

Queer Newark Oral History Project
Interviewee: Arnie Kantrowitz
Interviewer: Timothy Stewart-Winter
Date: June 1, 2015
Location: New York City

Arnie Kantrowitz: ...antediluvian period.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Well it is, it's earlier than anything...no, the only place that I need you to check is either here, if you are willing to have your real name used, or the line below if you're not. As you can imagine we have some who are not. I think they want you to initial.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Initial, okay. So that's if I am willing.

Tim Stewart-Winter: If you are willing, yeah.

Arnie Kantrowitz: And I have to sign it. Put my name here?

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yes.

Arnie Kantrowitz: What about the taping if I have to interrupt for nature's reasons or...

Tim Stewart-Winter: Oh, I'll just...

Arnie Kantrowitz: I can just say it.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yes.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Or some weird hand signal.

Tim Stewart-Winter: You can just say it, absolutely. We're not that advanced.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Now I wrote Arnold instead of Arnie. I'm so used to filling out forms from insurance companies and doctors.

Tim Stewart-Winter: I love your apartment. I know—I don't *know*, I *met* your partner once.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Oh, really?

Tim Stewart-Winter: At a film screening at Lincoln Center.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Oh of Vito Russo, the one about...?

Tim Stewart-Winter: No, this was I think it was "We Were Here," the documentary about the AIDS crisis.

Arnie Kantrowitz: About the AIDS people, yeah.

Tim Stewart-Winter: I don't think you were there.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I don't remember if I was there.

Tim Stewart-Winter: I don't think you were cause I would have remembered.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I'd love to skip tonight's thing due to the weather [laughter].
This is a film by Jeanne Carlomusto about, it's called "Larry Kramer in Love and Anger." And we've already seen it but tonight's the official premiere and then it's gonna be on HBO later this month.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Oh cool. we persuaded Time Warner to give us HBO for free for a year—

Arnie Kantrowitz: Oh yeah? Great. [laughs]

Tim Stewart-Winter: —so I'll make sure to DVR that.

Arnie Kantrowitz: How did you do that?

Tim Stewart-Winter: Well I think we were threatening to cancel cable. [laughter]

Arnie Kantrowitz: Okay so here's what I have to do, I didn't...

Tim Stewart-Winter: You're all set.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Of course, I may be signing my life away cause I didn't read anything but you look like a trustworthy person.

Tim Stewart-Winter: There is nothing, oh and this is for later, once I send you the interview transcript I'll send you more documentation.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Okay.

Tim Stewart-Winter: So, I am thrilled to be here.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Thrilled to have you.

Tim Stewart-Winter: It's June first, 2015, and I'm here with Arnie Kantrowitz, and the first thing I wanted to just get concrete about, I have your book here—you know what, I left my notes over here, I'll just grab them.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Okay. Sorry this lamp doesn't work—

Tim Stewart-Winter: No...

Arnie Kantrowitz: —which I just discovered.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Okay. One thing that's especially exciting to me is that you are a Rutgers-Newark alum, which no one, we have not interviewed anyone from your generation who was an alum. So I just wanted to first ask, what year did you graduate, if you can retrieve that?

Arnie Kantrowitz: I can! 1961.

Tim Stewart-Winter: 1961. That sounds, and so, were you there four years?

Arnie Kantrowitz: Three and a half.

Tim Stewart-Winter: You graduated early.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I just went to summer school and made it happen quicker.

Tim Stewart-Winter: So you finished mid-sixty-one, or end of sixty-one.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Right. I graduated in June. I entered in February of fifty-eight.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Excellent. And you lived at home during that time.

Arnie Kantrowitz: During this time—I was born in Newark, lived in the Weequahic section, at several addresses over the years my parents divorced and my mother and my brother and I moved to Elizabeth, New Jersey, and it was from there that I commuted to downtown Newark to go to Rutgers. So I was living at home but not in Newark at the time. Close enough.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Why did you choose to go to Rutgers?

Arnie Kantrowitz: How embarrassing.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Or did you choose?

Arnie Kantrowitz: Well, I applied to three colleges. I was accepted to Columbia and Princeton, and Rutgers offered a small scholarship. And the reason was rather personal, I was not ready to leave home yet, much as I had difficulties with my parents, I didn't have enough self-confidence yet to go out into the world. I always consider that one of the great mistakes of my life. I would have matured earlier and faced life a lot sooner if I went to Princeton or Columbia. But a friend of mine recently told me that, who was also gay and Jewish and from New Jersey, that he went to

Princeton and he felt rejected as a Jew. I mean he felt that he was not quite welcome in the eating clubs and so on.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I don't know. It may be the reason, it may be that he's a little bit flamboyant and they sensed that he was gay, and that could also be the reason but, and I won't mention his name.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Princeton has a reputation as WASP-y, certainly.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Mmhmm. Yeah.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Were there a lot of Jews at Rutgers-Newark?

Arnie Kantrowitz: I think so. I mean I didn't find any survey but I think there were friends of mine. And I became friendly with non-Jews as well. Had a small circle of friends. Didn't join a fraternity or anything like that. Was a lone wolf of sorts.

Tim Stewart-Winter: You have a wonderfully vivid description of the campus in *Under the Rainbow*.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Do I? I should've looked at it again, I'm sorry.

Tim Stewart-Winter: No, I can, well I can read it to you if you'd like.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Well it was about five scattered buildings, or six.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yes. I think you used the word ramshackle.

Arnie Kantrowitz: [laughs] No wonder you said I was articulate.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah, it was—so—maybe you didn't, I'm making that up. [Reading from *Under the Rainbow*:] "...housed a diverse crowd in an ill-assorted collection of converted office buildings, breweries, and factories, scattered around Washington Park in the downtown shopping district." How would you describe the student body? Or do you have memories of who your classmates were? How would you characterize them?

