# AAHP
# AIDS Activist History Project

## Interview Transcript 08
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| **Interviewee:** | Robin Turney & Sri |
| **Interviewers:** | Alexis Shotwell & Gary Kinsman |
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Persons present: Robin Turney – RT
Sri – S
Alexis Shotwell – AS
Gary Kinsman – GK

[START OF TRANSCRIPT]

**GK: The first question for both of you, is when and how did you first hear about AIDS?**

RT: I honestly can't remember. I think my best guess would be either late in 1983 or sometime in 1984. I don't remember anything more than that.

**AS: Were you living in Toronto then?**

RT: Yes.

**AS: You're a long-time Toronto…?**

RT: Since 1980.

**AS: Where are you from?**

RT: Winnipeg

S: I first heard about it probably around the same time on the radio. I don't know if they had started calling it GRID yet.

**AS: Uh huh.**

S: The broadcast was talking about other cities than Toronto, but, the fact that it was hitting gay men was certainly in the initial report and there was probably some mention of "people abusing needles" – their words – or whether they were subject to blood transfusions. But I think it was mainly through the mainstream media. I hadn't moved downtown yet; I hadn't come out yet, or I was just in the process of doing that. And, because they hadn't established any kind of understanding of the epidemiology of the disease, like the actual mechanics of this transmission, I was terrified because I was aware that I was gay, but I wasn't sexually active yet.

**AS: Right.**

S: I wasn't sure if I should be. My parents are biomedical, so there was always concern in the house about how to keep things clean and that kind of stuff. I mean I had already taken microbiology at university, like a course on that, so it was a concern to me, there must be a very specific mode of transmission if it's hitting this specific population. In retrospect, it kind of makes sense which population it would have hit.

**AS: Right.**

S: Considering what its epidemiology is, but it was really fear inducing. If I had already been in the middle of it I would be terrified for different reasons, but, when you are not even sure about anything about sexuality because you hadn't really started, it had a particularly repressive effect on me.

**AS: Yes.**

S: I basically waited a couple years before I had sex. It was like, if nobody knows how it's spread than nobody knows what to do in bed so that means I shouldn't do anything.

**AS: And you were living in Toronto?**

S: Yes. I was in Etobicoke then, so it was Toronto but suburban… very different than being embedded in the gay community in the village.

**AS: Yes.**

RT: I didn't hear about the GRID – Gay Related Immune Deficiency – until after I had heard the term AIDS. And all I can remember in terms of, I think, the media was there was a debate on whether it was caused by the immune system breaking down, an overabundance of venereal diseases or if it was a virus.

S: And after a few years, there was talk of a kind of reappraisal of gay male hedonism, like people kind of thought, "Oh it's a complex of some pathogen with poppers and excessive drinking."

**AS: Yes. Too much fun and too much fabulousness.**

S: Most people living in Toronto were brought up with this sort of anti-hedonistic sort of culture. And then you have these hedonistic subcultures embedded in that and, of course; so, you know, people are dying, people have to address it, and the way they would address it I guess is by reflex – people were expressing their upbringing. I mean any kind of borderline science situation will produce that. People will speculate and their speculations are going to reveal much more about them than the problem they are trying to solve.

**AS: Yes.**

RT: Yeah. I remember somewhere somebody saying that they tried to link it with poppers.

S: Oh yeah! I remember reading stuff at either the Sex and the State conference or one of the International Gay Association Conferences in the '80s I would have to go back and consult my button collection, but it was one of the queer conferences that happened at the Medical Science Building at the University of Toronto every year or so. Yeah, people really speculated a lot about causation, and then there was also a division of what side were you on. People asked, "Are you

going to change your sexual behaviours?" When the rules about how to have sex started coming down, people were like, "Well, are we going to change our behaviour or are we going to continue the sexual revolution?"

**AS: Yeah.**

S: I met people who were you know political barebackers in, like, '85. There's very few of them left. Probably even none. But I remember some people polarizing at that point about sexual behaviour and some people on principle were not going to change their behaviour.

RT: Well, *Fag Rag* had an article that was headlined "Are you willing to die for sexual revolution?"

S: It was a *Fag Rag* person. I have forgotten his name, black guy… he wanted me to assure him that I wasn't going to change my behaviour, meanwhile I wasn't even having sex. [laughter] It's like, "Yeah, I'm not going to change my behaviour at all."

**GK: Alexis, are you familiar with what *Fag Rag* was?**

**AS: No. What was it?**

**GK: It was a publication coming out of Boston. I would say sort of like an anarchist…**

S: Radical Faeries, anarchists, long-time anarchists from the '70s.

**AS: How would it circulate up here? Like, how did people get it?**

**GK: Glad Day Book Shop had it.**

S: Glad Day had it. I still have issues of it. It was very interesting, from a "history of activism" point of view because of the positions that they held – like, being pro-NAMBLA (North American Man Boy Love Association). These were classic positions in gay liberation that have been completely dispensed with other than the inner circle of Pink Triangle Press probably still talk about it behind closed doors. But I can remember when destroying the family was an objective among activists around us. We wondered what it would be replaced by? We weren't sure. People were probably still going to persist in some way shape or form, reproduce in some way shape or form, but the current form of social reproduction, the nuclear family specifically was clearly in our crosshairs. People holding these positions would be horrified by what happened within the next thirty years. They would see so many of these things as complete reversals of their positions.

**GK: So, Robin in the midst of all of this you find out that you actually are HIV positive, do you want to tell us a bit more about that?**

RT: I was in a study following people who had partners with AIDS by the time Bob Moore had been diagnosed. He was my lover in Ottawa. There were no HIV tests, so he came down, and it was at the University of Toronto, The name of the study was the University of Toronto Epidemiology Study and the name of the Principal Investigator was Dr. Kenneth Johnson. They interviewed me

and they interviewed him. I just came down for one interview, and then they proceeded to track my – they didn't need any more interviews with him – to track my health. And it was just T-cells in those days, and in the beginning there wasn't, you know, anything to worry about, because they were above 500, and 500 was kind of like the line that was drawn in the sand for do you or don't get a more specific diagnosis. And then, I think it was in 1985 in April… I was talking to the Principal Investigator or to someone else in the study about issues with my health. They offered the test – HIV test when it came out in 1985 – and they gave you the option of not knowing, so I ticked off the box, "No, I don't want to know." And I guess somehow the person who I was talking to missed that and thought that I had assented to knowing and so they told me. You can't put the genie back in the bottle, and they realized that. Yeah, this is their mistake but it was too late. So, I was kind of freaked out. I mean I kind of thought that because Bob Moore had been diagnosed with pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP) that I was probably infected but it was I think the certainty that freaked me out.

