

Ep. 33: Second Adolescence w/ Chip Hall (he/him)

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SPEAKERS

Adam James Cohen (he/him), Chip Hall (he/him)

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 00:09

Hello, and welcome to the Second Adolescence podcast. I am your host, Adam James Cohen. On this week's episode, we have a friend of mine, actually, his name is Chip Hall. And there were lots of different reasons I wanted to invite him on. But one reason in particular is that he had the really unique experience of being a queer person in the US Coast Guard, while the anti queer Don't Ask, Don't Tell legislation was in full effect here in the United States. And he was a leader in bringing internal change to the Coast Guard Academy and Coast Guard with regards to queerness, and queer visibility, all of that added to this greater effort that eventually repealed Don't Ask, Don't Tell. And so I wanted to invite him in to let us all into what that experience was like, in addition to sharing his own queer journey that is also so interesting and fun to listen to. And so I just loved this conversation. Again, I think everyone should just get a podcast and have their friends come on, because it's such a fun way to get to know their stories more in depth. And so I'm excited that he agreed to come on and share his story. And I'm really excited that we get to invite you into it as well. And as with each episode of the second adolescence podcast, I want to invite you as a listener to listen with open curiosity, knowing that each of our stories are different and unique. You might hear some guests share things that really differ from your experience, whereas you might hear other things share that absolutely speak to what you went through or are currently going through. And I really hope that all of this happens, and that together, we can continue growing and expanding our awareness of what life and queerness and healing can be for folks, if after the show you want to connect further head on over to secondadolescence.pod.com for show note and more. Or you can follow the show on Instagram at [@secondadolescencepod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescencepod). Welcome to the conversation. Thank you so much for being here. Welcome to second adolescence, I'm so honored, you said yes to doing this. And before going anywhere, I find it's helpful for the listeners to hear the person on your own just give a little mini introduction to who the person is behind the voice.

C Chip Hall (he/him) 02:18

Yeah, I'm a 32 year old gay man living in San Francisco. I grew up a couple hours south of here. I'm a lawyer, a fairly new lawyer. I just finished law school about a year ago and work in San

I'm a lawyer, a fairly new lawyer. I just finished law school about a year ago and work in San Francisco, and I'm a US Coast Guard Veteran, which informs a lot of sort of my coming out experience and what my life's been since then, which I'm sure we'll talk about.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 02:37

Yeah, absolutely. I am really eager to dive into that part of your story. And as I mentioned in the intro, I know you and so there's gonna be some things about your story that I know. But I think I'm also going to get to discover new parts of your story. So I'm really excited about that. And yeah, I definitely want to hear about your Coast Guard experience and a lot of the advocacy work you did there. But let's first dive into kind of you and your story. Where did your story begin?

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 03:01

So I went to high school in Pacific Grove, California, which is just across the bay from Santa Cruz. My dad was also in the Coast Guard and didn't retire until I was eight. And so I moved around a bit was born in New York, lived in California for a few years, and then was in Virginia for kindergarten through second grade. And so that's where I sort of started forming memories and things like that. And then my dad retired, we all moved back out west and grew up in Pacific Grove after that.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 03:30

And yeah, what was Pacific Grove like?

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 03:32

it's a great little town, you know, some of the non mansion shots from Big Little Lies were filmed there. And it really I think captures how just gorgeous and stunning it is. It's a great place to grow up very small community and my high school class was like 120 Kids in the public school, and I love it, I still go down often my parents are still there. And so it's great to be closer to them now.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 03:54

And then Okay, so where and when did queerness start coming into your story?

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 03:59

So I was aware that I was queer, fairly young. I think when I was living in Virginia in second grade, I remember having this friend who was in my grade, and we would start experiment together and exploring, and I didn't know enough at the time about what sexuality was or what sex was to put any words or coherent thoughts to what we were doing. But in retrospect, it was

certainly the beginning of my experimenting with my sexuality. And so then in middle school, seventh eighth grade when I like a lot of other young adolescent boys started looking at porn and talking about sex and things like that. I was very aware of the men in porn, or what the boy would talk about when he would tell the story about sex or something like it was aware I was interested in the man, but I convinced myself that whoever I had sex with first would be what my sexuality was like it could be into women too. I think even that I knew that was not accurate because in preparing for this podcast and thinking about what I was going to say, I remembered a story from sixth seventh grade in the bus coming back from a school field trip. And some girl, I don't remember who it was really wanted me to sit next to her on the bus. And I did, I just wanted to sit with my friend up further in the front of the bus. And we can just chat and whatever, I don't know that I had a crush on him or anything like that. I can't remember that much detail. But I just knew there was much more comfortable sitting with him than I would be sitting with her. So that was definitely a hint early on. But it was still in that phase of, Am I gay? What is being gay, and not really wanting to put myself in a box or make a decision kind of until I had a friend that was probably 14 or 15, who I was driving with him and his girlfriend, who was my best friend, and still one of my very close friends. And he stopped me when I was talking about something and just said, "Chip, are you gay?" And that was the first time where I really internalized? Yeah, I definitely am. There isn't like a decision to be made. There's not some external factor that's going to switch me to one side of the tracks or the other. I'm definitely gay.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 06:10

And what was that moment like? And also like, before that moment, what do you remember, like learning about what it means to be gay? Like, what were you exposed to what was happening both in your home and the culture in PG? Like what was happening in terms of what you came to learn about queerness?

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 06:23

I think I have a very bad long term memory. I don't have a ton of memories about childhood. Honestly, I feel like I've already made it sound like I do. But that's all I got. I don't have I don't have like a lot of memories of points of culture, or Will and Grace, or anything like that. There were a couple, literally, maybe two or three kids in my school who were out and gay until I was aware of them. You know, my dad was a military officer for 20 years, and they've become much more liberal as they've aged. But at the time, you know, I think they were fairly conservative, especially my dad, and I'll talk about this again later on. But don't ask Mattel was something I think that people were aware of in the 90s. And me having sort of a military flavor to my family, it was gays aren't allowed in the military. I don't know if I was explicitly aware of that at the time. But I think it was just sort of hanging around in my awareness of what being gay was that was still, you know, legalized government discrimination against them. But at the same time, there were out kids who were maybe not as socially successful as others, but we're not being bullied or picked on that. I noticed I'm sure they were but it wasn't something you'd see in a TV show or violent or something like that. It feels a little, shockingly, a little bit of a blank slate for me. I don't really remember engaging with that much around me about what being queer was.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 07:42

And then so then in that moment, when your friend asked you, and you kind of had this internal, like moment clicking of Oh, yeah, I am. What do you remember about your response to that? Even just internally? I don't know what you said to him. But what was your internal response?

