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ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION
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Paul Quin

Interviewed by Jennifer Kinniff

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Johns Hopkins University
Oral History Collection

Interviewee: Paul Quin (PQ)

Interviewer: Jennifer Kinniff (JK)

Subject: Life of Paul Quin

Date: May 2, 2017

JK: Today is May 2, 2017, and this is Jenny Kinniff, and I'm here in San Francisco with Paul Quin. Thanks for being here with me today. Can we start with you telling me when and where you were born, and a little bit about your family?

PQ: I was born December 4, 1942, at the Columbia Hospital for Women, in Washington, DC, which is no longer there. And my dad is a North Carolina hillbilly, who, he actually came to DC to become a doctor, but it was the Depression. Things happened; he wound up getting a law degree and becoming a special agent in the FBI. He's the guy who invented fingerprints. He came from a, well, farming family, but, you know, it's mountain folks, so it's not like Midwestern farming. [Laughs] Before he was born, they were loggers; his dad was a logger, but then they moved to a farm. He had eight sisters and two brothers; he was right in the middle. And my mom was from a Baltimore family. She was born and raised, lived in DC; her dad was in the Public Health Service, in charge of influenza, smallpox, and polio. Those were the three diseases he set out to conquer.

JK: That's all, huh? [Laughs]

PQ: And he did pretty well with them. He was part of the crew that got rid of smallpox. And her mom was very social.

JK: So did he work with D.A. Henderson, from Hopkins? Because I know he was involved with—I don't know how much you know about his work.

PQ: Yeah, I don't know a lot about it. I know that my grandfather developed that—well, you won't know; you're too young. There

was this method of, like, 1,000 pricks, and he developed that. Because before that they used to just use a knife, and slice it open, and rub the cowpox in. My father had scars from that. So he developed that, and he was in charge of rolling out the universal vaccination programs. And when he was in his 80s, he undertook to republish the smallpox identification book for the border people. Because, at that point, there were the last few pockets of smallpox, and people weren't being vaccinated anymore. And he was, like, "Nobody's ever seen smallpox. If it ever gets in, it'll be devastating, because nobody's inoculated against it." And who knows, randomly, you know, someone might come from the little corner in the steppes of Asia that still has smallpox. So, he had me teach him about printing, so he could go to the printers and make sure they got the plates right, because he was one of the only people who had ever seen smallpox.

So that was a lesson for me in how things change, and sort of the balance between human memory, personal memory, and society memory, and stuff. Anyway, so, yeah, that's what he was. And my mom went to Hood, in Frederick, and she was a scientific mind, but in those days she wasn't going to fight the system. So, housewife, here I come, you know? I have four brothers. When I was six months old, we moved to Chicago, and lived there until I was two.

JK: Was that because of your dad's job?

PQ: Yeah, he got transferred there.

[0:05:00]

And he was working on, I guess they call it counterterrorism, counterespionage stuff, German spies coming from Canada.

JK: Could he tell your family much of what he was doing? Or did you only hear about it later?

PQ: Well, he was working—so, the FBI and the Mafia made a big deal, then. The government allowed Lucky Luciano to come back from exile, in return for the Mafia agreeing not to strike the docks in New York until the war was over. And then, they started working together in other ways, and so my father started working with some guys in Chicago, because they knew the border, because they smuggled across it, [laughter] back in the day, you know? And so, they worked together, and then there was a big personal scandal, and he got sent to Baltimore, actually, to be rehabilitated. Then that

was a big trauma of my life, because our father, like, left us, and you know, when you're little, you think it's your fault.

JK: Yeah, and how old –

PQ: I was two, and my big brother was four, and I was sure that it was our fault, and that we had to do something to get him back. I don't know, all that stuff, you know. Anyway, then we moved—he came back; my next younger brother was born. We moved to San Francisco, early '45, and then he started, after the war was over, with the GI Bill, there were all these people going to college, and so there were lots more colleges happening. And they were developing different programs that they hadn't had before, and one of them was criminology. So, all these youngsters were graduating from college with degrees in criminology, and the old cops [laughs] were lucky to graduate high school. And my dad had been developing CSI stuff, so he set up a school, well, the FBI did but he ran it, for serving police and sheriff's officers in Northern California.

So he traveled all the time, all over, giving these week or two-week-long classes on gathering evidence, and testifying. So we were here in Palo Alto and San Jose; he and his brother built us a house in San Jose. I went to high school down there, and then, back to Hopkins.

JK: You grew up, you said, Palo Alto is where you were most of the time?

PQ: Well, in years, probably the longest in San Jose. We moved there when I was in the second grade. So, ten years I was in San Jose.

JK: And what was your growing up like, there?

PQ: Paper route at 5:00 in the morning, bicycles, playing in the streets. We had trucks that came by with everything: the bread truck, the milk truck, the bakery truck. And we'd just walk and bike everywhere. I remember turning 14 was very exciting, because I got my work permit, and I got a job sweeping out a cleaners that was run by these two, to me at that time, incredibly decrepit old ladies. They were pretty old; they were probably in their 70s. But they were the sisters, they were running this dry cleaning shop, so I did for them.

JK: And that was just because you wanted a job? You didn't have to support your –

PQ: Well, I was saving money for college. But also, yeah, it's fun to work.

JK: Mm-hmm, I worked when I was 14, too—it's funny how when you're a kid that seems so exciting.

PQ: Yeah, it's exciting. Well, then we got involved in politics, you know, newspaper, going to the school board meetings and raising Cain –

JK: You personally did?

PQ: Yeah.

JK: About what?

PQ: Oh [brief silence] –

[0:10:00]

I don't know how easy it is for you to understand what it was like in the '50s [laughs], but as an example, my high school wrestling coach and social science, social studies teacher was a Korean War veteran, and he, of course, came home with tattoos. He was not allowed to wear a short-sleeve shirt in school, even while he was coaching wrestling, until he had his tattoos burnt off.

JK: Yikes.

PQ: And, one day we were studying Russia, and he brought in a copy of Pravda, which was kind of interesting, I mean, just to see it, you know? And it was in Russian, da, right? But there was such an uproar, and he almost got fired, because he was bringing Russian propaganda and perverting the mind—I mean, we couldn't read it. [Laughter]

JK: Yeah, right!

PQ: It made totally no sense, but that's what it was like those days. My French teacher got pregnant, and they couldn't fire her because they couldn't find another person to teach third-year French, but the rule was she had to sit at the desk before the students came in, and she couldn't get up until after they left. Of course, we all ignored that, but –

JK: That's unbelievable.

PQ: It's just, like –

JK: And was this, was it a public school, Catholic school?

PQ: Public school.

JK: Public school, interesting.

PQ: Yeah, and half Mexican-American, Chicano, Californios, even, some long-term—San Jose, very Mexican place.

[Side conversation]

So it was about half-Spanish-speaking. Kids who spoke Spanish at home were not allowed to take Spanish in school, although kids who spoke English at home were required to take English in school. That made no sense to me. And, also, they couldn't speak Spanish in the halls, between classes. It was just really strange. Of course, now it's a bilingual school, my high school.

JK: Right, and that's what everybody is excited about, right? [Laughs]

PQ: Yeah, yeah. But it's just, things were so strange in those days.

JK: And so you and your fellow students would kind of go before the school board, or talk to the administration about things?

PQ: Yeah, just trying to get more student engagement in things, and get—just, it was so rigid, you know, and nonsensical. And the policies about academics and sports, and all kinds of different things. It was just really not a—there was not much happy about it. But, you know, people were nice, and our teachers were wonderful, and –

JK: Did you have any success in those efforts?

PQ: Well, yeah, we wrote the student constitution, and we got a faculty agreement to have the students in charge of investigating claims of ethics violations, so that it was taken out of the hands of the administration. And, yeah, we had a bunch of things, and, you know, then we had our subversive things, like keeping the secret that the baseball coach was dating the head cheerleader.

JK: [Laughs] Yikes.

PQ: Yeah, they got married as soon as she graduated, and as far as I know, they're still happily married. They were the perfect couple because I mean, really, he was, like five years older than she was, or something.

JK: And people did get married at 17, 18, back then, so –

PQ: Yeah, and it wasn't that she was so young to get married; it was that he was—he wasn't even her teacher, but, you know, people were weird about that stuff. And, yeah, so I lived there, and then I got away. [Laughs]

JK: When you were in high school, obviously you had plans to go to college, because you were saving for college. What were you looking for in a college?

PQ: Well, I wanted to go to college in the city. I always thought of myself as being from San Francisco. All those years that we didn't live here, I was still like, "I'm a San Francisco boy." And I wanted to come to college here, but my dad –

[0:15:00]

My dad had this thing about me being gay—it's, like, I didn't know anything about that until I was almost 18. But later on he said, "You know, when I went to see you when you were born, I knew you were gay. And it's just such an awful life, and I've been trying to keep you from it, because I don't want you to suffer."

JK: He knew when you were born?

PQ: Where do I start with that? [Laughter] Anyway, he didn't want me to come to San Francisco –

JK: Because he was afraid that you would –

PQ: – because there were too many gay people. There were a whole bunch of things I couldn't do, because—I couldn't go to the gym and work out, so, my football coach came and even talked to my dad, said, "You know, he's pretty good—he can't handle the ball –" because I didn't know it, but I had double vision, so, couldn't catch a ball. But I was good other stuff, bumping into people, things like that. But I needed to bulk up, and so he wanted me to go work out, and my dad wouldn't let me go work out. And he even came and

talked to my dad, and my dad still wouldn't let me go work out, he said—his attitude was that only fags do bodybuilding.

JK: Did he say that to your coach, something to that effect?

PQ: Yeah, he said that to my coach. Anyway, it was weird.

JK: I bet that went over well. [Laughs]

PQ: So, being stymied, I thought, "Well, I don't know—where do I want to go? I just don't know anything about it." So, of course, growing up kind of isolated, I was a real book guy, so of course I got the college book. And, of course, I'm my mother's son so I'm, like, "Okay, what do I want in a college? Okay, break it down to statistics."

JK: The college book is kind of like a list of all the different colleges in the US?

PQ: It probably doesn't exist anymore.

JK: Maybe online.

PQ: But, yeah, it listed all the colleges and universities in the country, with all the statistics about them—when they were founded, a brief paragraph about their history, the departments they have, outstanding professors, stats, students, where they come from, how big is the library, all that stuff. So I thought, "Okay, key things: gotta be a university, because that means you've got those professors who do research, which is going to be interesting. It's gotta have a big library, because how do you learn without a big library, right? And I'd like it to be kind of small—" because I came from a 1,200 student high school, like, 400 in each class. Not tiny, but I didn't want to go to Cal, you know, some place where I had 300 students in my class, I mean, a physical-like subject class.

JK: Lecture hall, yeah.

PQ: So, I said, "Okay, I'm looking for real high ratio, the highest ratio that I can find of teachers to students. I'm looking for a university that has a small undergraduate program." Well, there were two [laughs]: Princeton and Hopkins. So then, between my junior and senior year, I got into this strange little program that the Telluride Foundation ran, where they took kids during that summer. And we went to Cornell and we lived in a fraternity house at Cornell, and then we had people—it was a subject, it was about Brown vs.

Board of Education. And so, all these professors came in, we did research, and had discussions, and wrote papers, and stuff—all summer we studied about this topic, in kind of a college way. You know, they wanted to introduce us to what it's like to be in college, to live in college away from home, and to work together with the other students, and to have all these professors really challenging you. We were all high school kids, we had high school teachers—nothing like that. So, I did that, and since I was in the East, I did my college visits. And I went to Princeton—have you ever been to Princeton?

JK: I haven't, no.

PQ: You get on this little train, and you go to the end of the line, and that's Princeton, out of New York. So already it's weird, because it's in the middle of the country, it's in New Jersey, but it's attached by this umbilical cord to New York. And the other weird thing is it's a Southern school—not many people know that, but it's where the Southern, back from plantation times even, Southerners sent their sons to get educated.

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So, there's that, and it's also kind of prissy. And I got off the train, this guy met me, was showing me around and stuff—all he wanted to talk about was the eating clubs, which were their fraternities. It's like, "I'm not a fraternity guy, you know? I'm here to read books, and listen to professors, and learn stuff." And he didn't want to talk about that at all. I'm, like, gee, maybe if you're a graduate student, you know, you get to study, but I guess undergraduate life is all social.

So then I went to Hopkins. It wasn't until a couple of years ago—I mean, you'll think I'm really stupid, but—that I realized what actually happened. But when I went to Hopkins, I met with the admissions people—first of all, Homewood is gorgeous, and really relaxed, laid back, and all he wanted to talk about was professors. Well, my grandfather had friends who taught there, and not just friends, some of his idols taught there. So, I came in with my academic kind of questions, and sort of what it was like, and what I could expect, and the guy was, like, "Well, if I were to offer you a scholarship and a position in the class of 1964, would you say yes right now?" [Laughs] And I hadn't even started my senior year in high school, and I'm, like, "Yeah, definitely, because I just crossed off the only other place I was considering, and this is where I want to come." And I thought, well, in those days, universities were

beginning to try to get more geographic distribution, and hardly anyone from California went, in those days.

JK: All the way to the East Coast.

PQ: Went out of state, even. I mean, even on vacations, Lake Tahoe was a long way. You know, people just didn't go out of state, because it's a big state; why would you leave? Now, we traveled because of family. Other people traveled, but it's mostly because of family, you know? But very few people ever went out of state for college. So they tried hard to attract—I think it was easier to get in if you were from California, in those days. It isn't anymore, but used to be. So I thought, "Oh, that's it, you know, here I am, I'm from California, I'm a different demographic, I have all these—" my academics were really good, and I had all the extracurricular stuff. So I thought, "Well, it's just, you know, they just want someone different. So, here I am, I'm different, and so they took me." Then, when I was with him [gestures to husband] at the 50th reunion, I was showing him around; we walked in the old library –

JK: Yeah, in Gilman?

PQ: Yeah, in Gilman. And I'm in printing, so I've always loved those windows with all the printer's marks. But there were certain things I didn't notice about them, so we walk in, and we look up, and I'm showing the window, and I notice at the bottom is my great-great-grandfather's name. [Laughs] And I'm, like, "Oh!" When I went there, I didn't know about Baltimore. In the West, when you introduced someone, it's first name. Why? Because that's them and that's what matters. But in Baltimore, when you introduce people, it's by the last name, because they don't count, it's their family that matters. So, that was weird when I went back there, but I finally kind of figured it out. But I didn't know anything about that before, but then I thought, "Oh, I walked in that room, he knew who my ancestors were," because, of course, the first thing anyone does, in Baltimore, is look you up. [Laughs]

JK: Right—and it's your mother's family or your father's family had been there for a long time.

PQ: My mother's family, yeah. And my mother's uncle and her cousin were both professors at the medical school, and her cousin ran Baltimore Power and Light, whatever it's called.

JK: Oh, BGE, Baltimore Gas and Electric?

PQ: Yeah.

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Her aunt was on the board of the Peabody, and her cousin was on the board of the Walters, and, you know, like that.

JK: So you were a known quantity to them in some ways.

PQ: So, you know, I didn't think of that because it wasn't me, it had nothing to do with me, as far as I was concerned. But I realize now that, from the Baltimore point of view, that had everything to do with me. [Laughs] And so, I thought I got in because I was an outsider, but I think now that I probably got in [laughs] because I was an insider.

JK: Or both—the ideal combination!

PQ: Or both, that odd character of both. It was weird, when I was at Hopkins, I was actually in the Blue Book, which, first of all, I'd heard people talk about it, and you read it in novels, like, Victorian novels and stuff. But I had no concept that it was actually a book.

JK: So they put you personally in it, as an individual listing?

PQ: Yeah.

JK: Wow.

PQ: Well, because, and that I was at Hopkins, and who I was related to. I actually got invited, once, to a party, out of the Blue Book. Because they used it to make up men-women things at parties, like, "Oh, we're a couple of men short—let's see who we can find," you know? And usually it's, like, parents giving parties for their children, because they don't know any of those kids anyway, but they want to balance it out, so they got the ones they know, and then they're like, "Oh, we need two more boys." It's usually they need more boys; there's always lots of girls.

JK: I think the Blue Book still exists, actually.

PQ: Anyway, so I got invited to a party at this house of this Russian prince, who lived in, I don't know, just north of campus, and he had a—it was the closest in place where he could keep a horse. And he was charming, and his daughter, whose party it was, was wonderful. We became friends and it was just a lot of fun. It was a

little, like, California house, it was funny, in this kind of swale, and the horse was up there. And the house, a little wood one-story ranch-housey kind of farm-housey place—really comfortable and beautiful, and nicely done, but nothing special. And then over the mantelpiece are these two raggedy portraits. Well, his father had been wrapped in those.

JK: What do you mean?

PQ: To keep him warm, when they fled Saint Petersburg. [Laughter] Because, you know, he was a prince, and blah blah blah—

JK: Yeah, "Time to go."

PQ: And, of course, in Baltimore, he's still a prince, because they're like that. My aunt had all these friends who were Hungarian princes, and Polish princes, and Russian princes, and stuff like that.

JK: Yes, royalty in exile.

PQ: Yeah, there's more royalty in Baltimore, probably, than any other city in the world. Except maybe London; I think London has lots of those people, too.

