

AAHP
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Interviewee:	Michael Graydon
Interviewers:	Alexis Shotwell & Priscillia Lefebvre
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Persons present: Michael Graydon – MG
Alexis Shotwell – AS
Priscillia Lefebvre – PL

[START OF TRANSCRIPT]

AS: So, the way that we start these is to say that it's August 21st and we're in Ottawa. We're talking to Michael Graydon. Thanks so much for meeting with us.

MG: Is it August 21st or do you say that on all of them?

AS: We say it on every single one. It's really confusing. [laughter] So, the way that we start all of these is just to ask people how they first heard about AIDS.

MG: Well, for me it would have been the early '80s. I remember going to a meeting of the AIDS Committee of Ottawa, I think, late in the '80s. Dr. Norbert 'Nobby' Gilmore worked at Health Canada who went on to work for the Centre of Excellence in BC or something. And he had this meeting for gay men about what we were hearing out of LA and New York. That's the first I started to hear about it. I would have started quite early for Canada. Like, Fucking For Condoms like, mid-'80s, which would be quite early for Canada. So, I would say mid-'80s I started hearing about this.

AS: Were you reading anything coming out of Toronto or New York?

MG: Not that I would really remember. Probably, mainstream gay press I would hear things. Not until the late '80s, early '90s when I got really more involved did I start hearing and getting a lot more information about it.

AS: How did you start getting more involved? How did that happen?

MG: I went to the tour of the Canadian AIDS quilts in the late '80s, maybe '89? I could look up the date. It came to Ottawa at Lansdowne Park and I volunteered, because I think I was already volunteering with the AIDS Committee of Ottawa. I went and volunteered and helped out at the site. I had studied graphic design after high school, and when I went back to school at that point, I think, I was working on an art history degree at Carleton University. I think I was getting set that summer to go into the third year. I was thinking for my Honours thesis I would do the quilt as kind of, "art as a response to crisis." Like, you know, Navaho blankets and Holocaust survivor art. Anyway, I volunteered at the quilt and I was just dumbstruck. I haven't seen my father in thirty plus years and no plans to change. And I was struck at the quilt about how much of it was about fathers and sons, mostly fathers not being able to cope. Like, "I was a prick his whole life and now he's gone." All this regret and stuff, and so I decided... I was with my partner David by then and I got a bus ticket and I followed the quilt across the country. I talked to them and I showed up and

volunteered in each city. Like, Winnipeg, Calgary – I didn't do Toronto – and right through to Vancouver.

AS: Can you describe a little bit how the quilt would be set up and how people would interact with it?

MG: Well, it was interesting. So, it was this group of Americans. Part of the committee that had created the Canadian quilt... Well, actually as I remember it now, it was more correctly a tour of the American AIDS quilt, which was to kick start the Canadian AIDS quilt. So, people were invited to bring quilts. And so there were lots of volunteer people would come, it was very much like handing over a body, "Here's my son." But increasingly daughters had got it from, not so much transfusions, but from using and stuff. So, it was to really kick start that process as I remember now. And so here it was at Lansdowne Park, I guess maybe at the Cattle Castle, I'm not really sure. In Winnipeg it was in a big high school gym. And so, I think, in Winnipeg I helped set out the grid. You'd set out this grid, if I remember it would be like four quilts in four squares. So, like four, four, four, four, four. So, you'd set out this grid and they gave me the task of setting out the grid. It was usually a 2:30 exhibition. I would stay with friends or relatives along the way. And the American crew eventually they warmed to me, because this came to be quite common. People would camp out and follow them. Was it generally about their own personal healing? Absolutely. And so we went to Calgary, I don't think it was Edmonton. And then in Vancouver it was at the Vancouver Art Gallery. It took over, I think, most of the ground floor. I would help set it up and I would help with the merchandise booth, and just kind of help out. Yeah. I would wander around and answer questions.

Actually, there was this awful moment in Winnipeg. I forgot about this one. This father showed up... So, there was a signature quilt. There would be a big quilt you could sign, but you couldn't sign the actual quilt. This father showed up and started writing in marker, you know, an apology to his son. And you weren't allowed to do that. Not quite the same as writing hello on the Mona Lisa, but you can't do that. And I was the one that had to scrub his stuff off, which I actually kind of objected to personally. I was like, "Oh come on. Just leave it. Put a little note beside this one. It's hardly vandalism." Anyway, that was one of things that happened. You weren't allowed to do that. But it was interesting, I was still struck by how much of it was fathers and sons. Settling this relationship and just the like, "Oh what have I done? I fucked up."

AS: And it's too late.

MG: Yeah, it's too late. It's way too late. So, when I got back from that, August, I was supposed to go back into third-year university in art history. Actually, I started and I thought, "Oh these old paintings are going to be here in 50 years." Like, if I take off... That actually might have gotten me volunteering with the AIDS Committee of Ottawa [ACO]. It just seemed pointless; it seemed irrelevant. I guess I had this sense of crisis, and everyone was very afraid, and I thought I could just return to this art history stuff, I could go back to this. And when I had gone to my art history degree, it was a bit of a toss up. Would I do fine arts, go back to graphics or do art history? And I did art history, mostly because I am more of a historian, like a social historian, and I liked art and that was a good fit. That kind of got the whole ball rolling.

AS: And so when you were getting involved in ACO, was it ACO at that time?

MG: It was AIDS Committee of Ottawa.

AS: Was it always AIDS Committee of Ottawa?

MG: I mean it started initially... Actually, the Gays of Ottawa [GO] had a hand in it. I think initially before it was formally it may have been... I don't think it was a PWA [Persons With AIDS] group, but it might have been like "Physicians Concerned about AIDS." I could get you the actual acronym out of the GO files. So, that was kind of the working group that formed the AIDS Committee of Ottawa. That was formed in the late '80s. David Hoe was the director.

AS: Let's actually back up a little bit because you know so much about Gays of Ottawa. Would you give us a little bit of the picture of what was happening? Like, we've heard a little bit about this from... Did you ever know Brent Southin, who was here in the early...? He moved to Toronto and gets involved in AIDS ACTION NOW! later.

MG: I might have. There was a couple Brents in my time.

AS: Yeah, it was a good name for that moment. Anyway, if you could talk a little bit about how Gays of Ottawa comes about, when it starts? What this context of queer and gay organizing in Ottawa was?

MG: Okay. So, Gays of Ottawa starts... You have the big rally on the [Parliament] Hill, whose name I just forgot. The...

AS: We Demand.

MG: We Demand! I was going to say "We Belong" or something.