C Chip Hall (he/him) 07:54

Clarity? Honestly, having someone else say it out in the world helped me understand what I was thinking. I think a lot of people I think you may have mentioned this prior on the podcast of saying it into the mirror. And that being a really clarifying moment of now it oh, there's physical sound waves in the air having communicated this thing, it's more real now. Yeah. And so for me having someone else say it felt the same way. And I was shocked at how perceptive he was, I was shocked by how empathetic he approached it. It didn't come across as a joke, or as a way to pick on me it just he was interested in who I was and just asked. And so I remember very positively even though I think for a lot of people that could be really scary and really negative moment, but it really helped me clarify things.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 08:42

Wow. Wow. Okay, so then what happened after that moment of clarity?

C Chip Hall (he/him) 08:47

so came out to a handful of friends, not more than five I would say...

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 08:52

pretty quickly after that moment, you started coming out?

 08:55

C Chip Hall (he/him) 08:56

pretty quickly, again, long term memory, timelines get confusing. But definitely, I was probably a sophomore at that point. And so had told two or three more people, let's say, within the next year, maybe. And when I was a senior, there were these two other guys, one of whom was a friend in my group at the time, a friend of the guy who had asked me that question, and he came out after he graduated as some flavor of queer by or something, I think and so I was like, "Oh, he's cute. He's gay or interested in guys, so am I.... it must be a match made in heaven...this is great." I remember I was at mock trial practice at the Monterey courthouse, and he had been there as like he was gonna help out with us as a witness. And I was sitting in the back watching someone else go and like he got up to go to the bathroom. And so I sort of got

up as well and like, went out to the bathroom with him and just started talking, my memories that we're both aware of the other person and having come out, at least to a social group, but we had never actually talked about it before. And so we kind of talked about it very smoothly just made a lot of eye contact, you know, and then eventually was just like, can I kiss you and then sort of made out for a cute little second. And then nothing with him really went anywhere. But it was definitely affirming that oh, yeah, definitely gay. This was awesome. Yeah, like this a lot. Kissing boys is cool.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 10:31

The tenacity of younger you I'm so into this just getting up and like going and going for it.

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 10:38

it's funny. We've talked before about Heartstopper. And how sweet and like, I don't know, smooth they are to each other. And like patience and understanding. I don't think I knew what any of those words meant. At the time, I still don't know if I didn't know what those words meant. And so instead of being patient, and being more letting things develop, I was kind of more just like, Let's go for it. Let's go direct, doesn't always work out, doesn't leave room for other people to grow into it, which I'm sure he had his own things going on. But that was in my mind at least one reason why that never really went anywhere. So that was that guy I mentioned there are two guys. So it's one other guy. We'll call him Paul. Paul and I knew each other, we were in the same class, small class. And we were in gym together. I don't know why it took Jim is a senior but we're in gym together. And he i and this other random guy would chat during gym when all the sophomores and freshmen and juniors like ran laps, and we were just too cool. And so sat in bleachers and chatted, and the conversation with Paul would get sort of more and more sexual, like, you know, those conversations where both of you know what's going on. But it hasn't been said explicitly yet, so you can't address it. Sure. So things got more and more sexual and more daring. And eventually, we like walked off to go home together and like got more explicit and then eventually came out in the open about I don't know what words we use, but being sexual if you want to call for that kind of thing and walk towards his house. But we were in high school, we live with our parents, and so I had nowhere to go. I don't think either of us had a car, or at least an accessible car at that point. And so we went to this like bar in the woods, which is where all the stoners would go smoke, and there was like a ratty old couch. And the whole thing in retrospect is disgusting. But like, sexual being, you know what I mean, I think was overpowered by my hormones, maybe or my sexual drive, and so hooked up on this disgusting right in the middle of the woods behind the elementary school. And that was like, sort of the extent of any experimentation and confirming my identity in school.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 12:35

Yeah, it sounds like all those experiences just really made it clear for you. Okay, yes, this is who I am. This is what I'm excited to buy. I like this. I want more of this. Yeah. Yeah. And exciting to get to start having those experiences are excited. What do you remember? Do you remember younger you feeling about that?



C Chip Hall (he/him) 12:50

You know, feeling when guy one got up and go to the bathroom in the back of the courthouse, like, my heart was just beating so fast. I'm like, Yes, I'm gonna do this. Paul. Guy. Number two, in retrospect, not my best decision. A little gross, don't feel proud of it, but still was like exciting and fun. At the time. After that first girl I talked about in middle school where it didn't want to sit next to her. I had plenty of female friends, but never had a girlfriend never really expressed any interest in dating a girl. And to me, that didn't feel strange. You know, other than the fact that I wasn't out and I knew what the reason was, it didn't feel like anybody externally was particularly aware of it. You know, I was in student government, I was a boy scout, I was a nerd, you might say still felt decently popular and have friends and things. But I was not the cool guy going to the parties on the weekend. And a lot of my friends were the same way. And so I had two good friends who were in Boy Scouts with me. Both of them straight men, still good friends, and neither of them were dating in high school, so it didn't feel like I was missing out on anything. At least compared to my peers. There were other people dating, but it didn't feel like I was an outlier as only having these sort of clandestine semi gross hookups in the woods. Uh huh.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 14:02

Yeah, I appreciate you naming that because there's a variety of experiences in terms of queer people their experience in adolescence, some folks very much feel like they missed out some folks got to have experiences and it sounds like based on your appears set, you felt kind of on the same playing field in the sense of just you were doing this other thing. Do you remember feeling like this was different? This is like a not typical experience. Like what was your relationship? Once you were kind of having these experiences getting very affirmed? Like yes, I am gay. How did that sit for you?

C Chip Hall (he/him) 14:28

It kind of excited me it felt like I had kind of a cool secret identity almost like I was kind of a boring nerdy cross country runner on the outside but secretly I was having wild sex in the woods. I wasn't to be clear, but right right. It felt kind of cool. And I think that stuck with me in the your sense of being gay wasn't to say like I had overcome any demons. I was fighting about accepting my sexuality. There were still tough times ahead. But it was a hint at how proud I would feel do later on how fun it felt to be gay and how much joy you can get out of it. You know, and I mean, that wasn't maybe the most healthy at the time. But it's still I think felt cool.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 15:12

I love that. Love. That is cool. Okay, so then the academy is that what came next right after?

