

KENNESAW STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
INTERVIEW WITH JON C. GREAVES
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Kennesaw State University Oral History Project
LGBTQ Oral History Series.
Interview with Jon C. Greaves
Conducted by Anne Graham and Heather Oswald
Saturday, September 20th, 2014
Location: Audio Video Technology Studio

AG: It's Saturday, September 20th, 2014. And this is Anne Graham and Heather Oswald, archivists with the Kennesaw State University Archives. We're interviewing Jon C. Greaves and the Studios of the Audio Video Technology Services at Kennesaw State University, as part of the museum's archives and Mira books, oral history project. This is our third interview with Jon.

HO: So Jon, could you talk about your relationships with David and how that developed?

JG: David and I met through Friends Atlanta. One of the things Friends Atlanta had was a friendly volleyball during nice parts of the year at a place called Winn Park over behind Colony Square in Atlanta. We on Sundays, we -- just pickup volleyball, people would go and anybody I wanted to play, we divide up into teams and play volleyball, and I love to play volleyball. I'm not very good at it, but I still like playing. And David was, I guess he would have been eighteen. I was probably twenty-nine and he had found out about Friends Atlanta and was there with another, with a friend of his watching us play volleyball and, and seen me and decided I was somebody he wanted to meet. And so he arranged to meet me at some point. We went out a couple times and then he and I, and two other guys went out together for Halloween that year or Halloween evening.

And we just kept spending more and more time together. And he introduced me to his family and his parents. And we eventually moved in together. We, we were just spending all of our time together and lived together for -- initially in Smyrna, a place that we lived on Hawthorne Boulevard. I think it wasn't Smyrna, we were close to the Dobbins Air Force Base. Later on moved into the city of Atlanta. We would go dancing together and out to dinner with friends and travel a little bit, we didn't have a lot of money, we were poor. We, neither of us was financially well off when we moved in together. I remember we had a complete set of bedroom furniture, two sets of dishes and cookware. And we had a box with a towel over it with the television in the living room. And my sleeping bag folded out on the living room floor with some pillows, we didn't even have chairs, so we could watch TV and sit on the floor. And we had a second bedroom that was empty and didn't have anything in it.

But we had, we had a great time together and spent the evening -- Sometimes we'd go out new things with friends, but most of the time working during the week and at home during the evenings, during the week. On weekends we were out going dancing and dinner with friends or going to the park. We went camping. We went to Cumberland Island and camped out at Cumberland Island tents, and in the woods up in North Georgia mountains, North Carolina. We had friends through Friends Atlanta that we did bowling with and volleyball. I play volleyball, David never played volleyball. He'd just watch. But we, there was friends of mine, had a thing dining out. My people would get together and go somewhere, but they also had what they call a gourmet club. People would get together somebody's home and each person, or a couple would cook different dishes, have dinners together.

There was a lot of outdoor people, so we'd have camping trips, and sometimes we'd go day hikes to places. And we got involved with people through Friends Atlanta who were involved in activism or interested in politics. And I think that's where both of us started our political activism. So we lived together after moving into the city of Atlanta for a long time. And I guess we were together for twelve years all together. We kind of grew apart toward the end of our relationship, but still cared a lot about each other and lived together for two years after we decided we really weren't a couple anymore, which was kind of odd, especially if one of us wanted to go out on a date with somebody, but we stayed friends and then eventually David left Chicago.

We got a friend Dan Zanella that had been the fundraising person for Easter Seals in Atlanta. And he got a promotion and got moved to Easter Seals in Chicago. Dan also played the clarinet and piano and he started playing in a chamber orchestra. I think while he was in Chicago. And he moved from Easter Seals into fundraising for orchestras and symphonies. But we went up and visited in Chicago a few times up there. And David fell in love with Chicago and decided he was going to live in Chicago. So when we did finally move apart, David moved to Chicago and I stayed in Atlanta.

I guess that was, gosh I don't know what year that was, we'd have to figure out backwards from the days, but we had -- I'll have to say I still love David very much and he loves me when. I'm so glad with twelve years invested in a relationship together that we've been able to remain best friends and still keep close in touch with each other. I, I think probably talk to each other at least every other week, sometimes weekly. And I think he uses me sometimes as somebody to confide in and talk to, and he doesn't want to talk to other people or, you know, to people that do these around all the time, up in Chicago, which has been nice.

And we both kept, he's kept a lot closer in touch with Cody his nephew than I'd have over the years, but we both have kept in contact about Cody and sort of discuss what was going on with him over the years. And that was part of our relationship. There, there was a point where Cody was born and became part of our lives and lived with us in our household for almost a year. And that was really interesting. It was kind of a shock to suddenly have a baby, you know, no more going out nights dancing. You know, I was getting up every two hours, feeding him when he was, before he started sleeping through the night and really caused some drastic, drastic changes in our relationship. But we had friends that would voluntarily say that call and say, hey, you guys need some time off. Can I come over and watch Cody for the evening and you can go out and do something? Or they would collect clothes and give us clothes for Cody and stuff. So some of our friends helped us adjust to that, but it was such, such a weird adjustment to go through.

And we did it on very short notice when we got Cody, he came to live with us, maybe like two days notice. And we went from having a life of gay men going out, dancing all night and going to parties with friends sometimes to taking care of a baby and a house and, and trying to figure out how to fit everything else you have to do in life. And with that, 'cause that's like a full-time job.

AG: Can you talk a little bit about how Cody came to stay with you?

Unidentified: I'm sorry, I missed this, but you said we were going to do all of that stuff at the end, right. [crosstalk] Okay. Well then I'm going to turn off that camera. [crosstalk] I'm sorry. [crosstalk] because this is, it's got a smaller card that doesn't really [crosstalk] Go ahead. So get a nice long shot. Great shot.

AG: Can you talk about how could he came to live with you?

JG: So David had his family they're Georgia -- some of them were Georgia mountain people. Some of them are people that grew up in Atlanta and then moved out to Cobb County, I think in the white flight time period, you know, after the school integration and stuff. But his mother and father, both big families, both one of seven children. So lots of aunts and uncles and cousins, and David's had in his own family just his sister, and his sister had gotten married, she got married and had her first child. I think maybe when she was seventeen. That relationship didn't work out. And then she got divorced and then had a new boyfriend that they weren't married, but had another second child. And then a third child, Cody was the third child and David and his sister got along pretty well. And, and I got along well with her too, but we didn't see that much of her.

But when Cody was born, there were problems that I'm not going to tell you all the details about, but there were fights between Dina, his sister and the father over some issues between them. He was abusive toward her, even when she was in the hospital, recovering from having given birth, and then he fled the state, went to Alabama where he was from and just disappeared. And there were issues with Dina. I'm not going to go into detail about. David was concerned about what was going on and talked with a sister and tried to get her to straighten out the issues. And they, it wasn't real successful. And there were things she was doing that was endangering her children, David contacted Family Children's Services and they did a check of the home and they ended up taking the children away from her.

So the oldest child, a daughter from her first marriage went to live with her father. The next oldest child went to live with David's parents and nobody wanted to take care of a baby. She had a two-month-old baby and nobody in the extended family at all. And his parents, the parents said, we're too old for that. We can't deal with a baby. And there was talk from the County Children's Services, we're going to place Cody in foster care. And David came home from work one evening and he said, Jon, I don't want my nephew to go into a foster home. I want to take care of him. I want to bring him here and I bring him here and you don't have to do anything. I'll do all the work to take care of it. And I said, that's, that's crazy. I'll help you. What do you mean you'll do all the work?

And so we told the foster, the Family Children Services that we would take care of Cody. They did a really fast, we had to get fingerprinted to get a background check on us, and then they certified us or, I don't know what the formal process is, as family foster parents is different, we couldn't have foster children that weren't related to us, but they, came and did a home visit too, as part of all that. But they placed Cody with us, and so that all sort of happened like in two days. And so we all of a sudden had a two-month-old baby and neither of us had ever taken care of babies before. I'm remember reading up this book what to expect in the first year. And like Cody would be crying and pull on his ear and you could go look up in this book.