AS: We don't belong. We do demand. [laughter]

MG: So, the We Demand rally and Charlie Hill was there from the U of T group, from UTHA [University of Toronto Homophile Association]. He gives his famous speech and a few days later – so, that's in August – a group of gay men meet to create what will become Gays of Ottawa. By the fall they settle on a name. Charlie Hill, who was working as an art history student at the Gallery [National Gallery of Canada] for the summer, was very big with UTHA. He came in the fall to kind of give them advice. Many people think Charlie Hill founded Gays of Ottawa, but he didn't. He'll become President in a few years, but he's very much thought to be grandfather to us all. He's totally self-effacing, "Oh I had nothing to do with it." He had a huge role. So, they formed the group and it was very much like homophiles versus liberationists. Like, the homophiles did not want "gay" in the name. It was going to be like, "the Bytown discussion group." People like Denis Leblanc, they were much more of a liberationist, they wanted "gay" in the name. And they settled on Gays of Ottawa because of the acronym GO could just be written on a check, because they had a

number of people who wouldn't give money to the group and have anything to do with gay, right? So, you could write GO as an acronym and nobody knew what it was. And so they start, and by that late fall they have an office at... There was a big community college, very much like Rochdale in Toronto. Gosh, I'm forgetting all these names, that's weird, I studied it for years... And they had an office down there at this community college right on Rideau Street. It's now a big condo building.

So in August 1971 they formed this group, but what's interesting is the group they formed right away will do three things. There's going to be a political part, a social services part, and a socialization part. Like, gay dances and socializing efforts. They had a Friday night drop-in right away. So, right from the word 'go' they are working on all three fronts. And within, I think, two years they moved into an office on the corner of Gladstone and Elgin. The building would burn down in a couple of years in 1979. And they start having a regular gay men's coffee group on Fridays, and they start having dances. And there were a few women involved, not too many. Marie Robertson, one of the women that got involved, one of the reasons she got involved was she got involved with a women's feminist group who had an office on Somerset, and she wanted to speak to the Gays of Ottawa about a choice rally that was going on on the Hill, if they should be part of the parade. And the feminist group wanted nothing to do with them and Robertson was like, "Well, fuck you. Like, we need to be working this together." So, Robertson got involved. And it was interesting because a lot of the men, not completely, but a lot of the men in Gays of Ottawa had done their homework around women's issues and they were quite unique. Whereas, gays and lesbians tore themselves apart, say CHAT [Community Homophile Association of Toronto] in Toronto, because CHAT just couldn't cope with women's issues, and the women could tell gay men don't give a shit about women's issues. Because for men largely through the '70s it was mostly about arrest and public sex issues and not having their sexuality policed. For women, it was really all about child custody and reproduction stuff, because basically if you left your husband because you were a lesbian the judge gave the kid to the husband like that [snaps fingers]. So, the issues were completely different and the men just didn't get it. Like, for women it wasn't about how their sexuality was policed in public because they didn't have a public sexuality. For men, it was all about not getting their head kicked in the bushes, which is a thing but it wasn't the thing for... You know, as one of the activists said, "I'm not here to keep you from getting mass arrested when you're blowing someone in the park. Screw that. I have bigger fish to fry."

So, that's how GO got started. Once we get into the '80s, GO is now on Lisgar & Elgin. They're there for several years until the mid-'90s. They start a women's Saturday night bar night, which is a huge, huge hit. So, very quickly the lesbians are basically financing GO. So, you either get more women involved in the Board and they start to shift and get more interested in women's issues. And it probably would have been one of the few groups that didn't tear itself apart around lesbian and gay issues, but that was also a feature of a smaller city. The pie is small and there isn't enough money to set up two individual groups. You could do that in Toronto, but you couldn't do that here or in London or in other places... Windsor, you couldn't do that. So, they really kind of pulled it together. In many ways, by the late '90s GO is more and more, I think, if not a women's group but dominated by women. But, one of the things that happens though is that once you get into the '80s you get more and more public venues, social venues for gay men – you get more gay men's bars – they don't have to go to the men's coffee nights so much anymore. It was portrayed as a less sexualized space, but you'd go for coffee and then you'd hit the bars. The women's bar nights,

which were going great gangbusters, started to drop off financially because a big sobriety thing went through the community. Women were going to the bar and just drinking pop, so they weren't making as much money.

AS: Not a money-maker.

MG: And, really with GO they were just amazing. Like, they did really crackerjack stuff. The RCMP was watching them and they knew that. But they had access because people worked for the government. They had access to government phone lines and government photocopiers. There were points where they feel they were CLGRO [Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights of Ontario], that they were running CLGRO. It may have been CGRO [Coalition for Gays Rights of Ontario] then, just because people, like [Tom] Warner and them, were exhausted in Toronto. So, GO was really quite dynamic and much more involved. In fact, I find Warner's book really downplays really anyone outside of Toronto, but seems to... I don't know. Like, he'll mention Denis Leblanc and those people, but he won't really mention how involved they were with GO. So then what happens, 1984-85, they set up Pink Triangle Services [PTS] organization, which was totally to do social service work because you couldn't do sort of lobbying...

AS: Political work.

MG: ...political work as a charity, so they needed a charity that would be separate from politics. So, GO gives all of the social work stuff, education stuff over to PTS. What GO is left with is kind of the political stuff and the social stuff, and that basically was the beginning of the end. Because the social stuff was becoming less and less needed. In '85 Ontario changes the code, right? Was it '85? [It was 1986].

AS: I can't remember.

MG: Anyway, they started to have political success. Well, there's more and more groups coming on board, and you're getting a much more diverse range of groups. This kind of one-stop shopping group, a generalist gay group isn't really needed. HIV is becoming a thing, so what GO is left with was of less and less relevance in some ways. I think Richard Goyette, by 1990 he's the president, talks about how it should shut down. That really its time is done. PTS is doing great gangbusters... Like, it's a cycle, right? So, now PTS is more and more largely irrelevant.

AS: Now, it changed its name to Kind.

MG: Oh, has it? I didn't know that.

AS: It just happened.

MG: But, Ottawa Youth Services starts doing really great stuff. Even the AIDS Committee when I worked for them, the Health Department was medieval. They were awful. But, now they do great... They continued after us, they do great stuff, they've really turned stuff around. They've got the gay zone. So, in many ways a lot of the stuff that the AIDS Committee would have done has been taken

up, as it was supposed to be. These other groups were supposed to take up this work and they have.

AS: One of the things that I find living in Ottawa is this weird thing that happens where there's a lot of political stuff that is directed nationally, and a kind of strange disconnect between the things that are actually related to Ottawa and having these national offices of things here... Do you have any sense about that those early pre-ACO days? It's sounding in the description you're giving that there was quite a lot of grounding of it actually being an Ottawa focused thing.

