

# UC Santa Cruz

## Out in the Redwoods

### Title

Scott Brookie: Out in the Redwoods, Documenting Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender History at the University of California, Santa Cruz

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### Authors

Brookie, Scott  
Reti, Irene H.  
Letellier, Patrick

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## SCOTT BROOKIE

**Interviewer, Patrick Letellier:** *Scott Brookie was interviewed on August 27, 2002 at UCSC, at Scotty's Santa Cruz home. Scotty and I sat at his kitchen table, drank apple juice and talked for a couple hours. It was a relaxed and, at times, quite entertaining interview. Despite working on the same campus for a year, I didn't know Scotty prior to interviewing him. I had worked for the past year as the Program Coordinator at UCSC's GLBT Center, but our paths had not crossed. Before coming to UCSC, I worked as a freelance writer, a counselor, and an interviewer on AIDS studies, so I was comfortable turning on a tape recorder and asking him lots of questions. Scotty seemed to enjoy the process as well. He was generous with his time and his work: I left that night with an armload of Lavender Readers that he retrieved from a back closet. They are a treasure I have since passed on to the GLBT Center.—Patrick Letellier*

**Letellier:** Can you please tell me a little bit about yourself, your academic background, your life, like where were you born?

**Brookie:** I was born in Oakland, California in 1955.

**Letellier:** When is your exact birthday?

**Brookie:** I was born October 26th, 1955. I'll be forty-seven.

**Letellier:** Did you grow up in Oakland?

**Brookie:** I did. My mother still lives in the house I was born in. In trying to decide where to go to college, I looked through... What college students did at the time, they got the big, thick book from the college board that listed all the colleges and universities in the country. I read the whole thing and picked out two, Colorado College and UC Santa



Cruz, because they were both kind of “alternativey.” I was accepted to both. Colorado College sent me their catalog, which was a bunch of pictures of ivy-covered buildings and I thought, that’s far too traditional, I’ll go to Santa Cruz.

**Letellier:** What was it about UC Santa Cruz that made it alternativey?

**Brookie:** Narrative evaluations, no grades. I visited here, and you got the feel of a very different, non-traditional kind of place. It’s a little hard to remember exactly, but the narrative evaluation and the lack of grades was big.

**Letellier:** So, the non-traditional part was appealing. Did you grow up in some sort of traditional environment?

**Brookie:** Oh, I grew up in a solidly middle-class family with my mom and dad and my sister. My parents stayed together until my dad died in 1993. We were Presbyterians, regular, church-going folks. I sang in the church choir. I was a boy soprano in the San Francisco Opera. I wouldn’t say we were rigidly, oppressively traditional, but maybe that gives you a bit of a picture.

**Letellier:** Yes, it does. So, by the time you were looking at colleges, had you figured out that you might be different in terms of your sexuality?

**Brookie:** All right. I had my first boyfriend when I was thirteen, in 1969, the year of Stonewall. He was a fellow soprano in the San Francisco Boys Chorus. He’s straight now. [laughter] He owns a pizza parlor in a resort town in the mountains. He broke my heart. He broke my heart because—this is sort of noteworthy—we were both thirteen, we were actually born fifty-two hours apart, and we went to camp along with the rest of chorus, and I realized I really liked him and we kissed all through that August. We came back to the Bay Area. There was often a lot of messing around at the boys’ chorus, and usually I would come back afterwards and it didn’t mean a whole lot. But I realized I was still thinking about him all the time, and the next time I saw him after we came home, I realized that I was in love with him. I sort of asked him in this very nervous, anxious way if he still felt things for me, and he did, and we began, I guess what you’d call a relationship. We actually didn’t use the word *relationship*. People didn’t use the word *relationship* until a couple of years later. I don’t know if you remember that, Patrick, but *relationship* is a word from the early-1970s. And being thirteen, we would just steal our moments. Like, we rehearsed in the church and we would go into the sanctuary, which



was empty, and kiss and kiss and hug and hug. And one day, his brother happened into the sanctuary and saw us. He (my boyfriend) was so petrified, that he stopped speaking to me and stopped hanging out with me and broke up with me. It was just sheer homophobia, his own internalized homophobia totally broke my heart. So, that was my first relationship and that's how it ended. Of course, there was no such thing as a queer youth group or the idea of gay youth, or anything like that. Gay was something you made fun of.

**Letellier:** So, by the age of thirteen, it seems you had already figured out you liked boys. Did you have a word for it?

**Brookie:** We used *gay*. One of the things we did in the chorus was singing Christmas carols and we would always sing, "Don we now our GAY apparel," to each other. It was a loaded word. But I hadn't figured out I was... I don't know what I'd figured out. I'd figured out I loved him, and I went in and out of the closet until 1977, until eight years later at UC Santa Cruz. I tried not to be gay. My first year at Santa Cruz I had a girlfriend, who I ended up introducing to my ex-boyfriend and she wound up dating him.

**Letellier:** Not to the pizza guy?

**Brookie:** Not to the pizza guy, no, a different one. I had sort of a boyfriend from high school. I tried really hard not to be gay for a long time, and I sort of eased into it by first calling myself bisexual. The story of my actually realizing I was gay might be just a chapter of its own.

**Letellier:** Please.

**Brookie:** Ready?

**Letellier:** Yes, please.

**Brookie:** Living in the dorms in Stevenson College. My first year was 1974 to 1975. I got a girlfriend about a month after I arrived, and yet there would be times when a particular guy named Kenny and I would have sex in the bathtub room in the bathrooms at Stevenson College. And that was okay with my girlfriend. In fact, my girlfriend's other boyfriend, who was also my ex-boyfriend, also had sex with Kenny. We were a busy group. 1975-76, I was rooming in the dorms with my friend, John. I had a hopeless crush on John. Once in a while, I could get John to have sex with me, not very often—not



nearly often enough. And then I got a crush on a guy named Matthew, who somehow I knew wasn't entirely straight. And I made him a very special valentine. He was a religious studies major and I took a picture of Jesus casting the money-changers out of the temple and wrote, "Be My Valentine" on it in fancy script and delivered it to his mailbox. He became my valentine; he became my boyfriend; he was my first boyfriend. But still, I was bisexual. This was 1976, so we called it being bisexual for the bicentennial. I marched in my first Santa Cruz Gay Pride march that year with a sign that said (oh, this is the ending of the Anita Bryant period), "Hey Anita, can bisexuals only work half-days in Dade County?" I was still very homophobic and it was still a very homophobic time. I was aware of one professor, David Thomas. There were rumors he was gay, and I thought that was just awful; that was gross.