You know, baby won't stop crying and tugging on ear. And it would say, baby probably has an ear infection. You know? And, and we got some tips from his mother and we got some clothes and things that he already had, but we quickly had to make a place for Cody in our home, in the crib. And we had to arrange for childcare and, you know, Cody, that's how he came to live with us. He was placed through Family Children's Services. Now I used to tell people at that time that when the Cobb County stuff happened and the Gordon Wysong and the people who supported him would talk all

the time about family values. And I used to tell people the Department of Family Children's Services at Cobb County knows who has family values.

AG: Was there ever any question about the fact it was a gay couple taking Cody in?

JG: No. They were, what they were concerned with is that he had a safe, clean home and secure and that we could be good parents to him.

AG: What year was that?

JG: Oh, gosh. Let's see, so Cody is eighteen. So it would have been eighteen years ago and I'll let you do the math. I try to do that in my head when we sitting here, but now that didn't seem to be an issue or concern for them. And they told us they had a preference for placing him with family over putting him in foster care with people who weren't family. No, so they really prefer, I think they were happy with the way it came out. And by being certified as family foster parents, that meant that we got Medicaid. So he and his medical care was paid for by the state while he was with us. And I think we got \$60 a month for baby formula or something like that, I don't know. We got some minor amount of money, but yeah, they didn't care about that. And as I was saying, I think the Family Children's Services knew they were experts in dealing with family and children, and they knew more about family values than the politicians at Cobb County.

AG: So was there any thought of Cody remaining with you permanently, or was this always a temporary?

JG: So I mentioned that Dina and her -- Cody's father were not married and there was no record of them being married. And during the process, when David went and talked to Family Children's Services, he never mentioned his father's name was Billy -- never mentioned Billy, and they didn't ask about it and it wasn't in any records, and when Family Children's Services went to Dina and talked with her and told her what is going to happen if I think that they gave her opportunity to, to fix some of the problems first and not do what she was doing. She never mentioned Billy either, and we didn't know it. We didn't know that they were unaware that he existed. But they didn't know.

So, there was a period of several months where we were caring for Cody, and Dina never contacted us and asked us how he was or what was going on with him. We would we'd start treating him like he was our little boy. We'd take him to the family gatherings and things. Some interesting experiences we had because of that. But, his father never contacted us, and then about maybe eight or nine months after he was living with us, one day, we got a phone call from his father, Billy. And he said, I've moved

back to Atlanta and I'm going to come get Cody, he's going to live with me now. We, we said, well, you need to contact Family Children's Services. He's been placed with us through court order. And we can't just give him to you. You got to talk with them.

So he contacted them. They didn't even know who he was, and they told him, no, you can't go pick him up. We don't even know who you are. And he was furious, and he was, he was angry that when he wanted Cody, he couldn't just have him. He became very angry with us and wouldn't talk to us. And he went and got an attorney and began the process to legally fight, to get custody of Cody, which we weren't trying to interfere with that. But when he left the state and had been abusive to Dina and had left the state and was gone, he wasn't in the picture and somebody had to take care of Cody. And, we were concerned when he wanted to get him back too we were concerned and pointed out the Family Children Services that he'd never for months for the nine or ten months had never contacted us. Never asked about him, how he was doing, anything.

So he -- Dina straightened out some of the problems that she had. They got back together. She straightened out some of the problems that were -- caused the Family Children's Services to take them away -- the children away from the first place. And then Billy and his attorney went into court. And in a process like that, they had his attorney, they had attorney that represented the Family and Children's Services. And then I think they're called the Guardian Ad Litem, is that attorney that's supposed to be a neutral attorney to represent the interest of the children. And they had that the attorney had contacted us and interviewed us, ask questions, I think, talk to Billy and Dina, talk to the older children that could talk with him. And he was there in the court to represent the children's interests.

And the court eventually made the decision that the children would be placed, that they would come out of foster care and the care with the different family members they worked with and the custody would be, would go back to Dina and Billy. And so that was actually a really, really horrible experience 'cause I don't – Do either of you have children? I had never had children before either, but I, and I never understood when people said, babies, you know how cute babies were. I always thought they were kind of ugly, but within a week of taking care of Cody, I was so attached to him. There's just something that happens when you're taking care of some, another human being, they're completely dependent on you. I was so attached to him and it was really like, he was my little boy and, you know, for both of us.

And when we had to give him back, part of the agreement was that we would get to visit with them once in a while. And Billy was still furious with us, furious, 'cause he thought we'd interfered with his, his control

over his children, which I think he did that on his own. It was horrible when Cody, we had to give him back to them and he wasn't going to live with us anymore. It was, you know, I was like giving up my own child and I think David and I both cried quite a bit. That was a difficult thing.

AG: You mentioned some of the experiences, the family gatherings. Would you like to talk a little bit about those?

JG: So David's family, some of them were Georgia Mountain people. I don't know what David will think about me saying this, but there were a couple of his uncles who thought might have been clan Ku Klux Klan members. And when David and I got together, David went to his grandmother. She was sort of like the matriarch in the family, and told her about me. And she had some kind of family meeting David told me about where told everybody, you know, what do you think about David and Jon being together? And I don't care what you think. Cause, 'cause I think it's good. And when we have family gatherings here at the home, they're both invited. And if any of you have anything to say about it, you need to just be quiet. And the, you go to the, these sort of family gatherings, like for Thanksgiving and Christmas and Easter we'd -- and everybody'd bring potluck and food and whatever.

And the uncles would all be out in the driveway, drinking beer and talking and walk by and say, hello, how are you? Or Merry Christmas or whatever. And there were a couple of them that would just ignore me like I didn't exist or they wouldn't say anything to us. It was literally like we weren't there. And something really interesting happened after they saw us -- we brought Cody with us a couple of times we were taking care of Cody. They began talking to us and one of them actually said to me, he came up and shook my hand. He said, Jon, I appreciate that you care about family and that you're taking care of Cody. And that you're a real family person. And he said, why don't you come out and have a beer with us? And it was kind of a shocking experience, but that, that showed me something about people's attitudes.

You know, again, some people know what real family. So anyway. [laughs] And we got along well after that with all of them. And I think that's some of the bias that people had then, and still a lot of people have toward gays. It's like they think that gays -- One of the ideas that a lot of people had was gays chose to not have straight relationships and have children because they didn't want them responsibility and verge that, and that all we wanted to do was to have parties and sex, you know, and so that we were kind of irresponsible people. And I think, I think some of that attitude may have been there with the uncles. The couple that wouldn't talk to us and the experience with them showed me that, that you can break

down negative feelings and bad treatment with just about anybody if they get to know you and they learn what kind of person you are.

AG: We're going to shift gears a little bit, and could you talk about your relationship with Gary?

JG: So David and I had grown apart. I mentioned we were still living together for a couple of years after we kind of realized we weren't a couple anymore. We had a two-bedroom condo. So that was, that was good. And I had met Gary, I'm thinking it was around 1997. We met in a chat room online and met and had a beer and dinner together. And I just really liked him and we hit it off and we began spending time together. And, and he and I actually, after he and I met, he had a barbecue at his house one time and, and he invited us to come over and he knew that David and I lived together and had been a couple but are now more like roommates. And David went to the barbecue with me at Gary's and you know, that was all fine, but we began spending more and more time together.

And I just -- When you meet people, you connect in different ways. Some people you have in common, you like to read the same things or you like to go to movies or you like to go dancing or, you know, there's different things that you have in common with people. And Dave and I had a number of things in common, but I never met anybody until I met Gary that I had so much in common with. We had the same favorite book. We both liked our favorite book. At least at that time, As I Lay Dying by William Faulkner. And we both loved music, and all kinds of music. We would go and put our suits on, and go to the Atlanta Symphony. And we'd put our army boots and jeans on and t-shirts, and go to the club and dance to Nine Inch Nails, industrial music. We both loved traveling and later, as we went on some trips together, we really traveled well together. We traveled the same way, the kind of ways that we did things on trips. So we built this strong relationship, because we connected in so many different ways.

