

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Larry Fremin

COLLECTION: 4700.2118

IDENTIFICATION: Founding member of the Krewe of Apollo, Baton Rouge businessman

INTERVIEWERS: Melanie Russo, Elaine Maccio

SERIES: Baton Rouge's LGBTQ Community: Then and Now

INTERVIEW DATE: November 16, 2009

FOCUS DATES: 1970s - 2009

ABSTRACT:

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Introduction; Fremin is sixty-three years old; education includes Louisiana State University and business college, is now self-employed; born and raised in Baton Rouge; works as a florist; community involvement includes Krewe of Apollo and their AIDS/Crisis Fund, founder of Halloween Ball which benefits Our Lady of the Lake Children's Hospital, donations through his business to other organizations; giving back is rewarding; has been with his partner for thirteen years; his family all live in the Baton Rouge area, he has six siblings that are supportive of his lifestyle and community involvement; when his two daughters were teenagers, they told him they knew about his gay lifestyle and were fine with it; he has remained close friends with his ex-wife, they were the first couple in Louisiana to be granted joint custody of their children; cool relationship with his ex-wife's new husband and his former in-laws; came out as gay in 1974 around age twenty-nine; probably was homosexual as a young man but was dedicated to living a straight life; confiding in a married gay man who had left his wife who counselled him not to wait until his kids were older to seek a divorce, to give his wife a chance for a happy life and not be miserable with himself; agreed to a trial separation with his wife, they owned a business and worked together; wife was worried that he was working too much and had no social life, so he came out to her; they proceeded with the divorce; they were separated for a year while he lived in an apartment; he stayed busy with work; faced fears that he would be "run out of town" and would hurt his family when he came out; George's Place was a gathering place; his first time going to a gay bar he was afraid, but a man he knew from the catering business was there and introduced him to men that he's still friendly with today; met his first partner at George's; remembers the police raiding the place one night, embarrassing situation for patrons who were with the state police and state government; today things are different and more accepting; Krewe of Apollo was one of three gay clubs that started out, but two never made it to their first ball; support from owner of Boudreaux's catering facility to host Apollo's first Mardi Gras ball; all members and attendees were masked; 800 guests showed up and they had to shut down the

building; he was the first king of Apollo; they've come a long way towards acceptance, it's normal to be pictured in the newspaper now but at their first ball they were all masked, had to be closeted for their own security; has no shame about being gay; didn't know any openly gay people before coming out, had no one like him to talk to; his "gay dad" recalled not being able to invite more than three guys over for dinner or else neighbors would know you were gay and your life would be destroyed; a gay club downtown used to have protesters from a church outside on weekend nights, newspaper would be there taking pictures and Fremin had to dodge them; he probably tried to avoid controversies because he was a retail businessman; gay organizations are more prominent in bigger cities like Houston and New Orleans, "Baton Rouge has always been a little bit on the shy side"; admiration for the Metropolitan Community Church, attending services, donating flowers, bringing in new congregants, a way for him to continue practicing his Catholic faith; got very sick last year and nearly died, so he no longer has concerns about aging; can now be proud to be interviewed and say he is gay, thirty years ago he would have declined; his younger brother had the hardest time accepting that he was gay, probably because he didn't tell him right away; his brother thinks that Fremin's gay friends are the coolest; recalls reading about Stonewall Riots; feels that his sexual orientation was personal and doesn't share it with people who don't need to know about it; being a good role model and being an involved community member goes a long way towards getting people to accept gays; joking with a straight customer that came in to the flower shop asking for "the little gay guy"; conclusion.

TAPES: 1 (T3970)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 32 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 21 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Correspondence

RESTRICTIONS: None