**Letellier:** What was awful?

**Brookie:** That he was gay. Ew.

**Letellier:** So being bisexual was okay with you but homosexuality was gross?

**Brookie:** Yes.

**Letellier:** Can you explain more about that.

**Brookie:** No, I can't. That's just the way it was. And there was another professor, Bill Shipley, who directed a play that I was in, and there was a rumor about Bill Shipley being gay and I would check that out with people. I thought, yes that would be a tragic thing, to be gay. I remember maintaining that attitude about being gay long after I came out. Internalized homophobia, I think, dies really hard, or it did then. I worked for a lawyer in Boston, 1981 when I was twenty-six. I had been out for years, I was working for a gay newspaper (I know I'm jumping ahead), and it was a gay law office and I remember thinking, well, he's a fag, how could he be a good lawyer? And then finally thinking, huh, okay. If you were gay, how could you be a good anything?

**Letellier:** Were you included in that same category? Like, I must not be good at what I'm doing because I'm gay too.

**Brookie:** Not exactly, or not so explicitly. I didn't have a profession. I was just a reporter intern. But how could you be a good professor? The time when I was a freshman and sophomore in the late-1970s, being gay was something you whispered about and still



something shameful. Even though I was doing it with my friends, it was still shameful. It was especially shameful in other people. I continued to try to have girlfriends to get rid of it.

**Letellier:** Were there any gay people that you saw and admired? Were there any role models that you thought, I like that—I don't mean physically—I like who he is in the world? Anyone you wanted to emulate?

**Brookie:** No one I can think of.

**Letellier:** Did you ever read any books about being gay, or read any magazines?

**Brookie:** Oh, I read *Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Sex, But Were Afraid to Ask*. I learned that gay men put shot glasses up their ass, flashlights up their ass, light bulbs, that they walked with a mincing gait, that they wore clingy, powder blue shirts. I did actually own a clingy, powder blue shirt. [laughter]

**Letellier:** Sealing your fate as a gay man. [laughter]

**Brookie:** Oh, and I read *Boys in the Band*—very uplifting—“Who do I have to fuck to get a drink, Mary?” So, that's kind of what was available then.

**Letellier:** So those are some of the ways that you educated yourself about what is gay.

**Brookie:** I very surreptitiously bought, *Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Sex, But Were Afraid To Ask* by Dr. David Rueben. I bought it surreptitiously in high school at a bookstore. I remember asking the guy, “Is this the whole book? Is anything left out of this book?” And he showed me—no, not a single word has been left out. That's where I learned, you know, we put all these things up our butt and that's what we do.

**Letellier:** Why were you concerned that something might have been left out?

**Brookie:** I don't know. I guess because I wanted to make sure that the part about homosexuality wasn't left out.

**Letellier:** Might've been better if it was. [laughter]

**Brookie:** Might've been. *Boys In The Band* wasn't that great, either. And the guy who cut my hair when I was growing up was a big sissy and I just thought that was... My mom



would let me in the back door of her beauty parlor, so I wouldn't be seen going in the front door of a beauty parlor, because men and boys went to barbers, but I was too vain. This was before it was okay for men to care about their hair.

**Letellier:** I'm guessing that at some point, the tide turned and your attitudes about being gay shifted.

**Brookie:** Slowly. Let me talk a little about the campus organizing in 1977. People were organizing about the regents divesting from South Africa. We called ourselves CAIR, the Coalition Against Institutionalized Racism. It was one of those student movements that sprang up and took the campus by storm. The campus administration at that time was located in what is now Hahn Student Services. It was called Central Services then. Things built to a head, and one night, May 25, 1977—right around there, give or take three days—401 students stormed the building, occupied the chancellor's office, and were arrested for doing that.

I, at the time, was working downtown and helping to organize the restaurant I worked at into a union and I didn't want to get arrested, plus, I was kind of scared. But I remember seeing my friend Jeremy. As people surged into the building, he was on the upper balcony and he blew me a kiss. That was the moment I came out because I realized that gay men had this kind of freedom to do these outrageous things like blow each other kisses from a balcony in front of hundreds of people to a friend who was many dozens of yards away, and I thought, that's me. I'm the kind of person who wants to blow kisses at other guys. Clearly, since I'd been having sex since I was thirteen, it wasn't about sex. It was about the freedom not to be so rigidly masculine, I think, and to be so isolated from other men. So that's when I came out.

**Letellier:** That's a great story.

**Brookie:** Thank you.

**Letellier:** That was 1970—

**Brookie:** 1977. I was born in 1955, that made me not quite twenty-two.

One other thing. There were many speeches that day, of course, it being a coalition of student activism, and there was a speech from a guy, John Mausseri, who still lives in Santa Cruz, I think, who was speaking on behalf of GALA, the Gay and Lesbian



Alliance. I didn't want to have anything to do with him. I didn't want to have anything to do with GALA; I thought that was weird, but they were there and they had organized and they were speaking. The students were progressive enough to include a gay speaker. I didn't associate with him, but then Jeremy blew me a kiss and everything changed.

**Letellier:** Did it change right at the moment?

**Brookie:** It changed inside me. I don't know what would have happened if he'd blown me a kiss first and then I'd heard John Mausseri speak. I don't know.

**Letellier:** On that note, can you tell me what was it was like on campus then? What was the climate of gay on the campus?

**Brookie:** I thought you'd ask me that and I'm not sure I can answer with any authority, except for my own personal experience, since I didn't really identify much as gay. There was GALA, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance, and I didn't associate with them. I associated with my friends, with whom I had more in common, and we were student activists: we worked on the United Farm Workers something-or-other boycott; we worked on Proposition 14, which was a farm workers' labor rights amendment; we saw ourselves as organizers, and not around gay issues. But as it happened, I was sleeping with many of my friends in these groups. When I moved downtown, off campus, I moved in with my friend John, who I had a hopeless crush on. We basically became boyfriends, except he didn't really love me and he wasn't really gay, but we had sex all the time, and because we were principled activists, when we would go to parties, he would go out of his way to dance with me because it was the principled thing to do because we lived together and we had sex; and I thought you know, that was pretty good—that was a stretch for him. So I was more part of the progressive student activist community and just happened to be having sex with one of my male friends.

I can tell you a little more about the gay environment on campus later, in the early-1980s, a little bit. I moved to San Francisco in 1978-1979; I was there when Harvey Milk was assassinated. I came back. I became a community studies major; for my internship I moved to Boston and worked for *Gay Community News (GCN)*, which you've heard of?

**Letellier:** Oh, yes.

**Brookie:** For 1981 until 1983. I came back in 1983.





**Letellier:** That was when the *Gay Community News* was rockin'.

**Brookie:** [laughter] Thank you. I have all those up in the attic, too. It was good.

**Letellier:** Eric Rofes and Urvashi Vaid.

**Brookie:** Urvashi was great. [Brookie expressed a negative opinion of Rofes.] He wanted more pictures of guys with drinks, with their arms around each other, and less of this politics, please. [I also worked with] Richard Burns, Kevin Carthcart, Cindy Patton, Sue Hyde...