Gary lived in a house in Cabbagetown that he bought. He had gone to University of Georgia. He was a double major in Business and Italian. After graduating he had gone to Italy, and taught English or lived in Florence, and taught English for six months while living with a host family, an older woman, and learning Italian. And he made some Italian friends while he was there, and he could speak Italian really, really well. We were in Italian restaurants before, and he would start speaking Italian, or someplace where there were Italians, he talked to them in Italian, and they'd ask him what part of Italy he was from. He didn't have any accent to the Italians.

After that, he at some point decided he wanted to be a nurse. And he went to Emory, and got his nursing credentials. He worked at Charity Hospital in New Orleans, and Ochsner in New Orleans, and then he came and worked in Atlanta. When I met him, he was a trauma nurse in the emergency room in trauma at Grady Hospital. He was the person -- He literally was saving lives every time he went to work. He was the person there dealing with gunshot wound victims, knifings, people crushed in construction accidents, and car wrecks. It was amazing the stuff that he was doing. And he was a really, really good nurse. The people there at the hospital, I met some of them, and they spoke so highly of him. And he loved nursing.

We built this relationship, and at some point, we went on a couple -- We went on one trip together, or actually he was on a trip. He, at some point decided to go into travel nursing. In travel nursing there's a shortage of nurses in almost everywhere in the world. If you have a nursing license, you can go all over the world, just about, and work, and people will pay you well to go be a nurse somewhere.

And he started doing some travel nursing assignments. And he was in New York at NYU Medical Center for a couple assignments. This before we moved in together. And I went up there, and that part of is, because New York paid him more than he made at the trauma center in Grady and gave him an apartment, that was on the 26th floor of this building with this incredible view in Manhattan. And I went there. There would be like ninety days at a time, three months assignments. And I went there a couple times while he was there. And spent time with him in New York, the apartment there. And he did a couple other travels assignments, but the -- There was one that he got in Ukraine, in Kiev with Raytheon Corporation in the Defense Department, DTRA, Defense Threat Reduction Agency had a contract that Raytheon was fulfilling there. He went to fill in for a full-time nurse that wouldn't be there, that's going to be out for a while, for some reason. And he filled in for ninety days. And he met these gay guys while he was there. And you know, we're staying in close touch. Because we were gotten really close at that point. And he told me, you need to come here and visit. After he finished his ninety day assignment, he stayed for two more weeks, and I went over to Kiev, Ukraine. And we stayed together in this apartment, with some gay Ukrainian guys, and in downtown Kiev, and went site seeing in Kiev, and did things there.

When it came time for me to leave, and come home, he was still going to be there for a few more days, and we both kind of cried. And when we were separated, I think we start -- We really started falling in love at that point. And when he came back from that trip, he said, "I want to live with you," and we moved in together. So, he moved in with me, and put his house in Cabbagetown on the market. And I don't know how much more

you want me to tell you about, relationship with him. But we went on some trips together, and we did stuff, and we just had a blast with each other. We really had a good time.

AG: So, you brought a photograph of you and Gary with Joan Rivers. It was taken in April 2000. So, could you talk about how that happened?

JG: So, I don't know if you're familiar with a UNESCO World Heritage List. Something on my bucket list. I want to see as many of the places on the UNESCO World Heritage List, as I can in my lifetime. Kills me that they're destroying some of them in Syria right now, because of the wars that's going on there. They destroyed some of them in Afghanistan. The list is actually smaller than it was ten years ago. Gary had the same interest in traveling and going to see as much of the world who could, and we both had had an interest in going to India. So, we planned this trip to India. My brother was still working at Delta Airlines, and he gave us buddy passes. So, we got to fly first class to Frankfurt and then on to Bombay, which was nice.

We went to India for -- I think we were there for twelve days, maybe. We flew into Bombay, and spent a few days in Bombay, in the garden district in an Indian hotel in Bombay, not far from the Taj Mahal Hotel and Gateway of India in Bombay. Which the official name is Mumbai but the people that live there still say Bombay. Then we took a train over and we went to Jaipur, which is sometimes called the Pink City. There's all these fabulous palaces there. We spent time in Jaipur. And then from Jaipur we took an overnight bus, air-conditioned bus. It was a five, and a half, six-hour trip. It was supposed to be from Jaipur to Agra. The bus had a flat tire, blew out on the way there. This is in the dry season. It's kind of desert area. We were hours outside of Agra, it's like 110 degrees out. And the bus driver couldn't repair the tire, damage the wheel. He took everybody's luggage off and gave it to the people that were on the bus. He locked the bus door and walked off down the road. And there were British people, French, and then some Indian people there on the bus. And we're all standing on the side of the road, in the desert, in India, in 110 degree heat. What are we going to do? The driver spoke -- I don't know if he spoke Hindi, but nobody in the bus could communicate with him. And he couldn't tell us what he was doing. And we thought he had abandoned us, but he apparently he walked until he could get to a phone. And make phone calls. And after a while here came this Indian military truck. One of these big huge trucks, it's open in the back with some soldiers in it.

And they picked up all the women and children, and loaded them in the truck. And they said we don't have room for the men, and they drove off. And it was kind of weird, we're in the middle of nowhere, there's no buildings in sight. People had started appearing, who wanted to sell us

stuff. There was some guy with a dancing bear with a muzzle on, they wanted us to give them money to make the bear dance. And there were people that had drinks, they wanted to sell us. I don't know where they came from, or how they knew we were there. But then a local bus came, and we found out that the driver had actually made these phone calls and arranged with people. There was a local bus, that had a bus route, and they came further out, past their bus route, and picked up the rest of us.

We just barely fitted in the bus. I actually had to stand in the seat behind the driver, like this over the driver. And we stacked up our suitcases in the stairs that come up into the bus. And Gary sat on top of the suitcases. So the men, we got to the local bus station in Agra -- And then we carried our luggage. We had luggage, they had backpack straps and wheels. So you could carry on your back. And we went to our hotel. So anyway, we went to see the Taj Mahal while we were there. And we went early in the morning. In the morning, the sun's supposed to shine off the marble, it makes it look like it's glowing almost. Some of the white marble, the Taj Mahal, we saw the Taj Mahal, and the Taj Mahal is -- One of the stories about is that it's a monument to love, the man who built it, built it as a monument to his wife who had died in childbirth.

So we saw the Taj Mahal, it's just an incredible place. And it's hot weather, again, 110 degrees, 113 degree day. We went back to the hotel. We were at the [inaudible] Trident, and Gary said, "I'm going to the pool, I'm hot." And I said, "I need a beer." So he went in the pool, I went to the dining room,, and I ordered my beer, and I look up and there's nobody in the dining room, except me and another table, two people. And I look over and one of them is Joan Rivers. And so I run outside and say, "Gary!" He loved to get autographs, by the way, we got autographs at theaters, or stay outside the stage door after a show and get people to sign. And he got autographs from musicians, and bands, to have them sign albums. I said, "Gary, come inside and have lunch with me and Joan Rivers."

So he changed clothes quick, and came running back with his travel journal, and a little Fuji cardboard box camera because he busted his camera, dropped it, busted the lens the day before. We had one of those disposable green Fuji cameras, and we had our lunch, and she had her lunch, and we left her alone until she's finished eating. And when she finished eating. Gary walked over to say, "Excuse me, Ms. Rivers. We saw you here. We're from United States. And we're traveling Could we have our picture taken with you?" And she said yes. And she grabbed the camera out of his hand. And she said, "Let my friend take it. He's an Indian fashion photographer." And she pulled us together. He got ready to take the picture, and she put her arms up and said, "I don't have any makeup on, no, no."

And then she said, "Oh well." And she put her arms back down and smiled. And he took the picture. And then she pulled up a chair, and sat down at our table with us, and sat and talked with us for a few minutes. Then her friend -- The friend didn't say anything. He just listened, but she was really friendly and nice. And Gary asked if she would sign his journal. And she wrote a paragraph in this travel journal and signed it. And after three or four minutes, they got up and left. But that picture is special to me, not just because we had this weird experience. We met Joan Rivers, and we're at India after going to the Taj Mahal. But that evening we came and had dinner. And Gary ordered a really nice bottle of wine. I told him before the trip to India, that I had fallen in love with him.

