

**Oral Memoirs**

**of**

**Patty Sheehan**

An Interview Conducted by

Kalynn Smith

April 11, 2017

Regional Initiative for Collecting the History, Experiences, and Stories

(RICHS) of Central Florida

*University of Central Florida RICHS of Central Florida*

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## **Interview Histories**

Interviewers:           Kalyynn Smith

Transcriber:            Geoffrey Cravero

The recordings and transcripts of the interview were processed in the offices of RICHES of Central Florida, History Department, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.

## **Project Detail**

RICHES of Central Florida is an umbrella program housing interdisciplinary public history projects that bring together different departments at UCF with profit and non-profit sectors of the community.

Central Florida has often been associated with large-scale, commercial tourism and housing development. While those aspects of Central Florida are important to the economic growth of the region, much of its history has remained unnoticed and under researched. The Public History program at UCF links many projects under one initiative to promote the collection and preservation of Central Florida history. By facilitating research that records and presents the stories of communities, businesses, and institutions in Central Florida, RICHES seeks to provide the region with a deeper sense of its heritage. At the same time, the initiative connects the UCF students and faculty with the community and creates a foundation on which Central Floridians can build a better sense of their history.

## **Legal Status**

Scholarly use of the recording and transcript of the interview with Patty Sheehan is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on April 11, 2016.

## **Abstract**

An oral history interview of Patty Sheehan, Orlando's first openly gay city commissioner. The interview was conducted by Kalyynn Smith at Sheehan's offices at Orlando City Hall in Orlando, Florida, on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Some of the topics covered include an introduction, how the challenges of growing up gay shaped her activism, how coming out affected her familial relationships and career, identifying items in her collection, Michael's March and bringing together the gay and lesbian communities over HIV/AIDS, the stigma of HIV/AIDS and how shame kills, facing discrimination while running for office, civil rights activism as city commissioner, becoming an advocate for marriage equality, and her favorite accomplishments as City Commissioner.

## **Patty Sheehan**

Oral History Memoir  
Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Kalynn Smith  
April 11, 2017  
Orlando, Florida

0:00:00

### **Introduction**

**Smith** S—you good?

**Cravero** Mmhmm.

**Smith** Alright. I am, uh, Kalynn Smith, a UCF<sup>1</sup> undergraduate. I am interning for the GLBT<sup>2</sup> History Museum of Central Florida. With me is Geoffrey Cravero. Um, we are conducting an oral history with Orlando City Commissioner Patty Sheehan in her offices, uh, in, um, [*smacking sound*] Orlando, Florida, on April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

Uh, Commissioner Sheehan, thank you...

**Sheehan** Thank you.

**Smith** ...for agreeing to speak with us today.

**Sheehan** Sure.

**Smith** Um, I am currently working on processing your collection...

**Sheehan** Mmhmm.

**Smith** ...with the GLBT Museum.

**Sheehan** There's a collection?

**Smith** And...

**Sheehan** [*laughs*].

**Smith** Yes [*laughs*].

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<sup>1</sup> University of Central Florida

<sup>2</sup> Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender

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**Sheehan** I didn't realize that. Okay.

**Smith** Yeah. It's, uh, mostly artifacts...

**Sheehan** Okay.

**Smith** ...and, um, a couple like journal entries. And, um, a few things like that.

**Sheehan** Mmhmm.

**Smith** And we just had a few questions regarding, um, uh, specific artifacts and...

**Sheehan** Okay. Sure.

**Smith** ...some personal biography.

**Sheehan** Alrighty. Absolutely.

**Smith** So, um, first, if we could start off by, um, having you state your name and tell us a little bit about where you're from.

**Sheehan** Sure. I'm Commissioner Patty Sheehan of—I'm in Orlando, Florida. I've been in office since 2000. So I've been doing this for 17 years. Um, and I'm well-known for my advocacy of pedestrian safety, walkable neighborhoods, um, Main Street districts, which are blowing up and very exciting around Orlando, and pedestrian safety, which I got death threats for my first couple of years in office. And ended up being one the hardest things I've ever done. Putting sidewalks within a mile of ele<sub>3</sub>—every elementary school. So people think that sometimes issues like LGBTQ<sup>3</sup> can be difficult. You'd be surprised what things people will threaten you on and everything like that. So it's not always easy being an elected official [*laughs*].

0:01:52

**How challenges of growing up gay shaped activism**

**Smith** [*smacking sound*] Um, what was the atmosphere like regarding LGBTQ issues when you were growing up?

**Sheehan** Oh, gosh. I mean I was raised Catholic. So, you know, this was something that was worse than being a murderer. So I really hid who I was. I struggled very much with it. I had a really hard time. There were times I was suicidal. And I wanted to end it all because I just couldn't accept who I was. Um, I had a very difficult time. I've—I've given a story to, um—to, you know, the folks that talk about—about suicide among young LGBTQ people because I think it's really important. The, uh, It Gets Better Project. Because I think it's important for young people to realize that they may struggle. I struggled. Um, and it, you know—just

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<sup>3</sup> Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Questioning (or Queer)

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because it's – maybe it's somewhat easier now to come out and be who you are, we still have a long way to go. Um, there's still children being bullied in school. There are still children who are not being accepted for who they are in terms of transgender issues. People can still be fired from their jobs for who they are.

So, you know, I get some blowback for those folks who say, "Patty, why can't you just be quiet? Why can't you just blend in? Why can't you just – why can't we just have unity?" Well, that's usually what's said by the dominant culture when they want to put you down. "Oh. Well, Black Lives Matter and the LGBTQ community and all these people are making it difficult for us." No. You've actually made it difficult for us. And we're just trying to live and be who we are. And it's re – something that's really, really, um, offensive to me and – is this notion somehow that we have to bury who we are. "Oh. Ya'll have the right to marriage. Why can't you just be quiet?" Um, you know, there's always been this desire to keep the LGBTQ people in the closet. And I find that very offensive.

Uh, I was talking to, eh – years and years ago, I was talking to, um, uh, an African-American activist. And she says, "Well, you know, your difference is – is different from mine because you can hide yours." And I asked her, "If you could hide your difference, would you? Would you hide your skin color if you could?" And she looked at me. And it was an "aha moment" for her. And I can't even believe – I don't even know where that came from out of me. 'Cause I'm not even – I'm not – I don't think – I don't consider myself that eloquent.

But Pat – then people that – "why don't you just hide who you are?" Well, you know what? When you're work – when you're at work with people and they all talk about where they went on – you know, on vacation or on – what they did on the weekend, you know it – it's[sic] puts you in a very difficult situation. When I was a younger woman, I was, you know, attractive woman. "Where's your boyfriend?" Where – you know, there is – there is – people don't understand because they're straight that these are things that they take for granted. And these are things that we can't – couldn't talk about back then.

