

Oral History Interview: Keith Wedmore

Interviewee: Keith Wedmore

Interviewer: Mark Bowman

Date: March 20, 2013

Mark B. This is Mark Bowman here with Keith Wedmore on March 20, 2013, and we're at Keith's home in Mill Valley, California. Thank you for the time, Keith, and I just said I would love to have a short conversation with you just around the time period in which *Towards a Quaker View of Sex* was written. As you already alluded, you were in the U.S. for a couple of years, you returned to the U.K., and then you discovered that Anna Bidder was putting together a group. So just what do you recall? What did you know about the group? How was it forming?

Keith W. I think about half or two-thirds of the people who were later to be on it were already meeting, and she invited me, when I came back about April or May of 1957, she invited me to join the group, and I think we may have added one or two after that.

Mark B. Do you think they all came by invitation from her or she put out a concern and people responded? Do you know how they became part of the group?

Keith W. A very powerful person like her, with immense charisma and energy and effectiveness—she was an amazingly effective speaker—if she took up something that she cared about, she would see it through. And I think that

it probably came from her talking to people that she knew might, for one reason or another, be sympathetic or interested. We had had some suicides in Cambridge, for instance, which I was able to attribute, in part, to people having—well, indeed, most of them having emotional troubles—but I think gay issues took a large part in it. And there was one particular inquest where I intervened on behalf of the parents so that people didn't just think that the guy was overworked or something. Being overworked doesn't help. I mean, these things tend to happen in April or May when examinations are looming, but they're not the cause.

Mark B. And the understanding, from the beginning, was that the concern of the group was specifically homosexuality, correct?

Keith W. Oh, yes, indeed, again, on a very narrow issue. The law had not been changed, you remember. Nothing was legal at that time. Have you been watching “Doonesbury Abbey?”

Mark B. Oh, “Downton Abbey,” yes, of course.

Keith W. I mean “Downton Abbey,” yes. It's a bit much to suggest that the attempt to kiss or whatever it was that Thomas did to the pretty guy, that's not actually quite gross indecency, even in England then, but of course that was glossed over slightly. But you had, actually, to do something. But whatever it was, it would then be described as gross indecency.

And nobody bothered even to define it, as I think I say somewhere in that file. They just thought that it would be enough for a court to be told, the jury to be told, that certain things were grossly indecent, and the jury weren't left to decide for themselves. That was beginning to crack by the time that I got to the law, anyway, and I and my friend John Mortimer [QC] were thinking, well, the jury should decide those questions, not the judge. It's a matter of fact whether something is grossly indecent.

Mark B. The Wolfenden Report came out in 1957. That's the year you started. I know the Wolfenden Report is quoted in *Towards a Quaker View of Sex*. Do you think that might have been part of the impetus for the group forming?

Keith W. It turns out that his son or something was gay. Yeah. But definitely there was a whole move. The Bishop of Southwark—and there's a letter from him somewhere. John Robinson, yeah. He was part of the new wave of Christianity which was open to change. People like Mick Jagger, who once said, famously, that the sexiest guy around was Cecil Beaton, who of course was quite ancient. But I think that he meant it. And everybody said he can't possibly, but I think he meant it. So all sorts of people were beginning to sort of break through the sort of glass ceiling, whatever it is.

Mark B. You mentioned in the other interview that the group met once a month at the University Women's Club, had lunch together in the library. Was it

the same date each month? Did you schedule a day each month? Do you know how that evolved, how that started?

Keith W. We scheduled it, obviously, according to whether people were all going to be on holiday, or whether our prime members were. We could obviously stand meeting without one or two, but to lose more than that out of the 11 would have been sad, so we just fitted it to needs.

Mark B. So it was a different day of the week? It wasn't the third Sunday, or something like that?

Keith W. No. It might well have been at the weekend, because most of the group, including me, were working. I couldn't attend a thing which met on Friday or Thursday. It must have been always at a weekend, possibly Sunday.

Mark B. I saw a reference—I think it was in David's work—that you always began with worship, that that was the beginning of your time together.

Keith W. Oh, yeah, sure, sure. We gathered in a very Quaker manner. We had time. We didn't have to start talking as soon as we sat down. And so we could start with a few minutes of silence with a little worship and finish the same way, in the Quaker tradition. I mean, this is how all our committees function. And the difference between a committee, so to speak, and meeting for worship, as such, the church meeting on a Sunday

morning, is that you can eat through committee meetings, but you're not supposed to chew sandwiches during meeting for worship.

Mark B. You met for a couple of hours, an hour, three hours?