And he, I think was caught off guard and surprised when I said that, and he told me, "I don't know what to think, I wasn't expecting you to tell me that." And he said, "I need to think about this." I said, "Okay." And I didn't say anything else. We're having dinner, and we had a good bottle of wine and over dinner, he said, "You know, I've been thinking a lot and I love you too, I want us to be a couple." You couldn't get married in those days, and I consider that picture, to be the day that we got married. And we came back from our trip to India, and got rings, we exchanged rings.

AG: So can you talk about Gary's job? And you've already talked about some of the travel involved with it and, and how that affected your relationship.

JG: His job was that -- When he started as a travel nurse. I mentioned the trip to the Ukraine. Gary loved traveling. Before I knew him he'd been on a trip to Ireland, and loved Ireland, and loved the Irish people. And he found that he -- Here you go to somebody's house, and they might turn the television on, and you sit, watch television together. In Ireland you'd go and have tea, or a beer and talk. And people didn't ever sit down in a room and turn on a television together. He felt like people connected with each other more. And he also felt like when he was traveling -- And not only was he getting to see, and experience places, and meet people, but he felt like he was more open to new experiences, traveling. And he loved that. One of the reasons he became a travel nurse was a chance to travel.

And he had hoped to have, for some time a long-term assignment where he could go live in another country, not as a tourist, but live the way that people did, in local housing, eat the food, make friends and get to experience another culture, and learn the language as a person living there, and not as a tourist. And he'd been looking for a long-term assignment for quite a while, and hadn't found any opportunities, just these little short-term assignments. He had the short-term assignment in the Ukraine. And that assignment that he was on there, was after the Soviet Union had broken up. He what the Defense Department contract was, that was going on there, there was a treaty that was signed between Russia, Ukraine, the

United States, maybe European countries. Where Ukraine agreed to give up the nuclear weapons they had on their soil, left from the Soviet Union, from the Soviet Union days in return for guarantees that their territorial integrity would be protected in the Ukraine. They wouldn't need them for defense.

Of course, what's going on recently, we know that, that's not entirely true, but -- So Gary was the short term assignment he got, filling in for another nurse was providing medical care, for the American employees, who were there both observing, and helping the Ukrainians dismantle their nuclear weapons. He told me a story about one day, one of the Ukrainian military officers saying, "Have you seen the nuclear warheads?" And he said, "No." And he said, "Let me show you." And they took him down into this door and unlocked and went down underground into this bunker. And there were catwalks, metal catwalks, and down beneath them, it was rows and rows of nuclear weapons on the ground, nuclear warheads that had been taken off of the missiles. They were waiting there for, for them to be shipped out of the country, and destroyed under the treaties with the U.S and the European Union.

That assignment got him on the radar of Raytheon and the Defense Department. And we were living together, and we'd come back from India and exchanged rings. And he's working at the Grady that he'd gone back into working as a contract nurse at the trauma center, and wasn't their employee, but as a contractor, and which left him free that he could still maybe get travel assignments as they came out.

But he kind of accepted that he wasn't going to get a long-term assignment. And then here comes this offer, for a long-term assignment to go work for a minimum of a year with DTRA, the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, in Votkinsk, Russia. And again, when the Soviet Union fell apart, the weapons that they had in Russia, we were really worried about them being able to protect the weapons, and the Soviet Union, when it fell apart was broke, and they didn't have money to pay their soldiers. In some cases, the soldiers that worked at their nuclear facilities weren't being paid. And I think our government was really concerned that something was going to happen those weapons.

And there was also provisions in the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty, the SALT Treat that was signed under Reagan, both to monitor nuclear weapons, new ones that were being made, and to destroy some older ones to reduce the size of both of our country's arsenals, and Russia agreed that they would uphold their treaty obligations that have been entered into by the Soviet Union. And we agreed to help pay for that and, help run part -- their portion of some of the treaty obligations in return for them upholding those, and also letting us monitor to be sure that the weapons were

protected properly. So, there's two portions of that treaty that were going on in Russia. One in a place called Izhevsk that was close, about 30 minutes away from Votkinsk. And then the one in Votkinsk. Izhevsk was what was called the portal monitoring site. And that's where we had nuclear monitors, that monitored new nuclear weapons that were being made by the Russians. New missiles, to be sure they're in treaty compliance.

The Russians had a similar portal monitoring site that was in Utah where they monitored our weapons. Then at the site in -- And that was a super secure site. The people that lived there, lived inside a wall -- Defense military compound, and all their food was flown in from of the United States for them, any time they left the site, they had to leave with armed body guards, and everything was real tightly controlled. The site where Gary was in Votkinsk was the site where they were supposed to take apart, dismantle, the older nuclear weapons. And that site didn't exist yet. It was being built. Raytheon had the contract with the Defense Department to build it, and they don't have good medical care there. So part of the contract was to have nurses to provide medical care for employees. That was what his job was. He was supposed to be the clinic manager, and he was a certified emergency nurse, certified trauma nurse. And if somebody was sick, he could take care of them. If they got hurt, he could take care of them, or make a decision where they need to be medevaced out somewhere else. And they were building a facility there, where they would take the older nuclear missiles. They would remove the warheads from the casings, cut up the missile casings, burn off the rocket engines, and then, they destroy the older -- the Nuclear materials. That was under construction. And he got this offer to go there. He said, "I can't go, we've just exchanged rings and become of a couple, and I don't know what I'd do if I wasn't here with you."

And I told him he should go. I knew him really well, and I knew how much he wanted to go live in another culture. I said, "If you don't do this, you've been wanting to do this for years. And you haven't found an opportunity. And now you have one, if you don't do it, you're going to regret it." And so he went and he was over there working, they were building this facility. And we would talk on the phone with each other, every Sunday, he had to get a background check. You know, the FBI did a background check on him and everything. Where he worked wasn't as secure as the Izhevsk site. You could come and go, and meet people, and travel around Russia if he wanted to. But they didn't ever tell him -- They didn't give him any training, which I later on figured out, they should have done on what to do, if there are security issues, what to do if approached by Russian, the Russians, like the FSB or the Russian police or anything.

But we knew, even though they hadn't given us training, and there was talk among the people who work there, that the FSB monitor the employees, and we knew they listened to our phone calls. We would talk on the phone every Sunday. And the phone calls, we would talk in the phone. And at twenty-eight minutes and thirty seconds, the line would go dead. Always happen, almost always. And then it happened when other people were talking with each other from the site that the other employees that were talking to somebody off-site. And the running joke among the American employees there was, that the FSB use thirty minute cassettes, and they would cut off the phone call so that you wouldn't talk, couldn't talk. So they wouldn't miss anything while they flipped their tape over. And there were a couple times we had conversations where nothing happened at twenty-eight minutes and thirty seconds. And we knew that they probably weren't listening that day, but that didn't happen very often.

I've kind of wandered off what your original question was.

HO: No, not at all.

JC: So that was his job. They had interpreters that work with them because Gary didn't speak Russian and the other American employees -- They had one of our employee who spoke Russian and English, and he was the logistics manager. And at some point, the Russians, for some reason, got mad at him. They didn't like him. And they demanded that the Americans remove him and send him back to the United States. And they gave him like seventy-two hours to get him out of Russia, or they said, they're going to arrest him. And they thought he was up to no good or something. I don't know what was going on.

But all of a sudden they didn't have a logistics manager. And Gary began doing, temporarily, in addition to being the clinic manager, which there wasn't that much demand because there was only like eight employees. They weren't getting sick every day, and having accidents every day. He actually helped take care of some local Russian people that got hurt, the local doctors didn't know what to do with them. He treated a person with anthrax infection on their skin while he was there. Had to look up online to figure out what it was the person had. But he began doing the logistics as well, which as they got their offices, the building built, he was helping order, and bring in supplies and, coordinate shipments. And occasionally there would be people from the Defense Department, or Raytheon that would come to survey the site, and check on progress. And sometimes military personnel, generals from the United States. And he'd have to arrange local places for them them to stay, and food and dinners. They'd always have big dinners.

