

Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection

Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection
2014-2015



Title Statement

Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection
Ms.2015.007

Publication Statement

Publisher: Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech
Special Collections and University Archives, University Libraries (0434)
560 Drillfield Drive
Newman Library, Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
Business Number: 540-231-6308
specref@vt.edu
URL: <http://spec.lib.vt.edu>



2016 (CC0 1.0)

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2025-03-25 08:45:01 -0400.

Language Usage: English

Revision Description

2025-03-24 Ella Winterling added Existence and Location of Copies.

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.2015.007

Unit Date

2014-2015

Language

English .

Extent

0.5 Cubic Feet

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research. One interview in this collection is only available on-site as a transcript by request.

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Acquisition Information

An initial 21 oral histories were acquired by Special Collections beginning in the spring of 2015. Additional oral histories have been added to the collection as they are conducted.

Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection was completed in [month year].

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection, Ms2015-007, Special Collections, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note

Beginning in the fall of 2014, faculty and students in the Virginia Tech History Department, along with colleagues in the University Libraries' Special Collections and campus partners including HokiePRIDE, the LGBT Faculty/Staff Caucus, and the Ex Lapide Society (the LGBTQ alumni network at VT) began collecting oral histories to document the history of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer life in the 20th century American South and specifically at Virginia Tech.

Scope and Content

This collection consists of oral history interviews with influential members of the LGBTQ community at Virginia Tech, both past and present. Interviews were conducted by Tamara Kennelly, University Archivist, David Cline, Assistant Professor of History and Director of the Graduate Certificate in Public History, and students of Professor David Cline's Oral History class.

Keywords

Sexual minorities
University History

Accruals

Additional interviews will be added to the digital collection and the finding aid as they are received and processed.

Existence and Location of Copies

Some of this collection has been digitized and is available online.

Alternate Form Available

Audio versions of the interview can be found online at the [Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection \(Ms2015-007\)](#). Please note: the website includes additional interviews not yet listed in the "Contents List" below.

Description of Subordinate Components

Oral History with Katherine Allen, October 23, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_AllenKatherine

Unit Date 2014-10-23

Creator Keith, Laura

Creator Allen, Katherine

Material Specification 00:27:53

Material Specification The master recording consists of two .wav files. These files were combined into one .mp3 access file.

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from the Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical note

Katherine Allen is a professor of Human Development at Virginia Tech. Originally from Baltimore, Maryland, she completed studies at the University of Connecticut and Syracuse University before joining the Virginia Tech faculty in 1989. Allen came to Tech as one of the first 'out' lesbians and following her arrival, she became a vocal activist for LGBTQ rights both within the University and throughout the state of Virginia. Her research has focused on children of LGBTQ families, including the effects of relationship dissolution and legal custody rights. In the 1990s, Allen raised two children in a lesbian relationship and founded a lesbian mothers group with her partner. Her family became a 'poster family' for LGBTQ community, both locally and nationally, before she separated from her partner in the early 2000s. Allen continues to fight for legal protections and employee benefits for LGBTQ families at Virginia Tech and around the world.

Scope and Content

In her oral history, Katherine Allen discusses her activism, her relationships and personal identity, her experiences as part of a 'lesbian poster family' and as an 'out' faculty member at Virginia Tech. The interview was conducted on October 23, 2014 in Wallace Hall on the Virginia Tech campus. Laura Keith was the interviewer and Sara Evenson was the technical assistant.

Keywords

Sexual minorities

University History

Allen, Katherine

Interview Online

[Oral History with Katherine Allen, October 23, 2014.](#)

Oral History with Luther Brice, Interview 1, October 24, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_BriceLuther_OralHistory1

Unit Date 2014-10-24

Creator Brice, Luther

Creator Kennelly, Tamara

Material Specification 01:11:19

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from the Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Luther Kennedy Brice, Jr. was born and raised in Spartanburg, South Carolina. He earned a bachelor's degree from Harvard, a master's from Dartmouth, and a Ph.D. from Duke University. Brice began working at Virginia Tech as assistant professor of chemistry in 1954. He earned tenure two years later and became a full professor in 1966. He served as professor of chemistry and Acting Head of the Chemistry Department in 1966-67. He received both of Virginia Tech's prestigious teaching awards. In 1961, he was awarded the University Wine Award that recognizes a history of university teaching excellence and involves automatic induction into the Academy of Teaching Excellence. In 1966, he was the first winner of the University Sporn Award for Teaching Introductory Subjects. He took early retirement in 1986 when he moved to Washington, D.C. and taught as an adjunct professor at American University. During his years at Virginia Tech, Brice taught 23,593 students in freshman chemistry, physical chemistry, and principles of chemistry. He was also known as "Merlin the Magician" when he donned the blue cape made for him by his students and presented his chemical magic show.

