current project we're doing, the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project. We all share writing entries. I've written only a few of them because I'm busy fundraising, but I had to write the Studio 54 entry. You think the entry will focus on Steve Rubell, Ian Schrager, the importance of Studio 54 from a cultural point of view with disco music. Steve Rubell dies of AIDS. That's the narrative that everybody knows. Ian Schrager now is a successful hotelier. They served time in jail, et cetera.

That's all fine and dandy. However, then I start researching. From doing research, I knew the guy who did the sound system at the Paradise Garage did the sound system at Studio 54, and I knew that he died because I found his obituary. I said, "Oh, he died of AIDS." Then I started researching who designed the logo, which is this iconic logo for Studio 54. I Google him, I go on ProQuest. He died of AIDS. He was a graphic designer and he died of AIDS. Then I find out that the interior designer died of AIDS.

I'm doing this research thinking: this is the other narrative of the NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project that needs to get told. So I put those in our little entry because it's an important story to say that while Studio 54 lives on as this legacy of disco and cocaine, and unabashed sexuality at a period of time in New York, it also discusses a story of loss of talent.

That's what sticks with me about that because I'm way older than those people were when they died. Scott Burton, he's an architect. But he's one of the, I think, only original designers who is associated with Studio 54 who is still alive. I can't imagine how he feels knowing and having worked with those people. It's sort of like PTSD in a sense, when you start doing that research, because it was a really miserable period of time.

Q: I wanted to rest on it because we're living in a moment that's kind of post-crisis. I was born in '87, for example. There are a lot of people who will be listening to this oral history who don't understand what it was to not know if this would end or if it would get better, and how that changes the way people live their lives and the way they make decisions. So, thank you for sharing that. Given the fact that people were physically disappearing as well as this history being kind of invisible, how did that shape decisions going forward about representation and preservation?

Lustbader: Just rephrase the question for a little clarification.

Q: Yes, I do need to rephrase the question because I was thinking as I was talking. But there's a

kind of urgency to this. Not just that the history isn't being told, but that people are actually disappearing, talent is disappearing. How does that urgency inform decision-making going forward? How does it reframe—

Lustbader: At the time?

Q: At the time.

Lustbader: Why I went to graduate school at the age I went was because I was on the cusp of turning twenty-nine to thirty and I was like, I've got to get out of this business and figure out what I'm going to do with my life. I think there was an urgency at that time for everything. I was in the crisis, but outside of it. I didn't have boyfriends dying or anything like that, although I had friends that died. It just colored one's view of the value and immediacy of life. I don't want to say the fragility of life, but it certainly was like, "This is screwed up that people are dying. What's going on right now is messed up."

That probably unconsciously informed me of the need to document the history. It certainly informs the way I feel now about history, as well as my own anger at how history—or the lack of history—about the AIDS epidemic is taught. I think that's just concurrent with my frustration that people don't understand LGBT history in New York City itself. Hence why the project is so close to my heart. I think that's also similar to how Jay and Andrew felt—and feel—because, well, we're the people to tell this history. It's really important, and if anyone's going to tell it from a preservation perspective, we're going to tell it the most accurately, and the most

concretely, and with the most panache. [Laughter] We have Amanda Davis working with us, who is also a stickler for details. It's a really great way to have these sites recognized in perpetuity.

Q: To go back to the OLGAD map, were there other efforts at that time like this? I know there were plaques or something going on.

Lustbader: Yes, we did our map. At the same time, there was REPOhistory—they were a consortium of artists that got together to do various plaquing projects in the city that were more radical interpretations of historic sites. They had a queer plaquing project. That was amazing to me that they were thinking similar to how we were thinking. But they weren't thinking as preservationists since they weren't as building-wonky as we were. But I remember coming across REPOhistory and thinking it was the greatest thing I had ever seen. They had a plaque on the street post by Julius' [Bar] for the Sip-In of 1966, which—I knew about Julius' since I had it on my walking tour as part of my thesis. We knew it. We had it on the map and all that stuff.

That was the temporary plaquing project that they got cooperation from the [New York City] Department of Finance to do. But I can't recall any other—there was never a walking tour. I did the first gay and lesbian walking tour. I did it as part of my thesis, and then I did it for the Municipal Art Society. Then I was like sayonara, I'm done. I have to get a job, and that was that.

Q: What was the reception of these things?

Lustbader: I think the reception for the map was great. People loved it. We gave them out. Jay and I recently found a photograph of OLGAD marching, and I think it must have been the 1994 parade. I asked Joan two days ago to please see if there were any additional photographs. So I think that was well-received. I don't think we ever got picked up as a newspaper article, which at the time, would have been unusual. I don't know any other place that was doing that.

Subsequently, I think *Stepping Out [Nine Walks Through New York City's Gay and Lesbian Past]*, or some guidebooks came out with some place-based locations, like a walking tour, and I got very "I should be doing this research!" but I'm not doing this since I was working at the time.

Q: Right, because '94, you're at [New York] Landmarks Conservancy, right?

Lustbader: Yes, so I graduated in '93. I floundered around, looking for a job. I think I did some temporary "consulting work" for Andrew and Paul [Spencer] Byard and a bunch of people. Then I get a job. I found out about the job through Ed Mohylowski because he was the head of the Sacred Sites Program at the Landmarks Conservancy, and he was looking for an assistant. Long story short, I get hired and I started in January of 1994.

Q: What was that like?

Lustbader: Here I am, I went to graduate school and I have a new job. [Laughter] I did it! I spent a lot of money at Columbia—the most expensive employment placement agency—but I got a job. I was sort of funny about it because I was working as a technical preservation program assistant to the Sacred Sites Program, which was run by Ed Mohylowski and by the Technical

Preservation Services Center, which was run by Mark [A.] Weber at the time. I had two bosses. I thought much more of myself because I had worked for years in a family business, and I was the son of the owner and had carte blanche going into every office. And here I am, “Oh, you can’t go to that meeting”; I had to understand that I had a new entry-level role. But I took it very seriously and had a great time working there.