**Letellier:** These folks were all at the *Gay Community News*?

**Brookie:** All at the same time, all when I was there. Jeremy Grainger, the man who blew a kiss at me was there. And other people who didn't go on to be famous, but were very, very good: David Morris, Nancy Wechsler, Mike Riegle, Larry Goldsmith.

**Letellier:** There was a lot of brainpower there.

**Brookie:** Yes. It was really exciting. Of course right around then there was GRID, the Gay Related Immune Deficiency. Oh God, AIDS in the schools. Coming back, computers have just been invented, or have just become a somewhat mass tool, at least in academia—and there was a whole community online of gay men. It's interesting to me—this is a whole other subject—but I feel like I've been a part of gay men's online communities since the very beginning. The very beginning for me was at UC Santa Cruz, when your community was within the campus. The networks weren't very powerful, they didn't go very far, the internet wasn't invented yet. But all the gay people could get online, whoever could get online at night and flirt with each other and fight with each other.

**Letellier:** So there was an online even then?

**Brookie:** Yes. Computers were, how to say...

**Letellier:** It's way pre-internet, right? You're talking early-1980s.

**Brookie:** Not way pre-internet, not *way*. Basically, there was one computer. Has anyone talked about UNIX-B? Back then, every student was eligible to have an account on a UNIX machine where you could send and receive email and write papers. It was one



computer about the size of a washing machine, and it sat in the Communications Building, and you connected to it with terminals from all over campus. Somebody wrote a program called Forum; it was basically a chat room, an early, primitive chat room. I remember one guy's name was Stuart something or other. He was "agayboy." Now that was kind of out-there, to take the name "agayboy." People would get online and flirt and so on, and you didn't get off campus, because the internet wasn't really active or the internet wasn't really quite there yet, you could send mail but... Oh, I know why. You could send mail off campus because every couple of hours computers would phone each other, but you couldn't in real time talk to anybody off campus, but you could on campus. So a lot of flirting, a lot of fighting, probably a certain amount of hooking up. I hooked up using that, come to think of it, in the Merrill Steno Pool where I had a little office. [laughter] A three-way. It was fun.

I was transitioning from being a student. I had finished and I wrote a thesis on gay men and lesbians in the cold war in the United States, which was pretty good. This was before people were... [Historian] Allan Bérubé helped me out. He directed me to some documents. It was the time of John D'Emilio, but nobody was really doing the 1950s. So I did this thesis on the Fifties and thought I might become a gay and lesbian historian, but realized it was much harder than I thought. It was the beginning of queer studies and I didn't understand what the hell people were talking about. They were inventing this language and it didn't make any sense to me. I'm done, never mind.

**Letellier:** So you were at UC as an undergraduate and then you went on to graduate work?

**Brookie:** No. My thesis was an undergraduate thesis in community studies. [I was] lacking a certain amount of direction in my life, or lacking much of any direction, and having been successful at *GCN*, and having written a successful thesis, I thought that that was the obvious place for me to go. Gay and lesbian history isn't a career choice with clear paths outlined for you, and I floundered.

But it happened that I had discovered computers while I was in Boston, and I really liked them, and I got a job tutoring faculty on the early UNIX machines. I discovered I really liked that and I used my writing skills to write computer manuals, one called *UNIX For Luddites*, which is still used on campus. That got me a job in computing and I liked it, and stayed on campus.



**Letellier:** When did you start in the job, Scotty?

**Brookie:** 1984.

**Letellier:** You've been on campus since then?

**Brookie:** As a staff member for eighteen years. Not in this job. In various jobs that were all in computing.

**Letellier:** So, it's 1984 and you're beginning an eighteen-year career at the university. I want to ask you to back up a little bit. You mentioned what was then called GRID or HTLV-3. Can you talk about AIDS and its onset and what that was like for you?

**Brookie:** I was living in Boston. I was working for *Gay Community News* and we started hearing about... I remember the term GRID, but what we talked about was Kaposi's Sarcoma. I remember being kind of scared about it. We didn't know what was going on. It's probably worth noting that in 1981, I made my first trip to a bathhouse—St. Mark's Baths on St. Mark's Place in Manhattan with my boyfriend. Actually, he went to the Club Baths and I went to the St. Marks. I had a much better time and I got home much later than he did. [laughter] After that, we made rules about time limits and so on, but I was getting fucked in bathhouses in Manhattan in the early-1980s, of course without condoms, there weren't any condoms. It's just luck that I'm still alive. We didn't know what not to do.

I remember there was not a whole lot of information. I remember kind of nervously joking about it with Eric Rofes. I think we were in Provincetown and we made some joke about a bruise or a scar, or something that he had on his body, or I had on my body, or something. He laughed about how that was...he pronounced it KAH-positis. We all were coming up with our theories of, well, it can't be transmitted this way because I've done this and this, and I don't have it, and should we all just stop having sex? Should we stop going to bathhouses; would that do it? My boyfriend, Jeff, at the time came down at the time with cytomegalovirus. He was sort of a slight, wispy person.

We knew about this disease; I don't remember what we called it. I guess we called it AIDS. We called it AIDS, or ARC [AIDS related complex]. It was caused by HTLV-3. What we knew about it was you got night sweats and then you got lesions and then you died. Sorta. Anyway, Jeff got night sweats like crazy and it turned out it was CMV. Fast



forward a little bit. I came home maybe a year or two later; I got night sweats really bad and I was like: oh my God. This is it. I don't know how I realized it wasn't *it*. I must've gotten tested.

So, not a whole lot of information in those first few years, but by the mid-1980s, I was going out with friends and talking to high schools. This was before there was any organized public health response. The only people talking about it were the gay and lesbian community. So we'd get invited into these sort of progressive classes and say, "Use condoms; don't floss before sex" All this stuff, and explain AIDS and ARC. It was kind of amazing, really, talking about sex with high school teens.

The last time I was fucked without a rubber was after a GALA dance in 1984. I brought a guy home from what is now the GLBT Resource Center; there was a dance there. We had sex without a rubber because it was kind of not a big deal. That was 1984. By 1986, you had to wear rubbers. People who didn't want you to wear a rubber, they were in trouble. In fact, the last guy who didn't want me to wear a rubber in 1986 is dead, as is Jeff, who got CMV, but then he got HIV and now he's dead. By 1986, principled, informed gay men were wearing rubbers.

**Letellier:** And you were one of them.

**Brookie:** [laugh] There's one other thing, which is that AIDS turned me into a top.

**Letellier:** I wonder how many gay men that's true [for]?

**Brookie:** I wonder. I moved to Boston to work for GCN and because I had met this wonderful man, Jeff, at a faerie gathering in Colorado and he lived in Massachusetts and I lived here. We fell in love, and I moved out there, and I moved in with him and his mother. The first night we went to bed, we both just kind of lay there and I'm like, I want you to fuck me and you want me to fuck you and someone's going to have to turn into a top here and I guess it's not going to be you. [laughter] So, I did and then, yes. Then, when I came back to Santa Cruz I was too scared to be a bottom anymore. Gary Reynolds, who was the person... We got together. I said I didn't have a rubber. He said that was okay and I thought, okay, he says it's okay—we won't use rubbers. That was pretty much the last time that I let myself get talked out of even being a top without a rubber. So yes, I was principled, but not principled enough to say, no, not okay. So. Your



question made me feel guilty. Well, it didn't make me feel... But I remember that my response wasn't quite as holy and correct as I wish it had been.

