

**Hudson Area Library Oral History Project**  
**Interview with Bob Bucci**  
**Conducted by Jasper Francis**  
**December 23, 2025**

[BEGIN STREAMING FILE]

JASPER FRANCIS: [00:00:00] This is Jasper Francis. I'm here with Bob Bucci on Tuesday, December 23, 2025. We're in the Hudson Area Library History Room for an oral history interview as part of the HAL Oral History Archive. Welcome, Bob.

BOB BUCCI: [00:00:15] Thank you for having me.

FRANCIS: [00:00:17] Could you introduce yourself, please?

BUCCI: [00:00:19] Yes. My name is Bob Bucci, I was born and raised here in Hudson, moved to New York in the 80s right out of high school. I went to school there and then lived down there ever since, but my husband and I moved to—back to Columbia County, we live in Hillsdale part-time. I'd say, twenty years ago? And, never thought I'd come back, but I actually did.

FRANCIS: [00:00:46] Mm. Could you tell me a little bit about growing up in Hudson?

BUCCI: [00:00:50] Yeah, sure. Uh, I'm a third generation, my great-grandparents – actually, that's a fourth generation, isn't it? Yeah, I'm a fourth generation. My great-grandparents on both sides of my family came over from Italy, mostly, and settled here in Hudson. And I was born and raised in Greenport, which – that's, actually, Lorenz Park, which is even smaller than Greenport, we don't have a zipcode or anything. Born and raised there, went all through the school system, Hudson city school system, and as a kid we had various grade schools, so I went to Greenport School, which is now The Falls. And, um, then went to middle school, and then I graduated from Hudson High School in 1983.

FRANCIS: [00:01:52] What was a day in your life as a child like? Just, like, average day.

BUCCI: [00:01:57] Oh, wow, you know I was just talking about this recently, because friends of mine who have kids are concerned that they sit inside and, you know, are on their phones all the time. We were very much so outside. I was telling my friend that we – no matter how cold it was, we had to be called inside. So I would say a typical day was, you know, hanging out in the neighborhood. And I was a big reader, so I definitely got lost in books a lot and, um, was kind of shy. But we had a series, or I had a series of neighborhood friends that were all in our corner that we hung out, probably, and outside... most of the time.

FRANCIS: [00:02:43] Alright. And what would you guys be doing outside? Did you play a lot of sports, was it more pretend games...?

BUCCI: [00:02:50] No. Yeah, my brother was definitely the sports person –

FRANCIS: [00:02:52] [Laughs.]

BUCCI: [00:02:53] – I was not a sports person. It was – as I was describing this in my mind, I pictured, it was definitely a lot of... creating games and creating... fantasies within whatever situation we wanted to be in, whether it was creating a fort or creating various scenarios where each of us were someone different. We always had different names and wanted to be somebody different. Which I guess should have been pretty telling, back then. Um, so yeah, it was – and I also, because most of my closest friends were girls, a lot of times we played Barbies, to be honest with you. And, you know, for lack of a better word, played ‘house.’ So to speak.

FRANCIS: [00:03:40] Okay. And what was school like for you as a kid? You mentioned you had a few different schoolhouses, one was like a one-room schoolhouse...?

BUCCI: [00:03:48] Oh yeah, that’s – so my house itself, where we lived, in Hillsdale, was a one-room schoolhouse that was moved to the property in, um, we think the 1920s? And then was created into a house in the 30s. And it’s pretty special and it has a lot of the Dutch architecture

because there's a lot of Dutch history in this area, and it's a clapboard ceiling, and it's – it's really special. But for me, I went to grade school all through Greenport, graduated Greenport in the fifth grade, and then went to the middle school – and then middle school to high school. School was pretty horrible. I would say starting with middle school, middle school on, was pretty horrible, and to be honest with you I couldn't wait to get out of Hudson. I couldn't wait to leave here, never imagined moving back here, and... but we did.

[00:04:46] I, again, was pretty shy, I did not play sports. I had an older brother, who was four years older than me, who was very much so the opposite of me – he was very popular, he was very much a... a jock, and really good in school, and I was the opposite. I was kind of awkward and shy and... I think some of it had to do with they didn't realize my eyesight was bad until probably the second – second grade going into third grade, so I think a lot of the sports that I would have played, I was kind of afraid of because I didn't realize the ball was in front of me until it was right in front of me. So I just had an aversion to sports. Um... and yeah, going into middle school and high school was - was pretty horrible. I couldn't wait to get out.

FRANCIS: [00:05:39] Did you and your brother have a good relationship? Was he...

BUCCI: [00:05:43] We did not. Growing up, we did not. He, very much so, was... for lack of a better word, a bully to me. And, um, that was really hard. Four years older, so by the time I got to high school he was gone, but I was my brother's, you know, younger brother and everybody expected me to be like him and I wasn't. And so that's where the bullying [*thump on recording*] and stuff came in and it was pretty horrible, to be honest with you.

FRANCIS: [00:06:18] Well, after you finished high school, you moved straight down to the city?