C Chip Hall (he/him) 15:18

Yeah. So one more story. My dad went to the Coast Guard Academy, you go there, you get a bachelors from it. And then you serve in the Coast Guard as opposed to the Navy or the army, the Marines. And so I was very aware of that growing up, that was a huge part of our family

culture. My dad goes back to reunions every five years at the Coast Guard Academy. A lot of his friends are either Academy buddies, or he went to the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, which is just what it sounds like. It's a graduate school for people in the military. And that's when he met my mom in Monterey. So he had friends from that, and I had two older sisters, neither of them ever had any interest in going into the military, I needed to die for a very long time. But it was very all of us were aware of it, all of us were aware that this was an option. And they sort of self selected out of it early. And I thought I had, but was convinced or convinced myself to go to the summer program at the Academy between my junior and senior years, and had an awesome time really liked it, and decided I would apply and ended up getting in and deciding to go but that's not been my plan all along. And I remember one of my friends, one of the friends I had come out to sophomore junior year was like, why would you want to go to a place where they actively don't want you that if you went and you were your true self, they would take you out and you know, your career, your school would be over. And at the time, my rationale was, well, I'm in the closet. Now, it won't be any different to be in the closet there. So who cares? very naive way of thinking, did not give myself enough credit for how my emotions would be impacted by that, but decided it would be worth it. And so off I went in 2008.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 17:01

okay, yeah. And so then you get there, then what happens.

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 17:03

So I get there pretty intense environment right away. It's like the first summer is kind of a boot camp yelled at me to do push ups. And you get this really heavy rifle from World War Two that's been filled with lead. And you have to hold it for super long and do push ups with it or various stupid things. But if you drink the Kool Aid, it really bonds you with everyone around you and bonds you with the institution, you feel like you've overcome something really difficult, which you have a sense of pride, their sense of belonging that we've all gone through this. And so that was great. I think that's what I wanted at the time was to feel this sense of accomplishment, the sense of doing something difficult and succeeding, and being really close with people around me do the same thing. But then when the summer ends, and you're sort of let out of the boot camp thing, you are a college student, like the weirdest college student for the first year, if you're not in your room, but you're inside the barracks, which is where our laundry is our bathrooms, our showers, our dining hall where we spent a lot of time there, you have to as a freshman, stay in the middle of the hallway, and you're braced up, so your shoulders are back, you're at the position of attention. And you're marching, essentially. And if you want to turn you have to march into the center of the intersection, pivot on your outside foot, and then march that way, you can't look around, you can't talk to anybody, except for upperclassmen who you're supposed to greet. So it's a very bizarre environment, when you eat in the mess hall, you have to still be at the position of attention. And you can't look down at your food or talk to any of your people at your table unless they're of a certain rank. And so you just sit there quietly and lift your fork very carefully, vertically, and then take it directly to your mouth, like in a 90 degree angle. And just like it's sort of an element of hazing, of developing a sense of military discipline that isn't super fun for you while you're there. And that's on top of the academics, which are very difficult for me, I had done decently well in high school and was not ready for my first C plus and calculus and the chemistry and whatever else that we were taking, it was difficult. And then everyone has to do a sport. And so I was running track at the

time. I'm not a particularly good runner. And so it was just a lot of pain, but made some really good friends and was trying to balance all of that. And it was really difficult. I had gone from being in high school where there were friends I known for most of my life up to that point I had been out to had shared a lot of experiences with and then came to this place where not only did I not know them as well. There's a lot of sort of manufactured closeness that you get from that boot camp experience. But you don't have the time that you need to really deepen a friendship. Also, I wasn't out to them. And also there's the fear that if I did come out to any of them, I would get kicked out and I have to start everything I had done over again. And the year before I had gotten there. There was a woman in the class of 2008 who had then kicked out for Don't Ask, Don't Tell . She'd been a senior who was about to graduate and become an officer in the Coast Guard and wasn't allowed to finish her time. And so all of those were sort of weighing on me. And it sucked, it was like, not a fun time.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 20:14

Oh, man. Yeah. How did you deal with that? And what was that like to have that weighing on you? Oh, my gosh,

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 20:18

really hard. I was ready to leave. Wow, I applied to school. By the time I found out I didn't get in. I decided I would stay anyway. So fuck them. I had the last laugh. I ended up going to Berkeley for law school. So yeah, it was tough. I was ready to leave. And I think only by sort of chance that I ended up staying or not so much chance, but wanting to stick it out, really enjoying my friends and hoping that it would get better without knowing that it would

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 20:49

and still kind of operating under the belief like I probably just have to make it through the rest of these years and not come out. Yeah, yeah.

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 20:55

Though, I did mock trial again at the academy and made a lot of friends through that. And one of those guys I was gonna use, he's really mad. He was my best friend there. We ran track together. We met at the first day of offseason practice and then did mock trial together. He's also a lawyer. Now, we were on a mock trial trip somewhere in the Northeast. And this is one of those memories that burned into my mind, we were sharing a hotel room, he was in one little full bed and I was in the other full bed. And we were just curled up with the sheets around our chambers talking late into the night. And I decided I wanted to come out to him. And so don't remember the words that I used, but led up to it felt the whole heartbeat speeding up and getting nervous and adrenaline pumping and feeling like a crazy person. And then getting out with it, hoping against hope that he was going to say, Me too, Let's be together. Right, because I had been crushing on him so hard from the first time I met him did not turn out to be the case. But he's just a lovely guy and was so positive about it. And thanks for telling me I think that's great. And whatever else he said, and that was a turning point in making being there more

okay, having at least one person who I could trust, who knew who I was, and accepted me still and wanted to be my friend. Still. He was the first person I came out to, but led to others. And through mock trial, actually, I started to meet other queer people that were also in what we call it sort of the underground, there was a lesbian who was like the leader of the mock trial team who's very cool and very good at mock trial in her same class. And you're above me, there's this other gay guy who it just felt so cool to connect with them. And again, have this shared secret that yeah, I'm not just this boring person that you might see I'm like, have this whole secret life. That's way more fun than whatever you've got going on, you know, football player or whatever.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 22:53

Well, we have this underground start, like how did this happen? How do you get in it? How do you know there was an underground scene of queerness happening?

C Chip Hall (he/him) 23:00

So I think how I first learned about it was Melissa was this girl a year ahead of me that was in my trial and is very good. She's just a badass is like a hard charger feels no fear and takes the lead. And so she as a sophomore sort of founded the Academy's observance of the Day of Silence. Which are you familiar with that?

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 23:22

Yeah, the Day of Silence kind of it was like high schools and colleges in like the 90s. Yes, like about queer bullying or something else about it?

