AAHP
AIDS Activist History Project

Interview Transcript 63

2018.001

Interviewee:	Andrew Sorfleet
Interviewers:	Ryan Conrad
Collection:	Vancouver, BC
Date of Interview:	February 10, 2018

10 February 2018
Persons present: Andrew Sorfleet – AS
Ryan Conrad – RC

[START OF TRANSCRIPT]

RC: This is Ryan Conrad, here for the AIDS Activist History Project, at Lasqueti Island, British Columbia, on February 10th, 2018.

So, the structure of the interviews is that we always ask people about when they first heard about AIDS, and what they heard?

AS: I guess I moved to Toronto from the Ottawa Valley in 1986 to go to college. I hadn't come out yet, and I moved there with a girlfriend. And I'd say, the very earliest AIDS stuff would have been really nasty media—*People Magazine*, *MacLean's*… [laughter] It was very sensational.

RC: So thinking from that time period, to thinking about AIDS activism, when did you first notice that shift from the sensational media coverage that you were seeing, to hearing about activism, or activist response to AIDS?

AS: I was studying at the Ontario College of Art, and the art scene and the political scene — particularly gay and AIDS — were quite well wrapped together. As a student, I was involved with some older students, and many of us who were gays and lesbians were hanging out; the current political climate affected us in that age. AIDS activism? It was a lot of different activisms happening at the same time. I would say that I got personally associated with AIDS activism because someone who I knew from school had AIDS, and was out as having AIDS — Ross Fletcher. He was involved with AIDS ACTION NOW!

RC: What year was this?

AS: Hmm… I would say 1988.

RC: You mentioned AIDS activism was a lot of activisms coming to a head. Were there any publications that you might have been reading to get information about what was going on? What else had you been reading?

AS: I think I discovered the very last issue of *The Body Politic* in the mall across the street from the Ontario College of Art ["OCA." Ed.]. That would have been my first exposure to any gay publication. Then there was *Rites Magazine*. Ross was part of AIDS ACTION NOW! Also, I did a gay history course at Ryerson with Gary Kinsman and Becky Ross. That was more about gay liberation history. But it's a certain time in history where AIDS is ever-present.

RC: In terms of your personal engagement with AIDS activist work, were you bringing to that any other sort of activist experience or background? Because a lot of people had been doing other things. AIDS activism doesn't come from nowhere; people were in the feminist movement, the gay lib movement, socialist, Trotskyist movements, right? Lots of people were doing different things. As you began to get involved in AIDS-related sex-worker activism, what else had you been doing, or what else might have influenced it?

AS: Well, in first year of college, we got involved in doing a demonstration against censorship, about Bill C-51. There were some teachers who would have been the kind of teachers who were involved in that — like Lisa Steele, who was one of my favourite teachers. We did a big, blindfolded march. We got black blindfolds, and we blindfolded ourselves, and then we had somebody take our arm, and we did a march blindfolded. Because that's what censorship does. Young art students are really interested in—*some* young art students are very interested in politics, too, politics and art.

I was involved with early morning clinic defenses at the Morgentaler Clinic. In brutally cold weather at 5 a.m., in the dark, we would escort, usually a young woman, often with her boyfriend, out of the taxi and into the clinic. That was really hard to do, because the Catholic anti-abortionist people were practically violent. What we would do was we'd make a human tunnel so they couldn't touch her — they would still try to reach through us with plastic fetuses and pamphlets, "This is your baby!" It was just really traumatic, I mean… she was always crying by the time she got in the place. That was sort of a real visceral activism that I was involved with. People who were involved in Pro-Choice stuff then were people like Laurie Bell, who's also involved as an editor [of *Good Girls Bad Girls: Sex Workers and Feminists Face to Face*.] and things like that, and with AIDS stuff, too. It was like that. The lesbians and gays all pulled together on AIDS in a way that maybe they... Dykes might not have been as directly affected, but they were already involved in healthcare stuff, especially sexual education and STD stuff, and pro-choice rights and all of that. It was a natural fit, in a way.

RC: How did you make that transition to doing AIDS activist work? I mean, you've come out of anti-censorship, clinic defences... Do you remember a shift when you were doing AIDS activism, and how that happened?

AS: Yeah, that happened at college. Strangely enough, at that time an art college could actually be a very closeted place. Kind of homophobic. Because, I think they were extra defensive, because artists were "fags," sort of [laughter] so even if you're not gay — especially if you're not — or whatever. People were kind of closeted.

We were this kind of bubble at OCA, my particular year, because we had a lot of people who came as mature students, and so we were more politically active. We came together as a small group of gay and lesbian students. I discovered this poster from the AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT), which had a big, bare ass on it. I had put it up on the bulletin boards all

around the school to do AIDS education. Then they got defaced, and torn, and people were really mad, like "It's pornography!" So I figured out a way to get them in the glass cases that were locked — you could slide them in between the glass and put them in there. I used condensed milk one time and painted them on the bulletin boards. [Laughter]

It was really bad. It was just constant. I was on the student newspaper, and eventually on the student union, and I also sat on the college board of governors. I was a very politically active and visible student, and gay, at that point — very out. So, the posters went up and down. That ended up eventually as kind of a debate about AIDS in the student newspaper. The culmination of that debate was a piece called "From the Horse's Mouth," which was an interview with Ross Fletcher.

RC: What year would this be around?

AS: 1988? 1989? I start working as a sex worker in late 1989, so...

RC: So, it would have predated that.

AS: Yes. One of the things we did, Sandra Haar and I, was, we made these stencils with pink and lavender paint, and we went around, and we stenciled male-male symbols, and female-female symbols, and pink triangles. We painted them on the hallway walls of the college one time, as a kind of art activism. We were just really trying to bust out — it was kind of homophobic, and it was time for it to come out of the closet. Because it was just ridiculous. There were lots of gay people there, actually. [Laughter] But for me, I came from a small place — gay didn't exist. I had a radically Catholic mother. So like, when people would tell me Freddy Mercury was gay, I thought they were being mean! [Laughter] So that's how naive I was.

RC: You've talked a little bit about coming into sex work in 1989, but do you remember a point at which you got specifically involved in sex-worker activism, in addition to doing AIDS activist work?

AS: It all started happening—everything for me exploded at once. I came out, I got involved in activism...