**AS: Yeah.**

RT: For a while I panicked every day and then – panic and paranoia – as the days and weeks and months passed, there would be in the month one day when I wasn't panicking and paranoid. And then it would be two days, and then three days, and then it went to one week, a month I wasn't panicking and paranoid. And then, you know, it would be two weeks and three weeks… finally, within a year there would be a month where I wouldn't be panicking and paranoid – although, I would be panicking and paranoid all of the other times. And then it grew to be two months and then three months until finally it just kind of tapered off after about two years and I wasn't panicking or paranoid anymore.

**AS: And so when you were in that study do you remember if there were other people around you who had… I mean there wasn't particularly any treatments that were going on yet.**

RT: No.

**AS: Were there other people that you were hanging out with and talking to who were positive and knew?**

RT: I don't remember. I don't think I knew anybody in the study… not that I can remember. I don't remember if there was anybody who ended up in AIDS ACTION NOW! (AAN!) that was there, but no, I didn't socialize then. I was pretty much an anarcho-separatist.

**AS: Yes.**

RT: I only hung out with my own for a long time and when I wanted sex I would go to the bars, but I wouldn't socialize with non-anarchists.

**AS: And how were the anarchists that you were with, like they were your people. How did they relate to it? Did you talk to them about it?**

RT: Well, they were always very cool and supportive about it.

**AS: Yeah.**

RT: That is about all I can remember – really cool and supportive.

**AS: Did they have any political analysis yet of it?**

RT: Not that I can remember. Not in like, 1985. I guess some people naturally thought it was a creation of the state.

**AS: Yeah.**

RT: I think that was the first speculation that was going because the state was evil and therefore the state must have something to do with it.

**AS: Yeah.**

S: But I can't remember when Kenn Quayle and his people were putting out that zine, *Jerking Off* and *Coming On*. I can't remember the year that *Jerking Off* and *Coming On* came out.

**GK: Can you just describe it?**

S: I should dig up an issue and get a scan to you guys of this, because…

RT: I gave mine to the Anarchist Archive in B.C.

S: Yes, so Anarchist Archives has it. *Jerking Off* and *Coming On* were two, they were basically the same magazine, fanzine, coming out in a very punk style of collage, so it was kind of radical faerie stuff, like *Fag Rag* in some ways, but also very specific about IV drug use and drug use in general and de-stigmatizing it.

**AS: Yeah, great.**

S: So, this was the very early literature that came from an anarchist point of view - about the de-stigmatization of drug use as a way of safety, basically. I think by then they were probably even using the phrase "harm reduction."

**AS: You think?**

S: I'm not sure. You would have to talk to Kenn. And, you know, the record will show because this is a zine, whether they were or they weren't, and when that discourse entered into circulation because it was being written partially by users.

**AS: Yeah.**

S: You know, these were politicized drug users who were anarchists and queer, and anti-establishment even by queer standards. It was youth oriented. The people it would be targeted at would be some people of like-mind, but also drug users who hadn't considered anarchism before, but it was pretty full on. And the new phrase we used back then was "in your face." But what I'm sketchy on is the year. Like, it could have been as early as '85, or as late as '88. But Kenn will pinpoint it for you. And Kathedral B, you know, it came out of Kathedral B… Kathedral A (sometimes spelled "Kathedral @") were named after RCMP drug operations at the time.

**GK: Could you tell us about the Kathedrals for just a second?**

S: The Kathedrals were two anarchist houses in Toronto in the early '80s. It was during a period where people didn't live in shared houses very much. I mean you have to think about the economics of the time and how you are still in that period before the 30 years of economic down-turn since the '70s. It was normal for middle class university students to move out of their parents' house; it was normal for people to have BAs and just get jobs. It was the very tail end of the baby boom and there weren't a lot of people living together in shared houses, who were either students or activists or artists. And so these houses ended up being kind of more or less unique – like, we would go to parties and we would talk to other people. No one would be living in a situation like this. They might live in residence at university, or they might… but it was only bands like Fifth Column people and a couple of other groups of artists who had shared rent. So, these were two houses under the same landlord. One had kind of more students, one had more activists, and both had artists. There were bands that came out of both houses – Mourning Sickness, which you might want to interview, maybe Tracy Tief or Lynna Landstreet. Do you know who I'm talking about? You might want to interview them.

**GK: Tracy has actually been contacted.**

S: And these people might connect you to other people as well who still live in the city.

**GK: So, Tracy lived in one of the Kathedrals?**

S: Yeah, she lived in Kathedral B.

**GK: Okay.**

**AS: And did you both live in the Kathedrals?**

RT: No, I always lived in a housing cooperative. I got into a housing cooperative in 1984, and I stayed there.

S: So, basically these zines came out of harm reduction work that these people were doing.

**AS: Right. Wait. So, did you live in Kathedral A?**

S: I lived in Kathedral A.

RT: The clean one.

S: Kenn [Quayle] and Tim [Potts] lived in Kathedral B, and Michael Smith lived in Kathedral B.

**GK: That's right.**

S: Just to put a fine point on it. I mean we didn't know… I forget when Michael started exhibiting symptoms, probably in the late 80s, and we didn't know how much cleanliness might impact somebody's immune system being compromised. But the work that Kenn and Tim did was really interesting and important initial work. I don't think anybody was doing that work from that perspective at that time. It's critically important in the history of harm reduction and epidemiology in this city. Maybe there were other harm reduction people, but they were not coming at it from the punk scene, nor from the queer zine scene, and that kind of stuff. And likely as a result they were less effective – being hobbled by moral panic, and bourgeois NGO thinking.

**AS: They were coming from an anarchist perspective and they were looking at the situation and saying…**

S: So, once you introduce drug use and harm reduction and the sort of lack of response from the state, it became obvious to anarchists who were nodding their heads and thinking, "See what we were saying about the state all along. It's this just harmful thing and it's out to get us." That kind of perspective would just be a reflex an anarchist would have anyway, so at least in the best cases, it would be just like pure confirmation of whatever analysis people had before. Also, their good perspective on First Nation's issues as well, because Michael was also active in First Nations struggles of that time.

**AS: I didn't know that.**

S: Oh, it was huge for him. This included most Indigenous issues at the time, some of which were in the States. Like, the Big Mountain displacement of the Navajo. I still have posters about Big Mountain that I got at Kathedral B then. The thing to remember also is, in the history of social movements, anarchists got on board a bunch of issues before socialists did – like, prisons, indigenous stuff – anarchists thought this way because they put the state as the enemy as opposed to or in addition to capital. Anarchists just glommed onto those things. So, Michael was involved at the beginning of PASAN (Prisoners' HIV/AIDS Support Action Network), as was Sunday Harrison I believe, who you should definitely consider contacting. As far as I know she was quite involved in AAN!, wasn't she?

**GK: No.**

S: More in the care of Michael afterwards?

**GK: Yes.**

S: But she was involved in Prison News Service and it would be a good point of contact to talk about that history.

**GK: We also want to talk to her about whether she has, or whether perhaps either of you have, a copy of *Person Livid with AIDS* (1990), which was Michael's performance.**

S: The text of the play?

**GK: Well, there was a video made of it.**

RT: There was a video.