C Chip Hall (he/him) 23:31

I think it was tied - this could be inaccurate - I think it was tied to Matthew Shepard, and events like his murder. It was people at high schools and colleges, like you said, committing to being silent for either an entire day or certain period in honor of the voices that have been silenced by homophobia and transphobia. So she in 2009, as a sophomore, someone like very new to school and junior Frank and the military had the bravery to step up and say, we're going to honor this event. And you know, Obama was president and there was talk about repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell, but there had been no official movement toward it was still the law of the land, you could be separated. Like I said, someone just a year previous had been feeling incredibly brave. To do that. She organized it. She had a senior read what it was about, which was very cool. And I think a savvy move, someone who was more established at the school and were well known to sort of be the ally that we needed at the time. I don't remember how I learned about it. But a group of us showed up to volunteer and we handed out little slips of paper that explained why we were silent until people could take them and then at lunch, if someone asked him something, they could pass on that piece of paper. So at that point, you're standing in front of the mess hall and you're like seeing other people being silent and you're like, Okay, I know what's going on here. I think you know, what's going on here. We should hang out more and we should talk and do things together. That's basically I think how the

underground developed that we would do that. Those events and then wink wink, nudge nudge outside of those and do things together, which was another huge reason why it became more sustainable for me to be there.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 25:09

Yeah, I bet I mean, first coming out to that guy, relieving some of that pressure valve, so it didn't work out. You wanted him to also be gay and then finding this group also relieving the pressure valve. Okay, I can be here. I can do this. Totally. Yeah. And maybe I don't know if it felt like it was chains starting to happen. Curious about that. Tell me about the group you've formed or this advocacy group? Yeah. Tell me about that. Yeah.

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 25:31

So as we were sort of stumbling our way to this sort of underground is very unofficial, mostly social group we had, there was a lot of movement happening in the broader Academy communities at the other academies and also in the broader military community, you know, and there has been those activists since time in memorial of people stepping up and standing out and speaking out. And so there were some more formal organizations, there was one called SAGALA, service academy, gay and lesbian association that was mostly just a social group. But they hosted a listserv, they had a website, and it was a way you could like create a little profile, everyone used pseudonyms, rather than the real names because of the legal consequences of being found out. But it gave you an opportunity to start connecting with people at other service academies, which at 18, 19, 20, 21 was really important, like this was our community. And especially when there was legal oppression, it was even more important for us to find each other. So this guy of my same class at the Naval Academy, sent out an email to everybody in our class, the class of 2012, and said, I'm a sophomore at the Naval Academy, we should connect or something along those lines. And so connected with him, Michael, we started talking became friends. When you're a junior at one of the academies, you have the opportunity to go on exchange to one are the others, it's it's kind of like studying abroad, except instead of Paris, it's West Point, which is less exciting. Annapolis is a great town. And so that's where I ended up going on my exchange, which is great. And so since I knew this other gay guy at the Naval Academy, he said, there were a lot more of them, they're four times our size by number of students. And so just as a numbers game, there were more queer people there. And so decided I would apply to go on exchange, I would leave the Coast Guard Academy for a semester, go down to Annapolis at the Naval Academy and take classes there for a semester and come back. So did that. And that was what I think was the turning point of my identity as a gay man, because there really worked a ton more people out there or out to this sort of similar underground thing that we had, but it was just much, much bigger. And not only were there more students that were out and active, there were a lot of alumni in the area. Recent grads, much older grads, who mentored the Midshipman, and took care of them and gave them a place to stay and would go out with them. I'd like buy them drinks at the bar and like show them around in what I thought was, again, this thread of feeling like had this cool, secret identity. This is sort of the peak moment of that, where I was hanging out with these people that were older than me who had been through similar scenarios that I had, and were for the most part, all just great people and had our best intentions at heart. And were great mentors, and advocates and shoulder to cry on and just great, awesome people and found that community and changed everything. I started dating this other boy, the economy's a year

behind me, it was very cute, very innocent, who would like go on little clandestine dates I met his parents once is only a couple months, but it was just like, felt very exciting. And it felt in that broader community that we were very supported, and was just a wonderful place to be. It was an awesome time made amazing friends and still friends with now and got a taste of what it could be like to have a community 10 out of 10 was awesome. But even then, one story that I like to tell which is not really on topic for a second adolescence, but it's just to me give such an insight into what was wrong with Don't Ask, Don't Tell. There was one weekend when that boyfriend and I and a few other couples went down to a football game that was out of town. And so we all got bus down to the game, we were all in uniform, watch the game, and it was really cared about the football. But then afterward, we got to go off on our own and have a long weekend. So one of the alumni who's really involved who was class of 82 or something like that 83 Maybe had an apartment in Raleigh, and so we were couple hours from Raleigh drove over there and went to his apartment hung out him and one other alumni were there and just like took care of us like took us out to dinner gave us a bedroom to sleep in. We had a great time. And the plan was for the two couples and two single guys. We were going to go out to the gay bars because it's in Raleigh. No one's here. We won't get recognized. It'll be fine. Except the only problem is I had lost my ID on the way down my wall. While it just disappeared, and I didn't have an ID to get into bars, so I couldn't go, I was tired. I felt fine with that, and my boyfriend at the time and the other couple agreed, and we just stayed there. But the two single guys decided to go out. So everybody else went to bed, and they went out to the bars and had a good time. And I remember waking up around midnight 1am, to hearing a pounding on the door, and the alumni rushes out, opens the door, and one of the guys is dragging the other one into the apartment, and there was a smear of blood being left on the floor under him. And I remember him being on all for standing in the atrium of the apartment, and just sort of like coughing and gasping because at the club, there had been a stabbing, and someone just started stabbing people around them and had stabbed to sky My friend in the back. We didn't know at the time, but it punctured his lung. And so it was definitely in the most literal sense. Serious. Oh, and everybody was terrified for a lot of different reasons. It was a major wound, which was scary. It happened at a club and other people had been stabbed. So people were thinking, do we need to get him on post exposure prophylactics because prep wasn't around yet, at least wildly, because who knows who've been stabbed before. That's that's blood on blood as you can get. And then it was a the reason they fled was we don't want to get picked up here. We don't want the incident report that goes back to the Naval Academy to say these two midshipmen were at a gay establishment in Raleigh. And why were they there? What were they doing there? So instead, the sky, put his friend in a taxi and brought him home to this apartment. And he ended up being fine. He went to the hospital, there's a lot of confusion about what was going on. From the police point of view. Why was there this person with a stab wound in this apartment, it ended up getting worked out. And thank God, we had these two alumni there to handle things because none of us were able to handle that kind of stress. And someone knew a gay officer in the admirals office at the Naval Academy. And so to make sure that this wouldn't get back to anybody, they called ahead and said, Hey, this happened. They were at this gay bar. I know you can't keep this quiet because a midshipman was stabbed. But make sure it doesn't say where they were picked up or where it happened. Because we don't want their careers to be handed over. And he did. I don't know how we did it or know what happened of it. But he made sure that that part of the story wasn't told. And you know, it wasn't just that there were all these gay men or lesbians or closeted people in different positions protecting each other, there were plenty of non queer officers who kind of didn't want to go to the effort of kicking out gay people, they didn't feel like it was a righteous cause. And I'm sure that played into it as well. But having someone there who could smooth the waters, if you will, was at the time helpful. And the reason I think it's so I'd like to add that anecdote is

how much fear that that law put into people that you would go to the extent of not just getting in an ambulance, not just waiting for the police show up, you would flee to an adult that you trust, basically, instead of doing what we're taught, we should do.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 33:10