Scope and Content

In this first oral history, Brice discusses how one had to be underground about being gay during his student years and through much of his time as a professor at Virginia Tech. Until the 1970s being homosexual was not discussed. He comments on the difficulties faced by gay faculty and students. The interview was conducted by Tamara Kennelly on October 24, 2014 at Innovation Space on the Virginia Tech campus.

Related Materials

A second interview with Luther Brice was conducted on March 26, 2015.

Keywords

University History

Sexual minorities

Brice, Luther

Interview Online

[Oral History with Luther Brice, Interview 1, October 24, 2015.](#)

Oral History with Luther Brice, Interview 2, March 26, 2015

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_BriceLuther_OralHistory2

Unit Date 2015-03-26

Creator Brice, Luther

Creator Kennelly, Tamara

Material Specification 00:32:51

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from the Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Luther Kennedy Brice, Jr. was born and raised in Spartanburg, South Carolina. He earned a bachelor's degree from Harvard, a master's from Dartmouth, and a Ph.D. from Duke University. Brice began working at Virginia Tech as assistant professor of chemistry in 1954. He earned tenure two years later and became a full professor in 1966. He served as professor of chemistry and Acting Head of the Chemistry Department in 1966-67. He received both of Virginia Tech's prestigious teaching awards. In 1961, he was awarded the University Wine Award that recognizes a history of university teaching excellence and involves automatic induction into the Academy of Teaching Excellence. In 1966, he was the first winner of the University Sporn Award for Teaching Introductory Subjects. He took early retirement in 1986 when he moved to Washington, D.C. and taught as an adjunct professor at American University. During his years at Virginia Tech, Brice taught 23,593 students in freshman chemistry, physical chemistry, and principles of chemistry. He was also known as "Merlin the Magician" when he donned the blue cape made for him by his students and presented his chemical magic show.

Scope and Content

In this second oral history, Professor Brice discusses his approach to and ideas about teaching. He also explains some aspects of his chemical magic show. The interview was conducted by Tamara Kennelly on March 26, 2015 at Innovation Space on the Virginia Tech campus.

Related Materials

A previous interview with Luther Brice was conducted on October 24, 2014.

Keywords

Sexual minorities

University History

Brice, Luther

Interview Online

[Oral History with Luther Brice, Interview 2, March 26, 2015.](#)

Oral History with Tom Brobson, November 6, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_BrobsonTom

Unit Date 2014-11-06

Creator Brobson, Tom

Creator Evenson, Sarah

Material Specification 01:07:04

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from the Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Tom Brobson graduated from Virginia Tech in 1982. After working in Washington, D.C., for several years, he returned to work for Tech in 1989, working as a fundraiser for the Department of University Relations. A diabetic himself, Brobson went on to work for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF).

Scope and Content

In this oral history interview, Brobson discusses his life as an undergraduate student and work as a fundraiser at Virginia Tech. He recounts stories of discrimination and threats he felt while an out gay student, discrimination and challenges he's faced at the university, and his activism while an employee, including helping to found the LGBT Caucus and to support Lambda Horizons. The interview was recorded on November 6, 2014 in Major Williams Hall on the Virginia Tech campus. The interviewer was Sarah Evenson and the technical assistant was Laura Keith.

Keywords

Sexual minorities

University History

Brobson, Tom

Interview Online

[Oral History with Tom Brobson, November 6, 2014.](#)

Oral History with Dolly Davis, October 24, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_DavisDolly

Unit Date 2014-10-24

Creator Laney, Jordan

Creator Davis, Dolly

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from the Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Dolly Davis is a former Virginia Tech student, who is a self-employed architect in Roanoke, Virginia. She is also a transgender activist who works closely with VT students and alums. Recently, she became involved in healthcare activism in southwest Virginia through her non-profit organization, Ladies and Gents of the Blue Ridge. Davis is married with two children.

Scope and Content

In this oral history interview, Dolly Davis describes her life as a transgender woman, including her childhood, the process of coming out to herself as well as others, and her activism on behalf of the transgender and LGBT community in Roanoke and at Virginia Tech. The interview was recorded on October 24, 2014 in Lane Hall on the Virginia Tech campus. Joran Laney was the interviewer and Claire Gogan was the technical assistant.