JK: Okay, so that was at the end of your junior year, before your senior year, you committed to Hopkins, and then you went back to California for one more year?

PQ: Yeah. Yeah, then I went back for my senior year, I never went to class—

JK: You already knew where you were going, right, [laughs] so—

PQ: Well, you know, I wasn't learning much. I had used up all the math, so I was going to JC for math. And that was fun, because I was, like, incognito: nobody knew I was a high school student. But I was editor of the paper, I assisted the coaches with athletic stuff, and I worked in the cafeteria. So, I'd come at period zero at 8:00 in the morning, and do the newspaper, but, of course, I'd always run late. Oh, and then I was rewriting the student constitution, and all that stuff. So I'd come in late to my first class, and I'd leave early from my second class, and the teachers didn't care because I knew that material. But looking back on it, I realize that I really was hardly ever in class. I learned stuff—I would, on my way home, I would stop by—they had these little Quonset hut things that were overflow classrooms.

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When I was going home, the janitor was in there cleaning up, and he was a graduate student in astronomy. And I don't know, I don't remember how I first got to meet him, but I'd go by and help him do the work, and then he'd work problems with me on the board, so we'd work out physics problems.

JK: Wow, how about that.

PQ: Yeah, it was a lot of fun. And then we'd go out and lie in the grass, and he would point out star things to me. Not the stars, but all the interesting other little things that are going on, so that was a lot of fun. So that's mostly how I learned, was I learned through working on the projects I worked on, and special things from my teachers, and working with him, and going to junior college.

JK: You were a graduate of the Writing Seminars. Did you know that that was what you wanted to do at Hopkins?

PQ: No, when I went, I had in mind—well, I wanted to get an education, mainly. But I kind of wanted to go into the Foreign Service, but then, of course, as I started coming out, one by one, all of the doors to employment started slamming shut. [Laughs] I wasn't going to pretend not to be gay, because that was not a tenable position for me.

JK: So you talked about how your dad says that he says that he knew you were gay from the moment you were born. What about your own personal identity?

PQ: I didn't even have any idea what that was; I had no clue. I mean, I had a kid I babysat for, who was actually too old to have a babysitter, but he was, like, 12, and I was 15, something like that. He was part of the Mafia family that lived across the street. And he used to keep trying to get me to do things, like take showers with him and stuff. [Laughs] And I don't know why I didn't want to—I mean, it wasn't like I had an idea of—I don't know, it wasn't what babysitters did; I just knew there was something there. And I had other young kids, you know, sort of 11, 12, 13, who kind of would hero worship a little, and they'd always want to get closer, and—but I never wanted to be alone with them. I don't know—it wasn't any active idea of anything; it just was, like, it didn't feel comfortable to be—I wasn't their parent. I guess that's what it was, I just felt like in some ways they wanted me to be a substitute

parent, and I wasn't, and, you know, I wasn't going to pretend to be; I was just going to be their friend.

Their brother, I was their brother, but I wasn't their parent. But my dad was weird, he wouldn't let me work out. I had a friend who was going to teach me to play the saxophone, and my father wouldn't let him come to the house, because he thought we were actually—that "saxophone" was the key word for—[Laughter]

JK: Code word.

PQ: A code word for "sex"—not that we knew anything about that. And, yeah, I just didn't, I never—I knew I had a different relationship to girls than other guys did. I had a lot of girl friends, and the girls were real comfortable with me, and so I had a lot of girls who liked spending time with me. But [brief silence] –

[0:35:00]

And, you know, being around certain boys made me real happy, but I never thought of it as being a sexual thing. I think I was, in a way, purposeful about keeping myself ignorant about that, because it would've been too much to handle. One of my best friends, who was the captain of the football team, and president of the class, and all that kind of stuff, was—I was a wrestler, so we'd have to weigh compulsively. And we were in the gym one day and we were weighing, and he was weighing, and he was in front of me, he was weighing, and he stepped up on the scales, and he was weighing. And I said, "Huh, I never noticed, but the cheeks of your butt are, like, different."

And he said, "Don't say anything like that. You can't say things like that out loud. You have to be quiet about that." I'm, like, "I don't understand why—it's hardly disfiguring, and—[laughs] everybody thinks you're the most beautiful man in the class, so I don't know why you should worry about that." But I didn't understand what it was, but I knew there was something, like, there were certain taboos, but I didn't know why. And other things, I just didn't—I was just really like a big doofus; I didn't get any of it. Until the first time I had sex, and it all became very clear.

JK: So that's interesting, because I was going to ask you about—it's funny the way you described Princeton, because I think a lot of people would say Hopkins is also a Southern school, right, and that it has –

- PQ: But Hopkins is literally, you know, is a school in the South.
- JK: Right, south of the Mason-Dixon Line, yeah, and has a strong fraternity culture. So, it's interesting to me that at that time it was the research and the academic life is what presented itself to you as the major defining characteristic.
- PQ: Yeah, well, in the book, it didn't say all the stuff about fraternities. I was actually asked to join a fraternity, which stunned me. I think because a friend of mine—they very much wanted him to be in it and I think he said, "You know, I want him, too." And it was flattering, but I never thought about doing it, you know, it was not something on my list at all. And it was one of those segregated Southern fraternities, and I was, like, "Ah, can't go there."
- JK: Yeah, that was a big thing. I was looking through a student newspaper, the years that you were there, and there was—it must've been the one. I mean, there was at least one fraternity that still explicitly barred African Americans and orthodox Jews from joining. And there were lots of other fraternities, there were even some specifically Jewish fraternities, all sorts, but—so I don't think any others actually had a policy against it, but it could be more in practice than in policy.
- PQ: Well, they said that their actual fraternity didn't have that policy, but the national did. So they were kind of trying to get out of it, but it was, like –
- JK: Still not something you want to be a part of.
- PQ: I was, like, "Mm—looks like a duck. Walks like a duck. I think it's a duck." I think it's a Southern-wide fraternity—I don't know. But I don't think I probably would've joined anyway, it was just a little surprising to me. When we moved to San Francisco, in '45, you know, wartime, no houses, so, they put us up in a hotel, which was fabulous for a two-year-old. I got so spoiled by the ladies in the hotel. But then we found a place, and it was at Parkmerced, which is out by San Francisco State. And it's a Prudential development—they're all over the country—and it was segregated. My mom was real upset; she just hated that. She comes from a very—well, my grandfather used to say, "We're an abolitionist family." [Laughs] Kind of old-fashioned, but, yeah, they were—her mom quit the DAR when they wouldn't let—that whole thing.

[0:40:00]

Our family's always been aggressively egalitarian, and so for her to have to live in a segregated place really upset her a lot. So, two years later, we moved out of there.

JK: Yeah, well, in Baltimore, too. I mean, when you were there, there was also a minority of Hopkins students, but some students were participating in things like sit-ins to desegregate some of the movie theaters, and things like that. Were you aware or involved in anything like that that was going on?

PQ: No, none of the overt kind of actions. There were a bunch of things that I—I mean, I was ignorant about a lot of stuff. So, I come from here, and we don't have, like, Black radio stations and White radio stations; as far as I know, we never did. I mean, I certainly never grew up with that. And so, I had no idea who these singing groups and people were, you know, I wasn't a fan or follower, like, the magazines and stuff; I just knew their music, and it's, like, "I like this music. I like that music." I go back to Baltimore, and people are talking about "Black music" and "White music," and I'm like [laughs], "I don't get it. I can't figure out what makes it different, or why there should be this big controversy about it." But there was, and it never seemed to make any sense to me. I lived on campus the first two years, Sylvester House, and then I lived with my aunt in Bolton Hill for a year. Then I came home for a year.

And then, when I went back, I was working, and going to school, and living on my own off campus, because my classmates were all gone, and so I was a townie, I guess. But the first two years, it was kind of isolating being out there. We'd just study all the time, and totally engaged in campus life. The other people thought that I was adventuresome to go to North Avenue, which I did all the time. And, of course, my aunt lived down in Bolton Hill, so I'd go down there. When I went back to school, I'd just had a knee operation, so I was learning to walk again, and I went to therapy at the Y downtown. So none of my other classmates ever went out of the little bubble area, but I used to go all over town. But I think it was more the Baltimore kids, maybe, who were involved in that kind of stuff. I was just learning about it, because there were segregated things here, but it—I don't know—it never was a thing, no.

JK: Mm-hmm, not in the same way that it was there.

PQ: Public facilities weren't segregated, and—even that, I don't know how many people noticed that it was. When I went back to Baltimore, I just didn't—you know, things were changing, but I just didn't notice that. I mean, I would walk all over different

neighborhoods. I did notice that every neighborhood was separate and different. And I know my aunt's maid bought a house in a neighborhood that people thought she shouldn't have bought a house in. But, you know, some people were kind of cantankerous and old-fashioned and stuff, but it never seemed to me like a bigger issue, you know? It was just, like, the bigger issues were not about that. And it was just because of my tunnel vision, I guess.

JK: Mm-hmm, where you were coming from.

[0:45:00]

PQ: And then I lived kind of in older times, because I read a lot of old books. In those days, the kids, we were all very into Celtic Revival stuff. So because my last name's Quin, you know, I could pretend to be Irish, and—[Laughs]

JK: So within the Hopkins bubble, what sorts of things were you involved with as a student? You weren't in the fraternity—did you do any kinds of clubs? Or was your life different at Hopkins?

PQ: No, I had a small number of friends. I was very defensive of them, because we would get picked on a lot, and I didn't let that happen. There's a certain amount of violence in my family background, so I've worked to overcome that, but I would let it go once in a while, back then.

JK: Why were you being picked on?

PQ: Well, just because we were weird. And then the other thing totally not on my radar was anti-Jewish stuff, because growing up, like, bagels and lox, that's not Jewish; that's New York. You know, all that stuff that the Easterners call Jewish stuff, we would've said, "Oh, New Yorkers are like that." because it wasn't, I mean, we had Jews; they weren't like that, you know? My rabbi was a Holocaust survivor, and came over with a very small number of people left over from his congregation, with a son and no wife. And his son was in my class, and we were good friends. But nobody ever called him a Jew, even—I mean, that just wasn't a thing, you know? In those days, we had religious study time in school. I know it's odd, but we did. And the nuns would come in and take the Catholic kids in the classroom, and then some fire-breathing adulterous boozehound preacher who told everybody how they had to be perfect would take all of the Evangelical kids or Protestant kids.

Evangelical in those days was like Evangelical Lutherans, which

are actually really old-fashioned Lutheran people, not like the—I don't know what they call them, the modern people. Anyway, they would go off in another classroom, and we would go to the rabbi's little store, because his congregation couldn't support him, so he had a little shop where he sold, actually, things that they brought with them. And it was fascinating to me, because there was all this stuff from Prague, you know, it was just like a whole different universe of aesthetics for me. It was just a magic place. And he would use the things in the shop to talk about stuff. And so we'd go over there and hang out at the shop and talk about things. But there was no stigma about what you did. It was like people would try to escape. If they were from an ultra-Protestant family, they would try not to have to go to that class. And if they could do anything to not go to that class, they would do it.

And so, you know, we got points because we didn't have to go to either class, or study hall, which was the option. You could go to study hall if you didn't belong to one of those groups. But study hall was like, failure, but we aced it. But nobody ever gave us a bad time because of the Jewish thing. I mean, it just never occurred to me that anyone ever would. But then I heard these stories, because I kind of got adopted by a family from Sheepshead Bay, a classmate's parents.

[0:50:00]

He, of course, having grown up with them wanted nothing to do with them, and they were charming and wonderful to me, and like a whole different world, because they were New Yorkers. And I had no parents [in the East], so they adopted me as their surrogate child, so, he would be required to be with them on Parents Weekend, a little, but he'd run off as much as he could. But I loved being with them [laughs], because they were really nice to me, and it was fun and it was like pretend different parents.

And I'd visit them on holidays and stuff like that. But he'd tell me stories about the things, the experiences they'd had of it being hard to find a place to live, and about how, even at Hopkins, there were certain levels of quotas, like, you couldn't have more of Jewish—and, I mean, they do that now for Chinese students, I think.

JK: I interviewed someone—I think he was maybe class of '58—an African American student, and he was talking about how one of his best friends was Jewish, and that he would get invited places that his friend wouldn't. So there were many different levels of, I don't know, prejudice and [crosstalk].

PQ:

There were some black students when I was there, but there were no—first of all, there were no girls. The last year when I went back, after my class had graduated, there were women graduate students for the first time, but not undergraduate. So, there were no girls, period. But there were no black boys in my circle of operations. There were black students on campus, but they were mostly in the engineering department, and mostly local, so they didn't live in the dorms, and they weren't in the Upper Quad a lot. There was one black person in my high school. I mean, I went to a pretty diverse high school, but not in that way, because there just weren't that many black people in San Jose. But lots of different varieties of Spanish background people, and lots of different kinds of Jews. There was this one family, Palestinian Jews, who left because of the discrimination they faced in Israel, and they were just hilarious, because they were much more grown up than we were.

And I remember the woman who was in my class, she was just always talking about the hair on her chest, and—[laughs] she was well-endowed, and she was, like, used her weapons very aggressively and with a great deal of humor, which most of the women didn't have a lot of humor about that, but she had a huge amount of humor about it. [Laughs] But, yeah, so there were lots of varieties, you know, so for me that was variety. We had Eastern European immigrants, like my friend who's from Prague, and a lot of people coming out after the war. And we had a large number of people from the Balkans. A lot of the ranchers were Yugoslav ranchers. So, yeah, I'd never seen restricted or narrow, and there were those weird things in school about the people who spoke Spanish, and there was all this stuff about the Mexican girls who would tease their hair up and hide switchblades in their hair—[laughs] all these urban legends and stuff.

But the Mexican cowboys did used to ride into South 2nd Street, on weekends, on their horses, and when they'd get drunk, they'd start shooting their guns up in the air [laughter], like, at 2:00 AM. So there was a lot of color in life, but you know, I just didn't grow up with all those categories. And I guess I just thought that not paying attention to them was the best—

[0:55:00]

But I didn't want to take it on, you know, it wasn't part of who I was or how I grew up, and I didn't want to take it on as, like, being

a thing. I just wanted to live in that world where they didn't exist. And I don't know, maybe that was willfully stupid, but—

JK: And so you said you were kind of out and about more, in Baltimore, than a lot of your fellow students, right? So what were you doing? You mentioned going to North Avenue. What was on North Avenue?

PQ: Well, out, you know, it was real life, because my mom's family, they always had servants and all those things. But my dad's family was very hillbilly, the polar opposite. And we just grew up in California being like normal people, but we worked, like, I started a paper route when I was 11. I'd cut lawns, and take care of people's houses on vacation, and babysit, and do all kinds of things. Then I got jobs starting when I was 14, real, regular jobs, with paychecks, and taxes, and all that stuff. So just living in campus felt odd to me, and there isn't any real life around there, shops and people and, you know. It's different now, there's a lot more student stuff than there used to be. It was just the campus, and there were the fraternities, just, like, spots, and then there was Roland Park, you know, suburbanite people who were kind of ghosts. There was no street life or anything.

The first place you got to that had any kind of life to it was North Avenue, but until then, it was just, like, mm, nothing, you know? So, I'd just go down there to buy toothpaste, and whatever, and it just didn't make any sense to me —

JK: To stay in that little confined area?

PQ: Yeah, it's kind of like, when our son was seven, I took him to Paris for the first time. It was a long flight, I thought, he's going to be exhausted. We got to the hotel, I'm, like, "Okay, we're here, you can relax." He said, "Dad, we haven't found our café." And I was kind of like that, I was, like, "No, you know, I have this nice place, and it's beautiful, and it's like a dream, and—" in those days, it was elm trees, like, these massive elm trees everywhere; the whole campus was covered with them, and the architecture, you know? It created this—it was like we were living in fairyland. You know, it felt like—I had this feeling that I never even walked on the ground, I floated across. Everything was just like that, it was magical, and that massive lilac hedge along Charles Street. Well, I don't even know if it's still there, but —

JK: I don't think so.

PQ: It was, like, 15 feet wide, and just over your head high, and just wild lilacs. And it ran from the horseshoe all the way up to the end of campus, and you couldn't get through. [Laughs]

JK: Right, so it really did kind of wall you off.

PQ: It walled you off, but it walled you off in that sort of Sleeping Beauty kind of way. It was a very Sleeping Beauty sort of existence. But if you went out, the little local areas, it was, I don't know, retired people, and weird little—you know, there really wasn't anything about street life. Until you got to North Avenue, which was very street life. So there was the theater, so I'd go to movies, there.

JK: That Parkway Theater? Or—there's a few different –

PQ: Charles Street, off to the right, across the street. I think it's now some kind of performing arts thing, maybe?

[1:00:00]

And then, downtown—well, I didn't ever really go downtown-downtown, until the summer I stayed over, after my junior year, I stayed over for the summer, and I worked at the Baltimore News-American. And their offices were on the pier, right at the water, and the piers were kind of crumbling, and the one across the street from the building, a barge would come up from the Shore, with watermelons, and you'd just buy them, then they'd throw them up to you standing on the dock; you'd buy them off the boat. It was cool. It was very rundown down there, in those days, nothing like it is now. So I didn't go downtown-downtown really very much, but went to the library, because it's a nice library, and I worked out at the Y a lot. And then at that part of town, there were a lot of art galleries there—the Walters, and the Peabody—and it was kind of a neighborhood; there was a lot of stuff going on down there.

