

# UC Santa Cruz

## Out in the Redwoods

### Title

David Kirk: Out in the Redwoods, Documenting Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender History at the University of California, Santa Cruz, 1965-2003

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## DAVID KIRK



David Kirk 1970, Photo by Phil Eilers

**Interviewer, Sheila Della Ratta:** *I chose to interview Dave Kirk primarily because I believed he possessed a wealth of information waiting to be unleashed, much like how I perceived my own grandfather. I was drawn to the Out in the Redwoods project in spite of my heterosexuality, because I felt, as a Latina woman, the repressed voice and struggles experienced by gay persons which I have witnessed firsthand. I wanted, as an undergraduate anthropology major, to contribute to the historical and present understandings of gays in the community, more*



*specifically, my community at UCSC and in Santa Cruz. Having only lived in California for three years and migrating from the South, I strongly believe that the discursive and pervasive stereotypes surrounding gays are harmful to everyone in society. David has dedicated a large portion of his life to help counteract those stereotypes, and even now in his retirement he is a lifelong contributor supporting gay rights. Dave and I interviewed on the sunny Valentine's Day of 2002 in the parlor of his home warmed by a gas fireplace, and sliding glass doors allowing a peering into the outdoors. I remember the birds jubilantly chirping outside and an overwhelming sense of welcome and peace.—Sheila Della Ratta*

*David Kirk was a staff member at UCSC from 1972 to 2001, starting at the Office of Instructional Services, and then with the Media Services Department of the University Library., where one of his accomplishments was developing the library's extensive collection of GLBT film and videos. Kirk was a founder of the Lesbian and Gay Men's Union at Cabrillo College (LAGMU), and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance (GALA) at UCSC. He was an activist with Committee United to Defeat the Briggs Initiative (CUDBI) and also a founder of Santa Cruz Gay Pride.—Editor.*

**Della Ratta:** Dave, please tell me a little about your early life and family background.

**Kirk:** I was born in 1939, and raised in Niles, Michigan, so I'm a Midwesterner. I lived in a small town in southern Michigan, five miles from the Indiana border, until fourth grade. At that time my father worked for a company in Niles that had a branch in Berkeley, California. We moved for a whole year, fourth grade, to Berkeley, California, which was a really progressive educational experience for me. Then we returned to Michigan and I was there for fifth, and sixth grade, and two months of seventh grade. Then we moved to East Hollywood. My father's business took him there. I went to junior high school in East Hollywood for the rest of seventh and all of eighth grade. My uncle, my father's brother, came out of the army here in Fort Ord, which is over in Monterey. Now it's the site of California State University at Monterey Bay. He loved the area, so he decided to stay; he moved into Aptos. My grandparents were retiring two years later. They moved to Santa Cruz from Indiana. My father's business was not working out. He decided to sell out to his partner, and we moved to Santa Cruz. So there were my grandparents and their two sons here in Santa Cruz—sort of a close-knit, familial support system. They have now all since passed away, including my parents, so I am the only one of the Kirks left in Santa Cruz. I have lived in Santa Cruz basically all the rest of my life.



Average childhood, all the wonderful things of growing up. The inexplicable thrill of being in seventh and eighth grade in East Hollywood, where they used to have street cars, and for a dime you could ride down all the way down to Grauman's Chinese Theatre. Being a star struck, movie-loving child, I spent all my Saturdays at the movies week, after week, after week down on Hollywood Boulevard, and Hollywood and Vine. All the famous old theaters were down there showing their movies through the 3D craze. I've loved movies and that is why I went into movies when I started working at the University. It was my second love, maybe the first love. I have a visual memory and recall of the first movies I saw in 1949. It made a real impression on me. Growing up, all my Saturdays were spent at the Saturday matinees of cowboy movies and serials and cartoons. I was a movie buff from a very early age.

**Della Ratta:** How about your educational background?

**Kirk:** Okay, standard stuff right up through high school. I was in ninth through twelfth grade in Santa Cruz. I graduated out of Santa Cruz High School. In those days, Cabrillo College didn't exist. It had been granted, but not started or built yet, so all high school graduates from Santa Cruz County were given the opportunity to go to Hartnell in Salinas, or to Monterey Peninsula College in Monterey, and free transportation was provided by buses. I went over to MPC. I had started as a junior in high school doing theater work and thought that it was just wonderful. When I was a senior, they had a contest at MPC. They were giving out scholarships to high school seniors from the various areas for the theater department. Our teacher at Santa Cruz High got together a group of people to do monologues and we all went over to MPC. I won second place, and the person who won first place decided not to go to MPC, so all the prizes were upped one, and I got first prize and got the money. In those days, tuition was probably twelve dollars a semester, but the money paid for the books.

So I was launched on my theater career. I went to school there for two years from 1957 to 1959, astounded the world, was in play, after play, after play after play, and came in with a 3.9 GPA, which was rare for anyone in the theater department because their GPAs were like two point... I mean, they were C level and often below, and they had to be at C level to keep in school. Theater people weren't supposed to be smart or academic and I pulled A's in all my academic classes as well, plus rehearsing every night, commuting, and doing the plays and all the academic work, and everything else for two years.



I applied for scholarships at two schools and got into Stanford. I spent the next two years at Stanford, majoring in theater, minoring in history, and graduated with a bachelor's in theater arts. I decided to stay and get my master's degree. I had a very good part-time job. I was putting myself through school. I had scholarships paying for tuition, but not the books or living expenses. I was holding down two part-time jobs. I built up seniority. It was easier to stay there and go to graduate school than go anywhere else. It was forty miles from home and I knew the place; I knew the program; I knew everything else. So I stayed and worked on a master's degree. Rather than doing it in two years, I did it in four because I had to get a teaching credential at the same time. It was my plan to become a teacher in junior college, to go back to teach where I had gone originally, the junior college. I just love that level of education. So that's what I did, spent four years, then came out with my master's degree in theater and history. After that, immediately upon graduation, I did one semester of student teaching at MPC. I got a teaching position at a junior college in Dallas, Texas, and worked there for the next two years. Then I resigned my position and returned to Santa Cruz. And we will not say anything about the educational values of Texas, let alone Dallas, Texas.

I returned to Santa Cruz in 1968, and then got a job directing at a community theater in Carmel, California. I did that for nine months, and in September of 1969 resigned that position after having done six plays back to back—every six weeks a new play, one in rehearsal and one on performance at all times. I went off to Europe and backpacked my way around Europe for nine months. I came back to Santa Cruz in June of 1970, stone broke. To earn money I started doing substitute school teaching. From 1970 to April of 1972, I was on the top-ten substitute school requested teacher list.