I remember one time he had pizzas flown in from Moscow, and the generals told him "This is logistics. You've got pizza in the middle of nowhere." Which really wasn't the middle of nowhere either because it's Votkinsk, was over a million people there. But it had been back in the Soviet days, one of the secret cities, that didn't show on maps or anything. Factory there called, but Votkinsk [inaudible] is an arms manufacturing. And they made -- I think they may have manufactured SS 22 nuclear missiles there. And as well as small arms, and some other types of non-nuclear missiles and stuff. In addition to pressure cookers and pots and pans. It's kind of a strange place. So that was what his job was there, what he was doing. And he was there for a year, and decided he wanted to stay longer. And I said, "Okay." He'd been there two years at a point where some things happened, and sort of changed everything. And should I just go ahead and tell you the rest?

HO:

Sure.

Votkinsk is on the West side of the Ural mountains from Siberia. It's cold during the winter months. They have three and a half hours of daylight. The coldest, longest winter days. It was a miserable place to be in the wintertime. He made friends there. There was a Russian high school teacher her name was Olya Kuntzenova, and Olya taught English in high school. She found out that there were some American people working there. Apparently, everybody in town knew about these eight American people who were there. She contacted and they met Gary and asked if he would come to speak at the high school as a native speaker. So they could hear a native speaker speaking English. Here his mother had been a teacher and he'd always thought it would be neat to be a teacher and he enjoyed the experience.

He talked with Olya afterward and said, "Could I do a reading group with the kids where we read English books together, talk about them in English to help them with their English." He made friends with some of the Russian high school kids that way and got to know some of their families.

Because the place was miserable, cold, and awful in the wintertime, and the Americans assumed that people wouldn't be making friends with Russians, that they wouldn't be able to communicate with them and that they'd want to leave. They got two weeks vacation every three months, plus a \$1,500 allowance to buy an airline ticket to leave and go somewhere. So we would meet somewhere. I didn't have enough vacation and money that I could fly somewhere every three months, but twice a year while he was there, we would go meet somewhere and have a vacation. We spent time in Scandinavia together. We spent Christmas one year in London. We went to Vietnam and Thailand together and had some

great trips. Then he went on some trips on his own and saw other parts of Europe.

After he started doing these reading groups, like the Christmas we were in London, he contacted me a month before. I knew about the reading groups, we were talking every Sunday. He said, "Jon, I need you to bring thirty copies of the new Harry Potter book with you to London. That's what the kids and I are going to read next." So I had an extra suitcase full of paperback Harry Potter books. And he had made these friends. We had some code between us. When we were talking on the phone, certain things we could say, again he hadn't had any training, but they knew the FSB watched him. They knew that they came in and they would look at his apartment when he wasn't there and stuff. They knew that they listened to the phone calls and there was an employee of theirs who ran their computers for them, our I.T. guy was a local Russian guy named Sergey Nechayev.

He and Gary kind of became friends over time. Sergey one day said, "Let's go for a walk." They went for a walk and walked outside the city into the woods. Sergey said, "I give information to the FSB." Gary said, "You work for the FSB?" He said, "No, I don't work for them," he said "I got this job and they came to me and said, you have to tell us what the Americans and the people are doing. We want to meet with you regularly to know what's going on there in the office. You work on their computers, we want you to get stuff from their computers for us." He said, "You don't say no to the FSB." I have to do it. He said, "I meet with them weekly for lunch, so you should be careful and never say anything around me that you don't want the FSB to know because I can't lie to them."

When we were in London Gary told me this. That's not something we talked about on the phone. We have some code and things. One of the code things was, my friends took me to lunch. That meant that you had contact with the FSB. On one of his vacation times, the Emergency Nursing certification, Advanced Cardiac Life Support certification, you have to renew those periodically and his were coming due where they need to be renewed. He found a class in New York that he could go take and get recertified. He was going to take his two weeks to go to New York, spend a week doing these classes, redo his certifications, and then I was going to come meet him the second week and we were going to do stuff in New York. We used to do the Delta weekender things.

You'd get a special deal where you could fly round trip on short notice to New York, from Atlanta for \$130. We'd fly in and stay at the Y that's close to the Met, go get standing room tickets at the Met, and go to a Broadway show. Some of New York's have seen, seemed like a great place to be. We had this trip planned and I was at work working and he

called and he was crying on the phone. I thought that he was already on his way to New York for his certification. He told me he was on a plane and he'd waited to make the call using the airphone on the plane after they cleared out, left the ground in Moscow and he was crying and he said, "Jon, my friends took me to lunch today. I need you to come to New York now, not next week." I knew that meant the FSB had done something to him.

I told my work, I needed emergency time off. I got a ticket and flew to New York. He got there a day ahead of me and checked in at a hotel at W Tuscany hotel I remember, nice place. I got there and he was a basket case. He was crying and upset, he was alternatively depressed and having panic attacks. He told me the Russian's FSB had picked him up in the airport, in Moscow. He'd gotten to the airport early and probably the people who write the transportation for him had been told to arrange to get him there early. They had taken him – They'd picked him up in a place where he was checking in with his passport and immigration they said, "Just a moment." These men came and they said, "We need to talk to you, Mr. Thacker," his name was Gary Thacker. They took him to a room somewhere and there's FSB agents. They said, "Where are you going?" He told them that he's going to New York to get his nursing certification renewed, and "Where do you work?" He told them, which they were hoping he would do. Then they put these pictures in front of him.

They were pictures of him naked with teenage boys, naked, sitting next to him in a sauna. That sounds really awful. The Russians have these things called banya where they go sit in the steam baths, and everybody does it. Even the poor families have got little banyas out in the countryside and their vegetables garden will have a little wooden building. They go heat up rocks and put steam of water over it and make steam and stuff. The Russians – I actually, when I was in Ukraine, we went to the steam baths in Ukraine. Russians don't feel like they are clean until they've been in a sauna and sweat. Just taking a shower by itself is not enough. There was a community center in Votkinsk that the local people could go and they had a swimming pool, weights, exercise rooms, and it had saunas or banyas so men had one and women had one. Gary had started going there and using the community center, swimming and exercising.

Some of the kids from the reading group would be there sometimes and they would see him and come talk to him and they'd be in the sauna, which could have thirty people in it. They'd be sitting, talking with him and apparently the FSB had put cameras, hidden them in there and had been taking pictures when they were in there. They cropped the other people out so you don't know that they're in a sauna with thirty other people, adults. They put these pictures in front of him and said, "Who are these boys? Who is this boy?" and "What are you doing in these pictures?"

He said, "Well, it's the banya at the community center in Votskinsk." They said, "we're going to show these pictures to your employers and tell them that you're a child molester unless you do what we tell you to do." They wanted him to -- later, one the Defense Department security guys, I talked to, they wanted to turn him, they wanted to get him to be a spy for them against the United States.

It's crazy because he didn't have any secret knowledge. What they wanted from him was they wanted to know who were the employee -- what the employees other habits were, what was in their medical files, who had a medical problems, who was dating local people, did any of them have drinking problems?

They wanted to use him to get information they could use to blackmail other people who had secret information. They showed him these pictures and he said, "Go ahead and show them to them." He said, "The other people have been to the banyas too. Even when the people come visit for our company, the local people will take them. They go out for dinner and then they take them to the banya. They know what the banyas are. Show it to them, I don't care." I guess the FSB, they must've thought of people, it used to be they wouldn't let gay people work in security services because they thought they'd be ashamed and they'd be easy to blackmail. I think the FSB must've still thought that was the case. Gary didn't care but one of the kids in the pictures is a boy named, Daniel. Gary had gotten to be, Daniel had introduced him to his family. They had taken him out to their little banya outside the countryside, the vegetable garden and he had traveled with them on a weekend a couple of times and gotten to know the whole family and the children. When he said, go ahead and show them the pictures. They said, "Who is this boy?" He said, "This is Daniel" and I can't say his last name Voster -- something. I have it written down. They said, "You spend time with him and his family. Are you in, what's your relationship?" He said, "Well I've become friends with them I like them and they're very nice people." They said, "What would you think of something bad were to happen to them?" They threatened the family.