Q: And you managed to stay connected with OLGAD and other advocacy groups—

Lustbader: Well, involvement with GLAAD was in the late ‘80s. This new job started in January of ‘94. Stonewall 25 was just months away. So I was definitely still involved with OLGAD and the map and whatever we were doing. That was all heady and fun. It was great. But I don’t know what happened after June of 1994, quite frankly, after OLGAD. I don’t remember what happened after the map.

Q: Yes. I forgot to ask you about the ‘93 panel. What was it for? What was the subject?

Lustbader: I have to look it up here.

Q: Okay.

Lustbader: Here it is. I have the old mock-up of the OLGAD newsletter. This is the January of 1993 newsletter. The next event, “Site Unseen, Who Will Protect Lesbian and Gay Historic Sites if We Don’t?” Tuesday, January 26, 1993 at 7:30 pm at The Center. I love this: [reading] “Come

and hear the latest stories about the preservation movement as we see it. It's going to be a panel discussion and slide show. It will include preservationists and historians, Richard Moses, Don Prycer, Ken Lustbader, Joan Berkowitz. Speakers will examine the visibility of lesbian and gay cultural history and queer preservation in the New York urban landscape. Community Shrines: Should the Stonewall Bar Be Designated a Landmark? Homo History: Should We Preserve Significant Community Sites, Neighborhoods, Bars, Piers, Homes, et cetera? Queer Preservation and the Preservation Movement: Who Will Preserve Our History?"

I'm laughing now because I feel we should crib this for one of our upcoming panels today because of the use of the word queer, which is now really prevalent. I quite frankly didn't remember, and I should tell Jay and Andrew that it was being used so predominantly then, without any negative implications, by OLGAD.

Q: Right. So, I kind of have to ask how has the language of the movement changed over time, and has it affected the work?

Lustbader: Yes, that's a really tricky question and answer. The language has obviously changed over time. Terminology is really important and nuanced discussion. When I was doing the research in graduate school, "gay and lesbian" history of Greenwich Village is what I focused on. I could go on about this. There are people who write lots about this—but "lesbian." in the late nineteenth century, wasn't a term that women would use to self-identify, so we don't overlay that to people who didn't identify that way. "Gay" was obviously a code word for people who were homosexual. "Queer" was reappropriated in the early '90s by Queer Nation as a way to

reclaim its negative connotations.

Now, so many people of my generation or older hate “queer” because of its negative historical use. That’s why I was just laughing reading that. We don’t use it in the current project that much, because historically, it wasn’t used as a way to identify people. We’re trying to be historically accurate. But clearly, it’s changed over time now that it’s LGBTQ+. There’s so much more awareness now of trans identity and trans issues. Not that we shied away from it in the ‘90s—I just don’t think it was as understood as a viable way to document certain spaces.

The other part about all of this history—of LGBTQ history and how to document it—are the stories that are left out within the community itself because of disenfranchisement, money, discrimination, oppression, and so forth. We can only document what we can get our hands on in terms of the record. We’re not necessarily finding the full story. We’re not finding the places where people had house parties, if they couldn’t afford to go to a bar, or if they were not let into a bar.

We know lesbian bars in Greenwich Village in the ‘50s, for example, were primarily white, working-class, lesbian bars with a butch-femme dynamic but often were discriminatory—didn’t want African Americans or women of color going there. We know that a number of the bath houses in the city didn’t really want gay black men going there. That’s why the Mount Morris [Turkish] Baths became so popular in Harlem and stayed open after 1985 when the city closed all but four bath houses. Because it served a purpose for teaching safe sex to gay black men or those black men who didn’t identify as gay but had sex with men. I’m going off here, but it’s all

nuanced—

Q: No, I think it's important because—

Lustbader: No, it's just all very nuanced and delicate. I don't have all the answers, but I just know that there needs to be sensitivity when addressing those issues.

Q: Yes, my sense is that the language changing reflects a kind of coalition-building or coming together of movements that were once separate for reasons that, as you mentioned, were exclusionary and that needs to be addressed.

Lustbader: And with the LGBTQ+ umbrella, I think there's an awareness—at least for me personally—within the community of the others' invisibility and what it means to ensure that that invisibility is part of the story. Even if it's just acknowledged that we don't have the documentation. But that doesn't mean it's not important, in that people still existed. They may not be on the record in a space, but somehow, they existed. Just because it's not in our physical record, doesn't minimize the fact that somehow people were living their lives. I don't know how exactly, but it's part of the story. And until someone tells me otherwise—it's not like there were no black gay people because we didn't document them in Harlem because *x*, *y* and *z*. It existed.

Q: And then there's the challenge of to say that something exists means that you have to identify it as something, how would it have been identified then and how do we translate it to what that means as an identity now. There's a real unique challenge in talking about this history.

Lustbader: And the void is the story itself, the lack of this narrative. It's in conflict with historic preservation, but nevertheless, it exists.

Q: Right. And that panel in '93, was that one of the first academic talks about this?

Lustbader: As far as I know, yes. I don't remember it, even though I suppose I was on the panel. My name's listed.

Q: [Laughter] You don't remember it.

Lustbader: No, I must have been like, "What have I gotten into?" I don't know why Andrew and Jay weren't on the panel.

Q: That's really funny.

Lustbader: I'll have to look back and see what the story was.

Q: That's fascinating. Moving forward a little bit from there, I do want to learn about your time with the New York Landmarks Conservancy because you were there from '94 to 2002? Is that right?

Lustbader: Yes.