In April of 1972, I applied for and got the job at UCSC and was there for the next twenty-nine years. I started working with the Office of Instructional Services, as it was called, in what was called the Learning and Language Laboratory.

**Della Ratta:** How did your job transition over the years? I know that that particular department was dispersed later.

**Kirk:** After about ten years there were dramatic and drastic changes. We changed the name along the way. I can't remember what the secondary name was, but it was an umbrella organization that took care of photography, graphics, media production, the language learning lab, and the equipment rental program. The Media Services staff was taking care of the classroom services. This was then put under new management, and at



that time, the functions I was performing with the dispersal of the audio tapes for the campus and the learning modules, and all of this stuff seemed to be a library function.

Also, those ten years were incipient beginnings of the first fifty or sixty sixteen-millimeter films in the University collection. During that time span, I created the first actual descriptive film catalog for the University, so that the University faculty knew what we had and where it was, how long it was—all the information about a film. About 1975, we actually started printing the very first catalog. After those first ten years at the library, my job developed more and more into dealing with the media, besides just working at what became the Language Lab, rather than the Learning Lab. We did all the foreign language support, switched to a cassette-based system, and got more and more into the acquisition of media to support the educational mission of the school and the teaching programs. That just evolved over the years, until finally, we were Media Services and we had the recordings, the film and videos, and things like that. For the last fifteen years, I was in charge of the acquisitions of the non-print materials—not photos, disks, and music, but all the other formats of non-print. I kept maintaining the catalog, and then created the online, web-based film and video catalog.

**Della Ratta:** You just retired last year, right?

**Kirk:** Right.

**Della Ratta:** When you look back upon your twenty-nine years there, how do you perceive them?

**Kirk:** Oh, absolutely fabulous. The University was a great place to work and the particular skills that I had fit in with what needed to be done, and could be done, was being done. It was a good meshing, blending of needs and skills.

**Della Ratta:** So, getting away from your education and work experience, and back to more of your personal experiences, would you say that you had an actual coming out experience? And if so, could you describe that for me?

**Kirk:** I can claim that I knew I was gay when I was probably ten years old. I knew I was different. Of course, at the age of ten you haven't a clue, but I knew I was different. It just wasn't that I was exceptional. I just knew I was different.



When we finally moved to Los Angeles, I got to see more of this difference visually, in classmates and things like this. Even in seventh and eighth grade... But I hadn't a clue of what it was, or what it meant. It was always in the back of my mind that—I think there is something going on out there that I really need to know about and would like to participate in—even if I didn't know what it was. So all the rest of the way through high school, I led what probably everybody did in those days—because we're talking 1954, 1957—you led a double life. I had no gay experiences, but there was one gay person in our high school who was always picked on and made fun of. It was not a good role model. So I did all the normal things one did growing up as an adolescent during that period of time. You dated, went to the movies, school dances—all of this stuff. But I knew that there was something different out there.

Once I found out what the words were... Didn't have the word *gay* in those days, but besides *queer*... The word *homosexual*... Looking these words up in the dictionary, and then being able to listen for and spot inferences of this in books, conversation, movies. This probably reflects a lot of what Vito Russo wrote in his classic book about how gays were portrayed on the screen, because you could see these types and say, "Whoa, that is a different person; that is a gay person," or something like this. I was very aware of the images and the portrayal on television and in film, mainly in the film in those days, of gay characters, and starting to say—well, yes I think that is what I am, but not quite like those people up on the screen. I won't say [I] suppressed any of this, but being in theater two years in high school, and then the next two years at junior college where there were gay people, I finally met some gay people, but I wasn't out. It's like theater masked a great number of idiosyncrasies amongst the people participating, that were overlooked, were not even considered as part of your character while we were participating in theater work. Because you could say, "Ah they're just theater people," you know, that any peculiar behavior, or flamboyancy, or any sort of behavior that was beyond the norm for everybody to observe was discounted, because there was a visible excuse. But I don't think that is what drove me into theater. I just love theater, but it was also a very creative outlet for me.

Then I started meeting gay people, and also started to socialize, but still had no gay experiences. I started saying, ah, now I know what it's all about. I started reading; books were being printed and written. Gore Vidal and other authors were writing books that had gay characters. I would get them and read them. I was educating myself the only way I knew how, through reading, observing, and things like that, and talking with



other gay people, but not the type of talk saying: “Why are you gay? Are you gay? Do you have sex with people?”—you know, that kind of conversation. They were gay, but nobody said much. Lives were not discussed in that terminology the way [they are] today, where things are much easier and more open. It was not until I went on to Stanford... Again in the theater department... There were more gay people in theater [laughter], it was not an anomaly. There they were, and I started making friends with other gays and conversing, and finally came out while I was at Stanford.

**Della Ratta:** When you finally came out, who did you come out to? How was that? Can it be epitomized by one particular event?

**Kirk:** I mean, I came out to my family. I just finally said, “Here’s the story; this is what I prefer. Having sampled both, I prefer men. And there we have it, thank you.”

I would say that the coming out process, actually coming out, was so easy, being in theater and in and around a whole bunch of gay people, and I won’t say a support system or support group, but around people who were not hiding their lives. They were not living double lives. They were out. Whatever terminology people used those days, back in 1964 or 1965 nobody pretended not to be what they were, but most of the people didn’t go around with big badges on saying, “I am gay.” If you asked them, they would tell you, but they didn’t advertise. I don’t know quite how to put it. The same thing was [true] about me all those formative years through theater and everything else. Probably if someone had asked me and explained to me, I would have said, “Oh yes! I’m gay.” But it never happened, and again, people, if they were asked, would say so but nobody quite volunteered the information. People didn’t go around, “We’re going to form a gay group and I want you to be in it.” This sort of stuff hadn’t happened quite yet, in my experiences. But living close to San Francisco—Palo Alto to San Francisco, less than an hour’s drive, and going to theaters and plays... Two gay people took me under their wing and said, “Do you wanna know what a gay bar is?” I said, “Oh yes, please!” and [they] took me to San Francisco, and showed me hundreds of gay bars and a gay lifestyle that existed in San Francisco, of which I was not unaware but not participating in, not knowing where to look for it. I had a very easy coming out, because two people were very happy to show me the ropes and show me around. So, it was at that point that it was easy, and I’ve never looked back.

When I was teaching in Texas, I did the closeted life, because everything I had heard about Texas was true, and [I] was not about to be lynched by a redneck. And when I





came back to Santa Cruz and did the substitute school teaching... I suppose if somebody would have asked, I'd have said no, but no one ever asked. As long as the city school department was going to hire me, and keep me for two years, and have me busy five days a week teaching substitute school, I wasn't about to stop that because I needed the money. But after that point, I have never hidden it whatsoever, just have led my life and let everybody lump it, you know; whatever anyone thought was fine—it didn't bother me.

