

TAPE # LC068
Larry Courtney 04.27.08
JIM WHITAKER, Producer/director
PROJECT REBIRTH

07.00.32 PICTURE UP

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

07.04.52 LARRY COURTNEY: (MID-STATEMENT) Well, I think what happened was I up in (?) yeah, Tahoe-Truckee helping build a fence around my son's deck so that his little boy wouldn't fall through the balustrade thing. And they're surrounded by pine trees, and I didn't even realize pine had pollen, but you could actually see it coming down and that's when it all started. And ever since then, every, every summer I get these. It just, it's just stuffiness, you know? Just sinus stuffiness.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: What about 9-11 last year and what were you thinking about before?

07.06.59 LARRY COURTNEY: Well, any time I'm going to be with you and you know, or the crew, it always brings back 9-11 because that's where it all started. And so I, I just was thinking about it, and how I had never actually seen that. And the fact that I got up on 9-11 at 5 o'clock in the morning, thinking that CNN or somebody would be showing the memorial service live.

07.07.35 'Cos I know they've done it in the past. I don't know, maybe because this was 6 years instead of five, and they've stopped. But so I was flipping through the channels like crazy trying to find the memorial service. And I came across NBC on the Today Show, and they were doing, they, they did their whole show from, just showing the show of that they actually did on 9-11. And so (~JW~)

JW: Rebroadcasting the original?

07.08.11 LARRY COURTNEY: They were just rebroadcasting the original 9-11 broadcast. And, you know, the panic in their voices actually about what's going on. 'Cos at the beginning when they first, you know, I guess they first cut into it right after the first plane hit.

07.08.29 And of course nobody knew what was going on or anything. And I had never seen the footage. Because when I was at work that day, the minute the plane hit the second building, my supervisor made me leave and go back into my office, because she thought it would be too painful to me, to, to watch any more of it. And then later that day, when after the stock market shut down and so we closed.

07.09.02 And I went home and, and my best friend at work walked home with me because she lived in New Jersey and couldn't get to New Jersey. So she wouldn't let me turn on the TV. And then my supervisor came about oh, I don't know, half an hour later, and they kind of tried to divert my attention from what was going on.

07.09.30 And then my best friend, or one of my best friends in New York and she actually stayed two nights with me. And so I never, never got to see this footage. And I thought when I was watching it on 9-11 this year, that it was going to be really hard. And it wasn't. it was, it was time I guess for me to see it.

07.10.04 And when the second tower actually collapsed, I had a couple of moments. But the rest of it was more curiosity, you know? I mean, I'd heard about it all. I, you know, I'd seen blips and pieces of it, but to watch it in the actual timeline that it happened, you know.

JW: You had never seen it?

07.10.36 LARRY COURTNEY: (MID-STATEMENT) I had seen on the news, you know, pictures of the, of the second plane hitting the building, and then I had seen the towers coming down just, but not in a time line, and it was just, you know, so to actually sit and watch it as though it were happening that day, that's the first time I'd ever, ever done it.

07.11.04 And it was almost, almost healing to watch it. Which I thought was a strange reaction for me. Because I really expected, you know, to be a, a wreck. And I was by myself for the most part.

07.11.29 My roommate was there, but he was kind of in and out. And so (?) it was very early in the morning. So.

JW: How early in the morning was it?

07.11.43 LARRY COURTNEY: Well, I got up at 5 because I figured they'd start showing the ceremony at 8 in New York. You know, they'd show it live time. And so I was, it was, I watched from (?) I watched it for 3 hours, I think. And, you know, to see the, after the towers fell and everybody running and, and I had like I said, I'd only seen snippets of it on the news.

07.12.10 But to see that actually in live time and then to, to realize that the emotion I thought I was gonna be feeling - I almost didn't watch it. I almost turned it because I (?) realized what they were doing very shortly on (CLEARS THROAT).

07.12.31 But I thought, you know, you, this is time for you do to it, to watch it. And I really expected a really emotional downer, you know? And, and I didn't, I didn't feel that. I felt - for the first time I, I felt curious about seeing it. And trying to, I guess when the south tower came down, I thoughts were going through my mind was where was he?

07.13.07 You know? Did he get to a lower floor, was he still up on 102? Was it possible for him to get to a lower floor after that second plane hit? So I had some of those thoughts in my mind. And throughout the day after even watching it, I would have just when I would sit down to do something or whatever, and I would be thinking I would, that kind of thing would come into my mind, you know, did he suffer?

07.13.46 Was it instant, you know? All of those kind of things. And actually being glad I didn't know. You know? Because I, there's nothing I could do to change it, and actually knowing exactly what happened, and particularly if he suffered, I (?) don't want to know that (?) I just know that he's, he was gone, and so I'm you know, just pray that it was quick and fast. And.

JW: There was a desire to know just a couple of years ago?

07.14.33 LARRY COURTNEY: Yeah, there was. And I think (CLEARS THROAT) I've thought about it a lot. I mean, I had plenty of time to think about it. And I don't know that I would

want to know if there was a lot of pain and suffering. You know, I'd rather just think that it happened very quickly and he didn't suffer.

07.15.01 And so I think that I'm better off not knowing that, and I can just, I can just put that to rest, you know, that he's gone and, and I don't know how and I never will and that's fine. So. But you know, I did, I did go through that period. But I'm glad I'm past it. You know, that was, I don't think it was a healthy thing to try to think.

07.15.30 I don't think you know, people who lose a loved one say in a car accident or, or any, or you know, any violent, sudden death. I think you go through a period where you want to know exactly what happened and then you don't. I don't know if that's true for everybody. But it would seem to me that that, that would be the way, the way that most people would deal with it.

07.16.02 I, I shouldn't really say that 'cos it, it's the way I dealt with it.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: It's common to want a certain amount of understanding about it, but there's also some comfort in not knowing?

07.16.50 LARRY COURTNEY: I do, and (?) it is, it is more comforting for me now not to know. Like I said, there's nothing I could do to change it, even if I did know. And if there were some way that, that I could actually see what happened to him, you know, I don't think I'd want to now. I would rather just let it go and, and sort of be at peace with it, you know, (?) there's nothing I can do about it.

JW: Why do you suppose there would be comfort in knowing?

07.17.36 LARRY COURTNEY: Yeah, and a couple of years ago, like you say, that I, I thought that that would be the most comforting thing for me, to actually know exactly what happened. And I think that now, looking back at it, had I actually, say, say there was a survivor that was with him.

- 07.18.03 And then they, they got out and he didn't, and they knew exactly what happened to him. I don't think I would want to talk to that person about it. I don't think I'd want to hear you know, horror stories or any, I actually, when shortly after, well, maybe it was about 4 months after 9-11, somebody emailed me a piece that this guy had written.
- 07.18.35 And I don't remember any names, but he had actually gotten out with a co-worker, and they had passed just indescribable horrors in the hallways, and with the jet fuel and the, and the burns and all of that. And he described it fairly graphically. And then they're getting out and, and getting away.
- 07.19.03 And I thought, I don't want to, I don't want to think that, you know, Gene was standing beside the elevator shaft and was burned to death, you know? I don't want to know that, really. I don't, now I don't think that would be any comfort to me whatsoever. You know? I'd rather, like I say, I'd rather just say it, it happened, and there's, there's no knowing and there's no need to know now at this point.
- 07.19.42 You know, I, when his, like, DNA was identified, and I actually was able to you know, inter him in a, in a columbarium, it kind of that's, that's when my thoughts began to change about it.
- 07.20.07 At least I, I knew that, you know, there was proof that he had, he was there, and he, you know, and that's. It took me awhile after that, but finally I would, I came to the conclusion that you know, it's just, he is gone, and knowing exactly what happened to him just would not help me.

JW: Was there an anger that you felt towards him in a way?

- 07.21.07 LARRY COURTNEY: Yeah. Well, and I think that that's, I've seen that in other people that have lost somebody tragically, you know, why, why were you there? Why, why didn't you get away, why didn't you get out? Why, you know, your car is submerged, why didn't you break the window and why, why couldn't you, you know, save yourself?
- 07.21.32 And there was that anger because I knew Gene, and I know that if there was one last elevator going down, he was putting other people on it before him. You know? And so I, I had to work through that to realize that that's what he would have done.

- 07.22.01 And like why should I be angry at something that I can't control? I think that if there's one thing I've learned about anger is that it takes an enormous amount of energy to sustain. And I'm just not willing to waste that energy on, on anger. I have a couple of family members who do not speak to each other.
- 07.22.32 They've held this grudge for like ten years or (?) maybe longer. And nobody really remembers how it started. But they, they're angry with each other and they don't talk, and you can see it in them in their body language all the time. And I think why do you do that, you know? Why do you waste that energy? It is not productive, it's not, not doing you any good, it's doing your body harm, basically, you know?
- 07.23.04 So I just, I, I had to release any anger I had. I remember shortly after 9-11, I was interviewed by a, a German documentary film, firm, and they asked me if I was angry at the Arabs and at the people who actually flew the planes into the building.
- 07.23.30 And I had to really stop and think, and I said, no. I'm not. I mean, what they did was horrible, but why should I use all that energy to be so angry all the time, you know? 'Cos that's something that wouldn't go away. You know? So I just, I just can't support it.

JW: Why was seeing the rebroadcast healing for you?

- 07.24.35 LARRY COURTNEY: Well, because I guess because I hadn't seen it. And this was kind of a finalization, to actually watch in that timeline and to know that there was nothing to be done, it was, it was already happening.
- 07.24.58 It was just, I don't want to say I wasn't, I was calm or you know, totally rational about it the whole time, but looking back on it, I needed to see that. And that's as much as I needed to see. You know, I (CLEARS THROAT) I didn't have to go to a morgue to identify a body. I didn't have to see the mashed car, you know?
- 07.25.29 But to actually see those buildings come down and know that the people that escaped were so lucky and there was no chance for those people still inside, you know? It was, I don't know it just gave me a different way to look at things, I think.
- 07.26.00 Instead of looking back and, and being angry about not knowing what happened to him and everything, just, just to see it. And I don't know if I can explain it. It just, maybe, maybe that was my, my time to go to the morgue.