Keywords

Sexual minorities

University History

Davis, Dolly

Interview Online

[Oral History with Dolly Davis, October 24, 2014.](#)

Oral History with Mary Beth Dunkenberger, November 6, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_DunkenbergerMaryBeth

Unit Date 2014-11-06

Creator Cline, David

Creator Dunkenberger, Mary Beth

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from the Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Mary Beth Dunkenberger is the Senior Program Director at the Virginia Tech Institute for Policy and Governance. She joined Virginia Tech in 2001, after working in the international trade field and as an attorney in Washington, D.C.

Scope and Content

In this oral history interview, Dunkenberger discusses her first marriage and children before coming out to her family in her 30s. She also discusses being out in Virginia, her involvement in LGBTQ community, and issues related to LGBTQ and other minorities at Virginia Tech and in Virginia. In particular, she discusses issues surrounding being gay and religious, legal issues concerning gay marriage, and the LGBTQ climate survey at Virginia Tech. The interview was recorded on November 6, 2014 at Dunkenberger's office, 205 W. Roanoke Street in Blacksburg, Virginia. Professor David Cline was the interviewer.

Keywords

University History

Sexual minorities

Interview Online

[Oral History with Mary Beth Dunkenberger, November 6, 2014.](#)

Oral History with Jean Elliott, October 27, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_ElliottJean

Unit Date 2014-10-27

Creator Elliott, Jean

Creator Seabrook, Tom

Material Specification The interview was recorded in three separate audio tracks. Track 1 is 6 seconds of pre-interview conversation. Track 2 is the vast majority of the interview and Track 3 is 0:05:05 of additional interview. Tracks 2 and 3 were combined in the .mp3 access copy, with a short 2 second clip redacted at 0:00:25 at the interviewee's request.

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from the Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Jean Elliott is the Director of Communications for the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences at Virginia Tech. Before coming to VT in 1999, she earned degrees from Western Maryland College and Salisbury University, then worked in sports information at Brown University and the College of William & Mary. Elliott serves as the co-chair of VT's LGBT Faculty/Staff Caucus and was instrumental in starting the annual Gay in Appalachia event series at the university. She has received multiple awards, including the OUTstanding Virginian from Equality Virginia.

Scope and Content

In this oral history interview, Elliott discusses her childhood, struggling with her sexuality throughout her childhood and early adulthood, and being out as a lesbian or gay woman while working at Virginia Tech. She also discusses stories of her contributions to the LGBT programming at VT, including the Gay in Appalachia event series, and her observations about allies, challenges, and changes in Virginia and at Virginia Tech. The interview was recorded on October 27, 2014 in Elliott's office in Wallace Hall on the Virginia Tech campus. Tom Seabrook was the interviewer.

Keywords

Sexual minorities

University History

Local/Regional History and Appalachian South

Interview Online

[Oral History with Jean Elliott, October 27, 2014.](#)

Oral History with Tori Elmore, October 24, 2014

Unit ID MS2015-007_VTLGBTQ_ElmoreTori

Unit Date 2014-10-24

Creator Boggs, Ellen

Creator Elmore, Tori

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from the Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Tori Elmore grew up in Wytheville, VA, and graduated from Virginia Tech in 2009 with a BS in Mechanical Engineering. Elmore currently lives in the Blacksburg area and works as a maintenance engineer at the Celanese chemical plant in Narrows, VA. In the Spring of 2013, Elmore began hormone treatments to transition from a man to a woman and the following Fall she came out publicly at her place of work. Elmore plays for the Christiansburg Roller Derby team and is an active member of the New River Valley chapter of PFLAG, a national organization that provides support and education for parents, friends and allies of LGBTQ individuals.

Scope and Content

In this oral history interview, Elmore discusses her struggle with depression, the transition process, playing on a Roller Derby team, coming out at work and gaining acceptance in a blue collar Appalachian community. The interview was recorded on October 24, 2014 in Major Williams Hall on the Virginia Tech campus. Ellen Boggs was the interviewer and David Atkins was the technical assistant.