**Della Ratta:** You had mentioned previously about that era when people were living a double life, which for you took place in your high school years. When you went to Stanford and felt like you didn't have to live that double life, do you think that was because of the 1960s and the different movements at the time?

**Kirk:** Yes, I think so. Stanford is a liberal educational institution. There's not much stigma involved. There were no gay groups; there was no gay caucus or whatever they eventually founded up there. I think the first one was founded the year after I left, and the first co-ed dorms went into effect the year after I graduated, so it was still very segregated and isolationist. When I was teaching in the late-1960s, and the whole business of flower children, and flower power, and the great hippie movement liberated a whole part of the world, and in California specifically, because of San Francisco, the Haight-Ashbury, and drugs, marijuana and all their wonderful things, there was a great opening and liberation of attitude—more widely than ever before. I think people were even more willing to accept people's lifestyles at that time than in years before.

Stonewall happened in 1969, and that was just when I was working in Carmel. I followed it very closely in the newspapers, thinking, whoa, this is quite an amazing little thing that's going on here. I wonder if there're going to be repercussions. Well, looking back forty years later, there sure were [laughter] really far-reaching repercussions from that. But in 1969 to 1970 when I was in Europe, I was totally out of touch with America. I didn't read newspapers, magazines, or anything else, so the people I met were all European and the gay people I met were European... The gay movement wasn't going on, but in Europe being gay or homosexual was a much more accepted experience or life thing than in the United States. A whole European attitude is brought to that and people didn't think much about it as such. Many things, especially in England, were still against the law. Laws haven't been changed, the age of consent and all of this sort of stuff, but the acceptance was much greater than in the United States. So when I came back and started to follow what was going on, to see what was happening... 1970 was the first



Gay Pride march for gay power in San Francisco, and I didn't go. But in 1972, I went to my first march in San Francisco because the Santa Cruz gay group went.

**Della Ratta:** So, you've referenced the terms in terms of *gay* and then *homosexuality*. When you first came out you said that the term *gay* really wasn't very present. What kind of term would you have identified with at that time?

**Kirk:** I would say basically, we were probably just *homosexuals*, or in the slang—everybody was *queer*. You know—*bunch of queer people*. But by 1970, the word *gay* was in the vocabulary around Santa Cruz, because when the first group got started in 1972 it was called the Lesbian and Gay Men's Union. So, the word was used then. I don't recall the identification process prior to that. I can't remember.

**Della Ratta:** Do you think that term came about with the national gay movement as you were referencing the 1970 march in San Francisco? I think it was termed Gay Pride?

**Kirk:** I think so. Probably the word was there, but I just don't remember it. I guess I was a gay person. I don't remember what I thought at the time, or [how I] was self-identifying. I guess if that was the word, then I was one of the gay people.

**Della Ratta:** I'd like to know about how you got involved in the gay community in Santa Cruz. I know you were a founder of the organization that started [at] Cabrillo [College] and then moved on to UCSC. Can you tell me how that came about, and if you feel comfortable naming names, who was involved?

**Kirk:** My one over-reaching or over-riding goal after I came out and then got involved with the groups, which we'll talk about, was that I didn't want anyone else to go through the process I went through, without having the information in front of them. Books, articles, journals, movies, counselors, groups—anything that would support kids who know they are different, and give them the support and the information that they need, was at the back of my mind all the time. Sure, I had an easy coming out and everything worked out, but I spent so many years puzzling. I [didn't] quite get it. I knew I was different. I knew I was gay, because as I look back that's what it was. It had to be. I liked to see naked little boys. Naked little girls were not of interest. If we all thought about playing doctor, I didn't want to play with the girls. I wanted to play with the boys. [laughter] So, having a school teaching credential and being an educator, I wanted people to be educated about gay issues—homosexuality, lesbians, transgender,



bisexuality. All of these things kids need to know about, and not from the gutters and the streets. They need to know it from the schools. They need to have a place to find this stuff out. Today, more and more and more of the gay-straight alliances and the high schools are happening. There are gay kids making waves all over the United States, founding these chapters, going national on television, on the Rosie or Oprah [television shows], and talking about these things, such as the fight against keeping gays out of scouting. (Parenthetically, although I was a Cub Scout, I was never quite a Boy Scout. But I am sure if I had been I'd of probably found a hotbed, pardon the expression, of activity in the Boy Scouts.) I felt that anything I could do to make it easier for other generations coming along to ease the transitional period of questioning, wondering and finding the information and find somebody to talk to somewhere, was what I needed to do. So that was what I did.

When I started working at the University in April of 1972 a group of people got together, and as Dan Dickmeyer in the program from “The 25 Years Of Pride” from the year 2000 has said, he doesn't remember exactly how it all happened, but a meeting was held, a number of gay people showed up, and the outgrowth of that was starting a gay group at Cabrillo College. Since all you needed was a group and a sponsor and four registered Cabrillo students to form a campus club, that's what they did. They got Cabrillo students, and we formed a club, although most of us were not going to Cabrillo. We had meetings and formed the Lesbian and Gay Men's Union, LAGMU—isn't that a terrible acronym? It's just so bizarre. You could've come up with anything else, but that's what it was.

There was no group at UCSC in 1972. Evidently, some time after the school was founded between 1968 and 1970, there was a gay group on campus. All of this is legendary, because I have never heard of anybody who was in it or took part in it. But there was always talk that there had been a group, but the people had all graduated or went away and it died for lack of support.<sup>9</sup> So, being a new employee up there, I thought, well, I'm going to get into the local gay group and see what's going on.

So I became one of the founding seven to ten members of the group out at Cabrillo. We had weekly meetings; we had potlucks; we had socials; we had dances. It was a whole community. The gays and lesbians of Santa Cruz County came together. All of sudden

<sup>9</sup>Kirk is referring to the Gay Students Union (GSU) discussed in the introduction to this volume, and referenced in the timeline included in the appendix.



there was a place. It's like [the movie] *Field of Dreams*—build a park and they will come. Soon there were fifty, sixty, seventy people showing up at a potluck right in the dining hall of Cabrillo College. We were never hassled that I know of. People just let us do our thing. So all through 1972 and 1973 my energies were with the gay group at Cabrillo. We had developmental meetings; we had parties. Things were happening sometimes twice a week. I was putting out programs and posters, putting up information around the campus. That was the only venue that was open at that time.