Arnie Kantrowitz: Well, I knew my small circle of friends, and my, I guess my classmates, in various courses. But, they were a very eclectic group. I think they were serious, as I recall, and intent on

getting their degrees, and I think all aware that they weren't in a campus college, you know, in New Brunswick for example. One of my friends transferred from Newark to New Brunswick and joined a fraternity and, you know, tried to act like a normal person. [laughter.] He wasn't gay. He was a child—I have childhood friends that I went to grammar school, high school, and college with, and we're still in contact, you know, we visit each other now and then.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Who you went to college with as well.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Ah, yes.

Tim Stewart-Winter: So you went with other people from high school to Rutgers.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yes. But I don't think there were a lot of people. I went to Weequahic High School, which was considered a very good school.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Good school, yeah.

Arnie Kantrowitz: And I can't remember that a lot of my classmates—I was from a January graduating class, so that there weren't that many of us, there were only about a hundred and fifty, something, in the class. So how many of them went to Rutgers-Newark? Just a scattering. A little, a small number. But. And they went off to other campuses. I think a huge percentage of them went to college.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah.

Arnie Kantrowitz: And the Weequahic section, as I remember it, you know, was almost totally Jewish. And the Italians were in a separate part of Newark. In, what was it, the Bound Brook section? Does that name sound familiar? And there was the Ironbound section.

Tim Stewart-Winter: I don't think so. Ironbound. Branch Brook.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Branch Brook was a park. Maybe the North Ward?

Tim Stewart-Winter: Mmhmm.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Cause the Weequahic section was in the south.

Tim Stewart-Winter: In the south.

Arnie Kantrowitz: And I grew up in Newark. I wasn't happy, because I think the whole gay issue had to be resolved. I felt *other*. I felt different from what my parents wanted me to be. My father took very little interest. Hate to speak ill of the dead, but that's how it was. And my mother was trying to shape me into the mold that she wanted. She bought a baby grand piano and tried to force me to practice. And I wasn't interested. I still have a little piano but I don't play any more at all. It was just the culture of the times, you know. One's children were supposed to play a musical instrument and excel in academics and also—the athletics were a little less important in the Jewish community. Maybe the mothers were afraid to have their sons injured or something like that. But—and there were rivalries among the high schools in Newark. The, I think it was mainly the Jews and the Italians that I have read about. I still read a newsletter online from Weequahic High School, the alumni.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Oh, there's a documentary about it.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yes, "Heart of Stone," or something like that?

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yes. Yeah I saw it before I was at Rutgers, so it's been a while.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yes, I did finally get to see that. But online I heard stories about when the football team, which was very unsuccessful, would go to other high schools, they would have stones thrown at them and fights broke out and...

Tim Stewart-Winter: Stones thrown at them out of anti-Semitic sentiment?

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yes.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Ah.

Arnie Kantrowitz: So, aside from that I never felt anti-Semitism in Newark. I didn't get on those buses and go to the football games so...

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right, gotcha.

Arnie Kantrowitz: The only thing that interested me about football was the tight pants. But I just didn't experience those things. So what I experienced was a high school that was over ninety percent Jewish. When I got to Rutgers I felt like I was in a broader community. And when I left for my first teaching job which was in Cortland, New York, I felt singled out as a Jew by some of the community members.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Which you had not felt at Rutgers.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Right. I never encountered anything. I think the student body was so eclectic that there wasn't enough of any one kind to hate everybody else. Or to hate any minority group, because we were all minorities within the student body. As far as I could figure out.

Tim Stewart-Winter: That's very interesting. I mean Rutgers-Newark today is, prides itself on its diversity, and on also being a school of opportunity for first generation and working-class students.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Well, I taught at the College of Staten Island for over forty years, and that school also prided itself on being an opportunity school for first-generation students. In fact, at graduation they always had that group of students stand up if they were the first members of their families to go to college.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Nice.

Arnie Kantrowitz: So it's part of the large urban area I think.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right.

Arnie Kantrowitz: That we have so many immigrants coming in.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Were there black students at Rutgers Newark?

Arnie Kantrowitz: There were, but I don't think there were very many at that time.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah, that's my perception.

Arnie Kantrowitz: And Weequahic High School had even fewer.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Okay.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I think there were maybe five or six in my graduating class who were African American.

Tim Stewart-Winter: At Weequahic.

Arnie Kantrowitz: At Weequahic. And I can't tell you the number at Rutgers but it was quite largely white as I recall it.

Tim Stewart-Winter: And you say in *Under the Rainbow* that you had no sexual experience with guys, or anyone, before the end of college. Is that accurate? Or is that, am I remembering right?

Arnie Kantrowitz: [laughs] Can I remember? I've had plenty of experience since then. I remember telling my creative writing teacher, who was the inspiration for my becoming an English major—she was, you know, she was a very nice woman, and I once took her into my confidence and told her I thought I might be gay. I think “homosexual” was the word I used at that time. And—

Tim Stewart-Winter: This was at...

Arnie Kantrowitz: At Rutgers.

Tim Stewart-Winter: At Rutgers, wow. Do you remember her name?

Arnie Kantrowitz: Eva Lewison Richter. I'll just tell you a little side story.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Please do!

Arnie Kantrowitz: When I became the chairman of the English department at the College of Staten Island, which I did for about five years, she sent out an email from, I think she was at Queens at the time, or Hunter, and she was gathering some kind of information which I didn't have access to, you know, or experience with. But I wrote her back a letter saying—she helped me get the job. Her husband was on the faculty at Staten Island, and she had him talk to the English department chair. And I'm sure that helped with my interview, aside from my sweating in the interview, I was so overwhelmed with anxiety. Anyway, she sent out this email and I sent back a note to her saying that I wanted to thank her for inspiring me to be an English major,

and that I hope she would be happy to know that I was not only an English professor but the chair of the department, and so on, and to thank her very much.