Q: And I loved reading the book that you sent me too, *A Passion to Preserve* [*Gay Men as Keepers of Culture*]—

Lustbader: Oh, God, no.

Q: Well, there's a quote in it that I really like where you talk about you have a great affection for old churches and synagogues, not because of the building itself but because of their specific connection to the people who inhabit those places and how they are anchors for their community. So, you're now focused on sacred sites, on religious spaces. Tell me how that affected your philosophy about preservation.

Lustbader: It's rather funny. I grew up in a culturally-identified Jewish family but was the worst practicing Jew. I got bar mitzvahed. I went to college. I grew up in a Jewish ghetto that was a feeder school to a more ethnic, Jewish, Italian, and Irish, so everybody was either Jewish or Roman Catholic. I don't think there were many Protestants. Then, I go to college and I'm around all these people who are various religions. I didn't know what to make of—[laughs]—I mean, I'm saying this on tape, but I thought, you're either Jewish or you're Christian. I didn't know what the levels of Christianity were.

Then, I meet my husband in '87. He has a MDiv [Master of Divinity]. My mother thought he was a priest, which he was not. Then I get this job in '94 where I'm working with religious properties, Eventually, Ed leaves. There's another director, Michael Rebic. He leaves and I get

the job as director of the Sacred Sites Program.

But before that, dealing with all these religious properties, I didn't know the difference between a Lutheran and a Presbyterian, an Episcopalian. I just had a quick primer of what was what. And the irony of all of this was that religiously they're different but similar, culturally they're a little different but similar. I'm going into these spiritual houses of worship, meeting these people that are incredibly dedicated and interested in the building, but in their own spirituality and what these buildings serve as buildings. It was wonderful. It was fun and meaningful because there was a level of care in these interactions. I don't know if in that piece I joked about becoming a social worker for people in their buildings—

Q: You did, yes. Tell me about that.

Lustbader: I remember so clearly being like the call center. "Hi, Sacred Sites Program, how can I help you?" "My roof's leaking. What do I do?" It was like I was a social worker: here's what you need to do, here's who you call. It was fun. It was touching on skills that I have of talking to people, liking to connect dots for people, and liking fixing things. I always liked to fix things. It's having all those little moments in a profession that I really care about. You're going to see religious properties across New York State. Who else gets to get into a car or a plane and drive around for three or four days at a time, to places you never go? Hi, here I am in Balston Spa, New York. Next stop, Albany. Then I'm going to go to Hudson and then over to Catskill. It was great.

Q: My interest in your experience with religious sites is I think there's such a great example of a relationship of people to a built environment because they're so important to a community's ability to worship and practice their beliefs and be who they are.

Lustbader: As you're talking about this, I'm laughing at myself because I'm on tape saying this, and somebody's going to be rolling their eyes, especially the Religious Right. Not for nothing, bar culture for LGBT people is also really important as safe spaces. I think there is a corollary there to religious properties being safe spaces, religious properties allowing people to connect to community, to connect with each other, whether it be safety, community, affinity, jobs, professions, politics, whatever, in the same way that an LGBT bar will serve that purpose for people coming into New York who are new to the community. People who want to connect and learn more and have an identity. They're similar in that way. They serve as really important community anchors and safe spaces.

Q: I'm sold. Tell me how. Why does it need to be a built environment, a physical space to house those communities?

Lustbader: Well, I think nowadays, with the internet, that's wonderful. People who are, especially LGBT youth or adults who are afraid to identify publicly, can find a space and research or look at their identity and reflect that there are others out there. I think genetically, we're made up as social animals, and we need to connect physically and emotionally, face to face, and speak to people. I think that the church plays a role for that as a community. Religion gives us our narrative in how we have a sense of beliefs, and ethics, and morals, and the stories

of who we are on the most basic level.

That serves a purpose there, but I think bars in particular for LGBT people are really important, or were important earlier on because they were the only commercial spaces available to meet people. In New York City, people have roommates. People live on top of each other. People live with their families. You can't have your own identity necessarily, or sexual identity—expression of that—at home, or at a restaurant, or at your church. Now you can.

So I think bars played a really important role. Paradoxically, in New York, they were probably the most regulated, controlling, oppressive environments, but they were the only game in town. They served a purpose for people to connect and have an identity that otherwise would not take place.

Q: In a church, say, the prayer space is built with high ceilings for these lofty thoughts and there has to be a gathering space and there has to be a kitchen because of what the space is used for. What does a bar in Greenwich Village provide physically?

Lustbader: It depends on the time period. Not much! The Mafia would go in—twenty-foot wide front, forty, fifty feet deep depending on the footprint of the building, one floor, go in, and establish a controlled environment. But you could meet other people. That was the big conundrum, starting after Prohibition with the State Liquor Authority, that the State of New York basically regulated the control of licensed bars. And without going into the details, this sort of policy that homosexuals were deemed disorderly and so they can take away a bar's liquor

license. It became this cyclical thing of the Mafia: opening unlicensed private bars, paying off the police, the police arresting people and so forth, but a bar was a bar. It was a place to have a drink, a watered-down drink, but you could meet people. And as social animals, it diminishes one's isolation and one's self-loathing because you see other people that are like you. They became safe spaces, albeit pretty crappy ones, that were scary and risked raid and arrest and things like that.

Q: And how did the role of the bar develop over time, once it wasn't just Mob-run?

Lustbader: I think they still—again, when I was in New York, bar culture was rich and the physical spaces themselves changed. This is just anecdotal, but they went from Stonewall, which was a defensible space—you had to go through a door, there was a bouncer, you had to sign in. It was a private club. One side was the bar with a little dance area in the back. The other side was a bigger space. It was two buildings. I think it's important to note that Stonewall, why it was so unusual as a bar, was that it was two twenty-five foot buildings put together, as opposed to perhaps other bars that were smaller, and because it had a big dance floor.