MG: Oh, absolutely. Without GO there is no ACO, there's no Team Equipe, there's no PTS, there's none of these groups. Basically, GO lays the foundation and has its time, because GO kind of seeded these other groups. Now, in their day they thought they'd never go out of business and they were shocked. Because they never thought in their lifetime they'd see these changes. So, GO lays the foundation. They do great stuff with the police department. Like, the first initial training and work with the police actually happens with GO years before. And the AIDS Committee, then we took it up. They ultimately lay the foundation for the bias crime unit and all that stuff. They really went after the cops after a disastrous bath raid.

AS: Okay, I was going to ask about that. Because in Toronto, we have the bath raids and the response to the bath raids as really setting the ground for AIDS ACTION NOW!, and I wondered if there were bath raids here.

MG: See, it happens... There was a feeling around the Montreal Olympics, there were raids in Montreal very much as part of that, "Clean up the town before the Olympics," right? KOX, or was it Katacombs, is raided, a couple bars are raided, I think a bath is raided. Then, a bath is raided in Ottawa in 1976.

AS: Where were the baths here back then?

MG: Well, there are two baths now. Then there was only one called Club Ottawa. I think it's still marginally called Club Ottawa down on Wellington near where I live. And it was part of a club/bath chain. You know, these baths ultimately they came out of the tradition of the European saunas. Men would go shoot the shit with their buddies on the weekend, get their weekly bath. There was probably always some sex that went on, but eventually these become stand-alone commercial fitness clubs in the '60s. But there are still some of the old 'real' men's saunas. There's the Oak Leaf in Toronto, there's the Colonial in Montreal, which are still sort of fairly traditional saunas but they're also gay saunas. There are days you go there and it's like, these are Russian sauna guys. You do not look at them. You don't touch them! [laughter]

So, the bath raid here I think it was 1975 or '76. I think, '76. The community thought it was tied to the clean up around the Olympics. And a guy committed suicide. I think he was a commissioner. He was the Head of the Commissioner's Commission. He threw himself off a building. And it's interesting. It led me to believe that every police force does this, gets their hands burned really badly and never does it again. Kind of learns their lesson. So, then you have Toronto. See, up until

then the baths wouldn't get raided. There'd be a men's sauna. I'd see you jacking off this guy, I would complain to the owner, the police would come in – it was very quiet. Then it seemed the police changed tactics because there was a growing sense of kind of alarm about how public gays were getting and stuff. Certainly, this is Kinsman's analysis. And the police changed tactics, much more heavy handed. And there was a feeling that the raid in Montreal and Ottawa were like test runs. Then, you had the first raid in Toronto in 1979. Barracks, the first Barracks raid, where they did bust down doors and really wreck the place. Then, in '81 you have the really big raids. And in Toronto that was very much felt to be a test run for whole new techniques of basically terrorizing everybody, busting heads and stuff. So, the raid in Ottawa they really challenged the cops, they challenged the media. Because, at the time, you would just publish the names, addresses, everything. That's why this guy killed himself. There was also a prostitution ring in Ottawa... I think this was also '75, '76. GO would advocate for the people that were caught up in these things, and they were out there doing stuff in the parks. And there were police officers who would kind of roll guys in the parks, and beating guys up and then arresting them. So, early in the '70s GO was leafleting the parks and saying if a cop comes up to you these are your rights. This is what you don't have to do. This is how you keep yourself safe.

GO even worked with the Hudson's Bay Company. Like, the Hudson's Bay washroom virtually in every city was always a happening place. I've actually always thought Hudson's Bay should be given an award. Because in every reasonably big city there would be a Hudson's Bay and there would be a washroom, right? And you could generally hook up there, or at least get a blow-job. And Hudson's Bay, almost like Chinese restaurants, everyone had one. They play this weird role. You could go to the Bay and you could find some action. Anyway, so the Bay here was having too much action and GO worked with them. And this was interesting. GO was very pragmatic. Like, GO... There were liberationists there, but even as liberationists they were quite pragmatic. It was like, "Okay, Bay. If you want this to stop this is what you do. You physically change the stalls." Like, instead of just arresting and destroying people, make some changes. Now, sexual liberationists like people say, in Windsor or Vancouver would be like, "Ahh! You can't do this." It's like, "Yes, we know that they're driven to these places and there are no options, and all of these things, but this is going to keep them out of jail." GO was quite pragmatic and practical, so when they did stuff with the cops around park cruising, it was very practical. Trying to get them to understand that this is what's going on.

Anyway, this guy was running a prostitution ring, marginally. It was a model agency, so he would hire you as a 'model.' So... What a dummy. He felt the Montreal mob was after him and maybe threatening him, so he went to the Ottawa police and he told them, "Bla bla bla the mob..." And so they arrested him and he had a little black book, and so some people were arrested. But the case fell apart very quickly. The people that the cops produced... "So, this is Jimmy. The boy you hired?" "No. I've never seen this guy in my life." And the case fell apart, but it involved a guy who was in Heritage working for the Minister. ... And even the Minister. So, he was out of town when this all broke and this guy came back from Montreal and, apparently, his name was on the front of the *Citizen*. And the Minister apparently sent him a note saying, "Until you're actually convicted I don't really care. Your life is your business and until people get charged with things..." And it was like, really? Startling.

AS: Because that was early.

MG: Yeah. So, GO really lays this foundation doing some quite radical stuff, but always with this kind of pragmatic side. And then, I think, they kind of had their time and they were done. Even Charlie Hill would say, “We were liberals. We weren’t radicals. We just weren’t.” But they really lay a foundation for everything.

AS: Denis Leblanc, will you say a little more about him?