BUCCI: [00:06:22] Yeah, I was accepted at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. So one of the saving graces for me in school – in high school, was music, and I was part of the drama club, so I was very active in the school musicals and the whole musical side of, you know, I lived in the band room. And those people were my people, and so that kind of saved my life, literally saved my life. And - so I was accepted at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts. I had applied

to four different schools, and it really came down to NYU or the American Academy. NYU wanted me to retake my math SATs and I didn't want to do it, so I just went to the Academy 'cause I was going to move to New York and be an actor. So I did that 1983, I had done a summer at... I think it was my third summer at MacHady, or my second summer at MacHady in Chatham, and right from there went right to New York with a friend – who surprisingly was an ex-lover, because I was out by this time. At least to my closest friends I was out, I considered myself bisexual at the time. And, uh, went to school at the American Academy, and went there for a year, and then just started working as an actor and never looked back.

FRANCIS: [00:07:51] Are there any memories from that time that really, like, float to the surface? Anything you're really proud of, or had a really good time with?

BUCCI: [00:07:59] Yeah, my summers at the Mac were - uh, MacHady theater, were really special. And realizing, again, that you can create your community, you can create your family, and that family does not have to be blood-related, was really special. Those summers were really quite wonderful. And I also, I guess as well, my senior year of high school I did an internship at The Egg in Albany. Empire State Youth Theater used to do semester-long intensives where I actually moved up to Albany and lived right near The Egg and did a whole, what was it called – Empire State Youth Theater.

[00:08:49] And that also was really special as well because it wasn't just high school kids, it was college kids, kids who were out of college, it was adults – even though it was Empire State Youth Theater, they created theater for kids. And a lot of the teaching artists were also the actors in the shows, so you got to be part of the shows. I did Romeo & Juliet up there, that was really, really special. Living on my own was really special up there too, and again, I was finding myself, I had my first serious boyfriend there, and... it finally felt like I was me. If that makes sense.

FRANCIS: [00:09:31] Definitely, yes. Was your first serious boyfriend also the person you were living with down in the city, or...?

BUCCI: [00:09:39] No, no, no, that – he, we sort of went our separate ways after that semester at The Egg, and have remained friends to this day, but did not... could not continue, we went our separate ways.

FRANCIS: [00:09:58] Well, in the city, I mean after you stopped attending the Academy – what was that like for you? Just, like, working as an actor...

BUCCI: [00:10:07] Yeah. Um, it was... intense. Hard work. You know I always – one of the things I prided myself in, that I always knew if I could get a job, I should have a job. So I wasn't one of those... a lot of my friends did this, and nothing against them, but I never went on unemployment. When I finished a job as an actor, I got what I would call a "survival job," and I did many, many things that ranged from working retail to waiting tables – I'm an incredible waiter – to hosting in restaurants, the restaurant industry. As well as – I was really lucky to fall into a job with a publishing company, and learned a lot of what now has become my work, learned a lot of marketing and sales, which I then took along with me.

[00:11:04] So I would finish a job as an actor and know that I could sit back down at that desk and have that job, and um, looking back on it, not only did it give me the basis for the work that I do today, but it also was... you know, I called it a survival job, but it really helped me survive, because it gave me purpose, it gave me a place to go so that when a job ended as an actor, which was all that I wanted to be. I wanted to be in the arts, I never felt like, "Okay, what do I do now?" I knew that even if a job ended out of town on a Sunday, I could be back at my desk on Monday if I could get there. And they held that job for me, which was – I guess a testament to me as an employee, because I was doing good work, but it-it was... it helped me survive.

FRANCIS: [00:11:57] That's really special, I'm – that's wonderful, that you were able to find a place like that.

BUCCI: [00:12:00] Yeah, yeah.

FRANCIS: [00:12:02] And – can you tell me about some of the productions you were in as an actor?

BUCCI: [00:12:07] Yeah, I was pretty fortunate. I never got on Broadway but I came really close, and at the time where I came really close, it was actually down to me and my – I called him my lover at the time, we were living together. And, um, I kind of knew it was his turn, and so I did not go to the callback, and he went to the callback and got the job. But I worked pretty steadily, and I really loved it. I spent a couple of summers – came back to MacHadyen, there were two or three theaters that I worked at pretty consistently and really loved what I did... And was proud of all the work that I did, my family would always come and see the things that I – I think there's only one gig that I had, in Arizona, that they did not come, but my family - sometimes just my mother and father, but then there were times, if it was close enough, they would rent an entire bus and take a bus down to the city, or take a bus to Connecticut or Pennsylvania or upstate New York to see the shows that I was doing.

[00:13:17] I was pretty fortunate and really loved what I did, along with honing my craft and constantly taking lessons, taking voice lessons, taking dance lessons... In fact, I now live around the corner from where I used to take dance lessons, and I recently went up to the attic and got my tap shoes out and thought, "I'm gonna do – I'm gonna take a tap class again!" 'Cause I walk by it all the time and see these young kids coming out with this glow on their faces that I remembered. You know, I would sometimes go and take two classes in a row and just love that, that energy and that creative spirit, which luckily I'm still a part of today.