My friends were, like, "You are having so much sex, you should just charge! You should do it." And, so… [Laughter]

I went to a panel discussion at Harbourfront Art Centre. Gwendolyn was on the panel. She was an artist and stripper and porn performer talking about prostitutes' rights. My friend, Deb Waddington, says, "You know, I remember that day, because you just looked at me and you said, 'I wanna be that.'" My early art school education was very feminist theory, you know? "The male gaze" and some of that. I mean, Carol Laing was a fantastic teacher, and definitely introduced debates within feminism. But, it was a very feminist position that I'd

taken. And so I thought of sex work as being demeaning for women. Then I realized, the whole gay thing just turned everything on its head. Then when I started meeting women who were old-time sex workers. I met Valerie Scott as a guest speaker at David Raeside's sexual politics course I was also taking at U of T. Because they were very strong, very capable [laughter] women, that really shifted my thinking a lot.

I started on the stroll first, to get my feet wet. It seemed to be an obvious place to start. Then, almost right away, I ended up in an escort agency that I found in the Yellow Pages. I went and applied. They had a couple of guys. So, I was working on the stroll, and with my pager for the escort service at the same time, which was really convenient, because the hotels were all downtown. So, it was very fast on my bicycle to be able to zip to the Sutton Place or down to the Hilton.

RC: A biking hustler! [Laughter]

AS: I even used to work on my bicycle, which I think is one of my little innovations. Because I had these old farmer overalls, so just the straps over your bare chest and shoulders, you know, and they were shorts, and they had some buttons down the thighs. So, on the driver's side of the car, I would unbutton them all the way down, I wouldn't wear anything underneath, and I'd pull up on my bicycle, and they would stop, and obviously the guy in the car wanted to talk to me, but I was on my bike, so I'd pull up beside his window. Then I would invite him to reach in. [Laughter] I always got the date! Then I would lock my bicycle onto a parking meter or whatever, he'd drive me to my studio, and then I'd have him drop me off back at the stroll. One of my little tricks. [Laughter]

RC: So you became a sex worker. At what point do you start doing sex-worker activism, and what led to being involved in sex work in that way?

AS: Well, that had a lot to do with Chris Bearchell. I was very interested at this point in porn. This straight artist, Mark Lewis, had made some art using gay porn, and I was really offended by it. In a certain way, as a young art student, this was all about appropriation, which was a really big topic in the 1990s—cultural appropriation. I wondered if this wasn't that kind of example. Like, it's great for you to show hardcore gay pictures, but exactly what is the deal? [Laughter] I became more interested in an esoteric view of pornography, which just would have made Chris laugh. But everybody said, "You have to talk to Chris Bearchell. You have to talk to Chris Bearchell!" So, I showed up at Chris Bearchell's house as a young, you know, [laughter] and all I remember was it was a house full of mean-faced lesbians! They all looked so stern, it was Konnie Reich, and Irit Shimrat, anyway... Chris and I got along like a house on fire, and so that was really great. And then, I was working on the stroll one night, and a Maggie's outreach worker came up to me, and I knew him—Will Pritchard. Will was like, "Maggie's has just moved to their new office on Gerard Street, and they're having an opening." And he invited me to the opening to see what Maggie's was all about. And that was pretty much it.

RC: So that's how it started?

AS: Yeah. Right away, Chris was interested. Danny had left to go globetrotting, as he did, Danny Cockerline. Will had been doing the educational materials and outreach, and then he disappeared. So, there was this hole, with a job and a little bit of money attached. And Chris just thought I was a natural.

RC: This is Chris, you were saying.

AS: Chris Bearchell, yeah. She was the administrator for Maggie's.

RC: Is this a good segue to talk about the Prostitutes' Safe Sex Project that was part of Maggie's?

AS: Sure. Actually, it was kind of the other way around. The Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes (CORP) was Gwendolyn and Val Scott and Danny Cockerline and Chris Bearchell… When AIDS hit, Danny Cockerline was quite well-connected, and so was Chris, with the AIDS Committee of Toronto. Danny did a joint project, because CORP didn't get any money at that time. They did the very first "How to Have Safer Sex" pamphlet for sex workers. That was Danny's thing, "you just take the condoms out on the street." They started the Prostitutes' Safe Sex Project, which was unfunded to start. And then Maggie's grew out of the Prostitutes' Safe Sex Project.

RC: Danny was working in coordination with the AIDS Committee of Toronto?

AS: And CORP.

RC: Interesting. So, Maggie's comes out of the Prostitutes' Safe Sex Project…

AS: Right. Maggie's is the institutionalization of that, in that a nonprofit was needed in order to get enough funds so that PSSP didn't have to be under the umbrella of ACT anymore. In the early days, Maggie's was "the Toronto Prostitutes' Self-Help Project." Then when Maggie's needed to get a charitable status from Revenue Canada, which was a goal, Maggie's couldn't use "self-help," because technically your organization has to benefit the community; charities can't be a group that benefits only the group. That's when Maggie's changed to "the Toronto Prostitutes' Community Service Project."

RC: Okay.

AS: We did a drug study, and that came through the Health Canada Health Promotion and Social Development.

RC: Can you tell us a little bit more about the process and the institutionalization of Maggie's? Because I know that Maggie's was the first sex-workers' rights

organization to have charitable status. And it would be useful to understand how that process happened, and who was involved.

AS: Sure: June Callwood. "Saint June" had started many boards, been on many boards, a lot of them AIDS organization boards, including Casey House.
Also one for young mothers: Jessie's. There were a lot of them that she was peripherally involved with, or "put a good name to," she might have said.

Chris Bearchell was an administrator that everyone trusted. Chris never considered herself a sex worker, and never claimed she was, never did any press, and never did any of that exploitative kind of thing. She'd done phone sex, and she'd made some "independent porn," you'd call it today, some lesbian porn — and she was an aficionado of porn — but she didn't consider that being a sex worker.

Still, she continued to help by doing all of the paperwork, the grant applications, and then the reporting—making us fill out all our outreach sheets, you know? [Laughter] She would make us come over and do it at the kitchen table, those who were very bad at it. She really directed the project, and when I came along, she was constantly searching for someone who would take her place, because she was going to move to, as we used to call it, "Mosquito Island." And we were like, "You're not going there! You're staying here, in the basement!" [Laughter] "On that computer! WordPerfect!"

So, she really created it—it was Chris and some good board people. The board was half sex workers, and then we also had a lawyer on the board, we had people like Laurie Bell, people who were public health nurse-type people. Our treasurer, Lionel Collier was very committed and supported us for ages; he was an accountant. And then the other half of the board were activist sex workers, of one type or another.