- 07.26.37 Instead of going to the morgue, I saw what actually happened, you know, or instead of looking at the car wreck, I saw, I saw what happened. And it just, it just kind of, I don't know.
- 07.26.56 It just, it just kind of released something in me that, that allowed me to feel better about the whole and that's, that's not the right word. But maybe to, to feel a circle being completed, you know, it's something that, I don't know, it just, it just was helpful for me to see it.
- 07.27.32 I guess (?) and know what happened, even though I didn't know what happened to him exactly. Maybe that's, maybe that was the, what we were getting out earlier is that I, I didn't have to know what happened to him exactly, but I knew what happened, you know, the events that happened.

JW: You hadn't processed the events like others who had seen them over and over?

- 07.28.39 LARRY COURTNEY: That's kind of it. Because all of America saw that footage over and over and over again, you know, they played it all the time - for weeks - on every news channel and you know, you would see some part of it or whatever. And like I said, I, I was not allowed to see it, basically.
- 07.29.01 I mean, people took control of me and, and really didn't let me see that.

JW: Did you want to?

- 07.29.07 LARRY COURTNEY: No. I, I was fine with that. It wasn't until later, much later, and I, like I say, this, this year when I found it, I finally decided, you know, I can, I can see this. I need to see this.
- 07.29.27 And I think that I had told Danielle, maybe a year ago, or I had asked her if you had access to that footage, you know, from beginning to end. And I think she said you probably did, and that asked me if I was really ready to see that. And that it could be arranged if, and then I, I didn't, I didn't push it any farther, because I, I guess at that, actually saying at that point I wasn't sure that I was ready to see it (~JW~)

JW: You weren't sure either?

- 07.30.09 LARRY COURTNEY: Yeah, (I'm sure not?). But then actually seeing it in, you know, sitting there I was still in my robe, you know, and I was just absolutely riveted to see what happened.
- 07.30.29 It just, it was. I guess the feeling I had was the fascination people have when they go by an accident and they have to slow down and look and see what happened and everything. Well, I had to watch this, you know, it was just like I couldn't (?) once I realized what was happening, I couldn't turn it off, you know? I could have kept searching for the memorial service.
- 07.31.00 But I couldn't turn it off, I realized it's time for me to see this. It's, it's really time for me to see this. And I'm glad I did, you know? I don't have all the, you know, if you don't see what happens or have a complete description of what happens, you're always kind of wondering. What, what exactly how did it go, what did, what you know?
- 07.31.31 But being able to actually see it and in the actual timeline, that, that was important to me.

JW: Did any one thing stick out for you?

- 07.31.51 LARRY COURTNEY: Well, obviously the plane hitting his building. Which I had seen that day. Because that's, I was watching it out on the trading floor and then after the plane hit the second building is when my supervisor took me away. But to actually see it in that, in that frame, that was really very difficult and then to see the buildings fall and to see the, the panic in the streets.
- 07.32.30 You know, I, knew about that. And I didn't realize, you know, the amount of dust and stuff that covered everything and the clouds of dust that came out, 'til really watching that. And it was, it was amazing.
- 07.32.56 Not in a good way, but it was, it was something that you know, is (?) bound to impact you to know that those people were running for their lives. And not knowing what else was going, coming, you know? So I, I guess maybe probably the, that was what, what struck me most was after the towers came down and, and people were running and, and you could see the dust clouds and, and covering cars and, and you know, covering people and the absolute panic.

07.33.37 I, I hadn't really, really seen that before. I hadn't, and I remember seeing news clips of Giuliani and, and his crew running and holding things to their face so they could breathe. And, but I didn't realize the scope of it, you know? And then, you know, it, it was just, that, that was incredible to me.

JW: What's been going on since last year?

07.34.20 LARRY COURTNEY: Well. Since September 12th of last year, I have joined a church, a United Church of Christ, which is an open and affirming church. They have, we're celebrating our tenth year this year, our tenth anniversary of. Each congregation had to vote to, to accept this doctrine of open and affirming, and we did it ten years ago. This particular church did it. And which means they're open and affirming to everybody.

07.35.00 You know? All races, creeds, we have some Buddhists. We have you know, four or five different races. We have an age group from, you know, one to 90. We have straight, we have gay. And everybody is, is just, we're just a, a family, you know? And actually going to that church for awhile before that, before I decided to join (CLEARS THROAT) I just felt welcomed in.

07.35.36 You know? And I made no bones about it that I was gay, you know, and then I met the associate pastor who is lesbian and she and her partner are there. And we have several other gay couples in the church. And so I, I just felt really that that was the place I wanted to be.

07.36.03 And since then, I have joined the hand bell choir, so I play hand bells. And I volunteer in the church office one day a week, and then I fill in if some of the volunteers can't make it on a particular day, 'cos I have a pretty open schedule for the most part for that. And just help around you know, do whatever needs to be done.

07.36.31 And it's a fairly large congregation there, about 385 members. And obviously not all of them are there every Sunday, but it's a very thriving congregation and they do a lot of community work. We do, we have a couple of children's homes that we supply Christmas gifts to and Easter baskets and things like that.

07.37.03 We collect food for (STOPS) Anyway, a charitable organization. And then we work with Habitat for Humanity. I think we've built like five homes.

07.37.25 And we also do, go if somebody is really in need of having their house painted and, say, they're elderly or can't afford it or whatever, then we'll go and paint the house and help, you know, spruce up the inside if it needs to be or build ramps if, if they need wheelchair access. And then they're very engaged in the Gay Pride movement,

07.38.00 and we have a booth at the festival every year. I think they've done that for the past 5 years, something like that. And march in the Gay Pride and sing at the festival, the choir sings. So it's very, a very inclusive church. And I have always gone to church. Ever since I was oh, I can't remember not going.

07.38.31 I didn't go as often in New York as the rest of my life. But so I needed to find a place that I felt, and, and a place that could help me increase my spirituality. Not necessarily my religion, but my spirituality.

JW: What's the distinction?

07.39.00 LARRY COURTNEY: Religion to me is something that is a dogma, more or less. That you, I think you can be very religious but not have any spirituality. Sometimes I hear, well, I was, I was talking to my roommate this morning or after I got back from church today, and I don't know what brought it up.

07.39.29 But I said, well, do you remember after Hurricane Katrina this one pastor who said that the hurricane was God's wrath on New Orleans for being such a sinful city? And he said yeah, I do remember that. And I said, you know, that's not, that's not anything I believe. That's a religious belief that I just don't hold. It just is not something I can get my, I don't you know, I don't believe in all this wrath and vengeance.

07.40.03 So I (?) separate the two, from those people who claim to be very religious as opposed to having an open spirit and seeking the truth. Not, and not always finding it, but you seek it and it's, it's a lifelong journey. And I think that that's the difference between just sitting down with the Bible and saying this is what it says, and this is what you must do.

07.40.34 And I'm not sure that that's being spiritual. That's being religious, to me. And that's how I kind of separate it, you know, this strict dogma-driven. And, and plus and then on the other side you have the actual seeking of Truth.

- 07.41.01 And I think that that's what my life is about - a journey toward my truth. It may not be anybody else's, but it'll be, it's my truth. And I try to, I try to look at all sides of things, so that I can, I can try to determine what is my truth.
- 07.41.31 Which doesn't mean I'm running off to start my own church of Me, Myself and I. But within the, the community of believers, to, to get to the place where I feel is, is truth for me, and so I think that that's what I consider spirituality.

JW: What is a description of where you are right now in searching for your truth?

- 07.42.15 LARRY COURTNEY: My truth? (LAUGHS) Well, I believe in a Creator.
- 07.42.32 In a higher power, and in our church, some people call him Creator, some, some people call her, some people call, you know, (?) just many, many different things that, that specifies a higher power of some sort.
- 07.42.57 And my journey is to understand what that higher power wants from me and what I can give back. Giving by worship is one (thing?) one way of giving back. Being involved in the community, searching for peace, searching for patience.
- 07.43.37 Trying to live a life that I feel is pleasing. And pleasing to me. Now that doesn't necessarily mean that I can't smoke, I can't drink, I can't whatever.
- 07.44.01 That's not, that's not what I'm all about. It's what am I doing to build myself up, and at the same time, build up others around me. I feel a very strong calling to help other gay people understand that God does not hate them, and they don't have to turn their back.
- 07.44.33 So many religious people tell them they're going to hell because they're gay. Because they (?) they're an abomination, etcetera (CLEARS THROAT). I don't, and I have talked to many, many gay men specifically, that they just, they're not going to church. They're not, they don't want any part of it because they've been told they're not welcome, basically.
- 07.45.01 And I feel that if I can sit down and talk one-to-one, that maybe I can, I can tell that person that they are loved, they are cared for, they're not, they don't have to believe that they're perverted or you know, or listen to this kind of thing, that they are accepted.
- 07.45.31 And that's what I would, you know, I really feel strongly about being able to do. It's a little difficult (LAUGHS) and it, it really has to be almost a one to one, because you get a group of gay men together who have been you know, basically told they're not welcome anywhere.

And you (?) don't, no matter what you say, you're not gonna make any headway because you're getting, you're gonna be attacked in one sense or another.

07.46.03 And if I can sit down and tell that person you know, I, I love you just the way you are, and I know that your Creator, he didn't create you to hate you. You know? I don't mean that as a slogan, I just but (~JW~)

JW: It sounded like one?

07.46.18 LARRY COURTNEY: Yeah, it does, it does. But He or She or whatever, if, if you were created as a gay man, then don't feel rejected by your Creator, you know? That's how I feel. I know that I am loved and welcomed, and I was created as a gay person. I didn't let myself go there for many years, but once I realized, I was OK. You know? And I'm loved and you know, I'm cherished, and that's the way I was created.

07.47.05 So I just, that's the message I would like to, to be able to bring to gay men who feel rejected. Who feel that the church has let them down. I don't want them to think the Creator has let them down. It's the church that's let them down, whatever you know, that's what (?) that's the way I see my life going, anyway, or at least I hope so.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

07.47.43 END OF TAPE # LC068

08.00.25 PICTURE UP

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: How long do you think you've had that calling?

