

AAHP  
**AIDS Activist History Project**

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<b>Interviewee:</b>	James Bigney
<b>Interviewers:</b>	Alexis Shotwell & Gary Kinsman
<b>Place:</b>	Halifax, Nova Scotia
<b>Date:</b>	August 6, 2015

6 August 2015

Persons present: James Bigney – JB  
Alexis Shotwell - AS  
Gary Kinsman – GK

[START OF TRANSCRIPT]

**AS: Wait. Before you keep talking. Let me just say to the recorder that it's August 6<sup>th</sup> 2015 and we're talking with James Bigney. Okay.**

JB: Okay.

**GK: So, just tell us a little bit about those clippings if you want to.**

JB: Well, these are newspaper clippings over the duration of my activism work, if you want to refer to it as that. [Showing clippings] This is myself and Jane Kansas.

**GK: Oh, yeah, that's Jane there.**

JB: She was another outspoken individual for the gay community. You can have these, if you want them. And, "Man sues Ottawa"—that's me, and a friend of mine at the Nova Scotia human rights wanted me to wave to her in the interview. I said, "I'll tell you what, I'll do the Carol Burnett thing." [laughter] And, they snapped the picture just as I... These are just, again, clippings. "Pride in the face of prejudice," and there's my lawyer, Anne Derrick.

**GK: Oh, and Anne Derrick represented you. Right.**

JB: And, god, this seems so long ago... David Swick.

**AS: Uh huh. That's good.**

JB: Feds to fight lawsuit by gay man seeking spousal pension benefit." This is all local stuff. "Gay man sues for pension." What to heck is this? Oh yeah, this one here, "Is benefit fight a matter of fairness, says Bigney?" And, this one is here is "Gay man drops suit against Ottawa," which I resented. Because the actuality of that particular story was that we put the case into abeyance because, at that time, it was rumoured the government was going to introduce Bill-C35, I think, in parliament, which would have extended all those rights and privileges to the gay community, so we were waiting on that. And, I called the reporter here, Sherri Bordon, and I said, "That is erroneous. You didn't get that right. It makes it sound like I quit, and I wasn't gonna quit." So, anyway, you can have those.

**AS: Okay, great.**

**GK: Okay. That's great. And maybe we'll look at the file more later. So, we're going to come back to the struggle you were involved, but what we do in terms of starting all of these interviews is we – because the central focus is around AIDS and AIDS activism – although, that certainly links in with all sorts of other things, is we start off by just asking people when they first heard about AIDS and what they heard. Do you have any memories of that?**

JB: I do, but, again, living in the Maritimes, I mean, everything, we'd play catch up a lot of time to other parts of the universe. And, the only thing I can tell you about that, just the news. You know, this strange, mysterious disease affecting the gay community of New York, San Francisco. And, I never thought of it in terms of like, "What is it?" or inquisitive really. I just didn't until different people that I knew of disappeared or became ill. And, even then, inquiring, "Well, what did they die of? What are they sick with?" There's was like a wall of silence. And, now, I don't know if that was because nobody wanted to speak about it or they didn't *know*. Until Michel, this fellow I knew, who became ill, and I went over to the hospital. I had no idea what AIDS was. I went over to the hospital to visit him, and, again, I spent some time with him. I sat up on his bed. I held his hand. I didn't know he was dying. And, then when I left, he said, "Thank you, Jim." And he started crying. And, "I said, "Oh you're welcome. I'll be back." So, that was the only exposure I had to this disease at that time, until my late partner, John [Morrow], started acting not like he usually did. He became withdrawn, and I realized he was drinking a lot more than ordinarily. He just wasn't communicating. He had a cough. He wasn't taking care of himself, but he wouldn't let me in until, finally. And one day, and you could hear him, he developed pneumo...

**GK: Pneumocystic carinii pneumonia, probably.**

JB: Yeah. And, I kept saying, "John...", I said, and he was a smoker, so I thought maybe lung cancer? Environmental illness? Whatever. So, I said, "John," I said, "Let me take you. Go to the doctor. There is something wrong." He just wouldn't respond. And, a few times when I came home from work, he'd be sitting here drinking in the middle of the afternoon and I'm going, "Whoa, this is not..." So, initially what I did was, I came home one day, took the afternoon off from work and came home and I said, "John, listen to me." I said, "I'm going out to look at an apartment. I'm moving out. I can't do this. You're not letting me in. Whatever is wrong; let me help." Right? And, as I came down the stairs, he was sitting up there. When I came down the stairs, he said, "Will you be long?" And, I said, "That's entirely up to you, John." And what I was trying to do was plant a fire under his butt. Right? So, I went to Alcare, because I thought maybe he developed alcoholism. I don't know, right? So, and, I talked to them for a bit and then I came home, and he looked at me and he started crying and he said, "Are you moving out?" And I said, "That is entirely up to you. We need to get you to a doctor. You've got to let me help." And, all of a sudden, he just looked at me, he said, "Well, help me." That's all I needed to know, so I got him to his doctor, and the doctor looked at him, and said, "What have you done to yourself?" And they wanted me to take him down to emergency. So, I took him down to emergency, and they wouldn't take him, because they said they didn't have a bed. And, at that time, he had an abscessed tooth, his face was swollen, plus he had the PCP.

And, anyway, the only way they would take him was if he was severely depressed or suicidal. And, I said, "If you give me a razorblade right now, I'll slit his wrists" And, I would have. I thought, This

is crazy. You've got to take him. This man needs help, and he needs help now. I had a friend that drove us over because at that time I didn't have a vehicle and at some point during this argument, if you will, with the doctors, John got up and left. I didn't realize it. And, I'm standing there arguing, right? And, then I turned and he was gone. And, I went, "holy crap!" I walked by the car that he sitting on, because I didn't recognize him. He was so thin. I got him home. Got him in bed later on, and then the next morning, I got him up. I cleaned him. I dressed him. And, he said, "Jim, what are you doing?" I said, "I'm taking you back to the hospital." He said, "They don't want me there." And, I said, "Oh, John, that was yesterday. Today is whole different day." And, I sat there until noon time, and I was just signing him in. I said, "You can do whatever you want. I'm not leaving here. If this man dies in that chair, that's what's going to happen."