JK: And did you have acquaintances in the city that didn't go to Hopkins?

PQ: I did—

JK: You mentioned a couple of people in the Roland Park area, right, that you met through your family.

PQ: Yeah, but I met, well, I started coming out while I was there, so one of my other activities was finding men. And there was a

certain amount of—it was very weird, because I really had no idea that it was even possible to have sex with another man; I just didn't. It, like, was physically not a thing, until it happened, and then I was, like, "Oh my god, nobody told me that you could do this, or that it would be so much fun." But I still had no social context for it, because I didn't know anyone my own age who was gay, or a grown up person who was gay; I just didn't know anybody. So, at Hopkins, there was a certain amount of anonymous sex, but I'd had sex with only one other student, and it was on a spring holiday, when there were, like, four of us on campus. And we kind of hooked up, but then he was, like, "Don't ever say hello to me or speak to me again."

JK: Oh, really?

PQ: Yeah. And then I had a little affair with a graduate student, for a while, and he was the same way, he was, like, "Don't even look at me on campus." That was when I decided I couldn't go to graduate school. I was, like, "I can't be like that. I just could never—if that's what it's like, I don't want to have anything to do with it."

JK: Was that painful for you –

PQ: It was.

JK: – that you were connecting with people, and then you couldn't –

PQ: It was. I didn't understand it, and it was really hurtful. Well, and the other thing was that he used to feel like we had to get drunk before we had sex. I was, like, "We don't really have to get drunk, first. You invited me to dinner, but I know you invited me for sex, so, we could just do it, you know, and have fun, and not be drunk." I didn't understand that, either. But it was very, yeah, it was both odd and hurtful. My grandfather was really good, he—[laughs] he knew I was gay before I did, and he always thought that the boys I brought over were my boyfriends. I'd bring some of my friends over, you know, because he lived in DC, and I never went home holidays, because in those days it was, I don't know, like flying to Delhi or something. It was really far. It isn't anymore, but it was really far. So I never went home, except summers, and—I lost the thread of what I was saying.

JK: You were saying you'd go see your grandfather in DC.

PQ: Oh, yeah, so I'd spend a lot of time over there, and he had just lost his wife, the summer before. And his local family, my aunts and

cousins, were all kind of tired of him, so, he was really happy, and I was really happy; we were very close. So I'd go over with a friend from school, and we'd spend the weekend, and he would always say, "Okay, you have the third floor—I don't go up there; sleep wherever you want." And I just thought, well, he was being hospitable and whatever, but then later looking back I was, like, "Oh, [laughs] he was just letting us know." Because he would ask me, later, about the guys and how they were doing, and whether I still kept up and stuff.

[1:05:00]

And he was, like, "I was always thinking that that John would be a nice person for you," and like that.

JK: It's pretty neat that someone from that generation would be that open.

PQ: And then, he had this project where he took me around—because I was always very religious, but that was one of the things you couldn't do, in my mind, like, you couldn't go to divinity school or something if you were gay. Well, that's a whole other story, too, but he took me around and introduced me—he'd gone to Harvard and Harvard Med, and he introduced me to all the people he knew from Harvard who were professional religious people. So they were all his age, so they were retired by then, because when I went to school he was 79, I think. So we went out to the woods in Virginia, to this little aluminum trailer in the middle of nowhere in the woods. There was a picnic table outside, and this guy who'd been a professor at the divinity school—and I knew who he was, because he had written hymns in the hymnbook and stuff; he was kind of famous. And he was gay. I didn't know.

But he lived there by himself, you know, all retired, and he was really sweet, and we went over and had lunch on the picnic table, and talked with him. And then we went—the retired rabbi of the big synagogue in downtown DC was gay, which I don't think anybody knew. But my grandfather took me down there, and it was really stunning for me, because out here, well, especially in San Jose, there were no big temples. This place was massive. It was one of those with a big flat dome, and then in the front it had a lion rampant, holding the Torah in its paws like that. And it must've been 15 feet high, this 3D-carved big massive beautiful thing, you know, just the muscles and the—it was fabulous. And just walking in, I just remember, like, the feeling of walking into this massive space, and I was, like, "This is a synagogue?" [Laughs] It was,

like, "All these people?" because, you know, we were lucky to get 12, right?

And I met him, and he was this really wonderful old man, and he was normal. You know, all these guys, they were just, like, normal, and that was the first time I had ever met anyone who was grown up and gay.

JK: And how did you know that they were gay?

PQ: My grandfather told me, and he told them he was telling me, so they knew.

JK: It was okay to talk to you about it.

PQ: Yeah, it was okay to mention it to me.

JK: Because they wouldn't really—would they really be out to their congregants?

PQ: Well, it was a need-to-know basis, I think. They weren't really totally in the closet, but—I know the priest who was at the seminary had some hard times, because he was enough publicly gay that one of the reasons he wound up teaching was that he couldn't get a congregation.

JK: Wow, it's pretty interesting that your grandfather was sort of taking such an active role, I guess, in helping you see what it was like to be –

PQ: Well, he really loved me, and he was very supportive. He took me in a big Presbyterian church near him, and they had a Bruce Rogers Bible. I don't know if you know who he is, but he's one of the four greatest American book designers—designed typefaces, stuff—of his generation, he was, like, the guy. And he designed a lectern Bible, one of those great big old things you read from—designed the type, did everything, the whole nine yards. And it's beautiful, it's really beautiful. And they had one there, so he took me up and he got permission for us to go up and look at it, and leaf through it, and read from it. And that's one of the things that inclined me to work on books. It was just so amazing to see that you could do something like that. Well, and also, my grandfather's house was worse than mine about being full of books. He was a book guy; he had books everywhere.

When he retired, he got a little cubicle in the National Institutes of

Health library, and spent his years annotating everything that was ever written about smallpox. because he was, like, "When I die, nobody's going to know any of this stuff, so I want to make sure that they—" so he cross-referenced things. He said, "This statistic doesn't match with that one, and this one seems to be on infirm basis, but that one is on this basis, so go look at that before you believe these," stuff like that.

[1:10:00]

And he'd write little things about his experiences—when they'd talk about smallpox in a certain place or a certain outbreak, he would have been there, so he would, like, "And we noticed this and that and the other thing in the spread of it and how it was contained, and—" so this really spidery little hand, tiny little letters, like, all down the margins of these books in the library.

JK: This is sort off-topic, but as an archivist, I'm just curious: does he have papers that were donated anywhere?

PQ: I don't think so. That was always an odd thing, to me. But they might be at the NIH, because that's where they would've been; he had everything there.

JK: Yeah, or if he worked on certain studies, those are probably documented.

PQ: He wrote stuff. He wrote the Encyclopedia Britannica article on smallpox back then when he was active. He was a member of the Cosmos Club, so he'd take me there, and that was back in the days when it was just beginning to get political. So he'd introduce me to all these people, but he didn't introduce me to any of the politicians. But there were a lot of really famous scientists and stuff who would be there when they were in town, because it was a comfortable place to be when you're away from home. And those days, clubs were still a big deal. Everybody, I mean, I didn't have a club, I wasn't a club kind of guy, but it wasn't just fraternities; everybody had clubs. One of my aunt's big things was the Engineers Club in Baltimore, and she was instrumental in getting them to buy those buildings from the—was it Shriners?—some black fraternal group owned them, and she was the dealmaker.

She assembled some property out by Jones Falls, and she traded that for the rowhouses there on the square. Because she knew that they would rather be able to have barbeques and picnics, and go out in the woods and run around and have their kids play, and do

that and have this nice clubhouse out there, than they would this falling down old brownstone in the middle of a crummy part of town. And so, she did the trade thing, and got that for the Engineers Club, and then they completely redid it and stuff. And she belonged to the Mount Vernon Club, across the way, and she knew the Duchess of Windsor, from her Baltimore days. Not that she liked her very much, but, yeah, the Duchess of Windsor was always considered a little self-aggrandizing. And the people at the Club were very upset, because when the Duke and Duchess of Windsor came to Baltimore, they stayed at the Club, and it's a private place. They should've stayed in a public hotel, because the press was around them.

But it was just like her, my aunt would say, "It was just like her to do that, to, like, march in there and show off that." And, of course, her grandfather's statue is right in front of, you know, on his Revolutionary War horse, is right in front of the door of the place. And just to stage-manage that like that it's, like, "Oh, and we're just simple people, and we're just visiting our friends in Baltimore, but, yes, we're inviting all the press to come take our picture."
[Laughter]

JK: Yeah, in the perfect location, yes.

PQ: Yeah, my aunt was just totally over her. But she was real involved in all the renovation of that downtown stuff, and the preservation of that square, there. And like I say, she was on the Peabody board, so she helped engineer the Hopkins thing.

JK: And you lived with her, so you were probably—I mean, you were going to things at clubs, and—were you involved in social activities that she was involved with?

PQ: She took me to the symphony, sometimes. She was the one in charge of getting the Philadelphia Symphony to have a Baltimore season. And her daughter-in-law was, it was like rivals. Her daughter-in-law was with the Baltimore Symphony, trying to make it a real thing.

[1:15:00]

Because in those days it wasn't really much—it was like a small-town gig. I guess now it's more—I don't know what it is now. But they had aspirations; her daughter-in-law, my cousin, had aspirations. But my aunt was, like, "You know the Philadelphia is the best symphony in the world, and we got it to have a Baltimore

season, so—" So she took me a couple of times; my uncle didn't so much like to go. So I went to that, and sat in the box. And that old, I don't even remember the name of the hall, but it's where they had the cotillion, and it's a really wonderful, acoustically wonderful, old concert hall. It might not be there.

JK: Was it part of Peabody, or no?

PQ: No, it was over closer to Bolton Hill, and down a little. I don't know. And it had, like, a balcony along the sides, and was all wood, and that's why it was a nice sound to it. It wasn't very big, so I don't know whether it's still around or not.

JK: I'm going to pause it for just a second.

[Side conversation]

[Audio break]

So let's see, we were talking about your aunt and being involved in Baltimore—

PQ: Yeah, so I didn't really go out to a lot of those things. Her life was running Baltimore. She had an office like my office at the house; it was the old nursery, you know, hall room. She had a little desk with all the little appointment books, and the Blue Books, and all that stuff. And in the morning, she'd go up there with her maid, and they'd work out things. And her maid she got when she got married, she went down to her friend's Eastern Shore plantation, and she found a wonderful, smart, intelligent, charming, willing 13-year-old, or something, and brought her back to be her maid. And so she was with her all her life, and. Her name was **Hyla**, and she had two boys, and they both went to college and became professional people. She owned her house.

JK: **Hyla** did.

PQ: Yeah. So, her life was pretty—from growing up, actually, in something that was more like 1830s—I don't know if you've ever been to the Shore, but—[Laughs] Those old plantations on the Shore, I'm sure they're still like it's 1830, you know, they're just so antebellum down there, and the social relationships haven't changed and everything. But to go from that to then having her kids be modern professional adult people in one of the busy cities of the world, it's just, like, really quite an arc of things. Anyway, and she would call the butcher, and she would call the green

grocer, and she would call the people; they would deliver; she would go pick up. She would plan the dinners; she would figure out things; she would call people; she would bend people's ears; she would—you know, it was her life; that's what she did. She gave luncheons, she went out to luncheons, she met the mayor and gave him what for; she did all that kind of stuff.

So she'd have a lot of lunches and dinners at the house. I never was part of that. And I'd babysit for my cousins, so I knew their kids really well. [Laughs] And their oldest boy married socially, you know, and they were raising their children to be social. And it was just hilarious to be with them, because the girl, she was, like, 12 or something, and she would do things like, she'd plop down on the bed to talk, and cross her legs, and say, "Oh, I can't do that," you know. [Laughter]

JK: She had a lot of training.

PQ: Yeah, she was still trying to be a good—she hadn't come out, yet; she was just still in training, a girl in training. They also, it was really funny, because I'd stay there with the kids, but they'd have their maid, and would serve us dinner. And my aunt had a little button under the table, like this, but my cousin had a button under the carpet.

[1:20:00]

And I have really long legs, and I didn't know it was there, and the maid kept coming out, and I couldn't figure out why the maid kept coming out, and checking. And finally one of the kids said, "You know, there's a buzzer under the carpet, and I think your foot's on it." [Laughs]

JK: Oh my gosh, how funny.

PQ: It was just, like, speak of worlds collide, it was just so bizarre. I had a traumatic and unfortunate experience making friends, my first year. Which had a great influence on the way things were, so, it probably would be good to catch up on that, although I don't want to get melodramatic about it. I was swimming at the Y, and I became friends with this guy, and it was such an exciting thing for me, because just away from home, at campus, blah blah blah. And I meet a guy who has no obligation to be a friend of mine, and he's grown up, I mean, he's not a lot older than me, but he's grown up, not a kid, out in the world, doing a job. And we just become friends, like that. We start chatting, we see each other once in a

while swimming, we meet up after. He for some reason is in some different locker-room area, so afterwards, we meet up at the little coffee shop, and I always have a Coke and he always has milk, and we chat about this and that and the other thing. And this went on several months, and it was just, he was my first friend. I was so, I don't know, happy about that. And I also thought, "Oh, well, over time, we'll get to know each other better, and then I can talk to him about all these grownup things that I don't understand." Well, one of the things we talked about was hi-fi stuff, because that summer I was at Cornell, they had a room, it was probably twice as big as these two rooms put together. And one whole wall was bookshelves, but they were records, and they had one of those hi-fi sets with, like, the microbalance little thing—this is 1959—those massive speakers all over the room, and—we'd stay up until 4:00 in the morning.

We had this experiment. We had read a study that said, the most value comes out of the first four hours of sleep, so we thought, "Well, we'll just sleep four hours, and then we'll take a nap, and then we'll have, like, double-dip best sleep, right?" Of course, [laughs] we kept falling asleep in lectures and stuff. But it got us to stay up until 4:00 in the morning, and we would just—in summer, in Cornell, it was beautiful; nighttime, it wasn't too hot, but big trees all over, this big old house, and we were playing classical music on this fabulous stereo set, and lounging around. I don't know what the other people thought about it; we didn't think about that very much. But we had a great time, and I just loved the whole thing, and it was new to me, because we had, like, four records around the house, jazz stuff, and it wasn't a big musical household. We weren't allowed to play the piano because it was too much trouble to move it when we moved. I don't know, all these rules we had.

Anyway, so, he and I, we talked about that a little, and one time he said, "Oh, well, I finally got a new stereo set, so you want to come over and see it?" Well, I didn't think anything of it, and so we went over, and it turns out he was the priest at this shrine of Saint Jude –

JK: You didn't know he was a priest?

PQ: Well, I knew, like, some distance into the relationship, after he showered and stuff, he came out and he was wearing a collar, so I knew, but I didn't know priest of what or anything. We didn't talk about that. So, we went to the place, and it was—I don't know if you're a Catholic or have anything to do with Catholics –

JK: I was raised Catholic, so I know a little bit.

PQ: Oh, so you know about, like, the rectories, and the women who take care of the priests, and that whole weird stuffy atmosphere. We went into the dining room and it was real carved wood, and this huge table, and there was no one but him, right? And she's full-time, there's nobody but him living there. It was, like, so weird. Anyway, so I remember it was Ash Wednesday, because he was fasting, but I was a growing boy—I'd just turned 18.

[1:25:00]

And so he had her feed me some food, which she didn't—she was a little weird about it, but—I mean, it was a little weird, it's, like, "It's Ash Wednesday, and we're fasting, but you're bringing somebody by and feeding them? That seems weird." It made me feel a little weird. Then we went up to the room, and he was showing me the hi-fi, and then all of a sudden he started dancing with me, and then one thing led to another.

I mean, he lead one thing to another, and I was just, like, we had sex, then I was totally not—I don't know, I was just, like, stunned, and upset, and—and then he gave me a drink of whiskey, and gave me the bottle to take, and shooed me out. And it was, like—I don't know, it was all really traumatic, and weird, and—

JK: Just not what you thought the friendship was?

PQ: It was not—well, I didn't even—I don't know, it just—that wasn't an option. You know, it wasn't, like, I didn't think, "Oh, is it this? Or is it that? Or is it the other?" I didn't even know that that's what—I mean, my only experience had been anonymous park, basement of the library kind of stuff, you know, it was all very—and not that often. And just weird—I just didn't know how to think about it, or what to do with it, or—but this was even weirder, because I probably would've been happy to be his boyfriend, if he wanted me—I don't know. I don't know what it would've been like, but it certainly wasn't like—being sexually assaulted was not on my list. And then I didn't tell many people about it—the word kind of got around, because I showed up with this bottle of whiskey, in kind of a daze on the doorstep. For the second time, in kind of a daze—I'd had a previous weird experience, so they already labeled me as a freak.