08.00.46 LARRY COURTNEY: I think I've had it for awhile. And I, it was finally put into perspective for me, when (~JW~)

JW: (RESTATE RESPONSE)

- 08.01.01 LARRY COURTNEY: . I think, I think I've felt that somehow or other, when I hear gay people talking about religion, it's always been offsetting to me because it's not how I see it at all. And so for, for many years, I've felt that I, I wasn't sure I was the one to speak out to anybody.
- 08.01.38 But I felt that somebody had to tell these people who were so against religion, basically, that that's not what it was all about. But I didn't, I didn't.
- 08.02.01 I didn't know if I had any words to say to people, to help them. I mean, I'm not a councilor, I'm not trained to do anything. But about a year and a half ago, I attended a human sexuality course for people with HIV.
- 08.02.28 It was (?) not a course, it was like a seminar. And it was, I think, six weeks, once a week, on Wednesday nights. And they're a group of I think there were 9 of us. And religion wasn't part of the, of the course at all. I mean, we were talking about dealing with HIV.
- 08.03.00 And, you know, revealing the status and who do you reveal it to and, and whatever (CLEARS THROAT). But I would hear so many people, so many of (?) these guys say that they don't want anything to do with church, you know, they were just, they, they had had it with being preached against and all of this. And I didn't speak out.
- 08.03.28 Because you know, everybody tells you don't talk religion and politics. And so I didn't speak out. But I didn't, I think there was one time when I said I'm you know, I attend church regularly and, and you know, this is something that I enjoy and it's, it's fulfilling to me. And but I didn't go any further than that. And it was after the course was actually over that I thought, well, who's going to, who is going to reach out?
- 08.04.05 Who am I waiting for to reach out to these people? While waiting for somebody to come riding in on a white horse and you know, talk to each. So when I went to see Reverend Nate Miller about joining the church, we had a long conversation.
- 08.04.32 And he asked me where I felt my ministry led, was, was going. And he said, you may not have thought about it, it may not be something you can answer at this point. And it just came to me while I was sitting there talking to him that I knew what I was supposed to be doing. You know? I, I should not be sitting on the sidelines waiting for somebody else to talk to people who are hurting.

- 08.05.07 Because every time these guys talked about religion, you could, you could feel the hurt. You know, they had been hurt at some point and so they were, you know, as several of them were Catholic and couple of Baptists and things like that. And you could tell that in their religious experience, they had been hurt.
- 08.05.30 And who, what am I waiting for you know? Why can't I attempt to express love and compassion and, you know, I'm not out to convert anybody. But to me, the, the love of my Creator is the most important and constant thing in my life.
- 08.06.05 And so I just feel that that's, that's the calling, you know? When I was young, or when I was in, actually when I was in the Air Force I actually considered after I got out of the Air Force, going, finishing my bachelor's degree and going on to divinity school and becoming a minister.
- 08.06.37 And things didn't happen that way and, you know, I ended up you know, with, with the three children and not being able to go back to school and I, I did finish my bachelor's but that's as far as I could go. So that didn't happen.
- 08.06.57 And you know, I think it happened for a reason. That's just not what I was supposed to be doing. So I, I feel that after, after dealing with so many gay people who are turned off, you know, and feel hurt, that maybe I can do something about that. And maybe it's only gonna be one person. You know?
- 08.07.27 If I could help one person release the hurt and realize that they are loved and cared for, then I would feel accomplished, you know?

JW: Did your church have a hand in the understanding of that?

LARRY COURTNEY: Yeah. I think so.

JW: You said to release the hurt?

- 08.08.17 LARRY COURTNEY: In a way, yeah. I mean, like I said, I've always been involved in church in some way or other. When I was, when the kids were young, we went to a Baptist church that was a Pentecostal Baptist church.

- 08.08.40 And they were very fundamental in, you know, if it says it in the Bible then that's exactly what it means. And I remember that, this was in Oregon, and at some point there was a law (?) proposed to end sexual discrimination in the workplace, (?) sexual orientation.
- 08.09.12 And the church organized a group of people to go down to Salem on the bus, well, I think several buses, to protest this bill. And I thought at the time, how can you do that?
- 08.09.35 How can you discriminate against another group of people? You know? We have black people in the congregation, you're not discriminating against them? Why are you discriminating against this group of people, which in the back of my mind I knew that I was a part of.
- 08.09.57 And not being able to express it at that point and not, I think I just (?) there were reasons that I didn't, and so I, I carried that around with me for a long time, as being very hurtful.
- 08.10.25 And it wasn't after, until after I came out and was still involved in, in a church, and even though it, I didn't come out publically, pretty much everybody in the church knew that I was gay. But they didn't care, you know? And I was able to, through that community and the loving acceptance, I was able to release that hurt, you know, that I had been carrying around and not even knowing it was there.
- 08.11.04 Not even remembering it, it was there. Occasionally, there would be, something would happen and I would think about that (CLEARS THROAT). But being able to release that, just, just was mind-blowing in, in one sense in that, that's something that I didn't have to carry around anymore, you know?
- 08.11.30 And I would like to be able to tell other people you don't have to carry that, you know? You don't have to feel that. And hopefully I'll get that chance, one way or another.

JW: How's your health?

- 08.11.55 LARRY COURTNEY: Very good. (~JW~). I went to the doctor, it's been almost a month now. And all the tests came back very positive. And he said as far as I'm concerned, I am just treating a 62-year old man with high cholesterol who smokes. He said, all your other issues are non-issues at this point. So I feel really good.
- 08.12.33 I mentioned that, about the, the neuropathy which causes a great deal of discomfort, but it's something you learn to live with. And but otherwise, I, you know, I feel great.

JW: Was there a tricky thing about your health and insurance that happened?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

- 08.13.33 LARRY COURTNEY: . Well, when I left my job in New York, you know, I had COBRA payments for my insurance. And they were running nearly \$500 a month. So I was paying that. And I paid it for actually 3, 3 years.
- 08.13.55 The normal is 18 months, but because I was a New York resident, or California resident, I don't remember, it was extended an additional 18 months. So at least I had good health coverage. And then I was looking for affordable health coverage as a single you know, non-employed person. And it's just prohibitive, you know? So actually my COBRA ran out.
- 08.14.29 And so I, and I ran out of medication. And so for about three months, I had no medication. And my feet got to the point where they were just intolerable. I got sick. It was like a really bad flu that I couldn't shake.
- 08.15.03 And then I developed a blood clot in my leg. And I had to be hospitalized for like 5 days. But oh - I'm sorry. That's. In the meantime, somebody, one of my good friends and now I'm (?) I think it was Oliver, said to me weren't you in the Air Force?
- 08.15.45 And I said yeah. And he said, well, then you should check with the Veteran's Administration. And I said, well, I'm you know, I'm not really a war vet. I just was in the Air Force during the Vietnam war, but, he said well, I, I think you qualify.
- 08.16.02 So I went out to the Veteran's hospital, and I was feeling just horrible. And had, my daughter, Heather, went with me. And we talked to the administrator, or one of the administrators, and she said, well, fill out this form. Ok. You, you're all set. And I said what do you mean, well I'm all set. She said, well, you're covered by the Vets, because you, you served over two years.
- 08.16.33 And, and I started that day. And I went to the doctor. And he immediately prescribed the new meds. Well, they were the same meds, but, and I got them that day. And I started taking them, and I got better except for the blood clot.
- 08.17.03 And then I ended up hospitalized for five days. And but they (LAUGHS) take really good care of me, you know? The doctors are terrific. I've never, when I, when I thought about the

Vets' hospital, the Veterans' Hospital, and you know, there was all the scandal about Walter Reed and, and the terrible conditions there.

08.17.33 And I went to the Vets hospital at Stanford and it's only 2 or 3 years old. It's bright and clean and the most wonderful people work there. And I thought that it was gonna be like doing to DMV. And getting some cranky old lady who's been sitting behind her desk for 50 years and doesn't want to help anybody.

08.18.00 It's not like that at all. They're just, I have not met one person that was not just kind and, you know, helpful. And so it, it was just such a great relief, you know, to know that this is something now that, and it's very affordable, you know? There are just small charges for this and that, and for medications. But it's extremely affordable and it just lifted such a burden, you know, of not being insured, not having the medications.

08.18.36 And I knew that if I didn't have the medications for a long period of time, I would simply die. I would, I would go downhill to AIDS and then I would die. And so that, that was like it, it was life-saving in so many ways, so many ways.

JW: How touch-and-go did it get?

08.19.27 LARRY COURTNEY: . (MID-STATEMENT) I stayed in the house. I got extremely depressed. And I just had, I just felt like I had flu all the time. You know? Some days were better than others, but I just literally felt rotten for those three months. And well, not right, not immediately, but as soon as everything wore out of my system, basically because what happens is the, your viral load just shoots up.

JW: What is that?

08.20.01 LARRY COURTNEY: Your viral load is the determination of how, how many parts of virus to so many parts of blood, or I, I don't know how they do the formula. But my viral load shot up to 35,000 which is extremely high. And right now it is undetectable in my body.

08.20.29 They, it's, it's so miniscule that they don't, they can't find it in, in tests. So and that's what the, the protease inhibitors do, is and then it also works on your T-cell count, which are your

white blood cells. And a normal person has (?) over 1500 of the, of white blood cells to I don't know, again, I don't know that formula.

08.21.01 But anyway, 1500 is the number of a normal person. And it used to be when you dropped down to 400, you were categorized as having full-blown AIDS. Now it's down to 200 because of the medications. So my T-cell count had actually dropped below 200. And we have now been able to bring that back up substantially with the medications.

08.21.30 And like I say, my viral load, that's what they call it, is your viral load. And (CLEAR S THROAT) and that's undetectable, so that's why my doctor says basically you're a 62-year old man that I have to treat, you know?

JW: Did you tell Heather at the time?

08.21.46 LARRY COURTNEY: Oh, yeah, Heather knew. (~I~) Well, I didn't tell her immediately.

JW: Why?

08.21.54 LARRY COURTNEY: Because I was embarrassed that I didn't, I didn't have the money for the health insurance, I didn't, you know, and I didn't tell her that I ran out of pills. And, but and I got sicker and sicker, you know, then she, she hounded me, you know, basically. And I told her, told her yes I'm out. And I don't know how I'm gonna be able to do this. And that's, that's when we, she went online immediately and she was searching everywhere for insurance coverage. And, and then finally when I talked to Oliver, you know, that's when the Vets came up.

08.22.30 So but I, I just didn't, and I didn't want to worry her, you know, which was stupid on my part because she was more worried just because she didn't know what was going on. So I've learned (LAUGHS) don't, don't hide anything from Heather. She'll find out, you know? But she's been really, really supportive of me.

08.23.00 I mean, she, when I had my, my blood clot and, and wasn't feeling well, she I mean, she would come over to the house and fix me something to eat, and 'cos I really, number one I didn't have any appetite, number two, I didn't have the strength to stand up long enough to fix food. And then (~I~)

JW: You had no strength to get up, living in your house?