But bars changed over time because the investment in them became greater, for primarily white, cis-gendered, gay men. More concentrations of people were going to them. Greenwich Village, then it shifted, Christopher Street after Stonewall. Then through the AIDS epidemic, a lot of the population died and then rents were shifting. Then it moved to Chelsea, and now it's in Hell's Kitchen and in Brooklyn. But bars still play an important role.

Q: So, in a way, the spaces changed as the needs of the community changed.

Lustbader: Or the needs, or the lack of community. The loss, too, of community. This doesn't touch on, again, the void of whose narrative isn't getting represented in this one interview.

Lesbian bars have always had a disproportionate, lower number of spaces because the difficulty in women raising capital for lesbian bars, the lack of safety of people going to lesbian bars. It's just a different social aspect. I think New York City, at the moment, has three lesbian bars that are identified as full-time lesbian bars, where New York once had dozens more.

Q: Going back to the Sacred Sites work you were doing, obviously, you have an eye for LGBT history in your work and in your advocacy work outside of the Sacred Sites program. Did you find places of LGBT history that existed within the sacred sites you were visiting and working at?

Lustbader: No, I had a job at the Landmarks Conservancy. I had nothing to do with LGBT history at the time. Seriously, I was like, "I'm the Sacred Sites director. We are doing this job!" I was having a great time. At the same time—and Jay and Andrew can talk about this—they wrote the National Register [of Historic Places] nomination in '99 for Stonewall. They were working on that after Stonewall 25. And Jay and Andrew can talk about, in 1993, the first efforts to get Stonewall listed on the National Register. That was involved in OLGAD—I remember that. In '99, it was Stonewall 30 and Andrew and Jay were working on something. David Carter was writing his book on Stonewall. That was feeding some of the research.

I didn't really have much to do with that other than knowing that was going on. It was exciting, but I had a job. I didn't do anything related to this other than just being a good citizen. It wasn't until much, much later that Jay was—we did some National Trust [for Historic Preservation] presentations. He did something, and I know in 2011, we did something in Buffalo. And that was great. Jay was advising. There were people starting to write their theses on this. It was just kind of wild that, oh, wow, people are doing something that I had done really early on. It was sort of shocking to me: “Wow, that's great, amazing. More people are doing this.”

Q: Was it not until the twenty-teens when you got pulled back into this world?

Lustbader: Yes, I had left the Landmarks Conservancy in 2002. Then I worked as a consultant to the Lower Manhattan Emergency Preservation Fund, which was this group of five preservation organizations that formed in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 to advocate for preservation around and on Ground Zero. That was great. Then I got a job as a consultant, as a program officer at the J.M. Kaplan Fund. That was in 2007.

There were certain things, like we all went to Buffalo to participate in a panel at the National Trust for Historic Preservation conference. I was like, okay, but it wasn't really until 2013, I was getting itchy. We should do something with place-based LGBT history in New York. If we don't do this—if I don't do this—I'm going to be really upset. If someone else comes up with this in the city and takes this away from me, and Jay, and Andrew, I'm going to be pissed off. I knew other places were doing things. There was this Rainbow Heritage Network and then there were other interests.

And I emailed Gale Harris, Andrew, and Jay, and we had lunch at Old Town Bar, I think, in April or so of 2013. I said, “We should do something.” I was working at the J.M. Kaplan Fund. I sort of knew how to put together a budget. What is this going to cost? I was reviewing grant proposals. I worked on the not-for-profit side. So I said let me figure this out.

I got busy, and I didn’t do anything. Then Jonathan Ned Katz had emailed me in 2014 and wanted to know something about his project, which was OutHistory, and something about place-based history. I was not clear exactly what it was. But I think it was April of 2014, I said, “Well, let’s have a meeting.” It was with me, Jay, Andrew I think was there, Jonathan Ned Katz, a woman, Claire Potter, who’s a professor at New School, and we explained who we are and what we’re doing and said what we should be doing. I said, “Well, it’s now or never. If I don’t do this, it’s my own fault.”

I said, “I’ll put together a budget.” At that point, I did put together a budget, and then within weeks of that, Andrew called and said that Kathy Howe and Kath LaFrank at the State of New York [Historic] Preservation Office sent him an announcement that there was a grant opportunity for underrepresented communities. And it was basically a very fast turnaround. Within that fast turnaround, I worked with Jay and crafted something with him, and submitted the proposal and we got the grant months later.

I never officially learned about the grant in the letter, because it was facilitated through the State of New York. But I did learn from an email in October of 2014 that I got from Dan Bluestone

when I was working at the J.M. Kaplan Fund. It said, “Congratulations. Look what’s going on in New York City.” He was forwarding the press announcement from the [United States] National Parks Service. “Someone got a grant to do the work you started in 1993.” I read it and I was sort of like, “Oh, my God, that’s me.” We got the grant. I just emailed Dan back saying, “I’m sorry, Dan, it’s my left hand passing the torch to my right hand.” Because he said, “Congratulations on passing the torch to the next generation.” And I said, “It’s not the next generation. It’s me.” So that was that.

Q: That was 2014, right? And that leads directly to 2015, starting the LGBT Sites Project?

Lustbader: Well, we got the grant and then Jay and I with Andrew were like, okay, we got a grant for \$49,999—because the state can’t go over fifty [thousand dollars] without it being a whole other type of grant. What do we do? I said we have to raise money because we can’t do much. In the grant application were a number of deliverables; it was a lot of deliverables considering the amount of money we had, which was sort of staggering in hindsight. It was to do five National Register nominations, and a reconnaissance survey, and to write a historic context statement for New York City. And surveys, intensive level surveys.

