

Oral History Interview: James Alison

Interviewee: James Alison

Interviewer: Sonny Duncan

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Sonny D. This is Sonny Duncan with the LGBT Religious Archives Network interviewing James Alison. Hello, James.

James A. Hello, Sonny.

Sonny D. Let's begin with the location and date of your birth.

James A. I was born in Westminster Hospital, London, England, in October 1959.

Sonny D. And tell me a little bit about your family and the religious and social context that you were raised in.

James A. Okay. My family were both...my parents I would describe as hardline evangelical Anglicans. My mother was a Billy Graham convert and my father was a John Stott convert, so I was baptized, actually, as an infant by John Stott. So my parents were leaders in the, let's say, a Neo-Calvinist wing of the church, which, outside the United States, is much more common than you would guess from inside the United States.

Sonny D. Tell me a little bit about, if you were to talk a little bit about the values that is common in that wing, or in that movement. Tell us a little bit about that.

James A. Well, it's what you would call in the United States the religious right. I mean, very consciously a movement of reaction against the 1960s that was already getting there in the 1950s. That was when the Billy Graham crusades were going. So yeah, I think that my parents were part of that generation that sought to redefine Christianity as being a hardline, moralistic and conservative political social movement. I think we're only now, 40, 50 years later, seeing the end of that cycle. But it was just getting going in the 1950s when my parents were young, and that was their world.

Sonny D. So when you think back about sort of your childhood understandings of God, of religion, of religious community for yourself, what comes to mind? Can you describe that for us?

James A. Oh, yes. That Christianity's true, but not in the version that I'm getting it. *[Laughs.]* As a kid I was sent to boarding school... One of the books we were allowed to read was the Bible, so I didn't have many books to read late at night. And so I read significant passages of the Bible. I could see that it was about love and I could see that this was not... there was something not right with the version that I was getting. I should say that this I was discovering at the same time as I was discovering that I was gay. I realized I was what we now call gay, but in those days was called queer, without any—what's the word—postmodern irony.

Sonny D. *[Laughs.]* Yeah, I hear you.

James A. When I was about eight or nine, so... So yes, both knowing who I...coming to know who I was and my understanding of how Christianity must be a different thing than the version I was getting of it, that the two went along with each other in my growing up period.

Sonny D. So tell me a little bit about, like if you were to take us from your life as a young child into young adulthood, important events or sort of different things that happened in your life that really shaped and formed you.

James A. Well, first was falling in love at age eight or nine, which was a terrifying experience. It was wonderful, but absolutely terrifying, at school. Something's happened there.

Sonny D. Mm-hmm. It's just popping up.

James A. I can carry on?

Sonny D. Mm-hmm, yeah.

James A. It was a terrifying experience because you don't have the words to cope with it, there's no one you can share it with.

Sonny D. And this is at eight or nine years old, you said?

James A. About nine, yeah. And he was no older. *[Laughs.]*

Sonny D. Uh-huh.

James A. And it was prepubescent so you didn't have any of the awareness of what it's about. But I do remember that shortly thereafter, in the way that these things happened, you know, at all boys schools, some of the older boys told me what queer was.

Sonny D. What did they tell you it was?

James A. Oh, the kind of dangerous person that one shouldn't...that one should avoid if they tried to do something to them. But of course what they were telling me was...they were giving a word to what I knew I was. It seemed to be an awful word at the time. But at least, ah, here was...here was some...some sign that there's a word to go with the experience, I exist.

So this was at the same time exhilarating, but also, at the same time, absolutely terrifying because I knew, from then on, that I was being launched into a world in which I would...in which, at that time, in which everything seemed impossible. The idea of actually there was a loving someone of the same sex, let alone develop a stable relationship with them, marry them. All of that was inconceivable at the time, so, you know, impossibility. Weighed very, very heavily on us, part of the psychological package.

Added to the religious element that I was an abomination and was somehow deserving of hell, and maybe this was a satanic trick of some sort. So that was, as you can imagine, a very strong set of experiences, along with the inability to talk about it. So...yeah, so from nine to 18 I

was living a private life, in that sense. The most important part of what was going on couldn't be shared.

I fell in love again at 12, and this time it was with a Catholic boy at a school where there were not a significant number of Catholics. And that made a big difference. I mean, he was straight. There was a certain warmth about him that made me think that maybe...that there was a bigger space in Catholicism than there was in the world in which I grew up. And that was something I followed. So those were significant experiences in that field.

Sonny D. And what specifically about the Catholicism that you were exposed to through him, what or what was happening that made you feel like there was that space that you describe?

James A. Well, I'm not honestly sure because I find it difficult to tell retrospectively. I mean, what I can tell you is that I was brought up with a very strong Protestant notion of radical depravity, and I could already tell that there was something in the Catholic understanding of nature and grace—which, of course, I was taught it was wrong—which made me think, which made me intuit, which made me hope that this was going to be the answer, that if there is something trustable in who I am and that grace is part of it, then this is the way out of the radical depravity trap. And I should say so it has proven to be. And I can tell you that 40 years and a doctoral thesis later. [*Laughs.*]

Sonny D. *[Laughs.]*

James A. But it's interesting that even when I was writing my doctoral thesis, which is about original sin, I was aware that I was dealing with an intuition that I had had very, very young. And it's not really surprising, if you like, the possibility for us to hope for flourishing from our hearts—really, that seems to be central to the whole of the gay and lesbian question, especially for those of us in the religious sphere.

It's one of the things I think that, curiously, those who most hate and disapprove of us get much better than the friendly fellow travelers who have now come along, which is that this issue is...it's a soul issue. It's a soul loser. Either you're going to keep your soul or you're going to lose it. You know, we're told that if you are gay you'll go to hell. And on the other hand, many of us perceive only if I refuse to sell out am I going to save myself. In other words, the temptation is precisely to go along with what everyone says.

And that's something which I think is, you know. And I'm always more appreciative of honest haters that recently have just come out, because at least they perceive that this is to do with one's soul. When Jesus talks about, you know, if you gain the world, lose your soul, public soul and so on, that's the issue this is about.

And this is why I think that over the last 30 or 40 or 50 years, why this issue has proven that it just won't go away. All attempts to say this is just

going to be a question of fashion, well, the reason it isn't is because we would lose our souls. And many of us have discovered it's better to be dead than to lose your soul. Which is why I think from a very early age I was aware of the soul issue. Does that make sense?

