

Interview Transcript

The Newsletter: A Lesbian Position – Linda Anderson

Details

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- Interviewer: Ellen Huggins
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00:00:02 ELLEN HUGGINS [EH]:

Okay, awesome. All right. So today is March 4th, 2025. And we are doing an interview with Linda about the Lesbian Position newsletter. Linda, would you mind introducing yourself for the record?

LINDA ANDERSON [LA]: I'm Linda Anderson, and I lived in New Haven, Connecticut for 40 years, and now I'm in Saint Augustine, Florida, until I can figure out how to get out of here.

EH: I'm Ellen Huggins, and I'm currently based in Newport, Rhode Island. Linda, would you mind just telling me briefly about your connection to Mev Miller and/or the Wanderground archive?

LA: Well, Mev and I knew one another in New Haven. And we were both part of the Lesbian community there. We were both activists and political and you know; it was kind of a small town. So a lot of us knew one another, and we would get together all the time and for various different reasons. I've known Mev since then and knew that they were doing the Wanderground from years ago and have kind of stayed on the mailing list and things like that. So that's how I know Mev.

EH: And have you gotten a chance to see the Wanderground in person yet?

LA: No, I haven't.

EH: Yeah, it just opened up recently. So, do you still live in New Haven then? Are you still—? No. You said Florida, now you're in Florida. Okay.

LA: In Saint Augustine, Florida, right now.

EH: Yeah, got it. And I'm interested in how you first became connected to New Haven, or did you grow up in that area? Did you move there for work?

LA: When I was 19, I was emotionally blackmailed into marrying a man who I liked, but I did not want to get married to. But my mother wouldn't allow that. So, we got married. He was from New York City; I was in Illinois.

EH: Oh, that's where you're originally from? Illinois?

LA: I'm originally from Illinois.

EH: Okay.

LA: And I left Illinois with him, and we went back to New York. And I didn't like New York, had never been to New York. I'd never didn't really know anything about it. So we got on 95 North, driving up the Turnpike from New York City, and we got off at a bunch of different towns, and we got to New Haven and said, 'Oh, this'll do.' And I was extremely traumatized and depressed from that whole situation. And I went to see a therapist, and the therapist heard my story, and he said, 'You don't need therapy. You need the women's movement.' And I said, 'What's that?' And he sent me down to the local New Haven Women's Liberation Center. And I joined a consciousness-raising group.

EH: Interesting.

LA: And my life flipped 180 [degrees].

EH: Wow. And what year was this? Was this the late '60s?

LA: This was 1969 when I moved to New Haven.

EH: Okay.

LA: And it was through—that therapist, introducing me to feminism. Then, at that time in New Haven, Connecticut, there was a great deal of political activity going on. The antiwar movement was very strong. The civil rights movement was very strong. The women's movement was becoming very strong. And I just dove into all of it because it was a whole new world for this little Midwestern kid who really didn't know anything. I didn't know anything.

00:05:37 EH:
Yeah.

LA: So, it was through those groups that I eventually met up with, you know, Mev and all the other people. And, of course, you know, when a lot of us who were—thought we were straight at the time, got turned on to all of this stuff. We just left our husbands in droves, quite literally. And I came out. So, that's the short version.

EH: And would you mind describing like, what—in terms of when you were first connecting with the lesbian community in New Haven, where did you first start meeting like other Lesbians and start connecting?

LA: New Haven Women's Liberation Center.

EH: Okay, so it was there that you started—Interesting.

LA: Consciousness-raising groups. And there was something called the New Women's Group. I think that's what it was called. And it just happened to be down the street at the Unitarian church where I was living. And every week there would be a presenter, a woman from the community, a feminist who would talk on a topic having to do with feminism. And then we would break up into small groups and talk about what they had presented. And that was life changing for a lot of us. That was where we started to understand why we as women were all so miserable.

EH: Right.

LA: And what we were up against. And you know, I moved into a women's collective living situation, which a lot of us were doing at that time because we were poor. We didn't have any money. And that's how we survived. We just all lived together. And that became our— that became my family, for sure.

EH: And where were you working at the time? In New Haven?