Keith W. Oh, no. It would have been most of the day. I mean, we would have met at 9:00 or 10:00 and had lunch at the University Women's Club and then continued afterwards until, I don't know, 4:00 or 5:00, that kind of thing. I see that I was the treasurer of the organization shortly after I got there. You can see all sorts of things which give away very much how we did and what we paid for and all that.

Mark B. Excellent. And the early period, people came and gave presentations?

Keith W. Oh, yes.

Mark B. How did you start addressing the subject? Where did you get your information from?

Keith W. Well, we thought that we were sort of trawling on a random basis, but boy, it got better than that. But we thought we'd have some, I don't know, police officers or some probation officers, or some psychiatrists that weren't already in the group, or a whole range of professional people, in the wide sense—probation officers, nurses, whatever—but people who would be likely to have some knowledge in right of their job, so that they didn't feel that we were summoning them because we thought they were or might be gay. I mean, that didn't come into it.

[paragraph about Wedmore's second cousin, headmaster of a Quaker school, who spoke to the working group deleted per request of KW.]

But anyway, so I found having my relations come and give evidence was sort of interesting. But none of them were boring. I imagine we took some notes. I imagine we all took notes and somebody did some sort of summary of where we'd got to, and that was circulated, and then we went on again from there. And when we started writing—I don't think we started writing straightaway at all, because we needed to listen quite a long time before we started to write anything—then, as we started to write, we sort of had a nucleus of written stuff that was loosely agreed, and then we could go on.

And then we discovered that we couldn't just write about homosexuality on its own because it would make no sense whatever. There is a whole range of sexual experience, of which this is a significant part, but it's not the biggest part, and so we had to go and do everything else.

Mark B. At one point, I think it was in the second interview with Neil, you said you actually had written something on homosexuality and sent it to a publisher who didn't accept it, and that's when you decided to broaden your topic, or is that...?

Keith W. I used to be in the Inland Revenue in England, and in the England Revenue legal department, there was a guy there who was the brother of Lord Darwen, who ran a publishing company called Darwen Finlayson,

and my friend thought it was natural to contact his brother early on, and his brother contacted us and said, okay, yes, what's all this about, I'm interested.

But at that stage we hadn't discussed anything except homosexuality, so he didn't really get too worked up about that. He thought that it was just going to be too narrow or...I don't know, so he let it go. And he wrote later to say, after it had come through all its different versions, and the one by your right knee had come out, he said how much he regretted that he hadn't taken it on.

We hadn't felt the need to—see, we weren't interested in money or publicity, as such, we were interested in changing what people think about morals, with whatever had to happen had to happen. But we weren't tied to a commercial publisher. And whether that would have been a good idea or a bad idea I don't know. As it was, it helped us, in a sense, because we didn't have anybody hanging over us on a deadline basis—you know, you said you thought it would be two or three years, well, when is it going to happen? Publishers like to know what's coming well in advance, and nothing was coming, really, until we had got there.

And then we put that out, and then there was something of a dustup, because we had perhaps been a little too brief in our consideration of triangular situations and that sort of thing inside marriage or without, and so we really said, without really going much into it in any depth, that it

really doesn't matter very much. Well, in a sense, of course, it does, and there were people who thought that that really is the limit, so we were induced to sit again a bit and bring out the second edition. I slightly prefer the first because I think we spent too much time on it in the second, and I think people should have understood, from the way that we were approaching this, that we weren't saying, no, no, it's already to upset—I mean, it depends on what your commitment is.

Some people marry on the basis that it's just to get somebody a visa.

Other people expect you to be totally in love, and totally committed, and totally faithful, and no sex what—I mean, and that's up to them.

Marriages are made in many different ways. All we would have said, had we been pressed to consider this at enormous length, is that you have to make your own respectful relationships, and that includes not letting people down, not betraying them. It doesn't include the fact that you may discover that your relationship has fallen apart. Most relationships do.

But indeed, one of the things that I think that we tried to recognize was that there aren't too many people who can, for whatever reason, stay in a kind of permanent marriage. I mean, P.G. Wodehouse was married for a very long time, but he had no interest in sex whatever, so he was out of that.

Mark B. Can you say a little more just—I'm curious about how you write with a committee of 11. How did the writing unfold? Did you have an outline? Did people write sections and brought them to the group?

Keith W. Yes, yes, yes.

Mark B. How did that happen?

Keith W. At the end of each session—as far as I can remember—I haven't read through this again, but as far as I can remember, at the end of the session, we would consider whether we would now add something, or add a chapter, or have a draft chapter as a result of the day. That, of course, doesn't, by any means, happen every week, or every month or anything else, but it did happen. And then somebody would say, okay. It didn't matter who did it at all, so somebody would write it and circulate it to the group, and we'd then come back next time and tear it apart and discuss it and produce something that we all agreed on, which was a lovely process because one of the charms of the Society of Friends is you're allowed to change your mind.