Tim Stewart-Winter: This would have been...

Arnie Kantrowitz: This would have been between 1999 and 2005.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Gotcha.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Those are the years I was the chair.

Tim Stewart-Winter: The chair.

Arnie Kantrowitz: What happened was, I pushed the send button, and without realizing it it went out to all the people she had sent the original request to.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Ahh!

Arnie Kantrowitz: So they all started writing back saying “aww, isn’t that sweet!” You know, made me feel terrible about my mentor. She was my Mr. Chips.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Why did you—why terrible?

Arnie Kantrowitz: Because people were making fun of me, you know, for caring, because most of this email set-up was involved with making complaints about the union and about the hours and about the pay and you know.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Ahh, I see.

Arnie Kantrowitz: That’s what people like to grouse a lot about, that, and here I am writing this genuinely heartfelt sweet little letter of thanks. So it embarrassed me. But I’m still glad I sent it, because—I had seen her since, you know, we had met in a restaurant once, she invited me up to her rented cabin with her husband by a lake, I also met her with a boyfriend of mine, so I was able to assure her that I did in fact turn out gay. And she was very supportive.

Tim Stewart-Winter: You were at Rutgers when you told her you thought you were a homosexual.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yes.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Do you remember her reaction?

Arnie Kantrowitz: She was, you know, quiet but supportive. You know, I mean these were not the days when there was such a thing as gay liberation.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Sure.

Arnie Kantrowitz: But she was very reassuring that I would be all right and it was okay.

Tim Stewart-Winter: What a story.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yeah, well um, that's a good thing about Rutgers, you know, in those days.

Tim Stewart-Winter: What is?

Arnie Kantrowitz: I mean that one could go to a faculty member with a personal secret, a trauma, and get support. I mean every faculty member wasn't the same way.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Sure.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I remember the French teacher who gave me A's for several semesters, when I asked him for a letter of recommendation he said he didn't know me well enough, you know, so everybody wasn't as nice as some of the people were. But that's probably true in every faculty.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Sure.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Anyway I felt like Rutgers was a positive experience. I keep getting phone calls now and then asking me if I can recall any positive experiences about Rutgers.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Really?

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yes.

Tim Stewart-Winter: From the development office?

Arnie Kantrowitz: From the alumni office. And they're trying to solicit contributions.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right.

Arnie Kantrowitz: So you know, once you say you had a good time at Rutgers, a positive experience, wouldn't you like to contribute some money so that the next generation can have some positive experiences? I never went—I don't remember any alumni gatherings of my class. There are only a few people I wonder about, whatever became of them. My high school class is, like, very involved in reunions.

Tim Stewart-Winter: High school class of fifty-seven?

Arnie Kantrowitz: Fifty-eight.

Tim Stewart-Winter: January of fifty-eight, February of sixty-one.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Right, exactly. No, I went to high school for four years. January fifty-eight. Well I can't do math. I went to high school for four years from January fifty-four to January fifty-eight, and then I went to Rutgers from January fifty-eight to June sixty-one.

Tim Stewart-Winter: June sixty-one. I misspoke. Right.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Right. So that's the way it worked out.

Tim Stewart-Winter: So you graduated shortly after the Bay of Pigs.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yes. We didn't mark our calendars with that [laughter], but if you want to have a historical context. It's really, we never looked at it that way.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Sure, sure. I'm just...

Arnie Kantrowitz: But, you know, shortly, a year before Kennedy's assassination. I was already teaching up in Cortland. So that was in sixty-three. So it was two years later. I spent that time getting a masters degree at NYU.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Was this creative writing teacher, Eva, the first person you told that you thought you might be gay?

Arnie Kantrowitz: I think so.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Wow. Wow.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I had students come to me because when I was teaching at Staten Island I was openly gay. I joined the Gay Activists Alliance¹ in 1970 at the beginning of the year, and soon afterward started coming out to my classes, and became known as “the gay professor.” So that if they needed somebody to represent gays on the sexual harassment committee, I’m the one who got the position. Students came to me with their secrets and, you know, I was as supportive as I could be, and encouraging them, saying “I survived and you will too” and so on. And you know, unlike Eva Richter I just—excuse me—I couldn’t—I had the experience, so that I could talk to them.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right.

Arnie Kantrowitz: And people told me that they would have committed suicide if not for my presence and so on. And it’s very moving, you know. I got letters years later from a lot of students who are all over the country, and this one wrote a book, and you know asked me to make a comment on it, as his creative writing teacher. And what students used to do—this is not Newark, this is of course Staten Island, but it’s pretty close.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yes it is!

Arnie Kantrowitz: Sometimes I didn’t realize what was happening, but if students wanted to come out to me they usually just hung around my office during office hours, and I didn’t put two and two together all the time. For some reason—it should have been an obvious pattern to me but there are a couple students who I kind of never addressed, you know, and years later I think that’s why they were hanging around. You know. So I did my best. I started an organization, it wasn’t a gay-straight alliance, it was a gay, it was modeled on gay liberation. And we had a

¹ Kantrowitz served as vice president of New York City’s influential Gay Activists Alliance, founded in 1970 in the wake of the Stonewall uprising,

lot of trouble getting started because there was an antagonistic, a competitive gay group, from—at that point there was a Community College of Staten Island, and then they invented, the upper two years became Richmond College, and *they* had a gay group, and they came to our meetings and started disrupting and saying that the men and the women should meet separately. Like we had you know maybe a dozen people altogether at the beginning.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Yeah.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

You know, *now* it's a large happy group. I taught one of the first gay courses in the country, as far as I know. It was in 1973.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Wow, that is very early. What was it called? Do you know? I teach Intro to LGBT studies every year.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

Well, I eventually got to that, but I called it—I was in the political movement at the time—so I called it Homosexuals, capital-H, and literature, small-L. [laughter]

Tim Stewart-Winter:

I love it.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

And my first course I had about a half a dozen people in it and the college didn't let it run again for many years.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Ah, that was gonna be my next question.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

Yeah. What happened later on is that it became—what was it called—some kind of studies in American—not in American literature but—I can't remember—it was just like a particular issues, studies—and within—under that general rubric—of course people didn't take my first course because they didn't want to have homosexuals on their transcript.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Right, sure.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

So years later it became a course in social issues or whatever it was.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Yeah.