LA: Well, let's see. The New Haven Women's Liberation Center actually got some grants. There used to be—it was called 'VISA,' V—I—S—A. 'Volunteers in Service to America', and it was a stipend from the government that paid a person to work in nonprofit social justice organizations. And so the New Haven Women's Center got a grant and hired two staff people, and I was one of them. And I did that for several years. Then in the early '80s, I was hired by Yale University, who had just started their Women's Studies program. It was brand new in the early '80s, and they hired me as their first administrative assistant. So that's where I spent 25 years working there. But prior to that, it was, you know, working at the Women's Center and then various kind of odd jobs here and there.

00:10:13 EH:

And was it—at the Women's Center, is that where you met the people who had helped to start Lesbian Position, or how did that go?

LA: First of all, it's not, 'The Lesbian Position'. It's just 'Lesbian Position'—no, it's 'A Lesbian Position'.

EH: Got it.

LA: And we were very deliberate about that. We didn't want to brand ourselves as 'The Lesbian Position', as if we're the authority. 'This is just one Lesbian position.'

EH: Okay. Thank you for that, then. That's good.

LA: And it was—it's common. People did it all the time then, and we'd go, 'No no no no no. That's not what we mean.' Yeah. We're not any kind of authority, this is just one—

EH: Yeah.

LA: Um, I don't know. You know, we were always doing potluck suppers. And political organizing at the potluck suppers, and I think— I can't remember, but you know, somebody must have said, 'Let's do a newsletter.' And so a bunch of us did. That's what I remember about it starting. That's the way we did anything. It's like, 'Let's do this.' 'Okay, done.'

EH: And it was already a community you were talking to a lot and obviously having these kind of big conversations with. So it just kind of came up naturally as a newsletter was something you guys wanted to do, or—

LA: Well, we needed a way to communicate with one another.

EH: Yeah.

LA: You know, we didn't—there was no internet. We had our phones with our answering machines. But there was no sort of, you know, central news outlet. And I'll say, there was the Women's Center and these various political action groups, but there was no media. So, we knew we wanted and needed a little bit of media people could subscribe to and get information about what was going on and upcoming events and write little articles, and this and that.

EH: And so was the audience that you guys were imagining for A Lesbian Position—it the people that you already knew in New Haven, or was it a wider group of New England Lesbians that you wanted—?

LA: No, it was just New Haven.

EH: It was New Haven- specific. Okay.

LA: We had no money to start it. So, I can't even remember—I think we charged \$3 for a subscription, and I think maybe we, you know, raised a little money for the first issue that way or something. But yeah, we wanted a way to communicate with one another. And that wasn't going to happen with the existing media that was out there.

EH: Right. And I guess a question I have, coming from someone who is from a generation where newsletters aren't really a common thing to get in the mail or even over email, I'm wondering were newsletters at that time just sort of something you received a lot of in the mail? Were you subscribed to a lot of newsletters from other people, or was this sort of like—?

LA: No, of course there were tons of newsletters, and if you go to the Wanderground and look

through Mev's collection, you'll see newsletters from all over the country.

EH: Right.

LA: Everybody was doing newsletters because how else were we going to communicate?

EH: Right.

LA: There was no other way except the phone. That was it.

EH: Yeah. That's true. And I guess I'm curious too, like, what was the process of you all coming together and even just assembling the newsletter? Was that like, you guys would meet up at a certain place at a certain time and sit down and I don't know—cut and paste things together? Or do you remember what those meetings were like?

LA: Exactly. It was cut and paste. And I'm trying to—we would meet at one another's houses and—gosh, I certainly remember typing up on the typewriter little news notices about whatever. And, you know, typing it up on a piece of paper, and then we'd go—we had—what size is that? 8.5 by 14 [inches]. Does that sound right? For a piece of paper?

00:15:10 EH:
Yeah.

LA: You fold it in half and then it becomes 8.5 by 7 [inches]. Is that right? That sounds about right. I think that's what it was. And we would, you know, get out our rubber cement and our scissors and cut out the articles and cut out little graphics and paste it to the page and take it down to the local Xerox copying store and say, 'Make me 300 copies of these.'

EH: Wow.

LA: And then we'd get them back, and then we had to collate them and we had to fold them. Then we had to put them in envelopes, and then we had to put postage on it, and then we had to keep the addresses. I mean that was going on all over the country. That was not just in New Haven. And it was kind of the precursor to—remember when people were making zines?