- 08.23.31 LARRY COURTNEY: That's basically it. I really didn't have the energy to do anything. I basically stayed in my apartment for 3 months. I would, I would make myself, at some times go to the store to try to find you know, quick (?) microwavable stuff, you know?
- 08.23.58 So that, but most of the time I just didn't even have the energy to do that. And I didn't have any appetite, so that was, I lost, I lost about 25 pounds during that period of time. It's not a diet I suggest for anybody. But I lost a lot of weight. And I, I just had no energy whatsoever. So as long as I had, you know, some food in the house.
- 08.24.36 And I was drinking protein drinks. Just made myself do that. And I (?) just, you know, it's all a downward spiral when you feel that bad and you, and you have no energy and you get depressed about it and then you feel worse and you get more depressed, and I just you know, I didn't even want people to come over.
- 08.25.05 You know? I just was, I would rather just sit in my chair or lay on my couch and, you know, not have to deal with anybody. But luckily, that, that is behind me. And I hope to never be there again (LAUGHS).

JW: Was there a point where you thought you would die?

- 08.25.31 LARRY COURTNEY: Yeah. I did. I thought, you know, this is, if I can't do anything about this situation, then the inevitable will happen, you know? I mean, I do know of people who are HIV-positive, who don't take any medication and they're fine. But the very fact that the medication worked so well on me and the not having it, I thought, yeah, I'll probably this, I'll probably not survive this.
- 08.26.11 And I actually (?) I actually took enough time to get my papers together. My will and, and you know, the health proxy, and my burial situation, and get it all together so that if that time came, you know, it was all in one spot, somebody could reach it and know what to do about it.
- 08.26.39 And I, that was just I think part of the depression, you know? I, I didn't feel suicidal, but I just felt that if I can't do something about this, then the inevitability of it is that I will die.

And. So I, I just, that's, you know, that's the place I was in. And, and that totally turned around once I was back on the medications. You know?

JW: Did Gene come up in the middle of all this?

08.27.23 LARRY COURTNEY: Well, when you lay around, you know, and don't do anything, you have, you know, all these things going through your mind all the time of all, every different thing. And you know, my missing him, you know, thinking about I remembered how, how much he cared for me when I was in the hospital in Oregon with a viral infection. And he stayed in the hospital room for 9 nights. You know?

08.28.00 Never left the hospital the whole time I was there. And (~I~)

JW: Have we discussed that incident?

08.28.07 LARRY COURTNEY: It was (?) well, you know what? Because I, I don't know that we ever have. But it was April of 2001. And Gene and I went back to Oregon for a family reunion. And the first day I was there, I, I wasn't feeling well when we left New York. I thought I had had a bad cold.

08.28.34 And then flying didn't help it. And so the morning after we got there, I got in the shower, and I collapsed. And literally tore down my mother's shower curtain and I couldn't get up. I just could not get up.

08.28.59 I did not have the strength to get up. And so I had, my brother was there, and Gene and my mother. So I had Gene call 9-11 and then call my insurance, or call my office to make sure that they understood I was going in for an emergency and that I was covered (CLEAR'S THROAT).

08.29.34 And so then he had to, he literally had to get me dressed because I didn't, I couldn't do it. And so they took me to the hospital and discovered that I had severe viral pneumonia. Which had nothing to do with HIV, it wasn't a bacterial pneumonia. It was, it was caused by some virus.

08.29.59 So I was in the hospital for 9 days with a chest tube, and I was pretty much out of it at the beginning. I don't remember too much of it at the beginning. But I do somewhere in the back

of mind telling, the doctor telling Gene that it was pretty serious and if this chest tube didn't work, then they were gonna have to do something else.

08.30.31 I don't remember what else that was. But so but it, it got better, you know, I mean, they, they treated it with, and not antibiotics because that doesn't work on viruses, but something anyway. And I got better, but I was in the hospital for 9 days. Then we had to fly back, and the only way the doctor would let me fly back to New York was if I arranged, or Gene arranged, for a wheelchair at the airport to get me on and off the planes.

08.31.09 And that I was not to go back to work. And so when I got back to New York, I went to see my doctor in New York. And he told me that he thought that I should go on full disability.

08.31.29 That I should never go back to work. That the stress and strain, and I said I'm only at that time, I was 6 years ago, so I was only 56 years old. And I said I, I can't go on disability at 56. I can work. You know? I don't, I'm, I don't have a strenuous job that where you know, I'm running up and down or carrying things.

08.31.59 I sit at my desk and punch numbers. You know? And he said well, at any rate, you're not going back to work until I, until I tell you you can go back to work. So he let me go back to work part time the first of July. And I was only supposed to go in for four hours, no more. And I tried to stick to that schedule, but you know, once you get to the office, you.

08.32.32 And I was feeling good. But I had a lot of trouble walking. That's when the peripheral neuropathy really kicked in. And they say that that's common if you're in, if you're laying in a hospital bed for a long period of time and not moving. (CLEARS THROAT) So I had to walk with a cane. And so I would go in and do my 4 or 5 hours and then go home and rest.

08.33.00 And then he finally let me go back to work full time September 1st of 2001. (LAUGHS) And I worked for 10 days and then 9-11 happened. So but it was, it was very serious.

08.33.26 And luckily, you know, the hospital was, was excellent and the doctors knew what they were doing.

JW: Gene was with you during the whole time?

08.33.41 LARRY COURTNEY: That you know, he had taken such good care of me. And, and he wasn't there, and I missed him, you know? And you know, that, it wasn't a constant, but it was definitely there. You know?

JW: Was there a point where things turned around and you went into the church?

LARRY COURTNEY: After that hospitalization?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

08.35.02 LARRY COURTNEY: No, I had been (~I~) because I, that's when I was living in New York (~I~) but I had been very involved in church up until the time we moved to New York (~I~)

JW: Was that a dark moment for you?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

08.35.33 LARRY COURTNEY: Yeah, I think (?) second to 9-11 maybe. But I had actually been looking at churches before that, before that happened here. And not wholehearted, you know? But I felt like that I needed to get back into that community of faith. And I (?) had been visiting churches and I, I hadn't found anything that really.

08.36.13 So then, then when I got sick, I kind of put that out of my mind as, as you know, when I can pray in my own home, you know, by myself. I don't. But then after I got well, and back on medications, again I, I started visiting just sporadically.

08.36.46 But then I visited the church that I finally ended up in. And I thought, this isn't what I'm used to, because I was coming out of that Lutheran tradition that has a ritual and a, you know, a liturgy. And this (?) is a congregational church and there's, there's no ritual that, I mean, the most ritual we have is that the ministers actually wear robes.

08.36.19 But so when I first went, I thought, well, I don't know, you know, I like, I like the feel of it. I like the, the people they were friendly. But where's, where's my liturgy? You know, where's my, you know?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: You were getting openness and longing for the tradition?

- 08.37.47 LARRY COURTNEY: Yeah. I, you know, I was longing for, ok, we do this, then we do this, and then we sing this and then we, then we sing this and then we say this and then, you know, it's written out in the, in the book.
- 08.37.59 And it had, it had real meaning for me because even though it, it's written out, if you, you know, give it your whole heart, then those words come alive and they have real meaning for you. And this, and at a congregational church they don't do that. You know? I mean, there's, there's a prescribed order and which we pretty much stick to, but not all the time.
- 08.38.27 It changes. And I mean, you know, we, we have a prayer and then we sing a hymn and then, you know, the, the children's sermon and then the main sermon. And but they don't all (?) they're not written down as a liturgy sort of. So I was thinking, you know, is, is this what I want to do? So then I revisited the Lutheran church that's very close to there. And even though I enjoyed the liturgy I felt a coldness.
- 08.39.04 You know? There just was no warmth. And so then I went back to the congregational church, and then I started just attending fairly regularly, you know? But I was, I was traveling a lot at that point, and so whenever I was home, I normally went on Sunday mornings, and that's about all. You know, I just went to church, sat in the back pew or, you know, and, and just interacted a little bit with people but not much.
- 08.39.37 And then after I'd been there awhile, I decided, you know, this something that I need to make a commitment to. This is something that I, I feel is, is the right place for me to be. I think that the teaching I'm getting, the, the guidance I'm getting, I need to be a part of that, a (?) and make a formal commitment, and so that's when I went and talked to Reverend Nate.
- 08.40.08 I don't know that that three-month dark period speeded up the process. It certainly didn't, didn't slow it down. But (LAUGHS). I don't know if my reflection on that - perhaps maybe because I was so grateful to be feeling better and to know that place I had been and didn't ever want to go back there.
- 08.40.42 That I wanted to be around a community of people who, you know, loved and accepted and felt like a second family.

- 08.40.59 You know, I, I felt, I feel a lot of the same support from, from this congregation that, as I feel for my children, you know in a different way. But, but the, the support is there. I know that if, if something like that were to happen to me again, that the minister would be there. They would organize food. You know, all of those kind of things. That's, that's what we do. You know? That's, that's what the church does.
- 08.41.31 And so I, I kind of see them as an extension of my family. And I've gotten to know some of the people really well. There are a lot of people that I really haven't gotten to know well. I still can't remember names. But it's, it's just, it's. I don't know.
- 08.41.59 I, I think that everybody, or almost everybody, I shouldn't say everybody, most people want a family. You know, whether it's their own children or whether it's brothers and sisters or you know, just a mother and father, that's, they need that closeness of family. And I think in my case, because of the way I've, I feel about my faith and this journey that I was talking about, that I needed, I need to be part of this larger family.
- 08.42.40 And that, that's what I feel this, this particular group is, that they're, they're a community that is a family. And like in the prayers this morning, we have a couple of people in the hospital.
- 08.43.02 And there were people who were praying for that person, but then afterwards I heard people talking about, you know, when they come home from the hospital, we'll set it up so that she doesn't have to cook, or he doesn't have to cook, or whatever. And we'll make sure that they have food and we'll have a, the regular visitation schedule so that that person's not alone.
- 08.43.33 And so, you know, it's, that's, that's the kind of, that's the kind of group this, this is, and I really want to be a part of that, you know?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

08.44.14 END OF TAPE # LC069

09.00.33 PICTURE UP

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: Was there a darkest moment for you?

09.01.27 LARRY COURTNEY: Well, you know, I mean, when I finally came to the realization that you know, I didn't have those meds and I had been without them for awhile, and I didn't see how I was gonna get them, and that I, I was probably gonna die, that, that was like, you know, and that's when, that's when I found out about the Vet's, you know?