So I think there's still a long way to go. I'm – I've been very, um, vocal since the Pulse tragedy, uh, that this happened to the LGBTQ community. And even our allies – some of our allies have gone back on me and said, "Why can't you just be nice? Why can't you just be unified?" And I'm like, "You can't erase us. Yes. There were straight people that died at Pulse, too. But that doesn't mean that we have to erase who we are to make it okay. Um, they were – they were targeted because they were young, they were gay and they were Latin – you know, QLatinx. They were people of color. And they were straight allies. And there – we shouldn't have to erase who they were in order to make it okay for everybody else. Because we do have to take, as a culture, responsibility for how we te – how we treat LGBTQ people."

In our churches – one of the most amazing things that happened to me after

Pulse happened, um – after we’re dealing with all the issues of the tragedy, I had come here to City Hall and Mayor [Teresa] Jacobs’s office called me. And I went running over there. And she – and it was a – it was a group of clergy. And they were having a press conference. And they were talking about, “We do not agree with the Baptist Church. [inaudible] wanna say their name. That’s coming here to demonstrate at the funerals of these victims.” They had never dealt with that. I’ve been dealing with that for, you know, 30 plus years. I understand what it’s like to deal with hateful people that carry signs that say, “God hates fags.” This was their first time of dealing with it. And our religious leaders came out and said, “This is not who we are.” I could not have been more proud. And felt so amazing during that time. That’s unity. Not telling me to shut up about who I am [sighs].

0:06:05

**How coming out affected familial relationships and career**

**Smith** Um, how were or are your familial relationships affected by your coming out?

**Sheehan** [laughs]. When I first came out, I was 21. And like I said, I really, really struggled. And it wasn’t a matter of my parents supporting me. I had moved out at 17 because I was different and there were issues that I couldn’t deal with my parents. And, uh, so I basically started – I mean I started taking care of myself at 17. And so it wasn’t any reason for me to, you know – to – to hide who I was. Other than the fact that, um – I mean I – I wanted to have a relationship with my family. And I thought that that was gonna be part of it. And it – it got to be more and more pressure for me because my sisters were old enough to go out. And I said, “Oh. I was at Park Avenue Club or I was at this club over the weekend.” And they’re like, “Well, we didn’t see you. We were there.” And the lying just got to take such a toll on me.

And at 21, I finally came out. And [laughs] my mother’s Italian and Catholic. She said to me, “Well, we’re a family and we’re gonna stick together. But you have to understand you’ve chosen a very difficult lifestyle. And – and you can’t be a teacher now. You realize that.” ‘Cause I had wanted to be an art teacher. She goes, “You – you – you’ll be a bad influence to children.” I was like, *Wow*. You know? Although, the weird thing was I did change to – to journalism. Um, and I went back to art eventually.

Um, but I accepted that. And s – ashamed to s – I’m not ashamed. I mean that was a pressure that was put on me. And I accepted that. And I – and I hope that young people now realize they don’t have to accept that. You’re not a bad influence because you’re LGBTQ. You’re not a bad person because you’re LGBTQ. Um, there are lots of people in this community who’ve made a lot of great contributions now that were not swept under the rug and – and forced to keep – stay in the closet. So I’m proud of many contributions of – of my community.

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Um, I was – it – we just watched – I just watched – I’m in the process – like I had recorded it because I couldn’t watch it. *When We Rise*.<sup>4</sup> And I remember Cleve Jones. And I remember [inaudible]. I remember these people who – who paved the way for people like me. And I think it’s important to tell our history because we tend to forget it. And I think that’s why this project is so important. And why oral history projects are so important. Because the dominant culture does want to erase us. They do want to erase people in the movement. The Women’s Movement. They do want erase people in the African-American Civil Rights Movement. Um, because it makes them feel com – more comfortable who they are. Because they don’t want to accept the fact that they did things that were wrong. There’s a whole movement to erase the Holocaust. And the fact that it happened to the Jewish community. Because the dominant culture isn’t comfortable with dealing with the fact that this happened and some of them were complicit with it.

So I’m not about making people comfortable when they do the wrong thing. And if they blow back on me – this has always been a risk for me. When I was at the Florida Department of Agriculture and I stood up for people in my office because they were people of color or people of Jewish faith, I was – I was punished for it. As a – you know, I – I was denied management positions because of my s – because of standing up for others. I was up for – I finally was up for a promotion at work. And, um, I had gone to the March on Washington for LGBTQ rights in I think it was 1992.<sup>5</sup> ‘Cause I went to – I went to a couple of them. There was one in the ‘80s and one in the ‘90s. And I can’t remember the exact date. But I’d gone to the – to the second march. And, um, I took – I took my vacation time. And I happened to be in the back of a photograph. I wasn’t even the – the focus of the photograph. I didn’t even know the person was taking it. I was basically getting out of a train to go to Washington[, D.C.]. And I was in the background. And someone took – took that picture out of the paper, faxed it to my division director in Tallahassee[, Florida] and made sure I got demoted. That was my life.

And when I called to complain, ‘cause I had actually helped the State of Florida deal with a lot of personnel issues. I was, you know, the person that they sent around to help deal with it – go – as part of my management training. They said, “We’re sorry, Patty. There’s nothing we can do to protect you. We can protect women. We can protect minorities. But we can’t protect you because your class isn’t protected.” So I’ve lived this. This has happened to me. And I think it’s important, you know – I’m not bitter. I mean I get better. I don’t get bitter, I get better. It was a hard thing to deal with at the time. And I was angry. But, um – but I had to find a way to persevere. And eventually, the manager that – the – the – the guy higher up that demoted me ended up getting in trouble

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<sup>4</sup> American docudrama miniseries about LGBT rights, created by Dustin Lance Black. The series originally aired from February 7, 2017 – March 3, 2017.

<sup>5</sup> The March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation took place on April 25, 1993.