**Letellier:** So, you mentioned before that you were on campus and had written your thesis, and then there were people who were doing this thing called queer studies and that was a foreign language.

**Brookie:** [laughter] Yes, it's still a foreign language.

**Letellier:** Did you go back to that?

**Brookie:** I thought okay, what do I do with this thesis? I sent it to UC Press, to an editor whose name I've forgotten. He wrote back eventually and he said, this is very good; it's not quite ready for publication, it needs some oral histories. Also at that time, there was something called the San Francisco Gay and Lesbian History Project or Society. They met monthly, I think, in San Francisco, and I started driving up there. It was some pretty high-powered people—it was Allan Bérubé and a woman named Dykestra, or... Some names I've now forgotten that are probably luminaries in the field. I would go there and I thought... I was well-versed in the history of the Fifties; I was well-versed in being gay; I was well-versed in activism and gay activism specifically, and I couldn't figure out what they were talking about. It was embarrassing, and I felt ashamed, and I felt stupid, and I didn't know how to contribute to the conversation. The more I went, the more I began to feel like I didn't belong there, except of course I blamed myself, rather than taking a different view of it. I entertained the idea of becoming a graduate sociology student at Berkeley and doing things like some of these folks were doing. Eventually, I just stopped going because I couldn't figure out how to contribute, or participate, or even understand what they were talking about.

Right about that time there was a conference at UCSC, which was the subject of a *Lavender Reader* cover at one point—the conference on queer theory. I didn't even go, because I knew... I felt like what we had done as activists had been taken away from us, actually, and taken up by these people who were changing the language into something that regular folks couldn't understand. Really, one of the consistent things throughout my adult life is making complex things accessible to folks. My book about UNIX, *UNIX For Luddites*, I wrote because I was working with faculty and staff who were smart people, and couldn't make heads or tails out of this computer system. So I wrote



something in plain English. I like to think the *Lavender Reader* was the same thing. It was a quality journal, written in accessible language.

I remember feeling about queer theory that they had taken something that was really easy to understand—it was oppression, it was police busts, it was laws, discriminatory laws, sex in the park, all this kind of stuff—and they put it in these terms that I didn't recognize, that I couldn't make any sense of, that I couldn't manipulate in my mind in any way that led anywhere and that's when I gave up on... I don't know. Activism's my... How to say this? In a way, my gay activism was derailed because it seemed to have led to this. It had been taken away from the folks, and stuck in the academy and made the subject of an academic career for academic careerists and I didn't like that. I stopped at that.

**Letellier:** What do you think about it now?

**Brookie:** I never tuned back in.

**Letellier:** Do you think there's any viability in having, not necessarily a queer theory, but what about a Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgendered Studies, you know, culture of politics, history, contemporary issues?

**Brookie:** Sure I do. I mean, if for no other reason than to provide queer students, or potentially queer students, or their allies with information and a place to explore issues: information about history, a safe place to come out, a safe place to hear different perspectives and so on. I've spoken to lots of those classes, mostly as publisher of the *Lavender Reader*. And I have no doubt that there's value and progress from having this intellectual ferment.

I should say that until a couple of months ago, I employed as a student technician a young man, who when he came to work for me as a sophomore was a sympathetic...you know, a sensitive straight guy. That didn't last very long, and pretty soon he was asking me, "Can I ask you a personal question? What was it like when you figured out you were gay?" And I'm like, oh my God, not you too. And then over the course of the three years he worked for me he came outer and outer, until he was just a total flamer and a completely delightful, wonderful person, completely out. [He] went from being devoted and serious and sensitive, to being loud and trashy and slutty—which I regard as a positive progression, often, in gay men. One of the last conversations we had before he



moved to L.A. to seek his fortune in film, was when he was telling me how how deeply reading Foucault affected him, how profoundly he associated with what Foucault was saying, how much it meant to him as a gay man, and how much it helped him. I thought, I didn't know Foucault had that effect on anybody. So, I guess there's room for more than one perspective on queer theory and how it can affect gay men who are coming out. I loved lots of other things, but he really liked Foucault. I was like, okay, I guess queer theory's good for some things.

**Letellier:** Okay, so jumping tracks. Can you talk about being a new employee, eighteen years ago and being gay? Can you walk me through [what it was like], whether or not there're some things in the beginning that stand out about what it was like for you to be a gay man on campus as a staff person?

**Brookie:** It was still kind of unusual, but I remember being... Probably one of the reasons that I've lived in Santa Cruz most of my life is that it's pretty safe. I've always felt like I could be my gay self here, pretty much, certainly at least on campus. In the first few years, I worked in the social sciences division. A friend of mine reminded me at a party last Saturday night, he used to work there, too. He said, "Remember those early staff meetings? I'd just come in the room and it was this very serious, straight-laced staff meeting, and you'd just tell me to sit on your lap, and I'd sit on your lap for the whole meeting. That's just who we were, you know? It was not a touchy-feely meeting or anything like that, but we were out-there. We were just out- there as gay men." I remember, at one point, the social sciences division at that time had very... People had a really hard time getting along with each other, and as a consequence they were always bringing in these psychologists and consultants to try to make us work better together and work out our issues and what-have-you. I remember at one of these go-arounds, we were being asked to say something interesting about our past, and I remember saying that I had always wanted to start the union of gay auto mechanics. As a teenager I'd always wanted to do that, because I was sure that I was the only gay guy who was a teenager who worked on cars. There could be a group of us and it'd be so unusual and so interesting to have all these gay men in their overalls working on cars. That would be fun. So I said that to that group. I was out-there, and I was always putting it out. I was one of the first people to put my partner, Andrew Purchin, in the campus phone directory as my spouse. As soon as they started offering to put your spouse in the campus directory, I tested it by sending in a man's name. No problem. One year they



took it out, and I was all ready to march on the chancellor's office and it turned out I hadn't turned in the form on time. [laughter] Oops.

Over the eighteen years, it's just kind of gotten more and more commonplace. What I see in the students is [sigh] people absolutely take for granted things that we really struggled for.

**Letellier:** Can you give me some examples?

**Brookie:** A gay center. That was a big deal. I remember when it was worked out that it would happen and where it would be and that was outlandish. I remember when Dennis Altman was appointed Regents' lecturer and he was publishing books about being gay, and AIDS, and stuff like that. Community studies brought him in as a Regents' lecturer. That was a big deal. They brought Vito Russo as a Regents' lecturer. Big deal. Out-there. I remember thinking even then, my own internalized homophobia—well, this isn't legitimate. I mean, you come here to teach and he's coming to talk about gay stuff. I mean that's not psychology or sociology.