EH: Yeah.

LA: That was sort of the next incarnation. But yeah, newsletters, paper newsletters have existed forever, for a long time as a way of communicating.

EH: Yeah. And while I was looking through them, I noticed there were so many different clubs, activities, things being advertised. And I'm wondering, how did you find out about all of those things? Like, what was the submission process like for somebody who wanted to advertise their Lesbian club in A Lesbian Position? Or how did people send in those things, and how did you

guys sort through that?

LA: I think in the beginning, most of the content we created amongst yourselves in the group. You know, we didn't have, like, a formal—it was very informal. There wasn't like a formal submission policy where you sent in your thing, and then we had to, like, vote on it. We printed it. Whatever anybody sent in, it's like, 'Yeah, give it to me, I don't care. Whatever it is, we'll print it. Why not?' You know?

EH: And did people in the group as well suggest, 'I want to write an article about this, or I want to write a book review about that' ? And it was just allowed to be in the newsletter? It wasn't like a very formal—

LA: Oh my gosh. No, no, no.

EH: Yeah. So, it sounds like there was a lot of, like, creativity of people being able to contribute what they wanted. What did that look like for you? How did you contribute to the newsletter in terms of your own writing or—?

LA: I wrote a few articles and some reviews and stuff like that. I'm trying—you know, other people did too. But I haven't looked at a paper copy of that newsletter in many, many, many, many, many years. I can't even remember what's—I don't have any other copies here left. But yeah, it was informal. It was very informal.

EH: Yeah. I mean, looking through it, I saw some articles from you that were, like, political opinion pieces and then some were book reviews. There seemed to be a range of things that you were interested in.

LA: Yes.

EH: Right. Do you remember if anyone who was part of the newsletter team took on any specific responsibilities or, you know, in terms of someone does the artwork, someone does the distribution, someone does that—did you have any particular responsibilities that you remember?

LA: No, we all did it all.

EH: Wow.

LA: Why does that surprise you? Why are you saying 'Wow'?

EH: Because I guess I just look at that and it's intriguing that so many people were interested in the same things in a way. Like, I would have thought there was someone who was like, 'No, I'm going to handle all the artwork for it,' or, 'No, I want to be the one who does this part of it.' I don't know. I imagine people having their own niches of things they wanted to work on. So, it's

interesting that all of you guys are interested in the whole putting together process of the newsletter, and that you were equally doing everything, you know?

LA: Well, we were a collective and you don't hear that term anymore. Collectives. And a collective—combined with our notions of feminism and our complete lack of interest in hierarchy, right?

00:20:18 EH:
Yeah.

LA: Because all combined together to—it's like, 'Yeah, you know, do what you want.' I think somebody was in charge of the mailing list, or maybe somebody kept charge of the money, or something like that. But in terms of putting the thing together, what I remember is it was just very, very informal and whatever you wanted to do. Whatever you wanted to do. Because we valued everybody, it wasn't like, 'Oh, you have to do this, and you have to do that, and you went to school for this. So that's your thing.' It was like, 'No, this is—we're going to make decisions collectively, and we're going to spread out the work, and there's not going to be anybody who's not going to be the editor.' There was no editor. It was like, this is the group of people who do this.

EH: Right.

LA: It's the collective.

EH: And what were some of your relationships like within that collective? I mean, were you all friends that hung out socially or was it more of a working relationship, or—?

LA: What I remember about getting together and putting together the newsletter is that it was enormous fun. I remember just laughing and having the best time. And sure, you know, I would see these people at other things. Again, it was a small town. A very small town. And so everybody went to the same things. If there was a Lesbian event, everybody went because that was the thing to do. It wasn't like there were, you know, 12 queer things going on that evening. There was one. And we all went.

EH: Yeah. Was there any clubs or in particular that you were a part of that you were passionate about, or any programs that you helped found or, you know, any groups that you were the leader of?

LA: You know, I think there were, but I can't remember.

EH: Yeah.

LA: Kind of—I don't think there was anything that I was, like, solely in charge of.

EH: Yeah.

LA: Again, that's not what we wanted to do. That wasn't our vision. Our vision was not to—'Oh, I'm going to uplift you, so you can be the best at this particular thing.' This is a collective. We're going to work together and everybody's going to win. It wasn't like, 'No, you're the head of this, and you're the head of that.' And that's not what we were about. At all. At all.