Sonny D. Mm-hmm, yeah. So talk a little bit about after that turning point with that young man. Talk a little bit about your life after that. What happened after that experience?

James A. Oh, I mean, I was in love with him for several years. Nothing particular happened except that I gradually became aware that maybe that was where things were going to go. My father became aware that I was interested in Catholicism, formally instructed the people at school that I was to have nothing to do, that I was not to be allowed to talk to—

Sonny D. Oh, okay.

James A. —to the Catholic chaplain. I was formally forbidden. My father, you know, he was very concerned about that. And he was brought up in, that, you know, the Pope is the antichrist world. He was slightly less intolerant than the previous generation, but he was quite hardline.

Sonny D. Was there anyone that you could talk to about that, about that tension between your father and that control and what you were feeling within yourself?

James A. Not really because I couldn't talk at all about the gayness, anyway. The nearest thing to a safety valve was my aunt, my father's sister. She was a wonderful lady. Alas, died long since. But I was much more able to be relaxed in myself around her. But even so, I mean, we're talking about within the limits of quite a traditional structure from long ago. But eventually I was able to, I mean, when I was 18 when I came out. This was in 1978. And it was quite interesting. I don't know. Are you interested in hearing stories about these kinds of—that's what this is about, isn't it?

Sonny D. Yeah.

James A. I was in Colombia. I'd gone for the year in between leaving school and going to university, or what in Britain they call the gap year. I don't know whether there's a similar thing here.

Sonny D. Not usually.

James A. Usually it's about nine months, since the university entrance exams tend to be at the end of one year, in October, November, and the university doesn't start till September, October, so you have the intervening months to fool around. So that's where the gap is, and lots of people travel or whatever, if they can afford it. I managed to get a job as an intern in Colombia, and part of what I'd hoped was that by going to South America, so getting far away, something would happen, maybe the less putrid air of

South America or something, and I would mysteriously, miraculously turn straight.

Sonny D. What was the internship that you were doing?

James A. Working for a printing company, Thomas de la Rue make security bank paper and playing cards, anything to do with security printing. I don't know whether that's still going. Actually, of course, it was quite a big company. But they had branches in different countries of the world and one of them was in Bogotá. And so through friends of friends of my family, because I was learning Spanish, this seemed like a sensible thing to do, and great fun.

And so my coming out was rather strange because it was Easter, so Easter, 1978. And I had gone—we had a few days off—I had gone to Cali from Bogotá, which is where I was working, Cali, which was less frightening and dangerous then than it subsequently became with the Cali cartel. Actually, Cali is a very, very beautiful city, very, very beautiful, go into the town center. So I was just there to spend the holy week.

And in addition to there being very many beautiful young men in and around Cali, I also went to—Colombia being a very gay place—I went to the cathedral. And I wasn't yet a Catholic, but I went to the cathedral for some of the Good Friday ritual and so on. I remember praying very, very fervently at Easter to be made straight, for the grace of being made straight.

And then, you know, after the weekend I went back to Bogotá, back to work, and on Tuesday of Easter week—so not yet back at work, riding the bus going to work—and I can even remember the jingle on the bus because there was a presidential election going on, so there was a wretched jingle for one of the candidates on the watts.

But I remember sitting on the bus going to work and I was invaded by a joy, being able to accept myself as gay, and I knew that my prayer had been answered, but in completely the reverse way to how I'd expected. So I then knew that it was fine and that I was...this is who I was and this was a good thing. It was a tremendously joyful experience which lasted for some days.

But at the same time I became aware that this brought with it responsibilities. Now I had to tell people and probably had to go back home to England and face my parents. I didn't think I would have the emotional strength to stay in Colombia for the full six months I expected to stay, for a couple of reasons. One, it was quite clear that the boss of this company was quite keen that I should marry his daughter.

Sonny D. Oh!

James A. In the way that these things, you know, get...for some reason or other, it was thought to have a nice English son-in-law was thought to be a great thing. But on the other hand, I also knew that if I were to stay I might fall in love with somebody, not the boss's daughter, but maybe the

quartermaster's son. [*Laughs.*] And then I wouldn't want to go back. So I went back to England early, and told my parents about this, which, for them, was quite frightening.

[*Unintelligible*] all sorts of details—making the phone call, first of all, from Bogotá to England to say I was coming back. And then coming back, and my dad was at work, so telling my mom. And she was okay with it. And then my dad coming home and my mom making him sit down, and of course he sat down and read the newspaper. And so my telling him, and then he went and got down the Bible and said this is perfectly fine, and then he just read me the passages. [*Laughs.*] That was his response, but it was, you know, he was fine. Said, well, don't do anything. But I was relieved because I was half expecting to be thrown out of home.

And so the next few months were very, very rough because now I was...I'd come out, but without any personal security. I didn't have any gay friends, I didn't have any social life, I didn't have...I lived in a very gay neighborhood.

Sonny D. What neighborhood was that?

James A. It was Earls Court. This was Earls Court in the pre-AIDS days. It was like Christopher Street. And that was just by accident. That's where we lived.

Sonny D. What year was this?

James A. 1978.

Sonny D. 1978.

James A. So yeah, there was no shortage of pubs and bars and things around the place. So yeah, that was...that was a very, very difficult few months because I was facing up to...I was about to go to university, where I'd bump into many of the people I'd been at school with, but now I'd come out, and how that was going to react. I was also now a member of a very conservative evangelical family, but absolutely, completely at odds. I don't know if my father was more upset about my becoming Catholic or my being gay, but that was a bit later.

Sonny D. And at this point you felt like you had become Catholic?

James A. Oh, no, no, not yet.

Sonny D. Okay.

James A. But I could tell that...you know, becoming Catholic is formal. Yeah, so after several months of really this very difficult situation, the awareness that there was no floor and there were no support mechanisms, and that I had no people to reach out to, I was really in quite a despairing state when, for some reason or other, I read a biography of Padre Pio, who's now

called Saint Pio. And it was a strange thing, a perfectly ordinary biography of him.

And I remember reading it and falling asleep, and then the next morning woke up, and this was the second complete invasion of joy. And I knew instantly that I had to go and become a Catholic. I was on the inside, I had been given a gift of something, the gift of the Catholic faith. And so I did. I just went to a cathedral and talked to a priest, and he gave support and instruction, and I became Catholic. It turned out—

Sonny D. Was this in the same year?

