

THE MATTHEW SHEPARD STORY –

REGGIE FLUTY INTERVIEW

Transcribed by Bess Arnold, 27 December, 2011, Cheyenne, Wyoming

- Subject: Reggie Fluty
- Occupation: Senior Patrol Officer, Albany County Sheriff's Office
- Interviewer: Mark Junge
- Place of Interview: Laramie, Wyoming

Transcriber's notes: I have deleted redundant ands, ers, uhs, buts, you knows, false starts, feedback, non-verbal sounds, etc if it does not affect the conversation. I have used an em dash(--) to indicate a break in a sentence, resumption of a statement after an interruption, or an incomplete sentence. Ellipses are used for incomplete sentences. Parentheses are used for non-verbal sounds. Brackets are used if I have corrected or inserted a word to say what was intended.

The following interview is part of a Wyoming oral history series titled "The Matthew Shepard Story." It is produced by Sue Castaneda for the Wyoming State Archives. The interviewer is Wyoming Historian Mark Junge. The entire project is funded by the Wyoming Cultural Trust Fund. In this segment we interview Reggie Fluty who was the senior patrol officer with the Albany County Sheriff's Office and the first law enforcement officer to respond when Matthew Shepard's near-lifeless body was discovered.

Junge: Today is the fourteenth of November, 2011. My name is Mark Junge and I'm in the home of Reggie and Mike Fluty in Laramie, Wyoming. We're here at their kitchen table. We're going to talk a little bit about the Matthew Shepard case, and Reggie has agreed that she'll talk a little bit about what she knows in her experiences.

Fluty: I'm Reggie Fluty and I was the senior patrol officer with the Albany County Sheriff's Office during the Matthew Shepard case.

Junge: How did you get into law enforcement?

Fluty: Actually, I always was really interested in the law even growing up and I either wanted to be a nurse or in law enforcement, and so I chose law enforcement at the time after my kids were old enough to leave.

Junge: How many kids do you have?

Fluty: Three girls.

Junge: They're all gone?

Fluty: They're all gone.

Junge: Spread out to the four winds?

Fluty: Yeah, one is in Alaska, one in California and my middle one lives here in town.

Junge: Well, did you have anybody to look up to, then, in law enforcement, or were you just inclined toward that profession?

Fluty: No - yeah, just inclined. Always been somebody who likes to help, you know, that needed a purpose and so I always liked to help.

Junge: How did you get the job that you had when Matthew Shepard was killed?

Fluty: Just longevity, I think, and a good critical thinker. Anybody who has those kinds of skills always makes...

Junge: When did you first get your job?

Fluty: Oh, I got hired in -- I think it was 1990 -- as a patrol officer.

Junge: So, that's the bottom of the scale.

Fluty: Yeah, I was at the bottom of the scale. You're on nights and you work weekends and holidays and all the fun stuff.

Junge: So it took you how many years before you rose up?

Fluty: Well, I was the senior patrol officer probably ten years—eight, ten-- you have a big rotation in law enforcement. A lot of people just don't make it or they burn out fast, or can't handle that kind of stress. It just depends. Sometimes you'd move up pretty quick then, and another time you'd wait two years before somebody else would retire or quit or move to a different office that paid better.

Junge: How did you deal with the stress?

Fluty: I think, truly, I'm just really grounded in my religious beliefs, you know, just really grounded that way and I kept a strong outside life. My life wasn't about law enforcement. I kept a strong group of friends outside of law enforcement and married somebody outside of law enforcement. I don't drink an awful lot, so I think that's a big help. And I had three kids that I was just (unintelligible). They take your attention when you're home; you're focused on them and not on what you are doing. I mean, not like I didn't go several nights without sleep or those kinds of things, but

you just keep choosing because you had kids and that's what you do. You got to raise those babies.

Junge: When you were promoted, you were promoted actually before Matthew Shepard was killed.

Fluty: It really isn't a promotion, at least where I work in patrol. It wasn't structured the way it is now. It was just a matter of experience and longevity and loyalty, and, like, say, if a guy who'd been there five years quits, now I took his position. And the guy who'd been there seven years, he quits, now I take his position. So, there's just kind of a stepping stone up the ladder.

Junge: Mm-hmm.

Fluty: I had a bomb dog and a protection dog, and I was (unintelligible), somebody who trained officers that were new coming in, a field training officer.

Junge: Is that what that is?

Fluty: And specialized in domestic violence and sexual assaults, and those kinds of things so I had a lot of specialty fields, and had worked the homicides that we had with Rob DeBree, and he teaches you a lot, and he gives a different focus, and just really paid attention to what people were doing, and the details in which they did to do it, and you develop your own style.

Junge: What did you enjoy doing the most?

Fluty: Probably the most—it's going to sound terribly odd—but I just loved the law with domestic violence because the victims in domestic violence cases didn't have a choice anymore. The law had changed, and so when you came in and there was

signs of domestic abuse on one side or the other, you could always have that card to arrest somebody, and you could stop the violence and hopefully give the other person time enough to get help, and think about things and the situation they were in, and the children that were involved. I really loved working with the kids.