EH: Well, something that I wanted to bring up to you that I found really interesting when I was looking through the archives, was Mev showed me how like the newsletter would fold over in the mail so that—I just said it, but, um, 'The Newsletter was all you could see on the outside. It wasn't 'A Lesbian Position', it was just 'The Newsletter'. And I'm interested, what was the decision process behind how you would mail things? Like, what were some of those conversations like of how you were—?

LA: Well, you know, we were all about safety. And there were so many Lesbians who were closeted or living with families or you know, whatever that they—it wasn't safe for them to have something come through the mail that had 'Lesbian' in the return address. That was a safety issue. So I think we started out folding the newsletter and then stapling it, and then I think we went to little manila envelopes because that was even safer.

EH: Right.

LA: Because there were people who didn't—I don't want this coming to my house. It's not safe for me, for this to come to my house.' So that's what that was about.

EH: And do you remember how many people roughly would receive A Lesbian Position in the mail, or how big the audience was?

LA: Up to like 300.

EH: Wow, okay.

LA: Which for a small town was a lot. I might have that number wrong, but that's what I seem to remember.

00:25:01 EH:

And you said a lot of people in the Lesbian community would attend many of the programs that were being advertised, or many of the clubs that were being advertised.

LA: Yeah.

EH: It's really cool. Going back to my earlier question, I guess I'm just curious of, like, what your hobbies were, or what you were interested in—did you play on the softball team? Did you do any craft clubs? I'm just interested in what you liked to do during that time.

LA: Oh, boy. Yes, we did have a softball team.

EH: Yeah.

LA: And I was never very good at it. But again, it was enormous fun. It was so, so fun. And oh my god. Okay, I just remembered this. I got—again, this was a government grant. Let's see, C-E-T-A. Comprehensive Employment and Training Act.

EH: Okay.

LA: I got a grant to go to auto mechanics school because I was a woman. And so I ended up in this auto mechanics class with two women and maybe, like, ten black men that were there on this training grant. I think I did that because I needed to prove something to myself about— that I could do that kind of butch thing. Now, unfortunately, I hated it. And you know, at the end of— it was a year-long training, and at the end of it, they expected you to go get a job doing what they trained you to do. And I said, 'I don't want to do this.' So they were very—so I didn't look very good on their paperwork because they didn't actually train me, employ me. I didn't actually take a job. But, you know, it's interesting that you're asking that because I'm trying to think. You know what? I was interested in art, I was interested in writing. I was interested in theatre. I was interested in a lot of different things. I was interested in psychology. I was interested in—not one thing, sort of stands out. I had—when I did go to college, I was a theater major, and I didn't finish. I actually was enrolled at three different universities and couldn't finish. And it was only this year that I was diagnosed with ADHD, and it just, it kind of—it put my whole life in a different perspective, one of which was, 'Oh, that's why I couldn't do school.' And no one picked it up because they weren't looking for ADHD in young women. They were looking for it in little hyperactive boys in the school room. And that's where they thought that ADHD resided. And because I was smart and doing okay in the rest of my life. Nobody thought to question that. Um.

EH: That's still a big problem today.

00:30:05 LA: Yes.

EH: You know, women go undiagnosed so often with ADHD. Especially high-functioning ones who do well in other parts of life.

LA: So I never made it through school, which was— it was a disappointment for me because I wanted to, and I couldn't do the stress. I couldn't take the stress. I couldn't understand a lot of the reading. You know, just the various kinds of pressure were way too much for me. And I couldn't do it. But, you know, I've always been a big gardener and animal lover. That kind of stuff.

EH: Yeah.

LA: Normal things.

EH: Would you say that being a part of A Lesbian Position, and I guess, being exposed to so many different clubs and events and that, did it expand your horizon in terms of different hobbies you started to do, or different things you were interested in?

LA: You know, I—ask that in a different way. I'm not sure what you're asking.

EH: I'm asking—I'm just thinking, like, if I was exposed to a newsletter so often, if I was the one helping to make it, and I just got to see, 'Oh, this club is meeting on this day, maybe I'll go try that out.' Or, 'I can go to this event and that might be cool.' I'm just wondering—I don't know, do you feel like you became interested in more things than you thought you could be interested in while you were working on A Lesbian Position? Or, did you go to a event that really surprised you, how much you liked it, or did you end up taking up a new interest that you didn't think you would before?