09.02.13 But I guess I had to go, go to that place just to be able to listen to it. And to think, you know, why didn't I think of that before, you know? (~I~)

09.02.31 Because I could have saved all of that COBRA money that I had been paying for 3 years had I gone to the Veterans' hospital and applied for Veterans' assistance or whatever it is, instead of being on COBRA. You know? I could have saved that \$500 a month for a long period of time. But I didn't know that, and why didn't I think about that?

JW: If you knew it was going to end, why?

09.03.13 LARRY COURTNEY: Well, you know, I never, I never knew it was going to come to an end.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

09.03.21 LARRY COURTNEY: (MID-STATEMENT) That is how it works, that is how it works. But in the back of my mind, there was always hope that somehow or other I was gonna be able to get, get back on the medication. And before it got so far gone that I, I couldn't be helped. And.

JW: It was all coming together at once?

09.03.48 LARRY COURTNEY: Yeah. There was nothing, nothing was working for me, you know? My medications, if I had to pay for them over the counter, well, now it'd be even more, but when I was in New York, it was something like \$1700 a month.

- 09.04.08 And that's, I was only taking 3 medications at that point. Now I'm taking 6. So you know, there's no way I would have been able to afford the medications on my own. And I couldn't afford the health insurance, either.
- 09.04.28 So I did not see any way out of it, you know? I, I (?) had hope, I've always had hope. But it was stretched pretty thin. When you can't see, you know, a way out of, out of the bottom of the barrel, then you kind of just sink into it, you know?
- 09.04.58 And the, the darker it gets the more you just sort of withdraw and, and let it kind of take (?) you over. But always there was hope, always there was some ray of hope. You know? And part of that, I think was that at no time during that, that period did I lose my faith.
- 09.05.33 And so I think I probably prayed harder during (LAUGHS) that period of my life than I ever have prayed before. But so that, you know, that, that glimmer of hope was always there. And, and I didn't know, you know, I didn't, I didn't know if that's, if that was gonna be my time or not.
- 09.05.59 And I just, I was prepared for it. I was not, not afraid of it. You know? I was more afraid of, of what that would do to my kids, you know? But still, still maintaining that hope.

JW: Were you looking for a job at that time?

- 09.06.33 LARRY COURTNEY: I had, I had looked for a job when I first moved to California. Well, not at the very beginning. At the very beginning, I just sort of enjoyed a period of retirement and traveling with my brother and that kind of thing. (CLEARS THROAT) And then I had thought about starting my own consulting business, and just doing accounting for small, you know, small businesses or I know when, back in New York I went to a therapist for awhile
- 09.07.10 and she was by herself, but she had hired this woman to do her accounting. And this woman messed up some, she didn't, she didn't credit my account with checks I had written. She somehow credited them to someone else and whatever.
- 09.07.31 So I did a nice spreadsheet and you know, with all the information, I took it into my therapist and said see, this is, see this is how I've paid. This is, this is what's, what's going on. And she said I wish you were my accountant. She can't do that. She can't keep, and so I thought, well, you know, I could do that for people like that. Who are basically on their own or just small places and do it out of my home and, and, but it didn't, didn't ever work out.

- 09.08.03 And I was kind of, I think I probably didn't plan it well enough and, and didn't exactly know how to go about it. And so then I signed up with a couple of these online, like Monster job dot com or something like that. And sent my resume and I went out on several interviews. Either for full time work or part time.
- 09.08.36 And or even temporary, you know? And I never got any calls back. I attributed it to my age, but that may have just been my own escape, you know? That they don't want to hire me because I was over 60 years old and, you know, wouldn't be around that much longer before I wanted to retire fully.
- 09.09.02 And so but, you know, that's, that's not legally allowable. But that always could enter into an equation. But I don't know. I may just not have been qualified for what they were looking for. So it just didn't happen, so I decided well, I just have to live off of what I have and, you know, try to make due with that. And so far it's worked.
- 09.09.32 Except (?) that that didn't allow for the money for health insurance. And had I been able to get a job, I would have been in a position where I would have had full coverage health insurance, and you know, and that's one of the main reasons actually that I was looking for the job. Because I figured I could financially I could, I could do it if I had health insurance in (?) a package.
- 09.10.04 And if I went to work for a company, even if it wasn't a huge and that's what I was, I, you know, I didn't, I didn't go for comptroller of the company or financial officer. I just went for an accountant position. But I was told twice that I really was over qualified for the position I was filing for, because I had been in accounting for so many years.
- 09.10.33 And so I, you know, it just didn't work. But it was, my primary objective in going back to work was that I would be, have full health coverage. And the rest of it I, I, I mean, a paycheck would be nice. But that wasn't my primary concern at that point.
- 09.11.01 So you know, I would have went to work for minimum wage if I had full benefits, you know? But they all, I went to this one employment agency, and through Monster, and they said well, from your resume and, and I took a battery of test and whatnot, and they said from all of this, you should be qualified for \$150,000 a year.
- 09.11.41 I said I never made that in New York the whole time I lived there. And I just don't think somebody's gonna hire me for that kind of position. But, but then they never sent me out on

any interviews, either, so. I don't know. But I was willing to work for much, much less than that if I had full health care benefits.

09.12.06 But it just didn't work out, so that's when there was nothing, there was nothing left for me to do, you know?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: Your spirituality has been burgeoning in this last year?

09.14.13 LARRY COURTNEY: Well those first few years, yeah, were, were I was fine. You know, I had my friends and I had my family and, and that's all I cared about. I didn't, but after I moved out here, and had been here for awhile.

09.14.32 And I, I began to realize that (CLEAR S THROAT) you know, I have my daughter here in San Jose, and then I had a roommate. And basically, and my daughter's husband. Basically those were the only three people I knew in San Jose. And I, I thought that that you know, something has to change.

09.15.03 I can't, that can't be everything for me or, or for them, you know? And so it was about the time that we spoke the last time that I realized that I really had to do something else. I had to somehow get involved in something.

09.15.27 To get me out of the house, to you know, have somebody to have, go have coffee with or you know, just somebody else to talk to besides myself and, you know, my roommate at that time. And so that was, that kind of helped me also decide that I needed to find a, you know, a community that I could be a part of.

09.16.00 This faith community like I said. And, and because I've always felt warmth when I, when I have been involved in, in a church body of some sort. I've always felt that warmth, which is (?) you know, the only reason I would become involved. But, and I thought it was time for me, that was a good place to start.

09.16.31 Not that I was, my roommate who is a character, but he said oh, I know why you're thinking about joining a church. You figure you're gonna find another man there. And I said that's not why I'm going (LAUGHS). But it would be nice, but that's not why I'm going. And so I just decided that that was something I had to do.

- 09.17.01 And like I said, that was a good place to start. And I have made a lot of friends at, at the church that, where I go. And, and been invited over to dinner and we go out for coffee or to lunch or whatever. And, and it's very nice, you know, to have people to talk to and, and relate with. And, and debate with about issues and whatnot.
- 09.17.30 And so it's led to other things, you know? It, it's lead to me reaching out in other ways. And that's really good for me. It's been very healthy. Been very productive. And it was, it was just time for me to, well, it was past time, but it was definitely time for me to, to get out of my shell kind of.
- 09.18.05 'Cos I had kind of for, for a long time I had just kind of wrapped myself in grief and, and that was (CLEARS THROAT) that was enough, you know? There were people around me, but still there was, I was fine. That was enough for me. And then (~I~)

JW: What do you mean that was enough?

- 09.18.28 LARRY COURTNEY: I could, I could be on my own, I could do it myself. I (?) didn't need, I didn't need another person in my life, another partner in my life. And by, by coming to that, I didn't also need other people that, except the friends I already had. You know? And I didn't need to be involved or I was, I was Ok on my own.
- 09.19.01 That's, you know, that was, I was just kind of, kind of my mindset.

JW: You talked last time that you could be yourself without Gene, but there was a period of time where you questioned if you by yourself was enough?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

- 09.20.18 LARRY COURTNEY: Well, after, after Gene died and I went through that period of feeling torn apart, and then realized that I wasn't, then I came to that realization that I was Ok with not having a partner.
- 09.20.40 Probably never having a partner. I, I was. And it was at this time that I talked to my brother who had lost his wife shortly after 9-11. And we, we took a trip together at that point, and we talked about it, and we both decided that you know what? We, we were doing fine. You

know? We, we liked our, we liked living alone. We liked having things our way, you know? Our house was the way we wanted it, you know?

09.21.24 Everything was done the way we wanted it. And so we talked about that. And that was in February. And in March, he meets this woman. And they have an instant connection, and the next thing I know they're together. And I said wait a minute (LAUGHS). What does that say about me, you know? But (~I~)

JW: What do you mean?

09.21.57 LARRY COURTNEY: Well, if, I mean, he's, he's 12 years older than I am. And I thought, you know, if you can find a partner, a new partner, and this was 3 years ago, so he was just about 70, if you could find a partner at the age of 70, you know, there's a possibility I would find a partner at the age of 60 or whatever. So.

09.22.29 But I, but I didn't, you know, I was just being funny about it, you know, not (?) serious about it. And I realized that I am a whole person. But I don't want to operate in a vacuum, basically. I mean, I, I could be OK by myself. But I think I can be so much better with community.

09.23.06 Other, other people. And that doesn't mean that I feel like I have to find another partner. That's not, you know, if it happens, it happens. But I don't, I'm not actively looking, I'm not you know, I don't know anybody who's even eligible, you know?

09.23.33 So I don't, I don't, I guess, I guess what I'm trying to say is that I can be my own person within other people. And because I have come to the realization that I am a whole person, I think it makes me more, more ready that's not what I want to say.

09.24.05 But it makes me better able to be a part of a whole, of a, of a group. Instead of being wounded and damaged, I think I can come into it as a whole person, and therefore enrich the group I'm in just as they enrich me.

09.24.30 And so that's kind of, that's kind of where I've gone from, from that point. And I hope that, well, I feel very strongly that that is true. That I, I can claim, I guess claim wholeness for me, and want to be able to share that with other people. Not necessarily to talk to them about it, you know?