Keywords

Sexual minorities

University History

Interview Online

[Oral History with Tori Elmore, October 24, 2014.](#)

Oral History with Howard Feiertag, November 2, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_FeiertagHoward

Unit Date 2014-11-02

Creator Gogan, Claire

Creator Feiertag, Howard

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Howard Feiertag, an instructor of hospitality and tourism management in the Pamplin College of Business, has been a Virginia Tech faculty member since 1989. In 2015 he was awarded one of the Top 30 CMP Influencers Award, which recognizes the top 30 professionals in the global meetings and events industry. Before joining the university, he was a senior vice president at Servico, a hotel management company based in West Palm Beach. His 30 years in the hospitality industry include serving as the first convention bureau manager in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Orlando, Florida. His many professional honors include induction to the Convention Industry Council Hall of Fame and the Lifetime Achievement award from the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International. Feiertag, who was among the first to receive the CMP designation in 1985, earned a bachelor's degree at Michigan State University.

Scope and Content

In his oral history, Feiertag discusses his childhood in Brooklyn, New York, in the 1930s and 40s, his long career in the military and hospitality industry, his homosexual experiences as a young man in the 1950s and 60s, his relationship of nearly 50 years and his life in the Virginia Tech community. The interview was recorded on November 2, 2014 at Inn at Virginia Tech. Claire Gogan was the interviewer and Jordan Laney was the technical assistant.

Keywords

... ..

University History

Sexual minorities

Interview Online

[Oral History with Howard Feiertag, November 2, 2014.](#)

Oral History with Shelli Fowler, November 13, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_FowlerShelli

Unit Date 2014-11-13

Creator Fowler, Shelli B.

Creator Shires, Samantha

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from the Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Shelli Fowler is the Associate Dean of University College at Virginia Commonwealth University. Her focus on active learning in all environments (f2f, digital, hybrid), and on fostering student agency as critically engaged co-learners, informs the work she does at VCU and nationally. She has taught in EDUCAUSE and HERS Leadership Institutes. Prior to her position at VCU, she was a member of the Virginia Tech faculty from 2003 to summer 2015. She was associate professor of English at Virginia Tech and senior director for Networked Pedagogies and Professional Development in Technology-enhanced Learning and Online Strategies. She was honored with an Edward S. Diggs Teaching Scholars Award in 2013. She directed the Networked Learning Initiatives faculty program and the Graduate Education Development Institute. She earned her doctorate from The University of Texas at Austin.

Scope and Content

In her oral history, Fowler discusses her upbringing in Southern California, her academic career, the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors' refusal to approve her spousal hire and coming together with members of the Virginia Tech community to fight for equality and policy change. The interview was recorded on November 13, 2014 at the Graduate Life Center on the Virginia Tech campus. Samantha Shires was the interviewer and Carmen Bolt was the technical assistant.

Keywords

University History

Sexual minorities

Interview Online

[Oral History with Shelli Fowler, November 13, 2014.](#)

Oral History with David Hernandez, October 26, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_HernandezDavid

Unit Date 2014-10-26

Creator Green, Dara

Creator Hernandez, David

Access Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from the Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

David Hernandez attended Virginia Tech from 2010 to 2014 and graduated with a degree in Computer Science. In Fall 2012, Hernandez founded the Virginia Tech chapter of Out in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (oSTEM), an organization that provides professional support for LGBTQ students and faculty pursuing careers in the STEM fields. In 2013, the Virginia Tech Division of Student Affairs awarded Hernandez with the Aspire! Award for Courageous Leadership for his work with oSTEM.

Scope and Content

In his oral history, Hernandez discusses defining his identity and sexuality at a young age as a Filipino-American, his work with oSTEM and other LGBTQ programs and organizations on campus, the changing

visibility and resources for LGBTQ students at Virginia Tech and his hopes for the Hokie Nation in the future. The interview was recorded on October 26, 2014 in War Memorial Hall on the Virginia Tech campus. Dara Green was the interviewer and Aaron Johnson was the technical assistant.

Keywords

Sexual minorities

University History

Interview Online

[Oral History with David Hernandez, October 26, 2014.](#)

Oral History with Ann Kilkelly, October 29, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_KilkellyAnn

Unit Date 2014-10-29

Creator Kilkelly, Ann

Creator Lilly, Amanda

Material Specification The interview was recorded in 2 audio files. Track 1 is 0:00:23 and consists of the introduction. Track 2 is 1:06:42. Sections 0:19:47 to 0:20:23 and 0:31:06 to 0:31:53 of Track 2 were cut from the access .mp3 file at the request of the interviewee.