So, there started, I guess, *my* journey with this particular life experience. And, they operated immediately on his tooth, and because they weren't regarding me as the next of kin they weren't telling me anything. Right? Which, I found very frustrating. And, all I know is that he was in there for, oh god, I think two or three weeks, and, of course, I was working during the day, and I'd go over when I could at night seven days a week. My whole life stopped. My total focus was on work and taking care of my partner and to make sure that everything I could do, to make sure that his quality of life in and out of that hospital was the best I could provide for him. And, I remember one afternoon where the gaggle of doctors' and interns and wannabe doctors were coming down the corridor and I could hear them, and at this point I still had no idea what was wrong with him. John didn't want me to know, because he was terrified I would leave him, which was happening within the gay community as I learned later that partners and whatever were leaving one another because they were terrified, right? And, so all I know is I stepped... I said to John, I said, "John, I'll be right back." He said, "Where you going?" I said, "I'm just stepping outside the door for a second." So, I did. I just stepped outside the door and the doctors came up to me, and the head doctor, Dr. Pollock, after the fish, that's how I remember his name. He said, "Excuse me," and I said, "No," I said, "Not until someone tells me what's wrong with my partner." He said, "What business are you in?" I said, "Not that kind of... Not a business partner, doctor. A same gender partner." He said, "Well, he has AIDS."

**AS: That doctor told you?**

JB: Yes. I said, "Because you're not getting by me. You can call the police, you can do whatever. No one is going in that room," because I had him in a private room. "Nobody is going in that room until someone tells me what is wrong with him." And, he said, "Your friend..." I said, "Correction – partner." He said, "Your partner has AIDS, and he has about a month to live." And, I can remember for that instant my whole body went cold and numb. And, then I stepped aside. I said, "This is the last time that you're going to bring the gaggle. Okay? Just so we know." I stepped aside. They went in. They did whatever. They came back out. I said, "Thank you very much." I walked back in. And, John, was looking at me, he says, "What?" And, I said, "Johnny, you look like you're pretty pensive." I said, "Do you want to share it with me?" And, he said to me, "Well, Jim, I was just wondering now that you know," he said, "I was just wondering if I should be open casket, closed casket, cremated or whatever?" And, I said, "You know, John, those are pretty important questions, and we will address those, but right now I need you to do me a favor." And he said, "What's that?" So, I went over to the window and I opened the curtain and I said, "Tell me what you see out that window,"

and it was a beautiful day like this. And he's looking and he looked at me and he said, "I see sunshine and clouds and blue sky," and I said, "Exactly. That's life." And I said, "You know me. If you think I'm going to let you lie there and die on me without a fight," I said, "You're crazy." I said, "John, I love you as much today as I did thirteen years ago, and for whatever reason life has given us this walk and you've got to know that I will be there, honey, going everywhere. Just so you know. Just so you know." And I gave him a big hug and a big kiss, and I said we got that out of the way, thus the battle starts.

And for six months I cared for him. I bathed him. I medicated him. And, looking back at it, it was the most extraordinary experience that I have ever had up to this point in my life. It was just... It was weird. It was beautiful. It was gratifying. It was a lot of things, because it helped me grow as a person, and it made me realize that there was something greater at play here than just the two of us. And, that was my first introduction into AIDS. And I started reading. I started reaching out. I started doing whatever I needed to do for support, which I thought was very little in the community, especially here in Halifax, Nova Scotia. You'd find more of it in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver – the larger metropolitan areas. But, basically the fight was the same thing. And, at work, it was touch and go, because at work... I worked for the federal government in the department of national defense, and when I wanted to take a family-related day off to go visit him or if his health was sustained high enough that I could take him out on a day excursion somewhere, especially the beach, they wouldn't recognize it, because I had put down my same gender. And just to clarify something, I don't like using same sex only because when you say sex in my opinion it conjures up a bedroom. This is not a sex issue, this is equality issue. This is human rights issue. Nothing to do with the bedroom, in my opinion, so I like using same gender. It sort of neutralizes that. So, all I know is that they wouldn't recognize it, and my supervisor told me to lie. That you were going to see... There's nothing here to lie about, so I started fighting them, because it was rejected. I would take it to my union four or five times.

**GK: Could I just maybe just ask one question? Do you have any idea what time period this would have been occurring in?**

JB: What year?

**GK: Yeah.**

JB: John passed away November 29<sup>th</sup> 1993, so it was started probably that year and I'm going to say...

**AS: ...early 1993.**

**GK: I didn't meant to drop you...**

JB: Yeah, '93. So, anyway, I didn't know what... I mean other than taking care of myself. That was something that I started, as I say, started reaching out. I started reaching out to the AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia, what support systems they had. I met a few people down there that were very helpful, and especially with home services and stuff. Most of that stuff I engaged people to be here

when he was home. That type of thing. And, it was a double-edged sword because you had homophobia plus you had this mysterious disease. And, I never thought of me until *my* doctor said, “Jim, have you been tested?” And, I said, “Tested for what?” “Well, AIDS.” “Why would I have AIDS?” “Blood. The transmission of fluid.” And I went, “Oh. Oh, I never thought of me. Never.” So, they tested me and it all came back negative, and they tested me at least four times that I can recall until I said “No. No more.”

**AS: Yeah. Enough.**

JB: And, on a personal level, I went through – after he passed away – went through all kinds of things like, “Why him not me?” You know, you’re questioning the universe and trying to make sense of something that, like, all of a sudden is there before you. And, I had no experience with death and dying. I had no experience with taking care of anyone, especially on this level. And, the number of people that dropped away; the friends that disappeared. It was on some levels, a very lonely and difficult time for me. Because, I would go to work, and I would go to work with no one to talk to where no one knew. I had a Walkman, and I would be walking around listening to Dr. Kubler-Ross on death and dying, trying to prepare myself as best I can. And, up to a point, I had to accept the fact that John was dying, and no matter what I did wasn’t going to save him. So, I had to come to terms with that myself, and I did. So, after that point, I realized, my job – if you want to refer to it as a job – or my role was to make sure that his care was the best that I could get for him. So, any chance I could I would take him shopping with me, grocery shopping, gardening. He would like to go to the beach. This is a photograph of John at Lawrencetown Beach, and it was that day that he came to terms with himself; his mortality. And, to me, the picture is special for that reason. Other than that, it’s a pretty depressing picture.

**AS: I love that beach.**

JB: Oh, I do too. I do too.

**AS: I think it’s a wonderful picture.**

JB: And I would take the nurse with me in the car just in case I needed help or whatever. And, so, that in essence was how I started my journey on this AIDS thing. I’m trying to learn more about it. Trying to sustain myself in terms of: What do I do now? Right? How do I survive this? How do I take care of him? And, it, in my opinion, was an experience I had mostly by myself. I didn’t find too much help, other than some help through the Coalition.