We had maybe twenty people from the University who were coming all the way out to Cabrillo to come to the meetings and the parties, and they kept saying, “Why isn't there a group up at UCSC? Let's get a group up at UCSC.” My memory has a lapse there as to how it all started. I remember a meeting at Alan Sable's office. He was a faculty member at UCSC in politics, and I remember there were about five to seven of us all sitting around in the chairs and on the floor of his office, discussing how to get a group started on campus. I pursued with my end of the informational stuff, finding out through the student activities office what one needed to do to form a group. And with good old UCSC, all you needed was a faculty sponsor and four people who wanted to sign their name on a piece of paper to form a group. So, we said, “Well, let's do it.” This was between September and November of 1975.

I have to back up slightly on this chronologically. In June 1975, the LAGMU organization combined with a coalition of gay groups in Santa Cruz like the Women's Health Collective. We created this great gay coalition and put on the first ever Santa Cruz Gay Pride celebration. It wasn't a parade. We had no parade, but we had a whole weekend of events. There were concerts, a dance. We had public forums; we had a program with people leading panel discussions on all sorts of issues—coming out, and being gay in school, gay parents, and gay politics. We had a dance out at Cabrillo. The great Lou Harrison, a [composer] of worldwide fame, gave a concert. Then we followed it up with a celebration, a picnic in San Lorenzo Park. We had probably two hundred people show up. We had organized games. I was in charge of the organized games so I know what we did. We had sack races; we had the raw egg toss; we had a huge rope and we had a tug-of-war across the San Lorenzo River—the gay men against the dykes. The dykes won, of course. People had a great time. As part and parcel of this, since I was working at the University at the time in the Office of Instructional Services, as it was called, we got two of the video port-o-packs and we videotaped the whole weekend's events—the panels, the concerts, the dance, and the celebration at the park, the games, the people just having



fun. So there is an existing video documentary. It runs about a half an hour and covers our whole first gay celebration in Santa Cruz.<sup>10</sup> That was in June of 1975. Then comes September of 1975. School starts, and this is when we got a group formed. As I like to say, the rest is history! We formed a group at our first meeting in November of 1975, put up posters all over campus, lovely purple paper, inviting faculty, staff, and students to an organizational meeting, set rules, have a mission statement. What do we want to do? Do we have men; do we have women; do we have the groups together? About a hundred people showed up to that meeting, and everyone was astounded that at the first meeting there were that many people who saw the need for a group on campus. Not everybody was a UCSC student. A lot of the LAGMU people came, because we had all of the organizational skills that we had honed in two years at Cabrillo to help start something rolling.

After that, we had potlucks. There were events held every month, if not more often. We actually had a film series at the big theater on campus at that time, charged general admission. [We showed] gay-themed movies; even the general [campus community] came to see good, fun movies that had gay characters in them, positive-imagined stuff. At some point we took over the Kresge College Commuter Lounge, it's now called I think, the Kresge Graduate Commons, but it was the Commuter Lounge, and we had our potlucks there for a whole year or so. From 1975 through 1985, one whole floor of, I think it was Crown College, was a gay floor and actually, the guy who was the residential assistant for that dorm used to organize field trips and get the campus buses and we'd all go to San Francisco for gay parades, or Halloween, or other events. But take a school bus and take all the gay students to San Francisco for field trips!

So, there was a fabulous group of people who had the will, the energy, the desire to make a place for a welcoming, safe, happy, gay experience at UCSC, between 1975 and 1985. After the first four years many of them graduated, but new people came along each year to keep the organization running. I worked with it until 1985. I worked with it for ten years. We eventually got our own little office space and created the GALA library, where people donated books so that other gay people could check out gay books and read them without having the stigma attached with going and asking, "Do you have any gay books that we want to read?" We got our own telephone, which is still the same phone number

<sup>10</sup>"1975 Santa Cruz Gay Pride Celebration" videorecording. Available in the Out in the Redwoods Archive in the Special Collections Department, McHenry Library, UCSC.



that the GLBT Center here at UCSC has now. We were given that number back in about 1977 or 1978. So some traditions hang on and last.

**Della Ratta:** That's amazing. What was the name of the organization at the time of its inception?

**Kirk:** GALA, Gay and Lesbian Alliance. We had some fabulous women who were working with us. I mean, they were just really were gung-ho into wanting to make a community space at the University for lesbians as well as gay men. We even toyed with the idea of calling it LAGA, the Lesbian and Gay Alliance [laughter] but everybody said no, that really sounded funny. So, we choose GALA after the description because we liked the way it sounded, plus we could always have a GALA event. It has its double meaning. People could always say, "Oh, we had the most GALA event the other evening." And the straights listening could possibly just pass right over them and not have a clue what you were talking about, whereas everybody else did. [laughter] But, it was a good working word for the whole group.

**Della Ratta:** I thought I had read in one of the older issues of *City on A Hill Press* that GALA favored separatism between gays and lesbians, but it seems like that actually contradicts not just what you've just said, but also even in the name of GALA.

**Kirk:** Well, eventually things split off. I couldn't put a date to it now, but *City on a Hill* would probably chronicle these events, because we always had fabulous coverage in *City on a Hill* of all of our events and articles. Everything was posted, so people who were reading *City on a Hill* knew what was going on. So, I bet it could be tracked back, but I don't quite know in my own head at what point this sort of separatism developed. As I said, I worked from 1975 to 1985 as an active participant. Things had grown so that... I won't say that the group was too large too handle, but... There were more interests. Men wanted to have men's groups where they could discuss men's things. Men's groups were developing down in [the city of] Santa Cruz. The gay counseling center started developing. There were women's meetings. The operation at Cabrillo eventually died out from lack of interest and support because the UCSC people were putting all their energy into UCSC and only the remnants of the people out at Cabrillo kept that going for a few more years. Then it died out, and I do not know if it was ever replaced, because my interests were at the University then, and I could not split my energies. For a couple of years I was doing both. One meeting each week for each group, and a potluck for this group.





Also, jumping back mentally here, we had what was called the “over-forties” potluck group. Once a month, everybody met for a potluck. You didn’t have to be over forty (because I certainly wasn’t at the time) to go to the potluck. They just announced where it was going to be and you went. People had them at their houses. We had them at social halls; we had them at Cabrillo; we had them at different places—any place we could get once a month. It was a set date, so everybody knew when it was going to be. Again, fifty, sixty people would show up to those, but it got to be an older gay Santa Cruz community involved in a social event. So I started attending those, and did until that finally disappeared. That lasted until the 1990s, until the founders of that either died off and moved off, got too old to do it because they *were* over-forties. Again, many of the University people attended that as well, because it was one more social event where gays, lesbians, bisexual, and transgendered people could get together. And it was part of the community of gay people in Santa Cruz.