**GK: And that's what we're actually looking for, but the text of the play would be wonderful too.**

RT: All I remember about that is that there was all these funny lines when we tried to play it on my VCR because it was on some kind of VHS which was not supported. As I was copying everything in those days, I probably would have made a copy and he was supposed to get it transferred to regular VHS, but I don't know what happened to it.

S: Yes. Kenn would be good to talk to about that. I mean I was in the play, but I don't think I have any record of it. I definitely would have kept it if I was. We are going way back, probably '91 for that play.

**GK: We are sort of jumping ahead of stuff.**

**AS: So, the folks that were doing work at the Kathedrals – I don't know if this is relevant really, but it's just I'm interested – they weren't reading Bakunin. Were they also, at the same time as they are formulating these anti-prison, pro-indigenous solidarity, coming into some more coherent anarchist politics, that they are a particular kind of anarchist?**

S: Well, they were representative of anarchists at the time, they were punks – some of them would read Emma Goldman. Michael Smith certainly read all this stuff, but he was anti-academic, so having read it he wasn't promulgating it on other people. Also, consider the fact that a lot of these people were 16, 17, 18, 19 years old, so they were just putting things together politically for the first time in their lives and everybody puts things together quite differently. I mean I considered the position coherent, even the non-Bakuninist position as far as I was concerned was coherent. Just because the way they tackled issues put them on the right side of the line, for instance, on prisons, censorship, the relationship between censorship and safe sex, for instance, in broadcasting - being able to be explicit and use the words and the images that need to be used to reach people in the language that they understood at the time. This was just an obvious thing for them - but being punks of course they wanted to put 'fuck' in. They could tell the story much better than me because they'd be telling it from their own perspective. I'm just describing it in the third person.

RT: Yeah, I only remember them doing hands-on stuff, like when raves happened. Kenn and Tim used to do risk reduction there, you know. Not just sexual – sexual and drug risk reduction as well.

**AS: So, they would set up with…?**

RT: Yes, that's right. They'd set up at raves. They'd set up a table at raves. They would have condoms. I don't think they could have needles, but they had literature.

**AS: And they would talk to people?**

RT: Yeah.

S: I think included in that is the radical faerie stuff, and included in that is a lot of stuff around gender presentation and the way radical faeries dressed up (and still do) was kind of political drag. So, it was all a piece for them and, you know, I would go to faerie gatherings with them. I wasn't as hard-core as they were, but Michael was basically my gay mentor – in the same way many younger people regard Will Munro. That is how I regarded Michael Smith with more of an emphasis on politics and less of an emphasis on culture. He had a huge impact on me in terms of my gay identity, and a lot of that hasn't changed. He made me the kind of questioning, queer anarchist I am still today. However, there were all sorts of problems with that community. Even up until recently, there's been significant transphobia that they're getting over in recent years, so it's interesting. But all of these things were cross-pollinating, there was some rural stuff as well. People were already going up to Bancroft and Maynooth (still called "Gaynooth" because of this) and the surrounding area. Those clusters of queers who live up there now have roots that go right back into the early 80s, maybe back to early 1983. I think the first time I went up there was probably '83 or '84, and we would talk about AIDS organizing up there – Michael and Kenn and Tim, and Robin, and me – we would hang around and we would be talking to the straight people who lived up there.

**AS: And so would that be on the land that is now Black Fly?**

S: That was not Black Fly. There was Dragon Fly was the main one, and later the Ranch in Maynooth? With Brian S. and…

**AS: Ok, I don't know.**

S: People at the Ranch knew the queers associated with the Arlington Hotel.

**AS: And some of the people that now own the collective space called Black Fly took some of Dragon Fly somehow?**

S: So, basically we heard about Black Fly, I might have gone there once, but this was also part of the same kind of back-to-the-land anarchist hippy punk worldview that was shared by some people at the Kathedrals. A lot of these issues seemed quite tied together. It was interesting having Michael there because he was older and he had experienced – you know, the pre-Thatcherite and post-Thatcherite Britain – and seen the changes that had been going on there. He was making people aware of the British coal miners' strike in Canada. He was a good socialist. He wasn't just an anarchist. We would of course accuse him of being a liberal, but he would kind of mix and match

ideas from socialism and anarchism to fit his own agenda. He was really involved in Prison News Service, Jim Campbell's…

**GK: Do you want to just describe Prison News Service a bit? It is something that has come up in other interviews.**

S: Prison News Service was an abolitionist newspaper that, I think, started in the late '70s or very early '80s; earlier than the period we're talking about. A lot of the authors in it were prisoners themselves, and they were politicized prisoners, so they might not be political prisoners. They might not have been put in jail for having done a political action, but once they were in jail they were doing political actions. And it was very strictly abolitionist in its position, and, you know, anarchism informed a lot of the writers, not all of them. I mean probably some of them were Maoists, and probably some of them were coming from a Pan-Afrikanist position. The kind of positions that came up within prison culture and prison political culture in the '80s. But they would do articles about, the MOVE bombing when that happened, and a huge amount of stuff about racialization, and eventually they probably had trans stuff, but early on I'm sure they had all sorts of stuff about AIDS intervention in a prison context, and when people were being blocked from treatment, or the lack of distribution of condoms and needles in prison – like the work that PASAN does now – that wasn't being done back then. And so the necessity for those groups being formed came out of that kind of culture. People, like Jim and Sunday.

RT: Yeah, Jim Campbell.

S: Like, I don't know when Syrus Ware met them. Do you know Syrus?

**AS: No**

**GK: No.**

S: A pretty major person in… trans guy, dad, had a baby recently, dates Nick Red, the DJ.

RT: Don't remember who Nick Red is.

S: You should ask me about Syrus, because that would be a major person to talk to.

**AS: So, Syrus was involved in prisoners organizing?**

S: The problem is I don't know when Syrus started at PASAN.

**GK: Was Syrus working at PASAN?**

S: Oh yeah, a central person... yeah. Like, Alex [McClelland] would know Syrus.

**AS: Okay.**

RT: Prison News Service also gave a platform to prisoners to publish whatever they wanted uncensored. Jim and Sunday were initially at least some of the people behind Prison News Service. Certainly, Jim was the driving force while he lived until he finally tried to pass it off onto other people, and then it just collapsed. Basically, it was anarchist-driven but the idea was that anybody that is political or a prisoner, period, can publish anything. I remember running afoul of an individualist anarchist in Montreal. He said he objected to the fact that there was Stalinist stuff in Prison News Service that is being distributed at the alternative bookstore in Montreal. And so he's a stupid individualist. He thought the Collective – the Prison News Service Collective – should have published something to counter or to discredit what this Stalinist prisoner had published, and I said that's not the function of Prison News Service. It's to give them a platform. He's one of those people where I said this like ten times, and it's like I was talking at him and not to him because he didn't get it. Then he started going on about what the Stalinists did in the Russian revolution, and I said to him, "If you think you can tell me anything about the Russian revolution that I don't already know, you're talking to the wrong person." So, you know, I couldn't get through to him. Purist anarchists like him didn't like it; they didn't make the leap to the fact that it was for prisoners. They thought there had to be an anti- to everything that wasn't anarchist everything, everywhere in the newspaper, but it was just ridiculous.