Material Specification 01:05:40

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from the Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Ann Kilkelly is a Professor of Theatre Arts and Women's Studies at Virginia Tech. She teaches a variety of performance and theater classes, women's studies seminars and undergraduate courses about community and culture, and tap classes. Since coming to Virginia Tech in 1991, she has been an advocate for traditionally underrepresented populations and she served on the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity from 2005-2008.

Scope and Content

The interview was recorded on October 29, 2014 in Henderson Hall at Virginia Tech. It begins with a description of Kilkelly's upbringing and early involvement with activism. It then covers her marriage and her own description of her personal identity with respect to societal labels. Next, the interview addresses the racial and LGBTQ climate at Virginia Tech, how it has changed over time, the scandal relating to Shelli Fowler's hiring, and the development of the Principles of Community. Finally, there is a description of drag shows at the Shamrock bar and Kilkelly's views on why it is important to discuss LGBTQ issues. Amanda Lilly was the interviewer and Molly Lash was the technical assistant.

Keywords

Sexual minorities

University History

Interview Online

[Oral History with Ann Kilkelly, October 29, 2014.](#)

Oral History with Eugene Lawson and Scott Sterl, October 23, 2014**Interview Online**

[Oral History with Eugene Lawson and Scott Sterl, October 23, 2014.](#)

Oral History with Jeff Mann, October 30, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_MannJeff

Unit Date 2014-10-30

Creator Mann, Jeff

Creator Harman, Ren

Material Specification 01:08:02

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Jeff Mann is Associate Professor of English and Director of the Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing Program at Virginia Tech. Mann started as an instructor in the English department in August of 1989, was appointed Assistant Professor in 2003, and later received tenure. A prolific writer, artist, and poet, Mann's work encompasses the complexities of love and relationships as well as the gay and lesbian experience in the culture of Appalachia. Mann is also known for his fiction, which details the depths and intensities of gay male relationships.

Scope and Content

The interview was conducted on October 30, 2014 in Jeff Mann's office, 210 Shanks Hall, on the campus of Virginia Tech. The interview chronicles the story of Mann's life from growing up in a small town in West Virginia to his college experience and his arrival in Blacksburg. It includes stories of his first experience with his sexuality, coming out as gay, his first sexual experience, relationships, the nature of his publications, and the meaning of his tattoos. Ren Harman was the interviewer and Veronica Nguyen was the technical assistant.

Keywords

University History

Sexual minorities

Local/Regional History and Appalachian South

Mann, Jeff

Interview Online

[Oral History with Jeff Mann, October 30, 2014.](#)

Oral History with Christian Matheis, October 24, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_MatheisChristian

Unit Date 2014-10-24

Creator Nguyen, Veronica

Creator Matheis, Christian

Material Specification 00:46:55

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Christian Matheis is a Doctoral Candidate in the Virginia Tech Alliance for Social, Political, Ethical, and Cultural Thought (ASPECT) Program working on a dissertation concerning liberation. He has several research interests including philosophy, feminism, anti-racism, and sexual/gender identity. He has a background in ethics studies and started participating in political activism in the early 1990's. Matheis works closely with the LGBT Caucus of Virginia Tech, helping to establish a political platform. He also works as a trainer in the Safe Zone Program teaching Trans 101 sessions.

Scope and Content

The interview was conducted in Matheis' office, Lane Hall Room 212. It begins with Matheis' describing his personal history and his views on personal identity. It then moves into discussion of his coming out experience, political activism, and involvement with the LGBT Caucus. Finally, he describes his experience with discrimination and gives advice and a charge to the future LGBTQ community. The interviewer was Veronica Nguyen and Ren Harman was technical assistant.

Keywords

University History

Sexual minorities

Matheis, Christian

Interview Online

[Oral History with Christian Matheis, October 24, 2014.](#)

Oral History with Aaron Slusher, October 25, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_SlusherAaron

Unit Date 2014-10-25

Creator Johnson, Aaron

Creator Slusher, Aaron

Material Specification 01:28:03

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Aaron Slusher was a student at Virginia Tech from 1988 until 1992. He graduated from Virginia Tech in 1992 with a degree in Biology. In 2011, Aaron returned to Virginia Tech to pursue a degree in Veterinary Medicine. In 2012, he transferred to Redford University. In the spring of 2014 Aaron graduated from Redford University with a master's degree in Social Work. While at Virginia Tech in the early 1990s, Aaron identified as a straight female and was married after graduation in 1992. In 1994, Aaron's relationship ended in divorce. From 1994 until 2009, Aaron identified as a lesbian. In 2010, Aaron began the transition from female to male and now identifies as a transgender male. Aaron currently lives in Floyd, Virginia and works as a social worker.