MG: Yeah. Denis, he was interesting. He comes here basically looking for work. He’s from New Brunswick and he’s looking for work and he’s Francophone. And he very quickly gets involved with GO, I think in the early to mid-’80s. But if you were just a low-level clerk you didn’t need security clearance. So, a lot of people that were involved in GO, some that were involved in GO, they worked for the feds, but at this kind of clerk level. If you’re at that level nobody cares what you do. But Denis was translating inventory manuals from like, a tank into French. So, it’s funny. There’s all this intense anxiety about giving away secrets to the Soviets, and launch codes, and this completely out, everyone-knows-is-out gay guy is translating your inventory guides to your weapons and you don’t seem to be the least bit concerned about this. But, you’re afraid that someone upper level is going to give them the bomb. It’s like, give me a break. But I asked Denis if he had come here... See, one of the things I was looking at in my thesis was, that Trudeau pushed the government to be much more bilingual, much more bilingual society, all this stuff – did that bring a certain population of gay Francophones to Ottawa that then GO benefitted, because GO was always a bilingual organization. No, that didn’t happen. Denis just came here looking for work. But, he was the chief translator for most of their stuff and he really was probably the one with the best analysis. Then there was Ron Dayman, who was involved with GO for a few years, then moves onto Toronto, who Denis would say, “No. *He* had the finest analysis.” I think he’s dead by the 1990s... Not Tim, I can’t remember. He went on to do work in Toronto. But they had a real analysis and they were very much attuned to what was going on. Like, it was just coming out of the mid-’80s about homosexuals and the holocaust....the play *Bent* (1979) was in Toronto...it actually came to Ottawa. So, there was this real kind of intellectual fervor about ‘gay is good’ and all these historical things were coming out. The people at GO were really involved in these things. And some of them were just civil servants, who were good at graphic design. There were a lot of people helping GO out who were not actually members, a lot of Francophones, who would do translation and help out without actually becoming publically members. But Denis was probably in this core group that founds it, and they kind of stick with through to almost the ‘90s. And then one of the things that happen is that the next group of activists, they’re not seemingly willing to work as hard. It’s like, “No. You don’t go to the dance. You work the dance. Yeah, you might get an hour to go dance, but you have to do the set up and clean up, mop the floors.” And GO was finding the next wave of activists didn’t seem prepared to do that work, that nuts and bolts work – the grunt work, which still needs to be done. And, I think, the AIDS movement found the same thing. That there’s always this grunt work to be done and that’s just the way it is. And kind of forgetting the conditions you worked through to get to this point. And if you forget how hard it is, it makes it harder to do the kind of non-romantic grunt work.

But Denis was a real force. He helped really strengthen their connections with the NDP and he was

involved with unions. And GO had this real working class union aspect to it, along with middle class professionals. Because one of the things I was interested in was essentially, who were these people? The analysis is they're all white middle class people. And they *were* all white, there are only about three non-white people in GO in the '80s, but they were not middle class. One of the things I argue was that they *appeared* to be middle class. That gave them the credibility.

AS: To do the work.

MG: Yeah, because they knew they had to shave their beards and put on a suit to go to the Hill. They would act the part. Marie Robertson would talk about putting on lipstick and a dress and going to deal with the by-law offices at City Hall because she knew that that would get through to the guy at the desk. You had to play the part.

AS: So, in other cities there seems to be a pattern of having AIDS service work starting to happen, sometimes alongside Persons With AIDS or PWA/PHA Coalitions. Was there a PWA Coalition in Ottawa that you remember?

MG: I think the concerned physicians group starts first. I think that its focus was around providing services and assistance. I think it probably started with a buddies program. So, you're paired up with someone and help them deal with food and personal care. I'm pretty sure this buddy program, maybe a speaker's bureau, because PTS... So, for a time in the late-'80s PTS and GO are sharing the same space. It gets a little fuzzy who founded what. And then the proto-AIDS Committee meeting in that space, PTS then gets its own space and I think then what becomes the AIDS Committee becomes much more of a PTS kind of creature. So, they probably started with a buddies program, but certainly they draw on the brain trust of GO, as does PTS. And they had that brain trust and that kind of activism and those kind of skills that they could then, like I say, seed these groups. So, they have a gay group that falls apart, an AIDS Committee is founded and it reinvigorates the lesbian and gay rights group. So, I've wondered or suspected how much... I think there was a fair amount of AIDS groups actually funnelling resources and skills and help to lesbian and gay rights groups to keep them going, if not creating that group. I'm seeing the synergies and that you need these both fronts.

AS: Okay, then there's ACO...

MG: And the feds knew, because the feds were very much... They didn't want to create a new permanent line of health services. They didn't want that. They wanted to respond to HIV/AIDS, but they didn't want to create another layer. I wonder how much they actually reinvigorated the lesbian and gay rights movement by funding this health movement. I don't think they realize what they did. Because I think one really helped the other along. You could get money for an AIDS group for all kinds of infrastructure that you couldn't possibly get for a right's group.

AS: Yeah. Okay, so ACO emerges in relation to PTS.

MG: Kind of a GO/PTS hybrid, but more and more PTS, I think.

AS: And what was the quality, the character of ACO when you start getting involved with it?

MG: Also, because PTS had also been running a speaker's bureau for a while, so they would have had those skills and they would have building HIV stuff into their talks. I got involved with the AIDS Committee of Ottawa when it was down on Dalhousie in the market. I think that would be about '89. For about a year I was involved and volunteering, doing public speaks. And then, at the time I was working for the NDP in their research office, their CRO [Chief Returning Officer] office, which they shut down after the disastrous campaign, I think in the early '90s, when they almost lose all their seats. But, by that time I'd moved on, so the gay men's educators as they'd been called, they'd hired one for about two years and he was leaving. I think his name was Philip something. And so they posted the job and I applied. What were my skills? I liked saying 'fuck,' I was very comfortable talking about sex, and that was kind of it; I had been volunteering, I was comfortable speaking. And so I got the job and realized very quickly how little had actually been done in the first year or two. I think we were still on Dalhousie for another year and then we moved to the Queen and Bank location. I think altogether I was there about three years. And right at that time we were discussing should it be called Gay Men's Outreach or should it become MSM [Men who have sex with men] that whole debate. Certainly, one of the things that I was pushing all the time was that there are a lot of straight guys out there they don't care who sucks it. And it can be everything from, "I hate my wife," to "My wife is ill," to "Women aren't socialized to do this, so she doesn't like it," it's all kinds of reasons. I had met lots of married guys who, it's just... It's what they want. The wife semi-knows or doesn't know, but they don't want to hurt her. This is just sort of something they need for various reasons. It's always kind of been this way, what's the big deal? So, I was always pushing the, you know...

And I worked very well with Francoise Pelletier, who ran the women's HIV group because we saw a real connection. Some guy wound up getting blown and getting chlamydia, and he takes it home to the wife and she doesn't get diagnosed for five years. Well, she's going to have pelvic inflammation or maybe cervical cancer. So, we really saw a connection between what men were doing with their dicks and women's health. And I think we were unusual in that, we worked very closely together, the work I did also helped women's health. So, this whole change to MSM, some people were really resistant to that, but since a huge part of the issue with... I thought we were focusing too much on identity. We should be focusing on actions and behaviours. You know, because these guys who want a blow job they're at the top of the food chain, they're on the road for work, they can hide what they do because they pay the monthly bills. You know, they want to get blown and there's nothing she can do about it, and we need to respond to this. We need to get him to wash his hands, wash his dick, take a piss, all these proactive things, we can protect women's health.