James A. This was in the same year, yeah. So that was...yes, because I became a Catholic in August of '78, because when I—Paul VI was the Pope when I started instruction, but actually he died in the middle of my being instructed, so when I became a Catholic there wasn't a Pope. [*Laughs.*] It was rather...I'm one of the very few Catholics who was a Catholic before there was a Pope. So the little ceremony of being—a reception, there was some formula which required me to make mention to “our Pope N,” so I had to say our Pope N, because there wasn't one. [*Laughs.*]

Sonny D. That's funny.

James A. So yeah. So that was the second great push of joy into a new life. And the two always come together, the Catholic joy and the gay joy. I refused to allow church authority—[*laughs*]—to keep them apart because that would

go against...that would go against God. So then I went to university, and that was a very, very difficult experience.

Sonny D. And what university were you at?

James A. Oxford.

Sonny D. Okay, Oxford University.

James A. Oxford University, yeah, a college called New College. And I was very seriously unhappy there. It was a very, very, very bad two years. In part because I'd come out without anywhere to go. I didn't have friends, associates. So it was a very, very odd situation. I was very nearly suicidal. I managed just to avoid killing myself, but I came very close to it.

Sonny D. What happened for you that allowed you to avoid that?

James A. I don't know. An experience of prayer, of feeling that it would be a way of neither... I don't know whether it's Milton, I don't think it's the Bible, but what Satan says is, "I will not serve." And while I was in this pit—I mean, probably it would have been—in those days, of course, I didn't have anyone to talk to about depression and psychological things, so people wouldn't have known to talk about these things. Nowadays I'm sure someone already made a pill. And I would be very grateful for it. I don't despise such things at all.

But I do remember that in the pit of this ever downward whirling thing managing to say, “I will serve.” And then gradually climbing out of it over...climbing is the wrong word, but gradually getting out of this psychotic, if that’s what it was, state. But what really enabled me to get over it, but, you know, what I didn’t know at the time was I’d effectively lost a world and hadn’t gained a world, [*unintelligible*]. My studies were getting...were failing. I didn’t have any major exams to do, but I knew that if I did have I would collapse.

But I was signed up to do a year abroad in Mexico as part of my course—or in a Spanish speaking country, which turned out to be Mexico. And that was wonderful. That was my salvation, really, because going to Mexico, I had already half planned not to come back, desperately probably not to come back.

Sonny D. In what year did you go to Mexico?

James A. 1980.

Sonny D. And was it a particular city in Mexico?

James A. Yes, a very particular city—Mexico City.

Sonny D. Gotcha, okay.

James A. [*Laughs.*] All 22 million of it. [*Laughs.*] I arrived there on the day Ronald Reagan was elected President of the United States, a sad day for

the Americans. But there we are. And staying with a family, a wonderful family. It was a family, actually, of one of my university friends, who was a real friend, and to this day is a very, very good friend—he's straight and married, and I godfathered one of his children. But his family, they really, just by allowing me to stay with them, they enabled me to survive, really. And they have been a huge, huge support to me.

So exile. I survived by exile. You know, either suicide or exile. And it was exile. And I was desperate to try and make it stay, so while I was there—it was only supposed to be for a year—I also managed to meet the Dominicans. I was conscious, before I was there, that I was looking for a way not to go back to England. Things had gotten more complicated.

Since I went to university the previous government had finished, and Mrs. Thatcher had been elected, so the third year Mrs. Thatcher government started. My father was a Member of Parliament and an associate of Mrs. Thatcher. In the second period he was her parliamentary private secretary, so he worked with her every day. But as you can imagine, that made me feel even more...not wanting to be in the country. [*Laughs.*]

And, you know, just...my parents were friends of people like Chuck Colson. My mother was the person who brought Prison Fellowship, Chuck Colson's thing here in the States, to England. They were friends with people like Ruth and Billy Graham, as well as Doug Coe and his collaborators. The people who are in that book *The Family*, those were

all...I met them all. That was my parents' world. Just to give you some idea of that, of the sort of world that I was staying away from. [*Laughs.*]

Sonny D. Mm-hmm. I hear you.

James A. So...

Sonny D. You said you found the Dominicans. So what was that? How did that happen?

James A. I asked some friends who they thought, and they recommended I talk to a particular Dominican priest. It turned out that he had just died, so they recommended that I talk to this other one instead, and I went to see him. He was the postulant master and was a wonderful man. Still a very good friend of mine. He's a great reference for me. He's now a priest in New York. But he goes back and forth between New York and Mexico. So he was my postulant master, so, you know, was chatting.

But yeah, so really the Dominicans gave me a wonderful...chance at sanity, I would say. And Mexican Dominicans, it's interesting, I was a member of the Dominicans then for 14 years, but it's interesting that to this day I've kept friends with more Mexican Dominicans than with any other, so they are, as it were, my...there's a certain...your adolescent classmates are some of your longest-standing, best friends. So to this day I am very, very good friends with lots of them.

Sonny D. And how old were you when you joined them?

James A. 22.

Sonny D. 22, mm-hmm.

James A. Yeah. Yes, I think my 22nd birthday was with them—my 22nd or 23rd birthday were with them. Yes, so I did my postulancy and started my novitiate there where my novice master was the then...he's now the Bishop of Saltillo, [Raul Vera], almost the only gay friendly Mexican bishop. And I hope that I have something to do with that. [*Laughs.*]

But I was his novice. We fought the whole time. But he and I have remained very good friends since then, and we've been able to talk about these things. And while he was a very conservative man, he was...in fact we all knew he was going to be a bishop. He was so clearly the perfect John Paul II profile for a bishop—very personable, very good in his relationships with people, so very pastoral, but very narrow-minded, so the perfect John Paul II profile. We knew he was going to become a bishop. We joked with him about it the whole time.

And eventually, of course, he did become a bishop. But the Vatican then decided to try and make him successor to Samuel Ruiz as Bishop of Chiapas, because Samuel Ruiz was the most progressive bishop in Mexico, and they wanted someone to go and sort of close the shop down, and they thought, well, we can trust Raul to be square and obedient to us and not in favor of all the things that Samuel Ruiz was doing. So they sent

Raul as his—what's the word—coadjutor with right of succession. That's the term.

And Raul wandered around the interior of Chiapas for six months with Samuel Ruiz, got shot at by the army and was completely converted to Samuel Ruiz's way of doing things, and became, from being a very, very nice, but really quite traditional man, to being a very progressive and very passionate defender of all sorts of all sorts of marginalized people . and of course then the Vatican went ape shit of course, but they'd lost their thing, so they managed to move him to Saltillo, which is as tough place to be bishop of in Northern Mexico, quite near Texas. Actually, Coahuila used to be the capital of Texas before it was part of the United States. So that's how it started. But yeah, so...