We knew we had to do the five National Register nominations and the general survey, and the historic context statement. I said, “Let’s try to raise money because we need to hire someone.” Then we need a platform to do this website thing. What are we going to do? It was supposed to be Historypin, which was a platform. Without going into the boring details, we didn’t use Historypin. But I went to the Arcus Foundation and met with Kevin Jennings and he said, “It’s

great you got this grant. It's great you want to leverage it. One area of Arcus' grantmaking is LGBT-related, but everyone comes to us for a handout. I love history, but this isn't LGBT history. This is New York City history. What I suggest is you go out and find some other funder in New York, who's really interested in LGBT history, or history and preservation, and come back to me, and I'll match it up to fifty thousand dollars."

So I did. I came back and worked on the grant proposal and got the grant by connecting the New York Community Trust and Arcus: we were able to raise one hundred thousand dollars. So, at that point, we had one hundred and fifty and we were able to then say we were going to hire someone. In August of 2016—was it that long?—we officially hired Amanda Davis as the project manager. Yes, it was that long, oh, my God.

We were well into the grant period without doing anything. Then, we subsequently applied for another grant from the federal government, which we got. We learned about it right before [President Barack H.] Obama left office. We made sure that the money was transferred from the federal government to the state before January 20, 2017.

Q: Wow. So, it sounds like you were the budget person.

Lustbader: Pretty much, yes.

Q: And that goes a long way to making things possible.

Lustbader: I would say I was sort of the business manager of the project, yes.

Q: So, when you say it was really ambitious and there were a lot of deliverables, can you list off what these deliverables were or what the initial vision was?

Lustbader: My initial vision was like, “Let’s do a reconnaissance survey. Put this on a spreadsheet and call it a day. We’ll have these sites and we’ll figure it out from there.” The grant proposal was back and forth with the State of New York with Kathy and Kath. I was going away. I was leaving on vacation. I wasn’t paying attention at a certain point, when it was finalized—but I’m sure I did pay attention. That’s an excuse. But when I look back now and I see: we had to do five National Register nominations. We had to do a historic context statement for LGBT history in New York City. We have to do survey forms. That’s incredibly ambitious for a two-year grant period at a fifty-thousand-dollar budget. San Francisco and Los Angeles have LGBT context statements that they worked on for years with Getty [Foundation] funding, which received lots of money. We had a really limited way to do this. And LGBT history in New York City is a huge undertaking.

Q: Yes, it is huge. It kind of touches on what we were saying earlier about who’s missing and how do these terms apply. Does this person belong on the map or do they not, depending on how they identify. Tell me how you tackled those issues moving forward in the project?

Lustbader: We did as best as we could. We identified by theme. Jay worked on this with Amanda, and Jay had written a lot of the South Village [Historic] Designation Report, which had

a whole section on LGBT history. He wrote that. He wrote the Gansevoort Market [Historic] District, which is in the Meatpacking District, in which he included LGBT history. So he took the lead and synthesized all that, and then we all worked together. He and Amanda worked on creating themes by chapter, and then he slipped in these addresses. We made a conscious note to acknowledge that this is a work in progress and it only can include what we know now. It's not meant to be an intentional erasure. It's just unintentional consequences of time and money and what we know right now of what the record is.

But as a project, we've been reaching out. We've done community-based meetings in all five boroughs. We've tried to tease out and get information from people. It's challenging.

Documenting LGBT place-based history is really difficult. Records are not often kept. Records are destroyed. People destroy them. Families destroy them. The LGBT community often doesn't even acknowledge their own history as being important, so records are thrown out. LGBT community spaces are often transient. They move around a lot, so the documentation is hard.

Then there's the burden of proof. People say, "Is that person gay or not gay?" If the burden of proof that someone was straight was as high a threshold, nobody would be straight. Here's what the facts are. It's a lot of little moving parts.

Q: How has your understanding of the history been changed by working on this project?

Lustbader: It hasn't so much been changed other than my appreciation for the people who were doing the work early on were incredibly brave and courageous. Whether someone is the father of

the movement, or the mother of the movement—anyone who is in those early days of activism—it's just unbelievable to me. The risk of loss was so high, in terms of loss of family, loss of job, loss of income, and friends, being ostracized. I just can't believe how brave people were.

I look at the photographs and the moving images of the first Pride Parade. It was 1970. People are walking up Sixth Avenue from Greenwich Village to the park. The footage is incredible of people in the park. I mean, I was terrified of coming out in college, or as a young adult in the '80s in New York City. Here these people are in 1970, no problem. This doesn't even account for the people in the '50s and '60s, who were so active in the movement, Randy [Randolfe Hayden] Wicker, who was on television, or Dick [Richard Joseph] Leitsch, Barbara Gittings, Martha Shelley. All these people, amazing.

Q: Tell me how this resource you guys have created has been used. What has it led to?

Lustbader: The project website is primarily—you can enter it through—a map. You can go on the site, and click and filter it by theme, or you can go on by various filters. It's an online exhibition, and it was designed that way. Each site entry is categorized by building type as well as by significance. We associate each building type with a level of significance, and you can filter all that.

So it's a mini-exhibition of sorts but also each entry is a Wiki page. I have to say it's all documented, and it's very clearly documented, and our information is so accurate that we've corrected people who have photo captions incorrectly, or people who have said buildings were

certain places that are not correct. I can't tell you how we've spent time analyzing something.

I think it's great because it's a record that can be used as a launching point for people. I think the other part of what's important is that it's history that people can access even though they're isolated or they're in their own homes. If they're scared to go to a Pride Parade, scared to go to a library to take out anything, they can go to our website and it really is accurate. It's not a blog post of someone's random thoughts. We do use other sources, but we're analyzing everything and categorizing it. It's a high level of significance. So it's really scholarly. We wanted it to be fun and curious, but we also wanted it to be scholarly. I think it's used by people as a stepping-stone for more information. Our entries are just brief snippets but there are ways to learn more. I think that's the real benefit.