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for bad behavior at work [*laughs*]. And, uh, I had a new boss. And I came out to him. He goes, "Why – why are – why are people so reluctant to let me, eh, promote you?" I said, "Because I'm gay." He said, "Well, that's stupid." I'm like, "Well, I know that." He goes, "You have to understand that not everybody is as comfortable with your sexual orientation as you are." I said, "It's not my job to make them comfortable." He said, "Touché." And he promoted me. And I thought, *Wow. That's really cool.*

So, you know, there are allies all along the way that you're gonna find if you're willing to stand up for who you are. And it wasn't easy. Um, I'm – that day that I had to meet with that – with that manager, I was throwing up. I was so – so nervous. Um, when I first ran for office, I was so nervous whenever I had to talk because I was, you know – I was afraid of how it was gonna come up. And I was at a debate one time, um, gosh, at the Audubon Park Covenant Church. Because I was running for office and there was a bunch of us. And, uh, one of the – one of the people stood up and said – um, one of the candidates – one of the – the question, which was clearly aimed at me, was, "Should candidates make an issue of their sexual orientation?" And one of the candidates – candidates stood up and said, "Well, I have a wife. And I have a child. But I don't think anybody should flaunt their lifestyle." And I got up there and I said, "Well, it's very interesting. 'Cause when my opponent says about his life, it's charming. When I talk about my life, it's flaunting." And a hundred and fifty people in that church that were sitting there listening to that got it. And there were people that ran after me and apologized for that question.

So it's not always easy to make change. And I lost that 1996 election. But I won the next one. So it is, you know – for me, and I think for our movement, it is incremental change. And it's not easy. And it is something that you have to fight for. But it's not something that I'm ever willing to – to lay down. And I won't until the day I die. Um, and the day I die I will be laid at the feet of all the Pulse victims because that's where I bought my cemetery plot in Greenwood [Cemetery]. I wanna watch over – I wanna watch over those kids forever. Because that's been – that's – that's a part – that's a part that's interwoven in my soul. You know? That they were viciously attacked for who they were. And we need to keep telling that story. Because of people are already trying to – they call it "straight-wash" it. But, you know? It's – it can't be. We have to talk about how hatred killed them and how we have to be better people as a result of it to honor their memory [*sighs*]. Sorry [*laughs*].

0:12:49

**Identifying items in collection**

**Smith** No. You're good. Um, how did you come to obtain the Paul [Efthemios] Tsongas and Brian Arbogast [de Hubert-Miller] 1992 election i.d. tags?

**Sheehan** What?

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**Smith** They're in your collection.

**Sheehan** [sighs] I can't remember [laughs].

**Smith** Oh. [laughs] That's okay.

**Sheehan** It's Paul and – and Brian?

**Smith** Mmhmm.

**Sheehan** Gosh. I – I don't know. Really? Maybe they got stuck in there by accident. Because Brian was friend of mine. Um, he helped me with, um – with – he was one of the original founders of, um, what was then Orla – Orlando Regional Pride. And then I knew him. Um, uh, so that's how I knew Brian Arbogast de Hubert-Miller. Um, and we used to call him "Alphabet Man" because he kept adding, you know – it's part of his culture. [laughs] He was like, "You know, I'm – I'm Hispanic. So we have a lot of names." And so he kept adding names. And we were – we laughed and called him "Alphabet Man".

Um, I don't know how Paul's came into – to be in my collection. I don't know. Um, uh, you know, I – eh, during the Names Project, we would – we – we, uh, – we were, uh, carrying names of people who had passed of – of HIV<sup>6</sup> and AIDS.<sup>7</sup> But those weren't the names that I carried. 'Cause – 'cause I don't think either one of them – no. I can't remem – I don't think either one of them passed from AIDS.

Um, but, um, there – there was an i.d. tag though that I had that I carried that was, um, a – a, um – it was, uh, from LCN Express.<sup>8</sup> And it had my name. And I had it made. Maybe that's how the i.d. tag accidentally got in my collection. Because we all had – I had an i.d. tag made in case I was a victim of violence at the march that they would know who I was. So it had – it had my name, it had the LCN Express, was the affiliation of the group that I was with, and it had my address on it. It was basically dog tags in case anything happened to me. But that's the only dog tag that I can recall that, uh – that I had from that time. That and – and one that was fabulous that had sequence on it. 'Cause, you know, it had a rainbow on it. It was beautiful [laughs]. I am who I am [laughs].

That's crazy. I – you – that's so funny. You know? I don't know how those got in there.

**Smith** Yeah. We had no idea either. We just kind of...

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<sup>6</sup> Human Immunodeficiency Virus

<sup>7</sup> Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

<sup>8</sup> Loving – Commitment – Networking. "A Women's Organization"

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**Sheehan** Wow.

**Smith** ...figured we'd ask.

**Sheehan** Nope. I don't know. Yeah. Okay. What else you got?

**0:15:25** **Michael's March and bringing together the gay and lesbian communities over HIV/AIDS**

**Smith** Uh, what was Michael's March? And what was your role within it?

**Sheehan** Michael's March [*laughs*]? I have no idea [*laughs*].

**Smith** That's okay.

**Sheehan** Yeah.

**Smith** It's like a letter or something. And it's—you have it titled "Michael's March".

**Sheehan** Oh. That's from LCN. Okay. Um, back, um, in the '80s, there was a big division between men and women in the community. The—the LGBTQ and the gay community. And, um, after the men started getting sick, they were moving in with the lesbians. The lesbians were actually taking care of them. And LCN had kind of been an organization for women—was women's only space. And a lot of the men were really offended by that. And I'm like, "Look. You guys call us 'fish' and you're really mean to us. So you know? We—we have our own space. You know? That's our thing."

But when the—the men started getting sick, a lot of us start—you know? A lot of women started taking care of them. And—and—and everything. And the community really started coming together. So when we went to the March on Washington—and I—again, I can't remember which one. It was Michael Wanzie's letter I'm pretty sure [*sniffs*]. Um, that was Michael's—that—I think that was Michael's story, um, that he had submitted to LCN, um, about his partner dying. I think that's the letter that you're talking about. Um, and Lou Tozer and a bunch of the folks that were really involved with the LCN were very much touched by it. And wanted to include it in our newsletter even though we only allowed women to write for the newsletter. So that—think I'm remembering that right.

But I would get into it with Michael a little bit later because, you know—because they would—they—again, there were these issues about allowing women into the what they called at the time gay community services. And representing the rights of women. And it wasn't easy with the gay men either sometimes. You know? And I mean they weren't sensitive to women's culture. And they weren't sensitive to—to our issues. And I was glad over time that they added GLBCS.

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You know? Gay Lesbian Bisexual Community Services. And now, you know, we've added T<sup>9</sup>. And we've – we've – we've been more inclusive. But that wasn't easy. And there's been many times when Michael and I tangled because, you know, we said, "Hey. You know? You gotta include women's issues, too."