And then this time I showed up with this bottle of whiskey, and I gave it to one of the boys downstairs who drank, and told him the

devil gave it to me. So I think they all figured out what had happened, because I'm sure they all knew I was gay, even though I wasn't really defining myself like that, because I didn't know that was an option. That box was not on my form. But there was a guy who worked at Homewood House that I was friends with, so I talked with him a little about it, and I talked with one of my friends about it. And I just couldn't forget about the fact that this person, whom I was not alone in trusting. He was in a position of authority and trust, and he abused that. With me, he abused our friendship, but he was in this position, and I'm sure that I was not the only person. It was, like, "This is not the only time this happened." So, I thought, "I have to say something, because it's going to happen again. And it's not good for him—"

What I really wanted to do was talk to him and figure out what the fuck happened. I was, like, "Why did this—it just came out of nowhere, and I don't understand it." Or why—it just seems like the worst possible—if you say, "Okay, what are the possible outcomes of getting this relationship, this friendship going?" that would be, like, the worst possible thing. Because it ends, for one thing, and because it's traumatic, and it's not fun. It's, like, how could that even be fun for him? You know? It didn't make any sense. So, I just thought, "Well, I have to do something," so I went—there's this big Catholic church right down the street. Again, you know, I'm a country boy, what do I know? These big places, they looked like Saint Peters, to me—they're massive things.

So I go to the back door of the rectory, and I knock on the door, and the woman opens the door. And go into the kitchen and sit down with some young priest, and tell him my story, and he's, like, "Well, I'm going on a retreat, this weekend. I'll ask my confessor." I'm, like, "Whatever—I don't get what that's all about, but—" "So meet me next week." So I came back next week, and met him, and he said, "Well, the most important thing is you, and so, we have an inquirer's class that's starting on Thursday, and you could go the inquirer's class, then you could get baptized, and your soul would be saved, and you would go to Heaven."

[1:30:00]

And I'm, like –

JK: "That's your answer?" [Laughs]

PQ: – "That's not exactly what I was interested in. And besides, what about, like, my friends and family?" It's, like, "Oh, well, they

wouldn't come along, you know, they would still go to Hell, because they're not Catholic. But you would be saved." And I'm, like, "But that isn't really the point. The point was, can I talk to this guy? Can you do something? Can I tell somebody about it who's going to do something about it, so it doesn't happen again? Can you work with him, so that it doesn't happen again? Is this going to be a situation that we can figure it out?" And he's, like, "Well, my confessor thinks that it's better just to let it go." And I'm, like, "That's not okay with me." That's one of those [naaaahh] buzzer answers, it's, like, "No, that's not on the list—not acceptable." He said, "Well, the only thing you can do is go talk to the archbishop," thinking, "Jewish boy, California, Hopkins, never happen." Ha.

So I go down, and you know the cathedral, right? Gorgeous place. And then next to it is this big edifice, which is the offices. So I go in there—and it's across the street from the Y, just hilarious. So we're sitting in the office, and I'm looking out his window at the Y. I go in, and he's all dressed up, like –

JK: In his robes and everything?

PQ: Yeah, everything. He's very somber, friendly, puts me at ease—well, obviously, not totally.

JK: Did he know what you were there for?

PQ: Yeah, he totally knew what I was there for; I told him why I was, when I called and made the appointment, I'd said why I was going, and I said, "Well, you know, I went and talked to these people, and they said—" I talked to his, you know, whatever, factotum, to make the date, and said, "You know, this is what happened, and I want to talk to him, because they said this is the only thing. It's a personal matter." So they knew it was kind of what it was about. And by then he'd heard from the priest, too, so he even knew who it was, you know, he knew the whole story. So I go and he says, "Well, unfortunately, you can't talk to him, because he's in a retreat at Seton House." Well, of course, I saw that movie about Boston, and one of the big things in putting the story together was their discovery of Seton House.

JK: Oh, you mean *Spotlight*, that movie?

PQ: *Spotlight*, yeah—was their discovery of Seton House, which was where they sent everybody. I, of course, didn't know that, you know, 50 years ago. But he said, "No, yeah, he's in retreat at Seton House, and you can't talk to him." Well, I knew that was a load of

bullshit, even then, but what was I going to do, you know, not—I had fantasies of catching a bus, and walking to Seton House, and sneaking through the shrubbery, and catching him in the garden, and talking to him. But I was never going to do that, I mean, I would go see the archbishop, but I wouldn't do that. So, he said, "Yeah, well, he had trouble in the parish where he was before, so we assigned him to the shrine because there's no congregation, so we figured that would keep him out of trouble." And I said, "Well, obviously, it didn't." And then, he was like, "But didn't you think it was strange that you met a Catholic priest at the YMCA?"

I'm, like, "It's a Christian organization. Why would I—" He said, "Oh, Catholics aren't allowed to go to the Y. It's Protestant." So I pieced the whole thing together, and I realized that he went to the Y because he knew he wouldn't meet Catholic boys, and he met me and made friends of me, but he wouldn't do anything until I turned 18. And it just made me—it was creepier, somehow –

JK: Yeah, like he was grooming you—

PQ: —to think that he was, you know—I thought he was becoming my friend, but he was just biding his time. I don't know, in a way, maybe he—I think that he wasn't not my friend, but then in his mind somehow there was this weird thing, split.

JK: How terrible, though, to realize that your friendship was not what you thought it was.

PQ: Was not what I thought, yeah, because to me it was, like, my first friendship, the first time I had a friend that wasn't because they were somehow incarcerated with me in whatever institution I happened to be in. [Laughs] You know, met him on the street, so to speak. It was just an odd friendship. So, we talked, and then, when I left, the archbishop said, "Well, you may kiss my ring, and that gives you the same number of days' indulgence that you'd get in purgatory for having sex with a priest."

[1:35:00]

[Laughs]

JK: Are you serious? Oh my gosh. [Laughter] A parting gift.

PQ: That's, like, one of the funniest things that's ever happened to me in my whole entire life.

JK: What did you do?

PQ: It was so hilarious—well, I kissed his ring, of course.

JK: You did? [Laughter]

PQ: I mean, how often do you get the chance, right? This big amethyst, it was, like, this big, and it was so hilarious, the whole thing was just, like, "You must be kidding." I was just, like, speak of alternative realities, you know.

JK: I mean, funny, but so sad, at the same time, because that was your last avenue, right? What else—did you have any other recourse, I mean—

PQ: Well, I mean, obviously, I couldn't do anything to help him, or to help the situation, because even though I spoke up, I realized it wasn't going to help. And where would I go from there? I had no idea. And I couldn't talk to the priest, because he was gone forever, and they would make sure we never spoke to each other. And I was, like, mm, so, my friends at Hopkins got me hooked up with a graduate student who became like a little counselor for me, and he was a priest. He was an Episcopal priest, and he was getting a doctorate in something, and he was attached to the Episcopal cathedral out there. And he was gay, and so that was a good situation, because here I was with a grown-up. At that point, the first grown-up gay person I'd ever known, who wasn't hitting on me. [Laughs]

JK: Did you find it hard to trust, after that? I mean, this is another older, religious person –

PQ: Well, it made me more isolated, and I realized that I do have trouble making friends, because I don't—you know, there's a certain trust thing that did happen with that. I thought, for a long time, 50 years, I thought that it was fine, got over it, didn't bother me, whatever. I didn't have trauma like people talk about, it didn't affect me—I just thought I got over it, it didn't matter. But lately I've realized it did matter, it really did affect how I relate to people, and I'm not as—I don't know whether trusting is the right word, but I just don't have friends like that. And it's a shame that I didn't think about it more, sooner. And other things have happened that have reinforced that, but that was kind of a big deal. So I would go out a lot, but I would mostly just be by myself, wander around, go to the shops, chat with the salespeople, chat with people I met on the street, but not really make friends.

I did make a friend the year I was at my aunt's, I had to kind of dress up, so I had my—and I was living in the whim of my aunt, so, I had my shirts done at this little laundry, and it was on my way. It was just off-campus, just south of campus. And the clerk was this Irish high school student, Baltimore Irish, and we got to be good friends, and she really liked me, and she felt safe with me. And I was a college boy, and I was—I think I can say this: I was really cute. [Laughter] I never thought of myself being that way, but other people thought I was cute. She thought I was really cute, and I was charming, I know that, you know, I have manners. And she was interesting, and I would tell her stories, we would talk, and for her it was a big deal, because she was a Baltimore parochial schoolgirl, and Baltimore is so—every neighborhood is so closed in on itself that even meeting somebody from across town is a big deal.

And for her to meet me, who was from California, and going to college, and had all these stories of stuff that she never had imagined in her life. And I treated her like a grown-up, and she liked that, because she had this job, but she never felt like a grown-up.

[1:40:00]

So we started kind of meeting, you know, I would go by even when I didn't have shirts to pick up, and I'd spend an hour there, two hours there. I'd meet her after work, and we'd walk over and have ice cream or something, and chat a little, but it was sort of pushing the boundaries. And then, I asked her out on a date, and she was, like, "Well, of course, you have to meet my parents." And I knew that, because, you know, the rule in my father's family was, before you date a woman the third time, you have to be sure that it's okay if you marry her.

JK: Oh my goodness. [Laughs]

PQ: And the thing is, well, because, if you start dating, you'll probably get her pregnant, then you'll have to get married, so you'd better make sure that it's going to be okay with you if that happens. But, I don't know, that whole logic is really weird to me, not what I grew up with. So, anyway, so I went to meet her family; of course, it made sense. But her dad was totally not okay: "Outside the neighborhood, not Catholic, college boy, the worst kind of reprobate, evil, sinful, terrible person, reads weird stuff, I mean, what do they study over there, right?" Just totally not okay, so we never saw each other again, I mean, except to say hi. The only

other time I felt like that was, my first girlfriend in junior high school was Japanese, and, of course, being my age, Japanese Californian, she was born in the camps.

I took her to the junior prom, and of course I had to meet her family, so they had me over for dinner, and her dad was just, like, "White guy, dad in the FBI, mm, not my daughter's boyfriend. This is the last time he's going to see her." And I totally understood, but it never had occurred to me before. I mean, I knew she'd been born in the camps, and I knew that was—but, you know, my other friend, he was born in the camps in Germany. I mean, I didn't hold it against him. [Laughs] I mean, that's just, like, yeah, we all have our experiences, you know? And me, my father ran away from us when I was a kid, and had this whole traumatic thing about his boyfriend. So, everybody has shit, you know, whatever, and I never thought of them as being, like, somehow not—somehow the other side of a fence for me, it's not a different kind of person; it just never occurred to me that that was the case.

JK: That they would have a problem with you?

PQ: Yeah. So, that does cause problems in Baltimore, though, because people there are very aware of all the differences, and—

JK: Yeah, I feel like it's a little more open now, but any family that's been there for a while, it's, like, you know—some of those neighborhoods are a two- or three-block radius, you know? But yet, it's so, you know, they know every single one, so—[Laughs]

PQ: Well, San Francisco was like that, in a way. It's, like, we could go out and play, whatever, be gone all day, but we could not cross the boundary lines of the neighborhood, and we could not have friends who did not live in the neighborhood. If they lived across the street, it's not okay. It wasn't whatever they were, anything about their ethnicity, or their parents, or their anything; it was the, not in our neighborhoods. And I see why, I mean, when Quin was growing up, by the time he got to be able to be out on his own—it was about 10 or 11—I felt okay. I mean, I trained him from little to go out on his own, but I'd follow him, and I'd make sure I had spies watching, and—because we knew everyone—but then when he'd go out with his boyfriends, it would be, like, "If you go to a different neighborhood, call me. I don't care where you go, what you do, but if you change neighborhoods, you have to call me, because I need to know what neighborhood you're in." [Laughs]

So that's a remnant of that, you know, so he'd call me, "Okay,

we're leaving the Civic Center; we're going to the Upper Haight." And then I'm fine; I don't care, because I know you're together, you'll be safe, you know how to deal with it, you know what to do if there's a problem. But I just need to know, in my mind, I have to know which neighborhood you're in. So there's a little neighborhoodliness, but it's nothing like Baltimore. I mean, the thing for me was the Lithuanian neighborhood, which is, like, three blocks by three blocks. I don't know if it's still there, but it was, like, the Lithuanian church, the Lithuanian school, and they all painted their screens, so they could leave their windows open in the summer, and you couldn't see in. Or you wouldn't really look in, because you'd see the painted screens.

[1:45:00]

And it just started, like, immediately, and it stopped immediately, and it totally didn't relate; the store was there, and nobody from outside shopped there, and they didn't shop anywhere else. And it was just, like, every time you crossed one of your streets, it would be like going through some kind of invisible barrier. It was like you'd feel the temperature change, or [laughs] like those doorways in the mall that keep the air conditioning in, it was like that.

JK: I know, it's funny, nowadays, I mean, those neighborhoods are still there, but there's just so much more—I think the boundaries are so much more porous. But, I mean, you walk and you see Lithuanian on church fronts, and there's still some stores and things, but I just don't think the boundaries are as hard as they used to be.

PQ: No, well, because the kids marry out. I mean, here the thing was, the big miscegenation thing was the Irish and the Italians, because, well, my dad hated the Italians, but that was because his boyfriend had been Italian and got him in trouble. But there was a big sort of rivalry in the law enforcement community between the Irish and the Italians, and so when I went back East and people started talking about prejudice, I thought that's what it was; I thought it was Italians [laughter], "Oh, you mean you treat the Italians bad, here, too, and you can't date them?" But half the weddings were across racial boundaries, you know? Every time you turned around, some Irish person was getting married to some Italian person. So, by now, are there those boundaries? Kind of, but not really, because even the most hardboiled Irish cop guy has whatever kind of grandchildren, you don't know, they're Japanese, or Chinese, or even, heaven forbid, Italian, you know?

And it changes, but there are still those neighborhoods here, where

the old people still believe that way; they think the world is like that. And it perplexes me, but is something I noticed that's true, that they can hold that at the same time that they have no issue with their mixed-race grandchildren, at all. I mean, it doesn't even occur in their mind in the same space; they're able to completely keep that separate.

JK: Yeah, to compartmentalize it.

PQ: Yeah, and it's something that, I don't know, I didn't grow up with that. I think you have to be born, like, raised carefully to believe that way. I think it helps to be Catholic, or Baptist, or something.

JK: Some sort of rigid belief system that can kind of –

PQ: That nobody believes in—so you can go and—my dad was Southern Baptist, so he would go to church, and then he'd bring the pastor back to the house. And, first off, they'd take off their jackets, which to me was like sitting around in underwear. It was just, like, a little creepy, I don't know why. I was kind of a prude, I guess. And then they'd proceed to get drunk, even though he'd just come from giving a sermon about the evils of drink. But he'd sit around with my dad, and they would drink, like, tumblers full of whiskey, and just get totally plowed. And talk about—my dad was kind of—he would goad me by being purposefully gross in my presence, because I was kind of fastidious, and he thought it was funny. But he was kind of gross, and the pastor was totally gross. And I guess if you grew up with that and somehow can cope with it, that you do learn to keep those things separate, but it was never a comfortable thing for me.

JK: If you don't want to go down this road, that's fine, but you mentioned that your dad had a boyfriend?

PQ: Yeah. Well, so, the Italian guy, the Mafia guy that he was his partner, they would spend a lot of time together, and they started having an affair, and somebody found out. And there were certain people who wanted to just fire him, but he was a darling of J. Edgar, because he was the fingerprint guy. And he joined the bureau as a fingerprint filing clerk when he was, like, 20, and they convinced him to go to law school, so they kind of raised him to be an agent, and brought him along to be this fingerprint expert. And just, you know, he was the product of J. Edgar and his buddies at the FBI.

[1:50:00]

So they just, they didn't want to let him go, so they sent him to Baltimore. My uncle arranged for therapy with this guy who was going to turn him straight. And they sent him to do undercover work at—oh, the name is always on the tip of my tongue, and I can't get to it—the big ordnance depot up the bay from Baltimore.

JK: Oh, Fort Meade? No.

PQ: No.

JK: Oh, the ordnance, oh man.

PQ: Naval Ordnance.

JK: Aberdeen Proving Ground?

PQ: No, it's just—anyway, it doesn't matter. But [whispering] there were some gay people up there, some gay sailors, and they decided that they must be communist infiltrators, because by this time the war was still on but winding down. And it was a certain point, I think in '44, when the FBI decided that the Germans were no longer the issue; that it was the Russians, and especially the Jews, who were all rabid communist labor radical sympathizers. So the attention turned to keeping different kinds of people out, and to watching different kinds of stuff. And one of the things was, "Oh, well, gay people are obvious targets for communist infiltration." And so my dad was sent up to play himself, this rather attractive 30-ish but still very military-looking gay guy, and get involved in this group, and sort of break it up, and tell the authorities what was going on, and –

JK: Wow, so they actually used his gayness –

PQ: So they used that, but part of it was to show him what happens if you continue to be gay, is you're vulnerable to that kind of thing, and that's where it goes; it goes down that road to perdition, and you have to not do that. And so, he was given the choice, and he decided that he would come back to the family. And the funny thing was, when he came out here and he started teaching, the partner he was given [laughs] was this guy who had been an actor, and he was actually a roommate of Efrem Zimbalist Jr., who played in that TV series on the FBI. They had been roommates, and then Efrem Zimbalist Jr. kept on acting, and this guy went into the FBI and became my dad's partner, and they traveled together 50 weeks out of the year. And I know that they had an emotional

relationship. When they retired, they bought five-acre properties next to each other, and built their houses with the front doors facing across the driveway. [Laughs]

It's, like, "You could've built your house anywhere, and you built them, like, so you can see into each other's living room," you know. And then when my mom broke her hip and they had a terrible experience with the hospital, and they realized they had to move back to civilization, they both moved back and bought houses across the green on a golf course from each other. Yeah, so they were friends until they died, until he died, and I don't know, you know, their exact relationship is not my business, but the fact that that provided his male bonding thing that he needed in his life I think was a really good thing. But that's how he worked it out: he had that, and he had five boys, and the FBI. I took a picture with J. Edgar Hoover, actually. When there were four of us, we were touring the FBI building, and they offered to let us shoot submachine guns, and I gave my brother my turn, I'm, like [laughs], "I don't want to even come near that thing."