And so we could work it through until we had genuinely convinced each other of what it should say, and some things got altered quite a lot and some didn't much. I, in fact, was asked to write the complete chapter on homosexuality, and not much of that actually didn't get through. I mean, that was—but of course it had been in my head for something like 15

years. I could just sit down and write what the Emperor Hadrian or somebody thought. Which one was it? Anyway, it's in the book.

Mark B. Right, you quote that.

Keith W. Constantine, or was it...it doesn't matter. Anyway, there's some emperor who thought that sodomy caused earthquakes or something. But all that was from actually reading Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* when I was in Canada.

Mark B. Did you write other sections? You wrote that section.

Keith W. No, I wrote that, but, I mean, they had a hand in chipping at it, of course, and I'm only saying that most of it survived. I still see my own words. They probably took out some bits. But the same thing happened with them. We all, or I'm sure most of us, at any rate, volunteered to write a chunk.

Mark B. Do you actually recall who was the major writer of the different sections?

Keith W. Sorry?

Mark B. Do you recall who was the major writer of the different sections?

Keith W. Oh, I see. If you hand it back a moment, it might come back. That's going to be difficult because of the very—

Mark B. And it may not—

Keith W. —[lack of] ego and vanity involved. It wouldn't make any difference who wrote what, as far as we were concerned. We just wanted—

Mark B. Okay, okay.

Keith W. Ah, well, for instance, there's some rather psychiatric passages.

Mark B. Right, there's the...

Keith W. Normal sexual development and so on.

Mark B. Exactly. That's Chapter...Section Four. Section Four seems to be...no, sorry.

Keith W. Anyway, that will have probably been written either by Lotte Rosenberg, who is long gone, or—

Mark B. It's Appendix B, "The Origins of Sexual Behavior."

Keith W. Appendix B?

Mark B. Yes. It gets quite a lot into the psychological.

Keith W. Oh, I see, okay. Let me have a look at that. I was in the wrong place.

Mark B. Page 53.

Keith W. Page what, 54?

Mark B. Fifty-three.

Keith W. Fifty-three. Oh. Well, the first paragraph or so, looking at it quickly, has a lot of Anna Bidder in it.

Mark B. Oh. [*Laughs.*]

Keith W. She was...what the heck was she, an anthropologist?

Mark B. A zoologist, from what I read.

Keith W. Oh, yeah. And so we had quite a lot of that.

Mark B. Okay.

Keith W. “Sex and Personality.” That looks like Richard Fox. Richard Fox was the second-youngest person. He was a psychiatrist at the Maudsley Hospital. If this is going to be very important to you, I will look through it and see if I can allocate passages to people.

Mark B. That might be interesting to have as a record at some point. If it’s not in the notes, that might be—

Keith W. Except that I am liable to be rather unreliable because of the distance of time.

Mark B. I understand that, and so if that’s not something...

Keith W. But the style. Some people had their own style. Kenneth Barnes, for instance, who was a headmaster, was a wonderful man, and his style was pretty... Wetherby School he was head of. And it was said by everybody

that the school was so wonderful to be there that it didn't prepare you in any way for life. You were shocked and horrified once you left it. You couldn't believe people would behave like this, the school was so good.

Mark B. From what I read, he was also the founder of the school.

Keith W. Yes.

Mark B. He was the founder and the headmaster both.

Keith W. Right. But that would help to keep him there, wouldn't it? Yes.
Wennington School, Wetherby.

Mark B. You mention the group in here, and there's a quote in the introduction—I thought it was interesting—that said some members of the group found themselves compelled to surrender assumptions that they had long accepted and held.

Keith W. Oh, certainly.

Mark B. Was the group rather diverse in its perspectives when it began, and you saw changes happening?

Keith W. When we began, there was only one morality to consider. We didn't know that we were going to barge ahead and say, well, I think we've looked that through, it's not going to hold up. So we all went there, in some sense, thinking that we were trying to rewrite the Bible or something. Yeah, I mean, we had...

I'm sorry, let me just look at the list of members. We had Joyce James, who was a housewife. She had a lot of common sense, but she was put on because she just had common sense. I know nothing about her private life.

Oh, Mervyn Parry, "teacher of educationally subnormal children. One-time assistant housemaster in a borstal." Yes, he was absolutely charming, and he'd been in triangular relationships himself, and so on, and he'd had his wife's permission, so to speak, and he was very grateful to her. It all worked through very well. It went through and was over, and life must have been pretty good. But I'm sure he had a lot of guilt when he came to the group. I think we relieved him of that, to some extent... You know I took this whole thing out of print when I discovered what had been happening.