Oh, my God, I'm just so like, my jaw is just like, on the ground with that story. And like, I'm sure, yeah, that's just like one of many stories that exist in the military, different parts of the military because of this law. And, yeah, you're so right, it totally does exemplify just how much fear this law put in place. And so much so yeah, this person like risked their lives didn't get medical care right away. Like, it's worth it for me to like, try to make it out in a cab, like, Whoa, oh, my gosh. Wow. And at the time, like, were you thinking about that, too? Like, this is fucking nuts that we have to be so secretive. And what were your thoughts at the time of Don't Ask, Don't Tell?

C Chip Hall (he/him) 33:53

Yeah, I mean, definitely, that it was nuts and it was a bad, bad, bad law. And I think anybody of conscience at the time knew that it was a bad law. Right. And by that point, this was late 2010, the writing's on the wall, that it was going to be repealed. And in December of that year, is when Congress voted to repeal it. And so we knew it was coming. The interesting thing is that repeal really changed the feeling of those sort of communities. Because before that, you had the sense of we're in this together, we have to stick together against the man who's going to take us down. And I think it made people very tight knit, and the only place you can be yourself was with these people. So you spent a lot of time with these people, which is that I don't think that should be a motivation for anyone, that they can only be comfortable with themselves in one place. But it made for this really strong community that was special to me at the time. So we were aware of the writing's on the wall, we weren't sure what it was going to mean or how it would change. And even after repeal happened, the military asked for nine months to implement it, to make sure that a gay person being in a unit wouldn't just lose the war. or whatever, but we knew was going to happen. So a lot of the fear dropped away. At least for me, there's still all the regular fear that comes with being closeted. You don't need an oppressive law to be scared about coming out to other people. But for me, it was fuck it, what are you gonna do? You can't kick me out anymore. No one was gonna get kicked out that last year. And if you're going to reject me socially, I would never want to be your friend or be close to you anyway.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 35:22

Totally, totally. I mean, yes, I'm just thinking about like, being in a situation like that, with this band of other people fighting against this and resisting against this and joining with each other. Despite this very oppressive thing that's happening around you like, I am so curious, like what that does to like, each individual's own relationship to their queerness and their identity. I'm just like, inserting, like, what would that have been? Like, if that were me? And how might my own relationship to queerness and my gay identity at that age be different if I was in you versus like, the context that I was in, like, Whoa,

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 35:57

it's something I've heard on the podcast a lot, which is the idea of I didn't have role models, or I didn't have someone I could see myself as. And that's part of the reason why it was so difficult to accept. And with that little slice of my life that one little semester, it was like I had all the mentors and the role models I could ever ask for. And they were all flawed humans. But like I said, earlier, they were just had the right intentions, were great, older versions of myself, it felt like in some ways, and there were things that I wanted to replicate in what they did, and things that I didn't, but just having someone older than me, who had been successful, was still successful, and was living their life and doing fine in it was huge. That was everything to know that I could be him someday, or he's doing fine, but I can do better. You know what I mean? So, so pivotal for what my development as an adult gay man was, and really were, it was no longer just an incidental fact about me that I'm gay. It's that, oh, no, being gay is great. Being gay is something to be proud of being gay is the only thing I would want in my life. And that was what turned that for me. What made that how I felt.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 37:09

So then how did that then shape the next chapter? What happened next?

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 37:13

Okay, so law had been repealed, but hadn't gone into effect yet. So we still have this underground that girl Melissa that I mentioned, and a few others. And we joined or formed this like working group that the mission was to advise the superintendent on how to change Academy rules. Because there's a lot of pretty archaic rules. The one I worked on was to cadets or two or more cadets, if there was a mixed gender number of cadets in a room, you had to leave your door at 90 degrees, you couldn't close the door. I mean, it's like being your parents house, basically, except you're like in a uniform. So we decided the proper thing to do would be to make that a gender neutral policy. I remember drafting it and going to the officer about what what she thought, I think we said to cadets, unless they're roommates of any gender could not have the door closed. But if you had three or more, you could have the door open because it was gonna have an orgy. You know what I mean? No one's gonna have a threesome. I don't know what the rule is now. But it's just the whole thing is silly. So it feels difficult to Yeah, you were in this group. And I remember in the beginning of it, Melissa stood up this like hard charging woman, and said, we all know why we're here. We're trying to advise the superintendent on how to implement repeal, no one can come out, no one can say anything, we're just going to hold the inner cells for another nine months, even though we know what's going on. And that's what we did. We had this pretty informal group, it was just sort of an ad hoc thing. And we met a few times and talked about what we wanted to see without getting too explicit and saying what our plans would be because we couldn't. But things were definitely starting to open up. And so that spring, I organized an event where we showed this movie called USNA Out, actually one of the alumni that was in Raleigh that night, where my friend was stabbed, had produced this movie about graduates of the Naval Academy, from the 70s on of what their life was like when they came out, really a fascinating snapshot of what 2011, 2010 queer alumni from the Naval Academy was. And since I had met him and known him, got him to give me a copy of the film, and we showed it at the Academy. And I got dressed up in my nice uniform. I like gave a short speech beforehand. Very wink wink, nod nod like we know why

everyone's here, but we can't say it. And I remember the commandant of cadets came who is like the equivalent of the dean, maybe not the president, but like the dean of the school, maybe. And that was very important to me. He came in uniform, which was cool, and I had started coming out to more people as well, just on a social basis. That was where I was, like, socially out, I would say was that junior year once I was back at the Coast Guard Academy after my semester, the Naval Academy, it felt like why would I hide? All these other mentors that I had just met and become so close with, they're still in the closet professionally, but they can be out socially and it's fine. So when For me, and then Don't Ask, Don't Tell repeal went into effect that fall in September. So then I was a senior, I was a big dog on campus, I was a company commander. So I had stripes on my shoulders. And I was getting ready to go out in the fleet and felt like, I was in a position to take the baton from Melissa, who had graduated just before she could really be out. And it was time for me to be a role model. And so came out- did the same showing of that movie. I'm not very creative. So showed that same movie again, on the night repeal went to effect September 20, or 21st of 2011, had about 100 people come gave a short speech again, but came out as part of it and sort of got the round of applause, sat down, played the movie, blacked out that whole

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 40:48

Wait, how'd that feel?

