

AAHP
AIDS Activist History Project

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Interviewee:	Patrick Barnholden
Interviewers:	Alexis Shotwell
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31 July 2014

Persons present: Patrick Barnholden – PB
Alexis Shotwell – AS

AS: It's the 31st of July and we're talking to Patrick Barnholden. Thanks for doing the interview, Patrick.

PB: I'm looking forward to it.

AS: So, the thing that we've been starting with usually is just to ask people how they first heard about AIDS, if they remember the first they heard about it as a sort of general context.

PB: I'm not sure if I actually remember the first time. I came out in 1981 in Winnipeg. So it was just at that moment when it would've started to be in the news, very soon thereafter. I remember coming across it in various mainstream news media. At the same time in Winnipeg, one of the things that was going on was, I think this was led by at least one of the gay doctors there, was to try and set up some kind of community health place for gay people. So, that was probably just a precursor to what was happening with AIDS. It's the tail end of what was happening elsewhere in the world, but in Winnipeg it was a bit late. And so, I sort of conflate those two things together. I remember going to one meeting where they were trying to set up a steering committee for this new kind of clinic organization.

AS: Had there been some specific problems with homophobia or queer-hating in the medical community?

PB: I don't remember any details before that. I just remember getting a little bit involved at that point. And then specifically about AIDS, you know, in '82 it's more and more in the news. I guess one of the first events I remember is, I think his name was Peter Evans who was sort of the first really public HIV positive gay person in Canada, did I guess a cross-country tour and came to Winnipeg and spoke. And that would've been probably in '83, maybe late '82. I think '83. So, that's how I became aware of it. In '84 I moved to Ontario.

AS: And were you already involved in activism in Winnipeg when you were there?

PB: I was involved with activism, yes. I was certainly involved in the peace movement. I was a bit of a left activist in some other things. We had done some stuff, and we were doing a number of interventions in the pro-choice movement to support people, and we had also done some stuff around censorship. I worked in a collective bookstore, so we did some things around there.

AS: Which one was it?

PB: Liberation Books. And there had been this stuff around censorship with *The Joy of Gay Sex* going on, so I remember doing signs and stuff to join in different rallies around that. So, yeah,

there were different things we were involved in but we were a bunch of left wingers trying to involve ourselves in different things. My partner at that time, Rob, did a lot of stuff.

AS: He was in Winnipeg?

PB: Yes.

AS: Was he from Winnipeg?

PB: Saint Boniface, yeah.

AS: And then you moved to Toronto?

PB: No.

AS: No?

PB: We moved to Hamilton.

AS: Hamilton. Why?

PB: Rob went to school there, graduate school, so we moved there. And I wasn't involved in things very much when we were in Hamilton, although I remember we used to go to Toronto and I remember at one point being at a restaurant with a group of men and Tony Souza was there, and him talking to me about Hamilton and saying, "You know, a lot of gay guys in Toronto are now going to Hamilton for sex because they think there's less HIV there, or less risk of AIDS." So, there was lots of misinformation out there. But by this time, this was '84-85, it was certainly in people's consciousness.

AS: And so when did you start getting into activism around AIDS and HIV?

PB: I think that was significantly later. I moved to Toronto at the end of '86 and in 1987 several of us went to the March on Washington, in October 1987. And I remember coming across an ACT UP table there. I think Larry Kramer was there and it seemed to be filled with energy, and just I remember hanging around it a bit and being very impressed with what was going on and that this might be something that we should be looking at.

AS: Yeah. How did the crew of people going to the March on Washington get together? What was the process of that?

PB: I drove.

AS: You always drive. [laughter]

PB: Yes. I don't think it was a huge group that got together, four of us went. It was me and my partner and it was Gary and his partner. It was also very interesting. We ended up staying at this house that Gary's partner Brian had arranged for us, and the house belonged to this guy who later became the director of the human rights campaign, and I remember this very interesting interaction. It was this guy who had come from Arizona.

AS: All the way.

PB: Yes. Well, I mean going to this March on Washington was an amazing experience because you would stop at restaurants and stuff on the highway on the way and you'd be running into all kinds of other queer people in the washrooms, in the restaurants, who were heading there too. But there was this guy staying at the same house as us. You know, there were like twenty people staying in this house. We were sleeping on the floor. I slept under the dining room table. And he had brought this whole photographic essay about the death of his partner, and he recorded the whole thing as it happened, I guess in the summer of 1987, and just how powerful that was. So, there was in that '87 march a lot of stuff around AIDS.

AS: And people doing active mourning and remembering.

PB: Yes. Exactly.

AS: And so, being around the ACT UP crew, lively and active, and there wasn't anything of that kind of energy happening at that point in Toronto?

PB: Not that I had yet been aware of. There certainly had been lots of people who were sick, right. But I don't think there had been that kind of focus. There was certainly the AIDS Committee of Toronto and people doing things, but nothing that would really be the kind of activism we were later thinking of.

AS: So, then you're in Toronto and there's this big meeting that happens at Jarvis Collegiate with a poster with an image of Thor.

PB: Yes.

AS: Did you see the poster around town? Do you know about people going to it? You went to that meeting?

PB: Oh yes. I was at the meeting. I remember seeing the poster very clearly.

AS: Where? It was just around? Like, it was on ...

PB: It would've been on streets. It would've certainly been up in bars, and it was very widely distributed. Yeah. I mean the meeting was very well billed. It was a huge crowd. The auditorium was basically full at Jarvis Collegiate, hundreds of people. And I think it was Alan's [Miller] partner who designed that poster, Gram. And so, the meeting itself I don't remember much in detail about

it. I think it was largely facilitated by Michael Lynch. And Michael Lynch was always a bit of a performer, so it was a good meeting because there was enough stuff to involve the audience. But I think it was the first time, like, these hundreds of people had been able to get together and express the feeling of crisis that was going on in the community.

AS: Right. And what kind of performance did Michael Lynch put on or did others...?

PB: Well, it's not so much that he's putting on a performance. He's just facilitating the meeting, but you know he had a way of moving that was very energetic. It was almost like he was dancing. I just remember him moving around at the front at different points and there was just something very artistic about the way he was able to do it as well.

AS: So something that allowed there to be all these hundreds of people to feel so involved with the meeting.

PB: Yes.

AS: Was there a sort of opening, beginning point where everyone's watching and listening and then what happens? Do you remember anything next?

PB: I don't remember much detail. I remember like, so clearly the part of that big room. It was like 26 years ago, right. I think we broke into working groups, but I can't remember what I did.