I think because a lot of the groups came out of the kind of gay liberatory ethic, there was this intense emphasis on identity when in many ways in Canada... See, a lot of the work... What the States did was basically kind of the poison well thing, right. "Oh, bath houses. That's the source of it. Shut them all down." We didn't do that. It's like, the source of the infection... It's not the source of the infection, but it's certainly where all these behaviours are happening, so you've got to go to the location. In Canada it was much more go and do outreach – and I think too in Australia and in Europe – go to where these behaviours happen. Don't shut them down, because then they just go

and hide somewhere. So, Canada took that approach, but there was also still like this, “Oh, loud and proud gay...” I didn’t have arguments, but disagreements with Ted Myers, who was at U of T [University of Toronto] and did a lot of the first week’s studies. Him partly, but also Barry Deeprouse, who basically... Those were liberationists, they didn’t believe in bisexuality. They thought you were just a fence sitter, you just couldn’t decide. It’s like, “No, there’s lots of people who like both. But since you’re making it so much about identity, and this guy doesn’t identify that way, he’s not going to listen to your messages. But if you make it about just health...” And I came to believe that we focused too much on HIV, we needed to focus on a whole broad range of things. Like, you could discover a cure tomorrow; I’m still going to fuck with condoms because there’s other stuff. But we don’t want to worry about it. But we’ve locked so much into HIV ... I think that’s changing now.

AS: Well, now all the funding priorities are making it be that it’s necessary that you have to do Hep-C, you have to...

MG: There’s much more emphasis now on hygiene. Like, in the baths, much more emphasis on washing your hands and really simple things. So, the whole change to MSM was happening when I was there and it didn’t trouble me very much. But a lot of the old guard wanted it to be called Gay Men’s Health because they didn’t believe bisexuals existed, or that we should force them onto one side of the fence. There wasn’t talk so much then about a continuum, which for some of these straight guys, they start off jacking off with some of their buddies when they’re kids. For some of them it was how they got to intimacy, and some of them just kept it at that level. They wanted to maybe get off with their buddy and then just kind of lay around and talk, but it was their entry way into that. And you’re making it about identity. So, I kind of had to restart the program. We would do talks; we started doing outreach at the parks. I started a bath program where volunteers would go get a room at the bath and just sit there and ask questions. And in some European countries those activists would actually have sex with patrons and demonstrate. That wasn’t going to happen here. And in the parks, we had to work with the NCC [National Capital Commission] at Remic Rapids Park and they were quite hostile at first. Well, hostile in that they didn’t really want to talk about this. Because we were pushing that they would put garbage cans in the bushes, and I remember there was some city counselor at some meeting we had who said, “Why don’t they just take the condoms home?” And I said, “You’d put a shit covered condom in you pocket?” He was like... I said, “Well...” Because the NCC was complaining about garbage, its like, “Well, if it’s about garbage, I’ll buy ten aluminum garbage cans. You guys will empty them.” “Well, my guys aren’t going to want to go into the bushes.” “Well, why not?” “Well, they’re afraid.” “What are they afraid of?” So, we kept pushing them and if the issue is the garbage, we’ll address the garbage. They also tried to push that the issue was complaints about people having sex, but when you push them overwhelmingly the complaints were about straight couples and it was about drunkenness. ... So, we only did it at Remic **Rapids**. Remic had been a stable outdoor cruising area for probably forty to fifty years. There seemed to be these invisible boundaries. This end of the parking lot *** you’d park and go into the bushes. **The other end** of the parking was kind of Mr. and Mrs. Canada; you’d have a picnic. Very much an equilibrium, which was then disrupted, I think, by the NCC getting more heavy-handed in the later ‘90s. They really cracked down on Rockcliffe, which I really felt displaced a group to Remic and tipped the balance. And then they basically cut down everything at Remic that was shorter than four feet tall. Remic used to be a forest with all kinds of bushes, I

mean a forest, and the NCC years ago went through and cut down everything that wasn't a tree. They did it to improve the views of the river. They also told me, when I met with them in the early '90s, they'd rototilled the paths in the bushes to cultivate wild flowers. And I said, "I think you did it so people would break their legs in the dark." "Oh, no no no." But we found if you worked with them it actually worked okay for a few years.

The AIDS Committee, by then it was Angela Favretto... So, David Hoe was my director for about a year. Then, Angela Favretto, who had an MBA in non-profits, took over when we were still at Dalhousie and moved us to Queen Street. Then, the next Executive Director came in, who I was with for a year, Dan Loewen took over, and I left. But in those years were probably, they were probably the golden years of the ACO, because we had really great counselors going on. We had a PWA drop-in centre, we had a great women's project going on. My program was doing great stuff, and largely all working together. The phone line never really worked, but quickly we were supplanted by the Internet. I actually worked with, at the time, *Capital Xtra*, with Cruiseline. I worked with getting safer sex messages onto the line. I would do training with bathhouse staff because another bath had opened down on Cooper Street. It was very much about hygiene stuff. I did precaution stuff with the RCMP, with the cops. And we really went after the public health department here. Yeah, I would say, if there was an activist part to ACO this was the most activist part.

AS: Did you find... In thinking about the formation of PTS, that guideline or boundary around getting funding and requiring groups to not do any political advocacy, did you experience that at ACO being a block to the kinds of things that you were trying to do?

MG: No. Like, we knew that you... And it was funny because they had a support services group, so when is advocacy not part of support services? There was always this kind of "wink-wink, nudge-nudge" thing going on, but I never felt stymied in any way. I would go to conferences and, in fact, spoke my mind. You know, shot my mouth probably a little too much in terms of what was practical, but I never once felt shut down or stymied. At the time, it was still called Health and Welfare Canada then, I went through the whole Health Canada, population health change, but I never felt this pushback that you're doing stuff that's too political. Because I publically criticized at a conference the Public Health unit, we went after the Health officer – whatever his main title is – because he was issuing more, I think they're called Section 22 orders than anyone else in the province, completely based on hearsay. Like, under the Health Act you have no rights. If your neighbor says you're fucking without condoms, that's it. There was no jurisprudence, there was nothing. He was being really nasty, so we publically went after him. I think he moved on to Kingston, but I never felt that we were being too uppity. Angela was always right out there with us. The one time it kind of blew up, I was at a conference, I think in Calgary, and I really mouthed off about the public health unit, because we buzzed their line. Like, I had volunteers phone their phone line – men, women, gay, straight – and they just said horrific things. "Are you black? Are you a black woman? You sound black." "Yes, I'm a black woman." "Well, can we talk about black men?" "Okay." Now, this was the early '90s, and it was "what black men are like" and bla bla bla. Gay men were being told they would become incontinent from being fucked. Like, it was just ridiculous stuff. So, we didn't go public with that, but I took that to Angela and she took it to them and they were like... And then, at a conference I really criticized them publically and when I got back I was,

not with Angela, but I was in trouble. And she said, “We have to fix this. We have to get this to work.”