**GK: So, you have already started to talk about aspects of the emergence of AIDS activism in different ways, but thinking back, do you remember when you heard about AIDS when it becomes a political or activist question? Do you have any memories about that, or when you heard about AIDS ACTION NOW! or ACT UP New York City?**

S: I went from hearing about it on the radio, to moving downtown, to moving into an anarchist house probably like, within a year or two, so by '84 I'm sure… or by, I think, '83 I was already downtown. By '84 I'm pretty sure I had already lived at Kathedral A for a while…

**AS: Did you become politicized through that process or did you say, "I want to be…?**

S: Oh yeah. I had vague liberal feminist politics before I moved downtown, and after that I had much more specific anarchist politics, you know, living in a house of activists. So, a lot of stuff around the peace movement, the Peace Camp at Queen's Park, the other ACT (Against Cruise Testing), Act for Disarmament… there were a lot of those people coming through. And actually, I heard about anarchism through those people. I was living in Campus Co-op housing at U of T (University of Toronto) and I met Camille and Edan there, and a couple of straight anarchists. Camille was from Holland. Anyway, that's how I kind of heard about it. And then when I heard there was an anarchist house starting I wanted to move out of Campus Co-op. I was like "Sure, I will pay $150/month for rent. I could share a house with 7 people that sounds like a great deal." It's way less than I'm paying now.

**AS: Yes. And were some of those people already active in AIDS ACTION NOW!?**

S: I think AIDS ACTION NOW! had not formed yet. I don't remember. What was the year…?

**GK: AIDS ACTION NOW! does not become a public group until early 1988, very early 1988. There were meetings in late '87, but those would not have been public meetings. Those would have been pulled together by Michael Lynch and other people.**

S: I think Michael Smith became involved very quickly.

**GK: He may have actually been at the first Public Action Committee meeting.**

S: This is prior to his diagnosis.

RT: Yeah.

S: Because his diagnosis, I think, was pretty delayed. I think he didn't want to know for a long time.

RT: Yeah. Kind of like me.

S: My kind of political consciousness came up during that whole period. It was formed by that period essentially, so my anarchism was really re-enforced by the AIDS crisis and how I understood the state in terms of censorship and prison stuff. You know, just either through negligence, or just consciously ignoring care for people, and refusing transmission of safe sex information basically contributed quite heavily to the expansion and depth of the epidemic. Since they had to reverse all their policies, obviously they were doing something wrong at the time, right? But it was an interesting period because it was before the AIDS NGO industrial complex. It was before the weird relationship between people who were long-time AIDS activists and ascending into the institutional hierarchy of that world.

**AS: Getting into the bureaucracies.**

S: And becoming the inner circle at the conferences instead of the people that were banging on the gates. So, it was an interesting period from that point of view because it was very de-professionalized. Even though people were about to start things like CATIE (Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange) and that kind of stuff, people had some medical experience and professional expertise to bring to the crisis.

RT: I remember a lot of us were hoping we just had what was called ARC (AIDS Related Complex), which was supposed to be a non-fatal form, but then later on we found out that if you are HIV positive, it's a death sentence. ARC really didn't exist.

S: Did you ever talk to Bill Berinati?

**GK: Oh yeah.**

S: I have lost touch with him.

**GK: He's still around. His health is not great but he is still around.**

RT: Yeah, his health is not great.

S: Was he involved in AAN!?

**GK: No, he was involved in the AIDS Committee of Toronto, quite involved in it, especially in terms of the alternative therapy within ACT. But not with AIDS ACTION NOW! He would have known a lot of the people in and around AIDS ACTION NOW! Some people in AIDS ACTION NOW! were really good friends with Bill, but he was never directly involved in it.**

S: So, can we move the timeline forward or do we want to keep it in the early days?

**AS: No, it's good.**

**GK: We're talking, I think, now about when AIDS ACTION NOW! forms and how you get connected with it in various ways.**

S: I mean we kind of felt… between Michael and Karen Pearlston…

**AS: Was Karen living in the Kathedrals?**

S: Yes, Karen lived in Kathedral B.

**AS: Was that the dirty one?**

RT: Yeah. [laughter]

S: She had concerns about dirt too, and protecting Michael from it because she was involved in Michael's care a lot. But as you move the timeline forward, you become aware of the differences in politics between, what you could call, the anarchist circle within AAN! and the George Smith's and his Marxist comrades. There were probably other people too, but everybody we know were either living in the house just further into the Annex by like, 1989; the one that Tim McCaskell and George lived in.

**GK: Yeah, they moved from Seaton to somewhere up there.**

**AS And those were sort of more Marxist?**

S: Oh, it was Marxist. Everybody in the house was a Marxist, more or less, I think. Not sure how important it was for filmmaker Richard Fung who lived there. But there was difference in politics at that point within the group. Karen and Michael became more and more aware how they were going to be among the main source of feminist voices within AAN! saying, "Wait a minute, it's not just about gay men. There are also increasing infection rates among women." They were also concerned about racialized and Indigenous communities. I mean we didn't call it racialization back then. We used phrases like "people of colour." Karen and Michael thought there were all these middle-class gay men dominating the group, and they were not hearing our voices. It became a bit

of an enclave within the organization and I think it was a good contribution to discourse because that argument is still going on today.

RT: Yes, I remember Karen and other women saying that women with HIV were being totally ignored. And in AAN! she singled out one gay man in particular as somebody who was a stumbling block in this regard. She thought people like him put the emphasis on gay men and not other populations.

**AS: And so when these kind of conflicts or conversations happened, would they be around specific events or actions that were planned, or would they be more around just how things were running? Do you remember anything about how it happened? That there would be those kinds of like, "What are we going to do?" and "What political perspective are we bringing to it?"**

RT: Yeah. But I don't remember.

S: I think it was mostly around resources and priorities. So, how are resources being allocated? How are actions being targeted? What are the priorities? And, regarding the literature that was being distributed, how does the organization represent itself? It was pretty brass tacks. Karen obviously can fill this in, but I don't know what or whether she and Michael felt a need to work outside the organization because of these differences; or whether it was just like, "Screw it, let us just work with Black CAP" or "Let's just work with service organizations, because they understand these issues better than the political organizations."

**GK: Do you ever remember a group called COMBAT?**

S: I worked for COMBAT. It stood for Community Organizations Mutually Battling AIDS Together.

RT: Yeah, he worked for COMBAT.

S: Jackie Knight?

**GK: I couldn't remember her last name.**

**AS: Do you have that picture?**

**GK: Oh yeah.**

S: Yeah, I worked for COMBAT. I went to the Jamaican churches.