So – but Michael's March was about losing his, um – his partner. His reaction to the march, which was, um, very emotional. Um, and again, I'm trying to remember which year were – was the year the [NAMES Project] AIDS [Memorial] Quilt was unveiled. In '87 or, gosh, '90. I – I n – I need to do my research because I can't remember when the marches exactly happened. But, uh, I – I can get back to you on that. But the first march, um, I believe was the one where they unveiled the AIDS Quilt. You'll have to go back and look.

But that was the year that Whoopie Goldberg<sup>10</sup> was the first person to walk out. And she was one of the first actors to actually take a stance on HIV and AIDS. And that was, uh, very emotional for a lot of us 'cause we lost so many of our friends. I mean I've lost, eh – between the age of 20 and 30, I lost easily half my friends. Um, a lot of the entertainers. A lot of the – the drag queens were the first to go. Um, you know? All of a sudden, it's – everyone started getting sick. They called it Gay-related Immune Deficiency. GRID. And all of us were t – completely panicked and freaked out. And by the time they finally had the test, of course, I took it. Because I was, you know – I was a bad girl. And I was going, *Man. Do I have it?* And I didn't. You know? But lesbians had a – had a, you know, lower submission rate and everything like that.

Um, a lot of my friends were dying. Um, my closest friend that died was Gary Bailey. And he was my friend and rock. And I mean I just loved that man. And, um, you know, I just couldn't believe he was sick. And then ended up passing away. And then there was Chuck [inaudible]. And it was just – it was a time when, um, we were going to funerals. Steve Marnier[?]. He was my political, um, mentor. I mean anytime I wanted to bounce something off Steve. And every time that I wanted to do something – he was like one of the few men that really got women's culture and understood the need for everybody to work together and everything like that. So whenever I really wanted, uh, someone as a sounding board, I would go to Steve. When I ran in 1996, he had gotten really, really sick. And he ended up getting it really early. But he had taken care of himself, so he had it for a while. But in – in '96, when I ran the first time, um, I had gone to visit him in the hospital and he asked me to pin one of my campaign pins on his – on his hospital robe. And, uh, he died like a couple days later. And, um, I'll never forget that. So, you know, I mean I wasn't there when he died, but I was there when gra – when Gary died.

And to watch someone pass away that you really care about, and they're so

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<sup>9</sup> Transgender

<sup>10</sup> Caryn Elaine Johnson (November 13, 1955 - )

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young, and it's so unnecessary, you just want the government to do something and to help. And there's – n – no matter how much we marched, no matter how much we did, no matter – I mean I remember we had – the first time I stood on the AIDS Quilt, and it took up the entire mall. It was a football field of people who were dead. People we had lost. And, uh, the, uh – the amazing thing about the quilt was it actually – they – they designed it so that it was the size of a – of a funeral plot. You know? So you could really get a sense that these were people. It wasn't like just a name written in a column or something like that. It was the physical size of a person.

And, uh, yeah – so I – I think – and – and a lot of that's forgotten. Young people go, "Oh. What's the big deal? What's the – why do you guys get so upset? A – AIDS is – AIDS is survivable." But there was a time when it wasn't. And it wasn't that long ago. And most of us who are a little older remember that. But that's why we're so passionate about making sure that, um [sniffs] – that people don't forget that. Because it was a horrible time. And, um, you know, yeah. It's become a chronic disease. But it's not something I would wish on anyone. And I still have friends who are suffering. You know? And I still have friends who are dying. They just die from other opportunit – or oth – other opportunistic diseases. There are some people who are still in the closet about having HIV and AIDS. There are still people who are dying of AIDS. And, uh, uh, you know? Um, we gotta keep telling that story, too. But Michael's March was about how he lost his partner. And, uh, yeah. It's a very poignant story. It's lovely. Even though Wanzie and I have had our issues over the years. Um, I thought that was absolutely a lovely story.

But, yeah. That's when I was with LCN Express. That was a women's newsletter. And I remember my friend, Joel[?] always saying to me, he'd go, "You are a separatist." And I'm like, "You know? You have to remember though that we were women feminists. And we also had women's culture. We – we had a double whammy. We were gay and we were lesbians. You know? We were – I mean we were – we were women. We were gay, but we were also women. We also had the – we also had to deal with the discrimination that came along with being women. And men telling us, "All you need is a good man." And all that stuff. And the sexual harassment that I experienced as a young woman. And, you know, it – so we had to have the – a space where we could express that. Where we could kind of come to terms with that. Where we could be supported in community, too.

And, you know – and – and, uh, after the marches and after HIV and AIDS, we really kind of gelled as a community. But it was a process. So yeah. There was a while when I enjoyed women's culture. And I kind of did the separatist thing. But I also evolved to realize that we all had to work together because if we didn't, you know, we were – we were gonna die. And the guys were dying at alarming rates. And we all needed to come together to – to do what we could to

stop AIDS. And, you know, to get education. And to get testing. You couldn't even get—you couldn't even get reasonable, affordable testing. Those all came as a result of fighting for that for many, many years [*phone rings*].

0:23:38

**The stigma of HIV/AIDS and how shame kills**

**Smith** Um, who was Charles S., [*phone rings*] whom you have memorial artifacts for?

**Sheehan** Is that Chase? Chase Smith?

**Smith** Um, all we have is a Charles and then his last initial. S.

**Sheehan** What do you got? I don't know what you guys have. I need to go over there and check out what you've got [*laughs*].

**Smith** [*inaudible*].

**Sheehan** I mean it could be Chase. But...

**Smith** I believe it is, um, rose pedals and a candle.

**Sheehan** Mm. I mean, um, that might have been from the last AIDS, um, uh, vigil that we had. And, um, Chase was the aid to—to May—a—Chase was my longtime aid for many, many years. And he was also an aide to Mayor [Teresa] Jacobs. And, um, he never disclosed his status to us until he was dying. And, um, I don't think his family wanted anybody to know that he was HIV-positive. And this just happened a few years ago. I'm almost reluctant to—you know, to do it because, um—because he didn't want anybody to know he was HIV-positive. And it killed him. He ended up getting, uh, lymphoma, which shouldn't have killed him. But because his—he had just contracted it and his viral load was really high. It killed him like that.

And, um, you know, here—here's someone who was openly gay, an aide to, you know, me and Mayor Jacobs, um, who wasn't comfortable enough to ask for help. So that's why I put Charles S. Because I didn't want people to know who he was. Because I didn't—wasn't sure that [*sniffs*]—mm—that he would want that known. But you know? There he was. He never came to me. I wish he had come to me. I could've—I'd have go—I would have walked him right over to OIC<sup>11</sup> to Doctor [Edwin] DeJesus. I'd have gotten the best care I could. But he didn't feel comfortable telling me 'cause he was ashamed. And, um, you know? Shame is a killer in my world. You know? I've seen it kill too many good people. We have to be—e—e—even though he knew. I mean he was an aid. He knew. All of these resources. He was too ashamed to take them up for himself.