This is an hour or so talking and interrogation has gone on and went on for four or five hours. He said, "What is it you want me to do?" They said, "We want you to cooperate with us, we want you to meet us once a week and we'll ask you questions, and we'll ask you information. We want you to cooperate and tell us what we want to know." He said, "Okay, I'll do what you want to do and they had gave him a pad of paper and a pen and had him write out in long hand, I will cooperate with the FSB and sign and date it and they took it. Then they said, "Go on back to your trip, your flight's leaving in an hour, you go ahead with your trip, just like you had planned and when you get back from your trip, we'll want you to, the second weekend when you're back to go to Izhevsk for lunch and we'll

meet you at Izhevsk to talk. You can't tell anybody what we've talked about. We'll be watching you, including in New York."

When I get to New York, to the hotel, it was late afternoon and he is just a basket case. He was crying and his family had depression, his father, his mother, he told me about some depression. Once when he got even a suicide attempt, when he'd been a teenager. He was beat up by other kids in high school because he was gay, and that was what triggered the suicide attempt. He wasn't depressed when I knew him. It was -- he wasn't having problems with that but whenever this contact with the FSB, it just scared the heck out of him and he was just having like an emotional meltdown. He was alternately, panicked and scared that there was somebody who was going to kill him so I tried to calm him down and we stayed in the room.

At some point he started talking about, I shouldn't have told you to come here. They're watching us. They'll know you're here. Now you're in danger. I shouldn't have told you to come here. He was worried they were going to do something to both of us. We eventually went to sleep. In the middle of the night I heard something and woke up and he was opening the window. He was going to jump out of the window at the hotel. I stopped him and pulled up my chair to the window and sat there awake the rest of the night and we got on a plane in the morning and came back to Atlanta.

From my days of working with the ACLU their attorneys that I knew had contacts with the FBI and I talked with one of them and he called people he knew at the FBI and told them what had happened and arranged a meeting with the FBI. I told Gary, we've got to tell the FBI about this. So then we went for a meeting and he felt safer and calmed down some when we were back in Atlanta, but he was still depressed. This triggered some kind of depression that I had not seen before, he was really, really depressed and still having these panic attacks. He felt safer in Atlanta and it was a little bit better. The FBI said, "Don't come to our offices, they watch our offices. We don't want to meet you here." That scared him because he thought, maybe they're watching me here too.

They had us go to the old Sunoco building downtown Atlanta and go up to a floor that was sheet rock walls with the tape that hadn't been painted yet and stuff and metal and tools laying around. It looked like a construction site, where they're building out a space. It didn't look like there was anybody there. We'd go up to this floor and go, are we in the right place? Then here comes this guy out from around behind the wall and he said, you know, Mr. Thacker, and he showed us the FBI credentials, He said, "We're going to go, we're going to talk here." They opened this door and there was a conference room, video cameras, recording equipment.

They said to me, "You can't be here during the call during this debriefing, you'll need to wait downstairs." I waited downstairs while they debriefed him. During the debriefing, he told me afterwards, they wanted him to go ahead and pretend to cooperate with the FSB. They wanted him to go back to Russia and just keep working and to meet with the FSB and they wanted to use him to pass misinformation to the Russians. Which he said no, because he was terrified. He was scared to go back to Russia. He had literally had to leave all his belongings. He walked away from the friends, the people he made his job. The FBI asked him not to tell his employer what happened. He just told his employer. He was sick and couldn't go back to Russia, he was really sick. And they're wondering what the world is going on.

Eventually when he told them I can't go back there, I'm too scared. I can't do that. They said, okay, well, give us some time to look into this. We have to do background checks on both of you and just to be sure what's going on here, but don't tell your employer, continue to tell them you're sick. Let us talk to them, let us handle that. About two weeks passed and he continued to be depressed and panic attacks. We went to, I found a, psychologist, a therapist, and he started going to the therapist and got some medication. He was going to therapy sessions, but they eventually told his employer and the employer called and they said, "We'd heard that they tried to turn somebody. We didn't know it was you."

What I'll tell you about this is, it turns out we both had talked with the FBI and there was Defense Department security people that talk, that came and talked to him and they told us that the SALT treaty, the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty had clauses -- Countries know they spy against each other because decreasing nuclear weapons required that the countries trust each other in a way they hadn't before. It was written into the treaty, that they would not try to compromise the people, the employees of each other's countries who were working the treaty, that they were off limits. That they couldn't be targeted by their spies and they couldn't approach them and try to do what they'd done to Gary. And that what they had done was the biggest violation of the treaty between the United States and Russia that had occurred since the Soviet Union collapsed. The State Department was preparing a demarche. I didn't even know what that was. I had to ask. And it's a formal diplomatic demand. They were preparing a demarche to give to the Russians to demand that they explain what they were doing and to stop this kind of stuff.

I asked later on about if they had delivered a demarche and they said, we can't tell you anymore about it at that's secret up to the Secretary of State at this point. They made this formal diplomatic demand because it was such a bad treaty violation that they had done this. Gary -- Raytheon tried to take care of him. They said, once they found out what all had happened

and they offered him a job to be a nurse down at the research station in Antarctica. They had an opening and he was still having panic attacks and depressed. Sometimes I would go and come home work and he would just be curled up in a ball on the sofa. This went on and he eventually arranged the -- Raytheon packed up his belongings. Sergey Nechayev that he'd become friends with, who talked to the FSB but wasn't an FSB agent volunteered to fly to Atlanta and bring his things, he checked all his trunks and stuff, his luggage, and he brought the stuff.

That was Labor Day weekend in 2002, the Gary was happy to see Sergey and he was happy to get his things back. He went through his things and he picked out some things to give as gifts and asked Sergey to put tags on them. Give this to Daniel, give this to his mother, and give this to different people and sort of settled things. He had started working again just two weeks before, as a nurse, he'd started being a little less depressed and I thought things were getting better. I told you in previous questions about doing my work on suicide prevention, suicide hotline. This had gone on for about three months at this point, these panic attacks and depression. He was non-functional and I was terrified, worried about him. I knew he had tried to kill himself when we were in New York and he'd started saying things at one point, that he was a burden to me, and I'd be better off without him.

I was really worried about him being suicidal. When he seemed to be getting better I was relieved but I was kind of worn down from three months of worried about him and taking care of him. I didn't recognize one of the things that's a warning when you have somebody that's suicidal and they're upset, they're volatile emotionally, they suddenly become calm and that changes. Sometimes that's a warning sign because it means they've made a decision and they're calm and quiet that they've made a decision and they're not worrying. There's no more anxiety about what's going to happen because they made a decision what they're going to do, and they're going to kill themselves. I think that may have been what happened with him. He got his things back and sent, made arrangements for the things to go back to be given to his, to people that he had gotten close to in Russia with Sergey.

He wanted to thank Sergey for bringing his things back. We went and took a little tour around, he showed him around Atlanta, and then we went Labor Day weekend and went up the mountains. We went whitewater rafting on the Ocoee and we went hiking up near some waterfalls. It would have been Sunday night, we'd gotten back and I was asleep and Sergey came and woke me up and he said, "Jon, Jon come fast." It was maybe two or three o'clock in the morning. Sergey had gotten up to go to the bathroom and the television was on and there, he didn't see Gary anywhere. He didn't know where he was. He started walking around the

apartment or condo, and he found him, he hung himself in our laundry room. So he woke me up and Sergey was in a panic attack.

I went in and I saw him hanging in and grabbed a kitchen knife and cut him down and everything but I could tell he was already dead and called the police. The police came, the coroner came, and I told them that we'd had some things going on with the FBI and then gave him the agents' names that the counter-espionage agents that had been doing the debriefing and, and told them to please contact them and tell them what happened. The FBI agents came by the next day, I talked with them and told them, Sergey is the guy from his office. Sergey is here at the house, Sergey brought his things back, Sergey is the guy in his office that had to meet weekly with the FSB. I don't think Sergey did anything to Gary, but please make sure. They said they would.