**GK: Do you want to just tell us a little bit more about what help they were able to provide?**

**AS: Or, what they were like.**

JB: Well, I went down to see what kind of services they offered. There was homecare, which always reminded me of the Jewish community in Warsaw. They sort of realized they had to take care of themselves, so the gay community, because of the fear of this disease and what was going on in rampant within the gay community, nobody... I mean, there were undertakers who wouldn’t

take bodies. There were doctors who wouldn't. There were dentists... Nobody wanted anything to do with them. So, they had to take care of themselves. So, they developed a homecare service – people to come over and to sit with an individual so that the partner could go out and have a little bit of a break. And that was what I learned, but mostly for me was the activism... Wilson Hodder, who was... I didn't like Wilson Hodder that much, but I had a great deal of respect for him.

**AS: Yeah. What was he like? We haven't actually heard very much about him, so what was he like?**

JB: Wilson was outspoken. In your face. Didn't bullshit. And his partner Terry. I sit on the Executive Committee of the Coalition, at one point I was on both of them – PWA [People With AIDS], which had never been heard of. And, Janet Connors was on that as well, but I found for myself, I could – or at least I thought I could – accomplish more individually, because I felt there was too many personality clashes. Everybody wanted to claim part of the realm. I'm not into empire-building. I'm doing this for the greater good. I'm not doing this for self-glorification or self-importance. I don't have that kind of personality. Right? So, I quit. I didn't like that ...

**GK: You were on the... In 1993 to 1995 the PWA Coalition and what would have been AIDS Nova Scotia are being forced to merge by the government, so that's part of the situation you're talking about as well.**

**AS: That must have been a lot of conflict.**

JB: Yes, and it was just too much there.

**GK: A lot of conflict there.**

JB: What I did, basically – without running the risk of sounding like I was a loner – doing a lot of things just on my own. Contacting Egale... I went to the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission. And when we found out after – maybe I'm jumping ahead to quickly. After John died, I applied for his survivor's pension based on principle.

**AS: Yeah.**

JB: And, I knew that it would be rejected, so I went to the Human Rights Commission. And that was before the Commission, two or three years, I think I'm going to say, until I was told Rosemary Morgan, who now I think lives in Ontario... She's a lawyer for the Human Rights Commission, the Federal... And she works for the Ontario Teacher's Union now, I think. Anyway, she was my lawyer at the Human Rights and we found out that there was nothing in the government's legislation that would allow us to carry this through the Federal Human Rights Commission, because it was not in the constitution. Nothing to do with the CPP [Canada Pension Plan] act, so I thought about it and thought I didn't have the money. I spent a great deal of money on John's, after he died. Like, it broke me.

**GK: You must have spent a lot on support for him for that last period, too.**

JB: Yeah. And, then at work, I was forced out of my job with the Federal Government, because of the homophobia. My bicycle tires were slashed. I mean, it was just awful, and I thought, "Okay." I tried to get short-term disability to take some time off, and I was denied it because, again, I was using that same-gender, and so I took six months off without pay. And, after he died, I applied for that pension *knowing* that it would be rejected, and that's when I decided – after exhausting, I guess, the Federal Human Rights and Rosemary Morgan – to get a lawyer. And, I went down to Anne Derrick's office. I'd never met her. I had no appointment. Nothing. This is just how my brain operates, and I sat in her office pretty well for about three hours waiting. I was told she was on the phone, so I said "Okay. I'll wait." So, I waited. Eventually she came out, and she said, "Can you give me a couple minutes? I need to brush my teeth." And, I said, "Absolutely." And, I went into her office and I explained what I wanted her for. I said, "I'm asking you if you could do it pro bono or..." I said, "It needs to be done." And, I said, "I don't want any other lawyer but you." So, she's like looking at me, and I'm thinking, she must think I'm a... You know. She said, "Give me a day or two." Anyway, she accepted. And, I think it was before the courts in the whole system for seven years, I think.

**GK: It took a while, yeah?**

JB: So, in that time, I was not only grieving, I think I was in post-traumatic stress. Because, for two years I turned to alcohol, drugs, and I was sitting here one time absolute kazoed and I would hear John saying, "You asshole." So, I signed myself into a facility outside the city for help. I wasn't an alcoholic. I wasn't a drug addict, but I needed help to sort through this whole thing. And, so after a week into a program, I came home. And, again, got the feet on the ground and I started again to see what I could do to help the gay community, the AIDS community – raising money, raising awareness, writing letters. The Mayor, the premier... I didn't care if you had a phone number, you had an office, I knocked on your door. And this is what I got from Wilson Hodder and Peter Woods. I don't know if you knew Peter?

**GK: Yeah, I did.**

JB: I liked Peter very much. But, again, Peter and I were at a conference one time when we got kicked out, because we were protesting the drug companies and the big pharmaceuticals, who were making oodles of money and using people who were afflicted with this disease as guinea pigs for drugs more or less, you know? And, we got kicked out.

**GK: Do you have any memories of where or when that conference would have been?**

JB: I can tell you this, that it was held at the World Trade and Convention Centre, and I'm going to guess maybe '96, '97. Maybe.

**GK: Yeah, that's quite possible.**

JB: I've got to tell you though – I seem to be digressing all over the place – that I would come home sometimes and sit in the garden and go, "What am I doing? How did this happen? You got people

calling you from all over the country to interview you. You're getting obscene phone calls. You're getting obscene letters. You're getting things from people that want you dead. What have I ever done to the universe? I'm a good person." And, those moments were there, but they weren't frequent. And, then I would also sit in my garden and go, "You know what. I am so glad to be where I am in time and space and living in Canada, because I'm taking my government to the Supreme Court." Because, in my court case, which was unique in so far as I was challenging the definition of spouse under the CPP act. And that's why I got Ann Derrick or had to go out, because the Federal Government's Human Rights didn't have the jurisdiction to address any issues that might come up with regards to that particular issue.

So, all I know is that sometimes when I think about it, which I don't very often now, but I do at times, I go, "How did this happen? How did it happen?" I don't know, but it's *my* monkey, as they say, and I ran with it. And, I always tell, and I'll tell you right now I had nothing to do with change in the social fabric of Canada with regards to the lesbian and gay community. I was one of a part a group of people. You got M v H [Joanne Mitchell "M" v Lorraine McFarland "H"] in Ontario. You got the people in Alberta, BC, different parts of the universe who all stood up and I don't think the gay community at large knows just how it impacts your life, your personal and private life. And, the most significant thing that I realized after John died was that there was no support system there for a grieving *male*. I had my doctor tell me, "Oh, Jim you'll get over it. You got lots of friends. Go out on your bike." And I looked at her. I went right over to her secretary, and I said, "I'm changing doctors." I got Dr. Chin from the Chinese community or Ethnic-Chinese community, who was just wonderful. She says, "There's no magic bullet, Jim." I said, "I'm not looking for a magic bullet. I'm looking for someone who's got compassion and also knows something about this disease." And, she said, "Well, I'll take him." And I said, "What about me? Where he goes, I go." And, she goes, "Oh, Jim." And I said, "That's the way it is." And, so, she did.