The persistence of internalized homophobia. I think and I hope that progressive generations of queer kids have less and less of that. I'm forty-six. I've been out for... If you start from [that moment at] Central Services, I guess I've been out for...twenty-five years. After Gay Pride this year [we had] a bunch of gay men in the backyard singing. I was still worried. I was still thinking, what are the neighbors thinking about the fact that there's nobody back here but men, they're obviously gay and they're all singing. Part of me wanted to say, "Could you make less noise? Could you be less noticeable? I've got to face these folks on the street tomorrow."

**Letellier:** You wanted to contain it?

**Brookie:** I did. I wanted to contain it so the neighbors wouldn't hear it, wouldn't notice it. Then I thought, you know, they're probably not going to care. I went up and down the street in my mind and I thought—Jeff's not going to care; Matt's not going to care; Jerry's going to think it's nice. Who's going to care? *I* care. Why do I care? You know, I've been out for so long and I still care. It's very painful.

Oh, I forgot something from the mid-1970s that was an important piece of activism. Alan Sable was a professor of sociology. In 1976 or 1977 he was denied tenure. He was gay. He





was openly gay. There was some activism about that. Maybe a sit-in at the library? I'm not sure. I didn't participate because I didn't... I don't know why. I didn't know him; I wasn't hooked into the gay organizations, but there was a sit-in. There was activism around hiring an openly gay men. Then there was Nancy Stoller (then Nancy Shaw), being denied tenure. She was openly lesbian, is openly lesbian. And the chancellor at that time, Sinsheimer, after whom the labs are named, said her work was the work of a competent investigative journalist, and he denied her tenure, even though she'd been recommended for tenure by her department. There were big sit-ins about her.

**Letellier:** Do you remember about when that was?

**Brookie:** Probably 1984 or 1985, and shortly thereafter there was more action around South Africa and another occupation at McHenry Library—this time for two or three nights. Mardi Wormhoudt, chair of the current [Santa Cruz County] Board of Supervisors sat in, slept in—with John Laird. Actually, next to John Laird, soon to run for the Assembly. They slept together in the library. And my boyfriend at the time, or actually one of my two boyfriends at the time, Gary Reynolds, also slept at the library. So there were caucuses of gay and lesbian students as part of this larger movement for that as well.

**Letellier:** You just reminded me of something else. I understand that you weren't so intimately involved in gay activism during this period, sort of sporadically, perhaps. What was the relationship between gay men, as a group and lesbians, as a group? [long pause] Maybe I could be more specific. Did you have lesbian friends?

**Brookie:** [sigh] I'm sure I did. In fact, I remember arriving in Boston and calling myself a lesbian-identified faggot. I thought that was a badge of honor and I remember saying that to Amy Hoffman, another *Gay Community News* person, then a managing editor, and she said, "I find that kind of offensive." I thought, well, that's interesting. Maybe I should have my own identity. But I didn't know how to make one. Well, I was good friends with Nancy Shaw, for one thing. I knew Irene, and had known her for years, and Valerie Chase, and the woman who gave the queer center, Ziesel Saunders. I had lots of lesbian friends. I'm not that comfortable in mass things. That's why I like to write. When there're hundreds of people and unendingly long meetings, I tend to absent myself and feel guilty about it. So, I wasn't a meeting person, an organization person, I tended more to write about things and observe things and take pictures.



**Letellier:** It sounds like you had some friends who were dykes.

**Brookie:** Yes.

**Letellier:** Did feminism have any pull for you?

**Brookie:** That was the thing. When you mentioned that, it took me way back to my very first linguistics class, which was sociolinguistics. There were all women and I was one of like, two men, and it was my first introduction to feminism. I was completely intimidated. I felt all the women hated me, and they may in fact have. I discovered feminism in the summer of 1976 and I was so thrilled. It was a model that worked for me where Marxism hadn't. There was room for my feelings; there was room for sexuality and love and affection, where other ideological systems didn't have room for that. So I was thrilled by that.

**Letellier:** Do you think to any degree, did feminism inform your queer politics?

**Brookie:** Absolutely.

**Letellier:** Can you say how?

**Brookie:** Well, I remember another class, an early queer class taught by the same friend, Jeremy [Grainger]. Ralph Abraham, who was a professor of math, and openly gay or something, was actually in this class. It covered topics like gay history, and it covered some gay issues, and wound up with violence against women. Violence against women was a big organizing and ideological topic at the time, on how society is so misogynist and how rape is a central issue. In my mind at the time, we went from Marxism, to feminism, to violence against women, which was an ideology all its own. That's how I saw it at the time; that's how it was presented in the class.

**Letellier:** You were talking about ways that feminism informed your queer politics and your own identity.

**Brookie:** Remember, I had no such thing as queer politics as an over-arching theory.

**Letellier:** What did you call it at the time?



**Brookie:** I think I called it feminism. Of course, there was the debate: could you be a man and a feminist? That was a very hot and active debate. To the extent that I felt it was ideologically permissible, I identified as a feminist and I have, probably a wide variety of writings from the period saying as much. I was anti-patriarchal, and viewed that as the primary oppression in the world. I don't know if we share the same memories, but there were ideological struggles about what was more important, economic oppression or patriarchal oppression; which was the dominant oppression and so on. A little on the black-and-white side.

Okay, I'll try to be more specific about your question. Feminism said that the personal is political. That's crucial for gay/lesbian politics. Feminism said that we get to control our own bodies, and that's a basic tenet of gay liberation. Feminism says that oppression can be carried out systematically, but also interpersonally, and that helps you understand everything from homophobic violence, to sexism in the group dynamics of a gay and lesbian organization.

**Letellier:** I'm trying to get a picture of what it was like to be on campus then. What about the connection between gay politics and race politics?

**Brookie:** Pick a year and I'll tell you. It's a long span.

I could go back to 1977 when I was a member of the Coalition Against Institutionalized Racism, which was mostly white kids. I had a couple of Latino friends who would lecture us on—it's all well and good for you to be anti-racist activists, but you don't know a whole lot about what you're talking about. I remember in particular one African American man lecturing all us white kids about how much we had to learn about the politics of race, and him getting shouted down by all of us shouting, "We are one people. We are one people!" Of course, we thought he was being divisive. And then someone else getting up after him and saying, "As a woman of color, let me tell you, you shouldn't be shouting down a man of color."

**Letellier:** So pretty contentious stuff?

**Brookie:** Well, a lot of well-meaning activism, and after all, the UC Regents did eventually divest from South Africa. I was arrested at the base of campus in some year that I don't remember anymore, for blocking the entrance. I remember being hauled



away by a campus cop and taken to court downtown. As a staff member, to get the regents to divest from South Africa. So, well meaning and probably a little clueless.