But back to your question about the breaking off, there were the splinter groups. Men wanted to have discussion groups and talk about men’s issues. Groups did break off, and the men had a group and the women had a group. They started meeting on different nights, to meet different needs of the campus community.

**Della Ratta:** Do you remember about what year that started to occur?

**Kirk:** No, I don’t. It was right at the end of when I was doing my work with the group. I felt like Grandfather Christmas. I had nurtured it, and worked with it, and given my energies to it for so long. I just said to myself, you’re on your own now. Everybody knows how to keep an organization running. You need to know what to do, how to plan, how to do all of the things it takes to keep things going.

In 1975, at one of the GALA potlucks, I met my life partner. We’ve been together twenty-six years. So from 1976 on, I had a partner who was not especially organizationally interested. I still went to all the meetings and social events. I was spending a great deal of time at meetings, organizing and posterizing.

Then they started doing the Santa Cruz Gay Pride parades. I think the first parade wasn’t until 1977. When they had the first parade, I also was in charge of the recreational games with the tug-of-war and all the bag races. So there was a lot going on in my life. Little by little, I had to start dwindling these things down, feeling that I had left behind, God knows the word’s not legacy, but I had left behind an operation that hopefully was



going to fulfill the things I wanted personally—to provide a space for the kids at UCSC, and outreach into the community to help the high school kids.

**Della Ratta:** So, do you think GALA accomplished what you originally set out for it to do?

**Kirk:** Oh yes, I definitely think so. The energy the students brought to the organization was incredible. There were a couple of faculty members who would come to some of the meetings. I was a staff member, and we had a few staff members. But it took a long time [for the faculty to come] because of the tenure questions about outing themselves in front of their students. The staff were more open. But it was the students who were so wonderful in bringing the energy to create a space and life on the campus. All I did was sort of steer the boat. I was a staff person who was not afraid to be out, and saw my name in print in posters, and was at the meetings. I was just up there out front, and to hell with it. I won't say that spurred them on, but they had somebody who was older than they were by fifteen years. I was double their age most of the time and was totally accepted by the students, who were absolutely fantastic with energy. People would graduate, and the next ones would go on. So it was always a perpetuating group. I was always around. I was like the grandfather, or father or whatever else, but I was always there as a resource, until I just could no longer put in the energy anymore for it.

Fast forwarding here, I was so happy when eventually UCSC got their GLBT Center, that they actually got funding for it and got a director. We had needed one for so long and a real, officially acknowledged University arm. GALA used to go out and do presentations to all the council meetings at all the colleges to beg for money to help subsidize us. You know, not much, fifty dollars. "Some of your students are gay and our organization is helping them, so give us some money." They're still doing that these days, but the University does put in money. Berkeley had an organization or a center; UCLA had one; Santa Barbara had one, I think. I don't know about the other schools, but I think we were about third from last for getting an actual Center on our campus. So, it just pleased me so much when it finally happened, that we actually had a real place. For these years since it's been in place, it's made me very happy, sort of the culmination of a dream.

**Della Ratta:** So, that was the ultimate goal. Even though it probably marked the demise of GALA, it was nonetheless the ultimate goal for the students' benefit.





**Kirk:** Through all the permutations of the other groups after GALA... I don't think any of the gay groups ever totally died out. There was still a men's group or a women's group that was meeting at least monthly on campus for many years, and then we finally got the Center.

**Della Ratta:** So, reflecting back on GALA which was founded in 1975, how receptive was the University in terms of the formation of that organization?

**Kirk:** That's funny, I don't know. I would suppose a great number of people were pleased to see the diversity, because of the ethnic diversity of the campus. I mean, we had a great number of blacks; we were getting more and more Latinos; the Asian students were starting to come. It provided a visible element of diversity to the campus. I think they said, "Oh, this is good." We did get hassled in the mildest [way]. Posters were pulled down. There're always a few who want to be pains about the whole thing. So, we'd put up more posters and we just never complained. We just went about doing it, and said: "We're here; we're queer. Get used to it. We're not going away!" [laughter] And eventually, people did get used to it.

I think the durability of the group... It wasn't a club or a campus organization that was formed and then died, then was reformed and then died. It had continuity. I think the continuity helped the image. "Gee, that group has been around a long time and they've done lots of good stuff." The longer we were there, the more viable we were, and visible. I had very good relationships with Stella Sunde, who has long since retired, who was the student activities coordinator. Her assistant, who still is around, lives in Watsonville. I used to go into the student activities office and sit and talk for a half hour. We'd just sit around and chat, and talk about events and things like that. No problems of, "Uh oh, those gay people are here again," or anything like that. They were very helpful with our programming, making sure everything was done we'll say, on the up-and-up, that all the paperwork was always filed, that our things got into *City on a Hill*. It wasn't all computers and electronic and web pages in those days. You had to write up papers that would go to *City on a Hill* for the campus calendar. You had to report how many people came to your social events. Events had to be clocked and taken care of. There was paperwork to follow, and procedures. Eventually, we were so respected on campus as an organization because we were one of the few who did everything absolutely correctly and gave nobody any problems. Never did anything illegal; we didn't have alcohol at the dances or stuff like that. There was never a problem with us; not that I would say other groups had problems. We had this long-running record of being a really good group.



**Della Ratta:** You said there were a few incidents, but how receptive would you say the administration was to the organization?

**Kirk:** I don't really know. It never crossed my path or anything like that. Even the gay faculty members were always very supportive. But the administration—I don't think they ever said, "Oh, I hope they just go away." I will say that we had a very high air of respectability for a group of queer people. [laughter] When you think of today's viewpoint since the advent of AIDS, groups like ACT UP... We did not stage sit-ins in the chancellor's office. We did not have banners and storm around campus saying, "We want our rights." I'm not saying we shouldn't have, but we didn't do these things like other groups did when they wanted to—like the Chicano studies or the Native American studies programs. They had sit-ins and people slept for weeks in sleeping bags in the lobby of the library, in front of the chancellor's office. We never did any of those things because we were very happy with what we were doing, with what we were getting. The administration left us alone, and we left them alone. I think on the tolerance level that was just fine. Nobody made waves and nobody said, "Well, we're going to withdraw your money, or your group has to close down."

**Della Ratta:** How would you characterize your personal work in terms of how your activism affected your work on campus? What was the influence there?