Mark B. Yes.

Keith W. That still amazes me. Then I had, from Friends House, no less, this stuff about well, of course you're all anonymous, we couldn't find any of you. And I said anonymous? You look at Page 4 and I'm on it. You could have written to me.

Mark B. Right. Yeah, and they didn't. I found some people in Wikipedia doing some Google searches. I'm just curious. The ending of the section on homosexuality, the last...

Keith W. Can you give me a page?

Mark B. Yeah, let me give you a page number. On Page 36. This whole thing about promiscuity and people living without a... It seems to me that the last two paragraphs from the end must have been carefully written by committee.

Keith W. You mean that they were sort of trying to trim it a little bit.

Mark B. Yeah. The third from the end in the middle there, it says, "Members of this group have been depressed quite as much by the utter abandon of many homosexuals, especially those who live in homosexual circles as such, as by the absurdity of the condemnation rained down upon the well-behaved."

Keith W. Well, yeah. I think I may have had a hand in that, or I didn't write those lines, but the...I think because they felt, gays in those days felt that nobody was going to like them, they were in permanent social disgrace, that they felt that anything went. And so I can remember one or two gay parties which were attended by one or two older people who lived in Cambridge, maybe they had been to Cambridge University as students, but they were much older. But I can remember them drinking and so forth, and then sort of getting their pricks out and fondling each other, and I thought that was not appropriate for a party. So that's what I mean by utter abandon.

I mean, I think that—“Downton Abbey”—that you expect to do some things in certain places and people should...there’s a certain amount of deference involved in every relationship, including just buying groceries, and certain things are expected of you. And so I’ve never thought that unless you were there specifically to get a kick out of other people having sex in front of you, which is okay, if everyone is going to do that, then that’s why you’re there, but I did think that... I thought that people felt they hadn’t any reins because they had no link with society. That really concerned me. I wanted to make a bridge.

Mark B. Okay, good. I was wondering if that was indicative of some dissent or disagreement within the group around how it is that we sort of still don’t allow the condemnation, but we don’t allow—

Keith W. No, I don’t think there was any dissent. We did have a really sharp dig, yes, at people who pretend to be in love or... I mean, we see nothing in them—this is a strong line often, but thinly disguised lust—I think we were... I’m not sure that lust needs to be disguised, but I think at that point we were trying to accept that the public were aware that some people, gays and, you know, whatever, partly, perhaps, because of the situation that they were in, cottaging and so on, but were... Ah, were having an entirely affectionless relationship.

And this doesn’t bother me now. I mean, I can remember Woody Allen quoting “sex without love is a very empty experience, but as empty

experiences go, it's one of the best.” And when I was doing calligraphy many years later, like 20 or 30 years ago, and we were going off to calligraphy retreats, there was this ancient lady doing some quite fine calligraphy, and I looked over her shoulder to see what she was writing, and that's what she was writing. So go for the empty experience if that's all you have. Yes, I think we were...and you have to remember that we knew our audience. We knew the audience were going to be astounded at every—

Mark B. How would you say who what audience was? Who were you thinking about when you were writing? Did you have a particular audience in mind?

Keith W. No, but we knew the British public and what they had been through. We knew that...I can't remember whether Peter Wildeblood and so on, when [Sir] John Gielgud—I think the Gielgud and Wildeblood and Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, the Boy Scouts, I think all of that was just before we got onto this, and possibly before Wolfenden. And although the *Times* described John Gielgud as clerk, which is a very mysterious way to describe an occupation, and he certainly wasn't, of course, he was a well-known actor, but they printed this thing, you know, and John Gielgud appeared at the Bow Street Magistrates' Court and pleaded guilty to, what was it, soliciting.

So we, the British public, are a randy lot, and we read the News of the World for its sensationally sexy passages and so on. And so the paper knows what its public is. They like dirt dressed up as a condescending [manner], you know. I mean, “how disgraceful that all this happens,” to whit. [*Laughs.*] And they set it all out. So I don’t mean to be censorious about that. At the time we were probably more concerned that people would think that we were just saying anything goes, and we were trying to sort of here find some way of saying that we’re not quite saying that. But this is now 56 years later, isn’t it, or something?

Mark B. It’s actually 50 years of the publication, but 56 from when you started, yes.