**Letellier:** But, nonetheless, white folks doing race activism on campus.

**Brookie:** Yes.

**Letellier:** Was there ever a race/gay presence? Were there a group of queer people of color on campus during your time there, coming together, having a voice, having any kind of visibility?

**Brookie:** Queer people of color. [sighs] In the years that I was a student, there was like one organization and now there's a lot. One was enough. Or, I mean, it probably wasn't, but...

**Letellier:** It was the beginning?

**Brookie:** Yes. The Gay And Lesbian Alliance.

**Letellier:** So what about when you were back on campus in the early-1980s? I came to campus last year, and there's this giant presence of queers on campus, and part of that is queer people of color. Any idea of when that started?

**Brookie:** No, not really. Students have a four-year cycle. They come here for four years, and campus activism tends to have these huge flare-ups at various intervals [that] then go away. People don't stay and put down roots in the community and change the community. I think it [makes] them less interesting to me. I realized it [takes] a tremendous amount of effort to get to know who's who on campus of the students, and then they'd be leaving anyway. Their interest is what is your major, what classes are you taking? I became a lot more interested in what was going on in town.

**Letellier:** Can you tell me about the *Lavender Reader*?

**Brookie:** I forgot to tell you about the *Lesbian and Gayzette*. In the mid-1970s there were some very good progressive papers. There was one called the *Independent*, which was really good, and it went up in flames and was replaced by two papers, one called the *Express*, and one called the *Phoenix*. The *Phoenix* rose from the ashes of the *Independent*, of course. I was on the *Phoenix* staff, along with my friend, Jeremy Grainger, who blew me



the kiss, and a bunch of other good folks—Roz Spafford, who’s now a lecturer in creative writing, and Bob Johnson, who’s a career journalist, and lots of other good folks. We covered progressive issues in town and in the region. Jeremy and I asked, and got permission from the collective (of course we were a collective) to publish a quarterly insert to the *Phoenix*, and we called it the *Santa Cruz Lesbian and Gayzette*; it wasn’t bad. We didn’t put out that many issues, but it was one of the very first gay and lesbian publications in the county. Someone else, it turned out, was putting out another one of the same kind called *People Like Us*; but with all due respect, it wasn’t very good. It wasn’t worth it. It didn’t have good production values, unlike ours. It didn’t have very good writing, unlike ours. I just thought [ours] was a lot better. So I was involved with that for maybe a year and then I went to GCN.

You asked me about the *Lavender Reader*. Then there was organizing in the community around... Oh God, it was time to organize around AIDS and lots of activism in the community. Of course, I wound up helping edit the newsletter for these rolling successions of organizations. Then my friend Michael Perlman asked me if I would write an article (I don’t remember what it was about) for the *Santa Cruz Gay Pride Reader, 1986*. I wrote something. I don’t remember what it was. I’ve got it in my room; it was probably pretty good. Then he said, “I’m going to start an ongoing magazine and I’d like you to be a co-editor.” Of course we had to have a lesbian and a gay male co-editor, plus Michael, who was the publisher. I think first issue was the fall of 1986, which was the year, if I’m not mistaken, of the first LaRouche initiative, Proposition 64.<sup>26</sup> A lot of our energy at the time was focused around AIDS. First there was a big backlash by conservatives and the Right around AIDS, and there were things like Proposition 64, and Proposition 69, and 96, and 102, which were all in various ways about locking up people with AIDS. Oh, I forgot the Briggs Initiative, we’ll come back to it.

**Letellier:** Memory is a web.

<sup>26</sup>The California Lyndon LaRouche Initiative [Proposition 64] of 1986 would have required doctors to report the names of any infected persons, or persons believed to be infected, to a central agency. People with AIDS would be immediately fired from any job in which they would come in contact with a large number of people—jobs like teaching, food handling, or holding public office. The most controversial aspect of Proposition 64 would have added AIDS to a short list of highly communicable diseases and allowed for quarantines of AIDS patients and suspected AIDS patients. It was defeated by a four-to-one margin in November 1986.



**Brookie:** Isn't it, though. It's hypertext; it's multimedia, hyper-multimedia. I think the *Lavender Reader* was started in the fall of 1986, and I was a co-editor, and my job as co-editor was to... I don't know what it was, but I got to write a lot. I would drift in and out of the organization, and then Michael Perlman, the publisher, told me he had AIDS. I said, "Well, we'll get through this," and I guess I kind of didn't realize... I didn't realize that you don't get through it. They get sicker and sicker and die. And Michael got sicker and sicker and died. His last words to me were... Our last conversation, on his hospital bed, the day before he died, he said, "Keep the *Reader* going." I said, "I will." "You'll need a publisher." I said, "I know." "You can be publisher if you want." I thought, well, now *there's* a mandate. [laughter] Thanks for the vote of confidence.

So he died, and I went home and I thought about it, and I thought, who's going to be publisher? And I looked around and I thought, nobody. You have to have writing skills and organizational skills and I can't think of anybody else, so I guess it'll be me.

So I put out my first issue as publisher the summer of 1989. One of the first things I added to the *Reader*, it might have been the fall of 1989, was sex. Michael was kind of reserved and he designed a very beautiful magazine. The person responsible for the format, that is, the shape and size of the magazine, the quality of the paper, which is important, and the fact that it looked good—that was his part. I basically took what he had created and continued to embellish, enhance, and improve on it. One of the first things I added was sex, because there were reports from various community organizations, and I eventually realized that those were deadly boring. As committed as I had been to community organizations, no one wanted to read about how our fundraiser on May 2nd raised \$1503.00 and the board named dah, dah—no one cares about that shit. So I got rid of it all, and I added on the inside back cover something called "Real Sex," which was exactly that. It was true stories by local community members about sex they'd had. It had to be true. As it turned out, years later I would find out from people that that was always the first place they turned. Even from my straight friends back from the United farm workers days, who had moved to Seattle, and gotten married and had children—I would send it to them and that was always what they read first: "Real Sex."

The *Reader* published out of the office of the *Good Times* while Michael was alive, because that's where he worked. Then the earthquake came and that building fell down and we were offered space in the building of *The Sun*, which is at the corner of Center Street and Cedar Street. *The Sun* was the next progressive newspaper after the *Phoenix*, which died.



So we could do our layout there on weekends. I remember working there with Michael when he had really bad AIDS and his feet were swollen, and the only way he could hear me was by putting his head between his legs, which I couldn't figure out.