AS: But it must've felt really amazing.

PB: Well, it was amazing because, you know, for me who would've been involved in other kinds of activism, this was quite new.

AS: How?

PB: Well, the fact that it was around a health issue, right? But one that was so central to what so many people were living then. And so new, and to a certain extent, it was serious still. And the fact that this had been going on in our community with so little recognition from governments and institutions. Certainly, there were some great doctors and others doing things, but when we went to the March on Washington, Reagan was President, and you know the whole thing around him never having said the word 'AIDS.'

AS: Yeah. In '87.

PB: Yeah. I don't know if he had said it by then, but it was many years that he just refused to talk about it. And it wasn't that much different in Canada.

AS: So, it really brings together all these people who had not come together in that way.

PB: That's right.

AS: And was there anything that felt particularly queer about it? Or did it feel more like a health issue?

PB: Oh no. Absolutely, it felt queer. Most of the people there were gay men and lesbians, because lesbians were of course involved right from the beginning and, you know, you can't see Michael Lynch up there moving around the way he was and not have a queer vibe to it. [laughter] He was great that way. I remember one of the things he did was he read what he said was a telegram he sent to some member of the royal family who had said something stupid around AIDS, I think it was Princess Anne, and his final line was "you should stick to your horses." [laughter] So, it always had that sense of fun with the seriousness too.

AS: So, that starts and then you clicked into doing so work with AIDS ACTION NOW! right away, or what happened after that meeting?

PB: Well, I certainly clicked into participating in their actions. It's hard for me to sort of keep clear the order of which these actions happened in, but there were a number of them in that first year.

AS: Does one come to mind?

PB: There was one where we went to the hospital, the Toronto General I think, and had a vigil outside, and also had hundreds of people at it.

AS: And why the Toronto General?

PB: It was something specific around the treatment issue but I can't remember the exact details.

AS: But most people would've been being treated there, in Toronto area?

PB: Yes.

AS: Was that the one where there was coffins carried, or was that a different one?

PB: I think that was the one with coffins. It was coffins and candles.

AS: Was it silent or was it noisy march? It was a vigil, so...

PB: I think there was a fair bit of silence. There would have also been some speeches at some point, but who spoke, I don't remember.

AS: Were there people that were involved in that sort of first year that you were connected to in terms of the activism that you remember talking to things about?

PB: Well, there were a number of people who were centrally involved. Certainly, Tim McCaskell. But there was this other sort of layer of people, some of the doctors who were involved, Michael

Hulton. Certainly, some of the people had more activist experience like Gary. And Tim would fit in that category and I think a couple of others. And many of these were people that you'd also known that were involved with you in other groups. George Smith. So, I mean it was largely started by a group of people who had experience as activists in other movements.

AS: And sort of a basis...

PB: ... of how to do it and what the issues were.

AS: I want to back up just a little minute. So, also in those years, earlier, there was you know a number of publications and people communicating through *Rites* and the *Body Politic*. Did you read any of those things? Were they a part of your sort of everyday life?

PB: Yes. I certainly read the *Body Politic*. I was involved in *Rites* magazine in the "News" group.

AS: What did you do?

PB: There was a group of us, half a dozen, eight people, who put together the "News" section essentially, wrote things, recruited people to write things.

AS: I didn't know that.

PB: Oh yeah.

AS: Were you always involved in that? How did you start doing that?

PB: I guess I did write. [laughter] I remember one of the first things I did was I covered *The Joy of Gay Sex* trial. I had this history in Winnipeg of defending this book, and then shortly after I was in Toronto there was a significant trial that went on for like a week at the old courthouse where the Opera House is now, and I mean, I went there everyday to see what was happening in this trial and wrote about it. And it was the one where the judge, in his final rejection of Canada Customs trying to prevent this book from coming into Canada, had this line. It was something like, "Anal sex is to homosexuality what Mozart is to music."

AS: The judge said this?

PB: Yes. [laughter] So, I got involved with things like that. It wasn't a big step to get involved in AIDS activism.

AS: Do you think that having those publications was important to being able to have hundreds of people come out to that first meeting at Jarvis? I think one of the things now, is that it's hard to sort of picture kind of pre-Internet, pre-how everyone comes together and forms a kind of community of knowing what's going on, and being committed to things.

PB: Well, certainly these publications were important in keeping people informed. But to put together these big meetings and rallies and stuff, we went to the bars. I remember many times leafleting at bars. It used to be great, though leafleting and picking up someone, right?

AS: Because they could be like, “What are you up to?”

PB: I remember once I was assigned to leaflet this country and western bar just off Yonge Street, I can't remember what it was called. But I remember being there and running into someone I knew from where I worked in the finance industry at the time. You know, we went to these things and we'd be at the doors handing out flyers to people going in and out. Of course it was the 80s so we were also using phone trees to get messages around.

AS: And the bars were supportive and open to the flyering?

PB: Yeah.

AS: Okay, so there's that action, the vigil at Toronto General. Do you remember any other actions that happened early in that time when AIDS ACTION NOW! first started?

PB: So, we're talking about 1988. There was that one. Then there was the one... I don't remember when this was is the problem, I think it might've been in '88, the Jake Epp demonstration, which was outside the Sheraton and at the City Hall, Nathan Philips Square across the street. This is one of my first awarenesses of Karen Pearlston, who would become involved in the organization, and she had just moved back from the U.S. where she'd been an activist for some years. And I had never met her before, probably met at a couple of meetings, but at this rally outside the Sheraton I remember very distinctly her pretty aggressively engaging with the police. And me sort of following her around at a distance of four or five feet and kept saying to the police, "I'm watching what's happening here." And she wasn't like physically attacking them or anything, but she was challenging them on what they were doing and keeping people away and stuff.

AS: They were trying to coral the crowd?

PB: Yes, essentially. And you know, they like to control crowds, right? And she was having none of that. So, that was my first real remembrance of her at one of our demonstrations. Now, I think this is the one where we burnt Jake Epp in effigy, which took place across the street.

AS: At Nathan Phillips.

PB: Yes. And I think Greg Pavelich was holding the effigy when it was lit on fire. Some people had gone into this conference with a large banner. I think it was the "EPP=DEATH" banner. Now, of course, what came out of this is the rumours we heard from Ottawa was that this enraged the Prime Minister. And apparently he called Jake Epp in and said, "What the hell is going on here? What are you doing?"

AS: Can you talk about like what was or wasn't Jake Epp doing? Why was he burned in effigy? What was the situation?