**AS: So, just talk about what COMBAT was because we haven't talked to anyone yet.**

**GK: Here's the picture. This is the AIDS ACTION NOW! retreat in August of 1989, and you will see Jackie right there.**

S: Yeah. I worked for Jackie. She was a whirlwind. There were big differences within the Afrikan community in Toronto about how to approach AIDS, right, because I mean basically, Black CAP was approaching it from a queer perspective and was mainly focused on Afrikan queers. COMBAT was mainly focused on women and thereby had to focus on straight families. Jackie said, "The best access to straight families in the Caribbean communities in Toronto was through the storefront churches, so that's where we are going to go. Every week, we are going to talk at the storefront churches. You are going to make sure the PA is working for me. You are going to make sure all the logistics are happening. You are going to hand out flyers and things." She was an anthropologist.

**AS: Jackie was?**

S: Yes, she studied Rastafarianism in Jamaica and Toronto and its political importance. Working for Jackie was interesting because it made me acutely aware of the split, the political split within the Afrikan community, in terms of how to target education. And basically, she said if you come in, if you approach a Jamaican church as a queer organization, they're just not going to let you though the door. The message is just never going to reach its target. And that was her position, so she said, "I'm going to be the straight lady working with straight people about how they get AIDS and how they are at very, very high risk, and any denialism is going to stand as a barrier to that." And she basically said, "Look. I can go places Black CAP will never get into." And, of course, she didn't treat homophobia the same way Black CAP did. Like, she would, be more liberal and less of a radical about that issue, but she would identify homophobia itself as a major source of infection. So, speaking to the pastors she would say, "If you are going to be in denial about queers in Caribbean communities, there's going to be a lot higher rate of transmission." She would be telling community leaders that they had to reverse their positions on these things, but in more muted terms than say, Black CAP would be.

**AS: How did you get involved with COMBAT?**

S: I think Michael probably introduced me to Jackie at some point. I also was convinced at this point that AIDS ACTION NOW! was not going to be the way I was going to understand the broader demographics of the disease. And I just like minority reports. I have always liked minority reports, and I'm always going to be a dick about it. So, anytime Michael and Karen were complaining about AAN!, I was like, "Yeah! That's terrible!"

**AS: Yes.** [laughter]

S: I was frustrated and I was interested in the fact that politics is very perspectival, so who you are and where you're situated in the world was going to determine in a lot of ways how you approach politics. I was really interested in that sort of anthropology of activism – why there was this big split between Black CAP and COMBAT, and why they couldn't reach any common ground?

**AS: One of the ways that I enliven these things that I hear about the past… like, is there a story that showed that for you? Or that when you think of it are you like, "That's a moment where…" I mean Jackie saying, "Look, if you're doing a queer analysis you're not even going to get through the door."**

S: I mean going to the churches, I kind of agree with her. But I wouldn't know, not being an Afrikan gay man myself.

**AS: Yeah, what was that like? What would happen?**

S: Maybe there were Afrikan gay men who went to church, and they could have expressed some kind of a middle ground; or maybe they were so vilified by the church that they couldn't be out.

RT: I'm sure there were lots of positive black men who went to church.

S: Yeah, and they wouldn't necessarily be allies in that situation. I can't speak to that really. Like, I'm really ignorant, but at the time I wanted to overcome that ignorance through direct exposure.

**AS: So, you would go with the PA system…**

S: I would go with her in her car. She would pick me up and we would go to these churches every week and do talks about basically, making people aware that hiding under a rock would be the worst thing they could possibly do. And that's what people were doing – hiding their heads under a homophobic rock that was going to make discussion extremely difficult. But, I mean during that period of history people didn't talk as openly or frankly, or even know what kind of open, frank language to use about sex. We were still in the shadow of the early twentieth century, and its sexual repression. The sexual revolution had started, but it certainly hadn't had the raw impact that it has now. People just treat sex completely differently, and that is partly a result of the response to the crisis itself.

**AS: Would people be able to ask questions in that context? Would they say things?**

S: People were struggling to understand, and they had such ingrained homophobia that it made thinking about the issue really difficult for them. There's sort of the classic tension around bisexual Afrikan men. Basically, there's a group of women who regard them as kind of sources of harm, and then there would be a queer perspective to counter it – what's the cause of that? Is it misogyny or is it homophobia? What's the root cause? Because it was early days in those discourses, I went to those places just to learn. I didn't talk ever. I just listened and facilitated, and that's kind of what I do when I work with Afrikan organizations in general. I just offer my hands. I'm not offering my voice, unless people ask me questions.

**GK: Do you have any memories of what happened with COMBAT?**

**AS: How long it lasted?**

S: It was a one person show. I mean you'd probably get a better picture of what happened, how it ended, talking to people in Black CAP.

**GK: Okay. Do you have any contact with Jackie still?**

S: I lost contact with her because eventually I just found it difficult to work with her. As I got to know her, she got more frustrated in her work and she just became angrier. Eventually, I was like, "I don't need to be subject to this anger."

**GK: Well, I think part of it was also Black CAP got the money and COMBAT didn't.**

RT: I seem to remember that.

**GK: Black CAP was getting the health-related funding around AIDS.**

S: I remember Chris Korwin-Kuczynski on Toronto City council. He was a right-wing councillor back then. I attended a meeting at City Council with Black CAP and his comment was, "Well, why can't the black community finance this?" [laughter] "Why isn't the black community financing all of the information distribution and counselling?"

**GK: Maybe you can move back to just focusing for a moment on AIDS ACTION NOW!, and then move back into the differences. How were you in your different ways connected to AIDS ACTION NOW! and what did it mean for you perhaps, at the point in time, when it was doing activist things?**

RT: I don't know when I joined. I remember going to meetings with Michael [Smith]. I don't remember a lot about the meetings. I remember one meeting in a large auditorium kind of space, and Chris Bearchell was talking about how somebody in the Mulroney government should be fired… an Alistair something.

**GK: Alistair Clayton**

RT: Yes. Clayton. Saying he should be fired. I remember a meeting in a much smaller room where this woman wanted ddI to be released for her son because he had failed on AZT (azidovudine). I remember the meeting, her coming and speaking, and how we were going to organize an action. I don't remember the action itself. This now jogs memories… I mean my memory's fragmentary. The names are familiar. In particular, I remember Passive Immunotherapy. I remember that Dr. [Abraham] Karpas… I forget where he was from or how he discovered it, but he found it by taking antibodies to HIV from HIV-positive gay men. I don't know what he would do to the blood, but he would get the antibodies somehow and introduce them into PLWAs (People Living with HIV/AIDS). I remember Paul Mingo was one of the guys who was receiving it and drastically improving on it. I remember there was a meeting at the 519 where Karpas came to speak and I remember it all looked very hopeful. And so those of us – we are all justifiably terrified by AIDS – we were really hopeful that something would come out of this, but then it kind of ended up not going anywhere. I remember doing a paper for AIDS ACTION NOW! on passive hyperimmunotherapy therapy. So, that was before the Internet. I did all this research, and I started reading medical books, and I made a glossary at the end. They passed that out so people could find out about it. You [pointing at Gary] said it was really good, I remember that.