RC: So to clarify, because I think it's an interesting point, a lot of the money that became available to Maggie's once they had charitable status, was actually AIDS money?

AS: Almost all of it was public health. All of it was AIDS money, usually the same AIDS money from different levels of government: Toronto Department of Health, some Ontario AIDS money and Health Canada too. We didn't really need the charitable status for that. We were able to get Ontario Women's Directorate money, having our charitable status, and there was an Ontario Trillium Foundation—where they would double whatever you raised in fundraising event—so we did charitable events to try to raise money. The charitable status was good for that.

RC: What kind of fundraising events did you do?

AS: Well, the very first one we did that I was part of, in 1992, was called *The Half and Half Show*. Gwendolyn had done a brilliant piece called *The Merchants of Love*, which is a one-

person theatre show. She presented a smaller, condensed version of that. And we had Annie Sprinkle come, and Annie Sprinkle did a show, and sold tit prints, and all the money from the tit prints went to Maggie's.

At that point I had my own business, Atlas World Class Male Escorts. I rented a couple of young guys tuxes, and they did the ushering, and that was my donation as a business. That was our first big event. It was a very supportive art community and political community in Toronto in the 1990s. It was a strong community, it was interwoven, and it was very supportive. So, those kinds of events were very well attended.

Then the next year we went a little bit bigger over several days. We did an art show, and we did film screenings, and we did a performance night, and it was called *WhoreCulture*. That was 1993.

We did another *WhoreCulture* night in 1994. They were really successful events for building grassroots support, because people really loved to show their art. And whores—so many whores—are artistic, in so many different ways, including with their whoring!

A dominant named La Marquesa came and did bullwhip demonstrations. She got another guy who used to hang around Maggie's, he'd been a sex worker, but he was a very kind of Regent Park core kind of person, and always hung around Maggie's. She had him stand at the end of the room like this [extends arms] with a cigarette in between his fingers. She took the bullwhip, from practically the other side of the room—it was a big bullwhip, right? And she just softly kept doing this: the bullwhip would curl around his arm, and curl around his arm, and she got it so he would stop trembling, right? And then she just went CRACK! and took the cigarette out of his fingers. She also did a demonstration of piercings, and she would literally be doing these needles like this [demonstrates piercing motion along length of arm] and then she's like, "Okay, you'll notice my eyes are starting to glaze now..." [Laughter] Some really interesting people came to show their wares. Some of the people who were quite well-off sex workers brought special clients. The clients were only allowed to come if they put $500 in the jar. "You're coming as my slave, and you're paying for this privilege," because it's a whores' event. Not everybody's allowed to come.

RC: What kind of interventions or projects did that kind of funding make possible in terms of HIV/AIDS activism within Maggie's, or any other iteration of the sex-work projects?

AS: Our biggest connection would have been Toronto Public Health. So, we would get cases and cases of condoms—thousands and thousands of condoms. Like, three thousand condoms. It was a lot. We'd fill the closet with boxes of cases. They basically just paid us to do street outreach, and hand out condoms, and hand out pamphlets. And that action in itself is grassroots, or can be grassroots-building. It can be for an organization like Maggie's, because it was truly peer-led. I used to say, "We invented it!" Like Andrew Hunter says in *Our Bodies Our Business*, "You know, you come along—we've been documenting our

projects for four or five years now, and you come along and you talk about these peer-based projects as if you just invented it!" You know? And we really were “peers.” Staff meetings would get embroiled about whether you worked last week, if you were still a hooker! [Laughter] You know? It was fierce. Not like today, “this is a peer.” More like, "She's not a ho! She hasn't worked in weeks!" You know? [Laughter] Not quite, I'm exaggerating a little bit, but I'm also not, right? So, we had kind of an effect on the scene... One of the outreach workers who came to work for Maggie's once said, "I had a very different attitude about myself, and about working as a hustler, until I met Andrew. He just was so proud.” [Laughter] It was kind of foreign in a way, that there were people who were like that… And you know, Danny Cockerline was a natural that way. There was no shame there, right? [Laughter]

RC: Maybe that's a good chance to talk about what kind of contributions Danny made to that milieu. I think he's one of the unsung heroes of sex-worker activism and AIDS activism from that era, that I don't think a lot of people know or remember, who weren't physically present themselves. He's a figure that, without a lot of digging or knowing what to look for, is relatively unknown. People don't know who he is. To some degree, the same is true with Chris Bearchell. I mean, I think she has more of a legacy that's more clear. But their work is something that we're interested as a project. We can't interview Danny, and we can't interview Chris, so would you mind sharing more about them? I mean, you've talked a bit about Chris, but if you have more to share about Chris and Danny, in terms of their contributions to sex work and AIDS activism in the sex work context, I think it would be really good to capture because people don’t know.

AS: Sure. Well, I'm trying to think where to start with Danny. Danny and Chris were involved in the Right to Privacy Committee after the bathhouse—I'll do a very fast sketch—after the bathhouse raids. That's 1981. So, at this point, it's kind of a defence fund for all the people who had been busted with bawdy-house laws. Danny and Chris took it upon themselves as part of the Right to Privacy Committee, to look further into the idea of the repeal of the bawdy-house laws.

There was a street hooker named Peggy Miller, who is a veteran, maybe 27 years or something of work as a sex worker. And she picked up an undercover cop in an entrapment sting and brought him to her apartment—because that's the safest thing to do—and she got busted for bawdy-house. So, she wanted to fight the charges in court, and her lawyer said, "You know, you can't win. You have to change the law. That's what you'd have to do." So, she'd heard about these people who were working to change the bawdy-house law, and that's how she met Danny Cockerline and Chris Bearchell.

Danny Cockerline worked for the City of Toronto at that time. Then, around that same time, he became a prostitute. And I mean, what a natural fit! [Laughter] He just, you know, Danny takes off! Right? And so, this is maybe 1983, and they form the Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes (CORP). AIDS is pretty much close on their heels at this point. So,

by 1986, Peggy Miller and Danny Cockerline go to the World Whores' Congress, and that one was in Brussels, maybe. Danny might have been at both Congresses, it's hard for me to tell from the pictures. I'm not in the scene yet. By the time I get to Maggie's, Danny is globetrotting Australia, of course. He's got a LOT of connections internationally. And that becomes important later. Danny had done the first safe sex pamphlet. I think we talked about that. And had started the Prostitutes' Safe Sex Project.

RC: Do you happen to have any copies of that old pamphlet? Or scans of it, maybe?