**AS: Took you both?**

JB: Yeah. And, I'll tell you a little story about her that... I think she should have been canonized. John developed cancer and a brain tumour and his immune system was so compromised they couldn't do anything. He was dying. She gave him morphine and stuff, but anyway she gave me her home number and she said, "Jim, if you need me, call me." So, I was up with him on Saturday morning *all night* trying to help him with his pain and his fear. And all I know was that about a quarter to eight that morning I called her, I said, "Jeannie, it's Jim and," I said, "I need you." So, she said, "Give me twenty minutes." Now I didn't know this, but she was eight months pregnant for one of her children. She had two children. And, anyway, she brought the kids over. I put my little dog out, because the little dog didn't like kids and I didn't want the children to be hurt. Anyway, John was upstairs and she came over pregnant and she went up to see him. John was six foot one or something like that and for some reason, I don't know why, but he kept slipping out of the bed. His feet were always dangling and I was forever going, "John—pushhh!" I had to step out of the bedroom for a minute, and when I came back, she's standing on the bed straddled over him and gently prying him up under his arms. And I walked in and said, "Jeannie, what are you doing?" She said, "Duh! Trying to get him up on the bed."

**AS: And she's eight months pregnant!**

JB: Yeah! She said, “Grab his feet.” So, we lifted him up and made him more comfortable and I will *never* forget that because I embraced it as the purest of... I never heard of a doctor coming into your home, let alone... “What are you doing?” Right? So, the whole six months that I took care of him are filled with some pretty poignant moments and memories of that personal part, but the activism part of writing letters, of being interviewed, even at work, I had people... I had a black man come up and say, “You faggot,” which I thought was ironic. “*Hello*, there’s discrimination. There’s a lot of similarities here.” Right? But, he was the homophobe. I don’t think he, in a better light or whatever, would have said that. The day that John died, November 29<sup>th</sup>, I’d gone into work. I was up all night. I waited until the nurse got here, and then I got to work and I got a call that they had taken him to the hospital. And when I got to work some of my colleagues were looking out a window. There was something going on outside. And the building that I worked in was just underneath the bridge at North Street, and they said, “Jim, come look at this!” Now, they didn’t know what was going on in my life, okay? It wasn’t until I applied for and started suing the government that things were made public in the paper. Anyway, I had gone to the window and looking out and I said, “What is it?” And, they had a jumper off the bridge. Some gentleman jumped off the bridge landed on the roof of a big van and he was still alive. And I’m looking at this and in an instant, I’m going, “Oh, life is so ironic. You want to take your life and I have someone I dearly love.” You know? And, I just turned and looked at them and I said, “I don’t—I don’t—I don’t.” And, I couldn’t even speak. I just walked away.

**AS: Yeah.**

**GK: Right.**

JB: And, then I went and signed out. I said, “I’m going home” to my supervisor. I said, “I don’t feel well.” And, instead of going to the hospital I went down to the park and I sat, I don’t know, three, four hours underneath a tree. I cried. I screamed. I talked to the tree. I talked to... It was just bizarre. And, then finally, I got myself okay. Let’s go home. Let’s go to the hospital. I got to the hospital, and I was taken aside and this doctor said, “I can pull him through this.” And, I said, “No. No,” I said, “Let him go.” I said, “His quality of life is, you know.” So, I from that two o’clock that afternoon, I guess it was, until about quarter to twelve that evening, I laid with him, I talked to him, I sang to him. It was pretty poignant. And, he... [whispering] It’s just so fresh sometimes. He died peacefully in my arms. I don’t know how I got home. I think I walked. I don’t know. All I know is I got home and I sat on the edge of my bed and fell back on it and slept. And the next morning when I got up, I came down to start preparing my day when I realized that he wasn’t... I destroyed so much. His wheelchair. Everything. I just went bonkers for a couple minutes. Then I caught myself and I said, “Jim. Stop. Get a hold of yourself,” which I did. I gave all his drugs away to the Coalition; people that need it. Everything that I got for him, his wheelchair, everything. Everything. I said, “Just pass it on to someone who can’t afford it.” I want nothing; just a simple thank you. And, then we cremated him and buried him over at Camphill and I even paid for his funeral. His parents wouldn’t pay for it, which I guess is right, because he was my partner. That was my responsibility. And, I had contacted Egale a couple times for help and I didn’t find them helpful at all unless you were from Toronto or... Here down in the Maritimes it was like, you know...

**AS: Nothing.**

JB: Where most of the major decisions based on equality and extending rights to the gay community were based on court decisions out of the Maritimes. And, I resented I think the guy, his name was Elliott or something, at that time he was the president or executive of the Egale. I had issues with that. I had gone to Ottawa at one point to take it up with certain people. All I know is that if they had a number or a name or an office, I was either writing you, calling you or knocking on your door. And, I got that from, as I say, Wilson Hodder and Peter Woods and Terry... I can't remember Terry's last name. I'm going to say Parker?

**GK: I'm not sure that's right.**

JB: No! Exactly. And...

**AS: And, you have been familiar with Eric Smith's case and Simon Thwaites?**

JB: Eric Smith. I was working for the provincial government here when they had given him an office in the Denis building downtown and my office was just above the floor he was on. And, I again, I wasn't into the gay community, per say. I had lots of friends – gay, straight. Any parties we had was a mixture. I didn't want to pigeon hole myself. I have as much right to go to that gay bar as I have as much right to go to that straight bar. Right? That type of thing. And, I remember one day getting on the elevator, and Eric was on the elevator, and people wouldn't get on.

**AS: Oh.**

JB: And, I'm going...

**AS: What's wrong with people?**

JB: I recognize him. Right? So, I get on the elevator and it was just the two of us. He said, "You going up?" I said, "Seven." He said, "Okay." He said, "Six." I said, "Great. Push, push." And, then I said, "You're the fellow that lost his job. Blah, blah, blah." He said, "I am." So, I said, "Do you mind?" I embraced him. Never knew him. And, I said, "I wish you well. I wish you well." I said, "It was wrong what happened to you." And, he said, "Thank you." So, we not became friends, but just good acquaintances. In fact I was thinking of him the other day. I haven't seen him around, and I hope he's okay.