FRANCIS: [00:13:55] That's wonderful!

BUCCI: [00:13:56:] Yeah.

FRANCIS: [00:13:57] Where were you taking those lessons, was that –

BUCCI: [00:13:58] At Steps on 75th Street, right on Broadway. And I live on 75th and Broadway now, literally around the corner. [Laughs]

FRANCIS: [00:14:05] [Laughs] Amazing!

BUCCI: [00:14:06] Who would have thought?

FRANCIS: [00:14:07] Were you doing, like, a lot of – mostly musicals at the time?

BUCCI: [00:14:11] Yeah, I was, and one of the things that I was grappling with when I ended up transitioning to, what I say the other side of the table, was I was not leaving New York anymore, too. In fact, I was turning down work, because when – at least at the time, to be considered a serious actor, a lot of times musical theater was not considered as serious. You know, you're either a musical theater actor or you were an *actor* actor. And, um, I was right on the precipice of considering, do I move to Los Angeles – which if I had done ten years earlier than I did, I would have actually done it – but I was so sort of set in my ways and loved New York so much, at the time in my late twenties/early thirties, the thought of leaving the city and starting fresh in a new city, a big city like Los Angeles, was a little scary to me. Or I – I clearly had reservations about doing it, or I would have done it.

[00:15:16] But anyway, I was staying in New York and becoming part of theater companies to really concentrate on putting the musical theater aside and really concentrating on the acting. And, um, was a part of a couple of theaters, did some really great work I loved, and to this day I miss the process, I miss the... being in a rehearsal room and working on a new script, and sitting around the table and talking about the art of it and dissecting, um, dialogue in a play. That I really miss. So I was trying to put the musical theater stuff aside and be... what at the time was considered, you know, an *actor*, not a musical theater actor. And then fate had a different... different, um, process for me to follow, and so I followed it, and here I am today.

FRANCIS: [00:16:12] Can you tell me a bit more about that process?

BUCCI: [00:16:14] Yeah. [Laughs]

FRANCIS: [00:16:14] Like, what the path was from the – I guess to the other side of the curtain, so to speak?

BUCCI: [00:16:18] Yeah, for sure. So, um, I was – again, staying in the city and not taking jobs out of town, I was doing a bunch of theater company stuff, and, um, getting really close to some really big things. The theater company was doing really well, there were some plays that I helped nurture from, here's a scene and a scene becomes a one-act, a one-act becomes a two-act, a two-act becomes a play, and you put it up on its feet. And a couple of those were going to... we did off-off-Broadway, but they were called, like, workshops. And then those – some of those were going to move, then they didn't move. Anyway. I was auditioning, and I had, I think, three jobs, four jobs, all different kinds of things. I had gotten my equity card through a, um, a children's theater company called The Traveling Playhouse, and that kept me in insurance, and it constantly kept me working on that side, so that was one of the three or four jobs that I had.

[00:17:24] So I got a call from a friend who was executing – executive producing this off-Broadway musical called Urinetown. And she was working out of a producer – a producer's office called The Dodgers, Michael David and Ed Strong. And, um, they had an in-house group sales department, and at the time The Dodgers had a lot of things going. They had Music Man on Broadway, they were bringing 42nd Street to Broadway, Blast, they had Urinetown going off-Broadway, they had a whole bunch of stuff in the pipeline. And this group sales department was kind of struggling, so she called me and she said, "Would you want to come here and do some work? I really love it here, and I think you'd love it as well." So I went and I interviewed, and they didn't pay me what I wanted to be paid, and I said look, what I'll do is I will work with you for two to three weeks, get you set up, get you caught up, and-and in a place where I can then go, because I'm a working actor, I have all these jobs, you know, irons in the fire. All these things potentially happening – I was... um, recording a demo of the new musical which happened around that same time, so I was busy as an artist, but this opportunity came up.

[00:18:45] So my second day on the job, we were at a big conference room table with the advertising agency, and this is a producer of – a prolific producer that has been producing on Broadway, at this point, for maybe twenty-five years. Multiple Tony awards, like – it was a big

deal! Here I was at a table with a Broadway advertising agency, a Broadway producer, and me. So I'm sitting there, and the director of marketing turns to me and... to go back a little bit, for sales, I went by Robert, because I'd learned in the publishing company when I was doing sales, if you called someone and said, "Please call Robert back," they called Robert back. They did not call Bob back. So when I changed from going from Bob to Robert, my sales tripled at the - at the publishing company. So I was doing sales so I went by Robert, so I'm sitting at this table, really just listening and soaking it all in, and they were talking about all this different stuff, and the director of marketing said, "Well, Robert, who's our projects manager," and she starts rattling off all these things that I needed to do! So I grabbed a pad of paper and I started writing it down, and it was a full list of all these grassroots things and all these marketing initiatives, and I had a list of duties that I guess I was gonna do, that were above and beyond the group sales.