**AS: Because people wouldn't know…**

RT: And I took it to the University of Toronto epidemiology study and I made the principal investigator read it. It was really fairly long because I said I don't want to pass it out at a meeting and for anything there to be medically incorrect, so he did read it. I prevailed upon him; he finally caved in and he did it, and I did pass it out. I remember you [Gary] saying it was really good. And basically, just put the process, which unfortunately I don't remember now, in lay terms.

**AS: Did you do that a lot, Robin? Were you doing that translation of complicated medical things?**

RT: I think that's the only one I ever did.

**AS: But were you following… you know, how were you relating to the different possible treatments that were coming up?**

RT: Well, when AZT became available at the University epidemiology study I went on that. I took… what was it? Three capsules, 100 milligrams every four hours.

**AS: Wow!**

RT: That's when I got a medication timer that would go beep-beep-beep! in the middle of the night. So, every four hours in a twenty four hour…

**AS: In the middle of the night you had to wake up.**

RT: Yeah. So, six – that would be 1800 milligrams of AZT a day. And I was lucky because I could tolerate it.

**AS: So intense.**

RT: [laughter] But again, you know, the theory, which was wrong, was, "Okay, we'll give you AZT when you are asymptomatic and you will remain that way." Not true, but nobody knew. And I think people might have had the same idea about ddI because that was the next one coming down the line, but that didn't work out. None of them… all the monotherapies failed. And beginning them while you were asymptomatic usually didn't do anything. But, this hindsight is 20/20.

**AS: Yes.**

RT: Nobody knew any of that. And then there was one other treatment that I can't remember anymore now. It was touted as a cure, but it was another one that led nowhere.

S: It wasn't a protease inhibiter?

RT: No, it wasn't a protease inhibitor. It was supposed to be – I'm going out on a limb because my memory is not good – extracted from a cucumber or something (Compound Q), which was extracted from Chinese cucumbers.

S: Oh, okay.

**AS: Yes. There was a Saint John's Wart one. There was…**

**GK: There was a whole bunch of them.**

RT: There was a whole bunch of them and I forget which one it was, but this was touted as a cure because in vitro it was very good.

S: It was Chinese cucumbers.

RT: That's it! In vitro was very good, but in vivo, you know, it didn't go anywhere. I was always with great hope for something to be effective and it always, almost always, turned out to be a disappointment. My principal memory – although I don't remember or have a good memory for details – whether it is correct or not, was that AAN!'s focus was on saving people's lives. Well, that and risk reduction by getting pharmaceuticals to release their drugs. Wasn't there one they were manufacturing right here in Toronto that nobody could get?

S: Yes, I remember that.

RT: Which one was that?

**GK: I think that was Dextran Sulphate.**

**AS: And so, one of the main things that was happening was the Treatment Information Exchange. Do you remember reading that, and was it useful?**

RT: TIE? Do I remember reading TIE. No, unfortunately I don't…

**GK: It would've been Sean Hosein's material.**

RT: I did read Sean Hosein's stuff. I remember him now… I didn't remember him until you just mentioned his name, now he popped back into my head. I remember reading his stuff, but I read medical journals and I read so much stuff that it's hard to sort it all through.

**AS: Would you go to the public libraries? How did you get the medical journals?**

RT: I'm a Robart's Library (at the University of Toronto) research reader. I have been almost since I landed in Toronto, because I wanted to… I thought libraries have very limited collections. Public libraries didn't have the kind of stuff that interested me, but university libraries did. So yes, I did do that.

**GK: Do either of you remember being on AIDS ACTION NOW! demonstrations or die-ins?**

RT: I remember being at a die-in at Pride.

**GK: Okay.**

RT: And a die-in front of somewhere else, but I forget where it was. It might have been a pharmaceutical company.

**AS: The die-in at Pride – we had an event about the history of opposing quarantine and someone described the Pride die-in just being like… making it seem like AIDS ACTION NOW! was so much bigger than it was because almost everyone just laid down.**

RT: And if I remember correctly, someone would lay down and then they would draw your outline; and then they would lay down and you would draw their outline. And then you would both lay down in your outlines.

S: But you didn't have to be in AIDS ACTION NOW! to join in. It spread in the demonstration basically word of mouth. People asking, "Are you going to participate? This is where we are going to be doing it." And people were like, "Hell yeah," Just like, average folks and it was a great idea because it immediately made the organization look much bigger when the media were looking. No, it was a brilliant strategy. People were really smart about that stuff back then. They had nothing to work with other than just talking with people and, as I'm sure you can imagine, people were upset.

**AS: It's a really time-consuming thing to do in the middle of the Pride parade too – you know, one person and then the other.**

RT: I think that was right on Yonge Street near Wellesley and Church. Well, at least where I was. The Pride march was a lot longer than that.

**GK: Now we are talking a bit about various connections with AIDS ACTION NOW! Sri, did you ever go to meeting of the Public Action Committee?**

S: Yeah, I remember going to some big meetings with Karen at Med-Sci (at the University of Toronto), probably and Tim and Sean and Glen.

**GK: Sean?**

S: Sean Hosein, and people like that were there. It was around the time that Karen was sort of getting disheartened with the male focus and the middle class white focus that she saw. I went to a few die-ins. I remember the Pride one. And there was one more as well, but that was the limit of my participation. It was basically talking with people, going to the odd organizing meeting and then going to the odd die-in, but I wasn't right in there as a member, really. I was more there because my friends were really interested. Like, Michael was interested in it.

**GK: Robin, you were at least at some Steering Committee meetings?**

RT: Yes, but I don't remember them unfortunately.

**GK: Any other memories of AIDS ACTION NOW! events? And then we'll move back into the critique of it.**

**AS: Were either of you at the… everyone was talking about the Jake Epp effigy burning demonstration.**

RT: I think I might have been there with that. I was there if it's the one that took place in the back of the 519. Is that where this action took place?

**GK: No, it would have ended up at City Hall. But Kenn and Michael made the effigy of Jake Epp and they got into some difficulty with Tim and other people because they put KKKanada on it. That was outside City Hall. Kenn and Michael were supposed to make the effigy, I remember that much, but they were not supposed to put…**

**AS: KKKanada.**

S: You can't tell them to not do this. You know? [laughter] You can't give them specific things to say on what to say just by themselves. It will be good for you to talk to people like Kenn and Cyrus and Tracy, and they'll suggest some other people that I'm forgetting.

**GK: For sure.**

S: I'm in contact with all of them.

**GK: And Robin, I think that the other die-in that were thinking of is the one that we would have been taken out probably by van in Scarborough.**

RT: Yeah, that seems to ring a bell.