After the earthquake, locals, straight papers, came forward to give us help and help us continue to publish. With a little bit of thought, I could reconstruct it, all, but anyway, eventually, we wound up doing it in my room, my home, my bedroom. I had a big room. I bought a house with a friend. My room was big and we didn't have to clear out every night at midnight because someone was coming in the next morning at eight, like we did at *The Sun*. I could just leave the stuff up. Computers had advanced enough that you could lay out an entire magazine on one computer, and laser printers got fast enough that you could do fancy graphics and so on. So that kind of melded several things I liked to do: write, layout, use computers, fix computers. I could talk about the *Lavender Reader* at great length. It was a community organization. Michael actually organized it with a lot of foresight; he created editorships just before he died. So there were two fiction editors—a gay man and a lesbian, Carter Wilson and Julie Brower.

**Letellier:** There's all these familiar names from campus.

**Brookie:** Mm-hmm. [There were] two book review editors, Gail Groves and Lou Waters, I think; the two co-editors, me and Jo Kenny; and someone to do the distribution, G. Schultz, and someone to do... And so on, and so on.

**Letellier:** He was very organized.

**Brookie:** He was very organized. His job at the *Good Times* was operation manager; he was really organized that way. So I inherited a pretty well-staffed, of course-everyone-wants-to-volunteer group, and all I had to do was stay in touch with them, and rally them, and call them, and ask them to go out and find me some fiction, or whatever.

Over time, people burned out. The distribution guy it turned out would say...out of thirteen boxes of *Lavender Readers* we'd printed, ten of them had gotten delivered and 750 copies were sitting in his garage, molding and that had happened for several issues. I was like, "Okay, you must be tired of this. Why don't you just say that, and we'll try to find some people who can distribute all the magazines?" They cost a dollar apiece to print. The book review guy turned out to have more internalized homophobia than you could shake a stick at, and I had to ease him out. Then my co-editor moved to Santa Fe.



Then it was just me and Sarah-Hope Parmeter, who became co-editor with me. She was very funny and a very good writer, very clever. It was down to us and a couple of other stalwarts—Jo Covone the bookkeeper, Val Loeffler, who sold ads, G. Schultz who took care of mailing, Cindy di Primio, who is straight, a friend of Michael's from the *Good Times*. She was great, and really good at production. Carter and Julie stayed until the end and Sheri Paris, another campus luminary, stayed until the end. So did Gail. Linda Rosewood Hooper always helped with distribution.

But I was now coordinating distribution, doing all the collections, doing all the billing, storing the spares in my garage; plus, I was starting to see that what I had thought of all my adult life as kind of a monolithic gay movement or a monolithic gay community, had changed into something that was so diffuse and so large and so varied that one magazine could no longer possibly represent it. I would always try to incorporate gay people of color, and occasionally even try to incorporate gay conservatives, although I didn't try that hard for them because I didn't care about them and their point of view, and I still don't. Then there were bisexuals and there were transgendered people, and all these issues, and all these parts of the communities, and gays over seventy, and gays under ten [laughter] and I couldn't wrap my head around it anymore. I realized I was spending three or four weekends a quarter, which doesn't leave a lot of weekends in your life, from Friday afternoon through Sunday night at four in the morning, just putting the magazine out, plus extra time during the rest of the quarter doing the billings and the collections, and the distribution, and dealing with the printer, and all that shit. I was starting to have a life and I started to notice how my partner, Andrew Purchin, would regularly complain about... He called himself "The *Reader* Widow." He complained about how much it took me away from him and our life as a couple, and I started to realize that I didn't care as much about the monolithic gay community, which didn't exist anymore, plus it seemed to be surviving pretty well on its own. There weren't LaRouche initiatives anymore; we weren't being attacked in the streets like we had been. We weren't pariahs. There were lots of us; there were lots of community organizations, and I could probably relax, because gay men and lesbians, which were the reasons I started it, would probably be okay if I went off-duty for awhile. So we published our last issue in... It was either fall of 1999 or 2000.

**Letellier:** It's that recent!

**Brookie:** Yes.





**Letellier:** You did it for a long time.

**Brookie:** At least four times a year. Between thirty-two and... Fifty-six pages was the biggest issue.

**Letellier:** That's a huge piece of work.

**Brookie:** Yes, it was. I've never talked about it in this sort of span of like, starting from an activist perspective and then finally realizing that it would go on without me, there was enough of them that I could let it go, and besides I didn't understand it anymore. I couldn't keep my head around it.

**Letellier:** What's one particular experience in or with the *Reader* that you're proud of?

**Brookie:** Oh, I'm proud of the whole thing. Specifically, I'm proud of the design; I'm proud of the quality of the paper; I'm proud of the quality of the writing. I was always very proud of the humor. That probably covers a lot of it: the design, the art, the layout, and the writing. Santa Cruz has a really amazing concentration of talented people, especially writers and artists, many of whom who were willing to participate in the *Lavender Reader*. I think because we had high production values and so it was just a question on my part as publisher of getting them to do stuff for free, because we didn't pay anybody. I don't know if anybody ever asked me for money.

We tried to be on top of issues. I think we did okay. Here in the spring of 1997, we have a cover story about three high school girls at Santa Cruz High forming a queer student organization there, and we had excerpts from Carter Wilson's book on AIDS in Central America; we were covering sex on the internet and yada-yada. We covered a whole bunch of issues, I think, in ways that people could read and still be interested. More and more over time, as I think I said before, I began to realize that people weren't interested in politics if it was presented in the usual way like, reports from organizations and so on; and that maybe literature was more important, or maybe literature was more accessible, or maybe what mattered was that stuff was well written, and if stuff was well written, then people would read it. I remember something the editor of *The Sun* told me, which was that a good writer can make anything interesting. Of course the flip side of that, which he didn't say, is that a bad writer can make an interesting subject boring. So I tried to make sure we had good writing laid out in an interesting way. I'm proud of that. I'm



proud of the humor. I'm proud of the topics we covered. I'm proud of the extent to which it was a community effort, which is quite a bit.

**Letellier:** Given that some of the focus of the Out in the Redwoods project is the campus, can you talk about the campus connection to the *Lavender Reader*? It seems like Carter Wilson has a piece in there.

**Brookie:** Carter Wilson has tons of pieces in there.

**Letellier:** It included the campus to some extent, but it wasn't a campus publication.

**Brookie:** It didn't include a whole lot of students. Maybe that's me. Maybe a different publisher would have done it differently, but UCSC students' lives tend to revolve around campus, and other students, and student organizations and student issues. Student issues rarely, frankly, affect the community. In the aggregate, of course they do because they're a huge mass of people with monumental needs and housing and what have you, but politically, they stay fairly isolated. As I was saying before, I came to be less interested in that, and more interested in issues of myself and other people with roots in the community. At the same time, there's lots of the presence of staff and faculty in the *Lavender Reader*. Julie Brower, who works in literature, was the fiction editor; Carter Wilson, who's a professor in community studies, was another fiction editor; Sheri Paris, who is a writing instructor, was a political editor; John Laird, soon hopefully to be an Assembly person, was a political editor; Sarah-Hope Parmeter, writing instructor; Linda Hooper, now a network analyst, [was a] copy editor. Lots of campus folks involved. The database queen as we called him, Will Russell, worked for the natural sciences division or computer sciences, until he died. Gary Reynolds, a UCSC student, was a really good writer, until he died.