PB: Well, I was from Manitoba so was familiar with Jake Epp's reputation as a social conservative. We were looking for some kind of National AIDS Strategy that came out after that, but it seemed like there was no coordination of efforts and no real national strategy of how to deal with what was so clearly a major crisis. There was just no political leadership on this. You had various places where Medical Officers of Health were doing sometimes good things, sometimes terrible things, like around quarantine, and it was essentially chaos.

AS: What had he said about quarantine as a... Do you remember?

PB: What did Jake Epp say?

AS: Yeah.

PB: I don't remember specifically what he had said about quarantine. I know in the Toronto and Ontario circumstance people had raised this. I think one of the Medical Officers of Health said this. And it was happening elsewhere in the world, right?

AS: Right. Yeah. It was a real...

PB: It was a real threat.

AS: So, Jake Epp got burned in effigy.

PB: Yes.

AS: Did everyone in the crowd feel like they were completely on side? What was it like?

PB: Oh, I think people were very happy to see him burned. Yes. [laughter] This was a very well-received action.

AS: Do you remember who had made the effigy or anything about that, putting it together? Were you involved in the committee at that time with AIDS ACTION NOW!?

PB: I don't think so. I remember some slight controversy around this thing. It might've been made, this is very on the edge of my memory, Alexis, I think there was something. Maybe Michael Smith and some of his friends had made this effigy and they put something on it that some people didn't like.

AS: Yeah, in the pictures it says "KKKanada."

PB: Yes. That's it exactly.

AS: Yeah, which looking at the...

PB: So, some people thought was over the edge. Personally, I didn't have a problem with it, but some people didn't like it. You always had this kind of thing going on where some people wanted to take things further than other people. George specifically was always on this thing about respectability, and he framed it up mostly about you had to wear a suit to meet with government officials.

AS: There are pictures of him in suits, definite suits.

PB: I remember him in suits. [laughter] I think, when a group of people went to Ottawa he was adamant about how to dress. He was giving them lessons, he knew how to do a tie up. So, other people in AIDS ACTION NOW! were not exactly wedded to this idea of respectability in that way. And I mean, I'm not saying George was fanatical about respect in every way but it did come up in some ways.

AS: Right. It was a strategic move.

PB: Yes. And you know probably from a perspective of, was it helpful at times? It probably was. But I was not worried about it particularly in terms of the Jake Epp effigy.

AS: Right. Yeah. Because it's a different kind of move.

PB: We didn't have to buy the effigy a new suit in my opinion. [laughter]

AS: The effigy wore a suit, right?

PB: Yes, it did.

AS: And then were you involved in any of the ddi stuff?

PB: The ddi stuff was later. Not until '89.

AS: Okay, so maybe we should talk, if there's anything else that's sort of happening or that comes to mind around those '88 times.

PB: Well, at some point in there I became involved in the Media committee of AIDS ACTION NOW! and we put out a newsletter, *AIDS ACTION NEWS*, and we also facilitated a lot of our relationships with the media. George was very into cultivating relationships with certain reporters. And the thing I learned from George there, that was very important was how we really had to put a significant amount of energy and thought into thinking how we were going to frame what we wanted the media to do – whether we were ultimately successfully in getting them to take up that frame was another question – but to make sure we knew what we wanted and how we were going to try and get that. I remember at one demonstration, he spent half the demonstration walking with the *Toronto Star* reporter. Just trying to get her to have more full understanding. I mean,

often reporters would have a beat, but often they would come completely ignorant of what the issues were.

AS: Have no idea at all.

PB: Yes. Exactly. So, it was work to try and get some frames in there for that. George was quite good at thinking about that.

AS: Was the Media Committee big?

PB: No, it wasn't big. You know, six-eight people.

AS: Okay. And it would write press releases? What was the...

PB: Yes. We would write press releases. We would do the newsletter, talk about how to get different things into the media, even like different ideas for actions we might want to do. So, we worked closely with the Public Action Committee and things like this to support them in their work.

AS: And would you have gone, or someone from the Media Committee, go to the Steering Committee? Do you remember anything about that relationship?

PB: Well, I think George was on the Steering Committee.

AS: So, he was sort of the conduit between “the Steering Committee’s doing this, let’s work on...”

PB: Yes. And there may have been other people from time to time that were also on the Steering Committee. But I mean, some of the central people on the media committee were me, George, Bernard Courte. George and Bernard both worked at OISE, so we used to have our meetings like after work there about 5:30 in the evening. We'd have a room at OISE for our meetings. Mary Louise Adams, this young fellow called Ross Fletcher was involved for a while, but not for long because he died.

AS: Someone else has mentioned Ross.

PB: Yeah.

AS: What was he like?

PB: Ross? He was a younger fellow in his early twenties, who I guess had been diagnosed and wanted to get involved with something. He came out and, for a while, he had lots of energy and he also wanted to learn a lot too. But he got quite sick quite soon, so. I remember being with him at a restaurant on Queen Street once. He and I went for lunch. It wasn't long after that that he got sick and died. I'm not even sure where he was from. He probably was from Toronto. And then there

was Colman Jones, who worked in the media. He did a lot of work at CBC. So, it was very good. One of the other things I did through my relationship with the Media Committee, was with CKLN, the community radio station at Ryerson. One of George's roommates worked there as the news director, this gay guy – Dan Wardock. And they wanted to have an AIDS segment on their queer show – The Pink Antenna. So, George came to me and said, "Would you consider doing that?" So, I did. And I used to have this ten minute segment every week, which was called also "AIDS ACTION NEWS," because we were so original. [laughter] Our theme song was Michael Callen's "Living in Wartime."

AS: So it would open the segment?

PB: Yes. And I would have Sean Hosein as a guest once a month doing treatment updates, and the rest of the time essentially reported on activist news in Toronto, and from around the world essentially what was happening. I remember once doing a live report from when I was in New York on the phone. And that was basically my in. I ended up working at CKLN full-time as a news director after that. You know, I started off with this little show, then I became host of their queer show, then became the News Director.

AS: Amazing.

PB: Really a quick series of happenings. Yes, it was amazing. But it was all because George made that first approach to him. So yeah, I certainly was doing that by early 1988 in the Media Committee.

AS: Yeah. I mean, it's really interesting because it's a whole other way for people to get information and think about things.

PB: Yes.

AS: And did you interview people? Or would mostly just you know, this is what's been happening and here's the latest.

PB: We might have had some interviews in AIDS ACTION NEWS, I can't actually remember. But I would sometimes interview people on my radio show. I remember having Bill Berinati as a guest once on that.