[00:20:12]And I left that meeting, and she came up to me afterwards and she said, "I'm so sorry I did that to you, but you seem really nice, everybody likes you. Do you want a job?" As an actor, no one ever says that to you. In fact, I had just gone through a series of - "Oh my God, that's the best audition I've ever seen! But you're not going to get the job." Or, "Oh my God, I loved you! But we're going with somebody else." Or, "Oh my God, you were great! But, uh, you're not right for this job." And here I was, somebody looking me in the face and saying, "Do you want a job?" And I thought - what's the worst thing that could happen? I do it for six months, eight months, a year, and I hate it and leave? You're working on Broadway, which is something I've always wanted to do. So I said yes. And a year later, I had three promotions and two raises and I never looked back. So that's how that transition happened.

FRANCIS: [00:21:08] Fantastic!

BUCCI: [00:21:09] Yeah.

FRANCIS: [00:21:10] And just to contextualize things, you moved to the city in... 1983?

BUCCI: [00:21:14] 1983, yeah.

FRANCIS: [00:21:15] 1983. When did that transition from, like, stage to business happen?

BUCCI: [00:21:20] Yeah, that would have been probably... 2000? '99-2000, in fact it was 2000, 2001. Because it was the... March of 2001, because September 11th happened that September of 2001.

FRANCIS: [00:21:38] Ah, okay.

BUCCI: [00:21:39] So you know, it was almost... fifteen years later that – twenty years later, right? '83, '93, 2003, yeah. Um, I had transitioned over, and during that... twenty years, fifteen years, whatever they were, I worked pretty consistently as an actor. I was very happy with the trajectory of what I was doing and where I was going. I was – again, really loved the creative side of everything, loved being a part of a theater company. But there was just something about all this that clicked, that made me go wow. And, you know, when I do mentorships now and I teach students, I often say, “Always, always say yes.” Because you’re opening a door that could totally change your life, as it did mine. And thankfully I did say yes, because my life took a complete different turn, it’s how I met my husband – it just was a total change for me.

FRANCIS: [00:22:41] Alright, and this is still the work that you’re doing now, in marketing and promotion – how has that changed over the last twenty-five years?

BUCCI: [00:22:50] Oh, wow. [Laughs]

FRANCIS: [00:22:52] [Laughs]

BUCCI: [00:22:53] Well, *then*, those shows that I worked on, there was a specific way that we launched a Broadway show, which had to do with the way people consumed their media was different then, the way people bought tickets was different then, the way people, you know – not everybody had a cellphone and if they did have a cellphone, it was a flip phone. There wasn’t – you didn’t have a computer in your hand. Um, so it’s changed *drastically*. So I went from working there at Dodgers and, uh, became their director of sales eventually, and then left to go to

a company called TMG, The Marketing Group, and then worked on multiple Broadway shows in marketing, promotions, and sponsorship, which was a whole ‘nother learning curve for me in regards to how to pitch and how to quantify the value of what you were selling, which I loved learning. And then from there I was recruited to be the VP of marketing for a company called, uh, National Artists, otherwise known as NAMCO, which were the and are the producers of Chicago the musical. And again, a huge, prolific producer, and I worked on Chicago the musical globally, so I really learned a lot about – which I had started to learn at Dodgers and the sales, I learned about the international market and what that means for it coming *to* New York. I then learned how to take a show *from* New York to a different country, which I loved and got to travel around the world with Chicago. And then from Chicago went to my current job, which is, um, Broadway Across America and the John Gore Organization, and I handle marketing, promoting, and selling Broadway in forty-eight markets around the country.

FRANCIS: [00:24:48] Wow.

BUCCI: [00:24:49] And it’s changed drastically. And it... you know, the thing that keeps me up at night is, “What’s the next thing of how things are going to change? What’s the next, um, trend that’s going to... take over that everybody’s going to flock towards that you have to harness and understand and get in front of the consumer in a different way. But it also keeps it exciting, which I love.

FRANCIS: [00:25:12] Is there anything you would pinpoint as like, the biggest factor that has shifted in marketing? I assume maybe social media has to be...

BUCCI: [00:25:20] Yeah, I would just say the way people consume their information, you know. Um, there’s no longer a... you know, when I first started, papers ruled, and doing ads in newspapers was the way to go, and... in most markets and in New York City, no one places advertising in newspapers anymore. So, yeah, I would say the web and digital has changed everything. In a good way, as well as a challenging way.

FRANCIS: [00:25:51] Alright. This has been really fascinating to hear, I would just like to jump back in time a little bit and go back. So, grew up in Columbia County, your entire life, and then in 1983, coming to the city – what was that like for you socially? I mean, was there a little bit of a culture shock, or was it more exciting?

BUCCI: [00:26:12] I had – it was *so* exciting. It was so exciting, but you also have to remember that that was also, as somebody who had come out to myself - theoretically, because I still was bisexual or, um, fluid, I guess you would say - it was when AIDs was starting, as well. Here I was in the middle of a cultural, um... wonderful city, as well as this beautiful, freeing feeling of, I could be myself, yet there was this overriding fear of... being yourself could kill you. And, um... it was thrilling, and scary, and... but I, again, *never* wanted to look back. Never, ever wanted to come back here. Y'know, finally leaving what I felt was a very stifled – which, you know... here, now, Hudson and Columbia County is such a different place than it was in 1983.