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<sup>11</sup> Orlando Immunology Center

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So the rose pedals and the, uh, candle were Chase. And, um, I miss him. He's the reason those are – those pink bunnies are all around – I put those pink bunnies all over town [laughs] [sniffs]. Um, because he loved playing the Easter Bunny for kids. He was just a lovely, helpful, decent man who, uh, had his secrets. And I remember when he was dying – and it happened really quick[sic]. Um, Mayor Jacobs came to me and she goes, "Is he HIV-positive?" I'm like, "I don't know. He didn't disclose to me." And I – that's – I still struggle with that. I mean, you know? He really didn't – he didn't tell me until he was on his deathbed. But, um, yeah. That's my boy, Chase. So, yeah. I'm – I'm actually delighted that's part of my collection [clears throat].

**Smith** Good.

**Sheehan** Yeah [sniffs].

**Smith** Um, what type of problems...

**Sheehan** I can't believe you got – where'd you guys get this stuff? I mean what do you guys go around following me? This is weird [laughs]. I'm kind of freaking out a little bit [laughs]. I'm like – I need to like – I need to like say, "Here [laughs]..." That's interesting.

**Smith** I think it was, uh, donated in 2002. If that helps at all.

**Sheehan** [sighs]. He didn't die that – wait a minute. No. That couldn't have been because he didn't die then.

**Smith** Huh.

**Sheehan** I need to get – I need to get together with you guys and make sure this stuff is in the proper s – sequences and stuff. Because this is just kind of a little strange. Yeah. Because that's the only Charles S. I could think of would be Chase. And the – and the rose pedal and the candle would have been from the AIDS – but that wouldn't have been from that long ago. So we may – might need to go over and make sure that everything's in the proper sequence and stuff like that. Yeah.

**Smith** Okay.

**Sheehan** I'll – I'll – I'll sit down with you. 'Cause I want to make sure it's right. 'Cause it – 'cause you know as it happens some type of historical stuff. You know? It – it's not quite in the right slot and everything like that. So I'll – I'll...

**Smith** Yeah.

**Sheehan** ...go over it with you. Yeah.

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**Smith** Well, thank you.

**Sheehan** Yeah. I'll – I'd be glad to do that. 'Cause it shouldn't have been from 2002. Gosh. He didn't even die until [sighs] – I think he's been dead since 2013 or something. 2 – 2012 I think he died. Yeah. Yeah.

**0:28:51** **Facing discrimination while running for office**

**Smith** Um, what type of problems and discrimination, if any, ha – did you face during the 2000 and later elections?

**Sheehan** Uh, '96 was the hard one. '96 was the one where, um, half the candidates running were gay. I was the only one who was out and open about it. Um, one of the candidates used my sexual orientation against me everywhere she went. And then she ended up going to the runoff. And then she ended up getting defeated because they actually put, um, flyers in – as an insert in all the *Orlando Sentinels* and all the, um, mailbox – and all the, uh, boxes. And said that Patty Sheehan lost 'cause she's a lesbian. And this other woman needs to lose 'cause she's a lesbian, too. She was – that's how she got outed. And where they didn't s – insert them into the papers and all the mailboxes and all the paper boxes downtown, they threw 'em all in the intersections in these little bags. Outing this other person. And, um, she came to me and says, "What do I do?" And I'm like, "Well, you know, you used it against me. That's kind of karma [laughs]. You know? But what you've gotta say is discrimination is wrong and that you're willing to stand up for other people." And that didn't happen. It just became an ugly food fight.

And that's the thing. When someone attacks you, it's the first response to get angry. But that's what they want. They want you to get angry and frothing at the mouth and looking crazy. And what I've learned is I have to, you know, take a step back and take a deep breath and think before I speak, which isn't always easy sometimes. Sometimes I still get my hackles up. Usually, that's when I get in trouble. Um, um, because you – you're – you're not just speaking for yourself. You're speaking on behalf of a community, whether you like it or not. And, um – and it's important to do that in a way that educates and not what I – what I always call "teachable moments".

So in '96, I lost. And I said, "Well, you know what? I only lo – I only lost that election – I only missed that runoff by like 75 votes." And I threw that l – I threw that together with my friends in like 90 days. I said, "What if I actually worked hard and learned the issues a little bit better that people were criticizing me that I didn't know about? And what if I really applied myself?" So for the next four years, I got all involved in – in – in city business. And got to know about the codes. And came to – to be president of my neighborhood association. Talking about things like duplexes and, you know, sidewalks. And all those things that were really impacting the neighborhoods. And got to know the other neighborhood leaders. And I ran in 2000 and I beat the incumbent. And I won. So



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it can be done. And I wasn't just—even though the newspaper in 1996—they had a huge headline on Election Day, "Gay Candidate Race on Ballot". Um, yeah. They just ma—they all—they made it all about me being gay. They didn't make it about any of my other stances on anything. Why I was really running, which was historic preservation, and saving neighborhoods and those kinds of things. Because there was all these teardowns happening. Making better quality of life in our neighborhoods. Business. Those were the things that I ran on. But all they wanted to talk about was me being gay.

And then I said, "Okay. All these people now know me. And they know I care about these issues. And I've known them from their neighborhoods and all that. Let's see how this works out." And it worked out very well for me. I won. And I've won every election since. And I've been through redistricting. And every time I go through redistricting, my colleagues try to put me in a more conservative area, thinking they're gonna get—I'm gonna get beaten. And I just get higher and higher, you know, percentages [*laughs*]. So you know? I'm kind of the middle kid. I get picked on. I've represented more of this city than any other commissioner 'cause they keep moving me around, hoping to get rid of me. And the bottom line is I'm not going anywhere. I'm, you know—I serve at the pleasure of my constituents. They're my boss. And, uh, you know, I try to do the best job I can for them.

And I think it's important to be an advocate for LGBTQ issues, but I also have to balance that with, "Yes. I care about your issues, too." But what really offends me is when people say, "Well, you're gay so you can't represent me." That's not fair. And that's not true. Um, I think being an a—being an LGBTQ activist has made me a better commissioner because I'm not afraid to fight for what I believe is right. Regard—if that—regardless if that's sidewalks or if that's historic preservation. Or if it's proper infill development. Or if it's for fighting for small businesses. I—I—I bring that passion to all those aspects of my job. And I think that makes me a better commissioner now—[inaudible] commissioner.