AS: Who was he?

PB: He was a medical care provider of some kind - a chiropractor I believe and later chair of the Casey House board. He was very involved in some alternative treatments and stuff. We would've had some things like that going on. And then when I worked at CKLN as the news director we'd integrate more queer stuff and more AIDS stuff throughout our program.

AS: So, it didn't have to just be this sort 10 minutes on the queer show.

PB: That's right. That was a good start.

AS: That's great. How long did you work at CKLN?

PB: A year and a half maybe. You see Dan, who lived with George, was the News Director and he was leaving for some reason.

AS: He lived at one of the Kathedrals?

PB: No, no. In the house where George and Tim and Richard lived on Seaton Street, and their giant cat.

AS: How big was the giant cat?

[motions a size]

AS: [laughter] So, he was the News Director and he was leaving.

PB: Yes, and I ended up being the News Director. First of all I was sharing it with someone, but then she left too and I was the News Director. I did that right up until I left Toronto, which was the fall of 1990.

AS: Okay. So, do you remember in there? There was the G7 demonstration in '88. Do you remember anything about that?

PB: Yeah. I do remember.

AS: Keep going.

PB: I know I was still working at the time of the G7. I remember from my office window, I saw Margaret Thatcher. [laughter] Our office was right at the corner of, not King, the street south of there, and University. And this whole area was like closed off for this G7 thing, but I still had to go to work. So, you had to get off at a different subway stop and things like that, and then walk in. But I could do that because I was working there.

AS: Right. You could say...

PB: But yes, we did this thing. I think it started at Queen's Park. We were going to march south. And there was a lot of people preparing to cross the police barriers. And my recollection is that Chuck Grochmal spoke at the event at Queen's Park. Now, there was a lot of division. I wasn't involved in going to the organizing committees for the G7, other people were. I remember Barry Weisleder coming up to me and saying, "Oh. You can't march down the street. You're going to get in too much trouble if you do this." Barry was one of the, and still is, one of the Trotskyists around Toronto. But we still marched down, maybe it was to Dundas, I can't remember where the police barriers were. And I was doing a lot of pictures. I was doing a lot of photography at this event, so I

found some newspaper box that I could stand on and take pictures as people threw themselves across the barrier.

AS: Wow. And people really did?

PB: Oh yes. There were quite a few people arrested. I don't remember who from AIDS ACTION NOW! might've been doing that, but certainly there were people there right at the front.

AS: Right. And so they were bringing a question to the sort of global situation around AIDS and HIV.

PB: Yes. Absolutely. That was the point.

AS: And a lot of people were there.

PB: Thousands of people were there. Yes. It was a very big event. I had this great view from the tenth floor of my office building.

AS: [laughter] Of Thatcher.

PB: Not one of the highlights because, you know, I've seen her a number of times.

AS: Really?

PB: I was in the London the day she first got elected in 1979 and I remembered thinking, "This is a big event." I went to Downing Street and saw her going in there. And then I was in London during the Falklands War in 1982 when the British ship was blown up by the Argentinians, and I thought, "This would be a good day to go to the House of Commons and see what's going on." So, we went to the House of Commons and heard her speech. She was very emotional.

AS: I never knew about this connection between you and Maggie.

PB: I don't think it was a connection. Oh, so here's a story. Margaret Thatcher, of course, when she would travel around the world, Margaret Thatcher's hair – that's not natural, right? Well, it's natural hair but it requires substantial maintenance. So of course, you have to have what? A hairdresser. What does that mean?

AS: A gay man?

PB: Yes! [laughter]

PB: And of course Greg Pavelich happened to know the hairdresser who did Margaret Thatcher's hair when she came to Toronto for this event. And this was the time around when her government had introduced what was called Clause 28, which was this thing saying it was forbidden in schools in the UK to teach anything, and I don't remember the exact wording, but it referred to gay couples

and gay people as “pretended family forms.” And this was absolutely forbidden. So, I remember Greg saying that his friend who had done her hair, had thought about carving a big “28” into her hair, but didn’t. [laughter] Although apparently this person said she was a very nice client unlike the very rude Queen of the Netherlands, whose hair he had done before that.

AS: He was a hairdresser to royalty.

PB: Yes. Tells you something about the true nature of the gay conspiracy.

AS: [laughter] Getting into people’s heads. Okay, so I also wanted to ask about the protests that happened around the AIDS conference that started at the Sheraton. Do you remember anything about this one?

PB: I’m not sure I’m conflating these things or not is a problem.

AS: Right. The one with the coffins and... Because they’re all in the same sort of area of the city.

PB: Yes. Well, and the Jake Epp thing because it was right there too.

AS: Maybe that was the one that came from the Sheraton with the... That’s when we need Gary to be in the room.

Yes, the Jake Epp effigy burning and the Sheraton action were at the same event.

AS: Yeah. So there was this trip that went to Parliament Hill to bring the issue of treatments that were available in the U.S., that weren’t available in Canada, and people went and took various unauthorized treatments. Were you at that protest?

PB: No. I wasn’t.

AS: Do you remember it being planned or anything about it?

PB: I certainly remember it being planned and people going there. Mostly what I remember is the photos were very good, which we used in *Rites*. They were framed very well with Parliament in the background.

AS: And so what was the purpose of this protest? Or what happened?

PB: Well, the purpose was, and again I’m not really clear on the whole timeframe. There was this thing called the Emergency Drug Release Program, which was very central to so many things. And I’m not sure when it actually really gets going, but the way this program worked is you could apply to Health Canada to access treatments that were not yet approved. The catch was, even if it did get approved that you could take it, it was not then necessary for the drug manufacturer to release it. It was still up to them. But you had to go through this two-step process – the company had to

approve and the EDRP had to approve it. And I think these were very new cutting-edge treatments they were talking about. Probably pentamidine was one, I don't remember what else was.

AS: DdI was maybe one?

PB: DdI I think was later from that demonstration. I don't remember what the other ones were. I don't think it was ddI. So yeah, and it was to expose that people needed these to save their lives and the government wasn't doing anything to make it easy for people to get access to them. And access to treatments was a very, very central thing that was going on this whole time. Because, in the beginning there was almost nothing, but by '87, '88, '89 a lot of stuff was coming down the pipe that people are wanting to try. You know, by this time thousands of people had died around the world and like, there was suddenly possibilities that maybe it won't stay like that. But getting access to these treatments was very, very difficult in so many ways. Some things were being smuggled across the border. This gets us to the whole ddI thing. Do you want to talk about that now?