And he then encouraged an LGBT youth group to form. And got into all sorts of trouble with that But he had very good advice, so he knew how to get out. Besides, the people who were attacking him for that were really attacking him for other things. But they couldn't, you know, to accuse a bishop of resisting narco traffickers and not accepting narco bribes—I mean, bishops shouldn't accept narco bribes, so they couldn't accuse him of that, so they tried to find something they could accuse him of. It was very difficult [*unintelligible*]. But anyhow, so it's a little bit off the beaten track. But anyway, this is one of the people to whom I owe so much in terms of my education.

But anyhow, it became clear to me at a certain point that I wasn't going to manage to survive the Dominicans in Mexico, just for cultural and temperamental differences. So I went back to England, and after working for a few months just to pay off my airfare was able to join the English Dominicans, with a letter from Mexico saying I was basically sane. [Laughs.] I wonder whether they would still think that now.

Sonny D. And where in England were you at this time?

James A. This was—the Dominican HQ was in Oxford, so I'd come back to Oxford, rather to my sorrow, but there we are, that's where it was.

Sonny D. And what year was this?

James A. So this was 1983. So I started my second novitiate there in 1983 at Blackfriars in Oxford in September or October—probably early October '83. And there I became—I wouldn't have known this at the time, but now, in retrospect—what an incredibly privileged set of teachers.

My novice master was a man called Herbert McCabe, who was probably the most significant Thomistic thinker in the English language in the 20th century. Published much more posthumously than he did upon life because his papers were published after his death. But an extraordinary man. And apparently, for many people, quite a frightening man. For some reason or other, he and I got on well, so for that reason I wasn't

frightened of him, and he respected me, which wasn't always the case. So I was genuinely very, very fond of Herbert.

But also Timothy Radcliffe was the prior and later the provincial and later the master of the order. I was taught by some of these amazing people like Simon Tugwell, Fergus Kerr, Timothy, Roger Ruston, these amazing teachers, so I've been hugely privileged.

And of course at that stage, this was early '80s, so the John Paul thing hadn't been going on that long, so of course people knew I was gay when I joined. I said I was. There was no... I was fairly conflicted about it, but I wasn't being dishonest. And this was fairly standard at that time.

I think it's one of the things it's difficult for people to remember, from this end of the John Paul thing, was how much, in the late '70s, people assumed that all of this was going to open up much more quickly, and how much more honesty there was towards the end of the '70s and the early '80s than there then became, and that really John Paul put a brake on everything. Things became very reactionary. So it was interesting, thinking about that, that the sort of honesty that people took for granted at the beginning of the '80s, by the end of the '80s, the beginning of the '90s, a different world.

Sonny D. Very different. I'm going to close the window really quick.

James A. I didn't realize that it was actually a window. [*Laughs.*]

Sonny D. All right, so you were talking about John Paul.

James A. Yeah. So yes, it was...yeah. At that stage, these things could be talked about more openly. So there wasn't much pretense. I mean, as I said, I was conflicted, but I wasn't pretending.

Sonny D. So what was the conflict then?

James A. Well, at least a large part of me still thought that there must be something wrong with me. And that really lasted until the...ooh, until the early '90s. It was only in the early '90s that I really could see quite clearly that it just wasn't the case, the whole of the...that gay being some sort of pathology was just wrong. But, you know, before I was trying to be as honest as I can. I tried to defend the teaching of the church as honestly as I could. It was conflicting.

But it wasn't at all an unhappy period at that time of studies in Oxford. The teaching was marvelous. And for me, I was aware that I was in a waiting room, because my passion was to go back to South America, because I still needed to be out of out of the country. This was still the Thatcher government, and my father was a minister, good Lord. Not a minister of religion, a minister of the state.

Sonny D. And what was your relationship with your family like at this point?

James A. Well, you know, distant, cordial but distant. From my father's point of view, I had become an enemy in some way. And he only really started

mellowing towards the very end of his life. I mean, certainly after he'd retired from politics. But even so, you know, he was really...

I think—and it's often the case—I mean, this is a generation that had seen the war, the Second World War. It was a completely different generation, and there was something fragile about...any totalitarian faith structure is fragile. [*Laughs.*] That's one of the things which you see. So I think I must have been aware of that. I think I was aware of that. I didn't want to kick something fragile.

So anyhow, basically I kept out of my family's hair. And I saw them occasionally. It was perfectly friendly when we did. But I had no intimacy with them. And basically I studied hard, thinking of Oxford as a waiting room. What's the word? Yeah, a waiting room for Heathrow Airport so I could get out of the country and go back to South America, which I eventually did. I managed to go and do my theology studies in Brazil.

Sonny D. And what year was that?

James A. '87.

Sonny D. And where in Brazil?

James A. Belo Horizonte, which was the Jesuit faculty, Jesuit theology faculty. It's now called Faculdade Jesuita, and there's a—it was called Instituto Santo Inácio. But now they changed the name. It's the same place. And again,

wonderfully privileged teachers. Superb. I had an amazing mixture as well, from different periods. It wasn't that they were all liberation theologians. Some of them were. Some of them were much more traditional. But there was this breadth, and they all got on. And the teaching quality was really very good.

And the course was just very well designed. So, for instance, my...this was a basic three year theology course divided into semesters. The major credits per semester for each of the first four semesters was the gospel, which means that the major credits you were getting for the whole of those were for reading one gospel, which meant that every week you didn't do more than a few verses, or a chapter at the most, because, right, [*unintelligible*], well, these are guys who are being prepared to know enough to preach on this text for the rest of their lives.

And when I compared that with what my classmates from the Dominicans in England had done, came to Oxford doing the Oxford theology degree, they did the gospels in one eight week term, so two weeks per gospel. It's astoundingly little. And of course two weeks per gospel meant that there were much more questions about the gospel life, you know, theories of authorship and so on, rather than going through the text. So, I mean, the Jesuits dreamt up this course. It was a superb setup. So I was enormously privileged with that.

At the same time I was living in a very highly...a very difficult community, Dominican community. Again, I had told them I was gay before coming. They initially had a hissy fit because they claimed that there was no such thing as gay friars, and then they realized that that made them sound awfully silly, and so they said yes, of course you must come, but, we mustn't tell any of the simple faithful because they will be scandalized.