**AS: Yeah, he's good.**

**GK: I think he's okay. I've heard from him recently.**

JB: Oh, good.

**GK: We have interviewed him. If you want to read his interview, it's on our site.**

JB: I've seen him shopping. I haven't seen him around buying chicken. Always buying chicken. "Eric, why don't you buy a farm?" You know?

**AS: Right. But, I was thinking more about that Simon Thwaites was in the military and was discharged, and just thinking about their legal cases as these precedent setting legal cases from the Maritimes, which yours was too.**

JB: Well, again, I look at it. I just don't see what I've done all that terrific. I went and had lunch with Sean Foreman. He was one of the lawyers and that time he was just fresh out of law school. Wonderful, wonderful lawyer. A gay man who set the scene. And, we went out for lunch a number of years ago and he asked me how I was doing and I said, "Fine." I said that this lady was making this documentary. And, he goes, "Oh, really?" And, I said, "Yeah." And, he had been awarded some kind of a medal or something. It was one below the order of Canada, and he had been in Ottawa to receive this. He's a wonderful, wonderful person. Great lawyer. Brilliant mind as far as I'm concerned. And, I went, "Wow. Congratulations." And, he said, "Jim..." He was teaching also at law school, and he said, "I don't think you realize the importance of your case." I said, "I don't. I don't have that personality. I'm just glad." It was painful on a lot of levels, but I'm glad that what I was helped to contribute to pushing forward the laws and mores in Canada to embrace the gay and lesbian and transgender, and anyone else that wants to throw themselves in there, community. And, I said, "I'm glad to have been a part of that," but I told myself I came out for the second time at 45, because I couldn't hide. There I am, photographs in the paper. I mean there wasn't a day and some days I just thought, "God. I wish I could turn this off."

But, I don't know what an activist is supposed to do. I don't know what... The first time I heard someone refer to me as a gay activist, I went, "What's that supposed to mean?" I just think I did the right thing. It's like—I wasn't at any marches. I didn't throw eggs in anyone's face. I was part of that scene where Wilson Hodder, he was doing his thing. Janet Connors was a spokesperson for the "tainted blood" thing. And I used to talk to Wilson about this as an activist. I said, "You know, up to the time that the disease infiltrated the straight community through bi-sexual men or the blood transfusion or the blood system," I said, "At that time they wanted to take all the gay people out and burn them, shoot them, put them on islands the whole bit. But it wasn't until the straight community started experiencing these things that, like, "Oh my god!" So, the attitude toward it changed a bit." And, I said, "Janet Connors is the face that's more palatable to the public because she's a straight hetero." Right? And, along with myself and other members of the community, I resented that. I really resented that. And it made me look at Janet Connors. She called me one time, and I said, "Janet, your pain is no less than mine. I've lost my partner as you have lost your husband, and for that I'm truly, deeply sorry, but I do not see the difference. My grieving is as deep as yours, and the stigmatization about this disease," but I said, "You're the one with the straight face." And I didn't apologize. I said, "You're the one turns the tears on in front of the camera." And, that's how I perceived her. So, I didn't have much to do with her even though I would meet with her at AIDS conferences and chat with her. I didn't dislike her, but I guess that was something as a gay man, who was comparing treatment of the straight community as opposed to the gay community. And then I read a book, it was called, *And the Band Played On* by Randy Schiltz. I don't know if you've ever hear of it. And it infuriated me. It infuriated me that they were just left to die. People were just left to die. But my partner, we didn't have a will. No power of attorney. Nothing.

And we were in the process of making that up *when* he developed this brain tumour. He went into a seizure and I thought it was toxoplasmosis until they told me, and that they had x-rayed and they said, "If it was shrinking then the antibiotics, then it was toxoplasmosis, but if it didn't shrink and it was growing but it was cancerous. It was a brain tumour and there was nothing they could do because of his immune system." So, they put him on some steroids to reduce the swelling. And eventually it wouldn't work and he would die. And, I think it was at that time that I finally accepted that my role here was to make sure...

**AS: He was comfortable.**

JB: Yeah, and whatever he wanted, he got. Right? But... My mind wandered there, what were we?

**GK: You were talking about comparing your experience with that of Janet Connors.**

JB: Oh, yeah. And, the difference in terms of the staff. I went into his room one day and he had a bit of a Kleenex sticking out of his pocket, I was there everyday, and I took the Kleenex out to discard it, right? And, I felt something in his pocket, so I put my finger down a bit further and there were his pills, his medications. So, at that time, I was told that he was not competent enough to sign a legal document and I didn't have power of attorney. I had *no* standing there. And his parents were talking about putting him into an institution. It terrified me, but I didn't say anything, other than, "Over my dead body." Without sounding dramatic like a little drama queen, I remember going in to his room and finding these medications, so I called in the nurse and I said to her, I said, "What's this?" And, she said, "Well, those are his pills he takes." I said, "I don't get it." I said, "If he's not competent enough to sign a freaking legal document, what makes you think he's competent enough to take this medication without any..."

**AS: Someone helping.**

JB: Yeah. And she looked at me. I said, "Hello? I'm listening. Give me an answer." And, then, she just walked out. She brought the doctor back. I said, "This happens again and I'm suing you. He is to receive the best freaking medical care that this institution provides, regardless of his sexual orientation." I said, "Do you get my meaning? And, do you get my point? Because I will sue you if anything," I said, "The next time I come in here if I find this," I said, "There's going to be trouble." So, from there on in whenever I went into his room, it was immaculate. It was like walking into the Holiday Inn. And so, what I did was, I got thinking about this, and I went out and I got a great big chart for, like, you put on a desk – a calendar – and I put it on the wall right at the end of his bed. I said, "Johnny," I said, "I know you can hear me and I know you understand. I know that. It's very important that you listen to me," I said. And, I had marked the date off. I can't remember. Let's say the eighth of August. I said, "Today is August the eighth. Just after the X, Johnny." And, I said, "You're in the Victoria General Hospital. Very good. Victoria General. Okay?" And, he's looking at me, giving me this smile. And, I said, "You understand me. I know you do." And, he just kept smiling. And, all I know was that a few days later the doctors came in to test him for his competency level and I'm sitting there. I was going to leave the room because I didn't want anyone to think that I had influenced him in any way to give his parents some fuel to fight. And, all I know is that they said, "Oh, no, you can sit there." So, the doctor's asking him what day it is. He like

looked at me then he looked at the wall and he told them. “Good,” I’m thinking in my head. “Great. Great.” You know? And, then they said, “Do you know where you are?” And, he said, “Yeah,” he said, “Yeah.” And, they said, “Where are you?” and he said, “Victoria General. Very Good.” So, the lawyer came in with the – and that’s when I left – to sign the will and to give me power of attorney and that’s all I needed.