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 40:48

Oh, I was so nervous, I was shaking, heart was beating so fast. Again, I like got up in my nice uniform, and was totally unaware of what the words were saying. I've written him in advance and was basically just reading them. I couldn't look up for the line. I said, something like, as a fellow struggling gay cadet, I understand their experiences or something like that, and was just very nerve wracking, and then a huge, huge relief afterwards, all this pressure that had been on me for probably eight years, let's say of aware of my sexuality, but keeping it to some extent in the closet had finally been released. Oh, I'd come out to my parents a couple years before, that's like as part of the story too, but and so this was sort of the last step of I'm out now. Like, there's no going back in the closet at this point. And the next day, Kelly, my classmate, and I started the paperwork to found a gay straight alliance, we were told it can only be an LGB group, not an LGBT group, because transgender service was not allowed then. And still, it's very complicated. But we were able to found the LGB portion of it at least. And then maybe six weeks later, when the paperwork wound its way through the bureaucracy of the academy. And we got it approved and had our first meeting, we had got some minimal press attention. So we did an interview with CNN, and Reuters and the AP. And you're able to talk about why it was important, why it mattered. And there was definitely no going back at that point. You know, there was more articles out in the world

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Adam James Cohen (he/him) 42:13

because this was the first of its kind, right?

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 42:15

Yeah, the other academies followed suit, they chose to use our name as sort of a way of building community. So we called the group US CGA Spectrum as like the idea being sexual spectrum, the spectrum of gender identity, etc. So all the other academies now have their own spectrum groups based on ours, which is pretty cool.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 42:34

That's so cool. What's that, like, right now, looking back at that memory and seeing what you did?

C Chip Hall (he/him) 42:41

it's probably the thing I'm most proud of, in my life, I've been asked to go back twice to speak to cadets. And it's just the coolest experience to see people who bore me, you know, 10 years previously, and to know that they have this group now. And it doesn't solve anything by any means. being queer is still difficult. And even if you live in the most accepting society and have great role models, it's still difficult because figuring yourself out is the first hurdle. And that's not easy. And so it's not to say it fixed all the problems, but it I think, made things a little bit better. And it's awesome to see that it's still there, it's still going strong, and still with people that believe in it.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 43:22

So you mentioned coming out to your parents a couple years prior to that. What was that experience, like?

C Chip Hall (he/him) 43:27

Like I mentioned, my dad, then a military officer. So in some ways fit the stereotype of a stern disciplinarian. And I mean, my dad has a very strong sense of right or wrong and a very strong sense of discipline. So he was a little freaky. At the same time, I didn't have a lot of fear about them rejecting me. I've had friends who had been kicked out of the house, but the parents and terrible things have happened to them. And I knew that wasn't going to happen. I thought it was going to be difficult, it was going to be a change, because new things are always difficult. But it wasn't scared. But I was nervous, like you always are nervous coming up. So this was Thanksgiving of my sophomore year in college decided to tell my parents over Thanksgiving. I still remember I was driving with my dad in Monterey, because, you know, he had to focus on the road. He couldn't look at me too much. So that was helpful for the process. And it told him and his reaction was that he was worried about my career because of don't ask, don't tell that. He didn't want me to be kicked out for being gay. And I got I mean, I felt that too. And it was kind of, in some ways, I don't wanna say non event, but it was in the best way. Not dramatic, you know what I mean? And almost not even memorable, other than the fact that it was such a big turning point. There wasn't you know, we shouted or cried or anything like that. He said his piece and I heard him and said I love you and accept you and everything. So it was great. And then my mom I hadn't really talked to my mom much which is weird because I'm very close to her. And she's the best human. I know. She is more liberal than my dad, especially them was

more liberal than my dad. But they both grew up in upstate New York, my mom was a product of the Catholic school system. We went to Catholic Mass every week, when I was younger, I was confirmed in a Catholic church. But even then, my mom was still who she was. And she's someone who just loves everybody loves fun and loves meeting new people and different perspectives. And so coming up to her was difficult, again, from the sense not of worrying that she would be able to take it, but from the sense of this has changed. And I didn't want to be watched. You know what I mean? Anyone who looked at like, I was changing when I hadn't changed, I had been the same person she used. And so came out to her in the morning breakfast, when it came down from upstairs. One of the days I was home, and I remember she was quiet at first and you kind of left the room for a bit and came back and said she loved me and accept me and everything. And I think it was still a surprise, which I don't really get. Because, like I said, I've never dated any girls had a lot of female friends. I'm not the most masculine person you've ever met, I don't think but I guess my mom has rose colored glasses is about thick as a book when it comes to me. So maybe didn't see what was actually going on. But again, it was eventful for me, in the sense of, I'm out to my parents, but uneventful in the sense that no tears, no yelling, nothing like that. So as far as those things go, it was good. Like both of them were experiences I was out to my family, which felt awesome.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 46:33

Awesome. Yeah, okay, so came out to your family, then you're really out within the academy and within that whole part of your life. So then I'm thinking about, okay, you leave the academy...

C Chip Hall (he/him) 46:43

So one more story before I leave the academy?

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 46:45

hit me with it, yes!

C Chip Hall (he/him) 46:46

because this feels the most second adolescent to me, as I was thinking back to what I identify as me going through that again, and it was dating, I had that one relationship with a boy at the Naval Academy, which felt very cute in a lot of ways, but felt almost cartoony, we're very sweet to each other, we like, lost her virginity to each other by partners mom is the listener of the podcast. So I want to be careful about how explicit I get. But um, Hi, Pam, it was just very cute. We were very sweet. And it but it wasn't that serious. It wasn't we're gonna be together forever. We love each other, whatever we were friends, we found each other attractive. We explored each other. And when I was moving on, I just moved on. We had kind of a like a chat, but it was we stayed friends very non event. But then it came back to the Academy. And all of a sudden, I was a senior. So I had a car, your car for the first time, you could go to different towns, the New London, Connecticut, which is not my favorite place, and could kind of explore data. And this was 2011 12. So grinder had been on the scene for a few years now. And had