LA: Not that I specifically remember. I mean, when I was growing up in Illinois, I knew nothing about politics. Nothing. Literally nothing. And so the kinds of experiences that I had being in New Haven and the various communities there—and not just the lesbian community. The civil rights people, the anti-war people, you know? All of that stuff was a revelation to me. And that never left me. I guess, my passion for politics. You know, there's this weird notion going around that people get more conservative as they get older. I don't know where that came from, but that certainly is not true for me or any of the other women that I knew during that time. I'm more radical now than I've ever been. I'm not less radical. It's like, once my light—once my brain was turned on to how things actually work, what oppression is, what discrimination is. That's what I wanted to do. I wanted to be part of making it easier for women and other people. So it wasn't like, 'Oh, there was a Lesbian event about pottery. And I went there, and so then I became a potter', if that's what you're asking. You know, there was nothing like that that I remember.

EH: Yeah.

LA: There were—it was just the usual stuff, you know. Music and plays and potluck suppers and political discussions and protests and rallies. All that stuff which was very consuming.

EH: Right. When you were talking about trying to make— just women's rights in general, it reminded me of an article that I actually got to read. I looked up some—just like, your name generally, to see if there was anything on the internet that I could research before this interview. And I found an article that you had written about working at Yale and just women's rights in general, and how you were sort of frustrated with what it was like to work at Yale and be called a secretary, I guess, while you were [employed there]? And I was wondering if you could just talk a little bit about what you remember from working at Yale that period of your life, maybe? How this political consciousness that you're talking about, how that sort of

informed how you approached what you were dealing with at Yale?

00:35:54 LA:

Um. I felt very lucky to be hired as. An administrative assistant for the women's studies program, because there were no feminist jobs around. There weren't. And that was a feminist job in New Haven. And I was, of course—when I was first hired, was paid very little. Very little. Because Yale was a racist, classist institution. I can't separate my working time at Yale from the reality of the union organizing that went on there, and how we formed a union and went on strike against the university. Three different times. And one, we won. When I first started working at Yale, I was very intimidated because I had not been able to make it through college and I felt an inferiority. I thought there was—you know, I didn't have this diagnosis [of ADHD]. And so I thought it was my failing. The good thing about it was I got to work alone most of the time because it was such a small program. So, I had a lot of what I'll call, like, 'liberty' to do some of the things I wanted to. Like, there would be times on, you know, Yale time that I would be typing up newsletter stuff just because that's—I had time to do that. And the faculty kind of came and went. They weren't around all the time. But I found almost immediately that I became a beacon for other—for Lesbian students there, because I was out. I was very out, and I was known for being kind of direct and straightforward. No bullshit. And, you know, word got around. 'Oh, have you met this Lesbian who runs the women's studies office?' Yale was a really mixed bag. It was. I met some wonderful, wonderful, wonderful people there. Wonderful people who I'm still in touch with. At the same time, you know, we went on strike and they hired scabs by the busload.

00:40:12 EH:

And what year was this?

LA: Around 19—Sometime in the '80s, I can't remember.

EH: Okay.

LA: There's another—I don't know if you came across this article. I wrote an article about being on strike against Yale University. That was published in *Frontiers*, which was a journal of women's studies, which I don't think exists anymore. But I think it's called, 'On Strike Against Yale University'.

EH: Okay. I can look it up.

LA: Yeah. And it's on the JSTOR site.

EH: For academic—

LA: Yeah. And that experience of being part of the union and watching how they— we organized and showed up for one another was as important to me as any fancy name academic who came through there. And there were a lot. There were a lot. And that was—it was a kind of

a rarefied experience for me because I was this kind of young, political, white Lesbian in this university setting. And I had transgender friends in the 1980s, for instance, which I never would have encountered anywhere else if I weren't inside that program, inside that university. I was introduced to concepts having of— having to do with everything, and I never would have been exposed to otherwise.

EH: Yeah.