Keith W. Yeah, that’s right. It’s a long time, half a century. And now, not that we can go meet again and do this again, but you would be starting from an entirely different place, and you would know that people would change. Do you remember that yesterday, or the day before, this woman who’s a newly converted Mormon—two days ago—born again Mormon she is now, and she said, “God hates fags, and you can tweet that as much as you like.” And the lights went out on her, the audience rose and disappeared, she was taken off the stage. Her later performances were canceled. And I know this is out West, but, I mean, you couldn’t do that now. You can’t say that sort of thing.

Mark B. You can't say that these days, right. Agreed. You mentioned the article in *The Friend*, and I don't know if you recall. The group did go public in May of 1960—

Keith W. Yes, we said a few things—

Mark B. —by printing a concern in *The Friend*, and it said—and I wonder who wrote that—and then a month later you had a one-day conference, and there was subsequently a lot of letters to *The Friend*, so you kind of, the group went public. Was there a particular reason for doing that? Do you recall where you were in the process?

Keith W. We just thought a progress report might interest Friends, which it did. Duncan Fairn wrote it, and I think he came out first with the title *Towards a Quaker View of Sex*, a sort of slightly wry title. And so that came out, and that, of course, was written out of the stage that we had got to. We were at a fairly early stage. We were sort of Neanderthal man at that point, but nevertheless, we were making progress, and I imagine that he...I forget his letter now, but I imagine he let the cat out of the bag in the sense that he was saying we're looking at this as a different morality, so that caused some correspondence and so on, which we considered, but we didn't feel any of it needed answering.

We didn't indulge in, as the National Rifle Association does, having a spokesperson produce some beautifully worded—you know, they're very good at this. We just went on with our work in the library of the Women's

University Club. And those Friends who said the—when he wrote, of course, he hadn't read what we had so far written, and neither did we offer to give it to him.

But a lot of people were disturbed at any thought that the ancient, ancien regime might fall. People like structure. Any change, especially of mind, any change is horrific to contemplate, so if you're brought up in any system—and England is very programmed compared to America—if you're brought up in any system, you don't want it destroyed. For one thing, you may have suffered greatly in order to keep it going, or you may have felt that you set a good example by how much it had cost you in pain and agony of hanging onto the same relationship, for instance, long after it was over or something. So all those people had an investment in nothing changing.

And the people who attacked it most in my presence once—oh, that...it was theoretically sponsored by the Friends Temperance and Moral Welfare Union, and I think I've already said that when it came out, I did show the chair of that a copy. I sent it to him because he asked me to, and I saw no reason—it was already printed. There was nothing he could do. And he and his wife went through the roof, and they described it in my monthly meeting as poison, "this poison," they said. I was present to listen to this stuff.

And I discovered later that they'd had these horrific experiences with their children going all wrong, especially in a sexual manner, and I suppose they thought that was a breakdown of society, in that they had not followed the British moral code. Well, I think that the British moral code was one of the problems, myself, but the parents thought that the fault was in their children for not having followed it. And there's a big difference there. And they certainly weren't prepared to climb down and say we have treated our children cruelly, and that must partly account for their problems. Too, to some extent, they don't have any problems, you know, you're just being interfering parents, or we have been interfering. I'm rambling. Sorry. You better give me another.

Mark B. That's okay. Following that, you mentioned Duncan Fairn wrote in *The Friend* on May 20th. The record says that you had a conference at Hampstead Meeting House on June 10, 1960. Was there a meeting where you invited other people to come in, or that was just your group meeting?

Keith W. It wouldn't have been our group meeting because we wouldn't have met in a meeting house. We may have convened—well, actually, we convened several conferences, both before and after the thing came out.

Mark B. Okay, you did.

Keith W. To sort of get people's views, I think.

Mark B. Times for listening.

Keith W. And of course the people who came were self-selecting, so they would tend to be more liberal than we were, especially on things like the age of consent, I remember. I remember my suggestion at Oxford Meeting House of a representative group of Friends that maybe the age of consent should be reduced to 15 or something like that, and do you know that they were going to make it 14. And I have that wonderful memory of the librarian at the inner temple saying to me in the toilet of the inner temple that didn't I think that the age of consent should be 14 years, eight months.
[Laughs.]

Mark B. *[Laughs.]*

Keith W. That must be after this thing came out.

Mark B. It's been mentioned that the group had no trained Quaker theologian, you were mostly social scientists. Did you talk about that? Was that a concern?

Keith W. Quakerism is a bit short of trained theologians, you know. What training? Who would train them? There are much respected Quaker colleges and universities in the United States, but not quite the same sort of people in England. England doesn't have any Quaker universities or colleges, for historical reasons. And we had weighty Friends, very weighty Friends, whom everybody would say, oh, that is a weighty Friend. Ormerod Greenwood, who was on BBC practically once a week, and George Gorman or something. His name will come back to me. But we had

people who were very well-known and were sort of used by the media occasionally to ask questions as to what Quakers think about something.