Junge: Well, you really loved helping people.

Fluty: Yeah, it's a real rewarding job; raised three kids on it.

Junge: Can we talk about the Matthew Shepard affair or event?

Fluty: Sure.

Junge: How good a memory do you have on this?

Fluty: You know, I hope it's good. Like I said, I'm over fifty, so sometimes it's "iffy," but it's good. You spent a whole year preparing for that court case because the defense attorneys would try to block everything you were doing and it was constantly going to court and testifying and stuff, so it's kind of ingrained in certain areas. You're just kind of ingrained.

Junge: Okay, can you take me back to that time when you first came across Matthew Shepard or when you heard about it, what took place?

Fluty: Yeah. Yeah. Dispatch had called and told me to respond to a guy who was tied to a fence post and beaten, but the guy on the phone was not sure of the other person's injuries. So, they gave me the location, so I started heading there and Dispatch were just good girls. They were just sharp as a tack and like, "You want us to send an ambulance?" "Sure, why don't we just to be on the safe side and we'll go that route."

So then I get there and you have to—there were no houses in the area. It's east of town and just northeast of Grand, so it's hard to describe.

Junge: That sub-division that's out there to the north?

Fluty: Yeah, northeast, yeah, of east Grand before you get on the Interstate. You just kinda' kept going kinda' north with a little bit of an easterly direction you'd eventually run into it. Still there's no sub-division spot now where he was, but it's real rocky in there. So, when I get there I can see the guy on the bike and he's waving to me and I see a gentleman off the side of the road where there's actually a dirt road, and he's trying to flag me down, and he's pointing where I need to go, and I'm like, well, you know you're trying to find your way through there 'cause there's a big ditch so you can't drive to it, so I go around and get there. You're kind of shocked. You're insulted in your soul at what you see when you first come on something like that. You think...you're just insulted! Your heart aches and you think: "My God. What did this guy do to deserve this?" But at the time too, you're thinking: "What does he need to survive?"

Junge: What did you see?

Fluty: He was laying on his back, and his hands were tied behind him at the wrists and then at the wrist there is a pole that runs right here, and they're in a buck shaped fence and across at the top and he's tied with his hands behind there, but he's slumped over, so you're kinda' figuring probably his shoulders are dislocated. I don't know for sure, but that's the first you think. And then he's bloody from the top of his head clear down to probably mid-chest. I couldn't figure out if he was a small boy or a young man because he was very tiny in stature.

Junge: But you knew he was a guy?

Fluty: Yeah, I knew it was a male, a young male. So I cut the rope that connected him, straightened him out and re-arranged his head to hopefully see if he would breathe deeper, 'cause he wasn't breathing well at all, and that didn't go so well, so I breathed for him.

Junge: You gave him mouth-to-mouth?

Fluty: Yes, until the ambulance arrived.

Junge: His whole head was bloody though?

Fluty: Right. Yeah, but I had a mask so it kept him safe and me safe.

Junge: Did you give him this basic first aid first before you called back and asked for anymore help?

Fluty: Right. Yeah. As soon as the ambulance got there and they started their business, and we helped get him in and everything. Then I noticed people were starting to kinda' walk toward that general direction. They were real curious, you know. It was out in the country and people are like: "What in the heck's going on over there?" That's an odd place for an ambulance to be." So people are kinda' walking, so I tell them I need some assistance up here. And Jeff Barry from the Police Department said, "Do you want me to send some help up?" I said, "That would be awesome." So, he jumped in and helped and he sent (Ben ?) and then Rob DeBree was called in. God, I had more help up there.

Junge: O'Malley, Dave O'Malley?

Fluty: No, he was never there at the scene of the crime. The two agencies, after the initial call, got together. Of course, Rob was the detective and I think was the Chief of Police right in there at the time, and they got together and kinda' started a plan of attack because McKinney and Henderson lived—McKinney lived in the city limits and they had another crime that was associated with McKinney and Henderson at the same time that night unbeknownst to me. So by the time we all got together with all of our information, we started figuring out, these are all tied together.

Junge: Was this back at the courthouse?

Fluty: Oh, boy. I'll tell you, I couldn't tell you where that meeting was held. I think we went to the P.D. to tell you the truth from what I remember.

Junge: The Police Department?

Fluty: Yeah, the Police Department.

Junge: He wasn't breathing at all or barely breathing?

Fluty: He was breathing, but not enough to sustain him. I can't remember what his respirations were, but they were really short and below and I want to say, like I say, I'm just guessing here, probably four a minute is kinda' what I remember, which is, you know, average is twelve to twenty.

Junge: I don't understand -- four a minute?

Fluty: Respirations a minute, I'm guessing that's about what they were. Your normal respirations are between twelve and twenty and he was way, way short of that.

Junge: So, your first impression was "What did this guy do to deserve this?"