So, um, yeah. I think that's—I think that's an important point to make. 'Cause I think a lot of people who are in the LGBTQ community who run for public office are marginalized that way. And it's something that you have to be able to overcome.

0:33:22

**Civil rights activism as city commissioner**

**Smith** How have you used your position as city commissioner to conc—to continue civil rights activism?

**Cravero** [*sniffs*].

**Sheehan** Yeah. Uh, when I was with the, um—I was really involved with the Democratic Party many, many years ago and they asked me to be constituency outreach.

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And it wasn't easy 'cause people were angry. I mean like they – go deal with – they'll go deal with the – the – the – the different caucuses. And then – and – and sit down and, you know, figure out what – what – what are their needs and stuff like that. And people were really angry. And the thing was they hadn't been asked.

So I go in there. I'm this little white girl. You know [*laughs*]? And, "What do you know about struggle?" This and that. You know? And I'm – everyone I went to I [*sniffs*] – I was with the African-American caucus and they were – they're just – and I just said, "Okay. I'm just gonna listen. I'm just gonna sit here and listen to what everybody's, you know, issues are." And I sat there. And one of the – one of the gentlemen who was – M – Mr. Armistead[?], who I still know, said, "You hung in there." He goes, "You just hung in there. And you listened to us." He goes, "And you know what? That's important. 'Cause nobody listens to us." Like wow. It's like, "I can't promise anything. But it – but it's important to listen." And I never – I never forgot that. Because for him to tell me, "Nobody has ever listened to me." This is an African-American lawyer. Pretty prominent in his community. To tell me that no one had ever bothered to listen to him, that's – that broke my heart.

Um, and so I think it's important, y – you know? I can't promise I'm gonna fix everybody's issues like that. You know? Nobody can promise that. Because a – again, any kind of civil rights movement, you have t – it's incremental change. Because the – the majority's not gonna just give it to you. You know? The don – they don't – they don't say, "Oh. Eh, gay and lesbian community, you want civil rights? African-American community, you want civil rights? Jewish community, you don't wanna be discriminated against? Oh, we'll just do this 'cause it's the right thing." It doesn't happen that way. You know? You have to educate and you have to fight for it.

Um, but it's been a – it's been an honor to be trusted by people. And with their feelings. And with their concerns. And with their problems. And, um, if you look at it that way, um, that it's a chance to – to bridge that divide and – and help them, that's how I look at it. And, you know, I deal with angry people all day long. And I say, "Even a broken clock is right twice a day." You know? Everybody's got their – everybody has something to offer. Everybody has something to give you. Um, sometimes people are just mean. I don't know. I mean I don't take on everybody who wants to call me a[sic] epithet or curse at me or anything like that. I mean that's – it – I think there's a level of civil discourse that's – that's very uncivil, especially with social media "keyboard courage" I call it, that really unfortunate. But, uh – but I think overall, if you, um – if you listen and try to – to – to understand – and listen not to respond, but listen to understand, um, you'll – you'll – much better advocate and – and public servant. That's just how I've applied it.

But I mean I've had, you know, the Hispanic community, the African-American community, I just haven't just dealt with the LGBTQ community, you know, over the years. And, um – and there – and there are specific needs. And there have been specific needs specifically from Pulse. I mean the QLatinx, these young Latin-American, you know, young people. Many of whom – you know, some of – some of the families didn't claim their kids 'cause they found out they were gay that way. I mean the – what else – what other community's experienced that?

So there are things that we need to help people with. Um, and we need to be sensitive, too. And I think a community – the community came together really well. I was very proud of how the city – the Camping World Stadium – deal with the immigration issues. I mean a lot of families weren't even – you know, they had to come here to bury their kids. What a horrible thing. That the way this community – and it's amazing how well this community came together to help everybody. But that doesn't mean that we, um, brush aside their concerns as minority community.

0:37:22

### **Becoming an advocate for marriage equality**

**Smith**

How have you aided in developing marriage equality?

**Sheehan**

[*laughs*]. You know, um, eh, when – at first when they were talking about marriage equality, I'm like, "I'm not you're girl." You know [*laughs*]? I hadn't had a relationship in a long time. You know? 'Cause we were – g – gosh, we had been fighting for marriage equality forever. And – and – and, you know, in the – in the – in the, uh, early 2000s, everybody's like, "We want you to take this one." I was, "This really isn't my thing. You know? I'm a lesbian. I think I got workplace equality. All those things are important to me." But I hadn't really been in a long-term relationship. But then I got in a long-term relationship and I realized why those things were important. Because, you know, I went to go get – you know, I went to – to – to deal with, um, um, you know, leaving – leaving my things to my p – my partner in case then – my health had gotten really bad. What if – what if I – what if something happens to me? Um, you know? How do I take care of her?

And all those issues that it – marriage conveys 1,500 rights that, you know – 'cause straight people think about, *This is a right for me. This is something for me. Gay people shouldn't have the right to the wedding cake.* And all those things. That's a straight thing. Well, we had the right to the wedding cake. We had the right to the church ceremony. But what we didn't have access to was the contractual arrangement. So I had to educate myself about it so that I could then communicate it. And I think w – w – and I'm a – I was a member at the time of a lot of the national LGBTQ organizations that said, "You know what? We don't talk about..." I said, "I don't care if they call it 'domestic partnership' or call it 'Fred'. But what we need to explain to people is the difference between the wedding cake and the contract." And so every time I had the chance to talk about

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it, I said, “There are 1,500 rights that convey with marriage that go – that – that – that we should be able to have access to as a contractual relationship to – to be able to partner with someone.

And then other people in the, you know – other – my – my colleagues said, “Yeah. You know? That’s a really well – that’s a really good way to communicate that.” So then we all started – elected officials, we all started talking from that same page. And, you know, we would all get together and fight about how we were gonna do it. ‘Cause, you know, it’s – it’s difficult. I’m from Florida. You know, and – and they’re from San Francisco[, California]. They’re talking about medical marijuana. And they’re so cool. And everyone’s more accepting. I mean, I was like, “Okay. I’m not a canary in the coalmine. And in Orlando, you know, if we can figure out how to communicate it, this should help you guys, too [laughs].”