I think the other benefit is to really use it as a teaching tool. We're using it now going to public schools in New York, working with seventh and eighth grade presentations, and with eleventh and twelfth graders, to show them that LGBT history is American history. It's New York City history.

When we show them where Lorraine Hansberry lived in Greenwich Village, where she wrote *A Raisin in the Sun*, they're blown away that they see the building where she actually wrote the play that they've studied. But then they're blown away, saying, "I didn't know she was a lesbian." Well, she was married, and that becomes a layered bit of information, or that she got divorced and she fell in love with a woman. She couldn't be out publicly but she wrote under a pseudonym for *Daughters of Bilitis*, which had an early lesbian magazine. That's a story that no

one knows. That's a story that's not told generally in high school.

Those are the little details of rounding out a person's life. People would say, "Why is it important that you're discussing their sexuality?" Well, the assumption is, "Why is it important to talk about anyone else's lives?" This is an important facet of her life. Her sexuality identified her life as an activist. She was writing for *Daughters of Bilitis*. The same thing with James Baldwin, or any other artist or architect who was designing work in New York.

Q: So it sounds like what you're describing to me is not just a unique rigor of the source but unique, engaged outreach. Also you have a premise, you have a point of view. You have your own academic voice as it were with this project. How is that defined as a team? What is your premise, if you were going to say it in a pithy way? What is your goal? What is your stance?

Lustbader: We haven't even discussed this collectively amongst us, but I think our goal is to document LGBT history in New York City to show that there are sites related specifically to LGBT history, and historical events such as Stonewall, which is obvious and self-reverential, as well as sites related to LGBT history that demonstrate the community's influence on American culture. That would be a performance venue, the home of an individual where a notable work of literature was written, to a place of oppression, to a place of celebration, or medical discovery. We have them all categorized, but it's really to show that there were LGBT lives in New York City predating Stonewall, and the texture and the cultural landscape of New York is informed by LGBT heritage.

Here are the locations where this took place, and here are the places you could see physically. You can go to where Christine Jorgensen was raised in the Bronx, and when she came home after her sex reassignment surgery in 1953, and she landed at Idlewild [Airport], now JFK, and went to the Bronx, where she was surrounded by press in this house in Throgs Neck. Or you can go and see in Queens where Frank [Franklin Edward] Kameny was raised, who is the father of the LGBT rights movement, who was incredibly effective as an activist.

Or you can go see [Elizabeth] Alice Austen, where she lived in Staten Island with Gertrude Tate, and know that she had a same-sex relationship for over fifty-plus years. That's where her pioneering photography was developed.

That's why it matters. It matters for people to know, especially gay youth, that there's a legacy there, there's a narrative. LGBT history isn't passed down from generation to generation because you don't have the same structure in a family that you do if you're African American or Jewish, or Italian, Irish. Whatever your narrative is, your parents tell you where you come from. Except mine. [Laughter] But you don't have that in a family.

Q: Yes, so sort of passed across instead of down.

Lustbader: Right, right. So, we are creating a baseline of information for people to use.

Q: What about the five designation reports? What became of those?

Lustbader: So, there were five National Register nominations. Of the 93,500 sites that are currently on the National Register, only nineteen are officially associated with LGBT history. Stonewall was listed on the National Register in 1999. For at least a dozen years, it was the only one on the National Register. I think when we wrote the grant application in 2014, there were only two, Stonewall and the Henry Gerber House [National Historic Landmark].

So, of the five that we were required to write, Mark Meinke out in DC wrote one for the Bayard Rustin [Residence] House and it was folded into our project. Amanda wrote the nomination for Caffè Cino in Greenwich Village as the birthplace of Off-Broadway theater. Andrew wrote the nomination for Julius' on West Tenth and Waverly, the 1966 place for the Sip-In. He wrote the Earl Hall nomination at Columbia, which is the location of the first Student Homophile League. We also amended the National Register's nomination of the Alice Austen House to reflect her pioneering female photography and her relationship with Gertrude Tate for over fifty-plus years. We're currently working on the James Baldwin House on West 71st Street and the Holy Apostles Church [Church of the Holy Apostles], which is in Chelsea.

Q: And the impact of those is not just visibility but protection, funding—

Lustbader: No, the National Register's more honorific. It doesn't come with any real protection other than if you are using state or federal funds to do anything to the building. You would then have to have a Section 106 [of the National Historic Preservation Act] review and a mitigation plan, but in most cases, it's honorary. It comes with the fact that you're permanently memorializing LGBT history in a federal record. The Register is obviously the federal

government's record of historic and culturally important sites throughout the country. To have LGBTQ recognized in that same stratosphere is really important.

Q: Then in 2015, Stonewall was designated by the LPC [Landmarks Preservation Commission]. Did you guys have a hand in that?

Lustbader: We didn't have a hand collectively as a project in a sense. Jay was advocating internally for it to be individually landmarked. That was going nowhere. He was told—and he can talk about it when you speak to him—that it was already protected since it was in a designated historic district. Stonewall happened in June of '69. The district was designated in April of '69. Clearly, it doesn't reflect any of that history.

I was advocating for it quietly, speaking to people at the Commission. What was happening was—God, this interview can go on too long—I was working with the National Parks Conservation Association on the designation of the Stonewall National Monument. That was taking place in 2015. The Commission knew about it. So how can you have Obama work on designating Stonewall National Monument, and not have it be a local city landmark?