So, I went and I had a meeting, which was basically me and all their STD [sexually transmitted disease] nurses. And I did my shtick and they were pissed. But, there was very much a generational divide. The younger health workers got it, the older guard were kind of “grumble.” Like, “Why do you make him say penis? Why do you insist on knowing how many dicks he sucked?” I said, “You could go to the bath on just an average night and you could suck five or six guys, you may get fucked two or three times. That’s just the way it is.” I said, “The numbers don’t matter. You are so obsessed with numbers. I ate some crow publically, you know, I get it, but you humiliated people. You refused to say dick.” I said, “Every time I interview anybody else saying ‘dick’ or ‘fuck,’ they can throw out the dick and say fuck if they want.” “Well, that’s just...” I said, “It’s not about you.” The younger ones got it, but I found very soon after there started to be a change. And even the new Medical Officer of Health – who I can’t remember now, but the guy that took over – even he said to me, “Contact tracing is the greatest waste of time we ever thought of. It’s nothing but a make-work project. It’s a total waste of time.” Because we never have the right information, and even if you get the actual person they’re probably not going to come and see us, so we’ll never get the stats anyway. And then things started to change, but it kind of felt that we had to put right in the toilet. Like, really make it bad and then things started to change.

I worked with a woman, I think her name was Sabrina, who started doing anonymous testing through the Health Department. But she used to tell me that she’d go and have lunch with the other workers and say, “Oh, I got my first positive this morning.” “Well, where are they?!” “Well, they’ve left.” “Oh! Oh!!” And she said, “It’s anonymous. That’s the point.” “But! But!!” “No. That’s the point,” and they really struggled. So, I think we were right on that threshold where things were about to change tremendously and they did start to change tremendously. So, I guess I was at ACO about three years and I think it was its peak, and then I left as it was going to start to come unglued.

AS: We have heard that there was also an ACT UP group in Ottawa, and I just wondered if you knew anything about that.

MG: Well, there was a... Remember Queer Nation?

AS: Yeah.

MG: They got going. I went to a few meetings. ACT UP, I wasn’t really involved with here.

AS: But there was one?

MG: I don’t actually know. I think there was a Queer Nation group. I think it was when I was still at ACO, early ‘90s, but I don’t know that much ever really came of it.

AS: I mean in other places Queer Nation is more of a slightly... Like, more parties or cultural orientation, in other places in Canada that we’ve talked to. And in other places there have

been ACT UP groups that then transition, or that Queer Nation comes out afterwards. Do you remember anyone who was involved with it?

MG: The kind of main guy between Queer Nation was an out guy who worked for the post office. Queer Nation always had a little more of an angry edge to them, and he was almost too angry and edgy for most people. Good soul, heart in the right place.

AS: Do you remember his name?

MG: No. I just wasn't really involved in that.

AS: Yeah.

MG: But I don't know if there was a real ACT UP group here. There might have been.

AS: Okay.

MG: Certainly, there were lots of AIDS ACTION NOW! rallies on the Hill. Glen Brown would come to town and others. I think actually Phillip Hannan might have been involved. I'm not ever sure where he is now.

AS: Hanning?

MG: Hannan. He was a photographer. I wasn't too involved in that stuff. Like, I used to go out to high schools. And I'd be very blunt. You know, I said there are about five words for 'vagina' and they're all insults, and there are about a hundred words for 'dick' and they're all kind of funny. Why is that? And we'd talk about language. I used to do these sexual safety talks at Carleton frosh in groups of 400 for a couple years. I had this dildo and a condom, and I would say, "Okay. This is your dick. How do you put this on?" And we'd also sacrifice a Wesley Crusher doll each time, because it was the height of, "We hate Wesley." Well, I hated Wesley. It was this really neat time where you could do virtually anything. I was this huge hit with the frosh, and I very much... Like, I would say to the group, "You know guys, your dick does very little for her. Really, it's your finger and your tongue." And the women would clap and the men would cross their legs and be like, "What? It's not Mr. Happy?" And a lot of those students I really worked. I was quite hard on men. For good or ill, I really took them to task. And, in fact, I think one of the last ones I did I was brought into an Ottawa U talk on recreational studies. Basically, what people do with time on their hands is, well, they fuck. And so before me they had this old school public health nurse, who came in and put up slides of HPV [human papilloma virus] growths and stuff. Like, things you could only see with a speculum and it was totally, "Ladies, girls! You get him tested! You do this... You get..." Not one word to the guys. Like, *you* go home and *you* pour vinegar on your dick and you see what's there. Because, with men HPV is virtually endemic, it's going to do virtually nothing to most of them, but this is a thing, right? Anyways, it was horrifying. I was like, "Oh god." You know, you have women in the room who have socialized to never look down there, let alone touch it or get in a stall with a speculum. So, I came up and I said, "First things first, no pictures." And they all cheered. And I actually went to Ottawa U and laid a complaint. I said, "That was horrifying. You

have now scared the piss out of these people. That will work for about three months. They're not going to look at themselves, they're not going to touch themselves." And I like to pride myself on talking about how sex actually happens. It could be fun or a disaster, you know. But, ACO seemed able to do just about anything.

It was that time, there was a sense of crisis, that things had to get going. The bar had to be raised in a few places and we were seen as the experts. And we were learning it as we went along. Except for these social workers at ACO and the legal aid people – Angela the Executive Director had an MBA – but no one had credentials. And it seemed to be after me that there was a much greater push on 'credentials.'

AS: Right, and having the professionalization of the...

MG: So, right now could I be hired by any AIDS group? No. They wouldn't even look at me. But at that time what you needed was to be social, you could talk about sex easily, you were creative, you were mouthy – that's all you needed.

AS: So, would you have gone to any of the conferences? There was the Montreal conference on AIDS.