- 09.25.04 But just by the very fact that I, I do feel whole that I can be more responsive. To other people, who may or not be whole, you know? And I think particularly as I was, as I said in the fact of, of meeting gay men with this (?) problem with religion, I think that (?) that's not wholeness.
- 09.25.39 I mean, I, I can understand if somebody is, is a complete atheist or whatever they are. But to be, to be that way because they were wounded, that (?) I can speak to because I'm not wounded. Anymore.
- 09.26.02 You know? Not that I don't miss Gene every day. Not that he's not with me in, you know, so many ways. But I really feel that, I really feel that he was a blessing to me in so many ways, because he gave me so much happiness when he was alive. And he was such a whole person. You know?
- 09.26.35 And in many ways, if I don't claim that (?) wholeness for myself, then I'm really not doing him justice, either. Because he, he helped me develop that, you know? And yes, it was fractured for awhile.
- 09.26.58 But I think that I've been able to put it back together. I feel very strong as a person and as an individual now. I don't need someone to lean on. But I need to be a part of something, a part of the community in, in one way or another. And, and I choose to be a part of it in this way.
- 09.27.30 I choose to be a part of it by becoming involved with the faith community.

JW: Are you calling upon your own vulnerability in order to help people overcome theirs?

- 09.28.00 LARRY COURTNEY: Yeah. And I think, I think that, that the most effective helpers or whatever, are someone who have gone through what you're going through. I mean, I. I know that, that this has happened to me and I've been able to overcome it, and if I can help somebody else overcome that, then it's, it's because I've learned it.
- 09.28.36 It, it's because I've lived through it. I don't, you know, I can't teach somebody how to fly an airplane because I don't know how and I've never been through it or, you know, things like that. But if you have been through some experience, then maybe you can help others who have been through something similar.

- 09.29.02 And that's kind of where I see it. And, and yes, it, it's made me stronger as a, as a person when I came out of it, when I came out the other side. You know? I'm not saying I'm. I don't know what the word is.
- 09.29.35 I guess (?) I wouldn't say I'm, I'm 100%, there's always a little part of me that's going to be damaged. But I think maybe realizing that that little part is there, I can be stronger in, in all my other ways.
- 09.30.03 That I can, I can talk to individuals who, who are damaged and, and I can touch that. I, I can know what that feels like, you know? But I can also know that you can come out the other side.
- 09.30.31 And I don't know how else to say that. I just. You know, I wish this had never happened. But I can't, I can't say this happened to me. You know? What happened, happened to Gene. And the experience (STOPS)

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: Is there a relationship between others who are making distinctions in the same way, and yet it's not callous to make a separation?

- 09.39.33 LARRY COURTNEY: Yeah, and I really, yes. This happened to Gene. I was affected by it. But it, it has to be a separate thing. You know, I will always know that this is what happened to Gene. You know? And I will always know how it affected me and how it does affect me every day. As will you. But it is separate.
- 09.40.08 At the beginning, this is what happened to me. It was almost a woe is me kind of, you know, how could this happen to me? It didn't happen to me. You know? It affected me. But it was not me that died at the World Trade Center, you know?
- 09.40.38 I thought for a long time that part of me had died, like we talked about. And then I realized that no, none of me died. That by knowing Gene and, and loving him and how, knowing that he loved me, made me a stronger person, not a half a person. It made me a stronger person.
- 09.41.09 And by being able, I think, just to, just to say that this is not my tragedy. I'm involved in it, but it's not my tragedy, you know? And just as you will do everything you can for your little

girl, you know, I would have done everything I could for Gene, but now I just have to do it for me.

09.41.47 And so (CLEARS THROAT) putting that together without ever negating the fact that he is gone and that I will miss him forever doesn't, it doesn't mean that I have to live broken. And not be able to operate as a whole individual.

09.42.28 And not be able to interface as a whole individual, and not have to be this wounded person. That is all about me. Now I can be about other people. And I couldn't do that a couple of years ago. I wasn't in that (?) place. And I really feel very strongly that I'm there. I guess it's, a, it's a lifelong journey, but at least I know that I'm on the right road and I'm, and I can do it.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: There was almost a necessity to go into extreme darkness?

09.43.45 LARRY COURTNEY: Yeah, I think probably so. I probably would not have done so much sort of soul-searching or, you know, reaching into myself, had I not been in that place and literally that's all the time I had to do.

09.44.11 I mean, that, that's the only, that's all I had the strength to do was to look at myself, basically, for those three months. And to be able to, to be able to realize that, that, that 9-11 did not define me.

09.44.47 I'm more than 9-11, you know? I, I. I know that Gene is with me and I hadn't felt that in a long time. I just, I didn't feel you know, he died and he was gone.

09.45.16 And I didn't, didn't feel that oneness that we used to have together. And basically I was able to, to look (?) at myself and say why? Because you're putting, you're doing this all on your own. You, you're putting this all on yourself, and it's not your self. And Gene is right there, you know? And I feel it, I feel very strongly that he's, he's (?) he'll be a part of me for the rest of my life.

09.45.59 And so I (?) but it was during that period, I think that that's, because I was just laying around, you know, and I didn't have much distraction, so it was, I kind of turned in on my self and, and tried to figure out some other things.

- 09.46.26 And as I thought about the possibility of dying, and of this never being right again, I kind of, that's when I kind of put it altogether that I, I was, I was a whole individual. I could and (?) if that's the case, I could be at peace with what happened.
- 09.47.06 What happens if, if I don't get medication, if I do die. I can be at peace with that, because I'm all, I am a whole person. I don't have to, I'm not gonna die a, a shattered individual. A broken person. And, you know, it, it didn't happen that way. It's, luckily it's, but I can still claim that, because I did do that searching.
- 09.47.46 You know? It's not finished, searching is never gonna be finished, but at least I got, I got that point that I, I could be whole. You know?
- 09.48.08 And it would be all right. I, I think I wasn't, I wasn't allowing myself to be whole, because then it, it would be like disrespectful to Gene for me to be a whole person again.
- 09.48.42 It would be denigrating to his memory for me to be a whole person. And when I realized that that's not true.
- 09.48.59 It would be the best thing I could do for him, for me to be a whole person again. And so I think that that's you know, that's, that's what I was able to come to, even, even in that darkest time. And then as a whole person I was Ok. I could, I could do, I could go either way, and, but I. But I didn't do it as a broken, wounded individual. I could be, I could be accepting of what was coming.
- 09.49.36 And I. And, and you know, you don't. These things don't go off like light bulbs in your head. And I mentioned to you one other time that a lot of times I don't verbalize these even to myself until I talk to you and you ask me questions or whatever.
- 09.50.13 And it makes me really put them together and put them into words. And I can't say that at the end of that dark period that I knew that exactly. I knew that that had, that's what had happened.
- 09.50.35 Although I felt (?) very strong on the inside, no matter what my health was, I felt very strong on the inside. And, but I don't think I actually verbalized it to myself was how it happened and what I had decided.

JW: Do you think you really did decided it or did it evolve?

- 09.51.03 LARRY COURTNEY: I think it's both. It's both. I had, I had to make a conscious decision that I was not going to live like that, to do, to dishonor Gene like that.
- 09.51.29 I, I can't say that I, I made a conscious decision to be a whole person, but I made a conscious decision not to be a wounded person, not to be a broken person. And I think there's a difference.
- 09.51.43 END OF TAPE # LC 070
- 10.00.48 PICTURE UP
- JW: How is your roommate?
- 10.01.03 LARRY COURTNEY: Interesting. I never wanted a roommate. Never. And I agreed to let Davie move in with me while he was looking for an apartment, thinking it would be a couple of weeks.
- 10.01.29 And he is one of Heather's best friends. So I realized that we got along really well, you know? And after a month that he hadn't found an apartment that he could afford, I started thinking about well, this, maybe this could be permanent, (?) you know, we got along really well.
- 10.01.56 And so it, it just evolved and was very, it worked out really well. And then they raised my rent (?) in the apartment I was living in, out of, out of my league, or out of our league. And so we found this house to rent together.
- 10.02.30 And there's a lot of comfort, you know, in knowing that there's someone else in the house. And we talk a lot, and we have very different schedules and everything and, and he actually is a consultant who works from home. And, but he gets up like at 5 o'clock in the morning and, and works until noon or so.
- 10.03.02 And then he's pretty much done for the day. But in that period of time, you know, we're interfacing one way or the other. And now that I've gotten involved in, in the volunteer work at the church and with P-Flag, I'm not always home as much as I was.
- 10.03.26 And but anyway we got, we got the house, and about 5 months later, was it 5 months, anyway, about that period of time, he met this guy and they started dating. And eventually,

well, Davie asked me if he could give him a key 'cos he lived in Morgan Hill so that was a, quite a trip.

- 10.04.05 And then he could spend the night when, when he worked late and (~JW~) 'cos he had odd hours, too. And (CLEARS THROAT) I said sure, that doesn't bother me. So but within a couple of months, he was living there permanently. And he's, he's a very nice kid, you know? I like him and, and he's funny.
- 10.04.33 And I have minor peeves you know, with the two of them. (?) I get really upset and then I have to think, you know what? This is their house, too. This isn't, 'cos I, I as I said when I was talking to my brother, we like, you know, the spoons in this slot and the forks in this slot.
- 10.04.58 And you know, no dishes in the sink and things like that, and doors closed in the kitchen and drawers closed. And they're not like that, you know? If, if it's put away it's put away, but it's not always in the right place. And like is aid, it's their house, too. So I shouldn't, I shouldn't get upset about it, but I do sometimes.
- 10.05.28 And so there are those kinds of irritations. And then they have three dogs, three small dogs. And the dogs are just sweet, they're just, they're really, and I'm glad I have them around, most of the time. Because even when they're gone their, their companionship and, and you know, but when they leave on both days of the weekend and are gone, you know, all day until like 1 o'clock at night, I don't like to have the responsibility of the dogs.
- 10.06.05 It's not that I don't like them and, and want them around, but I'm always afraid that one of them is gonna get sick or get hurt. And you know, I don't know where any vets are in town. So that kind of responsibility I don't want. But on the whole, it's been a good experience. And you know, the house is big enough that we're not knocking into each other all the time.
- 10.06.36 And they pretty much stay in the office or in the, in their bedroom. They have a Game Boy set up and they both love to play (?) they're really competitive. And so you know, and they, they watch different television shows than I do.
- 10.07.00 And so unless it's something we all watch together in the living room, they watch it in their bedroom and, you know. So it, it's really not that bad. I just, we eat different foods. David is kind of, he doesn't eat red meat. He eats chicken, and chicken particularly.
- 10.07.30 And he's Puerto Rican – Hawaiian mix. So there's a lot of beans, a lot of rice. And chicken, you know? And I can't eat chicken. I mean, it's, I can if it's served to me at someone's home,

I won't refuse it. But I don't like it. I, I grew up, we raised chickens and killed them and you know, (?) my mother butchered them and I, I just.