AS: Sure.

PB: That's later in '89. So, AZT had been available for some time, but ddI, which looked like a promising new treatment from Bristol-Myers. The weird thing about this is I remember when I was working at CKLN as the news director. This was the infancy of the Internet and stuff like this. I had a computer in my office and I was signed up, this was a small community radio station, we didn't have a bunch of money, but I did have this account to get wire service reports on my computer. I would get a million a day. I couldn't possibly read them all, but I could use a filter. And one of the weird things I discovered, if I used as my filter 'AIDS' three quarters of the stories I got were from the business pages. It took me days, a week to figure out what was going on, I thought I'd put something wrong. But I finally realized that the vast majority of media coverage about AIDS was in the business pages. So, you'd have AIDS stories about Bristol-Myers and other pharmaceutical companies. And this was just like a really weird piece of knowledge that came from doing that specific piece of work. You would also get like stories about, you know, demonstrations or what was happening elsewhere, but mostly they were from the business pages and about the business of pharmaceutical companies.

AS: Fascinating.

PB: Yeah. So, ddI... Let's not go there right now.

AS: Okay.

PB: Lets go back to 1988.

AS: Good.

PB: So, we did the thing with Epp and there's a federal election in 1988. We hear one day that Mulroney is going to be in Toronto. This is the other advantage you have of working in a

newsroom. We may have heard it from someone else, I don't want to claim credit for that, but it ended up being me, Gary, Shawn Syms, and David Marriage, are the only ones available to cut down to the Royal York. And someone brings the AIDS ACTION NOW! banner. So, we get there and sure enough, the two big busses are parked right in front of the Royal York waiting for these people to come out. First of all, what happens is that all the media come out of the media bus and basically ignores us and it takes off. So, we're still waiting for the Prime Minister and, when you interview Gary he'll tell you about his interactions with the RCMP. But finally Mulroney comes out, and I think two people were holding the banner, I was one of them. I think David might've had to leave by this point. So, it might just've been Shawn, me, and Gary.

So two of us had to hold the banner. Of course, Gary is going to confront the Prime Minister. So, he does. And he yells out some things about people dying and this stuff. He's handing out a list of, I think it was essentially a list of demands that we had probably prepared for something else, our issues. And Mulroney takes it, doesn't really say anything, and he's on the stairs going to the bus and he turns around, comes back down the stairs. And by this time, they had committed to a National AIDS Strategy and, I don't remember the figure, it might've been ten million dollars, and he says, "You know, we've just assigned ten million dollars to this file." He starts explaining this to Gary. Gary of course, was unsatisfied with this. And the interaction was pretty brief, but like it's a real interaction with the Prime Minister about this issue for us. I was thinking about this the other day actually because, you know, Harper would never do this, right? Not a chance in hell that he would engage with someone he sees these as an enemy. You know, Mulroney was terrible in so many ways but like he actually did engage with people. Times have gotten much worse in terms of that kind of thing.

AS: There was no media there to see that, eh?

PB: No. But there was me. [laughter]

AS: You were the media.

PB: And I'm sure it got reported in a number of different things because of that. But it was a good little moment.

AS: Yeah. So, that's '88-89?

PB: So, the election I think was in the fall of '88 in October or November. And this of course was also the election where Doug Wilson was running for the NDP in, whatever that riding is called – St. George, St. David – that encompasses the queer community in downtown.

AS: Can you talk a little bit about Doug Wilson? I mean, how that came to be or what happened?

PB: I somehow think the nomination meeting for that was also in the same room at Jarvis Collegiate and the person he was running against for the NDP nomination was that famous pianist – Anton Kuerti, but Doug won the nomination anyway. So, he started wearing a suit too.

AS: And he had been active in AIDS ACTION NOW!?

PB: Somewhat. Not centrally. But of course it was in the midst of this campaign when he got sick and was diagnosed, although that certainly wasn't publicly admitted to at the time. I remember driving in my car one day and hearing on the radio, they were trying to interview the different candidates and they said that he was ill and that he was in the hospital. I remember during the campaign, Gary and I had gone out for supper somewhere and we ran into Doug and Peter after he got out of the hospital but before the election. And I remember saying to him, Svend Robinson had just recently come out, but if Doug had won the election he would've been the first out gay person elected because the polls close earlier in Toronto than they do Vancouver. And I remember.

AS: [laughter] What did he say?

PB: He liked that idea. However, I think he was sort of doomed to defeat by a closeted gay person. But I remember also going to his election night party which was at the 519. His mother was there and stuff.

AS: Nice.

PB: Yeah. But he got more involved in AIDS ACTION NOW! after that.

AS: So, also around this time there's a teach-in happens at City Hall. Do you remember anything about that?

PB: Yes. The teach-in is the spring of '89, and Karen Pearlston and I and a few other people were organizing it. And I did a workshop on anonymous testing, which was another one of the big issues that was going on. And issues around it were that that anonymity is important to get people to actually be tested, so they can take responsibility for their own lives. It's something you can't force people to do, because then they'll resist.

AS: Yeah. And correctly.

PB: Yes. So, I think I did that workshop with Linda Gardner, but there were also like all kinds of other workshops. You know, it was done at City Hall, which was fun to do it in and they gave us all these rooms. We even had the council chambers to have a big meeting in.

AS: They were open to that at City Hall.

PB: Yes. Now, the mayor at that time wasn't open at all. I remember being in a protest, I don't think it was around AIDS, against the mayor because the mayor would never proclaim Pride, and I remember being somewhere where we actually were shouting at him in the lobby of City Hall, but I don't remember what that event was. Art Eggleton was the Mayor.

AS: And then there was some organizing around AIDS ACTION NOW! in relation to Pride. Was that...?

PB: Well, we certainly were involved with Pride stuff. I specifically remember, I think it was Pride '89, Michael Smith was in the hospital and we managed to spring him for the day in a wheelchair to participate in Pride that year. But what we did I don't actually remember, so not much use there.

AS: Do you remember any of these people doing die-ins as part of Pride in Toronto?

PB: Yes. I do remember that, and not just there. We did die-ins elsewhere. We did a die-in at a hotel somewhere once, and we did die-ins at intersections during Pride at least one year.

AS: So, the march would be going and then people would...

PB: ...drop dead.

AS: And lots of people did it?

PB: Yeah. And then you always want to have chalk so you can outline the dead people, so it stays there for a while. Oh... dozens of people at least. Maybe a hundred.

AS: Kind of different than Pride these days.