LA: And you know, I was there for 25 years, so I saw a lot. And I met a lot of people and did a lot of good work. And I was respected. I was respected. Although at the same time, people couldn't understand—some faculty couldn't understand why I was just a secretary. Because they were above that, right? And even with their feminism, they couldn't—they couldn't see that I was valuable, even if I didn't have academic credentials. Some of them could, and some of them couldn't. They just thought I was wasting my time. 'Oh, Linda, you're so smart. You're so this. You're so creative. You're so—' And I was like— you're just sitting behind a desk all day. And it's—that was revealing about them, right? It was revealing about how little they knew about the job I actually did.

EH: Right.

LA: And then there's this other faculty member who I did not get along with. I thought she was an arrogant bitch. She once referred to me as, 'the heart and soul of women's studies.' Because I was the one who was always there when the students showed up and helped the faculty and this and that. I think she thought—she was meaning it as a compliment. And I took it as, 'I am not the fucking wife of this program.'

00:45:20 EH:
Yeah.

LA: And you can't put me in that position. I am not going to be— I am not going to be the one to carry the heart and soul of this program. No. So, they were feminists, but they were academic feminists, and they did not have my street experience. They did not, while they respected it. Here's an example. There's another—Yale, of course, is in New Haven. And there was a—there's another small state university called maybe, Southern Connecticut State University, that was also in New Haven. And every year, Southern Connecticut State University would put on a kick ass women's studies conference. None of the Yale feminists ever went. So there was a kind of elitism that was very palpable. And I felt class conflicts a lot. And so I got along better with the students, even though I did have faculty friends. But it was complicated. Yeah, it was complicated. It's very complicated. I was recently talking to somebody, and I had told them I worked in Yale Women's Studies for 25 years, and their first response was, 'Oh, that must have been fun!' It's like, 'Well, wait a minute.' Yeah, sometimes it was. But why don't you ask me what it was like?

EH: Yeah.

LA: And then I went on to tell them all the things I just told you about how complex, how complicated it was for me. And I didn't—it's like, okay, there were other smart administrative assistants, but it was like, they weren't lesbian activists. So, I felt this separation from a lot of them. And that kind of dissolved once the union organizing took over. Because we then were on a level playing field that we were all looking for the same thing, which is to make our jobs better. And to get some security. And then, I ended up taking early retirement from that job. That's a long story I won't get into, but I was kind of pushed out by this new chairperson—this new director of the program, who came in and wanted things done all differently. And it was also a time when the university as a whole was moving more to a corporate model, meaning money became more important. And my job started shifting to, 'You got to pay more attention to the money part.' And, you know, not so much— this other stuff I had—I was in a meeting once where there was an administrator from the financial department of the university who referred to the work I did as 'Customer Service.' And I said, 'Excuse me, this is not Walmart.' Customer service. But it was like, that's all that—those were deliberate terms. I think this particular person had been hired off of the Coca-Cola company, or something. You know, they were some corporate person who was brought in to—you know, 'Let's save Yale money.' It's like, 'What?'

00:50:23 EH:
Yeah.

LA: I was on strike. I know exactly how many billions in your endowment exist. And now you're going to pretend that that's the most important part of my job? Anyway, so a bunch of shit went down, and I ended up taking early retirement from there, which is not how I wanted to exit, but that's what happened.

EH: In what year was that, that you ended up retiring?

LA: Let's see. 2008, maybe.

EH: Okay.

LA: I think.

EH: And how long did you work at A Lesbian Position?

LA: You know, I can't remember how many years we did it. For 4 or 5 [years]? I don't remember. But I was there for almost the whole time.

EH: And is there a particular reason why you decided to leave before that ended up closing?

LA: Um. Well, one of the downsides about small towns, and groups of small town lesbians, is there's a lot of—there can be a lot of drama.

EH: Yeah.

LA: And some drama went down, and I stopped working on the newsletter. Then I think it went on for a while after that, but I don't think much longer, maybe a few months.

EH: Did you keep up with it after you had already left? Like, did you keep reading the new newsletters that would come out or—?

LA: Um. I'm sure I did. Yeah, I'm sure I did.

EH: Did you? I guess one of my wrap up questions would just be, did you see A Lesbian Position evolving over time in terms of the content that was in it? Or, maybe, [evolving in terms of] how you guys put it together? Did you see it changing over time, I guess is my question.

LA: No.