I'm not – I wasn't considered family under Georgia law. The coroner wasn't allowed to talk to me the medical examiner, or coroner whatever it's called in Atlanta. The FBI talked to them and said, after you get your results, we want you to talk to Jon and answer any questions he has and give him any information he asks for. They arranged for me to have a call afterwards with the coroner to talk about what their findings were. They said that he had killed himself that nobody else had done anything to him. They explained even in detail, why they knew that. Apparently, when people hang themselves or somebody else hanging you, you would be grabbing the rope and trying to get it off and you scratch yourself and have skin into your nails. He didn't have any of that. The FBI told me they've never harmed someone on our soil and we don't he did anything to him.

They wanted to talk to him and Sergey said, "I can't talk to you. When I go home, the FSB is going to ask me questions and if I talk to you I'm going to be in trouble. I have to tell him that you asked me to talk to you."

Sergey, it was a pretty traumatic experience for him too. I don't think he did anything. I think he was a good guy, actually, just living in a crummy country. Sergey went on home after that. So that was the end of our relationship.

Gary's father was really happy when the two of us had gotten together and that we were so close. While Gary was in Russia his father and I would meet and have lunch together about monthly. His name was Rod. Let me back up a minute and get off topic. My own father, I told you earlier, we didn't talk for years. When my own father, the last time we did talk before we could talk to each other, we talked on the phone and he was quoting the Bible verses.

We talked on the phone and he was quoting me Bible verses and telling me he couldn't have a relationship with me. And we talked for a long time

on the phone. An hour, hour and a half. And at some point, I said to him, "Well, Dad, it sounds like this may be the last time we talk in this life together, then." And he said, "Well, yeah. And we won't be talking in the next one because you're going to be burning in hell." That was the last thing he ever said to me before he broke off and we didn't talk for years. That was kind of traumatic.

And it had been nice getting to know Gary's father. And he had told me, he actually said, "I love you, Jon. You're part of our family." And he knew Gary. Gary's depression, which I think what the Russians did triggered it, I don't think they caused it, exactly. Although, he's still terrified of them. But his father had pretty severe depression problems.

And at one point, when I was trying to take care of him, but I had to go to work, and he was doing so badly, and he would talk to me about being suicidal. He said, "I think I'm going to go stay with my dad for a while so I'm around somebody all day long." And he called his dad and asked him. He said, "I want to come stay with you." His dad already knew what had happened. And he knew that I was taking care of him. He said, "I want to come stay with you for a couple of weeks until things calm down and I get a little better." And his dad said, "No. I don't want you in the house. I've got enough to deal with, myself. I can't take care of you."

But when Gary died, his dad came to see me. He said, "Jon, you decide what the funeral should be. He's your partner. And Gary loved you." And we went together the funeral home and made funeral arrangements and we had the funeral. And two days after the funeral, Gary was getting paid very well to work in Russia. They paid for all his housing, they gave him a food allowance, they gave him this \$1,500 every three months to go somewhere else and travel. So almost all the money he was making was going into a bank account. And they were paying him three times what he got paid to do work as a trauma nurse at Grady Hospital.

And he'd saved up a bunch of money. And three days after the funeral -- So Rod got to be sort of a substitute father, a little bit. And it was nice having this nice relationship with him. Three days after the funeral, he called me up and he said, "Jon, I've been talking to my accountant, and he's explained how things work to me. And this isn't going to be you anymore. It's not going to be you and me." He says, "I'll take care of the estate and everything from now on. I don't want to talk to you anymore. Goodbye." So it was like all over, you and my own dad. It was just a really awful experience. And I talked with a friend, and I guess he found out this money and things. I have no obligation to share it with Jon, and I can just keep it for myself. Apparently, at that point, I wasn't the loved partner of his son anymore.

So I talked with a friend that was an attorney and said, "What do I do about this?" And he said, "Well, Gary didn't have a will. And those things go to his father. There's really not much you can do about it." And the particular friend I talked to did a lot of wills and estates with gay couples. And he said, "I'm just going to be blunt, Jon." He said, "This happens a lot." He said, "Families will tell their gay son's partner how much they love them, and they treat them nice, and they include them in things when they're alive." And he said, "Once their gay son is dead, everything changes." He said, "This works out this way most of the time." So the whole thing was an awful experience, the way things ended. And I still miss Gary a lot, to this day. I think about him a lot.

But since that time, Sergey contacted me a couple of years later and talked, and he would see me online sometimes, and would chat online. And at some point, he called, contacted me, and said he was going to come to the United States on a vacation, and he wanted to stop by. He stopped and spent a couple of days with me and sort of get some closure on stuff that happened and visit with me. And he came and visited and stayed with me for a couple of days.

And after he left, the FBI called and said, "Can we have lunch with you? We want to talk about -- We're going to have lunch. We want to talk about Sergey, what he did while he was there, and who he's visiting, why he's here, or what's going on." And I've had meetings with the FBI two or three times since Gary died, to talk about Sergey after contact with him, or he came to visit with me. They didn't get Gary to go back and pretend to cooperate with the FSB and pass misinformation, but they knew that Sergey worked in the office, and that he met weekly with the FSB. And then he was in the IT systems, Raytheon.

And I don't know who arranged what, and nobody had ever told me this is what happened, but I think that they used Sergey for that, instead. Sergey got promoted, and he works in the main headquarters office at the DTRA, Defense Threat Reduction, I guess the American Defense Department in Moscow. It's overall of our Defense Department operations in Russia. And he's their IT computer person and can get into their computers. And so I think that they use him, they plant information and put there what they want him to pass on to people. And when he comes to whenever I've had contact with anybody, they want to know whatever he has had to say to me, which that hasn't happened for about three years, now. So maybe that's done with.

Okay, so I have a collection of buttons. I've always liked buttons. And these are some of the -- This is not my whole collection, but some of them. And I just wanted to point out some of them and talk about what they are. So one of them up here, starting at the top, is the Campaign '92 AIDS,

"Vote as if your life depended on it!" During '92, '93, and before that, the AIDS crisis was at its peak, and people were dying. And when Bill Clinton was going to run for president, and he said things, he was very gay friendly. And there was a really big push to register voters in the gay and lesbian community, and to get out to vote and to support Clinton because we thought, here's somebody who's going to make a difference, and not just be friendlier toward gays, but help with policies to research and combat AIDS. And "Vote as if your life depended on it" really meant that to us. It's we need to get Clinton in office because our friends are dying. And so that was that one.

This is Minnesota Lesbians and Gays for Clinton and Gore. When I was at the Democratic National Convention in '92, one of the things you do at the convention is you trade buttons with each other. You swap. And so I got that from the Minnesota delegation. I was an openly gay delegate there, and there were others. And we had a pretty good-sized group of people there. Over a hundred of us in the Gay and Lesbian Caucus.

This is the March on Washington for Gay Rights from 1987. David and I went to the gay rights, to that March. We went with a group of friends. We flew in and stayed at a hotel. It was out on the Metro line, and went to the March. And I could remember probably the most -- This feeling of pure exhilaration. The Gay Prides here were small, at that point. And there wasn't anywhere that I went where the gay pride you saw 1,500 of us on a good gay pride. But most of the time, you didn't see that many people. And I can remember getting out of the Metro station and walking up the hill toward the Washington Monument. And we got up to the top of the Hill, and we look around, and there's hundreds of thousands of people. And just, at the time, it sent shivers down my spine. It was wonderful to be at that March. It was a good experience. And it was wonderful seeing, I think we came back from that energized. We knew how many of us there were, and how many of us there were that were working for gay rights. And we came back reenergized to work even harder.

Lift the Ban is from '90, probably '93, after Clinton was elected and then they passed through Congress the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy for military. And this was a button for lift the ban on gays serving the military.

This button is Elect Dick Rhodes. Dick was a member of Friends Atlanta, one of the first gay guys I got to know in Atlanta when I came out and they got involved with Friends Atlanta. He'd been president of Friends, and he was active in politics. He was a delegate at the 1988 Democratic Convention. And he was, to some extent, sort of my political mentor. I looked at what he was doing and the things he was doing, and it did some of the same things.