AS: I definitely have digital — some kind of digital — of the very, very first thing made on a photocopier, before the one that got funded by ACT.

RC: Okay. I'm going to follow up with you about that.

AS: Yeah, I'd like to be able to give you that kind of thing. And then I have the example of the very first "How to Have Safer Sex" pamphlet, and then it gets altered, because we have things that had changed, like double-bagging and then not double-bagging, spermicide and then not spermicide… Those things all come up around 1992. A bunch of things changed. Little things like that changed.

So then Danny was off globetrotting, and I ended up working at Maggie's, and then Danny came back.

So, at this point, Chris is working on the charitable status stuff, and Danny comes back, and she hires him to write the bylaws and what we call the *Maggie's Operations Manual*. So, Danny is a brilliant policy wonk, is what he is. He loves it! [Laughter] You know, missions and bylaws—he's got it all worked right out, you know?

RC: The stuff most people hate doing!

AS: Yeah, "If you haven't worked for six months…" You know, we're going to define all of these things. They're all very well defined in *Maggie's Operation Manual*. That's when he comes back and joins the Maggie's staff collective again. At this point, there's been a splinter with CORP. Valerie Scott and Alexandra Highcrest remain in CORP, and then people who had splintered who were still on the staff at Maggie's, we created the Sex Workers' Alliance of Toronto, and Danny was a founding member of that.

RC: This is around 1988, 1989?

AS: *Maggie's Operations Manual* is 1992 or 1993. So, Danny comes and goes. And Danny is kind of disillusioned a little bit with certain things at a certain point — like research. He was one of the early people that was not so keen on researchers and HIV research on sex workers, in particular, because there's kind of a stigma attached to that. Then we're members of the Coalition Advocating Safer Hustling [CASH], which is set up by the GMHC

[Gay Men's Health Crisis] in New York, and it's a North American male sex-worker thing. That's 1992. So, he and I go to San Francisco, to the first meeting (at Hallowe'en), and then he and Julien Francisco go to the second one in New York. And Danny behaves badly, according to some accounts, where he talks about drug use, and then, I think does a line on the table in front of everybody, or something. "Or would you prefer I went to the bathroom?" [Laughter] He was like that, though! He was a brat. As Chris would have said, over and over again, "Danny is a brat!" [Laughter] So, that's getting close to towards the end, because I leave in 1995, in January, and then Danny dies in December of 1995. It was just a big crush. Like, a big blow.

RC: Yeah. I imagine.

AS: Yeah. So, in terms of some of the importance of Danny's scope... and I think Valerie and Ryan went to Australia, too. There's this big crossover. Australia is like, the beaming light of the world.

RC: They're super organized, yeah.

AS: … of peer education, and the government supporting that, both in gay stuff and in sex worker stuff. They're really the first. Partially because there's a decriminalization of prostitution there in... 1996?

RC: First in the state of Victoria... They're the most ahead.

AS: They're all states, right? So, they're all different in terms of their laws.

RC: Sydney was behind Melbourne. But, yeah, it's much further along, in terms of decriminalization, than most other parts of the world, for sure.

AS: So, we have this thing happening at the International AIDS Conferences. They're happening every year at this time. So, you've seen the video, it's available, *Our Bodies Our Business* shows Danny Cockerline and Valerie Scott at the AIDS Conference in Montreal in 1989.[1]

RC: Were you at the '89 conference?

AS: No, I wasn't. But they have built these international connections. By 1989 the WHO is really interested in sex work ("HIV High-Risk Behaviour Unit"). Their research is all, you know, "sex worker as vectors." You can see by the comments from sex workers themselves, about how much bullshit that is. In 1990, Cheryl Overs (who is from Australia and in *Our Bodies Our Business*) has the idea that there should be an international network of sex

[1] *Our Bodies Our Business* is available for viewing here [https://vimeo.com/196200249]

worker projects. And, it was some of Danny's traveling and making friends that really makes that all possible—sews that together with Maggie's, in a way. Because he was connected to the old-school whores' activism through the World Whores' Congress, and then the AIDS stuff, and then his international traveling… And, the Australians are really big in the international scene at that time. So, it's a huge contribution by Danny, because I don't know that Maggie's would have had those same inroads to an international scene.

So, I go to Amsterdam with Gwendolyn, to the 8th International AIDS Conference in 1992, and that is the year that the Network of Sex Work Projects was founded. International Network of Sex Work-Related HIV/AIDS Projects, is what it was called at that time. The idea is they would have all the service organizations that provided services for sex workers connected to this network. But the representation for the network would be by truly sex-worker-run organizations, of which Maggie's counted as one. They were one of about five groups, or whatever, to build a model for peer education. That was something that the WHO was interested in funding — though not a lot of funding.

RC: And just to circle back to Chris Bearchell, when does Chris exit the Maggie's milieu?

AS: [Laughter] It's all Chris' fault. In 1994, Chris and I take our vacation time from Maggie's together. She convinces me that she and a friend are gonna drive to Vancouver, she's gonna go to Lasqueti, and I've never seen the west coast, and they need a second driver, so we should take our vacation together. This turns out to have some... some parts of it that aren't the best, because it's a very critical time at Maggie's, in terms of stress. There's been a lot of pressure on the Boystown stroll, because they've just passed a law in 1993, Section 193.1, the child pornography law. This resulted in police hunting underage hustlers, basically, whose faces might have been in videos. So, there was a lot of policing. There were police cars parked out front nearly every night.

RC: In front of Maggie's?

AS: In front of Maggie's. Then there was Jane Doe, from the Junger/Whitehead Inquiry. I was working at Maggie's late one night, and I got a phone call from her. She was freaked out, and I'm like, "Get in a cab right now. Come to Maggie's."

She had taken on Internal Affairs in the Junger/Whitehead inquiries. If people don't really know, Gordon Junger was a cop running an escort service with his girlfriend (Roma Langford), and there was an inquiry about that. Brian Whitehead was a sergeant who had picked up Fiona Stewart (aka Jane Doe), off the street, who was a very clandestine and closeted sex worker, and extorted sex, because he was a cop. Fiona decided to take him to Internal Affairs, because she was actually this really amazing housing activist by day. She was one of those people with a secret life. So, of course, that's all about corruption, and Maggie's was now in the middle of it — again.

A couple of years earlier Maggie's had this magazine called *Stiletto*. There was talk on the stroll from the girls about a cop who was making them give them blowjobs, "this big fat cop," who they had nicknamed Sperm Whale. So, Maggie's ran a story on Sperm Whale in *Stiletto*, which ended up with cops at Chris' front door one night to ask about it. Of course, they wanted to investigate this serious allegation.