But we don't really have a tradition of Brethren, or Pastors, or whatever. There's a bit more of that in America. For one thing, you actually have programmed meetings here and so on. I mean, the whole of Quakerism is in much greater flux than it was in England, where such a thing would be unknown. So our refusal to value classical academic education so highly as to actually want to have institutions providing it possibly means that we were rather short of trained theologians.

Mark B. Moving toward the publication, do you recall [how] the group kind of reached a consensus, were at the end, were ready to print this? How did you get to the point of moving to actual printing?

Keith W. It wasn't difficult, was it? We had no publisher offering to edit or anything. Nobody...neither had sought nor had been invited to. So that when we were ready with all the chapters finished and all of them minutely considered, many of them several times or many times, we must have just said, okay, we've done it, let's send it to the printer.

Mark B. David Blamires mentions that it's interesting that even though the book began as a study of homosexuality, once it was published, most of the negative comments were not about the subject of homosexuality, but instead were about adultery, premarital sex and things like that. Did the group think about that? What did you reflect on that?

Keith W. We thought that was rather natural because the predominant sexual activity in the population tends to be male-female, and they thought that they'd got the message, that we were discussing not just gays, but we were discussing them, we were discussing how people needed fresh guidelines. And I forget now what your question was. But no, it didn't surprise us at all.

Mark B. It didn't surprise you. Did the group keep meeting after you published?

Keith W. Oh, no.

Mark B. What happened to the group after the publication came out?

Keith W. No. We were very fond of each other. I mean, we might meet up...obviously, with Anna Bidder, I mean, she was a friend for life and I would have gone on seeing her. I don't remember keeping up, particularly, with any of the others, except Duncan Fairn, whose son had been a friend of mine, and was at Cambridge with me, and who was a very forceful personality, and his parents were forceful personalities. She was the chairman of the Marriage Guidance Council.

[paragraphs deleted per request of KW.]

Mark B. Notes mention that Kenneth Barnes and Anna Bidder were on the BBC show "Meeting Point" the night before it was published on a Sunday night and then it came out on Monday. Did the group do something to

recognize, ritualize your closing and your being done and getting out there?

Keith W. This was when it was published?

Mark B. Right, this is when it was published.

Keith W. No. I mean, we were all free to talk to anybody who wanted to talk to us. And they were two of the most vigorous personalities on the group, and we were delighted. We didn't have the sort of sensations that you would get normally when friends of yours get successful and you say ouch, you know what I mean? Nothing so annoys one as the success of a friend. And any of us who were asked to do something usually did it. We were quite interested in the subject after the essay was out, and so we all had—I mean, I must have given a hundred talks on it.

Mark B. You mentioned you spoke a lot, yeah.

Keith W. You know, at a different level from them, but some of them were on television. I can remember, in fact, this one caused something of a...and I nearly lost my position in Bristol. I was a barrister in a chambers headed by a drunk groper. No woman at a party will escape un-gropered. And he summoned me one day after I was on BBC television suggesting the age of consent should be whatever I then thought, 16 or 15. And he began his interview—I thought he was sending for me to give me a better room,

which I thought I was entitled to by this time, and he was the head of chambers, so he could, theoretically, have gotten me out.

But the interview began, “You fucking cunt, Wedmore,” and I thought, this isn’t going to go well. And so he then went on about this, putting up completely the traditional view, and what he want—anybody else listening. But he was a drunk. I don’t know whether he even remembered it the next day. I didn’t get any sleep that night and I decided just to stand on my reputation. I was well thought of. Well thought of in the chambers. He would have found it very difficult to get me out.

Mark B. In the other interview you talk about the second edition, how it came about. The group didn’t meet together on the second edition. Did a couple of people take responsibility for the revisions?

Keith W. Oh, no, no, no. We met.

Mark B. You did meet again?

Keith W. We certainly met, yeah, because we wouldn’t have done that. We needed to meet again and I’m sure we did.

Mark B. Okay, so that happened collectively?

Keith W. Yeah.

Mark B. Good.

Keith W. It was a big burden we had taken on. We didn't want to see it slide down the other side of the hill because it just fell upon two people to sort of write something, renew it.

Mark B. Any other particular recollections of any of the people on the group? You've mentioned some of them who were really outstanding. Things you recall about what, in particular, anyone brought to the group?

Keith W. In the case of the psychiatrist, of course, a lifetime of treating people who had been savaged by the traditional sexual ethics, and many of those were gay or interested in much younger people and so on. Let me just see. Let me just look at them.