So we went down the basement to the shooting range, they took us all over, and Hoover heard that we were in the building, like, this agent and the four FBI agents-to-be, right, four little boys, he couldn't resist. So we went up and met him, and he took a picture with us and he pulled this box out from under his desk and stood on it, because he was so short. And we were kids, but some of us were taller than he was, already, and I thought that was just hilarious.

JK: Wow, he had a box at the ready. [Laughs]

PQ: A little box under his desk, to stand on when he has to take pictures. Anyway, I think that's why my dad was so—

[1:55:00]

Because he had gotten into such trouble about it, and it had been so traumatic for him, and he really felt that he had no choice, you know—

JK: He was trying to protect you, in a way.

PQ: —and that he was really trying to protect me. When the year I came—so, I came home because my dad thought I was getting too involved in the gay life in Baltimore. I stayed over the summer, I had a working-class boyfriend, he was a baker, and I went to my

first gay wedding where the ex-boyfriend came running down the stairs with a gun—it was totally [laughs]—and the bride in white, 2,000 yards of chiffon, and the groom all in tuxedo, of course, both guys, and—

JK: And this was in 1963? In Baltimore?

PQ: This was in 1963, in a suburb of Washington. We kept driving back and forth, we'd forget this, we'd forget that. I think I drove back and forth from Washington to Baltimore like ten times that night, in my aunt's car. And then, coming home by myself at the very end at dawn, I had a seizure and hit a parking meter. Destruction of public property, so, I had to go to court; it's a felony. And my uncle called my father, and I didn't know it, but then I went to court, and there was my father, and he'd already talked to the judge and gotten me released to his care. So he took me home, and arranged with the psychiatrist that he'd seen to find someone for me to see, to make me straight.

JK: Because it worked for him so well, right? [Laughs]

PQ: So he recommended one of his favorite students, who was practicing in San Francisco, but he's in San Francisco, so of course he's not like that. And the first time I went to him, he was, like, "Okay, so, you and I both know you're not the one who should be here, but he's paying for this, so we might as well take advantage of this and do what we can, spend this time in a worthwhile manner." He said, "Yeah, you know, those were old times; my teacher was really a wonderful guy, but he had some old-fashioned ideas about things, and it's not like that."

JK: Wow, so he ended up being something good for you, then.

PQ: Yeah, he was really good for me, and not just—so, he was in San Francisco; I was working at the planning department in San Jose. I made an arrangement with them that I could work through all my lunch hours, and then take off at noon on Friday. And I took the bus up to the city, and saw my psychiatrist, and then I stayed until the last bus. So I would go out, because that was the year I turned 21, so I would go out and the only thing I knew, at that point, was to go to the bars, and get drunk, and fall in love with bartenders, you know, this pathetic thing that gay people do who don't know what to do with their lives. But it was good, because I did get out more, and I would wander around the city by myself, and it was nice.

JK: Yeah, and just to jump back one step, how did your dad know what was happening in Baltimore with you? Were you open with him? Did you tell him—

PQ: My aunt.

JK: Your aunt told him, okay.

PQ: Yeah, because I did some unwise things. So I was dating this guy, and Baltimore, in those days, was like this whole class thing, which also I wasn't used to; we didn't have—we had people with pretensions, but there wasn't an established class for them to join onto; they were just people with pretensions [laughs], whatever. And they were just normal people. So, I was dating this guy, and he was a baker, and he was from that old Baltimore, that, "We're proud, because none of us ever graduated from high school or go to college," you know, "That's our culture," and whatever. And there's this thing in the gay community about cross-social dating. So, I was dating him and hanging out with some of his friends, and my aunt was away, and I invited them over to the house.

She said it was okay if people came by, so, and we decided to bake a pound cake, but I didn't have the recipe, and just all I remembered was a pound of everything, so—which it actually isn't. So of course I put in, like, twice too much butter, and it oozed butter all over the oven—it was just a total mess; it was just, like, weird. Anyway, when they left, they stole things from the house, and my aunt noticed, and I got them back, but it was really embarrassing for me, and upsetting, and an issue, it was a deal.

[2:00:00]

I mean, she was fine with it, but she called my dad, and she said, "He's to the point, now, where I really can't take care of him anymore." And it was her car that I wrecked; didn't wreck it bad. It was her other car—she had a Jaguar.

She was amazing; she was just, she really just stood erect, and she had this immense bosom. And when she got dressed up, she would wear gowns that were cut like this, and she went to the gym, and she went to the masseur, and all that stuff, and her whole chest was tan and just covered with the finest network of little lines, you know? And it was just astonishing, because my mother never wore anything lower than, like, up here. She had what we called her Sophia Loren dress, and it had this very revealing, three-inch-low neck. [Laughter] But my aunt wore these things that, like, the

neckline went way out, and she had this one dress that was made of float-away silk panels in all these different colors—it was totally breathtaking. And she just, she was like a ship of state, and when she drove in her Jaguar, she just was really, like, a picture. She was a picture.

JK: I can picture it.

PQ: She was, like, "Your uncle John and I have only done two practical things in our lifetime: we moved the kitchen upstairs so that we would not have to have an upstairs and a downstairs maid, and we started eating margarine for his heart." [Laughter] And then the travails of life, how before the war they had the gardener, and the chauffeur, and the maid, and the cook, and the under-maid, and stuff. And then the guys all went off to fight, and you couldn't get help, so they figured it out, so they got along with the cook who came in and cooked; she wasn't there all day, she just was there five days a week, or whatever, and just cooked for the dinners and stuff. And the fulltime maid, who didn't live in, but she showed up—

JK: It's a wonder they survived. [Laughs]

PQ: — but she showed up at, like, 6:00 in the morning. And I was under strict instructions, when I lived there, that I was not there to give her anything more to do.

And the maid, **Hyla**, was under strict instructions not to do anything for me. Well, of course, she totally ignored that— tiptoeing downstairs to leave for school in the morning, and **Hyla** was, like, "I have breakfast—come on, it's all laid out." So, she called him and told him what was going on, and my uncle called him, and so he flew out and took me home, and I was home for the year. I got a job at the San Jose city planning department. It was actually a lot of fun. They put me in charge of producing the first city plan, it was, like, it wasn't a thing in those days. There were a lot of things I did that were like that, that nowadays are professions; in those days, people just did them. So I wrote it, and I laid it out, and I drew all the maps, and I—yeah. I mean, I didn't make the decisions, but I wrote the plan, I sort of cast the words around it, and figured out how to present things. And it was all just, you know, nowadays, they're very fancy things. It was all just, like, photocopied and stapled.

JK: You also said that you worked at the Baltimore News-American, as a student?

PQ: Yeah, just for the summer.

JK: What was your job there?

PQ: I ran the ditto machine. It was a summer job, during college. The thing I remember about that was the location, you know, it was this big old dusty building, and people everywhere, and the newsroom. It was just like the movies. But the big thing I remember is payday, because they came around with the cart, and they had a little envelope this big, Kraft envelope with a flap on the end, and it had all the pay and deductions written on it in pencil, and it had cash inside. And they would roll this thing around and just pass out these little envelopes to everybody. Every week, you'd get cash, with a little handwritten-in-pencil thing about the deductions and taxes and everything. [Laughs]

JK: Wow, that's crazy

[2:05:00]

PQ: So, I don't know, there were all these things that really, even at the time they were happening to me, were really old-fashioned, I think. And now, they're, like, "You mean that happened, and it was not 1893?" [Laughs]

JK: Yeah, because by the '60s there's places using computer punch cards, right? So it's funny that there's that range of possibilities in bookkeeping and things like that

PQ: Yeah, it was interesting. Yeah, the period I've lived in has really been a period of big transition, because, you know, the war—a lot of things happened, and then there was the Depression, and then there was the war. So, a lot of things didn't happen, and then there was the '50s, which, whatever. And then, all of a sudden stuff started happening, socially, and economically, and technologically. And so, after school, I got a job at the Baltimore Museum, but then I got fired because I gave the director's new wife, who used to be his secretary, the what for about her anti-Jewish stuff. So I got fired, so I went to work for a big printer in town, and they printed letterpress; it was an old-fashioned medical publications house. And they were doing everything like they'd been doing it since 1910, I mean, it was just all letterpress, I got to know the pressman, I went down and watched him put little pieces of paper between things to space the letters out and all the stuff on these—

They were, like, this big, and they'd run in and out of the press like this. That's the kind of presses they had, the big flatbeds, so the lead would run in, then the paper would be on top of it, and it would just print it off. It was just amazing. And then, at the Baltimore Museum, I started doing the first phototype, you know, they'd just invented these phototype machines. And the people who were supplying the machines made a deal with me to use it so they could show examples, because no one was using it. And we would do these kind of fancy things, but ephemeral publications like invitations and catalogues. And I did the newsletter. I started doing the newsletter all in phototype, and it was a big deal. And so they got overruns of that, and they passed them out to their customers, "Look what you can do with phototype" kind of thing.

And then, from then on, you know, I've been through so many generations of changes in typography, and printing, and all that kind of stuff. It's been really exciting, because for so long nothing changed, and now I don't know if things are changing—things are changing some, but there haven't been any dramatic changes in 20 or 30 years, and—

JK: And there's even that movement kind of back to letterpress and that kind of handset type, right? I mean, kind of more in an artsy sense—

PQ: Yeah, it's become an artsy thing, you know; it was never an artsy thing then; it was just what you did. That's how I fell in love with it at first, with printing. I got a job at the Baltimore Museum. That same guy at Homewood House, he got me the job. And I said, "Director of Publications? I don't know anything about publications." He's, like, "For the salary they're paying, they'll be happy to get a college graduate. So, don't look a gift horse in the mouth, just go take the job." I had no idea what I was going to do—it was, like, "Oh, I can't do that, I can't do that, I can't do that, because I'm gay. I can't teach, can't go to graduate school, can't go to the Foreign Service." Couldn't be a city planner, because I'd apprenticed with the Baltimore city planning department, and the guy who was the assistant director of the city planning department, and a friend, and I got to know his family, his wife had been a teacher of mine, all this kind of stuff.

I'd babysit their kid when—"babysit"—stay at the house with him; he was 14. They didn't want to leave him in the house alone when they went away, when they both had to go away. So I got to know him, and then one day he was on the front page of the paper. He was caught in a men's room in the park, and they let him out of jail, and he jumped off of a bridge in Philadelphia, killed himself. And I

was, like, "Can't do that." [Laughs] I mean, it was just, like, "Can't do, can't do, can't do," so I didn't know what I was going to do. So I got this job, and then, the designer I was working with was having an invitation printed, and we went to the print shop; they were mixing the color, which they did those days.

[2:10:00]

And I walked into this room, one of those big old warehouses with all the wood, these big wood things everywhere, and big windows. And the guy was working with inks on a thing, and he was just, like, a wizard weird genius guy, and he had this little proofing press, and it was just—the smell, and the sound, and just the perfection of what he was doing, and everything, I was just, like, "Okay, this is what I want to do. This is my life, now."

So that's how I happened to go into that. And my grandfather encouraged me, because of the book thing. And when I came back here, I got offered two jobs, one was on the Coca-Cola account at an ad agency, and another, which paid half as much, was for a scientific publisher. And I was, like, "Mm, I don't want to work real hard all day and come home and think, 'I just sold another Coke,' so I think I'll go with the publisher." And I really loved it there. I worked my way up to running the production department, and I did their first offset book, sort of brought them into the modern world, because they'd been doing all letterpress. And I got to work on the Black Holes book, which was, like, this thick; and Watson and Crick, I did that book, and worked a lot with Linus Pauling. And worked with Joan Baez's father, who was a physics professor. He wrote the physics books for us.

I have a picture of her mother, that she sent us. She's sitting on the hearth in their house, with all these cards and boxes of cards, because the index was late. And so she sent me this little note, she said, "This is proof I'm working on it," [laughs] and there she is with all these index cards, making the index to the book. And, of course, they don't do it that way anymore, but I kind of treasure it, because of that. Because she reminds me of my mother, and she's kind of old-fashioned, and she's sitting there with this thing which is now really old-fashioned. And she's Joan Baez's mother, so it's, like, this whole clash of culture, generations thing, it's really kind of interesting. So I had a really great time there, and then my boss retired and they wouldn't promote me because of my lifestyle, and—

JK: This was working here, in California?

PQ: Yeah, it was just, like, a few years later they had gay people working there, but right then it was just—so I was, like, "Okay, I'm going to work for myself, because I've tried, you know, what is there left? I mean, there's nothing I can do and be gay, except just be myself and just do work for people when they want it." And so, I remember telling myself that I would sweep streets, I would whatever, if I had to. So, I took a part-time job at the *Bay Guardian*, which was this local newspaper. I was their food critic. But I did it under a fake name, because they weren't paying me enough to live on, and I was, like, "I can't have a payment history as an independent, my first job as an independent person, I can't take less than I can afford to take. So, I can't be taking this money, so I have to be someone else," so I gave them a fake name, and in those days, you could do that. It was fine. And then I got my first book job, and then I started getting more, and then I didn't ever have to sweep streets.

JK: So this would've been in the '70s, then, that this was happening?

PQ: This was, yeah, early '70s. I was living two doors off Haight Street, and they had the Haight Street riots; our Mafia mayor's flying Tac [Tactical] Squad. And observing the way the police were, which was really awful, just broke me somehow. Because when I grew up, that's all my parents' friends were, you know, sheriffs and policemen. And I knew there were weird things about them, but I knew them as family people, and friends, and like that. And seeing them just being sadistic, and awful, and terrible, for no reason, it just, I didn't know what to do. Went down to the mayor's office, and sat in the office until someone would talk to me [laughs]—just told them how terrible it was. Got my passport, and from working in Baltimore, we'd done work with a press in Sweden, and I'd designed their American publicity stuff, and produced it, and they liked my work. So they were, like, "Well, if you ever come to Sweden, you might have a job with us."

[2:15:00]

So I decided to do that, but my brother and sister-in-law had a job in Hamburg, and my baby brother went to stay with them, and I went over on a German ship. So I was visiting them, and then I went up to Sweden, and Sweden was awful. I thought, "Oh, Sweden, it's where the draft resisters go." Yeah, but they aren't allowed to work, they aren't allowed to—they live in little—I mean, they just treated them really bad. It was really awful, and they were, like, in jail; it was like they were in jail. They weren't, really, but it was like that. And the people, I don't know, the people

were so rude, and the people I met really wanted to get away, and it was, like, "Ah, I don't think this is the answer." And then my family was in Hamburg, and I had kind of raised my baby brother, so I really wanted to be with him, and so I got a place in Hamburg.

And by the time I learned German well enough and found people who would hire me, I decided I didn't want to be there, because it wasn't home. And things were just as messed up there as they were here, but I couldn't do anything about that because I wasn't from there, but I could come back and do something about this. So I came back, and then two years later went freelance. I got my old job back, and they were happy to have me and stuff. But then that thing happened, and then I went freelance and got real involved in gay liberation, and I started the Gay Liberation Front, and the first Homosexuals for Peace march. [Laughs] Which went through the Fillmore, and there weren't very many of us, but we were dressed kind of outrageous. This one guy had a poncho, and he was totally naked underneath, and—it was those days, you know, people were kind of like that.

And we had these big signs "Homosexuals for Peace," which are kind of funny now. These old black ladies, in the Fillmore, they were just, like, leaning out the windows [laughs], yelling and screaming and waving their white handkerchiefs, and saying, "Bring our boys home. That's it. You guys go. Bring our boys home. We want our boys home." And just, like, "Go, girls. You go, girls." [Laughter] They were just so totally into it, it was just—because we were kind of nervous, because nobody had ever been queer and marched and —

JK: So that was, like, the first real march around here.

PQ: That I knew of, yeah. But we had that reception, they were just totally, like, "Yeah!" And then, a little later, the Stonewall Parade started, and one of the early ones, they used to come down Polk Street, in front of City Hall, and we had this big drag queen who was Empress Norton, because there was this Emperor Norton guy, crazy guy who called himself the Emperor of San Francisco. And so, her persona was the Empress Norton, and she always wore black. And she did this float, which was War Widows, because it was the Vietnam War. And she was on the float, like, in the big black Mexican dress, with this black veil that just spilled over the sides of the whole float. [Laughs] And then, it was accompanied by 100 guys who were war widows, and because at that time they weren't recognized or —

JK: Yeah, they didn't have any legal status.