Certainly that connection to campus, but not the more ephemeral student politics-type connections. I would go and I would hunt for student writers, too, but I couldn't always find good ones. I'm sure there were some, but I didn't have the connections and the network for the students, because it changed so often, to cultivate and develop student writers, who then leave, but staff and faculty writers I could cultivate a relationship with; and occasionally there would be student writers. A lot of published people. Linda Niemann, who wrote a book about being a woman and a lesbian working on the railroad, was published. Adrienne Rich wrote an obituary for Audre Lorde and it was gorgeous; I mean, that's a perfect example—who reads obituaries, but by Adrienne Rich



it was gorgeous. It could have run in the *New York Times*, but it ran in the *Reader*. That also says something about Adrienne's integrity and commitment to community.

I guess probably if you went through it, from the beginning to the end, you would see a trajectory of gay politics and gay community over time. I don't think I'll do this issue by issue, but starting with the first issues which were the LaRouche initiatives, the anti-gay, AIDS-related things. Covers about women with AIDS in 1987. No one was talking about women with AIDS then. Getting ready for big marches in Washington; that's what this fall of 1987 cover was about. More anti-AIDS initiatives in 1988. This was an interview with Marge Frantz, who was an instructor at UCSC, an older woman in her sixties or seventies, talking about what it was like for her. And during this time there were lots of obituaries, almost entirely men who'd died of AIDS; talking about sex, in 1990 talking about how gay men are having [unsafe] sex and what that means. This is an article from the early-1990s talking about sadomasochism. I remember there's a graphic in there about how many funerals we had to go to. Queer theory, [the conference] "Outwrite." Starting to put race issues in a higher profile. This is 1992, and people were rioting about... I forget what those riots were about. They were in San Francisco.

**Letellier:** That was when Wilson refused to sign domestic partner benefits [legislation].

**Brookie:** Is that what it was? Was there a riot in the city then? This is a great article about Norma Jean's, the Latino drag bar in Castroville. This was very good, this issue about lesbians with cancer. People were just starting to talk about that in 1993. [This issue] includes a centerspread, again dealing with issues of race, that the printers actually refused to print until I went down and talked to them about it, because it has racist words in it. It was done by an art student, a Vietnamese-American art student who wanted to use intense and effective words to make his point and it really upset the printers. I had to talk them into publishing it. "Young and Queer, 1984," that was kind of at the beginning of that discussion. Lesbian teachers in 1984. AIDS in Central America. The internet. This is an illustration, the winter 1997 issue illustrates a very hot fiction piece about a Catholic woman. Transgender issues in 1996. I'm probably missing some here. The very last one which, prophetically, we didn't know it was the last one, shows Karen Hilker—it sort of looks like she's carrying her dog out to sea. Of course they're just sort of in the water, but it looks like she's looking off into the horizon.

**Letellier:** I have a few last questions. Do you think there's a glass ceiling with gay staff?



**Brookie:** For gay staff? No. Well, let's see. I currently serve, and for the last few years have served on the Information Technology Committee, a policy group for computer issues and I often sit there and go, there're a lot of gay men in this room. It's actually a pretty high-level committee.

**Letellier:** Any women? Maybe there's a...

**Brookie:**...glass ceiling for lesbians? I'm thinking of Ziesel Saunders who was the CAO, the staff head, of a college, of Merrill, and openly lesbian.

**Letellier:** I'm not saying there is a glass ceiling, but I just want to get your take on it.

**Brookie:** For me, it's kind of the opposite. For example, I love sitting in that committee. It's like a bunch of straight people talking about computer policy, but it's got a slightly gay tinge to it because people say "girlfriend" at the right moment or, "who knew?" about some Oracle patch. There's gay lingo and we'll all get it and maybe the chair will get it. It's a safe space, and people are safe being culturally gay there.

**Letellier:** Switching subjects, can you talk a little bit about relationships between gay students and gay staff?

**Brookie:** I don't come in contact with a whole lot of students in my job. I work mostly with faculty and staff. I hire students, and it happens that two out of the last few students I've hired, one's a gay man and one's a lesbian. I think the relationship between me and Nathan, who just graduated, I hope makes for really good role modeling, because he came from a homophobic town, Turlock. While he worked for me, he came out to himself, he came out to his parents, he came out to his friends, started dating, da-da-da. He would come in after work or before work and would just sort of seek advice. We'd have conversations about how do you deal with this, sorta how you deal with safe sex. He'd just unload on me, about this happened, "And then my mom said this, and then my dad said this, and can I bring a boyfriend to my brother's wedding," and [so on]. I did lots of hours of mostly listening to him; he once referred to me as sort of a father figure to him, which of course is very sobering. First I thought of him as my friend, and then I realized, no—he thinks of me as a friend and he can say anything to me, but the reverse isn't true, necessarily. There's a lot I can't say to him and still have him feel safe and comfortable, and my priority is to have him feel safe and comfortable. Not just as an employee, but as a young, gay man. He left, and coincidentally, we hired a



lesbian to replace him. She and I don't talk as much, but I made it very clear at the beginning that her girlfriend's welcome at the office; when there are social events at the office, her girlfriend is invited.

**Letellier:** So you were explicit about that?

**Brookie:** Yes. She was out in her interview, actually. So I just took that cue and said, "Bring your girlfriend, whatever," and she has. Her girlfriend bakes us cakes and brings them to the office. So I don't know, it's ones and twos.

**Letellier:** Do you think there's work that needs to be done for the benefit of gay and lesbian people on campus?

**Brookie:** That isn't being done?

**Letellier:** Yes, that needs to be done. Like recently the UC-approved domestic partner retirement benefits.

**Brookie:** That was a big one. I just moved in with my partner a few years ago, even though we've been together over fifteen years. I'm at an age when I'm starting to pay attention to retirement and all that stuff. When I first started paying attention to it, it turned out that if I died before him he would get a lump sum of my retirement, which—since I've been working there since 1984—is quite a bit of money. He'd have to pay taxes on it and that'd be the end of that, whereas if we were married, if we were straight, he'd get a pension for the rest of his life. That made me mad. I was ready to get all active around that again. I'm not all that active around too much anymore. Then it changed. Effective July 1st, he gets a pension. There's a few things left, but it's kind of at a level of detail that if I don't write it down, I forget; like, we get this and this, but we don't get this except if this... So I know there's a few things left to be done, I couldn't list them.

**Letellier:** Imagine someone in the year 2070 reading this. What would you like them to know about your life as a gay man at UCSC?

**Brookie:** With the exception of more internalized homophobia than I wish I had had, I've led a happy, comfortable, productive life at UCSC. I generally felt safe there, and generally felt respected there, but it was not without some work. I stayed because I liked it and it felt good.