Which, of course, disguised what I couldn't yet know, which was that none of them really were able to talk about this. It was very much a reality in their midst, but not one that could be talked about at all. So it was a very bizarre situation because, as is very often the case, you find these guys who have a serious need to persecute gay people within religious settings. Of course what everyone else kind of picks up is that these are the guys who are closeted, the most closeted gay guys themselves. So yeah, what Truman Capote called the "killer fruits." The ones who are in pathological denial.

Of course where would you get lots of gay people? In religious settings. They're playing quiet, but they're not evil. There are some who are just very, very sick and sad people who feel... I think that probably, in some cases, even without realizing what they're doing, that they need to persecute themselves projected onto others. It really is very, very sad. So I'm afraid there was a lot of that.

And naturally I was the...what's the word? The catalyst. Because I was in the strange situation where the person or persons who would normally do that could never count on such a person defending themselves. But since I'd been open upfront, I'd removed the blackmail card. You can't be blackmailed if you already admit. [*Laughs.*] So let's say community life was extremely difficult for those three years.

Added to which, of course, it was the time when AIDS had arrived in a big way in Brazil, and so I got involved with pastoral work with people who, at that stage, it would be more accurate to say were dying with AIDS than living, because this was before any of the cocktails and any of that. I mean, 80% died within five months of first symptom, so a lot of what I was doing was giving people last rites and burial.

Sonny D. How old were you at this time?

James A. I turned 30 in '89, so I was in my late 20s. I was ordained in '88. I became a deacon in '87, priest in '88. So yeah. Let's say I was between the ages of 27 and 30, 31. Yeah, so that was a major backdrop to my learning theology. Maybe it was a major front drop to my learning theology, because at the same time as I was doing my theology course, I was also face-to-face with people who were dying. And so that was a very strong experience.

As I say, wonderful teaching. Very unpleasant community life. And very rich experience of working with people with AIDS. But it was also a very,

very...well, very burnout inducing, particularly if you don't have any backup. But, you know, led to good friendships with people who...like doctors who were working at the same time.

And then, finally, just before finishing my course and leaving Brazil, I met someone and fell in love again. And I'm sure it was only because I was about to leave, and therefore my guard was down. I knew that it couldn't...because I'd have to make absolutely sure that I wasn't doing anything wrong, because they already were looking for any possible reason to throw stones at me. But anyhow, God is good, and produces someone lovable.

And so...but it was only a very long distance relationship. In a matter of weeks after meeting him I was out of the country. We kept in contact over the next years. He then turned out to be HIV positive. And again, this was before all the cocktail thing. It turned out that he probably had been HIV positive for maybe at least ten years by then. So I never managed to spend very much time with him, but the time I did spend was very intense.

And then of course he died suddenly. Actually, he fell ill on the day that I was defending my doctoral thesis, because meanwhile I had finished my degree, come back to England, done the equivalent of the master's, come back to Brazil six months on a credit for my doctorate, gone to teach in Bolivia while writing my doctoral thesis, and so this was between 1990, when I first met him, and 1994, when I finished writing my doctorate.

So to cut a long story short, I defended my...I had come back to Brazil to defend my doctorate in November of 1994, and when I got back from the defense of the doctorate to the house of my doctor friend, there were these garbled messages from him you couldn't understand, and it turned out that he'd fallen over in the street and they'd taken him to hospital, and when he'd said that he was HIV positive, they'd thrown him out of the hospital and said—well, all of, everything ghastly that you can imagine. And eventually we found him and brought him back home.

So my celebration, my doctoral celebration, was spending the night with a very, very sick Laércio. The next day we managed to get him into a hospital where they did the treatment three or four days. And so there he was. And he was there for a week, and then he was well enough to leave, so we took him back to his home.

Well, at that stage I had to go back to Chile, which is where I was living by that stage. It was coming at the end of the academic year. I'd only finished. It was about December the 15th in the Southern Hemisphere. So I said I couldn't look at myself in the mirror if I were to not go back and be with him. I mean, this is someone I loved, and the chances were he wasn't going to live for very long, but I must just go back to be with him.

So I informed people that was what I was going to do, and I must say they were perfectly supportive, helping set up and organize, and was just waiting for the time to finish. It happened a week later. And then a week

before the term finished, my doctor friend phoned and he'd died suddenly. He died of a high fever going to hospital and died.

And that was a very...again, I can remember the details about it. I was completely like a zombie. Santiago, Chile in December is a beautiful temperature. It's about 21, 22, 23 degrees in the middle of the night, so it's a beautiful temperature to walk around. And I was walking around the city all night like a zombie.

But at the same time, realizing that he'd given me a huge gift of also—I mean, there were two things. I think the first was how easy it would have been to...let's say how near I had come to being a heartless bastard yet again, and not deciding to reorient my life and go back and be with him. But how amazingly I had actually decided to go back and be with him, and I had actually already put everything into operation to do just that. And that...I, you know, I had one foot in the air. So I thank God for once in my life I was actually not running away from doing the right thing.

And with that, the realization that—with that wandering around—the realization that this was actually all about love, and that that's...this was the real thing. I mean, this wasn't some sort of sick love, some defective love, some second class love or, you know, the usual stuff which they give us why it's not real love, it's not very grown up. Well, you know, there are endless things. So this was the real thing, and it's blasphemy to pretend otherwise. And never again can I go along with someone saying

that this isn't love. So not actually living gave me a very, very strong present. A very, very strong present which I hope has made me stand up much more.

It's interesting that before that happened, the same year as that happened, the succession of different religious superiors were really getting fed up with me. It kind of reached a crescendo with a bunch of them trying to have me removed from South America. Not for anything in particular that I'd done, because few of them actually knew me, but just rumors, slightly crazy. But that's how these things work.

So there had been this meeting of 13 or 14 of the regional superiors, all the superiors from Latin America, and they meant to be having a whole series of issues to discuss at their meeting for a weekend, and the meeting was held in Caracas. And for some reason or other, they got onto the subject of this awful person whom, of the 13 of them, only three I've ever met, and for two days they could talk about nothing else.

The superior general from Rome's assistant had to call them to order on the last day and say you've actually got an agenda, there are things to be done, because this is all...I mean...it's nuts. I mean, this is serious nuts, many of these, you know, provincial, the provinces of friars who are either gay themselves or have many other gay members...this whole thing was... So it was quite clear that it wasn't me as a person. [*Laughs.*] I was too much something else.