this friend was a year younger than me, who came out after I had given that speech and came out and we became super close friends. And we'd go to Providence together because that was sort of the nearest big city. And they had a couple of gay bars and a gay club. And we started making friends and going out. And I met this boy who I thought was very cute. He was really smart. He was going to brown to get his some sort of master's degree he was doing Teach For America was just confident in a way that I found very attractive, and could operate in a lot of different environments very smoothly social environments. And so we started seeing each other, I would go up maybe a couple times a month to Providence, he could never really come to me. But she didn't believe in monogamy, he said, and that was new to me. I wasn't really aware of that concept of like non monogamous relationships, and basically didn't want to be in a relationship. We couldn't say we were dating. We could only say we were seeing each other. And we would like, you know, hook up on the weekends, I would stay at his place. And then I would go back. And I remember really not liking that. I didn't enjoy just being someone that he was seeing and not someone that he was dating that felt so demeaning to me, for him to say, oh, no, we're not dating, but the castle dance was coming up, which is a tradition of your senior year at the Academy, where you rent out one of the mansions in Newport the rose cliff is where we went. And so you went to this like beautiful oceanfront mansion. And you wore your white uniform. So everyone was looking hot. They had open bars and a band and everyone was so fucking excited to be there. We were seniors. We are the top of the world. We're about to get our new assignments. We were ready to go out in the world start doing things and I wanted to bring a boy because this is the first formal dance that you could bring a boy to. So it's very important to me and to a couple other people that were in that him underground to bring a same sex partner. So he really didn't want to break it off with this guy, even though he was just like, not that great and a jerk and not who I wanted to sort of represent my identity, you know. And I remember the day of the dance. Again, everyone's so excited. This is like the party of our lives. He shows up in Newport, and he has this big raspberry on his lip, because he had gotten a fight with his friend at the bar the night before, and they like punched each other. And I was stunned. I was speechless when I saw I thought it was a cold sore at first. But he told me this story. And I couldn't believe how little care he put into something that was so important to me, that he would go get drunk the night before and get in a fistfight. With his friend, it just felt so juvenile. And I felt like I was in high school again, like this was something you would see in one of these high school dramas have, the boyfriend does something stupid and boyish, and the partner has to deal with the consequences. And I was mad, I was so mad that he would do that. And then he got drunk off his face and was a mess and had to take care of them. And I was over it. While the last that sort of short term relationship. Annapolis felt sort of like storybook cartoon, Mike and just sweet but not that emotionally invested. This felt like an example of what I wasn't doing in high school.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 51:30

Right. Volatile, messy. Exactly. Yes. Yes. Ah, I mean, yeah, that is such a great illustration of that second adolescence experience really kind of on both ends on his end of kind of being very messy than on your end of wanting this really special thing. I mean, it sounds like it's like, the ultimate prom was this castle dance, right, which maybe you didn't get to have in high school. You were having this experience with a boy like, Ah, I'm so sorry. That happened. Yeah.

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 51:57

It was still a great party still had a great time.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 52:00

Sure, ha, sure. So continuing on this idea of second adolescence, like, what else comes to mind, as you kind of go into that next part of your life, like what else was part of your second adolescence,

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 52:13

I definitely felt I sort of mentioned it earlier. But with that guy in the back of the courthouse, too much directness, and sort of fumbling and not knowing how to approach a guy, and you see these, like very suave people in TV shows or movies, and they just make moves so adroitly and I'm like, wow, like that could be me. And it was never, it was never me. And part of that I think is practice of you get the reps in high school with girls, I guess, or whatever. And then by the time you're older, you have done it so many times you figure it out. I think a lot of it too, is, even if I had had that experience, I still think I would be adept. I remember having these sort of older friends when I was in Annapolis, and we would grow up in DC a lot. They had more evolved mature language around identity than I did at the time, which is really helpful. I think, for me growing up as a gay man. And so you're talking about like, your slip phase, after you come out. And you know, that like guys are great, and like a lot of fun. And so I'm just gonna sleep as many as I can. And like that language, I think can be harmful, because slet is a charged word, but we're taking it back, but also like the fact that it is a phase two, you know, it's not like sexuality is awesome. Yes. And I had a period where I was like, sex is great, let's have a lot of sex. And some of it was not great. A lot of it was not great. But some of it was really fun and really cool. And that like figuring out what I like figuring out how to approach a guy and how to, you know, exist in a sexual romantic world like DC where there's a community and there's bars to go to and people to pick up and that kind of thing doing that at 20 and 2122. I don't want to say felt late, because I don't think it was late. I think it for a lot of people that's early, and I feel lucky that I got to do it when I did. But there was a lot of emotional wrangling internally to do learn. I don't need to fall head over heels for the first guy who looks at me, which happened several times. Or like, I know how to step out of a relationship healthily or like a hook up health away without getting obsessed or something like that. That all felt like somewhat of a second adolescence, of figuring those things out.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 54:30

Totally. We all have that. Whether it's 21, 18, 24 or 44, like those first chapters of Yeah, trying to figure out how do I exist as a sexual person, as a person person in romantic interactions? How do I flirt? How do I approach someone? How do I show up in a relationship? Totally, I think so much want to hear you speak to it's just like, it's what I hear every person on the show talk about when they're in that phase on the other side of coming out when they're real. like exploring who they are as a romantic and sexual being, and for many people doing it, for the first time, there's a lot of growth and a lot of obstacles in that growth total for sure. I think one

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 55:13

of them is not having the empathy to understand what someone else is going through. I think

of them is not having the empathy to understand what someone else is going through. I think the development of empathy is something that takes time and takes development, like the average adolescent, I don't think has empathy, they can't put themselves in the shoes of their partner and see kind of what they might be feeling or what they might be thinking, and then react in an emotionally intelligent way to that. And there's so many examples in my life, especially in that period of getting too wrapped up in my own emotions and being too internally focused, to not be able to appreciate what someone else is feeling, why they might be feeling that way. And then what to do with that, because it may be that they're not acting rationally, and you have to look out for yourself, but you should at least be aware of what they're doing what they are. And I think for me, at least, that was another second adolescence of developing and it's something that I am still developing and still have to focus on. Because it's so easy, sometimes just focus on yourself. But it's also something that when you do it more, I think you get better, or at least if you do it in a intentful way that you step back and remind yourself. No, I'm just like living in a simulation. And the people around me are just programs like no, like, Adam is a real human who has his own interests and drives and feelings and emotions. And just because I may have different ones doesn't mean that I get to ignore his

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 56:35

I so appreciate you bringing this up. I think it's so a skill and experience that we have to grow and develop if we are a relational being. And I guess I haven't really thought about like, empathy development as part of like the second adolescence experience explicitly, but I really do see, that really is like the essence of it, particularly when we're learning how to be in a relationship, any dynamic sexual romantic with another person, like, key in figuring out how to, like, navigate that gracefully with regards to our own emotions, and the emotions of the other person is this empathy development. So I just yeah, I really appreciate you naming that as like, one of the tasks as part of this experience. So boom, okay. Hi. Fi over the airwaves. To that that was great. Thank you so much for that. Yeah. Ah, well, okay. I will talk with you all night, but I'm not going to, but what else hasn't been a part of this conversation that wants to? Is there anything that's kind of still there part of your story that feels like, yeah, wants to be contributed here.