And he decided to run for office. Georgia House seat 46. And so that's a button the year that he ran. And we went out and campaigned for him. And unfortunately, he did not get elected, but the guy that got elected in his place, his name was Doug Teper. Turned out to be a pretty good guy. Doug got famous for when the politicians in the state were all trying to jump over each other to see you could pass the strongest hard on crime bills. And they were wanting to pass all these mandatory sentences that were just getting draconian. And I remember Doug got up on the House floor and made a speech where he wanted to have public guillotining for people who committed crimes. And he was fun. So even though Dick lost in the primary, we all ended up helping Doug Teper, afterwards.

We'll Decide, November 3rd, NARAL. This is April 5th, 1992. And November 3rd, of course, was the election day for the election that year. NARAL was the National Abortion Rights Action League. There's a number of buttons here that deal with abortion and freedom of choice. And there was really strong affinity between the freedom of choice and the women's rights movement and the gay and lesbian movement. There were straight women who were part of the women's rights movement, who were some of the only straight people in the early days of AIDS, when people were dying of AIDS, who would come and support their gay male friends. So we work, we support each other.

I Support Gay and Lesbian Rights. That's a kind of a militant looking one, with the fist, there. I was talking about us being non-violent, but it has the little pink triangle symbol in it.

This one is Reproductive Freedom for All Women. And that sort of goes along with what I was talking about, the NARAL button.

Stonewall 20. So, the Twin Cities Lesbian and Gay, and that was for the 1989 Pride celebration in Minnesota. And I think I got that button in the 1988 Democratic Convention, demonstrating outside. There were delegates, they weren't open gay delegates, but there was a small Gay and Lesbian Caucus at the 1988 Democratic Convention. And I was talking about the people swapping buttons. And they also had made these buttons, and they were trying to get people to come from other cities for their Gay Pride for the 20th anniversary. And they had these buttons already made up a year in advance and were giving them out to people.

Lesbian and Gay Caucus Member, Democrat National Convention. I was a member of the Caucus as an open gay member and open delegate in '92. So that was our caucus button. It's a really big button.

Abort Operation Rescue. Dealing with, again, the reproductive rights and freedom of choice. Operation Rescue got to be a real difficult sort of anti-

abortion group. They were difficult because they were kind of militant. They would go and they were assaulting people outside of clinics. I was involved in supporting freedom of choice, partly because of the affinity between the gay and lesbian activist movement, but also had been a clinic monitor as part of the efforts through the ACLU, where when abortion -- Operation Rescue started getting kind of physically violent toward people and some people had gotten hurt. Part of our strategy in dealing with that in the ACLU was to have civil liberties monitors go outside clinics when they knew there would be demonstrations, and we'd have a thing we hung around your neck that said, "civil liberties monitor." And we had a tape recorder and a camera, and we would announce to everybody that we were there to protect free speech rights and be sure that everybody had their free speech, and that we were recording. And there weren't any assaults that happened when we were doing that. The people were all nicer to each other.

Fight AIDS, Not People with AIDS. That's kind of self-explanatory. That's a good button.

LEGAL was a group in Atlanta. Legislative -- what was it? Legislative Equality for Gays And Lesbians, with the lambda symbol as the A, there. Taking Our Rightful Place. It was a early organization after the 1988 Democratic Convention. Dick Rhodes is one of the people that I think helped start that group. And it was a group of us. People who are into politics is always kind of a small group of people. Most people don't like politics. But it was a small group of us, maybe a dozen people within the gay community, who were interested in the political process and using it to get gay rights. And we formed this group. We lasted for two or three years.

This Keith Haring button for National Coming Out Day. And Keith Haring, of course, died of AIDS. Famous artist from that time period. And National Coming Out Day was really, really important. With all the activism that we did, I think that the single most powerful thing that anybody could do then politically, and still to some extent, is to come out and be open that you're gay and let people who know you know that you're a gay person. Because then they know that they like you and you're a gay person. And that's still one of the most powerful ways of changing. Not just things politically, but changing hearts and minds.

Committed Pro-Choice Georgia Delegate. NARAL, again.

Maynard Jackson. We worked for him and we got him elected and he then he vetoed the domestic partnership.

Gay and Lesbian Voters for Clinton and Gore.

Wham! Women's Action and Mobilization, Women's Health.

Heart String AIDS Memorial Quilt and You. I haven't mentioned this to you, but my brother is gay, also. He got involved, and he did mostly fundraising. He was the chair for three years of the Masquerade. It was a fundraising event for Project Open Hand. He worked on Heart Strings, was a traveling show with entertainers and singers. Dionne Warwick traveled with it one year to raise money for AIDS research and to help people with AIDS. And they had some tie in where they would be in a city doing their show to raise money. The ticket prices raise money for that. And they'd have the AIDS quilt on display at the same time. They kind of traveled together one year. My brother, he was the VIP Coordinator for Heart Strings. He worked with the movie stars and people and stuff. But anyway, that's what that button is. When the Heart Strings came through and the quilt was here one year.

Harvey Milk School. There was an effort -- I think the first Harvey Milk School, I think it was in San Francisco. There were kids that were bullied and beat up because they were gay or lesbian in schools. And there was this Harvey Milk School that was created. This button actually belonged to David. He really, really liked this. They created a high school just for gay and lesbian students so they wouldn't be bullied and beat up because they had their own school and there wouldn't be any non-gay, lesbian students there. And there was, I think, a few other schools like that that popped up maybe as alternative schools in other cities. That was kind of nice to have people who are bullied and beat up and abused and didn't want to go to school, give them a school of their own. Was kind of a nice thing.

CWA is Communication Workers of America. This is one of their little teeny buttons. And they gave it to me at the '92 Democratic Convention. And I'm not a union person. I work for a telecom company that I'm not unionized at. And they don't like the union. But I wore their button because they helped. They gave me a grant and helped pay my way to go to the convention. They supported the Democrats, and they were very supportive of the gay and lesbian community. The labor movement has been good about that.

Card Carrying Member of the ACLU. I've been a member of the ACLU for 30 years, probably. And was president of the lesbian gay rights chapter of the ACLU of Georgia. And so I've always been proud of that button, and still proud of being a member of the ACLU.

The Silence Equals Death. This is an Act Up button and is just the call not to be silent. That if we be silent and don't say anything, and we don't prompt, we don't – by making noise and speaking up, we don't prompt people to you more about the AIDS epidemic, that people just keep dying.

And that was the slogan for Act Up. Really powerful. They were really good at doing graphics and coming up with catchy words, and things. Act Up was a brilliant organization. Though, I love that button, too.

These things, I wanted to talk about these. This was from the '93 March on Washington. And each of these has a number. This one says it's oh, six, seven, three, eight, nine, I think. And this one is, oh, six, seven, three, two, one. I don't know if these were made in America. The numbers are kind of hard to read. But everything is political when you get involved in politics. And numbers are political at demonstrations. We would have the March of Washington in 1987, and I mentioned about coming up over the Hill, the Washington Monument, and seeing this hundreds of thousands of people and the March organizers said, "We have three quarters of a million people here." And the people who didn't like gays and lesbians said, "Oh, there was probably only 70,000." And we said, "No, there was way more than 70,000. Look how many people filled the wall. Look at a picture of this compared to when the March on Washington with Martin Luther King gave a speech and you can see, you can tell how many. Compare the crowds.

And there's this politics, an effort to try to make what we did and to make our voices quieter and less important because we didn't have as many people. That's the whole thing in the politics and numbers. So we asked the Park Service, "What's your official count?" And after the '87 March, and when I say what we, the March organizers and the media, and they said, "We don't do crowd counts."

So for the March on Washington '93, they made these little bracelets, and they numbered them. And they were a buck a piece, probably, or something. And they try to get everybody to buy one. And they could say how many of these they sold. And each one was numbered, and sequentially. They did that, and they also so paid a private organization with helicopters to fly over and take pictures and do official crowd estimates to try to deal with the people who try to marginalize us and make our voices smaller by saying that there weren't very many of us there.