PQ: – they didn't—they were just, like, invisible, like all gay people were when I was growing up.

And that was just really one of the dramatic moments in my life, was that, you know, just for people to say, "Okay, the truth is this. You might not like it, you might not have thought about it, but this is what's true. These guys are all war widows, and they deserve the same respect that any other war widow deserves, and they deserve to have their relationships honored that they've lost. And you can't ignore that, you can't sweep it under the carpet. They're not going away." And that was a big deal for me, because I'd spent so long just trying to find a place where I didn't have to confront, I didn't have to fight about it. I didn't want to fight about it, but then, you know, after I came back from Hamburg, I was involved in a lot of community groups. And weird things happened, but this group called Dignity, which is gay Catholics, had their first meetings at my house, even though I'm Jewish, whatever.

[2:20:00]

And we campaigned for this gay Catholic priest who was running for Congress, and we got involved with the farm worker strikes, and all kinds of stuff like that. It was just a really exciting time. You know, people called it the '60s, but it was really the '70s.

JK: Yeah, where you felt like you could actually start being public—

PQ: Where it was happening, it was, like, it wasn't against; it was for. The against part, I never saw the point of that.

JK: Demonstrating against the war, you mean?

PQ: No, against the war, that was something, but that was for peace. But being against stuff, I mean, my thing about not being able to teach because I was gay, it was, like, "I can't do anything about that." And I wasn't going to pretend I wasn't gay, or get a job under false pretenses, and then stand up and say whatever. You know, I wasn't going to be against that; I was just going to create some kind of life, on my own, in a place where I could be comfortable and be myself, and make that life energetic enough that people would see that I was actually gay, and real, and a person, and could do this stuff. And I felt that that's the way I could—being for instead of being against—that that's the way I could do it. So, I worked with the first co-op grocery, and we set up a co-op bakery,

and everything I did I was gay, and people knew I was gay. And then we did this Dignity thing, which was not against but for, and we did, of course, the peace thing, all the peace stuff.

But we founded the Gay Liberation Front, and then the FBI infiltrated us [laughs] and tried to talk us into, like, planting bombs. It was just hilarious, because I knew—these guys walked in; they were, like, totally drop-dead gorgeous, Mormons, I mean, you could just tell, the way they hold themselves and stuff. And they were clearly dressing in clothes they think are cool and hip, but they had no idea. And we were having our elections, and it was one of those anarchist things, so anybody who shows up, right? So like 20 of these guys show up, never seen them before, and they start talking about all this, like, bombs and da da da, and I'm, like, "Oh, I know what this is. I know who these guys are," and we just left. That was the end of it, we walked out, and we never—we just started other groups and did other things. But that's the way I approached it, I was like, "I'm not going to fight like that; I'm going to just—"

I feel like it's a waste of time to rail and rail and rail against stuff. The people now and the politics, yeah, you could spend all your time being against stuff, but what really makes more sense is to say, "Well, what do you want to do?" because, you know, the Republicans had those eight years when they were just against, against, against, and now they can do something, and they hadn't thought about what it is they want to do, you know? They have no clue. So, it's, like, "You know, I don't want to be like that," and I never wanted to be like that. And it's not that I don't admire the people who did that, the other thing, you know? I have, well, you know, Harvey, and a whole bunch of neighborhood people, people who were teachers, people who were in all kinds of different things, ambassadors, and all kinds of things, that I totally get, and they did wonderful things, but that's not me. That wasn't me.

Because they were doing those things, and then they realized they were gay, and then they were in this situation, and then they just said, "I am this, and I am gay, and this is true." But for me it wouldn't have been like that, it wasn't like that, because I was gay first, and then if I was going to go do that, then I would have to be, like, a saboteur attitude, or something—I don't know, something, and it would've been too much energy. And it's funny, in California, when you turn 55 or something, pretty young, you can go to state university free.

[2:25:00]

So I thought, "Well, I'll go back." I'd always wanted to study more; I love academic stuff, so I thought, "Well, I'll just go get a master's in history," because I really have gotten into history, and I've always kind of been into it. And I thought, "Well, that would be a lot of fun, you know, to get back into the academic thing."

But then I realized, well, you have to get in like anybody else, and I sent for my transcripts from Hopkins, and they're just hilarious, because you can just see all the things that were happening to me in my life, you know, the times when my grades would go up and down and up and down. And times when I just was totally not engaged in school, because I was doing all this other, like, figuring-it-out stuff.

JK: It's like a timeline of your whole life, not just of your grades.

PQ: Yeah, that period of time, and it just really—by the end, I just wanted to get through. I almost didn't graduate. I had a big fight with—I was taking religion, and it was being taught by a chaplain. And he was some Protestant guy, and he was, like, "Oh, you have to write a paper on Saint Paul," so fine, I write a paper on Saint Paul. Of course, Saint Paul's a pretty big creep, and terrible person, all these awful things. So that's what I did, and he said, "No, no, it has to be positive [laughs], because he's, you know, built the Protestant faith. He built the church—you have to—"

JK: Say how great he is.

PQ: – "say how great he is." And I'm, like, "No, I'm not going to do that, because it's wrong; it's not true," and I refused to do it. So he refused to give me a grade, so I wasn't going to graduate. But they called him in, they said, "Okay, you're not even a professor here; you're just allowed to teach this course because you're staff, you're the chaplain. But you can't do this—"

JK: You don't get to fail somebody.

PQ: "You don't have the power, you know, you're not given permission to not let this guy graduate. So you have to accept the paper he writes, you have to judge it on its own merits, and you have to let him graduate." So, I graduated, but barely—barely. There were weird things that made me feel bad. Between the time I graduated and the time I started at Hopkins, over that summer, they decided that the new math was the thing. So, all math was redone. Well, I learned geometry from Euclid, right, and I was a very old-

fashioned guy, but I'd gone clear through trigonometry, and solid geometry, and everything—I was like a math whiz. I come to Hopkins, and they want me to start all over again. I was going to—oh, that's what I was going to do: I was going to be an architect.

But then, they wanted me to start with all this math stuff all over again, and I was, like, "This doesn't make any sense. I can do those problems; I just can't do them the way you want me to do them. And I don't see any reason why I should learn to do them that way, when I can do them. What's the point?" So I was always kind of a not-nice person, stubborn, and –

JK: Nonconformist.

PQ: Yeah, and I would just look at things and say, "This doesn't make sense to me," and so, I had a big fight with the math department, and I had to be not having a fight with them if I wanted to be an architect, because, much to my surprise, an architect is not a designer; they're an engineer. So, that went out the window. And then, I don't know what it was about physics—I always liked physics, but I got a D. I almost didn't pass. But I think it was because I just—I don't know what it was. They weren't teaching anything interesting. My brother was in physics, at the time, at Harvard, and all my life I've been, like—that's why school was so boring: I would always learn his lessons two years ahead of me, so by the time I got there, it was, like, old hat. So, we were doing physics stuff, and I got to this physics class and I'm, like, "This is really not interesting, besides, half of it is wrong." [Laughs]

Of course, I was just over it. At that time, too, I was creeped out by feeling not accepted, "Oh, this thing, and this thing, and they have this feeling that they're the cat's pajamas, and—"

JK: Were there classes that did make a big impression on you, that you got a lot out of?

PQ: Oh, well, in those days, Hopkins—

[2:30:00]

One of the things I really loved about it was, as soon as you finished your first semester, if you could get permission to take a class, you could take any class on campus, graduate seminars, whatever. So, those were my favorite classes.

JK: The graduate seminars? Yeah.

PQ: Yeah, and they had visiting professors come, and they would give these things, and we would be able to go to them, graduate classes. And it was just, the history courses were astonishing, because the people—and you get to sit there and talk with the graduate students, and they were in some ways more interesting than the professors. Sometimes the professors, they know a lot, they've researched a lot, but they also have attitude. And they think they know it all. But the graduate students don't know nothing, right? But they're just full of fire, and they're interested, and they want to learn from this person. And so they learn this stuff, but then they look at the other stuff, they sort of lift the curtain, and they have other ideas. Yeah, so that was the most fun. And the other most fun was, there was this guy who was—Albright.

JK: Oh yeah, William Foxwell Albright?

PQ: Yeah, and he was a hero of my grandfather's. My grandfather was a Torah scholar, in addition to his job. When he retired, he joined this group of rabbis that were all 80 years old and read Torah all the time. And—

JK: Was Albright the guy who discovered the Dead Sea Scrolls, or something like that?

PQ: No, but he had, actually, very controversial ideas. My grandfather had very controversial ideas. My grandfather's idea—so, one of the things about Homeric studies and Bible studies and everything else was, there was such a long oral tradition, and then it was a manuscript tradition. And so, the scholars are always, like, "What's correct? What's the real thing? What's the...?" And in Torah studies, there's this whole wing of things where people are, like, "Well, if something is odd, is surprising or unexpected, then it must be a mistake." And my grandfather's, like, "If something is unexpected, it's definitely not a mistake, because you would write the expected thing. If you find something unexpected, and you can't get your mind around it, but you just write some version of it which is more acceptable, then that makes sense. But a scribe is not going to sit down and—where are they going to get that from? You know? You're not. So you guys are wrong."

[Side conversation]

So, that was the most fun. So he was a hero of my grandfather's, because he was a rebel voice in Middle Eastern studies, and his school of thought fell out of favor for a while. But he was

emeritus, I think, even by that time, at Hopkins. And Hopkins had a background as a classical university, so, they've taught Greek and Latin and stuff. But even by the time I was there, it was kind of on the way out. And so he taught Greek, so, I mean, it's amazing to think of that. It's, like, one of the most famous scholars in the world [laughs] has us in his office, sitting around the desk, learning classical Greek. It was just like heaven; it was so much fun. And I only took a year of it, and I didn't do that well. But it totally blew me away, just opened—Greek is such a strange language, because—you know the thing about Eskimos having 100 words for snow, or whatever? Well, the Greeks, like, the word for "cherry tree" is a different word depending on the speaker's relationship to the tree.

If you're sitting under the tree, if you're walking toward the tree, if you're planting the tree, if you're picking the cherries, different words. Not declinations, just different words, because it's a different thing. Because it has a different essence depending on your relationship to it, and that's just built into their language, which is something that we have nothing of in our language. I was, like, "Wow, how can you even translate, you know? How can you go—" so that taught me a lot about how you have to keep an open mind.

[2:35:00]

And of course, growing up with the rabbis, you always have that, "Oh, yes, but, on the other hand, [laughter] well, have you thought about this?"

You know, there's always that, there's always that voice, no matter where you are, you've got 16 of those things going on. So studying with Albright, it just was, just being in the room with all that stuff, and just knowing what he'd done, and having the stories from my grandfather, and having read the things he'd written, and knowing his personal struggles with academic correctness, and all that stuff. And just having him be, when he was with us, so immersed in his love of that language, and sharing it with us. I mean, we were kids, you know, he didn't have to do that. It was something done totally out of the love of his heart, and it was, you know, I treasure that. It was just one of the most amazing, amazing things. There were a lot of weird other things that, I mean, the social stuff was weird, how, you know, there were faculty women that—there was something funny about the faculty club, where the women couldn't eat—

JK: Oh, they had a separate dining room, I think.

PQ: Yeah, if you brought a woman guest, or if you were a woman professor, you had to eat in this other place. And they had, like, one night a year where people could bring their spouses, which were, of course, almost all women, and they would—and it was like this big laugh thing. Because they had only men's rooms, they would take a folding screen and put it in front of the urinals, and make it a women's room. And the women would always come up and say, "Well, you have to go down to the women's room, because if you peek behind the screen, you see those things," you know, [laughs] it was just, like, "Girls, I mean, you're grown-ups—you must have seen a urinal, before, in your life."

JK: You would think.

PQ: I don't know, maybe not, but that was weird. And then Ayn Rand came, and, of course, I read *The Fountainhead*—I went through that period where I used to build amazing buildings, and then burn them because they were too good to be built. I mean, models, and it was like, "Nobody will ever build this—I'll burn it. Send it to heaven where it belongs," whatever, that kind of thing. So *The Fountainhead* appealed to me on a certain level, but she never did. And by the time she came it was early '60s, and she was having these attitudes, you know, she wasn't a writer anymore; she became this campaigner.

JK: A public figure.

PQ: And her big thing was to be selfish all the time. So, I wanted to meet her, because she'd written *The Fountainhead*, and whatever, but I also wanted to be me, be weird. So I went barefoot, and she said, "Oh, so, how come you don't have shoes on?" I said, "Well, I do have shoes, but they're basketball shoes, and a friend of mine wanted to play basketball, but he doesn't have basketball shoes. So I lent him my basketball shoes so he could play basketball, because you can't play basketball without basketball shoes. And I figured it doesn't matter, I don't need shoes to come over here, so—" Thinking in my mind, "This is, like—"

JK: You were trying to antagonize her, kind of?

PQ: Yeah, I wanted to get some response. I wanted her to say, "Oh, you shouldn't have done that, because blah blah blah," but she didn't. It was one of those mind things where your grandchildren can be mixed-race and it's fine, but miscegenists should be shot, except, of course, not your children. It was like that. It was, like, "Oh, well,

that was nice; it was a good thing to do; it was, you know, practical,” she was totally in favor of it, and I was, like –

JK: And you didn't push it? No.

PQ: It kind of disappointed me, because her public stance is so not that, you know? But that really taught me, again, that same lesson, that these people who are the most dogmatic probably really don't believe that. And I don't know, I still haven't figured out why they do it—I mean, it's something about power and stuff, but it must make them feel creepy. I mean, even if they can separate it in their minds, even if Strom Thurmond could somehow keep the whole thing separate—you know who he was?

JK: Mm-hmm, yeah.

PQ: In his mind, that he would go every day and say the things he did, and do the things he did, and then go home to his black family, I don't—there has to be something weird crumbling him down in the heart. I mean, I don't know how you could really—

JK: How people can hold those two things in their mind, yeah.

[2:40:00]

PQ: Yeah, to keep that, you have to somehow die, I think; part of you has to not be there, in order to not have your head explode. I mean, I don't know, to do that for years and—it's like the people who are gay in politics, the conservative people are the most anti-gay, you know? It's like my dad was kind of like that, too.

JK: Yeah, that's what I was thinking.

PQ: He was whatever—but he was also not in a position of—there were other things he was in a position to do, that he did, that weren't good, that—kind of embarrassing for me. He had this total conviction that everyone spoke English. A couple of weeks a year he wouldn't be teaching, so he'd get stuff from other people's inboxes. And one of the things that nobody wanted to do, so they always gave him, was chasing draft deserters, because that was an FBI thing you had to do during the war. And he'd go to families where the parents would speak only Spanish. He, of course, did not believe that they didn't speak English. And he also didn't believe anything else they said, and he would have to investigate cases where people said they were the sole support of their family, their parents and grandparents, and their widowed mother and their four

siblings and their whatever, and that would actually be true, but he would never believe it.

You know, he'd go and say, "Oh, they're lying, and they pretend not to speak English," and one day I'm, like, "Dad, they probably don't speak English. I went to school with their kids, you know, they only speak Spanish at home." Their parents might have even been here for generations, but San Jose in those days, there were whole parts of the countryside where Spanish was the native language. In the stores you spoke Spanish, everybody spoke Spanish all the time. You could be born and raised in California, and never—I mean, you knew a little English, but you didn't live it every day. You know, your basic language you didn't have conversations in English, except with the police, but that was a specialized vocabulary, mostly, "I don't speak English." [Laughs]

JK: Understandable.

PQ: Anyway, we got off on a tangent.

JK: Oh, I wanted to ask about—we talked a little bit about this before we started recording, but—how you stayed connected or got reconnected with Hopkins in later years.

PQ: Well, I don't know whether it's understandable that I didn't have a yearning to keep a close connection. Part of that was that I'd missed that senior year. I didn't even go to graduation; they sent me my thing in the mail. My dad wasn't—nobody wanted to come back; I was starting work, whatever—I just didn't go. Wasn't a big deal—I got through it. It wasn't something I was really—I mean, by the time it happened, it was not something I was really proud of, or that meant a lot to me. And I felt like I had been basically not treated very well, and I didn't—it was one of those things, I didn't want to pretend I was straight and be all rah-rah Hopkins thing. And there wasn't a way for me to be gay and be part of that. So, I just didn't do anything about it, didn't go to the 5, or 10, or 15, or 20, or whatever. And then, this woman from the development office, I don't know, she was in San Francisco, passing through to somewhere, and she was bored, and she called me.

She just had my name, like, random alumnus sort of thing. She was charming, and fabulous, and amazing, and we had a wonderful talk, and I said, "Well, you know, I've been trying to get and see if there's some, like, gay student union or something—I can't find anything. Is there really nothing happening? It would be amazing to me, but maybe, I mean, it's Hopkins. You don't know." She said,

"No, there's something, but I don't know, and I'll find out," so that's when it took two years for her to figure it out.

[2:45:00]

She said, "You know what I did, I finally followed somebody I knew belonged to that group [laughs] into the bowels of this building, and got to the room that they used, and I said, "Hello, how do we get in touch with you?" So she sent me the thing, and so I signed up for the newsletter, and then, it was the 50th reunion—I hadn't really been in close touch with even my good friends—but a couple of them got together, and they were talking, and they said, "You know, we should get in touch with Paul," and so they did.