**GK: It was actually the Consensus Conference on People Living with AIDS and HIV. I think AIDS ACTION NOW! had some people inside. It was trying to find some consensus on various issues and we did a whole protest outside and a die-in, and you were definitely there at the picket at least.**

RT: No, I remember being at the die-in.

**GK: Okay. We did a die-in there so, that is probably the other die-in that you are thinking of.**

S: But it's interesting how by the early '90s, how much activism had changed and how it was continuing to change. So, you had the huge spike in coalition-building - an art that seems to be somewhat forgotten now – which continues to amaze me because it seemed to work so well in the early '90s; just a side-note. I'm amazed that just kind of went away. I don't think the anti-globalization movement is a very good substitute for going to a demonstration where the list of organizations on the bottom of the poster is half the poster.

RT: Yes, I remember those.

S: You had the rise of groups like Queer Nation. You had a huge publication boom in racialized communities going back to the Combahee River Collective, but that was not well known when it was published. And then, by the time you got to the early '90s there was this huge Afrikan-lesbian publication boom, and movies like *Brother to Brother* (2004) came out. Afrikan gay men were doing a huge amount of writing and publication and it was really changing the way people were thinking about politics. It kind of got swallowed later by a more academic movement, a second generation of it, you get the anti-oppression movement, and it becomes more lifestyle focussed – "Oh, who's oppressing who in our meeting?" Less oriented towards, for instance, "What are we going to do work with peasants in Mexico?" It changed its energy a lot, but I like that first generation. That changed my political consciousness a huge amount as well. I was already interested in other issues than AIDS/HIV and homophobia, and there was a contour arc in the early '90s because that was the peak of people dying as well. So, to have that simultaneous with the beginning of Queer Nation, which was in 1991. All those things converging at the same time made me feel…

**GK: Do you remember any symbiosis between AIDS ACTION NOW! and Queer Nation? They involved some of the same people, but…**

S: Greg Pavelich was in both groups.

**GK: When Queer Nation had organized a queer contingent in the first demonstration against the Gulf War, AIDS ACTION NOW! was also present there.**

**AS: Yeah, we just heard from someone that AIDS ACTION NOW! sent a contingent out to an ARA (Anti-Racist Action) demonstration around this time.**

S: Oh really! Wow!

**AS: Yeah, which I was interested in.**

S: Yeah. I can't speak to that because I wasn't really involved in ARA. I had no idea. If you told me that this happened I would be like, "No! How could that ever happen?!"

**AS: Someone thinks it did.**

RT: I didn't join the ARA until 1995, so I don't remember that. That was probably before because they have been around for a while, before I became part of it.

**GK: So, if we've got limited time I think what it would probably be best to focus on stuff around anarchism and AIDS activism more generally. What did anarchism bring to AIDS activism? What can you remember about the internal struggles within AIDS ACTION NOW!, some of which we've talked about? And then, memories of people who have passed away; we have already heard a little bit about Michael.**

**AS: I would like to hear more about Michael.**

**GK: But if there were other people both in and around AIDS ACTION NOW! that you can remember…**

S: Oh! Were you talking to Alec Butler? You need to be talking to Alec Butler. Because he still does work around HIV in Indigenous communities. He tours and he has a creative component because he's an artist. He'll have very specific memories around Michael. And he'll have archives… he'll have a file on Michael. I might have a file on Michael as well. Alec was close to Karen and Michael, Karen and Sunday, people like that as well.

**GK: If we have limited time, I think key things are memories of Michael or other people who died during this time period. One of the things we are trying to do in the project is to have ways of remembering people who died during this period. Greg has also died since then, not necessarily during this period, so memories of them…**

S: Greg was amazing. Greg was one of the people who weren't anarchists in AIDS ACTION NOW!, but I thought he was one of the people with the best politics and the willingness to have multiple perspectives on the same problem. Obviously, you can't please everybody, but by the same token, he was definitely a listener when people like Karen and Michael were talking about the issues that they regarded as issues that weren't central to AAN! Like, prisons, indigenous women, racialized communities, and broadening the focus so that it could live up to its name and not be like a Canadian Gay Men's Health Crisis. Yes, that's pretty much what it was. [laughter] If you are going to call yourself AIDS ACTION NOW!, that should describe a broad umbrella. Greg was amazing. But I think Michael was great because he was persistent. He never gave up on the possibilities of the organization. He basically was constantly pushing those things, until he got sick himself and started to focus on his own creative work and his own biographical expression.

RT: My memories of Michael are of him being ill. I remember that he exhausted naturopathy, homeopathy, Chinese medicine… he saw a doctor who said you should get some AZT, so Michael asked me for some of mine. And I mean I don't have a problem with that except he took one pill; it was so toxic that he couldn't take it. Yeah, it was at that point that it was much too late in the game for AZT to have been of any benefit to him. I knew that he was more tolerant than I was of alternative therapies. Like, he would get on the phone to me… I remember once he phoned me, he was talking about hearing alternative therapies, linking AIDS to UFOs and stuff like that. I have a hard time taking people like that seriously and I was having a hard time that I didn't really, you know, consider every alternative a viable option simply because it's an alternative. But on the flip side, he was very critical of AZT and I agonized over the decision to take it because I heard all the bad about it and all versus the benefits. So, I remember that one thing I did do is I made a list with two columns – reasons to take it and reasons not to take it. I think that in reasons to take it there were only two more than reasons not to so I decided on that basis to take it, but it wasn't a good decision. And then I remember Michael phoned me up one day saying, "Here's the latest about AZT," and I said, "Is it bad news or is it good news?" He said, "No its bad news." I said, "I don't want to hear it." He said, "You don't?" "No. I don't want to hear it." Then he said "You don't!?" I said "No. I don't." […] You know, because there is so much anti-AZT, often being led by Colman Jones, I don't know if he came in there afterwards…

S: Oh right. Coleman was involved in AIDS ACTION NOW!?

RT: Yeah.

**AS: He was really concerned about AZT?**

S: Poster child.

**AS: Oh yeah?**

S: I'm sorry. Colman Jones was like, the worst science writer in the history of *NOW Magazine*.

**GK: But that is actually much later though too. Colman was one of the media people around AIDS ACTION NOW! and one of the people who questioned HIV.**

RT: Yeah.

**AS: Oh.**

RT: That's the problem with…

S: Like, he wrote HIV denial articles in *NOW*.

**GK: Yeah. You're right.**

S: That's destructive. But I mean speaking about the anarchist community, it was and is a very open community. And as a result it attracts a lot of people who don't have a very strong idea about science. They're kind of like, science is blind faith!

**AS: Right.**

S: Or, be very open to "woo" (pseudo-science); to be very to open to any possible negative information about Western medicine. I mean it's good to be sceptical in general, and it's good to not let the drug companies steer all your thinking about these things, but at the same time, the thing that made the biggest critical differences in the epidemic were the invention of protease inhibitors and, later, fusion inhibitors and combined therapies. These were scientific advances that were caused by the epidemic. Those scientific advances wouldn't even have occurred – discoveries in virology, discoveries in chemical modelling and pharmaceuticals. A lot of these things were begun because of the AIDS crisis. And yes, shitty pharmaceutical industry, a terrible NGO industrial complex, in cahoots with them; yes, these are valid criticisms, but to just think that Chinese cucumber is going to save your life because you read it in a fanzine is not going to work.