But also, when I heard about this, when it was presented, once it was presented to me as something which had happened—and it was my then boss who was French and straight presented it very gently in a very, very good way, I mean, he was appalled by just... As a straight man he just found the whole thing completely incomprehensible folie à deux, as he put it. [*Laughs.*] That's not what we were like.

But it was interesting that as he told me this, I was...I knew in a very clean movement, if that's the word, that my belonging to the Dominicans had been annulled. It was very...it was quite surgical. It wasn't at all painful.

Sonny D. How old were you when you felt this?

James A. Thirty...what year are we talking about? Talking about 20 years ago, this time March—March 1994. Laércio died in November of '94, so it was in the beginning of that year. So that was quite a crucial year because at the beginning of it there was this crisis with these guys which, when I was told about it, had the effect of—so I'm not actually a member of this community. I've been here under false pretenses. This is just not true.

And along with that the realization of how much I'd been trying to hold onto some sort of fake life, really, sort of hedging my bets in some way, thinking that maybe the religious thing could protect me in some way from all this homophobia, but yet having to be honest and thereby making it very dangerous for myself and other people. But this came as a...because

I could see quite clearly this mechanism had nothing to do with God, so that all this heart is purely... And then with the realization, when Laércio died, that the love was real. No longer any hesitation about just the goodness and ordinariness of the possibility of love.

It was interesting because in the years before, even between being ordained and going back to South America, I'd attended two or three—I don't know whether they were called ex-gay, but whatever it is—now they would be called ex-gay. I've forgotten whether that was the terminology at the time. But Leanne Payne, someone Mikowski. Living Waters. I can't remember what it is. Comiskey. Anyhow, these various people who were part of the—and may still be part of the ex-gay. But I went along to see if it made sense for me.

And I should say my experiences of it were not unpleasant. Some of the things they talked about to do with emotional hurt were perfectly reasonable things to talk about, but as it happens it had nothing at all to do with sexual orientation. I ended up thinking, well, there's not much here, really. I didn't have a—what's the word—a bad experience in the way in which some friends of mine, in that sense, who were sent to camps and things like that. But I suspect maybe already by that stage I had enough emotional strength to be able to say, oh, well, this stuff here, talking about healing your memories and whatever, might make perfect sense and is completely separable from the gay bit.

And it's interesting that about that time I was still holding onto some conflict. But that was—so 1994 was the year that was resolved for me, and that I just had to sort of step into the world, which meant effectively stepping off a plank out of the religious order into nothing at all. A priest with a doctorate and two books. So that was later. I knew from then on. And I told them, you know, in '94, I think I'm a guest, not a member. And actually, you know, eventually the guest has to leave.

So I left, and so I'm still a priest. But obviously as a Catholic you're supposed to be a priest as part of something. You're not supposed to be just a priest. And I'm in a strange—to this day I'm in a strange, weird canonical situation, which has actually turned out very well. No one wants to take responsibility for me, but it also means that no one can close me down. *[Laughs.]*

But anyhow, so that's...so yes, so 1995 really was the beginning of a very, very difficult and depressing time. No money, no employment prospects, none of that. Going back, attempting to find something to do, first of all in South America, and failing. End of '95 going back to England, going back, and the ultimate horror, at age 35 go back to live with your parents.

My parents, at that time, it was the final years of the Tory government, which by that stage had reached a, you know, as often final periods of governments are, very sleazy and unpleasant, because it's all gone on for too long. My father wasn't at all a sleazy or unpleasant man, but he was

still supporting this fairly odious setup, and I think he was conflicted by it as well, which meant that he was always in a bad mood.

So it wasn't at all pleasant for my parents having me back. It wasn't at all pleasant for me having to do that. But I really didn't have anywhere else to go. And I was quite clinically depressed. I mean, I would sit shaking for hours and hours on end. But, so little by little, gradually started to try and put life together.

Finally managed to get a job. That fell through. A job in the States. Which fell through because of problems to do with visas. The college in question failed to hire an immigration attorney. They thought that because I was a Briton, why you didn't need to hire an immigration attorney, any attorney would do. Of course they really screwed up. *[Laughs.]* And alas, I wasn't able to hire an attorney for myself because it has to be the college that hires. But anyway.

Anyhow, so the result of that was a pleasant experience of actually being at this place, which was in Louisiana. But it's a very financially difficult experience of not being able to be paid for it, so ending up with a good deal of debt. And then going back to England and being unemployed again, and then finally landing a job with a Swedish newspaper.

Sonny D. What year was that?

James A. What year was what?

Sonny D. That you landed the job with the Swedish newspaper.

James A. That would have been 1999. So going back to Chile to run a newspaper, to set up a Metro newspaper for the Swedish newspaper. That was great fun. I was available because I could speak Spanish and I'd lived in Chile, so they felt, oh, he's okay, he's quite sane, we can... So that was fun. And so I did that for a living in Santiago, and then in Rio got them basically set up. And then they decided eventually not to go ahead with that at the time because of things to do with Brazil and the economy. But at least the structure was all set up.

And that was a very different experience, I must say, working with a Swedish company. It was a delight, and I had very fun colleagues with whom I still stay in touch. And something really—it was a Swedish company in which, of course, they all spoke Swedish, but the language of the company was English. And even if there were seven Swedes in a room and only one non-Swedish person, they would all immediately speak English. And without even hesitating. So unconscious.

I always knew that I was going to be outside of them, not being Swedish, but had never been in a group of people who made it so easy to be an outsider. I mean, what a classy bunch. And so I was very, very impressed by that. And they didn't mind, completely unbothered by my being gay or not. I mean, I had to bring it up with them in Chile because when you're launching a newspaper which was flying in the face of Chilean right wing

newspapers, they might have tried to take advantage of me being gay as a way to... But I was upfront with the lawyers about that, and they reckoned it probably wouldn't...they were just the financial, really.

Sonny D. And what was your role at the newspaper?

James A. I think formally speaking I was the translator for the boss. But because the boss decided to do something else somewhere else, he left me in charge, so I ultimately became the on-site, the local company rep. And since this seemed to go perfectly well, they were perfectly happy to have me do that. And because I could speak both languages. So basically they were happy with that. So again, they trusted me to... "Oh, we seem to have left the company in the hands of a priest. I hope he knows what he's doing." [*Laughs.*]

Sonny D. And how long did you work there?