[00:27:20] Warren Street alone was – all those mom n' pop's were starting to go under, so I think there were maybe four/five of them that were still struggling, like the... the jewelry store, and I think the Town Fair still existed in 1983, which was the toy store. There was a florist and things like that, but the New Yorkers were starting to come up and buy the big properties on Allen Street closest to the – to the train station, and that influx of what they brought to the table for a city like this started to change everything. But I could not wait to get out, and could not imagine coming back. And even when I met my husband and he said, "I've been looking at property in Columbia County," I was like, "Well, here's my radius because we are not moving anywhere near Hudson, New York, it has to be *X* away." And... long story is we didn't end up doing that, but that is how I felt. I couldn't wait to leave.

FRANCIS: [00:28:27] I mean, what was it that drew you and your husband back to the area? You're in Hillsdale now?

BUCCI: [00:28:32] Yeah, yeah. It was really him. You know, the idea of solitude – living in the city as long as I have, which is now, what, forty years... that energy is exhausting. It's exhilarating, exhausting, and never-ending. And so this idea that - especially for him, in a

high-powered position that he was, and owning a company - we needed that solitude, and we needed to, um, have a bit of peace. And so, you know, we call it *the country*, and going to the country is – it's a respite, and it's, um... truly changed my life. Truly changed my life. And changed my relationship with my family, too.

FRANCIS: [00:29:40] And you moved back, you said twenty-ish years ago – 2005-ish?

BUCCI: [00:29:28] Yes, yeah.

FRANCIS: [00:29:30] I mean, what was that like for you emotionally?

BUCCI: [00:29:33] Really, um... empowering. Because here I was as an adult, coming back to a place that I still felt like an awkward, bullied teenager. Um, I came back with a sense of self that I knew I had, but did not share with the people that were around me. Up here, you know, in particular family. Uh... we moved into the house in August. And by that December, we had a Christmas party, and it was an incredible amalgamation of – we had a lot of New York friends that lived up here at the time, and you know, that kind of also brought us up here, brought Chris up here, wanting to come up here. So we had those New York local friends, we had my family, and then slowly but surely over those couple of months we had a couple of local people that we became friendly with or reacquainted myself with – so like, my high school girlfriend was cutting my hair, right? So she and her family came, and then the guy who was doing work on our house came, and they knew each other because, as you know, it's a very small town here.

[00:31:03] ]Um, so we're having this party, and my nephews are there, whole family is there, and my mother's giving tours of the house, being like, "Isn't this fabulous? Isn't this fabulous?" When meanwhile, she did not want me to move in with Chris in the way that we did, she was worried that we bought a house together – that's a whole 'nother story. That relationship with my mother and my father. But here she was, giving incredible tours of how fabulous our house was and how proud she was of it. Never said that to *me*, but she was clearly saying it to everybody else. And we... the party ends, and I remember we had two - in fact, we still call the guest room the girls' room - one of our closest friends, she and her girlfriend were staying with us that

weekend. And the four of us were sitting around, the party had ended, we cleaned up, we're sitting by the fire, I'm having a cocktail or a glass of wine – and I just start bawling. And everybody's like, "Are you *okay*? How drunk are you?" And I was like, "Guys, you don't understand. I just melded my worlds. I just created a space that I was safe being myself, and it was *my* space, that my family came to, my friends came to, to celebrate me, us, and our life." And I just was so overwhelmed I couldn't speak. So, that encapsulates a myriad of things that I went through over the next couple of years, for sure.

FRANCIS: [00:32:42] Um, your husband's name is Chris?

BUCCI: [00:32:43] Yup.

FRANCIS: [00:32:44] Can you tell me a bit about him, about your relationship?

BUCCI: [00:32:47] Yeah! He, um, owns a PR company for Broadway in New York, he and his business partner, and he's one of the most successful Broadway press agents. He's done some incredible work. He, um... originally from Texas, and then moved to Louisiana, New Orleans, grew up – basically, did high school in New Orleans. And, um, he's a really special man and we have a really wonderful life together, and again, if it wasn't for him, I would not be where I am today up here, because I would have diverted to a completely different... way, and a completely different place. And thanks to him, and him making me feel comfortable in doing this – us moving up here changed my relationship with my family in a really special way. I give him a lot of credit for that.

FRANCIS: [00:33:55] What does your guys' life look like now? Like when you're up here versus, like, when you're in the city?

BUCCI: [00:34:00] Yeah. [Laughs] As I said earlier, the idea of relaxing up here and being outside in nature is – I've really become someone who loves gardening, hence also having Lyme disease a couple of times, but that's a whole 'nother story. You know, we've built a really wonderful life together here, as well as in the city, but the restfulness and the peacefulness – and

hopefully people feel this when they come over, there is sort of a... a solitude and a peacefulness that we have created for ourselves in our life here.