Fluty: Well, your first impression, truly, it's just kinda' insulting to your soul that as human beings we treat each other like this, and I mean, nobody deserves that. What I mean is, what in the heck could he have possibly done to deserve this? It was kinda' that question. You were just insulted!

Junge: Had you ever seen anything up to that point like that?

Fluty: Well, yeah. We worked a homicide east of town where a gal was stabbed to death because she had gotten pregnant and so her boyfriend killed her over it. And he left her nude in the woods, and she was stabbed to death. And another guy was shot just because they were moving drugs and he'd turned around to go squirt. and the guy he was traveling with wanted all the money and drugs, so he shot him in the back of the head. Just these kinds of incidents, plus you have all your fatality car wrecks and then you have your suicides.

Junge: Do you ever get used to seeing stuff like this?

Fluty: I don't know if you can say you get used to it, but in your mind's eye you never quit being shocked that that kind of violence occurs to what's supposed to be the smarter people. You're kind of shocked. It didn't ever physically bother me, but I think in the long term you just feel kinda' shocked. People treat each other like this. It sounds funny coming from an ex-cop, but I'm just not somebody who thinks that way. But, you know, if somebody did a crime, you become kinda' the person who tries to think that way and figure out who done it, and where, what why and how. You try to figure all those things.

Junge: Do you still think about it?

Fluty: I think about it in a way—maybe my views are a little different—I think about it in a way of “What an amazing mother this kid had.” I always get teary-eyed ‘cause she’s still fighting for him, and she’s still fighting that no matter what you don’t like about another human being, don’t make your opinions more important than the human being before you. And that’s just a good battle to fight, regardless of which side of opinion you’re on, don’t make your opinion more important than the person before you. That’s just wrong, and I’m kinda’ admirable of her and I’m really admirable of how somebody so small in stature has made such a big impact on this world. So I’m just kind of in awe of that, maybe. So I think of those kinds of things because I think it just soothes you -- at least it does me.

Junge: It’s interesting, your opinion on this. The fact that you see this as a significant event in a positive light, what his mother did and because of the impact of this kid’s... this young man’s death was on society.

Fluty: Right.

Junge: Because there’s other people who would not even think of things like that if I asked them that question. They wouldn’t think about how important this was. They would think about how embarrassed they were for Laramie or how embarrassed they were that the media had come here and think that we’re all a bunch of hillbillies.

Fluty: Yeah. No, I think it was a good deal. It wasn’t a good deal that it happened, but it was a good deal that somebody so small in stature and so helpless in such a situation like that made such a big impact.

Junge: Do you think there has been a big impact?

Fluty: I do, yeah. I think so. I can remember some guy called, and I just happened to be in Dispatch, probably visiting with those girls in they're not working 'cause it was cold and miserable out that night. But anyway, he called and they were like, "He wants to talk to you about the Bible." (Chuckles) After all this (unintelligible), it was like, "Hey, I'll take it." And so, I remember talking to him and he's like "You know, the Bible says this is wrong." And I'm like, "Yeah, but it says that one time and how many times does it say to love each other in this Bible of yours?" I said, "You look that up and give me a call back, will you buddy?" Sure enough, he called back two days later and he said, "You know, you were right. Way overwhelms it." I'm like, "You know, who are we to be so dang smart we think?" And I can remember, you see some amazing things. Some kids all got together 'cause we had that Reverend Phillips show up here.

Junge: Oh, Phelps?

Fluty: Yeah. Thank you. I always pronounce it wrong. Maybe on purpose. But anyway, I remember going down to the courthouse and I had my youngest daughter with me and Mike, and these kids were not hateful, they just surrounded him with all these angel wings, and he couldn't make an impact at all with all of his hate, so I was like, "You know, we saw some pretty amazing things."

Junge: Human beings can surprise you.

Fluty: Yeah. Like, wow. I was so thrilled my kid got to see that; see you can, in the worst of situations and the worst of hate environments, there is an easier way. And these kids just did it on their own. They made all the angel wings. They did this amazing thing. It was cool. So you were like, "Wow, look at them go."

Junge: After they transferred Matthew Shepard to the ambulance, what was your job after that?

Fluty: Oh, my gosh. I don't know. What wasn't my job? We didn't come home, any of us, I don't think, for probably almost thirty hours. I don't think any of us that were on that case got any sleep at all. I mean, for a long period of time, 'cause things just moved really fast. They just left the best trail in the world. We were at the hospital and when it pulled up, Kirk Kreiling who used to work for the Laramie Police Department, was like, "Somebody was talking to VanDeyer(?), who was a patrolman at the time who lived out by there, and he saw what he thought when he got off at midnight was a black truck going down this old road and it only had one taillight and this truck here kinda' matches that, don't you think?" "I'm like, "Hey, let's look." We looked in the middle and there's his driver's license and his shoes. He didn't have any shoes on. His shoes were in the truck, and it was like, "Wow." So, we used some old sheets from IMH, the hospital there, put them underneath and drove the vehicle away. I mean, it just started happening just that fast. And then we served the search warrants on both the residences. It was just non-stop, boom, boom, boom, go. It was just kind of a perfect crime from our point of view. Somebody trying to solve this as quickly as possible before anybody else got this injured, and keeping track on Rob Graham, who was a deputy with us who was down in Poudre Valley with McKinney, because then we started to figure out the guy that was in the hospital Dr. Cantway physically looked at, had a head injury from him and Henderson getting in a fight with these guys who they were poking their tires that night or vandalism of some kind so they got in a fight and he got hit in the head. So they flew him to Ft. Collins and we were kinda' starting to figure out, what's that guy

down there? So we sent Rob Graham down. It was just very fast. It was go, go, go, go.