MG: Not any of the big Montreal ones, I would tend to go to... You know, Health Canada would have these educator forums. I would go to those, OAN [Ontario AIDS Network] meetings – much more around the education stuff. Durhane Wong-Rieger at some point... Suddenly, the feds wanted everything evaluated, so Durhane Wong-Rieger, who I think goes on to work with a health information network, I'm not sure where she is now. She was from U of Windsor – Barry Adam knew her – and she was really great at evaluating programs. She was an evaluator, so she taught us all how to do evaluation. When I left ACO and I went to work at the Canadian AIDS Society [CAS] for two years, there was a project to teach gay men's health educators how to do evaluation. In fact, it ended up, the report I wrote for them was basically about how they couldn't possibly do this because of the way the programs were structured and their skills and how the groups are set up. They can't do evaluation. But I must say that at the Canadian AIDS Society I found a much different, a far less activist-driven group. I was quite shocked, and got in trouble there a few times.

AS: That sort of more activist orientation there was just not a...

MG: Well, I wrote an op-ed piece... Remember the *Globe* had these they were called Facts and Arguments pieces?

AS: Uh-huh.

MG: They sort of have them now. Now, they're more kind of social, "Oh, I miss grandma and her teacups." But, I wrote this piece basically... One of the things that I had become increasingly fed up with at AIDS Committee of Ottawa... Now, I left AIDS Committee of Ottawa because of the Executive Director, that's why I left. I was also getting ready for change, but I didn't like what **the director** was doing to the organization. So, at the Canadian AIDS Society it was a contract and I

was like, okay. It was the next step. But, I was getting increasingly frustrated because by then we had a PWA drop in at Queen Street and Bank, and there was real resistance from the gay men there to other populations coming in – users, women. *Real* resistance, which I understood. We finally got our time in the spotlight and we don't really want to share that piece of the pie. I get it, but there was this real resistance. Like, they would do a clothing exchange and they were refusing to collect women's clothes or kid's clothes, just refusing. And it's like, "You know, this mom needs a snow suit for her kid before she dies. That's what she needs." And it just seemed that the white, urban gay man – this is being a little uncharitable – but it felt like the white, urban gay man, they now had their reiki and their massages and their teddy bears and their vitamins, and they were set. And the needs that women needed were quite different. The users needed clean works, the women needed clean diapers for their kids. And the gay men were like... And there was *real* hostility. So, the centre would not be open during the day until late in the day, it would open at 4pm. The women's groups wanted to basically have a respite lunch once a week for women only. Basically, women get enough shit from men throughout the day, it'd be nice to... Men can go anywhere they want in the world, virtually. Well, they can if they can pass for straight. You know what I mean. And women, they can't. And the fights over that; the fights. And it's like, "You're not even here. Right? You've corralled this little gay space, which you want to police very heavily, but a women's only space on a Thursday for lunch..." It eventually happened, but there was enormous resistance.

So, I wrote this *Globe and Mail* Facts and Arguments piece, which basically said gay men, it's time to grow up now. By this time I was at the Canadian AIDS Society and I said, "It's time to share the spotlight. Take off the cloak of victimhood and start sharing because this is what's coming." Because the slice of the pie we went after, white urban gay men, say 25 to 40, we got no problem, no question. The only group we went after like, we had one of the greatest public health successes in history. We went from probably zero percent condom use, more or less – unless you're an old navy guy who's always been told to fuck with condoms, keep your dick clean – to say, fifty-five to sixty percent plus in a couple years. Like, wow. And really dealt with it. Okay yeah, you've got the ten percent that never did or the ten percent that were infrequent. And we had some real success, but now it was time to deal with other populations and there was real resistance. And so I wrote this fairly nasty... and apparently, the Board at the Canadian AIDS Society discussed firing me, and a lot of Executive Directors around the country complained. And it was right around the time that I was starting these site visits to various AIDS Committees with other gay men's educators to talk about evaluation, to train them. Not one of them gave me any grief about this; they totally got it. And I would usually stop by, if there was a woman's center drop by and they would say, "You're that guy! You wrote that thing! He's that guy!" You know, but the Executive Director was pissed – *pissed* – with me. Glen Brown was quite pissed with me. He was a very good friend, and he's still a good friend of my partner, but he was very much, you don't air your dirty laundry in public. And I was like, nah. I eventually kind of apologized to him, but I was like, "No, this is what's going on. We've finally arrived and just like every movement you arrive you want to basically forget everything. You know all these words, like 'safe space,' you think you invented that? It was the feminist movement, and they took it from civil rights and they took it from labour, who took it from the Luddites, I suppose [laughter]. And this is what I was really getting pissed about, so when I went back to school, I guess in the late '90s, I was kind of fed up. I worked at CAS for two or three years. Then, I did work with feds basically in evaluations stuff, and I was just really tired. It was

like, you're not making the connections, you're not seeing the links. Everyone gets the links now, but at the time there was no... You know, these groups need different things. Even so much I went to a... It was going to be a kind of second national CAPS [Centre for AIDS Prevention Studies] study, it became a Winnipeg study, but they were talking about how it was hard to reach populations. And I said, "Who are you talking about?" And they said, "Prisoners," I said, "Well, you know where they are. They're not hard to reach." "Well yeah, they are." And I said, "But why are they hard to reach? That's hard to access, that's different."

AS: That's not hard to reach. Yeah.

MG: You know exactly why they are where they are, but you're not talking about why you can't reach out to them. So, now it was time to go after other slices of the pie, but that wasn't really my thing and I was just frustrated and tired. Because, one of the things that would happen – and this actually came out in the report I wrote for CAS – this is actually the only time the feds got involved. I was to train gay men's educators to do evaluation of their program, but very quickly because of how the programs were so set up and so under-resourced and very much a kind of activist, street smart, 'you know you're doing' approach, and for all kinds of other reasons it was just impossible to do evaluation. But also, the kind of evaluation the feds wanted – which was how many pamphlets, how many condoms, how many speaks – we thought it was useless. We wanted narratives like, "Well, I talked to five guys in the parks. One guy was really high. I don't think he got it, but the other four I think they got it and this is why." There are little boxes in forms. It doesn't work that way, so the project ended up also being... I did interviews with gay men's educators about their work. About why they got hired, what they did, how it worked, how or why it didn't work, which was our first look at how this stuff really happened. How it played itself out. And think it became... The document I can get you was called "What Works" (Canadian AIDS Society). It was partly evaluation templates and how to do it, and this study of gay men's educators.