Arnie Kantrowitz: And I taught gay literature, and eventually it separated into two courses, one gay and one lesbian, and my friend Judith Stelboum founded the other course. And she was very intent on the differences between gays and lesbians.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Mmm.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Wanted to write a book with me, and I didn't want to focus on the differences but on the connections, because I thought we needed each other as a political group.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right, right.

Arnie Kantrowitz: As a minority group. Trying to get back to Newark.

Tim Stewart-Winter: So, Leslie is someone you talk about in the book.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yes. I won't say his real name.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Okay. Did you come out to him after Eva Richter, do you know?

Arnie Kantrowitz: I think so. I think it was when we graduated college, certainly after we graduated high school, but I think it was after we graduated college that we came out to each other. And we were interested in all the, you know, Broadway musicals, and he was into opera and so on, we had a lot in common. But we never, you know, addressed that subject, until, slowly, and eventually we did come out. You can check *Under the Rainbow*, I may be misremembering when we came out to each other.

Tim Stewart-Winter: That sounds right. I'll check.

Arnie Kantrowitz: We had a big falling-out and didn't talk for years, and then I ran into him when I moved to the Upper West Side where he lived also, and so we became friendly for another year or two. And eventually we had another falling-out. He was very—I don't know what to call him. He was very *contentious*, anyway, but his views, I thought, were racist and misogynist and so on. The jokes he would tell, the reactions he would have. He didn't believe there was such a thing as the gay

community, while I was the vice president of the Gay Activists Alliance.

Tim Stewart-Winter: That sounds pretty hard to reconcile with your views.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yes. I mean he wanted no part of it. I wonder, if he's still alive, what he thinks today about whether there's a community or not.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Hmm. You're not sure if he's alive.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yeah, I'm not. And I don't kind of want to look into it.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Sure, sure, sure.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Anyway, in Newark, as I wrote in *Under the Rainbow*, after graduation from Rutgers I moved to a little furnished apartment with another guy who years later came out to me as gay also, but we were both seeing women at the time. I was also seeing men. Not dating but anonymous sex.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Which he didn't know about, your roommate.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right. You lived together a few months? Is that right?

Arnie Kantrowitz: I can't remember.

Tim Stewart-Winter: In downtown Newark.

Arnie Kantrowitz: In downtown Newark. I don't remember the name of the street I kept trying to think of it. It's right off Washington Square. Washington Park.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Oh. This is the period where you encountered the cruising scene in Washington Park.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yes. Now, in Rutgers I didn't have any actual sex in the men's rooms. It's quite possible that there was at least one men's room that, you know, drew the gay population, but I was not in touch with that world at all, but what I did find was in one of the better buildings, it used to be an insurance company, there was a marble partition between the stalls, and between one stall and the urinal someone had drilled a hole through the marble

wall, that was very enterprising. It didn't seem like anything left over from some...

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Construction?

Arnie Kantrowitz:

...construction or toilet tissue holder or whatever.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

This was a Rutgers building.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

It was, yes. Right across the street from Washington Park. And if you put your eye to the hole you would see the person standing at the urinal. At least the pertinent parts of the person [laughs]. Dare I be too graphic? But when I lived in downtown Newark I also went to Penn Station and picked up men.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Sorry, I want to go back to the marble partition.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

So do I! [laughter]

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Do you think it was a glory hole or just a?

Arnie Kantrowitz:

No, it wasn't big enough to be a glory hole.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

You could just see

Arnie Kantrowitz:

It was just big enough to be a peephole. And the person on the other side of the partition outside the stall probably wouldn't have noticed it, it was a small...

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Fascinating, fascinating. But you never met anyone in those restrooms.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

No, I never met anyone or carried on with anyone there. Now I wonder, you know, what I was missing.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Sure.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

But you know, instinct drove me; even though I wasn't sure I was gay, I was sure I wanted to look through that peephole. You know. So I did. And I think there were people in my summer-school class who also went to the men's room and knew I was in there, and wondered about me. But nothing ever happened or got said.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Really!

Arnie Kantrowitz:

Yeah.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Because you were hanging around the men's room.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Mhmm.

Tim Stewart-Winter: It's so interesting that you remember the sense of wondering about each other.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Mhmm, oh yes. There was a lot of that. Even in high school there was, you know, when you wanted to say somebody was gay, the symbol was to lick your pinky and run it across your eyebrow, and that was, you're saying, you know, he's...and I was—

Tim Stewart-Winter: Is that derogatory, as a gesture?

Arnie Kantrowitz: Oh yes!

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah, okay.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I mean this was the fifties, good heavens.

Tim Stewart-Winter: You had another wonderful phrase in here, which is—sorry to interrupt again!

Arnie Kantrowitz: I hope you can get a copy of—there's a second edition of this book.

Tim Stewart-Winter: This *is* the second edition.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Is it the—it's got a hard cover though.

Tim Stewart-Winter: I think it's been bound this way.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Oh, okay. Fine.

Tim Stewart-Winter: I also have the first edition, but it's at my office.

Arnie Kantrowitz: That's the one with the pictures.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yes. I don't go there in the summer.

Arnie Kantrowitz: [he laughs] I don't blame you.

Tim Stewart-Winter: So this I got out of the library.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Which library is that?

Tim Stewart-Winter: New York Public Library.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Really? Nice to know.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah! They have several copies. [Reads from *Under the Rainbow*] “...the fabulous fifties in their hypocrisy were drawing to a merciful close as I entered Rutgers-Newark.”