PB: Yeah. A little bit. If you tried to do a die-in now, they would quickly try and revivify you.

AS: You mentioned doing a live report from New York City. Were you going to New York a lot or was that...?

PB: No. In fact, we went to New York like, about an hour after the teach-in.

AS: At City Hall. Wow.

PB: Yes. It was a Sunday night and we wanted to go to New York, go to some ACT UP meetings. Karen and I really wanted to do this, and my partner Rob and Shawn Syms, who was my boyfriend, came along too. So, we were billeted with this guy in NYC – near Trump Tower, well, the boys would go to this guy. I don't know where Karen stayed. And like, we went to a big ACT UP meeting.

AS: So, it would've been a Monday night meeting?

PB: Yes. Because I think that teach-in was on a Sunday. So, we had to leave like at 5 o'clock, it was over and to get to New York in time for this Monday night thing. And we met up with people there who then, you know took us to our billets and stuff. I had my car so finding a place to park was not easy but we managed.

AS: What was it like to be at one of those ACT UP meetings?

PB: Well, aside from maybe that first meeting at Jarvis, I probably have never been to as energetic a meeting as this ACT UP meeting was. I mean, there were like maybe 150-200 people at it and people coming up with different ideas all over the place. I ran into John Greyson there, and no one else I knew. Certainly people whose names I knew from things. But it was clearly a different kind of organization than we had, even though I think it had inspired AIDS ACTION NOW! AIDS ACTION NOW! certainly didn't have this level of energy and ongoing activism. So, it was very much an eye-opener in that way, to see how things could be done differently.

AS: So to have more of that kind of ideas and generation of movement coming from just people in the room and AIDS ACTION NOW! was much more, had a Steering Committee that...

PB: Yes. Now, the reality is it was partly because it's New York, but it's partly also just the way it was organized. You had a much more diverse group of people at this ACT UP meeting than you would generally have seen in an AIDS ACTION NOW! meeting. I guess, largely what I'm talking about is race and gender. It was still overwhelmingly queer, but a lot of people of colour and a lot of women.

AS: And in Toronto, AIDS ACTION NOW! was more white men?

PB: Probably, yeah. Certainly.

AS: Was that an active conversation in Toronto in AIDS ACTION NOW!?

PB: I'm not sure it had been that much up until that point.

AS: Interesting.

PB: It did become in that summer of 1989 in a number of ways. One is after the AIDS Conference in Montreal, and I'm sure we'll talk about the AIDS Conference, an incident took place there where... You know, it takes a lot of organization to get a lot of people from Toronto there and back, and people were hitching rides with each other. I drove there and my entire backseat and trunk were filled with all the signs and posters that we were going to use.

AS: These are the ones that John had designed, the "The World is Sick" posters?

PB: Yeah. He lived at that artist's co-op and they had a workroom when we went there. I remember being there one night to work on these things, and then going and picking them all up and putting them in my car too. And so, various people had gone there in various ways. But there was this one incident, where this gay male couple offered to... So, they had room to take someone back, but they wouldn't take a woman. Not everyone received that very well. Some people were very upset by this. We didn't really have a way to deal with that in any kind of institutional way. You know we could say to these people, "This is a problem." They'd say, "Yeah, but not my

problem.” So, this kind of became an undercurrent and brought some things to the surface. And at the end of that summer when we had our retreat at Hart House Farm, a number of the women there wanted us to adopt some kind of Basis of Unity that essentially said that as an organization we would be actively anti-sexist and anti-racist. This didn’t go very far. It didn’t get adopted at this retreat, or even on the road to adoption. So, some of the women were quite upset; Renee and Karen specifically, and this other woman Jackie who had come from this organization called COMBAT. So, there was this real thing going on around this. I remember, it might’ve been the next day, I run into George on Church Street and he says to me, “I’ve really been thinking about this issue, this Basis of Unity, and I’ve figured out what the problem is.” I said, “Really?” He says, “The problem is, if AIDS ACTION NOW! adopts this as a Basis of Unity –being anti-racist, anti-sexist, that means we’re going to be discriminating against gay, white men.” I reacted, “That doesn’t really make sense to me.” He says, “Well, some gay white men are sexist and racist.” I said, “A lot of gay white men are sexist and racist. You know, the purpose of this is not to say, ‘You as an individual have to be completely anti-racist and anti-sexist to be a member of this organization.’ That’s not what we’re talking about. But as an organization this has to be issues that we’re working on actively.” It seems simple now, doesn’t it? But he felt that this was really a problem. I was quite surprised by that actually.

AS: It is surprising based on other things that I’ve heard about him and his analysis.

PB: Yeah.

AS: So, he must’ve been kind of refracting something that was really real among people involved?

PB: But I don’t think most of these people thought it was okay for this guy to refuse to give a ride to them. You know, I’m not saying that we were going to kick this person out. No one was saying this. You know, this was a person who I think was HIV positive. We’re there to serve and help these people. And they’re fighting for their lives and we respect that. As an organization though, we can do all kinds of things around internal education and things like this. I think someone would’ve had to go to like, pretty far extremes in their behaviour to be kicked out, right? You know, refusing to give someone a ride was not going to qualify in my opinion. Someone might’ve had a different opinion. I never heard that though. So, there was a lot of anger around this. We should come back to that.

AS: Yeah. So, there’s three different things that I want to come back to. One is the Montreal conference. One is the sort of structure of AIDS ACTION NOW! And then also I want to talk more about COMBAT and some of the...

PB: Okay. Yes.

AS: Okay. So, lets go to the organizing. Do you want to talk anything about the organizing leading up to the Montreal conference?

PB: Sure. I was not centrally involved in a lot of it, but I do remember going to a meeting, which probably was at George's house, where one of the things we were doing was working on this Montreal Manifesto, which I'm sure you have a copy of. And one of the guys from New York was there who Gary and George and all those people knew because he used to live in Toronto or something. And we go in there and we're just like working through some of the wording on this stuff and they sometimes had different concerns than we had.

AS: The New York folks?

PB: Yes. But people were trying to get this thing finalized in relations between them and us. They were going to bring a couple of busloads of people to Montreal. And one of the things I was centrally involved in, because I was working in the *Rites* newsroom, was getting people press credentials to go to the event, which I was able to get for quite a few people. Maybe like ten. [laughter] I think that would be harder to do now. So, a lot of us were then able to go and spend time at the pressroom and meet people from around the world. It was good.

AS: So, the Montreal Manifesto, how did it come to be that people were like, "Let's make this. Let's write something." Do you remember anything?