[00:34:45] And it's much needed again because our jobs are so stressful, in particular his job – you know, when I met him... I would say we met on March 7th, and that January, that following January, it'd almost been a year. We were about to move in together, we moved in together after a year, um... and then six months later, got the house. We were visiting - again, this was thanks to him - we were visiting my parents in Naples, Florida, because they were wintering in Florida at this point, and we're walking along the beach together, and I said to him, "If you don't slow down and find a way to find peace, you're gonna have a heart attack. And you're going to not make it to sixty." And he heard me, and I think us moving in together and grounding ourselves and creating a really wonderful space – as opposed to him moving into my apartment or me moving into his apartment, we found a neutral space, so we created a world together. Um, and then again, six months later, found this house, and... the rest is, you know, the history wrote itself from that point on.

FRANCIS: [00:36:05] Wonderful. How long have you guys been together?

BUCCI: [00:36:08] Twenty-three years? It'll be twenty-four in March.

FRANCIS: [00:36:11] Fantastic.

BUCCI: [00:36:12] Yeah. [Laughs] Seems unbelievable. And you know, I never thought in my lifetime that we'd be able to legally get married, I never thought that was in the cards. And so we... initially, when we bought a place together in New York – so I owned my apartment when we met, and he was renting. I sublet the apartment that I owned, he got rid of his apartment, we found an apartment together. After two years of subletting, we decided to buy a place closer - we're on the Upper West Side now - closer to getting out of the city, and in doing that, we decided to exchange rings. And we found this really brilliant nondenominational minister who – we couldn't get married, but if we were going into contract with each other and buying a piece of property together, we wanted to have there be more solidified, um, binds that brought us

together. So we met with this nondenominational minister to have a commitment ceremony. And she was *fantastic*. We had to meet with her a couple of times and talked about our lives together; we then met separately with her and we each had to talk about what we feel about the other person. And then on the day of the commitment ceremony, we got the rings, and she came over and she blessed each room in the apartment -- it was a small apartment, *is* a small apartment, 'cause we're still there. Each room was blessed in a different religion --

FRANCIS: [00:37:49] Oh!

BUCCI: [00:37:50] Which was really cool. It was just the two of us and our dog at the time, Zippy. And then she brought us into the bedroom, which was the last room, and she brought us together and she took the rings out, and she goes, "Okay, now I'm going to give you what you said about each other, and you're going to read it to each other." And then she asked us to create vows, and you're gonna say vows and then I will bless these rings, bless this room, bless this house, and you will be committed to each other. And it was *really* special, and we then had about ten friends come over and we surprised them with -- the reason you're over is not just to have a housewarming party for our new house, but is to let you know that we made a commitment to each other. Well, we thought -- I thought in my lifetime that that was the only thing we would ever have, which was enough for me. I was really glad that we did that. And then, on our ten year anniversary, um, nine years into being together, our ten year anniversary, we got married because it now was legal. And, um, that was really special. I never thought -- even though now, potentially, there's the fear of taking it away, and at this point no one can really take it away; it's ours now, it's mine now, and I don't care what the courts say, I'm married. I'm proud of that.

FRANCIS: [00:39:14] Um, thank you so much for that, that's... absolutely wonderful for you guys --

BUCCI: [00:39:20] [Laughs] Yeah.

FRANCIS: [00:39:21] -- Wonderful to hear. [Laughs] Um... if you're comfortable, and if you're not, that's totally okay, because I can tell this is, like, a big topic, but would you be willing to tell

me a little bit about your relationship with your family? And how Chris has changed that for you?

BUCCI: [00:39:36] Yeah. Um... growing up gay, in the '80s, '70s and '80s, more so the '80s because I don't think I realized I was gay until the '80s, was really difficult, and my family did not know how to deal with it. They were raised Catholic, and in many ways I think... I don't think, I know, in particular my mother saw me as an abomination. When I finally did come out to her, and this was *years* later, I actually – they helped me buy my apartment in New York, so they – my grandparents on my father's side, my Bucci grandparents, owned and operated Bucci's restaurant on Warren Street, which is now Baba Louie's. And when they left the restaurant industry, they owned, uh, they moved into a house, two-family house, on Union Street. And when they passed away - when my grandfather passed away, he was the second to go - my parents sold that house and used that money to give me as a down payment on the apartment, which I was very grateful for and then they basically became my landlords.

[00:40:56] ]But at the time, I moved in with who I thought would be my life partner, we moved in together in this apartment. But we had two separate beds in the bedroom. Whenever they would come down to visit, which they did often because they owned the apartment, right? It was in their name. And they loved Christopher very much, he was, you know... But we had to take down pictures, we had to act like we were not together. Which was really, really hard. Christopher and I split and it was... I was home for, I think, Thanksgiving, and we were watching TV, and Hilary Clinton was on the news. And my mother went on this *tirade* about how much she hated her, and hated Clinton, and how could he – within this tirade, she said, “And how can he give rights to gays in the military? That's not his to give!” You know, there was the Don't Ask, Don't Tell thing that was going on? And I just shut down. And I didn't talk to her for the rest of the time I was up here, and they drove me back to the city and I didn't speak to them. They went back home and she called me, and said, “I know that you're upset, I upset you, I just don't understand why this is important to you.” And I said, “Well, if two people can love each other, why shouldn't they be-?”