Anyway, so there's a lot of pressure. And on top of that pressure is, there's a Supreme Court ruling which allows lap dancing — kind of. Touching. And the strippers are freaking out. Half of them are like, "we're not whores." The other half are secretly whores. We had meetings of 75 strippers coming to Maggie's about what to do, what's happening to their workplace, it was all like, turned upside down. So, during the middle of all of that it seemed, Chris and I go on vacation with our friend Jim Monk. And while we're away, of course... Things kind of explode. I go to Vancouver, and I spend all my time on Wreck Beach, I didn't go to Lasqueti that year, like, "No, I'm really happy right where I am!" And I get home, and I say, "I am moving. This place is too stressful for me. I'm moving to Vancouver." I didn't even know anyone in Vancouver. [Laughter] Right? So, and Chris is like, "You asshole. You're not moving without me." [Laughter] So, she was grooming me to be the Maggie's administrator. She kept finding people she thought would be great, and then, "You're gonna be my assistant, you're gonna learn how to do all this paperwork, and then I'm gonna go. Because I need to go now, I need to retire, I've been doing this too long, it's not my place, I'm not a sex worker." So, she wasn't very happy about that. So, we left together in 1995.

RC: Okay. From Toronto to…?

AS: From Toronto to Vancouver. One of the reasons I was interested in Vancouver is that I knew—at the International AIDS Conference in 1992 I had made a lot of new friends. And then, the Internet is very nascent still in a way. Like, there are news groups and email. There's not really a web yet, that anybody knows about. But through news groups we kept really connected with the really wonderful activists that I'd met, and it was such an eye-opening thing to go to an international event and then meet people with very similar and very different stories at the same time. So, I mean, it was a real click. I knew they were all coming for the Vancouver AIDS Conference in 1996, and like, there's no sex-worker group to host the sex-worker activists coming, and I think that's a really valuable thing to go and do.

Our friends who had come to visit Toronto from Vancouver in 1994 had seen that we started SWAT, and the couple of them, one who's now my partner—my husband, actually—started the Sex Workers Alliance of Vancouver in 1994. Then, when I showed up in 1995, I took over running certain things. Giving SWAV an Internet presence. There's now an Internet. And we were all very intensely interested in the power of being able to get your word out, and this HTML—hypertext! Just the idea of hypertext, that the words in your text could take you to the document rather than a footnote, all of that was very exciting. It made writing three-dimensional. And so, we got really involved in the Internet presence.

RC: So, just to back up a little bit, because now you're talking about Vancouver, I want to make sure that we cover one other thing in Toronto. It's the split that happens between Maggie's and SWAT. And maybe if you could just clarify how that happens, or why that happens, in terms of the service provision, the funding model, and the political stuff, and how you make all that work?

AS: Right. That was a big reason for the split. It was between CORP—Maggie's was a child of CORP. And then CORP kind of broke off from Maggie's. And that was mostly the Valerie Scott and Alexandra Highcrest camp. There had been kind of some troubles on staff, and troubles between them and Chris. I don't know exactly, because I wasn't there. But by the time I was really there, those people were no longer there. There was a disconnect. Valerie was adamant that anybody doing any kind of work with CORP had to be, like, a full-time hooker. Not a stripper, not an ex-stripper, not—you know? Will quotes her even today, where he says, "Do you suck cock for money or not?" [Laughter] That's his favourite Valerie quote, right? And so, there was a kind of resentment about the government-funded model, I think. And you know, you have to have peers on staff. Who is really...

RC: Who counts as that?

AS: It was a competition of authenticity, of sorts. So, we just started the Sex Workers' Alliance of Toronto, because there was a lot of stuff happening in the 1990s... there's police stuff, so there's a lot of pushback and pressure from Toronto's political community, and, if you look, there's more stuff such as racial profiling and so on. There's a lot more pressure in the cooker, around that time.

RC: Thinking about the split between CORP and Maggie's, and then Maggie's and SWAT…

AS: Not when I leave, though.

RC: Okay, so was that after?

AS: Yes. SWAT still exists, and is functioning.

RC: Okay.

AS: SWAT, what we did was, we had to have a political organization, because receiving government money and public health money Maggie's was not allowed to do lobbying. Whether or not we think it's empowering, and that empowerment is directly connected to self-esteem, and self-esteem is directly connected to health… That would be how we would argue it. But we didn't. We had an on-your-own-time group, we're gonna do marches and protests. Like, we would do Take Back the Night. We'd go on the International Women's Day March. Labour Day parade. All those events we would show up with the SWAT banner.

And so, we kind of represented that political side, and tried to keep the two sides separate from one another, but all our SWAT meetings were held at Maggie's.

RC: Right.

AS: Because they had a drop-in room. And all the people on staff were members of SWAT.

RC: Right, so it's the same people doing the political work that were also doing that.

AS: Right. Some who weren't on staff who were also doing the politics—like, Bentley Ball. There were a bunch of people who were members of SWAT at that time. Then, after Chris and I leave, I think, Anastasia Kuzyk takes SWAT off on her own when there's the split-up. Anastasia had been on staff, then there's a big rift between her and some of the other staff on Maggie's. So, Anastasia takes SWAT with her. After I leave, SWAT kind of moves away… Anastasia organizes a lot of the candlelight vigils, because Cassandra Do had been murdered, and there's a series of murders that happened around that time. Some found on the lakefront, maybe, and down at the bottom of Queen Street, there were murders.

Anastasia was really good at organizing those vigils. Great in the media, too, she was really great at media. We've lost a lot of sex-worker activists. People don't really realize how many people have just kind of drifted away, and have their own life, and aren't directly involved anymore. They're either burned out or felt burned. Or... [laughter] just tired, or their lives change.

RC: Great. I just wanted to make sure we captured the rest of the Toronto stuff. I would also love to hear more about SWAV and how it started. The AIDS Conference is coming up and nothing is really going on in Vancouver. But can you say a bit about the direction it continued, or what else happened with that, who some of the key players might have been, aside from, obviously, yourself?

AS: Sure. Well, Chris Wilde and Will Pritchard. There's a Shame-the-Johns thing in Mount Pleasant, and it's quite nasty. Maybe October or earlier, in 1994. Chris and Will go to the… There's a big town hall meeting at the community college. They go as the Sex Workers Alliance of Vancouver. It's its first big public appearance. There's a news clipping that has a quote from Chris Wilde. They're both guys, which was different. So, that's how this begins.