Arnie Kantrowitz: [laughs]

Tim Stewart-Winter: So in high school there was this gesture.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yes, and you know, people made fun of gay people, and commonly they would attack them, but I was closeted in high school and I think my manner was not overtly feminine.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah.

Arnie Kantrowitz: And that came from early training at my mother’s hands. You know, don’t talk with your hands, don’t wiggle your hips when you walk, da da da. And somehow I adopted those manners and put them you know, on, as a mask. And it became natural for me. Oh, the other thing was how I laughed. I laughed at too high a pitch. Where I had to go instead of hee-hee [high pitched laugh] I had to go ha-ha [low pitched]. [laughs]

Tim Stewart-Winter: But you learned to do that.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I learned. I’m sure it’s the story with a lot of people.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah.

Arnie Kantrowitz: And you know, it’s harder if you’re more visible. I just, people thought I was—my mother even took me to a doctor, who said—he wasn’t—he didn’t think I was gay, he thought that I was sensitive. And I was! [laughter] Both!

Tim Stewart-Winter: You’re just *also* gay. Did the, okay, so...

Arnie Kantrowitz: I remember one man I just wanted to tell you about.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah?

Arnie Kantrowitz: That I picked up in Penn Station.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Newark Penn Station.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Newark Penn Station, and we went to his car, where we carried on. And he was a middle-aged man. I was a young, overweight, fresh out of adolescence—and I don’t remember what brought

this on, but I remember him telling me that he was married and that if you're sleeping with a woman, you've gotta rub them down real hard, you know, all over, to get them ready for sex. [laughter] And I thought, I'll store that information, and I did [laughs]. And I did have experiences with women. I don't know that I rubbed them down particularly. But they were not satisfactory experiences. In fact, one was at Rutgers. I had an affair with someone. This is all in *Under the Rainbow*.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah. Esther?

Arnie Kantrowitz: I called her Esther. Her name was something else.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah.

Arnie Kantrowitz: She's out in California now.

Tim Stewart-Winter: She's not a lesbian.

Arnie Kantrowitz: She's not a lesbian, she's been married a couple of times. I introduced her sister to one of my best friends and they're still married.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Hmm.

Arnie Kantrowitz: It's nice.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Had you gone to high school with Esther? Quote unquote Esther.

Arnie Kantrowitz: No. Only...

Tim Stewart-Winter: Only college.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yeah. Anyway the two sisters aren't talking to each other as of recently, or last few years. So I did run into her later on, at her sister's family weddings, and you know, the children's, my friend's son's weddings, you know, she came as an aunt and I came as a friend, and we said hello and we talked and chatted, and she talked about moving to New York but never did. So that was my affair in Rutgers, and the story is in *Under the Rainbow* unless you want me to tell it...

Tim Stewart-Winter: Go ahead, if you...

Arnie Kantrowitz: It was just that, you know, we were sleeping together not with the greatest of success and one night we ended up in her room right next to her parents bedroom.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Oh right, yes.

Arnie Kantrowitz: And her father came out and called her name, and she said “We’re studying, dad,” and we tried to turn on the lamp and the light bulb blew just at that moment, and so I ended up literally standing in the closet with my shoes in my hands and he went back to bed. My car was in the driveway, I mean it’d be a little hard to not put two and two together. And the next morning she called me and said I should meet her on the bus, you know we both took the same bus to school, she lived further away than I did, and she said her father had thought we should get engaged, and I fled.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Because he knew that you had...

Arnie Kantrowitz: He assumed that we were having sex.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Which we were, but not my favorite kind. Anyway, Washington Park was a very active place.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Military Park?

Arnie Kantrowitz: No there’s—there was a Military Park in the heart of downtown further south, Washington Park, I don’t know if they’ve renamed it but...

Tim Stewart-Winter: Let me look it up [tries to open up map].

Arnie Kantrowitz: I think there was a Washington Place or Washington Street.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yes, right.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I can’t remember my geography very well. But there were two parks.

Tim Stewart-Winter: It’s north of Military Park, yeah.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Military Park, and north of it was Washington Park.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right. That was the cruising spot.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I was trying to remember, was there a Lincoln Park also? But I think that was in Chicago.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yes.

Arnie Kantrowitz: But the cruising park was the northern one, Washington Park.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right.

Arnie Kantrowitz: And cars would drive around the park and gays would walk around the park, and a car would pull up and you'd have a little interview through the window, you know, and sometimes we had sex in a parking lot. I remember getting caught by the police one time, who tried, they took whatever money I had [this story is told in greater detail in *Under the Rainbow*], didn't report me, so I was thrilled to get away with it.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I got robbed one time by several guys in white athletic undershirts.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Mhmm, you have that in *Under the Rainbow*.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yeah very hot looking, and they drove me to Nutley, and pulled out a gun, and took all my money and my class ring. I tried to—I was—what amazed me was how calm I was.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Hmm.

Arnie Kantrowitz: You know it's like I was watching a movie or something. This wasn't happening to me. Kind of never dreamed they would shoot me. I probably—I imagined that they weren't planning to shoot me either.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right.

Arnie Kantrowitz: But to scare me. And they left me. I remember I asked for car fare to get home and had to wait for the bus in the middle of the night it was very unpleasant.

Tim Stewart-Winter: They didn't give you car fare.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I think they did leave me car fare.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Oh.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I can't remember. I don't remember how much the bus was, either! [laughter] Prices have gone *way* up since then. I remember when the subway fare was a nickel and now I think it's two seventy-five or something.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Two-fifty maybe, yeah. So did you associate gay—this might be a funny question—well—so this—when you lived in Newark the second time, after college, was that after Cortland?

Arnie Kantrowitz: After Cortland. I attempted suicide in Cortland and then came back and lived with my father.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Near Clinton Avenue.