Scope and Content

In his interview, Aaron discusses playing normative social roles to accommodate the desires of other people and how that affected the course of his life. He also talks about his relationships with his parents while living as a lesbian and during transition. The interview concludes with Aaron addressing the need for LGBTQ history to be documented and told. The interview was conducted at War Memorial Hall, on the Virginia Tech campus. Aaron Johnson was the interviewer.

Keywords

Local/Regional History and Appalachian South
University History
Sexual minorities
Slusher, Aaron

Interview Online

[Oral History with Aaron Slusher, October 25, 2014.](#)

Oral History with Edward Spencer, November 7, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_SpencerEdward

Unit Date 2014-11-07

Creator Atkins, David

Creator Spencer, Edward

Material Specification 00:42:28

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Dr. Edward Spencer worked in student affairs administration at Virginia Tech from 1982 to 2012, most recently serving as Vice President for Student Affairs from 2008 to 2012. From 1983 to 1989 he served as Director of Housing and Residence Life, managing all aspects of residence life on campus during the height of the national AIDS crisis. Spencer was an important ally to LGBTQ students and organizations at Virginia Tech, helping to start various campus programs such as the AIDS Education Committee, the SafeWatch Program, and create a full-time position for Coordinator of Campus LGBTQ Relations and Initiatives.

Scope and Content

In his interview, Spencer discusses his career in university administration, his work with LGBTQ student organizations and how attitudes and treatment of the LGBTQ community on campus has changed since the 1980s. The interview was conducted at Edward Spencer's Residence, Blacksburg, VA. David Atkins was the interviewer and Ellen Boggs was the technical assistant.

Keywords

Sexual minorities
University History
Local/Regional History and Appalachian South
Spencer, Edward

Interview Online

[Oral History with Edward Spencer, November 7, 2014.](#)

Oral History with Michael Sutphin, November 5, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_SutphinMichael

Unit Date 2014-11-05

Creator Lash, Molly

Creator Sutphin, Michael

Material Specification 00:43:20

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Michael Sutphin was a student at Virginia Tech from 2002-2006. While at Tech, he was a student activist involved with LGBTQA (now HokiePRIDE) and a writer and editor for the Collegiate Times. During his time on campus he organized the first Freedom to Marry demonstration on the Drillfield in 2004 and served as the President of the LGBTQA in 2005. After graduation, he worked for the College of Agriculture and Life Science, which lead him to his current position as the public relations coordinator for the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine. Since 2011, Sutphin has also served on the Town Council for the City of Blacksburg, and he's currently vice-chair of Equality Virginia, the state's largest LGBTQ group.

Scope and Content

In this interview, Sutphin discusses his involvement on campus and on the Town Council, his activism in the LGBTQ community, and the current climate towards the LGBTQ community and the community's future. The interview was conducted at Michael Sutphin's residence in Blacksburg, VA. Molly Lash was the interviewer and Amanda Lilly was the technical assistant.

Keywords

Sexual minorities

University History

Local/Regional History and Appalachian South

Sutphin, Michael

Interview Online

[Oral History with Michael Sutphin, November 5, 2014.](#)

Oral History with Jo Ann Underwood, November 4, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_UnderwoodJoAnn

Unit Date 2014-11-04

Creator Kinmond, Damon

Creator Underwood, Jo Ann

Material Specification 01:14:25

Material Specification The original audio file was recorded as an MP3, duration 01:16:31. Small sections throughout the access file were edited out for clarity, reducing the duration to 01:14:25.

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Jo Ann (Murphy) Underwood pioneered tolerance of sexual minorities on the Virginia Tech campus. She and her family came to Blacksburg in the mid-1970s. She worked as a registered nurse at Virginia Tech's Student Health Services and was appointed the university's first health educator in January 1979. A strong advocate for women's issues, safe sex, birth control, and tolerance of sexual minorities, she started the peer education program at Virginia Tech in the mid-1980s. Her columns in the Collegiate Times helped educate students about various health issues. She served as an advisor to the gay students' group, Lambda Horizon. At one time she was known as the "Condom Queen of Virginia Tech" because of her diligence in working to prevent sexually transmitted disease. In June 2014, she was named Ally of the Year at the sixth annual Lavender Ceremony for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender graduates and their allies. After the ceremony, it was announced that the award would henceforth be called the Underwood Ally of the Year Award.