Then, when I arrive in January 1995, I get interviewed by *The West End*er. It's a community newspaper, they're maybe twice a week, or they're not every day, but they're not weekly. They are more localized in parts of Vancouver. And, they have escort ads in the back. I talk about starting the Bad Call List. Because, while I'm in Toronto, one of the things that happens, is one of the people I worked with at the escort service in the early days, Grace, who I knew as Candace, her working name, we worked together for an escort service... That was all pre-Maggie's, pre-politics or whatever, when I knew Candace. And she goes missing.

The police hunt all winter, and it's this sensational case, because out of that people find out that she's transsexual, and the guy who murdered her didn't know she was transsexual. He's a young jail guard. He writes a letter to the *Toronto Sun*, saying sorry to all his friends, because he didn't know she was transsexual. So, the cops, they had him anyway, right? Because the escort service, the woman who owned it, had turned over phone records, and it was the escort service that called the police, "She hasn't shown up." It's dead winter in Toronto, and they know that he has wrapped her body parts in her fur coat and put them in a dumpster. So, they spend the entire winter hunting the dump but never find anything. There's a bunch of weird sensational press that comes out of all of that. So, that was starting to hit kind of close to home, and we had always been doing these Bad Trick Sheets at Maggie's.

The first Bad Trick Sheet in Toronto was started by Will and Gwendolyn because, there needed to be one, and they knew that otherwise the churchy social services like SOS would do it. They were like, "We're gonna do one and we should do this because this is an outreach tool, this is an important thing to do, it should belong to the hookers, it shouldn't belong to anybody else. And we don't want to give it to the police, we want to make sure it's not really about that, it's not about collecting data for them." So, when Will leaves Maggie's, I take over running the Bad Trick Sheet, because that's one of the jobs of the education person. When I move to Vancouver I have the databases. I know how to do this. I decide I'm going to do a Bad Calls List for indoor workers. Because Grace and I worked at an escort service, and that's how that murder happened. So, then I get interviewed in the newspaper, about starting the Bad Call List, and they do a little story on me.

RC: At this point, is SWAV [Sex Workers Alliance of Vancouver] doing any HIV/AIDS specific sex-worker interventions or programs?

AS: We're not really equipped to do AIDS outreach or anything like that, because we're not that kind of a project; not a nonprofit at this point. It's just called the Sex Workers Alliance of Vancouver, is what it is. Not even really representative — just a group of people who were allied together to do this. But, the big thing we did do, was that we hosted the people who came for the Network of Sex Work Projects [NSWP] at the 1996 International AIDS Conference.

RC: Right. Which is a watershed sort of moment historically, for AIDS activism.

AS: It is, because the B.C. Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS Research brings out HAART, Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy. And it works. And it's around this time, where you know, things like the "Lazarus Effect," people they say are almost dead, and they go on these drugs and they get better. It's the first notion of "the cocktail," basically. One ARV doesn't work, but three together do.

RC: Yeah.

AS: Everything kind of changes at that moment. SWAV is always really active in the Network of Sex Work Projects that is extremely AIDS-focused. I mean, that is its focus. It's what it's funded for. And then, it doesn't really have any funding except enough to get to AIDS conferences for a handful of people, and a secretary. Little-to-nothing money — and a lot of volunteer hours. And, I do the Internet presence.

So, I unveil the first NSWP website at the 1996 AIDS conference, for example, which I'm housing within walnet.org at that time. And so, that's what I do at the AIDS conference. I bring in my computer and show them. I also design their first logo and identity and we print business cards for Cheryl Overs and Paulo Longo and everyone. I built them a listserv a little while later, because they tried to get a listserv, and they were trying to do it through a university, and the university wanted to have control over it all. I was working at a company doing Internet tech stuff, and Cheryl Overs was like, "Can you believe this?" And I'm like, "That's fucking ridiculous!" And the next day I gave her a listserv [laughter] you know? Done! Tell them to fuck off!

RC: And in 1996 it's new. Now we laugh about listservs, and it's like, you go to a meeting and hear, "Let's start a listserv!" and people are like, "Absolutely not!" But, in 1996, it's...

AS: Yeah, it might be 1997 by then because, we had reconnected with NSWP. We start on the World Wide Web, and then we know that we need a listserv, because there's an emerging technology that people are using to organize.

RC: Yeah. I mean, it's pretty radical, at that moment. Whereas now it's passé, right?

AS: It is?? Oh my god, the discussions and the debates for the first ten years of that listserv. I mean, Will and I jokingly refer to it now as "The Brain Trust." Because there were activists like Tracy Quan and Cheryl Overs and others, and we don't all take the same position. Some people are conservative. Some people are socialist. But we would have the most interesting, in-depth — almost fights, sometimes, but with respect. Like, not outright name-calling or anything, but heated debates.

RC: This is a pretty broad question, trying to capture your opinion about what sex workers accomplished. In your view, what was the contribution of sex workers to AIDS activism in Canada through that period? Now that you have some distance from it, what do you think the significance or the contribution was, the thing that people need to remember, in terms of what sex workers contributed?

AS: Well, I'm working on this piece of writing. I'm looking into this notion of key populations. I'm going back, and looking at the Valerie Scott and Danny Cockerline quotes in 1989, at the AIDS Conference there. Where they really talk about how "target populations," which is one of the terms they used to use, is stigma, basically. Our big line is, "you can't catch HIV from money." So, no.

Maggie's had it right in their bylaws. “There's no such thing as a high-risk group. There are only high-risk practices.” That was foundational to all of the work that we did. Because it's pre-treatment, in this way where there's no benefit to being a “key population,” really for you at this time. And so, sex work kind of goes through a period where, as you can see now, everybody wants to be a key population. [Laughter]

RC: Because that's where they get the money.

AS: That's where the money flows. That's something that I think we're losing touch with. One of the things I'm talking about is this notion that globally, sex workers are 14 times more likely to have HIV. This is a very common statistic. It's on the WHO webpage on HIV and sex work. In fact, that's completely useless in my personal context. In our community context, that's actually really a useless statistic. Because, first of all, it's only the 50 countries — low-income countries with high prevalence rates over all, that they are getting these measurements from. Then they're comparing it to everyone on the globe's prevalence rate, which is out of context, then, right? Because if you want to talk how high-risk—if sex workers are more at risk, than you look at sex workers in Cambodia and then you look at the general population in Cambodia and say, well, these people have this many more times people who are HIV positive, and therefore... So, this is something that there’s no critical thought on. Nobody pushes back on this kind of thing. Because the argument you make to get the money is, "This group is an important group."