Junge: Did you stay here in Laramie?

Fluty: Yeah. We did the search warrants with the Laramie Police Department, McKinney's place, and then we did the search warrant at Henderson's place and then we had that big group meeting. We made sure all the evidence was taken from up there before it got dark—all the casting of the tires and his U.W. ID, Matthew Shepard's, was taken from up there where he tied. Anything we could find, we went through with it. It was easy.

Junge: You've never had a case like that where you've been up for thirty hours?

Fluty: No. I've been up thirty hours before, but it was not a case where everything went so easy. One thing led to another and another and another and another. It wasn't a hard case evidentiary.

Junge: So, the judge issued the search warrants?

Fluty: Right.

Junge: Then did you do the search?

Fluty: Yeah. Me. Oh gosh, I remember Jeff Barry being there, Ben (Fritzen?). I can't remember how many of us were there at McKinney's residence or Henderson's residence.

Junge: You were at both places?

Fluty: Right.

Junge: Did you see their girlfriends?

Fluty: I knew McKinney's girlfriend at the time I was a single parent. I lived in a trailer park. She just lived three doors down. I knew her. I knew her mother, and so I knew her when we walked in. I didn't know that's who she was dating... and Henderson, and the baby in his diaper and that mess.

Junge: What was that?

Fluty: They hid some evidence in the baby's diaper.

Junge: What was it?

Fluty: You know, for the life of me, I can't remember. I remember thinking: "You gotta be kiddin' me." That's just terrible to put an innocent child in the middle of this.

Junge: Did you talk or interrogate either girlfriend?

Fluty: You know, I did not. I think that was Rob DeBree to tell you the truth

I know he did both on Henderson and McKinney, the interviews. I watched part of both of those and as soon as Rob was done, I was giving information to somebody else so that they could start all the information they can if we missed anything for a search warrant.

Junge: Were those two girls, I'm curious, were they denying everything?

Fluty: Yes.

Junge: At first?

Fluty: Yes.

Junge: Did it sound plausible to you?

Fluty: No. Uh-uh. It's one of those things where you say to somebody, if you had the balls to say it, "I'm either stupid or you really are, but you're lying to me. And you're doing it for one of two reasons. You really think I'm stupid, or you're really stupid." So you just keep pushing and pushing.

Junge: Do you have any empathy at all for these girls?

Fluty: No, I'm sorry, I don't. I really try. I mean, and you want to. I think I forgive everybody involved. Truly, I hope that I do for my own sake, not for theirs, but empathy, none. I just don't. I think if I have any empathy, it's for Henderson -- and not much, you know, for being led so easy, I guess.

Junge: Which is the one you knew when you were a few doors away from McKinney's house, I mean you lived a little ways away from the girlfriend?

Fluty: Yeah, that was the girlfriend, but Henderson was the other party to this crime.

Junge: Right, and you were just a little ways away from...

Fluty: ...the girlfriend.

Junge: So, did you ever have any contact with her? Did you get to know her? What kind of a person was she?

Fluty: Boy, I don't think they had the best of upbringing, just by chance. You hate to say the father's absent and so they don't ...because I know some remarkable people who didn't have a mother or a father present. Just remarkable. But I think just the way they are. I don't think they had any empathy. I don't think they had any

compassion, and if they did it was for themselves and not to get caught, which probably describes them the best I can.

Junge: Do you think things like this happen by accident?

Fluty: No, I don't think much of anything happens by accident. I think there are things that are called accidents, but I truly don't think there's anything that's much of an accident.

Junge: In other words, as the case developed, you began to see how the story got but...and you were able to put the story together.

Fluty: Mm-hmm.

Junge: Okay, so there are a lot of people who say that this was a simple robbery gone bad.

Fluty: No.

Junge: No?

Fluty: No.

Junge: Why?

Fluty: Well, it makes me kind of angry if you just say this was a simple robbery gone bad. I don't like it when... I have had people in the general public say that, and it's like, that's a big assumption to make for somebody who didn't listen to McKinney, who didn't show up to court, who didn't read the newspapers, didn't ask about their interviews or didn't ask...because I think they were so shocked somebody would actually kill somebody for this kind of a reason. But, it had to be something else, 'cause their mind just couldn't go there. So, I'm like, "Really?" I think they just beat

the tar out of this guy simply because he was gay and I think they took things from him simply because they could, because that was their mentality at the time.”