Tim Stewart-Winter: And was that before you lived with the roommate downtown.

Arnie Kantrowitz: That was after.

Tim Stewart-Winter: That was after.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yes.

Tim Stewart-Winter: So the roommate in downtown Newark was...

Arnie Kantrowitz: Wait a minute. That's really difficult.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Sorry.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I was there from 1963 in Cortland, to I think 1965, or late 1964.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Okay. So, it says [reading from *Under the Rainbow*], “compared to Short Hills, Leo place seemed dowdy. I stayed just long enough to save money for an apartment in downtown Newark, only a few blocks from my alma mater.”

Arnie Kantrowitz: Okay, so that was after Cortland.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right. So that would have been...

Arnie Kantrowitz: I'm glad I wrote this book because now I can...

Tim Stewart-Winter: I'm glad you did too!

Arnie Kantrowitz: My memory is fading away and I'm glad I got it in words, in print.

Tim Stewart-Winter: I'm very glad too. So you had been in Cortland.

Arnie Kantrowitz: For about a year and a half.

Tim Stewart-Winter: And at this point you moved back to Newark.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Cortland was worse sexually than Newark was, because there was nobody there.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right.

Arnie Kantrowitz: There were scrawled messages on the hotel men's room stall, and I used to go out cruising at three o'clock in the morning, this is not, this is like a nine o'clock town, and once I brought home a tired old salesman, and he was just looking for a place to sleep, really. It was not a hot encounter. And you know, I hid my pornography in the back of the closet. That's Cortland. In Newark I didn't dare to have pornography cause I was with my...

Tim Stewart-Winter: 'Cause you had a roommate.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I had a roommate. I bought a little statue of Michelangelo's David, just thinking this is a beautiful thing, you know, without realizing what a cliché it was. And the guy who sold it to me, there were two men who ran a little bookstore that had a little, a few decorative items.

Tim Stewart-Winter: In Newark?

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yes, and I'm sure they were gay too. You know, we didn't discuss it. But when he saw me pick out that...

Tim Stewart-Winter: Where was the bookstore?

Arnie Kantrowitz: I think it was Halsey Street.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Oh, yeah? Which is now sort of the center of an arts district.

Arnie Kantrowitz: My influence. [laughter] But as soon as he saw me buy this statue he would have had no questions left about me! I mean the statue was probably there, about yay high, about a foot high.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Do you remember their name, or the shop's name, or anything like that? No.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Nothing. It's amazing what sticks in your mind and what doesn't.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah, but even the fact that it was there is *wonderful* information that I definitely didn't have!

Arnie Kantrowitz: Well, lots of gays sort of lived as ordinary citizens openly, even two men together, and people didn't *want* to ask questions, they didn't *want* to know. Cause you know, once they knew they had to deal with it. They had to boycott the store or beat up the owner or something-or-other. But as long as everybody was pleasant there was no problem.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Hiding in plain sight was sort—

Arnie Kantrowitz: Hmm?

Tim Stewart-Winter: Hiding in plain sight was sort of workable.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Exactly.

Tim Stewart-Winter: So you said in email that you went to Skippy's only once.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yes, I went with the guy I called Leslie in the book. He showed it to me.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Do you remember when and where?

Arnie Kantrowitz: I imagine, I'm just deducing that if I came out to him after college, it was after college.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Okay. I think you came out to him at the end of college, or, roughly—

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yeah, or somewhere thereabouts, but that's around when, which was around 1961.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yup. Where was Skippy's?

Arnie Kantrowitz: I don't remember the name of the street. It was on the other side of Broad Street from Washington Park and Military Park.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yup. So the south side.

Arnie Kantrowitz: There was a little side, a smaller back street.

Tim Stewart-Winter: And it was downtown.

Arnie Kantrowitz: And it was downtown. And all I remember about it was that when you walked in, the bar took up the whole place. It was like, the activity took place around the bar. And there wasn't much activity that I was seeing, it was mostly people sitting there having a drink. It was pretty quiet. Newark not being a noted gay center. There was plenty of activity going on in Newark, but you know people were just hiding out even from each other.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Was Skippy's the only gay bar you went to in Newark?

Arnie Kantrowitz: The only one I went to and the only one I ever heard of. There may have been something else.

Tim Stewart-Winter: So you didn't know a place called Murphy's.

Arnie Kantrowitz: No.

Tim Stewart-Winter: It may have opened a bit later. But we've—

Arnie Kantrowitz: No, I didn't know it.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Murphy's owner sued the state later, like in sixty-seven.

Arnie Kantrowitz: For what?

Tim Stewart-Winter: For basically the right to operate—sued the alcoholic beverage licensing board—

Arnie Kantrowitz: To allow them to serve alcohol where homosexuals gathered?

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yes, yeah. I'm not—I wouldn't say that I—we've pieced together some of this information from a newspaper, a couple of newspaper articles, but don't take my word as gospel.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yeah there was, not a lawsuit, but in Julius's bar in the village. It's still there.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yes! '66. The sip-in.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yes. Because it wasn't allowed, in New York also, they weren't allowed to serve alcohol where gays gathered, and so they made a point out of you know gathering and ordering alcohol.

Tim Stewart-Winter: So Skippy's.

Arnie Kantrowitz: The fight went on for decades, a little piece at a time, until the big explosion in sixty-nine. Wouldn't it be nice if there was someone from Newark there? I was only across the street so I don't count.

Tim Stewart-Winter: I know [from *Under the Rainbow*]. [laughter] Skippy's—was it scary to go in a gay bar?

Arnie Kantrowitz: For me. Yeah.

Tim Stewart-Winter: You'd been in non-gay bars.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Not much, I'm not much of a drinker.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah.