EH: It stayed pretty consistent, even in terms of like the mission? Would you say the mission stayed the same the whole way through?

LA: Yeah, yeah. I think it started to become less relevant when email showed up. Which was what, the early '80s, maybe?

EH: I don't know. That's a good question.

LA: I'm trying to remember because. I remember working at my Yale job and getting one of the very first, those little cubicle Apple computers. That were built in the '80s. Little tiny screen. And we were all scared of them. We didn't know what the hell they were, or how to work them, or anything. So, I think that— not only did the internet show up, but also because feminism had some success that things were becoming more—what's the word? It's like—I'm trying to think of a good example. You know, I think things became more integrated as part of society rather than being over here. [Gestures at point in distance]. So, as the laws began to change and Roe v Wade came along, a lot of our work changed, because legislation was now in place to protect some people, in some situations. Not everybody, of course. And so instead of working at the New Haven Women's Liberation Center and doing abortion referrals and finding somebody a ride to New York State where they could legally get an abortion, once Roe v Wade was in place, there was now a Planned Parenthood in New Haven that would do abortions. So that that particular part of activism kind of fell away. You know, as women begin to make more inroads in finance and academia and all sorts of other areas, the intensity of some of our activism changed. And it only changed because of our activism. But once it was, you know, codified in a more normalized way, that was something that we were no longer focusing on.

EH: Yeah. That makes sense. And you said, too, that the newsletter used to be this, like, paper folded up with staples on it. And then it became something you put in a manila envelope. And so it looks like the form maybe changed a bit towards the end. Did you guys start using

computers to put things together rather than pasting?

LA: No, we did cut and paste.

EH: The whole way through?

LA: Yeah. Because we didn't know how to do a newsletter layout. I don't even know, you know?

EH: Yeah.

LA: Learning computers. We didn't know how to do a whole newsletter layout and then, you know, print out the thing. Nobody had the equipment to do that.

EH: So technology was moving, but not that fast to the point where you guys were— That makes sense. All right. Well, is there any concluding thoughts that you have—or something I'm interested in is, do you still think about A Lesbian Position today in your life? Do you feel like it affects you?

LA: No.

EH: That's honest. (Laughs).

LA: No. You know, I gave away all my stuff. All the stuff that Mev kept, and created The Wanderground place. You know, I had all that stuff, too. I gave all my books away. I sold all my ephemera to Yale. My personal papers I have are going to the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn. And that was—it was such a different, different, different part of my life than now. When I moved down to Florida, I really felt the lack of—when I would tell people that I work for 25 years in Women's, Gender and Sexuality studies at Yale University, it was just—like, go over their heads.

EH: Yeah.

LA: They had no idea what I was talking about. But they also wouldn't ask me. Which is like, okay. And you know, one of the things that bugs me as a lesbian is when other lesbians call us ladies. Because I fought like hell as a young feminist. Don't call me a girl. Don't call me a lady. You will fucking call me a woman.

01:00:03 EH:
Right.

LA: And so I really, really bristle against that. And, um. Nobody said the word feminism. I don't think I've—in 15 years, I've never heard anybody use the word feminism down here, for instance. And, um, that was a big—and still is a big lack for me here, is having an intellectual community of badass lesbians. You know, because we were badass. We were. We really were. I

don't know if you know of an old gay activist, Larry Kramer. Do you know that name at all?

EH: It sounds familiar.

LA: Yeah, he formed Act Up in response to the AIDS crisis. Huge misogynist. Hated women. And he came to Yale to give a talk, and he wasn't invited by Women's studies—some other department. And I went to the talk and at the end of the talk, he was going to take some questions and I was sitting in the front row and I said, 'Oh, I'm Linda Anderson from Women's Studies.' He says, 'Oh, I'm not going to take any questions from Women's Studies. I'm not going to do it.' I got up in front of this whole room of people and walked out on his ass. And the man who had invited him sent me an email later saying, 'Oh, Linda, I'm so proud of you that you walked out!' You know? 'That was so great. I wish I could have done the same.' And I wrote him back and I said, 'You could have. And you chose not to.' And that was commonplace. We were doing that all the fucking time. It's like, for me, moving to Florida has been a real loss of that. I miss that. I miss collectivism. You know, everybody's struggling with money now, right? And it's like, well, move in with your best friend. Why does everybody have to have their own fucking house?