[00:42:28] Anyway, long story short, she ended up saying, “Well, is this something you believe in?” And I said yes. And she said, “Are you gay?” And I said, “Do you want me to answer that honestly?” And she said yes. I said I am. She immediately started crying, she immediately said I was going to hell, she immediately said – like, all that. That’s where she lived. And I think somewhere in her heart of hearts she lived there until the day she died, no matter how much she might have tried. Um, she then told me that it would affect my relationship with my brother and sister-in-law and at that time two-and-a-half nephews, because my sister-in-law was pregnant. My sister-in-law recently found the letter that I wrote to my brother and sister-in-law to tell them, “Mom does not want me to tell you this, but I am gonna tell you I’m gay.” And, um, they accepted me. My brother was going to lean towards supporting my mother in this, and my sister-in-law was like, *no you’re not*.

[00:43:28] Um, it was hard, it was really hard. But I also got to a place where I was like, “This is my life, not your life, and if that means that you’re not going to be a part of it, that doesn’t – that’s fine. I can still be happy and I can still live, I can still love, and I can still survive better than I ever thought I could, without your support and your love.” It was hard. And, you know, growing up gay... it was *shocking* to me, seeing how this city, on the LGBTQ side, has blossomed. Because it was, in my opinion, a place that was filled with... hate, for who I was. So, when... that year that the two kids, the two boys, were the homecoming kings –

FRANCIS: [00:44:29] [Overlapping] Prom kings.

BUCCI: [00:44:30] – Prom kings, I was like, “Where is – what is this place? Wow.” And I was happy, yet angry, yet sad, yet thrilled, but that was not the place that I grew up in. That was not the place I grew up in. I grew up in the place where you walked down the hallway in high school and people called you a faggot and just, *pounded* your head, and walked away laughing. That’s the world I lived in, here.

FRANCIS: [00:45:09] Thank you for sharing that with me. But –

BUCCI: [00:45:11] I’m glad it’s different.

FRANCIS: [00:45:12] Yes. Um, did your relationship with Chris help your relationship with your parents, it seems like?

BUCCI: [00:45:19] It did. I think ultimately - I don't think - ultimately... my parents, my family, wanted me to be happy, and secure, and loved. And it took some time, and he was very patient in regards to that. Once they realized that that's where it was, they became better. But then when we decided to get married... um, so we were in Texas visiting his family, when - we were at a Hampton Inn, watching TV, watching the press conference, when Cuomo said... you know, announced that gay marriage was legal in New York, and I think he even said something like, "We are not like red Texas, we are going to accept everyone." That was part of his speech, and here I was in red Texas! But the next day, his family was - because he proposed to me that night, and I said yes - he, we went out to breakfast and they were... They gave us a sheet cake that said, "Congratulations!" They were like, "When are you gonna get married? Are you going to have kids?" Like, they could not have been more happy for us.

[00:46:42] My mother and my father never said anything to me. It wasn't until I finally said, "We're getting married, you know." And she was like, "I heard, I heard. I wish you wouldn't." I think in her mind, it was like... and she couldn't verbalize this to me, but in my opinion, she was more concerned about what other people were going to say. Was I going to wear a dress? Was he going to wear a dress? Who was going to be the bride, who's going to be the groom? She was all, like... as opposed to, you're two people who love each other. So, we ended up altering the way that we got married to make it comfortable for them. And I don't resent doing that, I'm not angry that I did that, it just made my life easier. And so we went to the courthouse with just two people - you know, a person standing up for us, and then we had a photographer with us. Then we had a party that night for the people who came into town, and then the next day we had a big party. And they - no one witnessed the ceremony, that was very private, and there were a lot of friends that were upset about that. They were like, "We came all this way and we didn't actually go to your wedding?" I'm like, "Well, this party is our wedding!"

[00:48:01] So we then shifted it a little bit, and at the party we gave speeches, which we were not gonna do. And the speeches were about each other, and about this union and about this... whatever. And I remember... Chris was standing in line for the restroom with my dad, and he said, "Tony, having a good time?" And he's like, "Yeah, it's okay." Chris said, "Well, what do you mean?" And he was like, "Well, you know, I just don't know – would my parents be comfortable with it?" And he [Chris] was like, "Well okay, wait a minute. Would your parents think this was a really good party?" And my father said, "Yes, they would." And he was like, "Then that's all you have to concentrate on." And then – you know, my father and I, God rest his soul, never had a conversation about me being gay. Ever. That was dictated by my mother, and shame on me for not forcing it, but... So yes, Chris really helped, and they saw me happy. And I was, and I am, and I'm grateful for that.

FRANCIS: [00:49:12] Thank you.

BUCCI: [00:49:13] Yeah.

FRANCIS: [00:49:15] Are things – are you on better terms with your brother these days?