James A. A year. A year in Santiago and then about nine months in Rio. And the net result of which was that I was able, because I was earning as an expat and not paying rent, that I was able to save a great deal of money, and therefore pay off the debt that I'd incurred because of my previous experience in Louisiana, and still have enough money saved so that when I then came back to England with my debt paid off, I could say, okay, maybe now I can dare to do...

I'd already written several books. I'd been invited to give talks here and there, and enough people seemed to be interested, and I'd given various talks in different places, including here and San Francisco on gay related Catholic issues. Maybe I could dare to try and live my vocation, so not look for another job, now that I'd paid the debt. So I thought, well, I'll give it a go. And so I did. And it started. For the first three or four years it was very hard to mouth because there's not much money to be earned as a theologian, and as a gay theologian.

Sonny D. What places were you going, and who took an interest in having you come speak or share your experiences?

James A. Very varied. One of the places here, St. Gregory of Nyssa, they invited me to come and give a talk here. Or to a weekend here because of—I think it was because of books of mine that they had read earlier. But it was like that. It was various places. Some books of mine had been read. Some people were starting to pick up that Girard might be quite important for understanding certain basic things with Christianity.

And also friends in Mexico, my classmates in Mexico, had me back and give lectures there at the Jesuit university and things like that. So little by little I was... You know, for several years I wasn't bringing in more than, let's say, \$18,000 or something per year, so it wasn't a... [*Laughs.*] It wasn't, let's say, very easy to survive on that. I was renting a small room

in a friend's flat in London. But hey, I was doing what I was supposed to be doing.

And then things started to get better. First of all, someone suddenly out of the blue read my first book—not my first book, but the first gay related book. Out of the blue I suddenly got an email on Christmas day in 2003 saying, “James, I would very much like to pay your rent for two or three years. Would you like this?” [*Laughs.*] And he offered me a generous sum. It was much more than my rent cost then, which enabled me to get a small apartment—not a particularly nice apartment, but perfectly adequate for me to have my own space. So that was extraordinary. So things like that have happened that have kept me going.

And then in 2008 I got this amazing thing from Peter Thiel supporting Girard's thought, gave the money to set up a foundation to help promote Girard's thought, and then invited me to be a fellow and gave me a fellowship. So that's basically what's kept me going since then. And they said we want you to do what you do anyhow, but with a cushion. [*Laughs.*] So I try to do that.

Sonny D. How did they find out about your work? Do you know how they found out about you?

James A. Oh, because, I mean, because Girard and Bob Hamerton-Kelly, I mean, I'd met them, and they liked me. I think that also they were aware, quite a lot

of the people who were coming to discover Girard's thought were coming to discover it because of my book. So yeah, I think...

But, you know, the person who—Bob Hamerton-Kelly, who was chaplain at Stanford, was one of Girard's closest friends and collaborators, who died young, by today's standards, last July, to everyone's surprise. But he was an extraordinary man, a great rogue elephant. Big South African macho alpha male who rubbed so many people the wrong way, but was utterly gentle and tender underneath it all.

He was the sort of person people thought would be a bully, but no, because bullies are cowards and Bob loved it if you pushed back at him. He was just pleased. Bob really isn't like that. A bully gets really annoyed if someone gives them as good as they get, but nothing would please Bob more than someone actually daring to stand up to him. Nothing would please him more.

So anyhow, he was one of Girard's closest followers, although of a much more Protestant bent than my...from South Africa, having been brought up in very much what he described as a Fascist boarding school, undergraduate at Cambridge, was a Methodist, was a minister, and a very, very fine Pauline scholar. And a lovely, infuriating man. A brilliant, brilliant man.

But he...what's the word? He realized that I had understood Girard in a way that helped make it accessible in a whole variety of ways, even if it

wasn't his way. And actually, even when he was pastor at Woodside Church down the Bay, he'd have me come and give a talk about the gay issue to his congregation which, at that time, was odder than we think. Things which now are just...

Sonny D. Whatever. [*Laughs.*]

James A. [*Laughs.*] At that stage it was not whatever, but it was a big, you know, quite conservative Protestant pastor like Bob would be. As gay friendly as he was, it wasn't obvious. So yeah. Well, I hope that I've told you about some of the extraordinary people.

Sonny D. Yeah, absolutely. Do you want to tell us a little bit about—so the last date we came up to was just around 2008, so talk about 2008 to now.

James A. Well, because I started to receive this fellowship, which basically set me free of having to worry about rent, I was able to start to think, to be able to choose where I might like to live. So I thought, well, why don't we go back to Brazil, where my fellowship money will go further, or so I thought. Brazil then became very expensive because the rest of the Western world went into a spiral. But anyhow, I thought, well, why don't I go and live there and see whether I can start, I can help set up an LGBT pastoral in Sao Paulo.

I'd given talks to gay groups and gay Catholic groups in Medellin, Bogotá, in Mexico City, in Santiago. But here in Sao Paulo, you know, the largest

city in the Southern Hemisphere, gay pride is three million people, and there's no church group at all doing anything. One or two independent evangelical Pentecostal gay churches, not only the Metropolitan Community Church, but some other homegrown, while the Catholic Church, of course, is doing nothing at all. And so I thought why not, given that I'm sort of a non person in canonical terms, why don't I try and see whether I can go do something. As well as it being a place where I can start helping spread Girard's thought and influence out to the world. And so I did.

So I moved there in 2008 and have been living there ever since. And carrying on traveling a lot. And what I had started to do, as early as 1997 or 1998—1997 I think—was saying, okay, I'm a priest and I'm a theologian, but I can't teach in a Catholic faculty and I'm not functioning within the thing. What I really need to do is to use what I've learned to try and come up with a basic introduction to Christianity. Other things are all peripheral. And it's also far more important. I mean, to write about gay stuff is great, but it seems to me that a Catholic theologian who writes well about gay things is less important than a gay Catholic theologian who writes well about basic Christian things. [*Laughs.*] Because that's what makes the whole thing unanswerable. In a sense that's much more radical.

So thanks to friends who basically invited me to explain basic Christianity—you know, he's Catholic and she's Lutheran, and endlessly involved in a whole variety of good works, but they said, you know, we

need someone to explain to us what it's all about. We've talked, and now we know what we should do, but we'd much rather talk about the truth. So they invited me to come and give this course to them, and gradually that developed. So I started giving it in different places, and eventually it became important to write it out or film it or something so that it could be given when I'm not there.