**Kirk:** I never disguised who I was or what I was, and nobody said anything. I was an employer of students, and I always told the ones who were going to work for me, "I hope you don't mind working for a gay person," and they said, "Oh, no fine." So nobody ever turned down a job working for me because I told them, "I don't want talk behind my back, or anything else. I'm telling you that here's what the situation is, and I may get a phone call and have to talk to a gay parent or a parent of gays or something." Being out as such never affected my work. I just did my work. There was work to do and I did it, did it with a gay flair.

In February a year ago, I received the Outstanding Staff Award of the year from the UCSC Alumni Association. Evidently, the file is thick. People wrote letters recommending that I get the award. There has to be support for the nomination. I would say that besides having survived twenty-nine years at the University, the work that I have done for the University for itself has always been the big payoff to me anyway. I've loved doing what I did, and the ultimate goal for my work at the University was doing the best I could, and making our campus better than any of the others in what we had,



and what we did with our film archive and video archive. I don't think being gay affected that. I assume, all of the faculty over, lo those many years, just totally accepted who I was, and what I was, because I was providing what they wanted, and they had no complaint with that. So, I don't think it ever affected anything I did or didn't do in my work, or in relation to the University or anything like that.

**Della Ratta:** Well, I have seen your nomination file, and some of the material that I perused said that you have encyclopedic knowledge of the canon works. One person called you, "Mr. Film." You were also regarded as being a very heavy influence over the academic quality in the actual instruction for the University, because of the caliber of the films and the videos that you brought to the collection that the instructors could utilize.

**Kirk:** It's all true. [laughter] Mr. Marvelous!

**Della Ratta:** Why do you think you were nominated, and how does that make you feel, knowing that all these people just love you?

**Kirk:** It was, I would say, awe-inspiring. It humbles one to know that you just plug along all those years doing your job, and knowing that what you want to do with the thing, and saying, wow, we could really have a really fabulous thing here if we just work at it! And continually wheeling and dealing, and badgering faculty to request things. Some of my expertise is inbred and native. I've loved film ever since I was a child. I remember the first movie I saw besides the westerns and cowboy movies, which I don't remember because they were all interchangeable. But movies from 1949 when I was ten years old. I have what is called a visual memory. Once I've seen something, it's in my head. It's not a photographic memory. I can't do that, but I am image-oriented. I can remember images.

I am going to digress for a slight moment; I had a class at Stanford, *The History of the Theater*. It was a graduate class that I was taking as an undergraduate because I didn't know any better. Ninety percent of the class was looking at pictures of classic theaters from the Middle Ages, the Greeks, the Romans. The final exam was looking at all these pictures and identifying them. It was like an art history exam. The slide went up there and you said who painted this. Well, I got a hundred percent, more than the graduates who were taking the class because I saw these things and I could remember them. And this is what has happened with the movies. So, that's one of the things about being "Mr. Film."



I can remember any film I've ever seen—sometimes the scenes, of course the actors, the directors. I can tell you scenes from them, recite scenes from them. Part of this has helped in the building of the collection. I used to keep a record of the number of movies. One year I saw 550 feature films, so that's more than one a day. That means some weekends I would see four films on a Saturday and four movies on a Sunday, two double features—practically a movie a day for a year when I was in college. So, I have that whole film background because of my age. I started seeing movies early on, but the whole classic period, now when students come in—well, I can't claim to have seen *Citizen Kane* when it was first shown, but I have to start at zero, what with videotape and films and laserdiscs, and now the DVDs. They have access to all of this material that I took for granted, that was there when I was growing up. I have this body of knowledge that I then recreated in creating the collection. But I knew we needed the stuff and as the department, which is now the Department of Film and Digital Media—we had the film board and then film studies—it's gone through all these progressions and now it's a major program. We've had many graduates go on into writing, cinematography, and directing. The program has grown and grown and grown. Not just in film and digital media, but in the literature board, history of consciousness, American studies, black studies, Native American studies, grants were given. I helped teachers work with their grants and spend their money in buying the things they needed to support their academic teaching. And I think it was the expertise that I had that I brought to the business end of building the collection. I loved working with the faculty members. It was easy to work with them, help them, bend over backwards to find things for them, do things to help them do what they needed to do.

**Della Ratta:** I'd like to return to something you said earlier, that you met your life partner at GALA. It was 1975 that you met him?

**Kirk:** It was probably in the fall of 1975. We made our commitment the following February; our anniversary is in one more week. It will be twenty-seven years next week. He is a staff member of the University, still working there. Hopefully, he is going to retire soon. In its own way it was good for GALA as well. Two staff people were together as a couple and a visible example of a working relationship.

**Della Ratta:** Well, it would seem that that would even provide more support and positiveness to the students who were coming to you for advice or help.



**Kirk:** Oh yes, I think that it did have its beneficial value. At all of the meetings and socials we were both there together, and people saw... There's the dichotomy of views about gay life, and I am speaking of lesbians and gays under one umbrella, of one's sex life as being gay, that there is the promiscuous end, and there's the committed end, and there's often a slight range in between that a lot of people see, did see, still see, that gay people are out having parties all the time, dope, and risking AIDS and all this sort of thing, and wild lifestyle and changing partners nightly, let alone weekly or monthly. People are in relationships for two years and then all of sudden just break up, then are single for two years, and then they're in another relationship again.

There're always these images that people have and can superimpose upon other people. We will not discuss that aspect. I had a very full life before settling for commitment. [laughter] But we found it was the right thing for us, and I think everybody needs to make their own decision. It's not something where somebody else can say, "Oh, this is what you need to do." I remember in a lot of the early days the argument was, "You're just like straight people. You got married and you're together." Well, that is true, but we are not like straight people! [laughter] But there is that downside of it, "Well, you're missing life, you know, all the stuff going on out there." Okay, that's fine. [laughter] Been there, done that.

**Della Ratta:** So how was it for both of you to be staff members for the University and be a couple in the public view?

**Kirk:** We both worked in the library. We were together before I moved to the library. Everybody in the library knew. I mean, everybody at the library knows everything. Any small organization with a hundred staff members—everybody knows everybody and everybody knows everything. Everybody knew that we were partners, and then when I moved to the library; everything but our lives are separate, with our work and everything else. They had parties that I'd get invited to, and if they were just an area party for his area, oh I'd get invited, you know this sort of thing... Total acceptance by everybody in the library. There were never any problems from administration down about people. You treat everybody as equals and everybody should treat you as equals. If you're kind to people they'll be kind to you, and you respect other people. Don't go out of your way to be mean, because you'll end up getting mean. That's been my way with working with the faculty and people. You do what you can to help. Same thing with the people at the library. You treat everybody respectfully and equally and all of a sudden you've got it back. There's never been any fallout.