PB: Well, it was just the idea that this was an opportunity where the world was coming to talk about this. And like to really clarify our thinking and our priorities.

AS: And were there folks also from Montreal who were involved in writing it?

PB: I don't remember. There must've been but I don't remember specifically.

AS: Okay. So, then, there you are, you're driving in your car with a lot of signs.

PB: Yes.

AS: Anyone in the car with you? Going with you?

PB: Maybe Gary went with me.

AS: So, you arrived in Montreal and what's the sort of scene there leading up to the conference?

PB: The scene is... So, the Montreal people in Réaction SIDA had got us this great space on Park Avenue, just near the corner of the mountain, to set up shop in. It was like, a fantastic space. And so we're there. We're waiting for the people from New York. A big concern of course, is are they going to get across the border? I think we had legal supports out of Montreal, but they apparently got across okay. And they show up with all their computer equipment and their signs and all this stuff and suddenly try to build an office. It was fantastic. It's like they had done this before. I remember like, fifty of them, or sixty. It was a big crowd.

AS: And how many had come from Toronto?

PB: Maybe thirty-forty? It was a big crowd too.

AS: Yeah.

PB: So, the plan was to do a variety of actions. Of course, the people from New York had the plan to take over the opening ceremony, which went off quite...

AS: Did they talk about that beforehand?

PB: Not very openly. [laughter] Some of us were taken quite by surprise, but it worked out very well and it ended up with Tim being up there actually officially opening the conference.

AS: Right. So, you were first protesting outside the conference?

PB: And then we just marched in. It was easy.

AS: You just went.

PB: Yup. Up at the front. I was further back, like seeing this, seeing Tim up there. It was the same day as the Tiananmen Square massacre. He made some comment about acknowledging that, and to open it on behalf of people living with AIDS. And about how this had to be a central part of this conference, which was great.

AS: Right. Yeah. I mean this was quite extraordinary, right?

PB: Yes. You know, one of our central demands in our manifesto, and what we'd been doing for a long time, was ... And you know we worked on the wording of this a lot. It was not to have people living with AIDS on every body that was dealing with this. It was to have people living with AIDS who were representatives of the organizations of people living with AIDS on these bodies. So, it was an important distinction to make. And it was one of the central things they were doing in Montreal. We did a rally around anonymous testing and I had to speak in French at it, and a couple of little events. Then one of the really big things we did was the protest when the Prime Minister spoke. I think it was the Prime Minister of Canada, and the President of the Zambia spoke, Kenneth Kaunda. And we sort of organized it so that we'd be much more respectful to him, but not very tolerant of Mulroney.

AS: And so what happened?

PB: Well, one of us, I don't remember who, snuck in this big banner under their jacket and two things happened when the Prime Minister got up to speak. One was, many of the Americans and many other people in the audience turned their back on him and held their watches up to show that time was running out. But four of us got up on the stage and stood behind the Prime Minister with this huge banner.

AS: What did it say?

PB: I don't remember... [Something like "Mulroney, You Have Left Us All to Die"]

AS: Okay.

PB: You'll find out what it says. [laughter] And I remember through his entire speech, I was standing about six feet from him.

AS: Amazing. Holding this banner.

PB: Again, wouldn't happen now, would it? Yeah. Certainly, his security guards were around there. But Mulroney had to give his whole speech with our banner right there.

AS: And the cameras.

PB: Yeah.

AS: And what was the interaction between Réaction SIDA and ACT UP New York and AIDS ACTION NOW!? Did everyone work smoothly together? What was that like? Because it's a lot of different groups with really different styles coming into the same...

PB: I will give you an approximate quote. At the end, we had this kind of closing meeting where we could express things. And one of the head guys from ACT UP said, "First thing I want to say is to thank Réaction SIDA for this great space. This is the best space we've ever had to work in, but" he said "the second thing I want to say is how sick I am of you." [laughter] He says, "I don't think I've had a single conversation with any of you people from Montreal where the word 'anarchism' hasn't come up."

AS: Really?

PB: And he said, "You know, that's not what this has been about." So clearly, yes, there were some problems. There were also issues like... This was basically an entirely English workspace, and Francophone people were not feeling very welcome. But in spite of all this, it was a very good experience. [...] Yes. There could've been... I mean, the ACT UP team arrived very intent about what they wanted to do and what they were going to do. They didn't arrive to like negotiate with two other groups about how we're going to do everything.

AS: Right. And have like, a vibrant collaboration that builds relationships. They were doing an intervention.

PB: Right. I think we learned a lot from them.

AS: So, anything else about the Montreal conference, how that experience was? I mean, it was big.

PB: It was big. It was a huge event and I think very empowering for a lot of people in many ways.

AS: Okay. Do you want to just talk a little bit about ddi?

PB: Okay. So, ddi, as I mentioned earlier, is this new antiretroviral. And you know, we're hearing these really good things about it but people can't access it.

AS: Because most people are being shunted directly to drugs like AZT.

PB: Yes. So, we decide to do an occupation of the offices of Bristol-Myers, which was in a building at that time at 390 Bay Street, which is Bay just south of Queen.

AS: And why Bristol-Myer?

PB: Because they were the manufacturer, and they were not releasing it to people who thought they needed it.

AS: So, it could've been approved through the EDRP, but Bristol-Myer wasn't releasing it.

PB: That's right. Exactly. So, we do a lot of organizing around this and plan who's willing to do it. There were seven of us, and Steven Maynard who leads us through this basic thing about civil disobedience and how to react when we're being arrested and stuff.

AS: Because he had some training or some experience in CD?

PB: Yes, in Kingston, I think. That's his stuff. He had been at the Montreal conference too.

AS: So, it was you and Gary...

PB: Me, Gary, Russell, Greg...

AS: Steven. He was there.

PB: Yeah, Steven. And I think this guy named Brian, and Brent.

AS: And Brent Southin?

PB: Yes. So, we went to City Hall and made all our plans together. We went over and went up in this building. We had a banner. And they somehow got wind of us coming up and locked their doors. But we planted ourselves in the hallway right outside their doors. And we waited a while. The police came.

AS: Was there also an outside demonstration happening? Like, there was the seven of you... And you were going in intending to be arrested.