And that's one of the things that I've been able to do since 2008, having the ability, thanks to donations and things like that from people, to get the whole course filmed, edited, and made ready so that it can now be available to people. On Thursday I'm going to meet up with a church down the Valley—or two different groups who have now done the whole course, so three months' worth each. And it's going to be interesting to me to get feedback. So that's a lot of what I've been doing, as well as traveling and the usual things. In lots of different places.

I've got a very great advantage of languages. I'm able to speak and lecture in English, Spanish, Portuguese and French, and even, actually, Italian, which is slightly odd, because I never learned it. But anyhow, they stay because they're very friendly and tolerant. They allow you to get by with a mixture of Spanish and Portuguese and French, with a little change of accent, and they're very helpful.

But it's amazing how glad people are when you can speak straightforwardly and honestly about the subject in these different cultures,

particularly ones outside the English speaking world, where there isn't so much literature easily available as there is—I mean, you know, there are lots of books in English about Christianity or theology and gay rights issues.

This is not true in many other countries. Many other cultures do not have the equivalent of the gay friendly book shops or the gay friendly, now that the big, the Barnes and Nobles or the whatever's that have significant LGBT sections. That just wasn't...hasn't been experienced lots of other places, so people are really grateful when... So I do find myself giving talks in different places. People are usually very pleased with that.

And then in Brazil I've also adopted a son, and most recently he's got a dog. I've got a son and a grandson.

Sonny D. And how did that happen?

James A. Well, it was someone I met. And I wasn't looking to adopt a son at all. If anything I would have been perfectly happy to end up with a partner. But I'm just not very competent at finding a partner. But after meeting him, something went click. And after a short time—he was abandoned as a child. He has no family at all, and a terrible, terrible childhood. After a short time it became clear that there was so much difference between us that it wouldn't be possible, really, to have a relationship of equals of the sort that would be foundational for any sort of real partnership. And so I offered it to him. I said, listen, maybe this will perhaps only really work if

you want me to adopt you. I think as a father-son relationship this might work. And he was delighted, not having had a family before.

And it's been very difficult. These are not easy things to do. I'm not an easy person to live with and he, having been through what he has, has found learning to trust anybody a very great challenge. But now we're four and a half years in, the paperwork is being done, so he'll soon have my name. And yeah.

Now that's been an extraordinary experience because of family values, you know. You learn how to respect your own father when you see how much like him you are, however I've seen that. When trying to love someone as a son. So it's actually an exercise in great forgiveness, of learning to appreciate my own father, but also learning how to be vulnerable and patient to bits of me that I was never vulnerable and patient with before in him, and vice versa.

So I'm...again, none of this was expected. None of this was in the original course, which this particular Malaysian airlines pilot plotted out. *[Laughs.]* To fly from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing or wherever it was. Slightly off chart since then. But that's where I am.

And...no, I just...what a privilege it has been to live through these years, bringing together these two realities—being an insider on the Christian faith and being gay. And these were two apparently incompatible forms of outsiderliness, and discovering that instead they're not. And that

there's a huge amount of life, not only for us, but for other people to be discovered by our inhabiting this space well. I think that that's what I've been discovering, so it's really a...yeah, it's really a very significant blessing.

Sonny D. When you think about the future, when you think about as a gay person, as a parent now, as a Christian, what are some of your hopes? What are some of the hopes for your work, some of the hopes for the communities you belong to, sort of in imagining forward into the future?

James A. Very good question. I don't even know because it's all going so fast. I mean, that's the extraordinary thing. We are rapidly heading towards that sort of banality which should be ours—*[laughs]*—with just the sheer ordinariness of it. And I think that that's essentially what I'm looking forward to seeing more and more.

And I think that we will be sensitive enough, really, to help those people in places like Africa and the Middle Eastern countries who are going to suffer more now because they're...the values that they have picked up, including freedom of identity and liberty and all those things. Those are not going to go away just because some nasty regime are going to start attacking them, so the tensions that they're going to be living, which are going to be very much nastier and more dangerous than the things we had to put up with, are very much there.

But in our patch of the world—and by our patch of the world I mean the Americas and Europe, at least, Australia and South Africa as well—I think that we're well beyond the tipping point in terms of just the straightforwardness of it all. So what do I hope? For our communities, that they're able to become as mainstream as what they in fact really are. I don't only mean not only in some sort of assimilationist way, but I think that for people to be recognized as being able to make certain sorts of contribution as gay and lesbian people without that being much of a thing. Having something distinctive, but not so different as to cause real difficulties.

In terms of my church, I hope before I die that I will be—what's the word—incardinated in some way, that someone will be brave enough to treat me as part of their show, which at the moment, of course, they put up a fight to do. But, you know, I don't know whether that will happen long-term. It may or may not happen. But that's, you know, obviously I'm a pretty conservative guy. I really would quite like...would quite like to be just an ordinary part of the system. And yet, you know, God has saved me from my own conservative tendencies by making all that impossible, all my own dreams of quiet security impossible. So we'll see.

I hope that this will be able to become something that will really be able to help people in other countries, as I say, in other countries and places where it isn't so easy. And this will lead to happiness. This is what I

think when I look about. People can argue, and they do, about the political effects of this, the political effects of that.

But one of the things that seems to me to be kind of obvious is that actually, when gay people are okay being who they are in a certain place, generally this makes the place happier. [*Laughs.*] Even if there are not very many gay people there. There's a kind of spillover quality to just the ordinariness and self-accepting gay people which just makes other people more relaxed about things. And I would like to see a lot more of that.

By this stage there ought to be enough evidence that if gay and lesbian people being who they are was really some kind of defect or some kind of pathology, that we would produce a great deal more unhappiness around ourselves when we are left to our own devices. And the fact is it doesn't seem to be the case. In general people are more happy and relaxed when there are ordinary, and not particularly interesting, necessarily, but perfectly interesting gay people around. In other words, something is being said about humans being able to get on together. And that's what I hope for.

I mean, it seems to me that's what Christianity is about—God making humans gloriously alive. And it's a strange, risky business, given how often we are—what's the word—hell-bent on making sure that we're sure of it. [*Laughs.*] So that's kind of what I hope for.

Sonny D. That's wonderful. Any last thoughts for the archive, for the listeners of the archive?

James A. For the listeners of the archive. I don't know, what does one say at the end of these things? Have a nice day? *[Laughs.]*

Sonny D. *[Laughs.]* That's perfect. All right.

[End of recording.]