Junge: Do you think these things are very well planned out or do you think they're just more or less spontaneous?

Fluty: Well, with these two, it was definitely spontaneous. I think they kind of put things together at the bar. I think they kind of devised a half-assed plan there and they just kinda' flew by the seat of their pants the rest of the way hoping things would work out really well for them. But I think in their anger and rage, they didn't have a sharp enough thought process. I don't think they came out of that to realize they're leaving evidence as they go.

Junge: Reggie, do you think that's because they were just young kids, punk kids, or do you think that's because of the way they were raised, or genetics, or—I'm looking for some reason why these things happen, and that's why I want to know more about McKinney and Henderson is because I think if you know more about their lives you can put a little bit more causation into it, maybe. Whereas, a lot of people think: “Well, it was just a spur of the moment thing.” And, yeah it could be. We've all done stupid things on earth...

Fluty: Yeah, you bet.

Junge: ...or said things that we wish we could take back. I do it all the time. Even today.

Fluty: Yeah, I hear ya'.

Junge: But, you know I kinda' wonder about causation and what kind of kids would do this. Are they just, "Ahh, they're just immature brats that got totally out of control," or maybe these were kids who were seriously neglected or abused?

Fluty: I think you're right. I think it's the totality of all the circumstances came together. I think you had kids that..like alcohol was more important than them at the time they were born. They just didn't have somebody who taught them compassion and empathy and respect and those kind of things, but I also think that they kinda' decided to take the way they were raised and used it against themselves and just figured they weren't worth anything more. And instead of trying to find something they could do, that was...

Junge: ...constructive.

Fluty: ...constructive or helpful with a purpose.

Junge: Could I summarize what you're saying, that they were self-destructive because of their upbringing?

Fluty: Well, I don't think it helped. I don't' think it's the totality of why they did it. I think it was a combination of alcohol and lack of self-worth, and the way they were raised and their choice to just not turn their lives into anything better.

Junge: There's choice involved here.

Fluty: There's choice. Yeah. I mean, I was raised—not raised—but the first five years of my life I had a father that was just horrific. I mean, the man was vicious and he would just do these awful things to my mother. We all had to watch that. That was

part of his game. We didn't—not a one of us ever chose to ever treat another human being the way that man [treated her]. We chose not to.

Junge: My parents had problems and I think one of things that we learned was not to do it ourselves.

Fluty: Yeah, what not to do.

Junge: If you learn nothing else, you say, "Man, I'm not going to do that."

Fluty: Yeah, it just doesn't look good. It didn't feel good.

Junge: So, did you get sort of lost in the details of the case or did you go off of it right away?

Fluty: No, no. I don't think anybody was out of that until they (McKinney and Henderson) were proven guilty. And then we all went out and had a beer and finally celebrated. We could finally relax—well maybe two beers, maybe it was a lot of beers—but, yeah, we were just so...everybody could finally relax, 'cause we've got a small department and you work nights, and then during the daytime you're doing reports or you're going to court or you're preparing for court, or you're going to a DUI case for the guy you arrested the night before. Just because this case happened didn't mean we didn't continue to work other cases in between this. We had court hearing after court hearing after court hearing and reports. Everybody was just exhausted. I mean, everybody just working that whole year working their ass off and I don't think a one of us figured out we were exhausted 'til it was over.

Junge: Really?

Fluty: Yeah. The momentum just caught you and you just kept on going. It was just too much to let go. This will not happen here. We're not gonna' let anybody get away

with this. We're not gonna' lose. We're just not gonna' tolerate it. If he couldn't stand up and say "no," we will. We're gonna' stand up and say "no." You are not doing that to us. So everybody worked their butts off. It was crazy.

Junge: Did you have problems with the press?

Fluty: We did. We disconnected our landline right off the bat. And if I had to answer the phone at the Sheriff's Office, I answered it "Pizza Hut." I'm not going to lie to you. I wasn't very kind. But then we were fighting this AIDS issue too, so we were very private at the time and we were, "mum's the word."

Junge: What was that issue, because I forgot all about that. I'm reading a book by Loffreda.

Fluty: I don't know what the book is.

Junge: Anyway, I forgot about that issue.

Fluty: Matthew had AIDS at the time, and my gloves were purchased, and they were expired and I didn't know that -- my protective gloves. And so, I kept putting them on and they kept tearing, and so when I was handling him, of course, I got blood all over my hands and was exposed to AIDS. So we were trying to be very quiet, and still try to do those very harsh drugs at the time and still work like a fiend, and do everything at once, and keep your kids supported and support each other.

Junge: How were you able to stand up against all those odds?

Fluty: I don't think it was me, to tell you the truth. This is where you get the religious side of me. I figured it was the good Lord. I mean, I don't think-- except for spending the nights at home throwing up constantly—I don't think that we ever thought there ever was a different option. There just wasn't an option to ever quit.