But what Danny Cockerline used to say, and what CORP used to say, and Maggie's used to say, "It's a business doing pleasure," Business cards that say, “Prostitutes are safe sex professionals.” It's this line we used over, and over, and over again. Valerie says it in the video, she says, "We're the ones who put the condoms on the guys! We're the ones who do the education." So, yes, we should be a priority for funding. But that priority should be because we occupy a very special place in society with access to broad numbers of the population who are invisible to public health. And we are doing hands-on work. People would ask you, as a worker, clients would ask some certain little question that they weren’t sure about that you would know. Right? They would ask the escort, "Is this safe? Yes or no?" Right?

RC: Yeah.

AS: That's something that might be lost, which I worry about because of the distraction of funding, and the institutionalization of many of these places that do HIV outreach service stuff. They're becoming entrenched. Some organizations are 20 years old or more. They've been through three or four full-on changes of boards, and all of those things, right? Their existence is dependent on stable funding. So, there's no critical approach. I think, if you want to talk about it as a work industry, well, you've got to… I mean, you can't expect to get clients if you tell them all the hookers are 10 times more likely to have HIV. It's bad for

marketing if nothing else! You know what I mean? So, there's this disconnect, which I'm trying to kind of figure out how that happened.

RC: So, we're coming to the last few questions that are specific. And one that we always ask people. I've asked you a lot about Chris and about Danny, neither of whom died of AIDS-related infections. But are there others? Do you have memories of people who did die from HIV/AIDS who should be remembered, or at least mentioned, so that their names are part of the public record?

AS: Well, certainly for me, Ross Fletcher because he was a very early person for me. And I went and visited him a lot in the hospital at the end. I remember ddI [didanosine], because, you know, just post-AZT [zidovudine] was ddI, and the hospital wouldn't give him his ddI because it was bad for his immune system. And he was livid. So it was a lot of intensely personal politics that came out of that. But the other thing about Ross is that he confided in me that he'd been a hustler in Berlin. And so, there was this sex work/AIDS connection that I think most people didn't really know about.

In terms of other people who've died, like, they die from strange circumstances. [Shakes head] I can't think of somebody who I know personally as sort of, a strong activist, that I would say, they're gone and nobody remembers them. Not right off.

The thing about Danny Cockerline is that he had tested positive. He had false negative tests, as far as we could tell. And seeing that Danny was just not prepared to be the HIV-positive prostitute, having been the safe sex prostitute for so long, it seemed kind of counterproductive. I'm sure even in his suicide note, if I remember, he mentions not being able to survive because of the high cost of AIDS drugs. So, it comes out in that way, which he wasn't super out about. Like, his friends knew, but it wasn't public knowledge. For someone who was so public, right?

RC: Yeah. that's really interesting.

AS: The other thing about Chris Bearchell, was that she was really involved in the Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange [CATIE] and their very first—*Managing Your Health* was their first manual. She was an editor for that. And so, she was involved in—I remember people sitting at her kitchen table, talking about illegally crossing the border to bring aerosolized pentamidine, for example. So, there was this connection to sex workers who didn't really have a connection to the gay, AIDS stuff, and Chris was a conduit in a sense of this knowledge.

RC: Right. And was Chris connected to AIDS ACTION NOW! at all?

AS: I'm not sure. I'm not sure. I mean, certainly, a lot of the people involved—like, she was very good friends with Tim McCaskell and a bunch of people like that.

RC: Tim McCaskell's famous for going across the border and then taking the meds, I think it's on Parliament Hill at a demonstration, saying "This is illegal," and taking the aerosolized pentamidine. But that was AIDS ACTION NOW! And yeah, it doesn't seem like there is a big connection, aside from Chris being involved in treatment activism stuff as well as sex-worker stuff—but there isn't, from the historical record that I understand and other people have looked at, there isn't a big crossover between AIDS ACTION NOW! activists and sex-worker activists. It just doesn't seem like that was there.

AS: No, but we were all part of a Toronto political culture. So, AIDS ACTION NOW! would have shown up at any demonstration that we did.

For example, in 1993 they passed the child pornography law. A video tape surfaces with three young men of indeterminate ages that are underage, meaning under 18, but if you don't know the law—you can't have sexual imagery of somebody who is under the age of 18 *or looks like they're under the age of 18*. This also includes fiction, art, a lot of that.

One of the very first arrests that happened under Section 193.1 is of Eli Langer, for his paintings that are hanging in an artist-run space. So, that brings in the artists and people who are anti-censorship activists. So then cops find these tapes, and they start hunting Boystown, basically, looking for the boys whose faces are in the tapes.

And then, in London, Ontario, the law passes and somebody ditches a collection of videotapes of hustler boys in London. The police find a garbage bag full of tapes in the river. And, they dry them all out, they rerun them, and they spend… Oh, they talk about the torture of it, these tapes, they have to watch every minute of these tapes over and over again. All in an attempt to try and identify the people in the tapes, and find them, and get them to testify, or whatever. So, we're drawn to London.

And this is a big problem at Maggie's, because there are people who were very uneasy about the age thing with sex workers. A lot of them are women sex workers and they're really afraid that we're kind of taking on this issue too strongly, and that in a way, we're tarnishing our chances of political reform on the sex-work front because of this pedophile element, which is what people are referring to it as.

I mean, they were sex workers, these guys, they're just underage sex workers which there's going to be! Not so many today, but in those times, 15 or 16-year-olds, 17-year-old male sex workers isn't completely uncommon on the stroll. And even Danny was not happy about it. Which seemed very strange, because his position on this had been different historically. But he was of the same thinking—that we were gonna ruin our chances of political success with something that was...

RC: An untouchable...

AS: Kind of untouchable. So, we organized… and Chris, very Chris Bearchell, "Is it an impossible goal? Let's go for it! We have to do it!" The Repeal the Youth Porn Law. RYPL ["Ripple"], we called it, because it had a ripple effect. We did a pamphlet called "The Queer Witch Hunt." We held demonstrations at Queen's Park. At our biggest demonstration at Queen's Park, we had over 300 people show up. And they would have been everyone from the International Socialists, AIDS ACTION NOW!, the artists…

We had two fronts, because we had the hustlers on the one side, and the paintings on the other, so it was a weird synergy of sorts that had brought that together. And so, in that sense, AIDS ACTION NOW! was part of a political scene, and we all stood in solidarity with one another on our particular issues. I've got great photos of when Schabas, the Ontario Health minister, talks about quarantining HIV-positive people, Prostitutes' Safe Sex Project is there with their placards.