The Commission knew that. I was speaking to people in [Representative] Jerry [Jerrold Lewis] Nadler's office. We had debates and a staffer there was like, "No, it doesn't need to be a landmark." I was like, "It should be a landmark, an individual landmark." My argument was always, "Yes, it's a cultural site." The Commission was always struggling with how do you regulate it? My attitude was that you can regulate it by simply having character-defining features

of 1969 reflected in the façade. It remains the same from the period of significance. Regulate the windows to what was character-defining at the time, the same thing with the door entrance. They designated it in June of 2015, a year before Stonewall was designated a national monument.

Q: Tell me about the national monument process.

Lustbader: I had heard about this meeting taking place, and these panel discussions of experts in Washington that the Parks Service was pulling together, and I was miffed—I should say disappointed. Who were they speaking to from New York? They weren't speaking to me. They weren't speaking to Jay. They weren't speaking to Andrew or David Carter. These were people that wrote the designation report.

Somehow, I connected with them and got myself invited to a meeting. It was with Cortney Worrall and the National Parks Conservation Association. They had a plan to advocate for the making of a national monument, which I thought was rather heady. How are we going to do this? We had already applied for the first grant. I didn't want anything to jeopardize that or be at odds with that. But being who I am, was like, I'm going to go and listen to what's going on and I got involved.

Then Jay and I did a tour for them in November of 2014. By default, they said we should have a tour. This was November. It was freezing out and I worked with Cortney and Jay on creating a tour. By default, we led them from Pfaff's, which is at Broadway and Bleecker, all the way to Stonewall. It was a freezing day that wound up at NYU [New York University] with a lunch.

But then I kept on going and I became part of a small group of people going down to DC and meeting with the [United States] Department of the Interior, the Obama LGBT liaison, various meetings on a number of occasions to say that if you're ever going to designate something to LGBT history, Stonewall has clearly been documented and clearly is one, if not the most important site at the moment.

If it hadn't been for the legwork of Jay, and Andrew, and David Carter's research in '99, I don't think it would have been as easy to demonstrate to Jim [Jonathan B.] Jarvis at the Parks Service, or the other people involved, how significant it was. It also gave me credibility that we had started this project. We had a name; it wasn't just me. It was a collection: me, Jay, Andrew. We had a plan. We had this grant at that point, although we hadn't really started it. It was great. It was fun.

Q: It must have been really gratifying to see all these governmental, official recognitions of the meaning of the place come through.

Lustbader: Oh, yes, it was wild. And to see other people who were supporting the concept of LGBT place-based heritage. I go back to little old me in graduate school, who had this hare-brained idea and suddenly Stonewall—and advocates to have Stonewall nominated were told in 1993 that it should not be a historic landmark—is a national monument.

There's this amazing letter that I have a copy of here. It was Gale Harris who, through OLGAD, advocated for Stonewall being considered as a National Historic Landmark. "Oh, we should

make it happen. We should identify Stonewall,” which was part of that panel discussion. Gale took the lead on it and got a “nice” letter [from the National Park Service] basically, saying, “Sorry, it’s too early. Gay history’s being written.” Maybe come back and look at something else that’s not just a riot. Maybe something more celebratory.

[In 1999,] there were also issues of owner consent. This is an amazing story that Jay and Andrew should talk about, where the building owner was the Duell family. They didn’t want to give owner consent for the building. Obviously for National Register status, you need owner consent, or you can’t have the owner not consent. So, that didn’t happen.

That’s why in ‘99 with the support of the [President William J. “Bill”] Clinton administration, they did the second attempt to get it listed. That changed the dynamic because the Clinton administration was supportive. Jay and Andrew should really talk about this part of it because it’s important history. There was somebody in the Clinton administration that really wanted to get this done. Andrew was contacted by the National Park Service to consider the nomination of Stonewall. He needed a sponsor and the Greenwich Village Society for Historic Preservation agreed. Andrew took the lead with Jay, and David Carter was doing research for his book that was being published in ‘94. He had a lot of data. He fed that to Jay and Andrew.

There was an issue about owner consent; it was still owned by the Duell family. Andrew then working with Kath LeFrank at the State Historic Preservation office, Kath came up with an idea that since most of the activity of the riots—uprising/rebellion—took place on the streets, the streets have to be part of the narrative. So, the streets represent over fifty percent of the

ownership, and the streets are owned by the City of New York. Therefore, you can have the City of New York, who supported the nomination, represent over fifty percent owner consent, and that's how it happened.

So in 1999, it was on the state register, and then it went fast track to the National Register, and then a faster track to the National Historic Landmark in 2000.

Q: From my perspective, it seems like we went from advocating for recognizing that Stonewall was important to history to now saying Stonewall isn't enough. We need to go beyond Stonewall in recognizing LGBT history.

Lustbader: I wouldn't categorize it as it's not enough. I would simply say it's one element of LGBT history. How do you define LGBT lives as inclusive as any site? I say in this romanticized, flowery way: we're looking at New York City through an LGBT lens. Stonewall is one element of a rich narrative of LGBT lives in New York City. As such, it's an important one because it's a key turning point. But if you add up all the other sites, we now have some context. We can understand better how to contextualize other locations in relationship to Stonewall.

And that's what was happening before. People were saying, well, Stonewall's the only site. Stonewall's the most important. Well, there are plenty of other sites in New York City that are important to LGBT history. They're just different types of sites—but they're part of the story. It's like saying if you're going to be looking at anyone's history, here's the best of the best and nothing else is important. We're all building blocks of one another.

If you didn't have where the Mattachine Society was meeting beforehand—and that's the problem now—people don't know that there were other histories and other peoples leading up to Stonewall. If you didn't know that, you'd think Stonewall—as I say, people think it happened and came out of Zeus' head, like this new god. No! It was part of a trajectory.

Q: We're coming up on Stonewall 50. The story, as we sort of began, was around Stonewall 25. If you could sort of do a reverse time capsule and send it back in time, what kind of messages do you think you'd send yourself about where we stand now, twenty-five years later?