BUCCI: [00:49:18] I am. Um, I'm really close with he and his wife and their three kids, that are – they're younger now, adults. And middle nephew has two amazing – so I have great grand-nieces. We do a lot of family things together; in fact, I just turned sixty and my sixtieth birthday, we all went to Italy together and went back to the town where my family's from, and met the sole surviving Bucci on that lineage, and it was really special and really wonderful and, uh. Yeah, it has changed.

FRANCIS: [00:49:53] That's wonderful.

BUCCI: [00:49:53] Yeah, yeah.

FRANCIS: [00:49:56] Um, circling back to something that you said earlier – regarding, like, the Supreme Court... I think that in a lot of ways, Hudson as it is now is quite a good place to be for

LGBTQ+ people, but what are your hopes for the future? And is there anything that you would say to... I don't know, younger queer people who are experiencing similar fears?

BUCCI: [00:50:25] Yeah. Um... all I can say is, I never imagined that we'd have what we have today. Right? We have it, and for me, and hopefully for everyone... no matter what is said on a piece of paper or in a court document or whatever, they cannot take that away. And I don't think we need the courts to tell us that it's okay. And that we're valid or that we're, um – we're equal, 'cause we are. And if we continue to be that way and act that way, no matter what the courts say, no matter what the hate, and we have to fight against the hate and we have to fight to have those rights. If they don't come or they're taken away, or God forbid they go backwards, that should – don't let them drag us backwards. We just keep being the powerful energy that we are, as a group of individuals that represent love and acceptance, that hate cannot pull it back. That's what I would say.

FRANCIS: [00:51:47] Thank you, that's wonderful. Um, we are drawing close to the end of our interview, but is there anything else you want to speak about? Or *anyone* else – a story you'd like to relate, a relationship you'd like to highlight in your life?

BUCCI: [00:52:04] The-the one person in my family that – there's two people. But in particular, without saying it, my mother's sister, my Aunt Madaline, always accepted me. And probably always knew – and look, there's no way that my mother and father didn't know. In fact, I even asked my mother that, and she goes, "You don't see what you don't want to see." I'm like, "Well, that's on you, that's not on me." Um, but I remember, really early on, my aunt taking me – she and I would go to the theater together, she'd take me down to New York, and one time she took me down to New York and we went to the City Opera. And we were sitting there and she broached the fact of two guys being together, and how she thought – how beautiful that was, that they were happy. And it was her way of telling me without telling me; she never pushed me, she never asked me point-blank to make me uncomfortable, because she clearly could see that I was uncomfortable. Or afraid. But that was her way of saying, "It's okay."

[00:53:24] When Chris and I met each other - the opposite of my parents - my Aunt Madaline gave us a... when we moved in together, gave us a housewarming gift. That was actually wrapped in like, wedding paper. It was her way of saying, "I know that you *can't* do this, but this is -" And they were these - which we still have today! - these beautiful, hand-painted wine glasses that we still use today. So, um - man, I miss her so much. She was, um... that, grounded support, that it didn't need to be vocalized but just needed to be... just needed to *be*, will always mean the world to me.

[00:54:17] And then, um, I have to give credit to my sister-in-law, who basically stood up and said - you know, when my mother said, "You can't tell them, they're not going to allow you to be around your nephews." And my sister-in-law stood up and said, "These are my kids, not your kids. You don't tell me who they love and who they don't love." Um, you don't tell me who they get to be around or don't be around. So she was a-a beautiful driving force in regards to that, and I'm very thankful for that. And I'm thankful for my three nephews, they've always been... there's a great story that my sister-in-law tells me, that my youngest nephew was out and about and using derogatory slang, like probably "fag," or whatever, when he was talking about someone. And my middle nephew said, "Kris, you really shouldn't say that, because you know it's not a nice thing to say." And he was like, "What do you mean? He's just a fag," or whatever, and he was like, "No no no, because you might know someone..." He's like, "No, I don't know anyone who's gay." And he was like, "Well, actually, you do," and he's like, "Really? Who?"

[00:55:28] He said, "Well, your Uncle Bob is gay." And he went, "*What?*" And he said, "Yeah, come on, he's - exum, you know, he's in his thirties, he lives with a man." And he was like, "Wait, wait, *Chris* is gay too?" So he just, you know - but then he was totally fine about it! The next time we saw him he came up and hugged both of us and has always been, you know, that love from those three individuals without judgement will always mean the world to me. Always mean the world to me, and that is a trickle-down from their mom, for sure.

FRANCIS: [00:56:05] Um, that feels like such a lovely point to end on, unless there's anything else...? [Laughs, overlapping]

BUCCI: [00:56:07] Yeah. [Laughs] I didn't mean for it to be, but yeah, it does seem to be a great place to end!

FRANCIS: [00:56:13] That's so lovely. [Laughs]

BUCCI: [00:56:15] Well, thank you for having me talk about this, it feels good to... relive it.

FRANCIS: [00:56:20] Of course, Bob. Thank you so much for joining me today, it's been such an absolute pleasure talking with you.

BUCCI: [00:56:25] Great, great. Well, thank you!