**Della Ratta:** Earlier you also mentioned the professor Alan Sable, who was involved in the beginnings of GALA. I know there was an issue around that time about him applying for tenure and then being denied, and so forth. How do you perceive that his denial of tenure changed any ideologies in GALA, or the gay community on the campus?

**Kirk:** Well, people were very upset. The fact that he did his research and everything... There were political aspects of the tenure process. There's another classic case on campus, of Nancy Stoller, who is now a provost (how things change in this world), but she was denied tenure. They said her research wasn't valid. She was a woman, and besides that she was a lesbian, so it was like: well, which one are you going after; was it the research, or was it me and my lifestyle? That ended up as a legal battle, and then she won. With Alan, I think people were just really pissed off at the time. People were really pissed—the groups, the students, the other faculty members. It's a peer review process. I've never been an academic at a university level and had to deal with this. There may be some ins and outs that I don't know about, besides the chancellor having the final say, but you receive the recommendations of a committee. Then, it's all sealed documents and sometimes nobody ever gets to see what was done, and so possibly no one knows who did what to whom, and what the real reason was. But again, Alan was gay, and I don't think hid it. I think he even came out to his classes. Since that time, we have had other... Now, I think a precedent has been set. We have had other gay professors. David Thomas was one of the early professors here, so I assume he had tenure, but he came out to his classes after he taught the first queer politics classes. I think the ones who have come out to their classes have waited until after tenure, like the day afterwards and said it. It's been a lot easier for faculty since then and there are probably lots of gay faculty now, or they're more out and visible than they ever were before. But there was fallout over Alan Sable, and great disappointment.

**Della Ratta:** How do you think the students were affected by that, because he was an integral part of...

**Kirk:** Yes, believe it or not there may have been protests; I don't know if we went to the chancellor's office, but there were protests and meetings. People wanted to know, to understand the process of what happened, because the fact that he was a teacher but he was also gay... How should that make any difference? And to say that your research wasn't any good if you had an ulterior motive. It will be very interesting to read the oral history from Alan that will be part of this project, to get his perspective on what





happened with him. It seemed like this icon knocked down right in front of you, and you say, “Gee, that’s not fair.” But things still went on then, and it was good that the organization was strong enough to go on without saying, “Oh wow, one of the major players was gone and what are we going to do?”

**Della Ratta:** I’m sure he wouldn’t have wanted that. You mentioned before that you did your work at the library or at media services with a gay flair. That is actually one of the questions I wanted to ask you—has your identity as a gay man affected your professional work?

**Kirk:** Oh, gosh. I would probably say no, but one of the goals was to build the largest gay and lesbian, bisexual and transgendered video collection of any of the campuses. Mr. Kirk’s ulterior motive that as part and parcel... Yes then, as a gay man, as a staff member, as the person in charge of buying the videos. There were gay classes. David Thomas taught gay politics; he taught other things. Other people tangentially taught classes that needed movies that had gay themes. We’ve had two gay film and digital media faculty who taught queer cinema. Vito Russo was a visiting lecturer and taught queer cinema. So, we had to have the materials to support these classes. If you look at it from one point of view: yes, this is very interesting, but do we need all those sort of things? But I made it personally my goal to acquire practically every gay-themed movie that’s been made since 1950, up to a year ago, when I retired. There’s new stuff that’s coming out all the time. As we all know, the cinema now has widened its horizons and its audience base, and even though some of the movies are still using stereotypes, there are many, many more gay-themed and gay-charactered movies—some good and some bad; but they’re still there and we should probably have them in the collection. Ever since I retired, I still buy them personally and donate them to the collection, so that we keep up with ones that possibly aren’t being purchased. Of course, I used to scrounge money left and right, and stretch the budgets, and do wonderful things to make sure we acquired things that needed to be acquired. And so (modestly says he), we do have probably the largest gay, lesbian, bi, and transgendered video and media collection of any of the nine campuses. There’re probably over three hundred titles in the collection of documentary or feature films. We broke them down in my database as to major characters versus minor characters in the feature films, so that people wouldn’t be fooled by a title. They’d see the movie and say, “There wasn’t any gay person in that,” and I’d say, “Well, there was, but it was a very minor character versus one’s that had major characters like, *My Best Friend’s*



*Wedding* or something like that or *Four Weddings and a Funeral* where some of the major characters are gay characters.”

**Della Ratta:** Like *The Bird Cage*.

**Kirk:** *The Bird Cage*, yes right there, and all the French versions. So, that was as something in my position I saw to it that happened. But not without support. I mean, I just didn't go on saying [laughter] this is my secret plan here, but again, used my expertise and being gay, and getting knowledge and film knowledge all together, knowing what we needed to have, and made sure we got it, one way or another.

**Della Ratta:** You mentioned Vito Russo earlier in our interview. What are some others that would you say had a profound influence on your establishing your identity as a gay man?

**Kirk:** One of the earliest films I remember was a British film called *Victim*, which we have in our collection, with Dirk Bogarde who interestingly enough is a gay actor, which I did not find out until these many years later, because he was a romantic leading man, and all of these things that went into character roles and stuff, but he was gay. Played a gay lawyer. It was a very well-done black-and-white Brit film showing the perils of blackmail, and people being blackmailed out to destroy their careers and their lives. It had an impact with getting the start of the change of British laws on homosexuality, which were slow to change but changed long before ours ever did in this country. It was one of the early formative films that actually addressed the issues of gay people, black male and being gay and how it affected one's life. That one had a real impact because it was 1957. Even in the original French version of *Cage Aux Folles*, a farce comedy, a lot of it played the gay issues for laughs, but all the villagers had totally accepted Albin as a gay person. He was not pointed at and looked at, they were all, “Oh, hello Monsieur Albin, how are you?” It showed a stable gay relationship, even though it was played in there for laughs and stuff, but it still showed that two men could have an enduring relationship in spite of the disparity of their personality types. [laughter] Even then, in the American remake of *Bird Cage*, which is a little more broad, but still captured a lot of the original in that, that it is not making fun of it, was laughing *with*.

**Della Ratta:** Well, to shift gears, I'd like to go a little bit more into more political issues. Were you ever discouraged with the way gay activism was heading on the campus?





Were there any incidents or anything that you didn't particularly agree with, or that were just discouraging?