Now, I’m telling you this as an activist, if I can use that term, because this is some of the things that gay people went through that we had to fight. And, I got a call one day from the counsellor I was seeing just so I could cry in her office in a safe way. And, she said, “Jim,” she said, “They’re looking for you at the hospital. They want a meeting between yourself, the staff and his parents. They feel that there’s too much stress.” And, she said, “I want you to know that I’ll go with you if you need support.” And, I said, “Well, thank you very much, Dr. Hendricks, but no, I don’t need you. At all. I don’t need anyone.” So, I went to this meeting, and there was Mr. and Mrs. Morrow. There was a couple doctors, a nurse, and someone else, I think, sitting around this table. And, I just want to point out that if I had a been heterosexual, there would be no meeting.

**AS: Yeah.**

JB: Okay? And they felt that I was spending too much time with John. His parents. That I was keeping them in the dark without telling them anything, and there was a third point they made. So, about a week before that, his father was in John’s room, and he called me a “stupid asshole” and a “son of a bitch” or something in front of John. I don’t care what you call me in the parking lot. I don’t care what you call me in the privacy of whatever. This is a sick individual. You don’t talk that way in a sick individual’s room, and you might think he’s in a coma, but he isn’t. He’s understanding. Right? So, I didn’t respond to this comment. Fast forward a week later, I’m in this meeting. He doesn’t know that I have power of attorney, and all I know is that I let them voice their concerns and then I addressed them. I said, “As far as spending too much time with him,” I said, “You’re retired, you have 24/7 to go visit him. Take him out. Whatever, if he can. I work during the day and then after I get home I take my dog for a walk. I try to get something... Whatever, I had ten things. Phone calls. Whatever. And, then I go up to the hospital and I stay until ten or ten thirty at night until he’s asleep. Then I come home.” And, I said, “As far as keeping you in the dark, I don’t know any more than you do, probably. And, thirdly,” I said, “I have a nurse coming after the long weekend and unless I can’t get one, John will not be left alone when he’s home.” Because they were just charging him for the Labour Day weekend.” And he just looked at me, but I said, “Just so you and the whole world knows, if you ever, ever, ever talk disrespectfully as you did last Saturday in front of myself and my partner John,” I said, “You will never see him alive again.” And, I said, “As far as I’m concerned this meeting is over. I am so goddamned sick and tired of this shit.” And, the doctors and the nurses they’re just like, “Whoa.”

**AS: Right.**

JB: I just got up and I left the room. I went back to John’s room. I climbed up beside him and fell asleep for a nap with him. And those were the sort of things that gay people, I think, by and large... But, this is only *my* experience of fighting for things that would ordinarily be extended if we were

heterosexual. To fight not only the medical system because there were certainly people over that were homophobic – Dr. Walter or whatever his name was.

**GK: Was it Schlech?**

JB: Yeah, that's him. Did not like that man at all, and he knew it. He... Ugh! I could have punched him in the face a number of times.

**GK: Yeah. He's one of the major AIDS doctors though, on the level of being a specialist.**

JB: Plus, he was a staunch Roman Catholic – and I'm not knocking it – who believed a certain group of people saw the Virgin Mary somewhere on a point in New York. *Hello*. And, he was homophobic. I know that. And, I heard that time and time again. So, I didn't like being around him. I didn't like him being around my partner, because *my* problem with that was he getting the best freaking attention that deserves or should get as a person with AIDS, or living with AIDS? And I didn't like that at all, until I noticed differences. I don't know what it was. It was like a whole new tide came in. and they were forewarning me – staff members – “his parents are coming over” or “the doctor's here.” If nothing else, I think at the end of the day, they respected me for my diligence, for my compassion. Because, very often when I would go to the hospital if John was sleeping I would visit other AIDS patients that I didn't even know. “Is there anything I can do for you? Can I bring you a glass of water? I'm over here every day. Can I bring you some magazines? Is there anything I can do?” This sweet little old lady, I don't know what her problem was, I used to sit and read to her for five or ten minutes. I'd come back and John says, “Where were you?” “Oh, I was just using the washroom.” You know? But, that's me, and I learned from that experience that, “Wow, I never knew I had that in me.” I learned so much about myself, and the world outside of myself. That, yes, there are homophobes. Yes, there are those that are pretty blatant about it. By the end of the day, though, a lot of the staff eventually, I liked being around.

And, the night he died. I can't remember what doctor it was. I want to say Dr. Johnson. Maybe. I don't know. Have no idea. It was quite late and I was quite tired emotionally and physically. I was walking in the corridor. I just had to get out of the room for a couple minutes. I thought I was going to implode, so I got up and I went out for a walk in the corridor and this doctor, [whispering] “Jim?” And, I turned and I looked, I said, “Yes, what is it?” and, she said, “I just want to tell you that you're one of the most amazing people I've ever met. Your love and compassion for your partner John is just *so* obvious.” Every day I was there for six months. And, she said, “I just want you to know that. That I have a tremendous amount of respect for you,” and she started weeping and I looked at her and I said, “Dr. Johnson,” I think it was Doctor Johnson, I pulled out a Kleenex, a clean Kleenex. I passed it to her and I said, “Wipe your eyes.” And, she said, “You're a tough son of a bitch.” And, I said, “No I'm not. No I'm not.” But, it's those moments out of that experience of all kinds of stuff.

**GK: Well, I was going to ask you a question, but if there's more about the hospital experience and that if you want say it, because I wanted to ask you a question about the legal case.**

JB: Okay. Go ahead.

**GK: You started to talk about that and then we...**

JB: No. I'm just saying, I didn't want it to become a personal thing – the legalities of it. It's all part of it. It's all part of it. It's something that born or spurred out of that illness. You know that, like, wow, I didn't think people did this to one another. That type of thing. It just opened my eyes to a whole brave new world, and I am so proud of the gay community. And I'm so fucking proud to be gay for those points – pardon my language on that point.

**AS: I'm usually the one that swears more on here!** [laughter]

JB: Because of the compassion that the gay community showed by and large. Some gay members, I felt there wasn't all as much support from the gay community in this city, and the ones that were supportive were glory seekers as opposed to, "I genuinely want to help." So, what was your legal question?