Scope and Content

The interview explores Jo Ann Underwood's work as health educator at Virginia Tech and her involvement with the gay students' group, Lambda Horizon. Underwood's family background and her husband Richard's civil rights work in the Together magazine are also discussed. The interview was conducted at Jo Ann

Underwood's residence in Blacksburg, VA. Damon Kinmond was the interviewer and Whitney Wright was the technical assistant.

Keywords

Sexual minorities

University History

Underwood, Jo Ann

Interview Online

[Oral History with Jo Ann Underwood, November 4, 2014.](#)

Oral History with Mark Weber, March 26, 2015

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_WeberMark

Unit Date 2015-03-26

Creator Weber, Mark A.

Creator Kennelly, Tamara

Material Specification 02:33:46

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

Mark Alan Weber, class of 1987, was born and raised in Northern Virginia. When he was a student at Virginia Tech, he served first as secretary and then as president of the gay student group, Lambda Horizon. He earned a bachelor's of business marketing at Virginia Tech and an M.B.A. in marketing from George Washington University. He is Director of Communications, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, which is an agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Scope and Content

The interview tells about the beginning of Lambda Horizon on the Virginia Tech campus in the 1980s, the organization's struggle to be treated equitably, and the work that the organization did. Weber discusses forming the AIDS Education Committee and organizing an AIDS Education Forum at Virginia Tech on March 3, 1986. Virginia Tech along with University of California Berkeley were recognized by the American College Health Association (ACHA) for their students' AIDS education efforts, and the students were invited to present their work at the ACHA annual meeting in New Orleans. The interview also addresses issues around coming out to one's family. The interview was conducted at InnovationSpace on the Virginia Tech campus. Tamara Kennelly was the interviewer.

Keywords

University History

Sexual minorities

Weber, Mark A.

Interview Online

[Oral History with Mark Weber, March 26, 2015.](#)

Oral History with John Gray Williams, October 28, 2014

Unit ID Ms2015-007_VTLGBTQ_WilliamsJohnGray

Unit Date 2014-10-28

Creator Wright, Whitney

Creator Williams, John Gray

Material Specification 01:48:51

Use Restrictions

Permission to publish material from Virginia Tech LGBTQ Oral History Collection must be obtained from Special Collections, Virginia Tech.

Biographical Note

John Gray Williams is a Career Advisor in Career Services at Virginia Tech. From 2005 to 2008 he also attended Virginia Tech as an undergraduate student in the Bachelor of Arts in Public and Urban Affairs program. He has been active in LGBTQ activism since he first came to Virginia Tech, working on events such as the Freedom to Marry Day, Gay? Fine by Me Rally, and the LBGT Relay for Life. As a member of the faculty, he has organized a yearly LGBTQ networking reception and has served as a trainer for the SafeZone program. In his role in Career Services, he is a passionate social justice advocate and works to

help members of marginalized populations identify discrimination concerns in the job market.

Scope and Content

The interview was conducted on October 28, 2014 at John Gray Williams's home in Blacksburg, VA. The interviewer was Whitney Wright and she was assisted by Damon Kinmond. There was limited time for the interview and there are moments within the interview where discussion of the time and Williams's evening plans can be heard. The interview lasts almost two hours. It begins with a description of Williams's family and their social dynamics and proceeds into his early experience and understanding of his sexuality and his motivations for choosing to be closeted. The interview then moves into his time at Tidewater Community College where he was first able to research homosexuality and the history of the LGBTQ civil rights movement. He then discusses his decision to transfer to Virginia Tech to pursue a career in Landscape Architecture and his decision to come out to his family. A significant portion of the interview is concerned with his involvement with the LGBTA at Virginia Tech and the variety of protests and events he participated in while completing his undergraduate degree. Then, he discusses his decision to attend the University of Delaware to pursue student affairs while remaining close enough to Blacksburg to maintain a relationship with a student at Virginia Tech. He then describes his return to Virginia Tech as a faculty member and the work he has done to support the LGBTQ community and other marginalized populations since returning. Finally, he discusses broader issues affecting the LGBTQ community beyond the fight for marriage equality.

Keywords

University History

Sexual minorities

Williams, John Gray

Interview

[Oral History with John Gray Williams, October 28, 2014.](#)