Junge: Why were you throwing up?

Fluty: 'Cause the drugs were really harsh. Back then your HIV cocktail that they called it was really harsh and damaging to your body. It was like really bad. They're really bad. They're much better now for people who have to take those drugs.

Junge: How long did you have to take them?

Fluty: I don't know. I think one day was too many, and I think it was six, eight, twelve weeks. I can't remember. I just remember throwing up constantly, losing some hair and...

Junge: But they were just taking precautions? Because you didn't have any open wounds, did you?

Fluty: Yes, I did.

Junge: Oh, you did?

Fluty: Yes. We were down the road building a lean-to for my father-in-law's lawn, so we'd been doing construction that morning, actually, and then I went to work.

Junge: You had scratches?

Fluty: Yes. I had scratches and cuts, you know, slivers from...

Junge: How come you didn't get AIDS? Because of the cocktail?

Fluty: I don't have the foggiest idea. I don't know.

Junge: Well, maybe your faith did play a part in it. What religion are you?

Fluty: I was raised Catholic, and not a good Catholic, probably a jack-Catholic. I love all of the—I feel like I’m in a support group, “Hi, my name is Reggie and I used to be Catholic and I have a lot of guilt.” (Both laugh.) You know, I don’t know, I don’t see a real big division between churches. I guess maybe that’s one thing about being a patrol officer really taught me. To me it just doesn’t matter where you are, what church you go to.

Junge: Since you mention that some good came out of this, do you think this was meant to be?

Fluty: I don’t know if it was meant to be, but I think that if it did, maybe there’s a kind of a bigger purpose to everything. I sure hope so, not that it was meant to be, but I sure hope the higher purpose. It’s been twelve, thirteen years.

Junge: Thirteen years.

Fluty: Yeah, and this is still going strong --for somebody who lived such a short time who was such a small man, who had no defenses and he’s sure been risen up. So that is kind of a good lesson. Everybody has a purpose, and everybody’s purpose is important.

Junge: How many interviews have you done?

Fluty: Oh, gosh. Just for the Laramie Project alone, I don’t know, maybe twenty. We’ve stayed good friends with the guys who did the movie and the play.

Junge: Moises Kaufman?

Fluty: Yeah. I love them. Moises and Jeff were basically my youngest daughter’s godfathers. They just took her under their wing and off they went.

Junge: Jeff?

Fluty: Jeff is a partner of Moises, and I don't remember what his last name is, that's terrible. I mean, we've just remained good friends. I mean, some of the guys from the play we've made good friends. Gregg, I can't pronounce his last name, but he came up when my mother was dying and stayed with us all in the hospital room, and just good people, and I think their intention was perfect, so we gave them probably the interviews. And so, I'd probably say five. I'm kinda' real picky about it.

Junge: Are you?

Fluty: Yeah. I have to meet the person, and if I don't get a good feel from them, I'm busy. I don't return a lot of phone calls.

Junge: That's flattering to me. I must have had something.

Fluty: Yeah. Well, you were persistent, if nothing else. So I was like, and you know, and then when you came in, I was like, "Oh, he feels like a good guy."

Junge: (Chuckles) Well, that's interesting. That's very interesting to me as an interviewer when you hear something like that.

Did this community change; did Laramie community change after the incident?

Fluty: I think it really ruffled a lot of feathers right after the incident. I mean, people got defensive. Like you said, "Oh, no, that would never happen just because he was gay. That's not the point here. It's just a drug deal gone bad, a robbery gone bad." People got a little defensive because maybe it was here. I mean they were just angry and kinda' defensive about the whole thing.

Junge: Have they changed since then?

Fluty: I think some have. Oh, I think a big majority have, and I think there's some who you could show them everything, put them in a room with those two, have those two say it. They wouldn't believe it. Some people you can't change their minds and that's okay, too, it's their minds.

Junge: It changed Dave O'Malley's life.

Fluty: I think it completely turned him around. I think Dave was in a cop kind of mentality. You have a kind of sick sense of humor, and I don't mean six, like the number six, I mean sick. Like it kinda' gets a little warped. You joke about things maybe people don't joke about because you have a choice. You can either joke about it or you can cry about it. So, you have a choice, so you always try to take the happier road, and you get used to seeing things that are not natural or normal, and so kinda' as the "why"—evidentiary, you worry about the "why", but you don't really grasp why because you know that you'll never understand that because you're not that kind of a person. So, you have a tendency to joke about "why" this or "why" that, and you make things up, and you try to lighten the mood or you stick Vicks under your nose, or you smoke cigarettes when you wouldn't normally 'cause the stench is too bad. You see things that aren't appropriate, or you try not to freak out because maggots are crawling on your leg, so you make a joke of it. And so you get kinda' sharp that way making jokes and Dave was kind of disgusted maybe ...at maybe his mindset when it comes to that and when you see what that kind of hate looks like and you can't turn your head from it, you can't make a joke about it, you're like "Wow. That kind of hate starts with me." I was just kinda' shocked, I think we all were, how he grasped that so much. He was stunned.