RT: Well, that was actually a serious scientific study – the extract – because it worked in vitro, but it didn't in vivo. That was an extract; it wasn't just eaten. But there was a lot of what Scott called "woo." Like, early in the epidemic when a vegan anarchist told me that no vegan has ever been diagnosed. [laughter] And of course I was just thinking in my mind, "Yet."

S: I'm sure you could go to Burning Man and find people who still think this. There is never going to be a shortage of woo people, like anti-vaxxers (anti-vaccinationists).

**AS: Robin, did you start pulling back from AIDS ACTION NOW! at a certain point?**

RT: I don't remember. I can't remember… I don't remember participating after Michael died. Yeah. I remember Michael's death, which was a big emotional thing. I don't remember why I stopped participating after Michael died. Maybe I was too traumatized.

**AS: Yeah. Were you involved in his care while he was dying?**

RT: Oh yeah.

S: Yeah.

**AS: Do you want to say anything about Michael?**

RT: Well, everything Scott said about him was true. He knew that I had very little tolerance for woo – what Scott calls woo. There was a little bit of tension, but he was very knowledgeable. Even when I thought his head was not in the right place, his heart always was. He always had his finger in a million different pies, far more than I did. He belonged to more than one First Nation organization. Not organizations of First Nations people but for… I can't remember any of them now unfortunately. You have to talk to other people. I also remember… I know because I have been there, when you get very sick, you want to pretend it's not happening. He's getting really sick. This is when the toxo [toxoplasmosis] was coming in, and he was determined that he was going to go to this Faerie gathering, nobody was going to stop him, but he ended up going to the hospital instead. And I remember him being so upset because, you know, there comes a point where even if you want to deny as a way of coping you can't deny anymore. One memory I have of Michael with toxo in the hospital is this anarchist, Christy. I had come on shift and she said that overnight Michael had had a seizure and they had sent in the emergency staff all done in space suits. And one of them asked her, "Do you think it's worth it for us to save him?" or something like that. Yeah. And this was the time when you guys [to Scott] were going in and you wouldn't let the hospital use any of their antiseptics. You were doing vinegar on the wall and everything.

S: Oh my god, so I was part of the woo too. [laughter]

RT: Yeah. He was a sweet man. The world is not a better place for him not being here.

S: He did put a huge amount of energy into activism and it did kind of burn him out quickly. And he did, at times, neglect attending to his own health. But it's easy for me to say as someone who wasn't ill. I'm downplaying the psychological barriers he would have had to face.

**GK: Any comments, either of you, on *A Person Livid with AIDS* (1990)?**

S: It was a good play.

RT: Yeah, I read the play.

S: It was basically a day in the life. So, he gets up in the morning at the beginning of the play and he's talking to himself and nattering…

**AS: And he was actually in it?**

S: Yeah. He was the only person in the play. At one point I think he goes to band practice and suddenly we have all our gear on stage and it's like, we're playing the songs that we would be playing. The band was called *Steal This Book* and he was in the band normally, not in the context of the play.

**AS: So, he would get up in the beginning of the play… he was getting up in the morning?**

S: Getting up in the morning, he would have appointments and…

RT: And all the medicines and stuff that he would take, next to his bed.

S: He would talk about spiritualism of other cultures and basically, it gave him an opportunity to describe his whole worldview surrounding the infection and the state's treatment of it; and to basically, articulate a lot of his politics. He touched on every possible political issue that he knew about from feminism, to prison stuff, to neo-conservatism, which was at its zenith at that time. All the governments in all the countries were conservative by that point. All through Europe and the States. He would associate all that with the attack on the land and the Earth. He was very Earth mother-oriented and his spirituality was a big deal in the play. He talked about Radical Faeries and their perspectives on gender, and what we would now call gender performance.

RT: And he talked to me… I just remembered this little tiny snippet of conversation. He went to England and came back and was telling me about Thatcher's new England. And the only thing I can remember that stood out in my mind was he said that Thatcher – I was incredulous when he first said this – prevented the media from reporting on Pride day in England, so it wasn't on the news. Was it Paragraph Twenty Eight, or Clause Twenty-Eight?

S: Clause Twenty-Eight. Yeah.

RT: Yes. I don't remember if it was before…

**GK: Yes, you couldn't proselytize.**

S: Basically, Putin; the same legislation.

**GK: Both of you were at Michaels's memorial service?**

RT: Yeah. I remember…

**GK: No one yet has talked about this, but one of the thing that happened in the States was – you actually see it on the ACT UP oral history project video – they had started to have political funerals. Now, I know there was a demonstration attached. Unfortunately, I was in St John's and was unable to attend.**

RT: We had a little march.

**GK: Do you remember that?**

RT: I remember people banging on their instruments and stuff.

S: Alec will.

RT: And then, we ended up at… I thought it was Dr. Bill's we ended up at?

S: I don't remember it.

RT: It might've been him.

**AS: Was he in hospital when he died?**

RT: No, he was at home.

**AS: At home… Where did the funeral start?**

RT: I think Rosar-Morrison.

S: Right, that one on Sherbourne – the Rosar-Morrison Funeral Home & Chapel.

RT: Rosar-Morrison, because they are the only one that were willing to do PWLA and HIVs. So, they did, I think, the services there. I remember Lynna Landstreet speaking and I remember talking to Landstreet, if you remember who Landstreet was. And then, after it was over, I remember Michael was supposed to be cremated eventually, but I remember people had put literature in his coffin. You were allowed to put stuff in his coffin, so I put a flashlight in. It was probably really bad for the environment because he was going to be cremated. I put a flashlight in his coffin so he could read the literature. [laughter] It didn't have batteries in it, but still, pretty toxic thing. In any case, people did stuff like that. And after it was over, we couldn't take him with us. We had to march from Rosar-Morrison's to… I don't know if it was Dr. Bill's. I think it was Dr. Bill's. I think it was this… maybe, this house on Sherbourne, which was very nice and middle classy looking. And I remember hanging out with people there. We marched there. There were lots of instruments banging. We ended up there. We didn't do anything particularly political, like have a die-in or anything. I think it was more around Michael. That's the only anarchist funeral where I have ever seen… where we actually had a march from the Funeral Home to where the wake was.

**AS: Oh, so the wake was at Dr. Bill's?**

**GK: Bill was a friend of Michael's, but I think it might have been Bob Gallagher's house.**

RT: It was Bob Gallagher's house!

**GK: Yes. I think that's right. We only have a few minutes left if you have to get going. So, is there anything more you wanted to say? It has been really wonderful for us.**

S: No, but talk to these people that I have contact information for. You may have more questions for us.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]