Arnie Kantrowitz: And my only reason to go to bars would be to cruise. And when I moved to the Village I remember I went to three bars in one night, had either a gin and tonic or a screwdriver in each one, got drunk and toddled home, you know, but I was terrified but I was trying, testing the waters. I used to mostly cruise after the bars closed late at night, you know, when people were very willing cause they didn't catch someone earlier.

Tim Stewart-Winter: On Christopher Street.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yeah this was on Christopher Street. Ah! The old days. The golden days. [laughter] I was not happy during a lot of that.

Tim Stewart-Winter: During a lot of what?

Arnie Kantrowitz: During the early years of cruising and still being in the closet.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Oh, sure.

Arnie Kantrowitz: When I met someone nice, or appealing, I was happy. But the idea of, I was furtive even in my own neighborhood, cause some of my colleagues from Staten Island lived around there too and I didn't want to get caught in the middle of the night trying to explain why I was out "just getting a little fresh air."

Tim Stewart-Winter: Was, when you lived in Newark, did you associate gay life with New York City?

Arnie Kantrowitz: When I lived in Newark I started a job in New York, it was at—

Tim Stewart-Winter: Channel five?

Arnie Kantrowitz: Channel five, WNEW-TV, just writing promotional copy, and I used to have—I didn't go to the Village—my encounter with the Village was going with my cousin to have a cup of jasmine tea, you know. I wasn't cruising down there, so I missed the world around me, it was invisible to me, as I've seen it be invisible to men in later generations.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Mmm.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I went to Port Authority. And that was where my sexual coming out was. And so I had to pass through there on my way to and from work, I took the number one oh seven bus I recall.

Tim Stewart-Winter: From New Jersey.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yeah. From Newark. And so I had my first encounter there. So I knew that sex was going on in New York. I knew it was going on in Newark but I didn't know the *extent* of the difference. I didn't know—when I moved to the Village it was because I wanted to be near artistic people, it didn't, I didn't *know* that it was such a center of gay life.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Fascinating. So interesting.

Arnie Kantrowitz: It was the first weekend that I moved in, it was a Labor Day weekend that, I guess it was late on Labor Day that I walked down Christopher Street and saw this, not a parade, but all the men were lining the streets; they had just come back from their Labor Day weekend, and they were still looking for some fresh meat, you know. As they would have called it in those days. I don't know what they do now. Fresh phone numbers I guess, or whatever. [laughs] And I was stunned. You know, and then of course I began cruising at night, when I realized what was there. And once I joined the Gay Activists Alliance it was like

one of those blossoms opening. I discovered the baths, I discovered places to cruise. I cruised, you know, the membership of the organization. I slept with a lot of them. And sex became a celebration at that point, rather than a guilty furtive thing.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Right.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

Excuse me, I have to sneeze. Eventually. I'm sorry.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Sneeze whenever you need to! One more question about Skippy's.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

Mmhmm.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

You mentioned in the book, and also in the interview in "Gay sex in the '70s," that you used the word "Skippy's," or you used peanut butter to refer to—

Arnie Kantrowitz:

With Leslie, yes.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Yes. How did you hit on that? Do you have any memory of that?

Arnie Kantrowitz:

Well, because of the name Skippy's, and we found it symbolic. And we were writing letters to each other.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Gotcha.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

It wasn't phone calls.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

This was when you were in Cortland or something.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

Yeah. So as we wrote letters, we didn't want to put anything explicitly gay in the letters—

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Right.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

—so we referred to peanut butter, as gay sex. How different the world is, you know—

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Yeah.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

—and I'm glad that I had a part in it, in fighting for the right to be open.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

A bigger part than most folks.

Arnie Kantrowitz: We didn't even think about, much, about getting married. There were demonstrations at the city clerk's office about the right to get married, that was Gay Activists Alliance, GAA, but it wasn't a priority.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right.

Arnie Kantrowitz: And just look at the world, how—I thought it wasn't, you know, when I kind of drifted away from GAA I thought, this is going to take *forever*. When I first was *in* GAA I thought it was gonna happen instantly. I thought, as soon as we announce the problem, America will enfold us in its arms and everything will be better. And by the time I left a couple years later, I said it's gonna take a *long* time. And now that I look back it took an *instant*, you know, because looking at the long historical view, the—how many years is it since 1969? Forty, fifty years.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Forty-six yeah, almost fifty years.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Whatever. that's a tiny amount of time given the span of history.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Now, you talk in the preface to the second edition about the AIDS crisis as rolling back some of the gains of the seventies. Do you see it differently now?

Arnie Kantrowitz: At first there was—because it made the gays into *other* again, and into unclean and dangerous. The idea of bad blood, you know, which haunts other minority groups even. Especially vampires! [laughter] But eventually it turned into a sympathy.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Once it became clear that this was not limited to the gay community, and that so-called normal people could get it as well. It engendered a lot of caring and sympathy. The government was slow to move with—and the Centers for Disease Control and so on. And the gays made history with organizations like ACT UP, which changed medical history.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah, yeah yeah.

Arnie Kantrowitz: The first time that the patients organized and demanded speedier trials of drugs and so on. This is where I'm going tonight, to see this film about Larry Kramer.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Who is the genius of that, as controversial as he may be. I'm trying to read his book now.

Tim Stewart-Winter: The new one.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yeah.

Tim Stewart-Winter: It's so long!

Arnie Kantrowitz: It's something like 800 pages and I'm a slow reader. Plus, my vision isn't doing as well lately cause I'm diabetic. But I was reading it, and then a dear friend of mine published her book and I felt *more* obliged to read it. I'm friendly with Larry Kramer, but, you know, we don't hang out together.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah.