In fact, one of my closest friends, many years after college, he's a really famous physics guy, CERN, all that kind of stuff—one of the big world guys. And my sister-in-law has a particle named after her, has won every physics prize known to human beings, including, her group won the Nobel Prize. Her name wasn't on it, but it was her group. But she's won every physics prize, she's a really famous person, and so he was at Stanford, and talking with her, whatever. And I was down there because I was doing work for Stanford Press, and I saw him, and I stopped him and I said, "Blah blah blah," and he said, "Don't talk to me, don't stop—just keep walking," and I'm, like, "Whatever—" Well, he was undergoing some ultra-high security clearance thing, and he didn't want them to know that he knew me, because I was—my FBI file was like that [uses fingers to indicate a thick file].

JK: [Laughs] Because of all the work in the '70s?

PQ: Yeah, because of all the stuff, civil disobedience things, and treating those Mormon fake gay guys badly, and—I mean, I didn't insult them or anything, I just walked out on them. Whatever, you know, all this stuff. Anyway, but he was talking with another friend of mine, and they were, like, "You know, we should get in touch with Paul," so they sent me a ticket for me and Vince, because they knew that I had no money and I couldn't go. And so we went, they invited me, we went, and the school gave me tickets to things, to go to things. And I had been in touch, by then, with the people at DSAGA, and Demere Woolway, and stuff. So, I went, and we stayed at this little place downtown, and hung out with my friends, which was wonderful; they're really amazing people. And met all the people who were in that—they had a little reception for me, meet the guys, and then they had a regular

alumni reception, and the president came. He was really charming and personable.

And it was small, it was just, like, ten of us, and it was really nice. So I reconnected a little with my friends that I'd had back then; it was just five or six of us who always hung out together, and they're all still the way I remember, just the most wonderful, smart, charming, amazing people. And they've all lived through stuff in their lives, but they're just never—they're the kind, they're just keeping going and not giving up, and stuff like that. So it was really a nice experience, and that reconnected the gay thing. But I got in touch with the Writing Seminars people, and I'm, like, "So, hey, I'm a graduate of the Writing Seminars; it'd be interesting—I know things are real different now than they used to be then. It'd be interesting to come meet some of the people there, whatever, whatever." Never even heard back.

JK: Oh, really?

PQ: Yeah, it was really, like, "We don't have any—" Well, no, I did hear, not from the person I wrote to, but from the secretary, "Well, so-and-so's not going to be here, and we don't have any time, because there's all this stuff going on." I'm, like, "Five minutes to say hello, have a cup of coffee—how often does this happen?" Because Writing Seminars was another thing. Why did I become a person in the Writing Seminars? Maybe because they were on everybody's shit list, too. You know, there was this thing among the other professors, not all of them, "Head of a department? He doesn't even have a doctorate." [Laughter] It was a big deal then, I mean, it was just starting out, nobody had Writing Seminars, I mean, it wasn't a thing like now.

JK: Yeah, Hopkins, I think, had the second one in the country.

PQ: Yeah, and the academic people didn't know what to do with it, didn't know how it was, didn't know what we were doing.

[2:50:00]

JK: So it appealed to you because of that, because it was kind of an outsider?

PQ: Well, I didn't know that at the time, but I think now that it was kind of like home, because it was under the rock where I was. I looked around under the rock, and there they were, and I was, like, "Okay." So, in those days, you had to have a certain number of

units with a certain grade, you know, had to pass a certain number of units. But you didn't have any other requirements, it was, like, you didn't have to take foreign language, or whatever; it was just up to you. But you had to do a senior dissertation, and you had to have somebody who was a full member of the faculty, who would sponsor you and say, "Yes, this person has earned a degree." I mean, makes sense to me, but nobody else ever did it like that. [Laughs] At least, I don't think so. And they probably don't do it like that anymore, but that's how they did it then. And so, my senior dissertation was this epic poem, which was really mourning the building of the new library, actually.

Because that was built in the year I was gone, they built that. And it wasn't just the building, it was just a lot of stuff was changing in the whole way the university was being run, and who was running it, and what the power balance went to the money people, and style over substance, and a lot of stuff that was—you know, I'm kind of a crotchety, old-fashioned troglodyte guy. And stuff bothered me about that, so I wrote this big, long poem, because there was a spring in that hill, and that was sort of the thing about it was they had to cap the spring, and that—

JK: I didn't know that.

PQ: That was what bothered me. Yeah, it runs out down by the old barn, and down that way, to Wyman Park, and—yeah, but it's right there where the library is; not there anymore. So there's not a creek in Wyman Park anymore, I don't think; all that's gone. I don't know if there's any little creek that runs down by the barn and, like, behind the engineering building –

JK: No.

PQ: It was all woodsy in there, and there was this little creek, and it was from a spring that they capped.

JK: No, definitely not a creek there anymore.

PQ: Anyway, it was just a little—but it was a creek, you know, tadpoles: my favorite thing; science project. So, that's what I did, and I think it appealed to me because it was nonconformist, and creative, and it really pushed me—I'm a good, good boy, but at some point in my life I decided that my contribution to the world would be more—I would make more of a contribution being weird. Because I can do perfect, but in order to be perfect, you have to learn what's on the back side of all those rocks. And I think

growing up with rabbis is part of that: while the back side's the same as the front side, that back side is someone's front side. And I just felt also, that experience, the drunk pastor, and even Strom Thurmond's story, all that kind of stuff, it was, like, yeah, the good, the perfect people, it really is counterproductive, because they're not paying attention to that other side.

So, if I'm going to learn enough about it to be able to be good, what I should really do is represent for the back side. Because that's going to be better for the life of our society, and better for the future, whatever. I didn't think at that point I'd have kids, so it wasn't, like, "Oh, my kid," but it was just, like, "Yeah, for life, it's better for life." It's life. So, I've been a little too, maybe, dark side guy, and avoided stuff probably too much.

[2:55:00]

Because I didn't want to go where people were not happy to have me, unless I was, like, marching or something. We did a lot of weird stuff; we had this idea that sex was liberating, and one of the big anti-war things was to keep the military slaves, the conscripts in the military, as human as possible, by enabling them to have sex as much as they could.

So we had lots of pickup sex with military personnel, and I kept doing that with bankers and lawyers and stuff, creating a great deal of calm and peacefulness in what would otherwise be very tense situations, by enabling them to turn a little trick on their lunch hour, and come back to the office totally chill.

JK: [Laughs] So this was a sort of philosophical act, then, or political act.

PQ: Well, it was a social political—yeah. And, you know, I wasn't going to have friends, so, I could at least, like, make the world a happier place, one person at a time.

JK: Did having a family change your look on the world?

PQ: Well, I've always wanted a home. I was raised to be a housewife, so, a housewife needs a house. I kept trying, and terrible choices, and—I always wanted somebody to fall in love with me. I kind of gave up on friendship—I mean, I had friends, mostly girls, but I realized that that experience did something to that part of me. But I did believe in true love, and the picture of it, you know, people say, "Oh, guys marry their moms." I married my father's boyfriend.

That was my, like—because, when he came into our life, it totally transformed everyone. My mother was happy, my father was happy. It just brought things into our house that had never been there before: joy, and laughter, and he was, like, from the moon. He had these shoes that looked like caramel candy—I'd never seen Italian shoes before. My dad had these big old brogues, with the toecap things with the little holes, real heavy, and the soles were like that.

And he had these smooth things, and the soles were this thin, you could hardly see them, and the laces were really skinny, and round. And everything was perfect about, you know, he dressed well, and he smelled good. And he'd pick me up—he was real physical, he was very funny. He would walk in the room, and he'd go like this to my mother, and say, "Madonna," and give her a big hug. My dad never hugged my mother. I mean, I didn't realize it until lately, when I've been thinking about that whole part of my life, and I realized, oh, this story about people, and seeing my brothers marry my mother, you know. And then it's, like, well, whom did I marry? You know, well, I didn't really break the mold; I just picked a different thing. Because it really is, I married, you know, him.

But with Vince it was just, like, it was real, right away. Like I say, we were together every night, from the very night we met, and we just were inseparable. And even though we didn't live together for ten years—which was maybe a really good thing—but we spent every night together at his place or my place. And I already had Quin, who was nine at the time. He stood up for me at our wedding. Without having that, then, I was like a free agent in that physical way. And so, being able to bring joy to the maximum number of people made a lot of sense, because it also was fun, and subversive.

[3:00:00]

But then, once I had somebody that really met me, then that was what I did, and it was, like, "Okay, I did that, and that's done—I'm not doing that anymore, because I'm in a different situation, now. And what I'm doing is this: my energy is our household, and our relationship, and our—" Being who we are in the community is how I make a difference in the world now, because I'm not alone anymore.

And with a son, it's different. You're totally, you know—you're, like, totally obsessed with them. I mean, I've done things with him, in relation to him—we went to whatever that theme park is up by

Vallejo, with his class, and it was him and his best girlfriend, and they were, whatever, six. And there's a big thing with tubes and stuff that only kids can go in, but it's really big. And then, the other weird thing is, there are, like, six exits to it; one entrance, but there are multiple ways to get out, and you can't see them all from any one place.

JK: Oh, no. [Laughs]

PQ: Parent's nightmare, right?

JK: Right.

PQ: So I'm sitting there waiting, and trying to—because I know that it is not their job to find me, and they're not even going to try. But it's definitely my job to make sure—it's, like, I don't care where they are, as long as I know what neighborhood. [Laughs] If they're in there, that's fine, but when they leave there, I need to know—I need to know. So it was a long time, and I notice the kids go in way after them and come out, and I'm, like, "Something's going on." So I went in, backwards, and all these people inside are, like, "You can't do that," and I'm, like, "Mm—shut your mouth; I'm going." And I went all the way through it, and I got way up to the top, and I look up, and there was a big cargo net over the whole thing. Of course, they were climbing on the cargo net—not part of the ride. [Laughter] But at least I found them.

But I did things like that, anybody tried to stop me, I would've ripped them into pieces. My roommate, one of those little fraternity boys who was little—they were little, like, muscle boys, and the kind who get in because of their connections and not because of their brains. And what they like to do is start drinking their first day, and they stay drunk the whole time they're there. And they were in this suite with some older fraternity boys, and it was the drinking place. He's the one I gave my bottle of booze to. But he was mouthing off about my roommate, one day, and I just picked him up and hung him over the three floors' drop to the [laughs] bottom, and just said, "If you ever say that again, I'm going to let go. So, you just behave yourself, and be respectful." He was upside-down, and he was turning red, and he was kind of scared, because I was totally out of my mind.

But I'm like that, you know, when somebody pushes that button, but it's not the same thing as being a husband. Being a husband is just, like, changes you—I mean, parent changes you as a person, but—but it changes you—I don't know how to describe it. It's

different, but it's a very different thing. It changes you in that it gives you this job that is totally amazing and wonderful, but it also it's going to have an end. I mean, it changes every day, and changes a lot over the years. And now he's 33, and it's very changed, and he fell in love, and he's got somebody to take care of him, thank god, and take care of his heart. But being married, I mean, you have a home together, and it's a long-term thing, and it's every day. Being a parent, you have to keep the boundaries more, because you can't—they're not you.

[3:05:00]

But having a spouse, for me, they are me, you know, in some kind of different way. They're not really; it's not like I insist on knowing everything, because it's definitely not like that. But it's, you know, like those new math Venn diagram things, there's a big overlap—

JK: Yeah, you're something together and separately.

PQ: There's a big overlap. But having a child is more tangential, you know, it's more like an electrochemical bond, not a physical mesh thing. So it's more, like, "Oh, they're there, whatever," and there's a strong magnetic field connection, and you always know where they are, and you're always connected, and part of you is always there, but you still have your own life, you know. And I did what to lots of teachers is anathema: I taught in his class, from kindergarten through eighth grade.

JK: Oh, really?

PQ: Yeah, and he loved it, and I loved it. It was a little private school. I'm a big public school guy, but he was living with his mom in Santa Rosa, and she worked, and there was zero opportunity. There was no place where he could go to a public school, and then have afterschool care until she got off work. No place, not a single opportunity for that. So, he had to go to private school, and they don't have private schools there, so, these funky little weird—the first one was kind of pretentious, and they started expanding into middle school. And then got a teacher of questionable moral background, who was being in questionable moral relationships with the kids, and so we left. And this other one was started by retired teachers, and [laughs] it was like heaven for me. It was all the kids the public school couldn't cope with, and it was little, so they had multiple grades with one classroom.

And they were so happy to have me come teach, because they just

didn't have resources. And I was happy, because they let me do whatever the fuck I wanted. Whatever the kids wanted to do we did, just amazing, wonderful, exciting things. We studied the Middle East, and our textbook was Gilgamesh. And the kids wrote a modern version musical, called "Mesopotamia: The Musical." Which was their understanding of the story of Gilgamesh, but it was all a musical, and they performed it for their parents and stuff. And it was all percussion, and woodwinds, because whatever talents the kids had, right? And it was wonderful, and hilarious, and interesting to see what points they got. And, of course, it's nice teaching something like that, because the parents have no idea what it is, so they don't know it has all this stuff in it, so they can't object. [Laughs]

And the kids don't get it, it totally is not about that for them, because that's not a thing for them. And so, it works out perfect, you know, the parents don't get upset, the kids enjoy it—really get, in some deep way, stuff about it that, you know, adults sometimes miss. Things about the passions and connections and the—and the funniness of it, some of the funny things. I don't know if you have ever been acquainted with that at all, but—

JK: I've not read it, no.

PQ: Oh, there's some hilarious, hilarious parts, where one of the characters is—you know, the Gorgon? Her brother, Humbaba. There's a whole family of them, right? Her brother is guarding the sacred tree that Gilgamesh is given this, in order to distract him from raping the population. He's given this job to go get the tree, and make a door for his mother's temple out of this tree, so he and his boyfriend have to go defeat this Gorgon. And the way they do it is just hilarious, because they call him names, they start calling him names, and it's so Shakespearean, and they stand, like, one on either side of him, so he has to keep turning around. And they keep insulting him with more and more colorful insults, and so he keeps shedding his auras to the next more terrifying aura. But then, you know, he keeps—yeah, it's –

JK: I can see kids being interested in that, yeah.

PQ: And kids, like, totally got into that, and into the hilarity of it.

[3:10:00]

And, of course, the bad language, but it isn't really bad, you know, it's nothing like we would consider bad language. It's really

esoteric insults that—[laughs] and nothing, no bad words or anything. And they just totally, totally got into it. And then the goddess who has 27 husbands—not that many; 9, or whatever it is—and she tries to make Gilgamesh be her husband, and he's, like, "Girlfriend, the things you do with your husbands, not for me." [Laughter] And so he goes through the whole list of all her husbands, and so they did this whole song, one of those things builds on, you know, number one and then number two, and then they recap number one, and then they go through the whole.

And they made up little stories about them that made sense to them, what happened to the husbands. They get baked into an oven in a loaf of bread, and whatever, torn to pieces, and all the things she did to her husbands. And it just turns out to be the most charming, most hilarious little song about love gone wrong [laughs], in just the most innocent kind of way. It's really amazing; it's really—yeah, you learn so much from kids. Professors and kids, like, the people you learn the most from.

JK: Yeah, very open-minded people, usually.

PQ: So I have one story I have to tell you, one more story, which is—so I went back to college, after a gap year, and there were girls, and it was controversial.

JK: Oh, the graduate students?

PQ: Graduate women, yes, women admitted to the graduate school. And some of the gay bars, there's still guys, old guys, who sit around and talk about women in really unflattering terms, and just have totally a weird—it was weird at the time, even when it was common, but now it's totally bizarre, fossilly weird. Well there were people like that, who were graduate students, not professors so much, but who were graduate students who were like, "Oh, I don't believe—these women are just here to get a husband, and they're not going to be serious. All they're going to do is sit around and talk about—do their nails and gossip, and blah blah blah." And I'm, like, "No, they're blah blah blah—" because I know my mother, and I knew a lot of women who were really academic people, and I had teachers, like Phoebe Stanton, one of my favorite teachers—amazing woman, amazing scholar, just wonderful, wonderful person.

And she did all that Baltimore Save thing, and she worked with my aunt a lot, and stuff. So, I just knew that it wasn't going to be like

that and I'm like, "They have to be good to get in—it's not like they're inviting housewives, you know?"

JK: They probably have to be extra-good to get in, because of all of this, right?

PQ: Yeah, extra good, it's, like, how do you get to be the first woman at Hopkins? You have to be pretty amazing. So I'm championing, and we're having this fight, and that year, because I'm taking all graduate courses, I get a carrel in the stacks in the new library. So I'm in there, and I don't know if it's like that anymore, but there are these rows of little things, and they have a locked thing, and a little tiny desk this big, and—

JK: They still have those.

PQ: And I'm sitting there doing Greek, right? And three women walk in between classes, and they have their purses and whatever, and they're chatting and chewing gum. And they sit down on one of the people's desk, and they open up the lock thing, start doing their nails, and they pull out fashion magazines, and they start gossiping and reading the fashion magazines and doing their nails. And I'm, like, "I am never going to tell anyone [laughter] about this," because it's exactly what they—but, I mean, I knew that it was just like not –

JK: It was a downtime for them.