So after a while, we started talking about the rights that convey with marriage. And it – and it was right from the HRC<sup>12</sup> website. It wasn’t like it was hidden. But nobody was talking about it. So once we started talking about that from that standpoint, the weird thing for me was I started seeing people go, “Oh. Wait a minute. That’s not fair.” So sometimes we have to remember this. Because we understand something doesn’t necessarily mean that somebody else understands something. And it became an educational process. And I think that all the LGBTQ groups did a better job of – of communicating that fact. The – the proper, um, court cases came forward. I mean the Windsor case<sup>13</sup> was just – was beyond. Because that was a clear case of someone being denied access to her partner’s, you know, um, uh, what they had built together in their life. When her partner died, that was a clear case. And, you know, here’s this – here’s all of us gay rights activists who have, you know – fighting, fighting, fighting. And here’s little Edie Windsor<sup>14</sup>, you know, winning this historic court case that brought that all come on tumbling down, which was phenomenal. And she’s a hero. You know? She just wanted to fight for what she thought was right.

And – and – and I – and something that I tell people that I think the majority of the community doesn’t understand is minority rights have never been conveyed by the majority, except for Ireland. Ireland did it for – for LGBTQ rights. They actually had a referendum and extended marriage equality, too. That there – that’s the only place that had – did not happen in the courts. Usually min – the majority does not vote to give minorities any kind of rights. And so that’s what I tell people. I’m like, “The m – the – the majority feels they’re gonna lose something ridiculously if they – if they – if they look after minorities, unfortunately. Um, so it’s – it should never be up to a referendum. Minority rights should never be up for a referendum. Because they’re – I – they are a

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<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Campaign

<sup>13</sup> United States v. Windsor, 570 U.S.\_\_(2013)

<sup>14</sup> Edith “Edie” Windsor (June 20, 1929 – present)

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minority. You know, you can't get enough votes out of a mi – minority. But – and that's why the Constitution talks about the tyranny of the majority. That's the actual quote about the tyranny of the majority. And have – and having rights for everyone. And having the courts. And having these balances.

So, uh, you know – I mean I think it's important to understand that. And I was glad to be a part of it. Uh, I was – my partner and I were the first domestic partnership. Unfortunately, it broke up shortly thereafter. I was horribly embarrassed 'cause I never would have put my – my relationship as – as domestic partnership number – number one, had I known it wasn't going to last that long. I wasn't on the way out. She was. But, you know, it – it happens. It happens. For divorce happens. And people break up. And, you know – but I felt this tremendous, "Ah." You know? Pressure to be perfect. And, *Oh, my God. How could this happen?* I was so horrified. And I was already heartbroken.

But, you know, I – and I remember when the report – one of the – one of the reporters found out. I'm like, "I'm just gonna get beaten up so bad, you guys." "And I ain't got – I went through a divorce, too. I'm so sorry." I thought, *Wow. I'm actually getting treated like everybody else. Isn't that nice?* It was the first time I really felt like somebody had been fair to me. Was [*laughs*] dealing with my div – it wasn't even really a divorce. It was by domestic partnership being – and I had – I went and dissolved it. Yeah. It's hard – it was hard. 'Cause I – it wasn't my choice. But lots of people get left. And lots of people get heartbroken. And it's part of life. You know? Half of marriages end in divorce. But that doesn't mean that the LGBTQ community doesn't b – deserve the same rights and equality or, as some of my friends say, "That's the same – that's the same right to be miserable as everyone else [*laughs*]." You know?

But there are some couples that I know that have been together 40 – I mean there was a couple that had been together 41 years that got married here on the steps of City Hall. And that was an incredible day. For the mayor [John Hugh "Buddy" Dyer] to have the ceremony. And he's actually a notary public. He did the – he did the ceremony. And I did a reading. And it was just really lovely to be there. You know? And – and to experience that. And it – and it was a little bittersweet to me because I wasn't in a relationship. But, um – but, you know, s – it was great for me to see my friends who'd been together 28 years and 20 years. And Bill [Stevens] and Bob [Brings]. My, uh – my assistant got married that day. Um, and they were actually – what a lot of people don't realize, there was a backcourt case, um, at – at the – at – at Orange County. Um, they had asked for a marriage license. And they were trying to get the clerk to deny them. And they were gonna do – they were gonna fight it in court, but it ended up being that the case came down. And they didn't up – not ended up having to do it. But, uh – but Bill and Bob were one of those plaintiffs ready to – you know, ready to take on that case if they had needed to.

0:44:14

**Favorite accomplishments as City Commissioner**

**Smith** Could you tell us a little about some of your favorite accomplishments as commissioner between 2000 and 2015?

**Sheehan** Um, yeah. I mean getting to work on the Lake Eola fountain. That was really cool. I mean I kind of got criticized because, uh, "Why are you spending all this money for this engineering study?" You know? 'Cause it's – it's a one-of-a-kind thing. I love neat, cool, original stuff. And I like the fact that it looks like a big old Jell-O mold [laughs]. But it was broken down. It wasn't working. It was dreadful. And the m – most fortuitous lightning strike I think in American history after we had done the study to figure out what it would take to fix it. And they were able to put LED lights. It's a lot more efficient. And, you know, it's the icon of our city. It's beautiful. And it was – wasn't working for almost two years. And I think that that was – I – I – when you have something like that it has to work. It has to. It got – municipal government. You can't just say, "Okay. Well, here's our – here's our icon. And we're gonna let – leave the lights off or leave the fountain off." We couldn't do that. And – and I think it's a s – I think it shows that it works. It's beautiful. It dances [laughs]. It's – it's computerized now. It does all these cool things. We have shows that we run to it. That was really neat to get to work on. That was really a lot of fun.

Um, painting the [Lake Eola] Bandshell. Working with Walt Disney World, uh, to paint the bandshell in the rainbow after Pulse was just so meaningful. And I – I – it was a very symbolic and beautiful thing. And I didn't even reali – you know, it – what I first, eh – it never occurred to me to paint it as a rainbow before. And then, uh, I actually a – a – a, uh – a person who just lives in the community. A mom who lost her son to suicide. He wasn't gay. He killed himself – she says, "You know what? I feel an affinity to these parents – parents who have lost their child." And she's an artist. And she says, "Look what you could do. Painting this bandshell in rainbow." And I didn't realize there were exactly six ribs in the bandshell for the rainbow colors. And, um – and then Walt Disney World came and painted that. And it just – is – it – it makes such a stunning statement. And it's such a beautiful testament to remembering the – the 49 fallen of Pulse. That was just – that was really cool to work on.