Mark B. Yeah, just look. I didn't know if there was something in particular you recall around a particular gift or perspective or role that someone in particular played within the group.

Keith W. Well, Alfred Torrie was a very well-rounded psychiatrist.

Mark B. He published a lot. I found a lot of books published by him.

Keith W. Yes. And so he brought a lot of common sense as well as psychiatric experience. I think that...who was it now? The lady. Oh, yes, Lotte. I think Lotte had tended almost to specialize in [sexually distressed] people...I don't think her practice was entirely all around. I think that she had a sort of Mother Teresa feeling about her patients. Oh, I think I sent her somebody, somebody in my meeting who I thought was gay, and

finally...I can't remember at what stage in my existence, but this was, I think, before all this stuff came out. But he went along to Lotte and it changed his life, I mean, it was wonderful. But that's the sort of thing that she really did. She would take people out of their nest of misery, and it was quite often sexual, so that she almost developed, so to speak, in psychiatry, a corner in sexuality, rather as John Mortimer and I had, in the law, a corner in indecency.

[paragraph deleted per request of KW.]

So Alfred Torrie was a good psychiatric all around-er. Lotte Rosenberg was an absolute gift to people who were crushed by sexual troubles. Mervyn Parry was a very normal sort of guy. He had this interesting triangular situation. But the fact that he was at a borstal, of course, so he had had England's toughest young crooks. The borstal institutions were institutions for young prisoners, and if you went to borstal you were more or less marked for life as an offender. It didn't do your resumé any good. But anyway, so he will have got quite a bit from that.

Kenneth Nicholson, oh, of course, Friends School Saffron Walden, where my daughter was later to go. I'd forgotten Kenneth. Well, that's interesting. You know, really, these things come back. As a headmaster—and I don't remember that he had any particular interest in gayness, particularly, while I'm at it—but he was running a liberal Friends boarding school, which was not quite a public school in the English sense.

I'm trying to think whether it was or not. No, I don't think so. The one at Reading was, Leighton Park.

There was a very posh school and they used to play football with Eton College and so on. Saffron Walden was a little bit out in the sticks, and it was more liberal, very intelligent. And he just had the experience, I suppose, that a headmaster must have, of how teenagers... By the time you're 14, you're what you're going to be the rest of your life, let's face it, so he had people who were even 17 and 18, never mind 14, so he could see their paths and where they were going, and no doubt he knew something about their troubles. I mean, he was a sympathetic sort of guy.

Joyce James was simply...she was unable to attend during the last year. I wonder if she was sick. That's possible. But she was just a charming, ordinary, but I think it was her ordinariness which was really her claim. I mean, we wanted somebody who didn't have any particular specialty.

Alastair Heron. He survived a long time. Very well-known Friend.

Mark B. He was quite prominent, yes.

Keith W. Yes.

Mark B. He and Anna Bidder and Kenneth Barnes have entries in Wikipedia.

Keith W. Yes, that's right. They're all mentioned because he [Alastair Heron] was the general editor of this thing. I'd forgotten that. So that he was finally responsible for collating it. It's an administrative job, isn't it? He was

finally responsible for collating the various suggestions and seeing that they got into some sort of form where they could be discussed at the next meeting.

Richard Fox was a wonderfully bouncy guy, yes. A very confident psychiatrist. Maudsley Hospital. He was good. And of course he was younger. He was nearer my—he was probably about six years older. How old was I? Let me see. In 1957 I would have been 25. Well, he could have been 31 or 34 or something. And he just had a...he was one of these busy psychiatrists who sees an awful lot of patients. He can't have been a Freudian. You know, [he saw folks] for just two or three sessions and that kind of thing.

Anna Bidder, research work and teacher. She's very humble here. Teacher in zoology. My goodness. Had she not refused such things on principle, she would have certainly been Dame Anna Bidder long before she died, and I imagine she had been specifically invited, because she founded Cavendish College, which is...I mean, almost singlehanded. But that was an amazing thing to do. And then, of course, Kenneth Barnes. Sorry, I'm just...

Mark B. That's okay. Just wondered if any recollections. That's fascinating that you share that. Did you meet Derrick Sherwin Bailey? Did you meet him? Did you talk with him?

Keith W. Sherwin Bailey.

Mark B. Yes, the Anglican theologian who wrote—

Keith W. Oh. Did I read a book by him at some point?

Mark B. You actually quote him a couple times. He was the first one who wrote *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*. He wrote the breakthrough books. And I just didn't know if you actually met him or did any work with him.