RC: I would love to track down some footage of that.

AS: I have photos of that. Chris, front and centre.

RC: If you have material that you feel comfortable allowing us to archive digitally, we try to interlace some of those images in the actual interview.

AS: Oh, Very nice.

RC: So that it's a bit more dynamic.

AS: I have a few things that you'd like. "No forced testing of whores" signs.

RC: That would be excellent. Like you said earlier, breaking up boring text with images. Keeping it interesting for those people who like visuals.

AS: Well, historical images are full of information on their own. And they're proof, in a way. One of the nice things about finding *Our Bodies Our Business*, when George Stamos pulled that footage together, was that I had lots of stuff of Danny Cockerline, lots of stuff he wrote and photographs and pictures of him in porn spreads, but there was never any video footage. And they just come alive. Danny is just a dreamboat!

RC: Yeah, he's such a babe in that video!

AS: He's a babe, and he's smart, and his little jean jacket open, and his little six pack. [Laughter] You know? Then, for people it's not like reading the letters he wrote, right? It's a very different kind of artifact.

RC: And you can totally see that he's such a little brat in that video. [Laughter] I mean that in the most loving, positive way you can be a brat. My god, he's such a brat, I love it!

AS: I'm still over the moon about helping, playing my tiny little part of getting it to surface.

RC: It's such a gem. It's really wonderful. So, is there anything else you feel like we haven't covered in relation to the sort of sex work, AIDS activism, Toronto, Vancouver, that you want to make sure is on tape for posterity?

AS: Hmmm... [laughter] Or, that I don't want on tape! Hmm. Well, I don't know. One of the things I wonder if you've done any looking into—just before 1996, there were a lot of people who were critical of the cause-of-AIDS arguments. Some of people were demonized, and not only Peter Duesberg. Everybody pulls out Duesberg and Kary Mullis, some of those people. But those were really active discussions in Toronto at that time. And some of them were incredibly interesting discussions.

RC: Yeah, even the *Toronto Living with AIDS* cable series, one of the episodes is an HIV skeptic. And it's not completely ridiculous stuff, right? It's not totally out there. It's actual trenchant questions about medical...

AS: Some of them are still unanswered today if I might be so bold as to say. You know? That all got squelched in a very strategic move, in a way that some people felt it wasn't right. That all happens in 2000, basically. So, you have four years of successful treatment. So, whether you can prove what the cause of AIDS is or not is already proven because treatment works. That's really the logic behind it. And then, you know, all the AIDS workers, professionals, doctors, sign a—we jokingly call it 30 Helens Agree— [laughter] they sign a declaration that says that HIV is the cause of AIDS, to put that to bed. And it didn't seem like a very scientific way to handle it. Although I understand why it's a very, very tense issue. Particularly in South Africa, because of what had happened there.

RC: Yeah. and there's zero nuance in the conversation, right? There's AIDS denialists on one hand, and the scientists on the other.

AS: Yeah. It turns into a black and white thing, as opposed to people who say, "Well, they're not necessarily saying this, they're just saying I don't necessarily know if I believe everything. Some of this seems unsubstantiated scientifically to me, or there's a question, of correlation is not causation." We used to have to say that constantly, "Correlation is not causation."

RC: I think it's a conversation most people don't want to have anymore. Especially, like you said, the medications work, right? So, we can't have a nuanced conversation about what...

AS: It should mean that we can.

RC: Yeah.

AS: Because, ultimately, if it all works, then the ultimate cause or not becomes irrelevant, in its own interesting way. Because as long as we're all agreeing that the treatment works, and the treatment is being used and all that, that nuance of whether or not, just becomes interesting—or could be an interesting discussion. But it can't be. Because you're a Holocaust denier, is what you are. It's really quite nasty how some of it went.

RC: Yeah, that's interesting, too, like, Michael Callen is known as one of the most important AIDS activists...

AS: He's one of my heroes.

RC: He's such a hero!

AS: Such a lovely person.

RC: Like, him and Richard Berkowitz. But you know, the thing that nobody talks about with Michael Callen, is that he was an HIV skeptic. He was...

AS: I just got his first book.

RC: *Surviving AIDS* (1990)*?*

AS: Yeah. It's beautiful.

RC: Yeah. But like, nobody talks about the fact that Michael Callen was an HIV skeptic. And that he had unanswered questions, right?

AS: Well, and part of all of that came about because of AZT. So, I mean, we have really good AIDS doctors in Toronto who didn't want to be on tape pushing AZT, you know what I mean, because AZT had different outcomes, let's just say. And there were some people who believed it was poison, we were just being poisoned, and then you know, they kind of just faded. It's still around. It still gets used. But people were dying. And they were definitely dying, and some of the things that people were dying from were related to the treatment. That was evident.

RC: Yeah.

AS: People were afraid to take that treatment. Like, I'm going to try anything [laughter] a naturopath, a homeopath... And in fact, that kind of AIDS activism is almost responsible for an explosion in medical, natural medical stuff. Like, it spins off and then becomes its own

thing, but it really started, so many things started with the AIDS activists that spin off in their own interesting directions in history. And that is one of them.

RC: Yeah. I mean, I think the medical marijuana stuff…

AS: Absolutely.

RC: You know? A lot of young people don't know, but that came out of AIDS activism. Medical marijuana grew exponentially under AIDS activism.

AS: Well, because of Brownie Mary! I met Brownie Mary at Dennis Peron's house in San Francisco in 1992. (Dennis Peron started the first compassion club dispensary.) Carol Leigh (aka Scarlot Harlot brought me there.) Characters like Brownie Mary, who would break the law by baking brownies to give to AIDS patients, who at that time were getting a lot of public sympathy, because people with AIDS were sick, they looked sick, you know? Like, my years in Toronto, I remember people in wheelchairs, completely skeletal, covered in spots. Like, that was not an unusual sight on the street, back then. Like, you were terrified. Will and I both talk about how when we came out, we didn't expect to live to be 30. Did not. It's like, you're gay, you're dead. That was what we came out to. And so, it really changes when you're not 30, you're like "What the fuck happened? I'm fifty!" [Laughter] You know?

RC: Yeah, totally. Well, is there anything else?

AS: No, I guess that's good. We've come full circle.

RC: Great.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]