PQ: Yeah, it was just, like, whatever, but I was, like, "This is exactly what people said they were going to be like." [Laughs] Of course, they could be like that and serious students, but it was years before I told anyone that story, because I was like, "I am not going to give anybody the 'I told you so' card on this one." But I thought it was just totally hilarious that I would be the one who said, "No, they're not going to be like that," who would turn around and there they were being like that.

JK: Yeah, you almost want to pop your head up and be like, "By the way, you might not want to do this in public."

PQ: Yeah, I just thought it was ironic, and kind of enjoyed it. It was, like, well, life is weird, sometimes.

JK: Do you have any other last stories that you want to share with me? Is there anything that I didn't ask you about, that you want to talk about?

PQ: No, I mean, so, my relation with Hopkins now is—I mean, I feel more connected, spiritually, I guess. I've been to –

[3:15:00]

There was this guy who started the gay alumni group, and he was in San Francisco a couple of times, and I met with him, and I went to a party, and they were, of course, mostly half my age, and three-quarters women. Which, of course, you know, I don't think about that, because there were never women undergraduates when I was there. And, I don't know, you know, I'm not surprised in a way, but it was not what I expected—and nobody as old as I am, nearly. And I don't have close a touch with my classmates, even though we kind of reconnected that time; they're, like, "Oh, I come out sometimes to the city, and maybe I'll look you up," and that hasn't happened, and whatever.

But, you know, I feel more like something has been done to change that attitude, and I think a lot of the attitudes are changed, a lot of the attitudes about pigeonholing people and categorizing people, I think it's changed pretty much across the board. I don't know for sure, but I have a feeling when I'm there watching the kids relate to each other, that nobody thinks it's weird that there are women.

JK: Mm-hmm, I don't think so.

PQ: I think that they would think it's weird if there weren't. The gay people I know there seem perfectly comfortable, and people know they are—not always, but a lot of them. They're passively, if not aggressively, out. I just don't know that [brief silence]—there was something about learning being so important in the old days, and all of the structural abstract stuff, courses you had to take, and whatever—you know, that whole thing of, "Well, you can take any course you want, as long as they let you in. And you graduate if you have enough credits, no matter what they are, as long as you can satisfy one tenured professor that you deserve a degree, and write something significant for them to be able to show people and say, "This is worth awarding this guy a degree." That spoke to me something about the seriousness with which they took learning.

And I think now, culturally, it's not always so much about what you learn as boxes that get checked. And I think that even getting into college and getting through college is just less personal, less individual, and therefore less, also, knowledge-related, and more bureaucratic. I think one thing about getting old is you have to be

allowed to have certain opinions about how things are worse than they used to be. And I'm not so sure things are worse—I mean, I think a lot of the things are much more vibrant and alive than they were. I think that there's a certain fear of physicality that impedes relaxed human relationships, that I think is unfortunate. The fact that people don't have to hide the fact they're gay I think is fortunate. I think the lack of an impulse to have to categorize everyone in some kind of box in the cabinet, whatever it might be, I think that impulse is not as prevalent as it used to be.

And I don't know whether one of the reasons is people have suddenly realized that there are not enough boxes in the cabinet to categorize [laughs] everyone, because, guess what, it's hard to see any two people who are close enough that you can actually put them in the same box.

[3:20:00]

And even if you start doing, like, ethnic things, pretty soon you run out of boxes to put people in, because it gets way too complicated. It's, like, okay, English—well, but then there's north English, and then there's [laughs] Welsh, and then there's people from Cornwall who are totally weird on anybody's scale of things. [Laughs] And even in London, there's the Eastenders and the Southside people and the—you know, whatever, it's, like, everybody's different, so dramatically different that they can't even sometimes understand each other when they talk.

And so, even though you might back off and say, "Oh, that's a category," when you get close—and I think there's more of that, more appreciation of the people, and it's not so much acceptance of some kind of definitions of integration, but it's just that it doesn't so much matter anymore. I mean, I noticed that with our son and his friends, sexual orientation is not a thing. And they're all so mixed-race that I don't think they even think about it as a thing. I mean, they do think about heritage, and they're interested that people have these different things, that so-and-so has these Indian habits, or has grown up with those fairytales and that learning, and so-and-so has these other ones, and stuff. But the people who have those are not always the people you would think do, and so I don't know, they just see things in a much more individual way, I think, than we do.

And I think that's reflected at Hopkins, which is to its credit, that it's not maintained some abstract patterning requirement. And I'll be happy if this is the most pleasant and relaxed relationship I have

with Hopkins. I was disappointed that the Writing Seminars people didn't want to even talk to me, because I thought that would be interesting, to sort of see what that's like. And I joined this Hopkins online whatever thing –

JK: I'm not sure—

PQ: It's like this mentorship—I forget what it's called.

JK: Mentorship? Is that what you said?

PQ: Yeah. And somebody actually—it's weird, you have to write to them, and they send it on—wrote me this thing and asked about—he writes poetry and wanted to know about getting published and stuff like that. But I couldn't even really get back in touch with him—

JK: I see, so it's really mediated, your interaction –

PQ: Yeah, it's really mediated, and then I couldn't figure out, and then I wrote him back, and then I never heard, so I don't know if he didn't get it, or if he didn't like what I said, or—it was just weird. The whole thing was so weird, and, in a way, you know, I think back to when I was at Hopkins—it would've been really interesting for me to visit myself, and "So, I'm in San Francisco, traveling around, I'll be here a couple of days, and I just want to have coffee or whatever, and meet somebody who lives here." Maybe I'm gay and he's gay, or I'm a woman, and I'm gay, too, and just to meet somebody who's grown up and lived that life, and to see what that's like. Or just somebody who's from San Francisco, and I've never been here before, and can show me around, or at least talk about what it was like. And somebody who was at Hopkins in the old days, or whatever, I don't know, but nobody's ever—

That seems strange to me, but it's okay; it doesn't bother me. You know, going back was really nice—we went to the dance, and people didn't throw things at us or anything. We danced like crazy all night. We were the only people over 20 there.

JK: Really?

PQ: Yeah. [Laughter] It was, like, these old farts dancing around, but the band shouted out to us, and people were really nice to us. And people even came up and introduced themselves, and that stuff—it was really nice, very friendly, and it was good. I enjoyed that, and I have a better feeling, now, you know, sort of more integrated into

my life, even though it's not a real part of it. And I still get those "send us money" letters, and we can hardly make ends meet here, so it's not like I have money to send anyone—people send me money. But I know that's part of the whole thing, so—yeah, it's nice. And then you called, so –

JK: Yeah. I can't tell you how thrilled I am that I got to talk to you.

PQ: That was good, yeah.

[3:25:00]

It's just, that creepy thing of not being able to say hello to my boyfriend; it was really, really, really, really, really weird.

JK: Something that stuck with you?

PQ: Yeah, because it was, like, okay, so all the people—I mean, I avoided being graphic about these things, but—all the guys that I've had anonymous sex with, in the bathroom or the library basement, I mean, that's cool. I know that it's whatever that was—it was just a moment, and it doesn't have any life relationship, and—some of them would, like, wink and stuff, but it's cool that we're not friends; it wasn't about friendship. But this was not that; we did have meetings, and dinners, and go for walks, and do other stuff like friends do, and I guess I wanted it to be a friendship. And it's even here I noticed it's real different—I mean, we got married whenever, we didn't care about that; it wasn't a big issue for us. I was fine with people who wanted to do it, but I never thought it was a big deal, but it really changed how people see themselves.

Because before, young kids could never date, I mean, it was just not—it was forbidden. It was even more transgressive than having sex with another guy would be to date another guy? No, you don't—I don't know, it multiplied the thing; it was just worse, you couldn't do it. And now, people do that, and they're relaxed about doing it, and they can have boyfriends, and they can walk around the streets. And there was always was, I think, a little of that thing with that graduate student who was extreme about it, but there was always a little about the thing, like, the relationship was only sexual, so if you showed any connection, it was scandalous, even in just normal public, even in San Francisco. Even if you could withstand the scandal, it was still, your relationship was a sexual one, and so there was always that tinge to the thing.

But now, not like that. It's, like, you guys are dating, and it's about

getting married, and it's about settling down, and having a family, and building a future. And it's about each other, and being together, and it's not just sex, you know? And so you can go around and hold hands, and you can flirt, and you can wear each other's clothes, and you can do all that stuff, and it's not like the walk of shame kind of stuff; it's just what people do. It's just flirting, and having boyfriends, and—it's normal, you know? It's happy. And that's a huge, huge change, and it's happy to see, and it's, you know, it's definitely changed on campus, too, where people don't have to define their relationships like that. You know, they can be friends, or boyfriends, or whatever, and they could be whatever gender, and there could be—and people don't even stick their nose in that much.

And if there's a whiff of romance about it, it's fine, because everybody has a right now to romance, you know? Because people could understand—I think men could understand the sexual thrill of having sex with other men, because everybody does it, but romance was, like, they couldn't get that part. So, it never could be about that, you know? It always had to just be sex. But now, it's allowed—that's a big difference. And I think it changes the academic thing, too, because—I mean, when I went to school, we were really relying on material that was not being published right then, but the material that was being published when our professors were graduate students. And because of the situation in the world, that is all real traditional stuff. So we were using—the most modern thoughts we had were from the '30s, right, which are still pretty modern today, but—

[3:30:00]

It's just interesting, as I look into stuff since, to see the fact that a lot more people are looking at the other side of the walls, and there are a lot more different viewpoints being expressed. There's a lot more variety of experiences being validated. I mean, there's a little bit of abuse of that attitude, too, but all in all it's just a really amazing, wonderful, positive thing. And it's changed a lot of disciplines, in the way things are being looked at. And even the whole study of the Provençal culture—and when I grew up in California, the dictum was, there were zero, no, not at all, any surviving California Indians—all dead and gone, end of story. And if you looked around, that's what you saw. But then, they opened up the possibility to register, and then they would get titled to their lands, and stuff like that. And all of a sudden, guess what, that isn't true, you know, there are actually lots of people who—

My grandmother was Cherokee, but back in the day it's just, like, nobody talked about it. Now, people find out, they're, like, "Oh, wow, blah blah blah," I'm like, "It's not like that," you know? We didn't grow up—we just grew up normal, you know. But there's a big change in that, so that when the history is studied about those cultures, the awareness is now there are people alive today who are descended from that culture, and have that in their experience in their life. It's built into their lives, and so it's built into all our lives, in a way; it's not separate the way it was separate before. And the Provencal culture, too, they thought, you know, the thing was, "Oh, they were all wiped out, the Albigensian Crusades, and all that kind of stuff, and nothing survived." But you start looking, and it's all still there, the language, the look, the—you know.

And I had a friend from Cuba, and the myth about Cuba is the Taino Indians who were there were completely wiped out, no survivors.

JK: When Columbus came? Yeah.

PQ: You look at him—he could be that drawing from 1492, or whatever, when they first discovered—he is, like, so strongly has Taino genes in him. And the instruments, they sang their language, and they played those gourds, and they had the rhythms of their language, and they're still extant in Cuba today. And none of it ever goes away, but it's not just that, it's that those viewpoints don't go away. And so, when you look at the Middle Ages, now, when people look at the Middle Ages now, they look at it with the realization that all the stuff that we thought was stomped on and wiped out and didn't count, no, it survived, it counts, it's important, and it's part of our legacy from then. So you can't just look at, "Oh, the victor writes the story," anymore, because the losers didn't really lose; they just persevered, [laughs] and their story is now being told, and so we're hearing different stories.

So when we even look at contemporary things, you know, unless we're retrograde certain kind of people who don't understand that kind of stuff—I mean, you can look at the Syria situation and you can say, "Well, it's not so simple as pro- and anti-Assad, and, like, this, that—and it's definitely not about Sunni and Shia." And you have to be really careful about how you treat the Kurdish population, because there are things you have to live with next, and those things now have to be worked out. And you can't decree something has to be a certain way; when you look at it, you have to look at it from all those viewpoints. And so, there is a way in

which now, I think, academically, it's more like that than it was when I went to school.

JK: Mm-hmm, just more room for exploration—

PQ: More room for alternatives. It's, like, I think Albright wouldn't have been stomped on so hard. Well, maybe he would, because he's Middle Eastern studies, and those Middle Eastern people are still pretty much, like—words I won't say.

[3:35:00]

But they'll have positions to take, that justify their whatevers, and it's never a good thing if you're an academic and have a position that you need to justify your life. It's like, "No, it has nothing to do with you—that's really, whatever happened happened, and you can't change that by pretending it was not like that." But I think there's a way in which he would've not had to be stomped on so bad, that people could've said, "Oh, yeah, and that, there's this and there's that, and there's this new attitude." And this new thing doesn't mean everything changes; it just means, "Oh, there's another voice." But all those old voices, they're still voices, you know.

And so, it's encouraging in that way; it's encouraging to be around campus and see that. And as much as there's some uncertainty in my mind about how much people care about those things that happened long ago. You know, is the fact that they're not as simple mean you can just say, "Whatever"? I don't think so, but I wonder whether other people do. And because there's no orthodoxy, does it mean nothing's true? See, I don't think that works either, but there's some sort of little fringes of that that, of course, get all blown out of proportion. They're like the girls doing their nails and gossiping, but—so I can't talk to this point. But the things that I have noticed are real positive, and especially the fact that, if I were going today, I could be me, and I could actually be taken seriously as a student. And I could actually be given permission to be good. [Laughs]

And that would've made me really happy, because I saw something I couldn't touch, and it was sad. But, you know, there was stuff that was really good; it was just that I felt like I had to steal it all.

JK: Yeah. I think hearing your experience and your story is really valuable for students today, just to understand what they have, and how the university and society as a whole has evolved to be in that place. And they are intensely interested in the history of Hopkins,

what particular people went through, and how it's different now. So, I think just having that story out there for them to access and think about is really a—

PQ:

Yeah. And there are lots of things I think are good about respect for people who know more than you do, because they actually know more than you do, even if you disagree with them. And I think there's a little less of that now than there used to be. But I think that all in all, you know—of course, I'm a big book fan, so anybody who's, like, "You don't need books anymore," I think is crazy. I think you need books more than ever, and anybody who throws away books that really curdles my blood; it makes me really upset. It's just, like, "Why would you do that? Yeah, they could be crummy books, but, hello, the books you think are the best right now might turn out to be—" they probably are the ones I think are crummy anyway. And I've so often gone back to random weird things that are shelved in some far corner, that people—you know, I look and it was last checked out 40 years ago.

And it would be, like, something in it would just really catch me and show me, would turn on the light about something that I was hitting my head against and couldn't get into inside of it. And it was just, like, "Oh, that, yeah," because it would just be this totally weird old-fashioned viewpoint that people hadn't thought about for a long time, but it was strangely relevant. So, I think every little, you know, even people I think are weird and I don't agree with, I think it's, you know, you can't pretend they didn't think that, because somebody in the future might find it illuminating. And that illumination might cause them to do something that changes the world for everyone in a positive way.

[3:40:00]

So, scholarship—I don't know—a lot of people, I think, see Hopkins as a steppingstone to what they're really going to do. But learning, and scholarship, and that whole thing that happens while you're there is something in itself. That's valuable, and that you don't have any other time to do, because you're never again going to be so naïve, and stupid, and rash.

You know, you learn to keep your place, or whatever, you get positions that you feel you have to maintain or lose face, whatever, all those things that happen that you don't want to happen to you but always do. But there's that certain age when you see things in ways you've never seen them before, you're introduced to serious stuff that you never were allowed to talk about. But you come to it

with this naivete that is both irritating and liberating. So it's a time that I kind of wasted, in a way, I wasted it by being too obsessed with trying to figure out who I was, and feeling so much like I didn't belong, and having no connection to a lot of it—I didn't figure out a way that I could connect to it. So, if I could say something, it would be that, it would be, yeah, appreciate and enjoy what you have, but mostly that.

That it's the time when your brain is a pathogen that has just invaded the storehouse of all knowledge, and will change it in ways people might not want to have happen, but will make it more resilient for a better future. And so, you've got to let that pathogen go, and grow, and just do whatever it does, break things up, absorb things, learn things, question things, go where you're not allowed to go, just do the things they won't let you do, and just look in weird corners, and learn weird things, and talk to people you're not supposed to talk to. And go back and find positions that people didn't think worked before, but, hey it might be just what you need. Just be weird, and crazy, and don't go out and get drunk; go to the library and do that. You know, be transgressive in scholarly ways, because it's more transgressive: you get to break more wonderful things, but also, when you're done, you feel good. And besides being ashamed, sometimes, of the stupid things you said, but that's all part of it, you know?

JK: I think that's a really good quote to leave you on—that's wonderful. Thank you.

PQ: So, thank you. And thank you because having someone like you, who represents the official university, be interested in the stories that no one was ever—not just wasn't interested, but wished didn't exist—changes things for me. It's pretty amazing.

JK: Yeah, well, I'm glad. It's my privilege to be here and talk to you, so thanks.

PQ: Thanks.

[End of Audio]