EH: Yeah. People are so isolated.

LA: 'My own fucking car! Oh, my privacy, my privacy.' You know? It's like, 'Okay, but how long are you going to be able to afford that?' So, the whole idea of communal collective work is not there anymore. And it's the only thing that's going to get us out of this, what's going on now politically, is if we can figure out how to organize.

EH: Yeah, so many parallels between what you're saying to right now, in this moment of—

LA: Yeah. And it's like, I don't have the energy to do this again. I don't. I just don't. And I can't really tell—I mean, you know, even if younger people came to people like me and said, 'Oh, well, what worked for you?' Then it's like, 'Well, this worked for us then, but I don't know if it would work now.' But this whole notion of, you know, 'lesbian feminist elders' and the kind of information we carry and the kind of work that we did is mostly lost. Except for, you know, Mev, and other people who are doing some fantastic work about trying to keep that alive. But you all are going to have to figure it out. You know? I'll tell you what I know. But I can't do it anymore. I'm 75 and I'm in bad health, and I can't do it. I can't do it. And it's also heartbreaking to see how hard we worked and how much we accomplished. And seeing it all being wiped away in a moment. It's very, very heartbreaking for me.

01:06:09 EH:

Yeah. Even in the two other interviews I've done with Lesbians from your generation, it's just echoes of the same thing of, just seeing all that hard work being erased. It never—it's just—it's such a difficult moment right now. And even what you're talking about with the newsletter and everything, like, I'm just thinking, how does that translate to the internet? Because I feel like that's the way that people, at least my age, connect [is] online so much now. And it just feels

like even the internet is not really what it was promised to be, as this utopian thing.

LA: Oh, see, people are now treating the internet as if that's contact. That's not contact. You have got to get together in person. You have got to look one another in the face and in the eyes and cry together and laugh together and build those kinds of energetic and physical bonds. We would have died for one another. We would have fucking died for one another. And I don't see that now. I don't see that. It's like, 'Oh, well. I posted something on Facebook, but nobody came.' And I was like, that's not going to do it. That's not going to do it. And if there's any one thing that I would encourage activists to do now is, like, start having potluck suppers again. Start talking about your lives and build from there, because that's what we did and that's why we were invested. We were invested because it was about our lives. And one of the only reasons I have a decent retirement is because we went on strike against Yale University and I have a fucking pension. And the other thing I would say is unionize everything. Unionize everything. That's collectivism in action. And we had 10,000 people on the streets of New Haven during those strikes. I have some incredible pictures. Jesse Jackson came to town and was leading us.

EH: Wow.

LA: Cornel West spoke for us. You know, we were fucking serious. And I don't see that. And the rallies I've been seeing, it's a lot—and again, I'm in Florida, so that's a caveat. But a lot of the people who show up are my generation. It's not the younger people. It's these old hippies who've been through it. I was like, 'Yeah, I'll go to that rally. I can barely walk, but I'll take my ibuprofen and my cane and I'll fucking go.'

EH: Yeah. A lot of activism is isolated to social media.

LA: And that's not activism. It's social media. That's all it is. That's all it is. And yeah, you can—I'm very selective when I'm on the internet, as I read what I want to read. I don't—you know, I went through—well, this is interesting, when I moved down here, uh, and this ties into doing the newsletter— is when I came down here, there was nothing visibly queer in Saint Augustine. No gay bars, no events. Nothing. So I thought, 'Oh, God, what can an old woman do?' So I did use social media, and I started a Facebook page called 'LGBTQIA+ Saint Augustine'. I have 1800 followers.

01:10:45 EH:

Wow. That's a good number of people.

LA: A good number of people.

EH: Are those people all from Saint Augustine, too? Are they from all over?

LA: From all over. And you know, it's a Boomer platform, but I have a lot of young people who are there, and, and I've been doing it for 13 years, you know, and people would message me and say, 'Oh, gee, do you know where the gay bar is in town?' I said, 'There ain't no gay bar,

honey, but I will meet you for coffee.' So, I would go and meet these strangers for coffee at a coffee shop, who would just come through town looking for something, and it's like, 'Ah, there ain't nothing'. And we still don't have a gay bar. So, that's my story.