Keith W. Well, I didn't meet him, but I think we were under a compulsion to read anything that anybody wrote on the subject so that we had at least done that.

Mark B. Okay. There's not much biographical information available about him. Someone is working on it right now, and I was just curious if you actually met him.

Keith W. No, I didn't.

Mark B. And I did want to follow up on your reference to Bayard Rustin. A good friend of mine, John D'Emilio, actually wrote *The Lost Prophet*, the definitive biography of Bayard Rustin, and he actually emailed me. He was curious as to whether there was ever any connection. In his research, he was never able to find a connection between your working group and Bayard Rustin, but he wondered if there ever was. And you mentioned that. And you mentioned it was in '52 or '53, but you said it was in New York. However, you weren't in New York then, and Bayard—

Keith W. I'm sorry. If I met him, I was obviously—oh, wait a minute. Had I been to New York before? No, I wasn't living in New York, but in the summer of, was it '52?

Mark B. But Bayard came to Oxford in late July, early August of '52 for the World Conference of Friends, so he was in Oxford for about two weeks and then he went to Africa. And then it says in late September '52 he came back to London. So I didn't know if that clicks a bell for you about the context you might—

Keith W. No, but in '52 I went to America for three months.

Mark B. Oh, you did go to America then.

Keith W. I was on vacation when I met him.

Mark B. Okay.

Keith W. In fact, because I discovered that I had rather underprogrammed my summer, I went to an American Friends Service Committee convened conference at Sarah Lawrence College on international affairs. Oh, boy, that was interesting. And while I was there, for reasons I can't at the moment clearly remember, I finished up having dinner with him and this Russian and somebody else, and of course he was a lot of fun, because he was a well-known Quaker rebel, and he had completely guiltless sexuality, and it was a rather splendid combination at the time.

Mark B. I don't know whether it was ironic. Were you aware that literally about two or three weeks before *Towards a Quaker View* was published was when he was arrested? That was the big scandal. He was arrested in Pasadena, California January 21, 1960—I'm sorry. It was '53. I got it wrong. It's ten years before. I had it confused.

Keith W. Perhaps it was then a short time, after all, before. I have a feeling that, by the time I met him, he was obviously likely to get into trouble. I can't remember whether he specifically... I have the opinion that he had already been in trouble once. Was it the summer of '52 or '53? Well, if I had to, I could work it out.

Mark B. It's okay.

Keith W. Because in '52 I didn't go to America. I picked strawberries. The summer of '53, I think it would have been. But with his totally courageous risk-taking, he was bound to get in trouble from time to time. And America is more prurient than England, in some ways. I mean, here you can be had for sodomy, I think, if it's purely oral, whereas in England it could only be anal.

And they extend everything. The law here is infinitely flexible. It gathers moss, you know, and all that, like a rolling stone. And people get caught up in it rather easily. And also, of course, with this absurdly high age of consent, which I think you've still got, haven't you? Isn't it 18? I think it is 18. It's ridiculous. It's totally unreal.

Mark B. Thank you for your time. In the other interview, which didn't get in, you do mention that being involved in this group is probably the thing which you're most proud of in your lifetime.

Keith W. Yeah. Well, I mean, it's one of the—I mean, the two things I did was this and capital punishment, more or less at the same time. But yeah. But I'd say if I had to choose one, because the capital punishment thing was so much of a larger... I mean, it couldn't fail, whereas the sex thing could have failed. It was more on edge. It needed more attention.

Mark B. Thank you for your time.

Keith W. Well, thank you. Are we through?

Mark B. Unless there's something else you want to add.

Keith W. Oh, no.

Mark B. I appreciate your help. I just wanted to sort of walk through the group and what that process was like.

Keith W. Yeah, I mean, I'll have another look at...

Mark B. To me it's fascinating that a group of 11 people would take six or seven years to meet regularly. The commitment to doing that, the commitment to each other, to the subject, and to being willing to work together with a group is actually an amazing phenomenon.

Keith W. Yeah. Well, it was really one of the biggest—I mean, it was like being part of a huge, highly successful sharing group. It taught me how you can do that. Sharing groups are one of Friends' gifts, I think. This was amazing.

And I think I've said this so many times, you must have heard it now ten times, but it was wonderful to be so much part of the group that you never had to worry, in a public appearance, that you weren't really speaking for the others. You were always speaking for them. And that gave you great strength. It's not just I that speak, look at the list. Look at them. And seven of them, or five of them or whatever were elders of the Society of Friends. And so we never felt personally persecuted. It would be very difficult to persecute 11 people.

Mark B. Yes. Good.

Keith W. Good. It's fun having you.

Mark B. Thank you.

[End of recording.]