**GK: So, it was just about the case. You talked about how you hired Anne Derrick and you talked about it being a long legal process, but maybe you could tell us a bit more about – because that must have been a long period of time – what was the eventual outcome of the legal case?**

JB: Well, the legal aspects of it, it was pretty drawn out, which was frustrating, because of the time it would take. You had to wait and wait and wait for things to happen, and the legal outcome of that was that we won, because I'm told through the legal experts – my lawyers – that this case only pushed the government to extent and to change a social policy and extend the rights and privileges to the gay community in terms of partners in that community. Because, if the government didn't push through this legislation that we would go to the supreme court and we were so confident that we would win, and the government knew that. All the decisions up to that point were in favour of the gay community. And, I have to say that Pierre Elliott Trudeau, who, back in '69, declared that the state has no business in the bedrooms of the citizens... To me, I think, he was a leader who had a vision and he also put it in the constitution that you couldn't be discriminated against on and so a lot of these legal cases were based on that fact that I'm being discriminated against, because of my sexuality. I can't help this.

And, I thought that was... I started from there. Like any fight in our society in North America, whether it's getting the vote for women, the indigenous people – you're fighting this bastion of white, male, superior, blonde hair, blue eyed, Protestant, white shield. And, so, incrementally, you chip away at that with these, more or less, minor little legal battles or making a point whatever it may be until eventually women get the vote, indigenous people are being treated not over well, but better. Let's hope it continues. And I always think that this whole activism thing came from, not only Stonewall, but also from the feminist movement. Because, the gay community was standing back and watching this thing happening within the female community – the feminists – and are going, "Wow!" So, that type of thing. So, I wasn't burning flags. I wasn't throwing bags of shit at anyone. I was doing what I felt needed to be done, not only for myself, but for my partner

and the general good. And I often thought that I would do it in a heartbeat again, you know, differently maybe. So, my legal case ended when the government extended all those rights and privileges, and I watched on CPAC the vote that government took and I cried and I cried tears of joy, but you lose a lot. I don't know if the gay community, and I don't want to sound like victimizing myself, because I'm not. Many people suffer in this world and I'm just one of them, but I just thought that, "Wow! I did all that. You're kidding me! Wow!" So, I embrace myself and I'm glad I did it. It was a good thing.

And I had an experience one time. I was – I'm going to name drop here – I was over at Rick Mercer's house when he lived here in Halifax and he had a few steps that went up to the main door of his home – it wasn't that far from here – and I was ready to ring the doorbell and this guy on the sidewalk, I'm looking down at him. He said, "Excuse me?" And I turned and I looked and I said, "Yes? What is it?" He said, "I recognized you getting out of your vehicle." He said, "You're the guy that sued the government." And Okay. And, I'm thinking, "Oh god here we go. He's going to call me a fucking faggot or something's going to happen here." And, I said, "Yes?" And, he said, "Well, I'm really sorry to bother you." He said, "My name is John Dicks." And I said, "Yes, Mr. Dicks," I said, "what can I do for you?" He said, "I just want you to know I have a very profound respect for you. It must have been very difficult to, not only lose your partner, but to go public and fight." And, he said, "It took a lot of courage and the whole bit." And he went on for a minute or so, and then he said, "That's all." I just wanted to meet you and to tell you. He said, "I'm heterosexual, but..." And, I went wow, "Wow!" It was like an angel. It came out of nowhere, because I have had moments where I'll go, "Why did I do this? My life is turned upside down. I don't have a job. I have no immediate future. I had a life." But it was moments like that I go, "Wow. Wow." So, what I did do was important. I didn't realize it. Even now, I don't. You know, because I don't I guess think that that way, but in terms of the legal aspect of it, it was long; it wasn't hard, it was just long. I wanted it to be over. But, it just goes to show you that the engrained mores and attitudes were turned on their head. Look what's happening in America. The Republican party – *hello!* It's like sweet mother of Jesus – or, Jesus/Allah/Buddha – look what you're doing! So, I alienated myself from the gay community, because I didn't feel there was all that much support. There were groups of support. I remember talking to... What was her name? She was the Egale representative.

**GK: You mean, later on? Someone from here?**

JB: Yep.

**GK: Kim.**

JB: Kim Vance.

**GK: Kim Vance.**

JB: I called her one day and I said, "Kim, Jim here." That rhymes. "Kim, Jim here." I said, "I'm just calling to vent and to voice my opinion with regards to the gay pride parade coming up, and to who you're going to get to lead it." I said, "You got some teenager in Ontario who wanted to take his same gender partner boyfriend, whatever, to a high school dance." I said, "I lost a partner. I

spent eight fucking years fighting and made my very private and personal life very public. Lost my job. Lost friends. I mean, and, you, as representative of Egale didn't even have the level of professionalism in your position to phone and say, 'Job well done, Jim.' Not a peep from the gay community. Not a peep." And, I said, "I resent that. I resent it big time. Perhaps I don't suck scotch at the same bar you do." And, I said. And, she said, "Well, I'm apologizing. I am sorry Jim." She said, "You're absolutely right." I said, "You take your apology and you shove it, because that's what I think of you and your ego and your buddies that suck scotch at the same bar. I didn't do this for glory. I didn't do this, because I have no job and nowhere to go. I did it, because it was the right thing to do." And, I said, "I didn't get too much support, not only from the local community or from Egale, which you represent.

**AS: Right.**

**GK: Which given it was a Federal issue, it was really...**

JB: Yeah. So, when I hung up she was going to respond to that. And, I didn't call to argue with her I just called to tell her this is what I think and this is what I feel, and if you don't like it go to hell. And, I have two gay guys that still live down the street here confronted me one day and called me a "goddamn troublemaker." So, I just look at these people and go, "You mean nothing to me. You're nothing to me. You're still in your closet. You might think you're out, but you're still in your closet." So, I don't know how to respond in terms to the legal aspect of it, cause I had lawyers dealing with it, but these are some of the things that happened *to me* in that time. I got some wonderful letters from people. I got some nasty letters from people.