Junge: He was forced to take a look at himself.

Fluty: Yeah. I think we all were, truly. I think we were all like, maybe we're not as---you know, we'd always say, "Oh, we're not the moral police. We're not here to judge you." And I think we're all like, if you're investigating a crime and people don't want to tell you something because they've done something bad, "I'm not here to judge you. I'm not the moral police." And you kinda' said that with some conviction, and after that I think we all weren't maybe using that line quite so much because maybe we did judge a little harsher, but then we're in a harsher environment and we forget, "My, God, we're human too." So, it kind of brings you to set you back on your butt a little bit and you're going to think about things.

Junge: (To husband, Mike) Is she always like this eloquent?

Mike: Mm-hmm.

Fluty: (chuckles)

Junge: Really?

Mike: Yeah.

Fluty: That's a nice thing.

Junge: She is good.

Mike: (inaudible)

Junge: Does she really? Do you agree with her?

Mike: Mm-hmm. I do. I do. At the time, I was more concerned about her, then as it kinda' went away we had more time to talk about it (inaudible).

Junge: Do you think this thing will ever go away from your lives?

Fluty: I don't think so, no. I think it impacted maybe us in a way different way than it did everybody else simply because everybody wasn't dealing with the AIDS issue. I was kind of really shocked at how people treated me even in the health care facility. I remember one nurse was not taking her pen back simply because I wrote my name with it, and she, "Keep the pen." That's what...and I remember just standing there staring at her, and I thought: "Well, I oughta' just kiss her and see if she just doesn't pass out." And Mike was getting very angry and, you know, my feelings were hurt and I was like, "You know, Mike, it's just not worth it. It's not worth it —ignorance is something she chooses to do. She was an adult female, and that's up to her. Just leave it up to her. We'll pray for her and leave her be.

Mike: So much more support and information from the gay and lesbian community out of California.

Fluty: Oh, all over. San Francisco, people we had never met before are sending us information on generalized things. I mean, "If I'm crying and he's holding me, can I make him sick if I have AIDS?" You have to be really careful. So, I think in an odd way, I think it's impacted the whole family of ours in so many ways because we had to be careful at our house. We had to be really careful at our house, and we had to be careful with the girls because back in those days they didn't know as much about AIDS as they do now.

Junge: Right.

Fluty: So, we were of the old school where like, "Wow, does the railroad still come through here?" We were kinda' that old mindset of 'be very careful.' So we were very careful. Plus, you were—the whole family is dealing with one person who has no sleep plus the one person who was always leaving to go to court and missing

Christmas parties with them and the girls' plays at school. It's not that everybody else didn't have to sacrifice that, but there was nobody else that was a mother and who was dealing with AIDS, and that really hit home in our family.

Junge: One of the things that Sue Castaneda who heads up this project and got me involved in this, one of the things that she asked was, she said, "You know, I just wonder if the most important things in this is how it impacted people's lives." And you just told me it had a great impact on your life.

Fluty: Yeah, it was huge.

Junge: On the whole family.

Fluty: Yeah, 'cause my kids went without. I was either very sick and locked up in the bathroom, or I was at work, or I was at court or I was—it was just—I felt like I missed that whole eighteen months of my kids' lives, and then trying to keep a marriage together, and we were moving at the same time. "Cause we used to live down the road, so we moved here and Mike put this place together in six or eight weeks, and I could have killed him. (Chuckles) But we were trying to do so many things at once and still trying to make my kids feel like they were the most important thing.

Junge: Did it have a positive impact on the family at all?

Fluty: Oh, it was an amazing thing. It truly was. It was really amazing. I was always under the impression, "No public display of affection." Trying to just get me to hold hands with him just drove me crazy. Now, everywhere we go we're always holding hands. I was always very affectionate with the kids, and now we're just more relaxed. There's not too much we can't talk about because we had to sit down and were

forced as a family to talk about, with young kids, hate, and what that looks like, and what that does to other people, and what that judgmental mentality can get away with and what it can't and how we're no better than anybody else. And, if you think you are, this is what it looks like, and what do you think, and why, so you had to talk to your kids about those things and what AIDS is and how it's trans[mitted], so there was no secrets and there was no not talking about anything.

Junge: Did you learn something about your kids in these discussions?

Fluty: I did. Those kids and Mike were my heroes. Never blinked an eye. It was just a not big deal at our house. It was outside the big house, but it wasn't ever a big deal here, and they just followed the rules. We had set rules about...

Junge: Isn't it nice to have a solid family like that for support?

Fluty: Yeah.

Junge: What did you think of Phelps?

Fluty: Well, you know, I feel sorry for that poor bastard. I hate to cuss, but he just really is—he's just a mean, hateful person, and he uses God to do it, and you feel bad for somebody like that. If you want to be hateful, have the balls to just stand up and say you're going to do it on your own. Don't use somebody else to do it. Not even God. That's even more of an insult to those of us who think that he would never hurt anybody but his own Son.