Lustbader: I am shocked that in 1992, '93, I was working on my thesis and met these random people who were historic preservationists, working on this little tiny project, doing a map. And that we are, twenty-five years later—which seems like a long time, but I guess in life, it's not that long—LGBT place-based heritage is in the zeitgeist now. Who knew that would happen? I had no idea.

I feel really lucky that we started this project when we did, and that we are now a mini-not-for-profit of sorts, doing all this work that a multi-faceted not-for-profit would be doing: survey, website, National Register nominations, school presentations, regular presentations, walking tours, social media. It's pretty robust. And we're conveying LGBT history. That would be my goal in '94. The fact that we're doing it now is amazing and incredibly gratifying. It's great.

Q: What kind of advice do you think you would give to somebody starting in preservation now,

in this current environment?

Lustbader: In terms of—

Q: If somebody was just getting into preservation, LGBT-specific preservation, what do you think they would need to know?

Lustbader: I would say you have to have your heart and passion in this because you are going to be met with obstacles in terms of documentation, and the public's understanding of what you're talking about. But the benefits, if you really care about your own history and using buildings to tell stories about LGBT history, it's fun and important. No one else is going to do it.

Q: Where do you think we'll be in another twenty-five years? What do you hope? What's next?

Lustbader: I hope that in the next twenty-five years that we continue to document these sites, but I know that the historic record is going to be much better in terms of documentation just because of people's visibility now, and record-keeping, and awareness. There's a digital record, I hope, that's kept of where people met. That's been the most difficult part: lack of photographs, lack of documentation, lack of addresses. I'm hoping that people now, who are making history, that they have the foresight to preserve their history. So people like me in twenty-five to fifty years could have eureka moments saying, "Oh my God. Look how fun that is! We found that."

Kay [Tobin] Lahusen, who's Barbara Gittings' partner, she's still alive. She lives in an assisted

living facility in Pennsylvania. She was photo documenting the movement in the '60s, '70s, '80s. Her record is incredible because it's such important documents. She knew it was really important to document this. She spoke last week—we heard her.—she said, “Someone would need this. Our history is important.”

With all the ephemeral nature of Instagram stories, or Snapchat, I hope someone has the foresight to say, “Let's archive these.” And I hope it's not just Facebook because that's going to be difficult to access. The LGBT community needs to document itself: what's a snapshot to someone today is an archival record in the future.

Q: What kind of plan do you have for your records, for these things that you've just pulled out for any research you did over the past twenty-five years, where's that going to go?

Lustbader: [Laughs] My record files are so slim that anyone can have them! Seriously.

Q: I hope you're taking good care of them at least until some archive claims them.

Lustbader: Yes, they're here. I mean, this [pointing to an OLGAD poster] was given to me randomly by a former OLGAD member. I said, “Do you have any old maps?” He said, “Yes, I've got hundreds and I have some of the early poster board stuff.”

I think it's great that you guys are documenting this because—just in the emails between us—people didn't know when OLGAD was started. Jay, and Andrew and I, and Gale, and some of

the others, can tease out that history, but the fact that OLGAD—it had a preservation arm to it. No one knew the real organizational history until a couple of months ago. I think it's important for NYPAP [New York Preservation Archive Project] to get that record too because that's going to be another element of who we are and what we're doing. It's only a small handful of people in New York that are really interested in doing this, or have been doing this.

Q: We're right at two hours. Is there anything that I didn't ask you that I should have?

Lustbader: No, I think there are certain things that are important to document accurately, and we don't have a written record, but there should be one. It's about, for example, the National Register story from '93 to '99, 2000. Jay and Andrew could really talk about that. That's very important from a historical record and how that happened. Then, separately, is the whole specificity of the making of the national monument, which was with NPCA, National Parks Conservation Association, and those players, and how that happened. Then the historic context statement is something that probably Jay should talk about, about why that's so important. Those are three elements of specific LGBT history that have been taking place.

Q: What about people who need to be named or given credit to, who may not otherwise be known?

Lustbader: There are a number of people on the OLGAD Preservation Committee that were involved, who should be acknowledged just for the historic record. I wasn't remembering everybody's names, but I know we can put them together. There are a lot of people from NPCA

that are outside of New York City, like Chad Lord and some others. That record could be put together. The same thing with the making of the monument. The people in the Clinton administration—those names for the record—who actually were involved. And Andrew and Jay, I know we did some research on that. Then there were numerous elected officials that were involved in helping lubricate the wheels for the monument, like Jerry Nadler’s office, and Robert Atterbury, who were instrumental in making that happen. As well as at the state level, [Assemblymember] Deborah Glick and [State Senator] Brad Hoylman. Those are some other elements of it.

Q: Great, it sounds like I should follow up with you about those notes.

Lustbader: Yes, definitely.

Q: Throw them in there as an addendum.

Lustbader: Yes, definitely, and to see who else is in the cast. Then maybe other people who were at Columbia, like Tatum Taylor [Chaubal], who wrote her thesis on interpreting house museums. That’s another person. It’s such a fluid sort of interest; some are not necessarily doing that work now.

Gwen Shockey is another person that is a different avenue. She’s an artist, a fine art photographer. She’s been documenting lesbian bars in the city for a project. Again, I don’t know how far back historically you want to go, but the ‘90s were the early parts of all of this. I’m still

shocked that we're doing it.

Q: Well, it's a great place to start and thank you so much for your stories and your time. I really learned a lot and had a wonderful time talking with you.

Lustbader: Oh, you're welcome. Thank you for doing it. It's great. It's crazy I'm being recorded for an oral history, part of a history that still makes me think—I was thirty. Who knew?

Q: Right, right. Well, thank you. I'll turn this off now.

[END OF SESSION]