Janet Connors said to me. I was talking to her not to long ago. She said to me, she said, "Jim," she said, "You have no idea." Again, that same sentiment being thrown at me, "You have no idea what you've done." She said, "Your case and my case were huge." And, I'm looking at her, and still you could sit there and tell me that all day. And, I go, "I don't understand that. I don't know how you say it's huge." Right? But, I guess it was. And, she said. I said, "Well, you know, I destroyed," which even before you got here, I destroyed myself in John's diary. I mean I sat here sometimes and I just burned things. I have a photo album that I will burn, because if anything happens to me. I offered it to Egale for archives. I didn't know that this other organization existed otherwise I would have offered it to them. And, she said, "What did you do with everything?" I said, "I destroyed it, Janet." [She said,] "You what?" I said, "I destroyed it." It's a part of my life. Not that I was hiding or ashamed of, but for me, it was something I needed to do in order *for me* to move on. And it was very difficult for me. I attempted suicide a couple times after. The therapist I was seeing at the hospital, one day I went over and she said, "I was only seeing you for John. I don't need to see you anymore." Well, I need help. I was, I think, I believe post-traumatic. It was just awful. They put me on Zoloft. I couldn't deal with it. I took myself off Zoloft. So, then in that six months that I took off without pay, I started cycling. I cycled out to the airport twice a day, just to work things out.

I started gardening, working in my garden. Just doing things. Doing a lot of introvert thought. Not spending a lot of time with myself, but enough time that fed that need to sift through all of the stuff that I had experienced and to cast aside all the negativity and all of the things that were done to hurt me, as opposed to the things that, sparkling moments of that man on the street. When I see a

young couple, a young gay guy walking down the street with his gay boyfriend hand in hand or two women, I go, “Wow. I’d love to do that.” But, the thing is, I go, “They have no idea who I am!” I’m just some old fart who’s got artie blonde hair – not grey. Artie blonde!

**AS: Frosty!**

JB: And, yeah, so that’s another reason why I like the opportunity of discussing it. So, that young gays and lesbians know that there are people in this country who stood up and challenged the status quo. The things that they lost on a personal level. I’ve never worked again. I haven’t worked since 1995, at a regular job. They’ve all been contract. I did another degree from McMaster University in Addictions, thinking I might get a job in the gay community counselling at a high level of drug and alcohol use. I couldn’t even get a fricking job volunteering at the detox centre. I’ve got three degrees, so I decided after of two years, attempted suicide, of not working. I said, “You know what? I got to reinvent myself.” So, I went to everyone I knew – Alexa McDonough, the Mayor, Walter Fitzgerald – the late Fitzgerald. I had to see if they could help me procure a job. Not that I wanted them to give me one. I just needed a chance to prove myself. And, Wilson Hodder said, “Good luck!” And I’m going, “This is crazy, Wilson.” And he said, “Oh yeah,” he says, “It’s terrible out there.” So, I started just working for myself. You name it, I’d done it. I’d just tell people it’s legal and moral and if you want to pay what I charge, and I’ve done it. So, I look back. I get angry sometimes, but I’m okay. Life is fine. My experience has been mine. I’m not sure if this is what you’re looking for. I’m not sure in response to your question about the legal aspects of it, how exactly I could respond.

**AS: No, this has been very good.**

JB: Other than, it was all handled. I just found it too long, but that’s the way things work in our system, I guess. Anne Derrick, I have to say, was just spectacular.

**GK: Yeah.**

JB: She was wonderful. Absolutely wonderful in terms of... But, I think, as I gay man, I saw the tainted blood thing and the issue as it started out with the gay community and AIDS totally different and treated differently in terms of – until they started finding this disease turning up in the straight community either through the blood system and or through bisexual men. I used to go up to the hill here and pass out condoms. And I’m going, “Wow. What am I doing?” I realized then that I got AIDS’ed out. I got so burnt out that I disconnected from everything and said, “Jim, if you’re gonna heal...”

**AS: Yeah, take some time.**

JB: So, that’s what I do most the time now. I’m not too interested. I don’t go to the gay bar. I don’t drink or anything like that, but I’m very supportive in terms of the gay community. I went to the gay pride parade for the second time in twenty years. I just get emotional. And I went this time. I took 60 photographs, had a fabulously wonderful awesome time just with myself. And I thought,

“God! The first time I went to a gay pride parade there was 60-odd people.” Some of them had bags over their head, but this parade stretched *forever!*

**AS: Yeah, it’s big here now.**

JB: *Yes!* Yes.

**AS: Totally.**

JB: And, I just think it’s great and I think this whole AIDS thing also propelled the gay community, but I’m very proud of the gay community for how they responded to the catastrophic conditions of their fellow gays by setting up homecare, by being supportive of one another, by and large, and becoming outspoken activists. I watched a documentary, I can’t remember the gentleman’s name, on Harvey Milk. I saw that movie and then Harvey Milk, but some of these AIDS activists in the United States of America have spent 25-35 years of their adult life fighting for the gay community, and I didn’t realize it in those terms. And, I go, “Holy shit.” They have spent from the time they were twenty-five to the time they’re fifty or sixty.

**AS: Yeah.**

JB: And, I thought, I have nothing to complain about. I embrace that. You guys, we owe you. We owe you. The older generation within the gay community, but we’re shunned, because we’re not young and beautiful, and what they forget is that they will also be in that position. I’ve been there, but you’re going to be here as well, and I hope that you make it and I hope that you’re happy and all kinds of stuff. But, my battle for equal rights started when I applied for that pension, and it was through Wilson Hodder. Wilson Hodder suggested I do it. And so, I have him to thank. And, as I say, I knew it was going to be denied based on the existing rules. I didn’t care.

**AS: Yeah. Well, that was the reason to...**

JB: And it had just turned 1994, because I applied for it in ’93, just before Christmas of ’93, and then after John died. And then it was in ’94 that I got a letter back from them saying it was denied, and I sent it back to them. I don’t accept this, type of thing. So, it’s like, what do I do? So then I started...

**AS: ...the process.**

JB: And I became, not keenly in, but I started reading more about AIDS and about the gay community. Where am I in this? That type of thing. Fundraising. Going on marches. Calling people. When the two city employees – the two lesbians – were trying to get coverage, and stuff, I would call the mayor. See, I used to sit on the volunteer for Heritage advisory committee. I sat on the... Oh what do you call it? The Nova Scotia Heart and... I was involved in a lot of stuff, so I reached out. And, on World AIDS Day, raising money. I had my doctor, my dentist. I even went to the freaking undertakers. You guys were all making money off this, so give me some cheques. I even went down to the legislative building. Sat in there in the foyer. They walked by. “Excuse me?!” Right? So,

that's what I would do. In and of itself, I'm not a national hero, but it was all these little things – activist things – I did all helped. It all went into the same package and parcel, and at the end of the day, here we are, living in a country that embraces diversity. That type of thing.

**AS: Good. Thank you so much for this!**

**GK: Thank you very much for telling us and sharing your experiences.**

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]