Junge: What causes a guy to be that way?

Fluty: I think just excuse driven. Whatever happens, it's not my fault.

Junge: Really?

Fluty: Yeah.

Junge: I never heard that point of view before.

Fluty: Yeah. Just an excuse driven, perfect victimization kind of guy.

Junge: Do you think he might have been abused?

Fluty: No, I just think he's...I think he's somebody who had a little bit of control at one time. It felt real good and he liked it and thought, "By God, I'm going to use it and God's a perfect excuse for me to do that, and if I'm up here just jabberin' away, then maybe one of you out there is exactly like me."

Junge: I would love to have heard a conversation between you and him.

Fluty: Yeah. It didn't go well. (both laugh).

Junge: Oh, you did have a conversation with him?

Fluty: Yeah. He was screaming.

Junge: Tell me about that.

Fluty: Well, he was just screaming all these vulgarities and these terrible things, and I was just like, "Oh, for the love of God, just shut up." And he just kept right on going. He just couldn't care less, but he's somebody truly, where if you think you could lose your temper, that's the kind of person that could absolutely make me lose my temper. He's somebody who's got so much hate, he just pours it right out of you. So, you know, you just have to really focus on that's what hate looks like and I want no part of it.

Junge: Wow! What a statement. Well, let me see if there's anything else I wanted to ask you on here. This is just (unintelligible), but there were some general questions I had. Do you think there should be a hate crimes, a bias crimes law?

Fluty: I do.

Junge: You do?

Fluty: Well, I think that when you decide as a human being to put your opinion so important that the person is severely injured or killed simply because you think you're right, I think you should be punished more severely. I think if you commit a homicide based on love or power or any of those things, I think you should be punished. But I think if you do it simply based on your opinion, I think you should be punished more severely. And I think if we can stop that, the one thing that that law would do for us is I think we could stop that before those things happen.

Junge: Where are we, do you think, in the whole gay rights movement?

Fluty: I'm not sure. I don't know if I pay an awful lot of attention to it simply because—this sounds terrible—but I really don't. I think probably if I had to make a quick guess, I'd say we were behind in the human movement. I truly just think that it doesn't matter. I'm not going to ask you what you do in your bedroom and I wouldn't answer if you asked me, and so I don't think we should be getting into people's private places. That's just none of our business, as long as it's not hurtful or harmful to the person they're doing something with and they're of age, of course. Let somebody love. I'm sure that love hurts just as easy and just feels as good if it's between same sex or the opposite sex.

Junge: Interesting, but you've got solid values.

Fluty: Oh, thank you.

Junge: Do you think you have been affected by this? I see you as a solid person. Have you changed at all because of this event?

Fluty: I think we all grow regardless. You don't stay stagnant at that age. I think I'm better at giving people a chance. When you're a cop, you kind of build this cocoon around yourself because you're protective. You don't want people harming or injuring you or your loved ones, you know, simply because of your job. So, I think you'd be more careful of that. I think since I've retired I'm kind of relaxed, is a better word. I'm more relaxed. I sleep nights.

Junge: I can believe that. How long have you been retired?

Fluty: I think it will be five years January.

Junge: Did you get to know the Shepards at all?

Fluty: I met Judy a couple of times. I met, of course, Dennis a couple of times. They were very kind, very gracious people. I probably remember Judy more simply because she was a mother and I was a mother. I just think she's amazing, truly. I thought she was pretty amazing at the time 'cause I thought they were very forgiving during the sentencing hearing, and they choose to spare their lives, McKinney and Henderson, even though they didn't choose to forego *their* son's life. It was a horrific crime and one you're not sure as a parent if you would be that forgiving. You'd be like, "Oh, my gosh, you mean as a parent, we're supposed to protect our children even from ourselves?" And I think they did that really well.

Junge: How would you react in a situation like that?

Fluty: I don't know. I would hope that I would react as good as they did, but I'm not going to promise you. As a parent, you first and foremost try to protect your children from yourself and then it works out from there.

Junge: Protect your children from yourself?

Fluty: Yea, from like—what I mean by that, I shouldn't say that like I'm stabbing them or anything, but if you have a fear of mice, you don't want to instill that into your kids. Or if you have maybe want to say something that's not so kind, you're kinda' watching your tongue a little bit because your children are present. Or if you want to lose your temper at somebody because they're sticking their nose in where it don't belong, but they want to offer an opinion, you're a little more tolerant 'cause your kids are there to a point. It depends on the opinion and what your kids are about to hear and maybe you wouldn't cuss because your children are there, or you wouldn't argue maybe as heated as you would because your children are there.

Junge: Thank you.

Fluty; You're welcome.

Junge: I really appreciate your talking to me. I've really enjoyed it.

Fluty: That's nice.

Junge: And I learned some things too

Fluty: Oh, God bless your heart.

Junge: At sixty-eight, I can still learn something.