And the only time the feds, or Health Canada, got involved was they asked me to take a line out, because the Reform Party now was stalking the land and a gay men's educator had said there... So, one of the things that happened was you would get hired because you were quite social and out in the community, but very quickly within a year or two you would stop going out into the community to socialize because every time you went out you were kind of Mr. AIDS. You just wanted to get laid, but every place you went became a place that you worked. You hand out condoms here... If you just go to socialize you couldn't anymore, so the guys would retreat. You're hired because you're the most social... Your greatest strength is your weakness, right? It's the thing that makes you retreat from the community, so you're only out when you work. One of the educators I interviewed said, "I can't wait to go out to a conference so I can get laid, because here I can't go out to play anymore." The feds wanted that taken out. That was the only time, and it was only because of Reform. They said that if Reform reads that we're in trouble. It was like, okay. That was it. It was one line, that was it. The people at Health Canada were very clear about it, "They'll kill us for that." But, you know, talk about piss, talking about S&M, none of that was ever a problem. It was all fine.

AS: Interesting.

MG: Have I gone through your questions?

AS: I think so – The way that we usually close is just is to invite folks to share memories of people who were active in the time or who just... We're trying to recover memories of this activism, but also memories of people who died. And so there's an invitation if you want to share anything about anyone. Also, if there are people that come to mind that you would say was an AIDS activist in Ottawa, who you think we should try to talk to, or hear more about.

MG: I assume you're talking to David Hoe.

AS: We haven't talked to anyone in Ottawa yet. This is just starting.

MG: Well, there's David Hoe. He was the first Director of ACO. And David Hoe is one of those guys that was HIV-positive and almost died several times. Now he's a life coach in Ottawa. If there's a kind of grand old man, sage, he's the guy. He's the gentlest soul. He was the Executive Director at ACO. I think I was at a Pride news conference and I think I'd torn up the AIDS strategy, and the next day he was like, "You know Michael, that might not have been the most effective." Like, he could correct you, discipline you, teach you in the gentlest way that would just make you get it.

So, I'd talk to him. Bob Read's dead. Like, Bob Read was absolutely critical to the latter part of Gays of Ottawa, but also PTS. He was really central.

AS: Was he from Ottawa?

MG: No. I think he was from around London originally, but he worked for one of the big high-tech companies at the time, they were out of Boston. What was it called, Digital computers. And I think he brought GO their first proto-computer, a punch card computer. And his best friend is now a prof at Concordia. I could try to get her name. She would have a lot of memories about him because they were friends. They lived at... Because one of the things that GO also did was they set up the Abiwin Co-operative, but to do that they set up a separate group because the financial risk was too high. They had to become separate. She was heavily involved in that and so was Bob Read, and he lived there for a long time. I lived there for a while. Denis Leblanc...

AS: Is he still alive?

MG: Yeah, I could get you his stuff.

AS: That'd be great.

MG: Tim's dead.

AS: Tim?

MG: There's a couple Tim's, but Tim McCaskell. The guy that even Denis said he was the real brains of everything, Ron Dayman. He eventually goes on to Toronto. I would speak with Angela **Favretto**. As far as I know she's still at Health Canada or the feds. So, David Hoe is the first Director... Like, David Hoe I think was very skilled in that often if you're the first ED you're the one that sets up the group, you get this locked in vision of the group and you won't let go. Everyone in the group is evolving and you won't let it evolve. David Hoe knew when to move on. And so Angela is brought with a very specific non-profit skill set. I think ACO went through those initial transitions very well, they realized what they needed there. They needed her skills...

AS: She had the MBA...

MG: ...so, she took them through that transition. And then after that there was just a bunch of disastrous EDs. I would speak with her. There was a funder at Health Canada, Heidi... I would have to look up her name, but she was one of the key funders; although, those people have kind of moved on. I would speak with Francoise Pelletier. I could get her contact. I think she's with Energy and Mines. She ran the women's project. She was a psycho-linguist by training. I'm not completely sure how she originally got involved, but her husband at the time, was long time Executive Director, Richard Nastor. He was a long time Housing Coordinator for the... What was the HIV housing group called?

PL: Bruce House.

MG: Bruce House! He was a long time Housing Director for them. He might still be with them. You know, Francoise comes out of feminism. She tried to set up a respite centre for sex trade workers, respite drop in centre, but I'm not sure if that ever got off the ground. It's hard to think now.

AS: There'll be more time. We'll send you the transcript and other things might come up. It happens that people remember names or remember stories they want to include.

MG: And, I guess, it was interesting... I would say working at ACO made me realize I was really kind of a sociologist. Like, a social historian. What I was really interested in the art was socially what was going on, but in doing that work... Like, years later I went back and finished my Art History degree with a Sociology degree, and one of the profs approached me to do an MA. And then eventually a PhD, and my partner said, "You know you're really good at this. You're just born to do this. You're a great teacher." It just really gave me that confidence to do that, because doing that work made me comfortable talking about anything in front of my class, *anything*. Like, when I do 'what's my sex / what's my gender' I'm like, "Don't look down there. It could be a sock, albeit a small sock. It's just my body. What's the big deal?" It's made me quite fearless in terms of what I talk about, but also doing the AIDS work, and because of a difficult childhood, that there's a real dark side to most of this stuff. There's a reality that we don't really want to talk about, which I talk about. And working at ACO empowered me to do that. Yeah, it gets you in trouble eventually. I never got fired, but there are enormous risks that you can take and most of them will pay off. It was a really intriguing time where anything was possible, and I think a lot of that fire would be rapidly lost in the '90s. You know, just like the early gay rights movement. Like, by the mid-'70s it's all about rights and most of the liberatory talk, that's all sucked out of it very quickly. I was

surprised at how quickly it gets pushed off the table and it becomes only about rights. Not about gender and difference and fluidity, it becomes rights. And I think AIDS became much more about professionalism and medicalization, and less like what really happens out there. Like, if you want a bed for the night and snuggle, you'll do whatever he wants. And tomorrow's tomorrow. And tonight I'll get a meal, and yeah I'll get fucked, which I don't like, but I'll get a meal and a place to sleep and that's all that matters. We can't seem to grasp that. It's funny, I don't actually consider myself an activist. I don't. I'll say that, but I'm not quite sure what it means, or what it meant for me. I think an enormous part of it for me, maybe for activists, maybe for social workers, is working through your own stuff, either consciously or not consciously.

If I think of anymore names, but definitely Denis Leblanc and David Hoe without question. You need to talk to those folks, because the counselors, I think, they've all moved on. Like, I've lost touch with them. When I left I didn't like the Executive Director, so I kind of cut the ties. And the guy that came on after me to the men's programs, he apparently – I heard through the government – he really struggled because people were always saying, well what Michael would do. And it's like, he needs to make it his own thing. I think his name was Benoit, but I can't remember. He was hired because he knew what he was doing. [laughter]

AS: Okay. Good. Thank you.

MG: Yeah, this was great.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]