Arnie Kantrowitz: You know, I see him at events. I don't know if he'll be at tonight's event or not. But HBO has done "The Normal Heart" and it's also doing this "Larry Kramer in Love and Anger." And you know, that's the kind of places I see him. But Larry Mass [Arnie's partner] is quite close to him.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Gotcha.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I mean, he and I visited Larry Kramer when he was in a rehabilitation home across the street from the Film Forum. Which is a good place to be. But he's, you know, slowly fading. He's had a number of medical issues, of course. He's had a liver transplant, and I've had a kidney transplant. Just enjoy your youth while you have it! [laughs]

Tim Stewart-Winter: I'll try.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I'm sure.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Is there anything else that I should have asked about Newark?

Arnie Kantrowitz: I wonder if there was anything about—I probably said this before—about—maybe there was a place for gays to meet in Rutgers. But it was probably the Washington Park area, which was planted *among* all these different buildings, within a few blocks of each. I can't think of a lot else. There's my childhood and all, that but that's sort of generic.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right. Well, it's maybe less place-specific. Which I suppose is the same thing you're saying. When were you last at the Rutgers-Newark campus?

Arnie Kantrowitz: I wasn't ever at the new one. I think I saw something about a low brick wall, I think I rode past it or something.

Tim Stewart-Winter: A low brick wall?

Arnie Kantrowitz: That's all I—that's in my memory. Are any of the buildings red brick?

Tim Stewart-Winter: Mmm...no. Well maybe.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Bad memory.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Maybe there are. The building I teach in is brutalist concrete.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Brutalist?

Tim Stewart-Winter: Late sixties, you know, sort of giant slabs that are riot-proof.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Warm and inviting.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yes, right, exactly. When universities had money to build.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Well, you know, it was much more rudimentary before the new campus was built.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yes, that's my sense. Meaning the late sixties one.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yeah. So, I was there in the late fifties and the very beginning of the sixties. Nobody was talking about a new campus yet.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Right. And nobody lived on campus. There was no on-campus housing.

Arnie Kantrowitz: No, there was no *campus*. You know, people lived in apartments downtown, some students or post-students did. There was a group of women that lived maybe on the other side

of Washington Park , down one of the streets—it's amazing how geography that was so central to my youth has faded away, I don't know the name of anything—but I used to visit them, you know, we were friendly. And I don't know many other people that did, but probably there were others that took apartments or furnished apartments somewhere in the downtown area. It was a pretty seedy area.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Yeah.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

I don't remember cockroaches in my apartment but...

Tim Stewart-Winter:

There may have been some.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

There was a very rude landlord, or superintendent, I guess what he was. I remember one night we moved from a downstairs apartment upstairs, and the downstairs was still empty, so I brought home someone I encountered at Washington Park. he drove a bread truck, that's my great memory. And he took my virginity.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Ahh, yes, yes, yes.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

He did ask first.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

That was in the downstairs apartment.

Arnie Kantrowitz:

Yeah, right next to the super's apartment. I was trying to be quiet.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Do you remember what the building was like, or where it was downtown?

Arnie Kantrowitz:

I don't remember the name of the street. It was about a block from Washington Park, and I think it was a brick building. Pretty old, and you know, creaky stairs is what I think of when I think about it. And furnished in a fairly seedy manner. Maybe, you know, maple kitchen chairs and stuff like that. Old.

Tim Stewart-Winter:

Anything else?

Arnie Kantrowitz: Not that I can think of. Do you have any other questions? Have I been at all useful?

Tim Stewart-Winter: You've been *hugely* useful, really spectacularly useful.

Arnie Kantrowitz: I'm glad to hear that! Because I feel so deficient in my memories of my youth, it's been a long time.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Well, you're not at all [deficient], and you're right that having your book helps jog your memory.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Right. That's not the reason I wrote it. The reason I wrote it was to show the transition from closet to public, being on national television, you know, the coming out, of the community, represented by my experience.

Tim Stewart-Winter: And I'm probably the—most readers presumably are not focused on the Newark bits.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Yes. Well, there was a showing from the high school, there was a gathering, one of the reunions, and they had an exhibit of books written by graduates of Weequahic High School, and *Under the Rainbow* was there.

Tim Stewart-Winter: How great!

Arnie Kantrowitz: You know, I didn't mention that much about the high school [in the book], but it really, it was a very nice thing [that they included my book].

Tim Stewart-Winter: Do you know anyone else that we could interview?

Arnie Kantrowitz: About Newark?

Tim Stewart-Winter: Yeah. Either about high school or Rutgers. Or let me say this, if you think of anyone...

Arnie Kantrowitz: Well, the only person I would think of, who was gay, who I called Leslie, and I don't even know how to get in touch with him anymore.

Tim Stewart-Winter: What about Eva Richter?

Arnie Kantrowitz: I don't know where she's living now. She used to live on the Upper West Side.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Okay.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Her name is Richter now.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Like the Richter scale, R-I-C-H-

Arnie Kantrowitz: T-E-R.

Tim Stewart-Winter: And Lewison?

Arnie Kantrowitz: That was her maiden name. She got married when I was in her class, and she came back from the honeymoon with black and blue finger marks on her upper arms.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Whoa.

Arnie Kantrowitz: What a brute he was.

Tim Stewart-Winter: That sounds...

Arnie Kantrowitz: It sounded sexy at the time.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Okay! Fair enough, fair enough. That's amazing.

Arnie Kantrowitz: The details you remember.

Tim Stewart-Winter: What course was it?

Arnie Kantrowitz: This was sophomore English. The freshman English was essay writing. I remember that teacher too, not that I ever would have spoken to him personally, and she was sophomore literature, introduction to literature, and we read the Bible, and, or passages from it, and Macbeth.

Tim Stewart-Winter: And was it while you took that course that you came out to her?

Arnie Kantrowitz: No, it was later, because she was also teaching a creative writing course later on. So I was probably a junior or a senior.

Tim Stewart-Winter: So sixty or sixty-one or so.

Arnie Kantrowitz: Right.

Tim Stewart-Winter: Fantastic. Well, thank you so very much!

Arnie Kantrowitz: My pleasure!