Um, sidewalks. I'm really proud that we can – that we – that we have sidewalks within miles of our el – elementary school. I mean I remember when we used to open up the paper on the first day school and a half dozen kids were getting killed in the '90s. The late '90s to 2000s. You don't – you don't do – you don't read that any more. We've become much more aware of pedestrian safety for children. And children aren't getting killed walking to school on the first day of s – of school. I'm proud of that. When I was in second grade, one of my best friends got killed walking to school. Again, there was a lot of people says[sic],

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“Why are you doing this?” Or, “Why can’t we vote?” And I said, “Okay. If there’s 10 people that live on a street and two have children, do the two people that have children get outvoted by the other eight? And we don’t put sidewalks in for children? Really? Is that how that works?” Again, that tyranny of the majority.

And I had to stand up for sidewalks. I got death threats [*laughs*]. They had to park a police car in front of my house for 24 hours ‘cause the death threats got so bad. The Audubon Park people. Um, it is what it is. People take very crazy stances sometimes. You know? And you gotta fight for what you believe in. And I honestly – how am I gonna change my mind, you know, that – when I lost someone as a child. And I’m an adult. And I’m a decision-maker. And I get to make a – and I get to make a difference. Do I just roll over? And the crazy thing was that gave me the political courage to say, “Okay. I really believe in this. I’m gonna fight for it. Even if I don’t ever get reelected.” “You are never gonna get reelected again.” I’m like, “Okay. Well, I guess I’ll have to do that then. Because I believe that this an important leadership thing. Tha – this is an important leadership stance I need to take.

Of course I got reelected the next time. ‘Cause people – people always say, “We’re gonna – we’re gonna make sure you never get reelected. And if you are always constantly worried about getting reelected, you will never get anything accomplished. Because there’s always a – there’s always people on two sides of an issue. Always. You have to pick a side or you’re schizophrenic. You cannot bend to please everyone. Is there a – there is even – I wanted to take the trash – I wanted to clean up the trash on Mills [Avenue] and I had someone that was opposed to the – that. How could anybody opp – [*laughs*] you know? “We don’t like going to these new garbage cans.” Well, that’s ridiculous. But there’s always gonna be somebody against that. And you – you can’t just bend or you’re gonna be completely ineffective. So I’ve decided, you know, I’m gonna fight for what I believe in. And – and I think I’ve been pretty good at it.

And the Main Street Districts are always – also something I’m really, really, really proud of. I mean we had all these great little areas that were so cool. I [*inaudible*] in Ivanhoe. And we did the – the, uh – they call it “Jingle Eve” now. But these[sic] big Christmas thing that we did. I’m like, *Why can’t we do special events to bring these folks together?* Which had morphed into our Main Street program. And I’m very proud of that program. I mean whenever we get written up in national newspapers and travel magazines now, it’s usually our Main Streets. And I’m proud to have been a huge supporter of that program. And I love what they’re doing.

And I – I – I – again – and public art. I mean we were – we were acting like public art was some kind of problem instead of something to be celebrated. And you – then when – when, um, Orlando City [SC] wanted to do murals all over the

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city to commemorate their news[sic], um – their new team, they said, “Well, you have to – you have to erase them.” You – we’re gonna [inaudible] tempor – I’m like, “Why would I want to do this temporarily? We have all this great art. Why can’t we find a way to legalize art?” So I worked on it – I worked on the orders with the planning staff. And now we’ve got art. But you have to go through a process. You have to get a permit. And it has – that’s what differentiate – differentiates you from the graffiti. So I – I was really proud to do that. I’m an artist. I love that kind of stuff.

So, you know, you get to work on really cool things. I mean I’ve been here long enough to where I’ve gotten to do some really cool stuff over the years. And, uh, they’re things I love. And urban – everything from urban chickens, which was a lot of fun, you know? Slow food movement. Um, these are trends. I mean I go to – when I go to a city, I see what are[sic] they doing. What are the kind of cool, f – fun, funky things that they’re doing? And how can we bring ‘em here to Orlando? And urban chickens was one of ‘em. I mean, you know? Backyard chickens. People love that. You know? And I’ve had a great time doing it. And people say that, “My – my kids love having our chickens and going and getting the eggs.” And I love that it teaches kids that food doesn’t come from a grocery store. And it’s important to treat animals humanely. And there’s always lessons that come out of that.

So it’s – it’s – it’s – it’s – need to be a – able to a part of, you know – of making that change in people’s lives. And it was something that people asked me to do. Um, so, and you know – I mean I’ve worked with everything from the Asian-American community, um, because they felt they were invisible and they wanted to be more involved in what was happening. And they’ve been really embraced by Mills 50 [District]. And they do the Asian Winter New Year, which is one of the coolest cultural festivals I think that we have. Um, it’s – it’s empowering people to be able to connect and do those things together. That’s the – that’s the neat part of the job.

The awful part of the job is when, you know, people are just mean and hateful and say [inaudible] – they just want to suck the soul out of you and just write mean things to you in an email. And I’ll still help him. I don’t take on their anger and their meanness. But I’ll still – you know, like I say, “A broke[sic] clock is even work twice – is right twice a day.” But that’s the stuff that hurts. You know? I’m a human being. People forget that elected officials are people. And, you know, I have people write horrible things about me. But if it’s really, really nasty and it’s so unfair, I don’t even respond. Because I don’t want to dignify it with a denial. It’s not that I accept their opinion of me. It’s that some people – some things are just so bad that you have to – I learned a long time ago that sometimes allowing someone to scream an epithet at me in an empty room and walking away is a lot more impactful than screaming back at them. ‘Cause I’ve had that happen where someone called me the f-word, even though I’m not – I’m not a



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faggot. I'm a dyke [laughs]. I've had someone call me that word. And I just walked away and I let it resonate. And, uh, sometimes that means more to people than shouting back [phone rings]. And, you know, sometimes you gotta know when to walk away. I—believe me, I'm a fighter. But I'm not going to stoop to the level to rise to the occasion. I'm not gonna be like him.

**Smith** Well, is there anything else that you would like to, um, say or talk about that we haven't talked about?

**Sheehan** No. I just need to go to the collection to make sure you [laughs] guys have got the proper stuff. 'Cause some of this stuff, I don't even know what it is [laughs]. So—and I wanna make sure that we've got it categorized properly. Yeah. I think I need to do that 'cause, you know—I mean, uh, 'cause I had a really—I don't think I've really donated to you guys. I think you probably got it from friends of friends. Or maybe through LCN or something like that. And I—and, you know, like I say, L—LCN was Love and Committed Network. That was the women's group. And, you know, different things like that. So I just need to make sure we got the right, you know—we're good—we've got the right stuff.

**Smith** Alright. Well, thank you.

**Sheehan** Sure. Thank you. Thanks for coming over. I appreciate it.

**Smith** Of course.

**Sheehan** Awesome.

**Cravero** Alright.

*End of Interview*