**Kirk:** When I finally stopped working with GALA and groups were splintering off... I was such an idealist for all those years from LAGMU on that I always thought that everybody should get together and work together. But I see now, looking back, that it just wouldn't always work. I have the ideal that men, women, everybody should be working together. We've got a common goal here, and that's what drove me to say, "We've got to do this! Come on group," and [I] always worked well with the women. But, I see in retrospect, that people do have different needs and wishes that need to be addressed, and that one group possibly, cannot do it all. There was the need then for the separatism and different types of groups. Now, at the GLBT Center, they have the Queer Geeks, (the computer nerd people); there's Queers of Color; there're all these subgroups that have meetings. Every night of the week there's a group meeting in the Center and they are serving all of these purposes. I think all of this is great! So, there is no disappointment or anything affected.

I had no political background. I was probably the most apolitical person. I didn't see a political agenda to this. I just thought, wait! Gay people got to get together and this is what we got to do to make a world for ourselves. But I will say, and thank you for asking the question, in bringing up good old 1977 and Anita Bryant, the great catalyst. That is when I became a political animal. That one woman shattered the gay world across the United States, turned into such an icon of derision, and could see the insidious influence that a political movement could have. I was apolitical and ignorant of this sort of thing. I mean, I thought all laws are going to get changed; everything is going to work out. I'm very optimistic, but to see so much backing for someone whose views were so radical, and the homophobia that was out there that I just never had seen. Living a sheltered life in Santa Cruz where there's always, basically, gay community invisible or visible... With LAGMU and GALA, all of a sudden this happened and out of the blue, as it were, just galvanized everybody.

I was going to mention 1978, which engendered Proposition 6 in the state of California, which was to get all gay teachers fired. We organized, LAGMU and GALA together, and the whole Santa Cruz gay community. I won't claim it was any one of us. It was all of us. We organized a huge campaign, and we go down in the record books [as having] the most NO votes in the state of California—Santa Cruz County against Proposition 6. We went out on the streets; we stopped people; we talked to people. We talked to them



about the issue and then said, “Well, I’m gay,” or, “I’m a lesbian. *Now* what do you think about it?” People were startled that they had been having a conversation with a real intelligent human being who felt strongly about this whole distorted Proposition 6 thing, about getting rid of teachers who were gay: “You wouldn’t want those people out in front of your students and talking, you know, just molesting your children,” and all of this. We fought fire with fire. We went out on the streets and talked to people, went to groups, went to meetings, addressed civic groups. Way before Triangle Speakers was invented, we went out as groups and addressed people and fought back and said, “We’re people and this isn’t right.” Thank God it was defeated statewide, but in the tally, Santa Cruz led the state. So that was my political awakening.

**Della Ratta:** How do you think your personal gay civil rights have changed over the years, and on the campus as well, when you were still employed there?

**Kirk:** The campus is much more open for gay staff than it ever has been since I started working there. They’re everywhere. They’re not just running the gay center. They’re in all the departments. I think the classic case of, everybody knows a gay person and the more there is of this, the more tolerance and acceptance there is, and the more visible they are on campus, the easier it is. There’s probably not a department, office, faculty services, janitorial group, or grounds crew that does not have a one gay person in it. I think the visibility engenders more visibility and people not pretending to be what they’re not.

I think over the years, seeing the changes of greater and greater acceptance, and the political people out there fighting for gay rights with organizations, and gay people like Sheila Kuhl going into California politics as an out lesbian, and being elected time and time again, shows that the political climate is ready for gay people, that being gay is... It almost sounds like being secondary to being human. You could be political; you can be a person; you can be for or against issues, but gay is also part of it. You don’t not have to not be gay, but you can get things done, and if you’ve got that motivation as part of your political agenda, to always stand up to the lawmakers that are coming in and saying, “Oh, we’re going to have to pass AB 4414 that says we can’t have any gay janitors anymore, because they might be lurking about after hours at the schools and your elementary students will be in danger of child molestation.” Then you fight back and say, “Well, most child molesters are heterosexuals, not gay people.” You’ve got someone in a position of political power who is keeping an eye open for these things, and can galvanize support.



With email and computers and websites now, political activism can go grassroots. With one click of a button, a message can be sent all over California saying, we need your help to write your assemblyman or congressman to defeat this bill, which is trying to slip through the assembly as a rider on something else. Boy, people are galvanized now. You type off a letter and send it off, or email and get back this thank you for your input. People from UCSC have marched on Sacramento. They have caucuses that go there when certain bills get into the assembly. They have gone in groups up to Sacramento to lobby. The University of California systemwide gay groups meet at different campuses each year, rotating around, have political arms and political caucuses that go and work in Sacramento. I think this is all great. This is an outgrowth or a growth of the visibility and the campuses supporting the gay movement.

**Della Ratta:** How has the University also grown in terms of giving more gay rights?

**Kirk:** The domestic partners bill passed the board of regents. That was a delayed thing. It finally went up for the vote and was passed, so that anybody who wishes to declare domestic partnership for the University of California can, and the domestic partners can get benefits. That is a great step forward for the University of California. Thank you for mentioning that and reminding me that that did happen and that is a step forward for the University of California.

**Della Ratta:** Well, if someone was to listen to your oral history that was done today, let's say seventy years from now, what would you most like them to know and understand about your life as a gay staff member at UCSC?

**Kirk:** I grew up in that in-between period of gay identity, and so went through a whole lot of things people today aren't going through. I would say seventy years from now somebody reading this, or listening to the tape, might just be having a good chuckle, saying: "Oh, those poor old people, all the struggle they had. We have it so easy. We have a gay group in my junior high school. I was out by the time I was in high school, and I've had a great life since and I'm going to plan to go into politics and we've gotten all these laws passed." Seventy years from now I just see these wonderful things happening along these lines that people could see that there was a time in which all of this wasn't there.

A number of people who are my age now, sixty-two, grew up at a time when a gay identity— people were gay, there have always been gay people—but gay identity as such didn't exist. And bless Stonewall. It started it all, helping forge a gay identity. We've



had nothing but upward progress, setbacks, but upward progress ever since then—with achieving more and more civil rights, human rights, women’s rights as an outgrowth of that, identity rights for all other minorities as well, because although you might not be an ethnic minority, gay people are still a minority. So, there’s part of the struggle of all working together. I think great strides have been made. People may be looking back and saying, “Gosh, how terrible to think they had to form a gay group, that they didn’t exist, that people couldn’t be out at work, and that some brave people were.” I think it will astound them seventy years from now, looking back. But I was from a different time and a different generation. It will be very interesting, from my point of view, to see the stuff in *Out of the Redwoods* from the younger people who are interviewed, and see what some of their perceptions are, and what their views are on the time span that they have been at UCSC, and how their lives have changed. But mine changed, was all for the positive at UCSC. I can think of nothing bad ever to look back on, on that. It was just very nice from beginning to end. Started well and went out in a blaze of glory. [laughter]