10.08.03 The smell of chicken I remember those feathers and I just I don't like it. And I do like red meat occasionally. And so we kind of do separate shopping and, you know? But, but other than that, you know, we, we really do get along together and we talk a lot. And like last night after I got home from the, the set or whatever that Kenny played.

10.08.43 They had just gotten home from up at his relatives'. And we sat up and talked for another hour and a half. I was exhausted (LAUGHS) by the time I went to bed. But I mean, we just talked about our days and, you know? So it's, it's nice to have the company. And, and even with the two of them, you know? The only thing is we only have one shower in the house. And that can be tricky. The, the two of them normally take two showers a day.

10.09.26 And so there are, that's four showers plus my shower, trying to figure out you know, what times and or schedules and, but other than that, it's (?) been a good thing. I complain about it sometimes, but by and large it's, it's good, you know?

JW: What about P-Flag?

LARRY COURTNEY: P-Flag meets at our church. They have for 22 years. (~JW~)

JW: What does it stand for?

10.10.10 LARRY COURTNEY: Oh, it stands for Parents, Friends and Family of Lesbians and Gays. It was originally started in, in the early '70s as a group to support parents of children who came out of the closet.

10.10.28 Because you know, 30 years ago it was absolutely devastating - well, it still is in many ways. But it started as a support group for parents. Just one woman kind of reaching out to others and (?). So anyway, it was basically parents at that time. Then, then it, they added kind of the friends and everything. And now there are also a lot of gay people who attend the, there are meetings once a month here in San Jose.

10.11.01 And again at our church, like I said. So that's how I found out about them. I mean, I knew about the organization, because one of my friends in New York had been president of the, his

P-Flag chapter. So I knew about the organization. So I thought, well, I'm going to just attend a meeting. So I attended a meeting, and then I went on line and, and read their newsletter.

- 10.11.30 And in their newsletter, they need volunteers for the financial committee. And so I emailed that person and, and said you know, I have a accounting background and, and he said well, why don't you come to our meeting? It was like in a couple of weeks. And you can meet us and we can meet you and, and so I did that.
- 10.12.03 And I got invited back to become a full, a full member of the financial committee. But the night that we, that I went for the first time, they kind of, we kind of did a little bio of everybody so that I would know who they were and they would know who I was. And I told them about you know, being married and having the three kids and that I had a partner, after that, and he was killed.
- 10.12.33 We were together for 14 years. So one of the guys emailed me and asked me if he could contact the (STOPS) he, he runs this speakers bureau for P-Flag, the public, the public speakers' bureau. And asked me if he could forward my name to Steven to see if, if Steven could use me.
- 10.13.06 So I said sure, that's. So what they do is they form panels of like 3 people and they're, they're quite a few people that pool kind of. And go to high schools, colleges, corporations.
- 10.13.33 And they talk to groups of people and each panelist does like a 5-minute bio of themselves. And always only speaking for our self. And then, then it's open to questions. And again, answering questions only, only as our self, not as a group.
- 10.14.03 We don't answer for, like in my case I don't answer for all gay people in the world. We're not all the same. I, I have my experiences, I know what, you know, how your question relates to my experience. So we've, I've done several panels recently in that, well, I didn't, I just started a month ago.
- 10.14.33 And I've done several panels, and they've all been extremely informative. To me as well as I hope to the classes we've spoken to, that I've spoken to high school freshmen, high school seniors.
- 10.14.58 We did an open forum at Notre Dame, what is it Notre Dame de Namur university which is up in Palo Alto. And it was just (?) in a courtyard, so anybody could sit in. And then last Thursday we spoke to junior and senior college students at San Jose State University who were studying psychology.

- 10.15.33 And they're studying in, in this study it's all the 'isms, like racism and sexism and so. We spoke and we had some really great questions. We always have great questions. There, there's, even the college, I mean, the high school freshmen that I didn't think would be bold enough to ask questions because there's so much peer pressure in especially in high school.
- 10.16.04 And if you ask a question about something gay, are you gay, you know, that kind of thing? But we had really good questions, even from them. So it's basically an education (?) like I said, it started out as support, but now it's, it's kind of branched into being an educational group. So and I think that's where, that's where it's going for the most part. It's going more to education, although there's a great deal of support at the, at the monthly meetings.
- 10.16.43 They actually asked me to speak at two of their meetings. They have one in Redwood City and they have one in San Jose. And so I did a 45-minute talk at each, each of those meetings.
- 10.17.00 And then spent 45 minutes answering questions. So it's. it's been interesting, you know? And hopefully educational.

JW: It's a natural extension of your calling?

- 10.17.19 LARRY COURTNEY: I think so. And I think that that's kind of, you know, kind of relying on having talked to you, you know, over the years. And doing a couple of those television interviews for, you know, the Today Show and Anderson Cooper. It made me realize that I could talk in front of people. I used to be scared to death to talk in front of people.
- 10.17.58 I couldn't, I couldn't join the debate club in, in high school because I, I'd just freeze up, you know, I couldn't do it. (CLEARS THROAT) But I think talking about an experience or experiences so, so close to me, so dear to my heart, and having, having been exposed a little bit that it's made me be able to do this with, with the fact that I have come to some sort of a, a knowledge of my calling, you know of what I call it, anyway.
- 10.18.45 And hopefully I'll be able to expand that and in some ways.

JW: You were also describing it as an openness to the truth?

LARRY COURTNEY: To my truth. (~JW~)

JW: Is this part of it, connecting to the outside world?

LARRY COURTNEY: Absolutely, absolutely. I think (~JW~)

JW: The truth implies a search for it?

- 10.19.33 LARRY COURTNEY: Yeah, I think it's a lifelong search. You know, I'm not just going to apply, you know, going to arrive at my truth, and it'll be that way forever. Because the world doesn't stay the same, things don't stay the same, people don't stay the same. And so I think it is a lifelong journey, search.
- 10.19.59 I'm happy to be in a really good place, in that journey right now. And it enables me, yeah it enables me to share it with other people, that I haven't been able to do before. And you know, I, I don't see myself as becoming a paid speaker on anybody's circuit.
- 10.20.31 But what I like about it is being able to, to reach people and to maybe try to educate them. This, this isn't the road that I thought I would be going down at this point. Because I'm I'm talking to mostly straight kids.
- 10.20.54 And nobody has come out in class and said well, I'm gay, and you know. But, but if (?) I can help educate the people I'm talking to now or at least open their minds a little bit, maybe, to, to things that are different from what they have experienced, maybe it'll make me stronger and then I can, I can actually reach out to the, to the people that I really feel I need to reach out to.
- 10.21.41 Maybe, I don't mean to, but it's kind of like a training, you know? And, and I will talk to them as long as they want to hear my story, you know?
- 10.21.59 I basically talked to, my story is basically that I'm a gay man who was in a straight period in his life, trying to fit into the molds and had three children. And after the divorce and, and the children love me and support me and, and then I met Gene and went on and, and then I lost him at 9-11.
- 10.22.30 And so there's a kind of, kind of three points, you know? There is, this is the family man and then the gay relationship and then 9-11. And so as long as people want to hear, you know, or (?) my story is relevant, I'll do this. But or maybe try to channel it into (?) another, into that other path at the same time.

10.23.06 You know? It's just hopefully this is like a training field for me. And but at the same time, I'm hoping people get something out of it, too.

JW: (?)

10.23.31 LARRY COURTNEY: Our church does a mission project where they raise money for the missions which could go to like I said Habitat or whatever. And one of the fun ways they found to do it is for individuals in the church to host some kind of a party.

10.23.58 And (CLEARS THROAT) so I decided this year to do a Queen's High Tea, because this is something that Gene and I had done for five years in New York City. And we spelled it different. We had Queens apostrophe, instead of Queen apostrophe s. But so this one is Queens' High Tea: Let Pride Ring, because it's the Sunday before San Francisco Pride week.

10.24.39 So (?) like I say, Gene and I did these for five years. And it's we do it open house, we did an open house, so that's what I'm doing. And I make authentic English recipes that I got from actually the British embassy, when Prince Charles and Princess Diana were, made their first US state visit.

10.25.11 And the embassy held a high tea for them. And they published this little pamphlet of recipes. And so I do the, do the whole thing. And I always did all the cooking for Queens' High Tea, even in New York.

10.25.30 Gene did the cleaning and the flower arranging and all of that stuff. This time, I'm pretty much on my own, but it's fun. And we serve foods that, that the English would eat at, at their, at a high tea. I mean, you have, you have a tea that is very common in the afternoon at 4 o'clock and it's normally tea with some kind of food.

10.26.03 Simple, you know, and but the, and it kind of goes up in degrees, and then you have Queen's High Tea where the Queen of England could actually be invited you know, and so it's got finger sandwiches and it's got smoked salmon and a, they called it an English Cheddar Pie, it's really a quiche using English cheddar cheese.

10.26.31 And scones and cold roast beef. And assorted cookies and crackers and that kind of stuff, and cheeses and fruit. And then English trifle at the end. So it's gonna be fun, I think. And I talked to my hand bell director before I decided to have this party.

10.27.01 Because I thought it would be fun if the hand bells could come and play at the party. And she was very excited about it. So I think I have now ten ringers who are going to be there, including myself. Our normal complement is 12 to 13 ringers, depending on what pieces we're playing.

10.27.28 So but she's found pieces that are, the ten ringers can play. And they're Broadway mostly, mostly kind of Broadway stuff and very uplifting and I told her that I wanted music that was gay. I mean, fun. You know? And so she thought Broadway would be fun. And so.

JW: Is it very Gene?

10.27.59 LARRY COURTNEY: Oh, yeah, oh, very Gene, very Gene. Yeah. Every time I think about going to a play here in San Francisco, or a musical, there's always that little tinge, Gene would have liked that. You know? So. But yeah, Broadway definitely. Yeah if we could just do something from Dream Girls, he'd be very happy. (LAUGHS)

10.28.29 But I don't think there's anything written for hand bells in, for Dream Girls. But that's kind of where I've been the last 18 months or whatever it's been.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: What about the Jack-in-the-box?

10.29.06 LARRY COURTNEY: Yeah. Heather, my daughter, had this idea oh, about 5 years ago or so, of making Jack-in-the-boxes for adults. I don't mean like adult Jack-in-the-boxes that way. But for doing sculpted heads of individuals. And using them for various things. And it took them several years to get it kind of put together. And get a box that would work and, and the, 'cos they do it all.