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 57:33

Because of that ground shaking moment of Don't Ask, Don't Tell being repealed. A lot of my coming out experience was that which I'm grateful for curtailed very early, that I didn't have to do it again. You know, I've used all those awkward points, we were like, do I have to come out to this person, I don't feel like I should have to. But it was so much less of a struggle after that, at least in hindsight, compared to when the hammer the law felt like it was looming over me. And so I moved to Puerto Rico after college and I served on a Coast Guard ship out of San Juan for two years, and which was unlike a social level, which is kind of isolating your 1000 miles from the mainland, I'm, for part of the year four times away from my parents and all my college friends have been shotgunned all around the country, one of my very good friends in Guam, so about as far as you can get, and didn't have much success dating there. So it didn't feel like my romantic self kind of got off the ground yet. Then I moved to Alabama for two years. And I took command of a Coast Guard ship there and was not expecting Alabama to be my place. For all the obvious reasons. I think it is a conservative place and super hot, came during the summer, my AC was out for a while was just like not very pleasant, but ended up having a great time I met a lot of very good friends, I met what I consider to be my first like serious boyfriend there.

Also a teacher there's a pattern and grew so so much as part of that relationship and knew that it was at a time limit, I was gonna move on to my next assignment. And I loved him, but it was not meant to be. And so I learned a lot from that process of parting amicably, and all the rest, moved to Annapolis. And so got to go back to what was such a pivotal point in my development as an adult. And that was two of the best years of my life. I was a junior lieutenant. And so I felt like I was sort of like the big dog on campus and lived right near campus. I get to work with the spectrum group that had been started based on the one I started, got to reconnect with a lot of people that I knew from my time there and just see it all from a new perspective, which was so affirming that No, it wasn't a mistake that I felt so right in that place. It was the people and the people changed and like I sort of previewed earlier, Don't Ask Don't Tell being repealed didn't change the vibe of what the group was. It wasn't as tight knit anymore. Pour could find their place elsewhere. And so that's so much better than what is before. But there was a little sense of nostalgia for that sense of we're all in it together, and we'll go to the same places that was so, so great again, didn't really feel like I was able to develop romantically very much there. And part of it was that moving every two years, and so I decided I was going to get out of the Coast Guard, and I was gonna go to law school, I only wanted to come back to California. So apply to schools in California 2018, moved to Berkeley, which was a culture shock, for sure, going from probably one of the most conservative at least on some measures, colleges in the country to one of the most liberal. And having felt in the past that I had always been the most liberal person in the room when I was in uniform to realizing that I was on a different scale. And people at Berkeley measure and so learned a lot and got exposed to a lot joined the what we call queer caucus, which is sort of the equivalent the LGBT plus group and became the co chair of that and got a lot of value of helping form community, their pandemic, which made it difficult, and then met my current partner, friend of the show, Zach, who was on a few episodes ago, and just felt very full circle because we met in Pacific Grove. It was a wedding of his cousin who was in student government with and one of my friends from Boy Scouts, one of those guys who hadn't dated in high school, and my parents were there, his parents were there. It felt somewhat like a stereotype. his aunts kept saying, Oh, sure, you should meet chip. He's so great. You love him. And he's like, okay, and Suzy, the only other gay man at the wedding. I'm sure. We're a match made in heaven. But yeah, we went on a date up in San Francisco later and Pandemic hit six months later, we moved in together, which was insane, and I never would have done otherwise. But now fast forward over two years, and we're still living together and still together. So I guess the answer is he was written. And that kind of brings us up to the present day.

A

Adam James Cohen (he/him) 1:01:55

Oh, go Aunt Suzie. I mean, yeah, like, I mean, I'm just loving the way you guys met at this wedding. But really, I'm thinking about for you and your story. Like being back in your hometown, after this whole journey that you've gone through, like, as this gay man, I just like, what was that like to like, have this very monumental moment in your life, coming back to your hometown, meeting this other man? Yeah. What was that? Like?

C

Chip Hall (he/him) 1:02:19

I don't want to overuse a theme here. But I felt fucking cool. I was. I was like, the edgy one who had thought the world was like, out and proud and, like, was not ashamed of himself. It felt great. And I feel that when I see people from high school and being proud of myself, and the

development I've had since I was in the closet, and trying to figure things out to now still figuring things out, but at least no longer in the closet. And again, just like so proud to be gay and so proud to have people like you in my life. People like Zach and a community that is just more than I could have dreamed of when I was in high school and trying to make out the boy in the back of the courthouse.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 1:03:05

What's up, I feel so appreciative of you coming on to share your story. I felt so much of it, particularly kind of letting us all in and when so much detail to your experience in the academy with that whole experience with Don't Ask, Don't Tell. I feel like so many of us queer people who aren't in the military, like only hear from the outside what that was like it was a real gift to get to hear what you were doing from the inside and making so much change happen. I just feel so proud to know you. And again, everyone should get a podcast and have their friends come on, because it's a really cool way to like, get to know more about them, then like you even really put together or new. So that was just such a special treat on my end. What was it like on your end to go through your story like that?

C Chip Hall (he/him) 1:03:51

I felt good. I had intended to do more preparation, maybe write things out and think a little bit more about it, but didn't. And still, it felt very good. But I mean, the overarching thing I'm feeling is just so proud of you. And this project and how you're not half assing it you are going all out you have so many incredible guests, you have so many incredible episodes. And all of them have been just fascinating and well put together and thoughtful and interesting. And I just think it's so so cool that you are doing this and making a platform for people who have experiences like these. And it's so so important. So thank you.

A Adam James Cohen (he/him) 1:04:29

Oh my god, that's so sweet. I mean, it's super selfish. It's such a gift of mine to get to like be witness to the stories like yours and everyone else was on the show. And I feel like it's the show I wanted my younger self to have and like each time I have a guest on I like feel our younger selves with each other. And so like I just felt it was such a treat to get to hear about your whole story growing up up until now because I could like see the different chips along the way and it was just it's just really special. So thank you. Thank you special for me too. Hey, thanks for joining us for today's conversation, feel free to head on over to secondadolescencepod.com for show notes and more and you can connect further by following the show on Instagram at [@secondadolescencepod](https://www.instagram.com/secondadolescencepod). If you're interested in being a future guests on the show and you want to come on and share about your own second adolescence, visit secondadolescencepod.com/beaguest and you can submit your interest there. Alright, that's it for me for now, whether it's morning, afternoon, night, wherever we're finding you and your day go on out there and keep doing things that would make younger you absolutely thrilled. That is what it's all about. Alright, take good care.