10.29.52 They, they build the box and, and they put in the springs and all that kind of stuff. And so it took them awhile to get it to work. They actually came to New York and pitched their sales pitch to me, hoping that I would invest. And when she wound the box, the, it flew open with such force that the head went all the way across the room. So it wasn't a great prototype. But I didn't, I wanted to help them.

- 10.30.32 But I really didn't have the money to do it. So it took them a little longer to get it together. But so she's now building, and has been for about 2 years now, she's building custom Jack-in-the-boxes, and what she asks, she has a website set up, and she wants, she needs a profile and a full face photo of the individual.
- 10.31.06 And their interests and likes. And then she designs a box, the outside of the box, around the interests and likes. Like she did a, a Gene box for me shortly after he died. And I didn't have to tell her much about Gene, you know, 'cos she knew him so well.
- 10.31.31 So she did all around the box she did pictures of our terrace, you know? I mean, she, the hand-painted, but it was, it was our terrace (?) in the apartment in New York, with all the plants that Gene tended and, and everything. And then Gene pops out of the box. And it (?) was great. I gave it actually to my cousin Rosanna when I left New York.
- 10.32.01 But oh, she did a Howard Dean box for me, too, when I was working really hard on his campaign. But finally, she sent a box to Ellen DeGeneres, for her birthday, a year and a half ago. A year ago January. (CLEARS THROAT)
- 10.32.31 And Ellen DeGeneres actually showed it on her television show for her, on her birthday as one of her birthday gifts. And then she did an impromptu commercial for Heather's business, and listed the website and everything. Heather got tons of response from that. And that kind of started the, the real wagon rolling.
- 10.33.00 And then early this year, well, actually last year, she decided to do a box and mass produce it. And at that time, it was just shortly after Hillary Clinton announced that she was going to run.
- 10.33.30 And she was so far ahead in the polls that Heather (?) Heather and her husband, David, decided that that's the box they wanted to mass produce. They wanted to make a Hillary-in-the-box. And so they went through the process of finding the manufacturer and designing the box and deciding what to make it out of and if they were gonna make it affordable, then they obviously couldn't make them out of the big wooden boxes.
- 10.34.04 And, so they decided to go with an old-fashioned tin jack-in-the-box box, and they actually hired a cartoonist to help Heather get the right feel for what was on, going to be on the sides of the box. And then Heather designed the head. And so then they mass produced them in China.

10.34.33 And they are currently on a truck somewhere in, somewhere. Anyway, she should have them next week. They ordered 1200 boxes. They've only sold 60 so far. So they're a little concerned, because they did this all with their own money. And, but we're hoping that things turn around.

10.35.02 And they did a, one of our residential newspapers did a article on her last week. And so they're hoping that they'll pick up some business.

JW: It's touch and go right now?

10.35.23 LARRY COURTNEY: Because their money that is already spent. And they're not seeing the return, you know? And that's what they're, you know, that's a big part of, of their (?) livelihood. So.

JW: And Obama?

10.35.42 LARRY COURTNEY: Well, she has one Obama box, but because they were using their money and they (?) could only pick one box to do, to, to mass manufacture. And one character, anyway.

10.36.03 And so like I said, when they got this ball rolling way, way back last year, Hillary was the shoe-in Democratic candidate. And so as things have progressed, you know, they kind of wish they could have done both- Obama and Hillary. But they didn't have the money to do two.

10.36.29 So you know, I'm just, I'm praying for them that, that they get, that their boxes sold, you know? Even if, the boxes are, are great enough even for Hillary haters, because they're funny. And so hopefully, they'll get them, they'll get a good deal of them sold.

10.36.58 And they'll recoup their money and make some, make some extra money, you know?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: Do you have conversations with Gene any more like when you're smoking?

- 10.37.31 LARRY COURTNEY: Not so many any more. I kind of thought, you know, I, I do talk to him. (?) you know. I'd look at his picture a lot and tell him I love him and, and if something comes up I said, you know, I'll say I think you'd like that, Babe, or something.
- 10.38.03 But I kind of got angry with him at one point because he wasn't appearing in my dreams. Well, I never dreamed about him. And I thought that's odd, you know? I dream about my other, the rest of my family, you know, different, and you know, and weird whatever dreams do. But he never appeared. In any dream.
- 10.38.31 And I just thought that was odd, that I didn't dream about him. And I kind of got mad and angry about it. You know? Not really, but I mean, you know, what are you doing? You know, why, why don't you, you know? And then one night I was having this dream, I don't remember what it was about. But I do remember that there was a knock on the door, and I went to open the door, and there was Gene standing in the doorway.
- 10.39.04 And then I woke up. And I though well (LAUGHS) that's not much of a dream, you know? But he has since, I have since had a couple of dreams that he was in them. And so I think that, that as the time (?) has passed, I, I sort of inside talk to him a little bit, but I don't, I don't have the kind of conversations with him that I used to have.
- 10.39.40 And I don't know whether, you know, I don't know specifically why that is, whether it's just the length of time. I really, I really don't know why that is. Whether.
- 10.40.07 Maybe it's just growing or moving on a little bit. I don't know. Maybe I don't feel that I need his council as much as I used to. Although I still, I still do that. You know?
- 10.40.30 Sometimes, it, it may not be a, an express thought, but certainly most decisions I make, there's at least some inner thought of would this be something that Gene would do or would encourage me to do, you know?
- 10.40.58 And I, I think he would be proud of me for speaking out at P-Flag meetings, and trying to reach out to other people. I think he would be proud of me. And that's, that's important to me, you know? That I do things that would make him proud or pleased.

JW: Do you see a partner in your future?

10.41.40 LARRY COURTNEY: If you had asked, asked me that (CLEARS THROAT) two years ago, I would have said definitely not. I don't, I wouldn't say no to it, but I don't, I have no, no desire, I mean, no interest in it, really.

10.42.03 And then after my brother got married, you know, I thought well, there's always the possibility. So never say never. I'm not actively searching you know? There are a couple of single gay men in, in the church. But I, you know, we just talk. That's, I'm not, I'm not (?) searching.

10.42.33 But if I wasn't searching when I found Gene, well, I was kind of searching when I found Gene, but he was just I mean, he was like presented to me, and I wasn't, it wasn't my doing. He was, he was actually brought over by a, another friend and said you have to meet this man. And so, you know, I think that if that kind of thing happened, I'd be open to it.

10.43.00 But I don't know, I don't see it happening.

JW: Are you more open than you were?

10.43.11 LARRY COURTNEY: Yeah, I think (?) I am a little more open to it now. There are times when oh, I, and I told this, that group that I mentioned it before with the gay men?

10.43.28 I told them this, there are times when I just need to be hugged, and not just by my daughter or my son in law, you know, but I just need to be hugged, and I loved going to Dr. Harbor, who was my physician at that time, because he always gave me a hug. You know, and it was such a warm, reassuring kind of hug, and I said that kind of physical contact I truly, truly miss.

10.44.03 You know, I (?) don't, I didn't say sex. Just that warmth, that, that (?) human contact, you know? And that, that kind of thing I miss, yeah, I do miss it, you know? And there are times when I think, you know, it'd really be nice to (?) be able to come home and have somebody wrap his arms around you and tell you he loved you.

10.44.34 That would be really nice. But if, if it happens, it happens, and if it doesn't, I'm OK with that, too. You know?

JW: Any other thoughts?

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

JW: Will you ever have a garage sale?

- 10.45.54 LARRY COURTNEY: Well. I had planned this because I thought, I've been carrying around all this stuff for all these years. And why am I, it's stuff, why am I carrying it around? Then, I was showing Heather some of the stuff I was gonna put in a garage sale. And she said no, you can't do that, that was yours and Gene's, I want that. I want that. So half of the stuff I was gonna put in the, not half, but a lot of the stuff I was gonna put in the garage sale Heather now has in her house.
- 10.46.31 And there were big ceramic platters that Gene and I used to collect on the 9th Avenue Street fair. And bowls and things like that, which, you know, she can use. But I, I'm not, or I hadn't planned on throwing any big parties. So I didn't need them. Now I have to borrow them back for Queens' High Tea probably. But so she took a lot of those things.
- 10.47.00 And then, she and David had sort of an impromptu garage sale. They had just had a bunch of stuff at their studio. And so they said why don't you bring over anything you want. So I took over a lot of books and records. LP's. And three boxes of LP's. And almost nothing sold.
- 10.47.32 So I ended up, had the books all packed up, so I ended up taking them to, oh, and I had a, a some suits and things from when I lived in New York. So nothing happened, so I took them all to Good Will, except for the LPs, which are now sitting in my garage. And now I've decided I have to go through them again. I went through them and picked out the ones I wanted to keep.
- 10.48.01 But so I don't know if that garage sale is ever gonna happen, because we've kind of dwindled down (?) I still keep accumulating stuff. I, I don't know where it comes from. It just sort of shows up, and if I ever have to move again, you know, then there's either gonna be a whopping big garage sale or I'm gonna throw it all away. 'Cos I am not packing all that stuff again, you know? I've moved it so many times.
- 10.48.38 And all of the silver has been in a box since 2002. Of a huge big box of silver. And there are 3 boxes of CD's and video tapes that I've never, haven't opened since I lived in the apartment on the Alameda.

10.49.11 And I mean, there's, and if I haven't used it or opened it in all this time, do I need it? You know? So there, there's probably gonna come another point where there's gonna be a garage sale.

10.49.27 But this time we'll do it right and advertise it better and everybody get rid, you know, just have everybody in the neighbors and everybody just do it, do a big one. I'll let you know if that ever happens (LAUGHS).

JW: Hillary, John McCain or Obama?

10.49.48 LARRY COURTNEY: Hillary. (~JW~) I'm a New Yorker. No, I've been, I've been a fan of Hillary Clinton's for a long time. And I just, I, I believe in her, and I, not that I, not that I couldn't support Obama. I can't begin to support Senator McCain.

10.50.20 I just, he's, he is determined to continue four more years of what we've had in the last 8 years, and I, we just can't, this country can't stand it.

10.50.34 So I would support Obama if he gets the nomination, which looks very possible now. Or very probable, actually. But my real support is for Hillary.

(OFF CAMERA REMARKS)

10.51.32 ROOM TONE

10.51.32 END OF TAPE # LC071