PB: We were doing an occupation. If they wanted to say, "We're going to release it" we would've left. But short of that we were there for whatever consequence there was. So of course, the police came to tell us we have to leave. We refuse. So, they decided they have to remove us. And the picture that ended up in the *Toronto Star* was of them dragging me out. I think Greg might've been bigger than me, but I might've made a better picture. I don't know. [laughter] And they take us down the elevators straight to the basement with a parking garage and we ended up in these paddy wagons for a little while. Less than an hour I would say, not a long time before they released us outside the building with the order that we're not allowed to go back in the building.

AS: Were people still outside at that point, the people that had been demonstrating?

PB: Yes. There were certainly some out there.

AS: Because they didn't know who you were, right?

PB: Well, no. I think that they knew what was happening. I remember that Colman was one of the media people covering us, so they knew what was going on. I don't think they knew where we had been taken or anything. They might've easily taken us to a police station, but they just put us inside of the paddy wagon.

AS: In the basement.

PB: Yeah. So, we get released and it was pretty good media coverage. Well, *The Toronto Star*, it wasn't anywhere near the front page or anything, but there was a picture and stuff about it. This of course did not have the desired effect of getting the company to release this drug. So, that's when this next thing happened, and that is we somehow get word that there's this guy who wants ddl. He's sick and his mother is willing to take some action. I think it was actually on the Sunday night of the Hart House retreat, or it was immediately after that, that George and I go to Toronto General Hospital and meet with this guy (Ivan Halpert) and his mother, Eva. And Eva has the intention of protesting outside 390 Bay Street, where the Bristol Myers offices are.

AS: And this is after you've done the ddl action?

PB: Yes. So, I guess he or she heard about us doing that and some contact was made. And the reason George and I go is that we're from the Media Committee, and we've decided we will offer whatever kind of support we can through the Media Committee in helping her get word out, so she'd have flyers to give to people, all this stuff. I was constantly going and getting more photocopies for her to give stuff out. And so we're meeting at the hospital in her son's hospital room and I say, "I am of course not allowed to go into 390 Bay Street." And she says, "Why not?" So, I explain to her and she says, "Who owns that building?" "I have no idea." She says, "Well, find out." I said, "Why?" She says, "Well, Olympia and York own a lot of buildings around there and if they own that one, I can get the charges dropped."

AS: How?

PB: I said, “How?” She says, “Trust me, Patrick. I can.” [laughter] So, I don’t know what to make of this, right? So, first day comes and I’m there first thing to help her get set up. The media’s coming, we’ve sent out a press release, all this kind of stuff. And she’s there with her father, who was very old. His name was Elmer.

AS: Also, Halpert? She’s Eva Halpert?

PB: Yes, that’s right. It’s her father, so I don’t think he would have the same name. But it quickly becomes apparent that he cannot stand with her for eight hours, so she thinks we should get him a chair. I say, “Well, how are you going to do this?” She says, “Go to the 77nd floor of First Canadian Place, speak to so-and-so and he’ll give you a chair.” This is the headquarters of Olympia and York. So, it suddenly becomes, you know, much more clear that she’s got a very close relationship with this person who’s at the head of Olympia and York, right? However, we find another method to get her a chair, and that is the Metro councilors have their office in 390 Bay. And Roger Hollander, who was one of the councilors says he’ll supply a chair for them everyday that they need one. And he says, “Furthermore, I’m going to take this a step further,” and he says, “They can’t prevent you from coming to this building” because this is an elected representative here and all constituents have a right to come in to meet us. I don’t know how he pursued that because I didn’t particularly want to go into the building. We didn’t need to go in the building.

AS: You were outside?

PB: Yes. So, this went on for about a month and we gave her a lot of support.

AS: And she was there everyday?

PB: She was there everyday.

AS: And you were there, pretty much?

PB: I was there most days, because I was working in CKLN so I didn’t need to be at work until noon or one. So, I had the mornings to be there and support her, and she would phone me virtually every night around ten o’clock and talk for like an hour, half an hour, forty minutes about how the day went and for tomorrow. And she was doing this very good thing. And she was a very interesting woman too. She had been a refugee from Hungary in 1956. So, this is not exactly the person that I expected to be working politically with frankly from where I’m coming from and where she’s coming from. I think they owned a furniture store in North York, she and her husband. But Elmer wasn’t there everyday, but he was there a lot of days.

AS: Wow. But her son in the hospital at that point?

PB: Yes.

AS: So, he was quite sick.

PB: Yes, he was. And eventually ddi was released and was not as effective as many of us had hoped it would be. So, I mean she was very dedicated to this. And we didn't want it to appear that she was like active on our behalf, frankly, so none of this was visible as AIDS ACTION NOW! work. I was there from the media committee, but I didn't say, "I'm here from AIDS ACTION NOW!" And the press releases we would send out on her behalf were on her behalf. They were hers. And this was honest because she was the driving force behind this. We also had some connection around this with a Jewish gay group of which Ivan was a member.

AS: So, they would've been sent from the AIDS ACTION NOW! office but not with the tagline or the...

PB: I don't think we had an office. Our first press release I remember sending out was, Chuck Grochmal had this magnificent machine, which was, in retrospect, a 1980s Mac, which could send faxes. But I'd never seen anything like this before. And I remember being in his tiny little apartment, which was not as big as this room, and him showing us how he could do this. And us like, agog of this miracle that happened. I can remember like three years before driving all the hell over Toronto for some event, delivering press releases to all the media. And then you know, yes, we could send faxes from our workplaces, but here we had like a computer that could fax right from it. [laughter]

AS: So, did her action end when ddi was released or did that happen just kind of around that...

PB: I think it was around the same time. She ended because of its success, yes. I can't remember when her son died. It wasn't that much longer after that. I didn't get to go to the funeral because I was still working at CKLN and I arrived at work like at noon and there was a phone message from Tim McCaskell telling me that he'd died, that the funeral was at one somewhere far away, so I wasn't able to get to it just because I didn't know in time.

AS: Yeah. This is also useful for me because I hadn't understood that EDRP didn't... There needed to also be this release. I hadn't actually understood that actually Bristol Myers needed to also release it. So thank you for that.

PB: Right. Okay.

[END OF PART ONE OF INTERVIEW]

28 November 2017

Persons present: Patrick Barnholden – PB
Alexis Shotwell – AS

[START OF TRANSCRIPT]

AS: Okay. So, we are talking to Patrick Barnholden and it is November 28th, 2017. It's been more than a year since our last conversation!

PB: Yes.

AS: So, one place that we got to at the end of the last interview was talking through a little bit about the things that arose at the Hart House Farm retreat and a little bit about thinking about the ways that multiple identity formations were coming to the fore in organizing. So, you can say things in the transcripts, but is there anything that came up for you that you wanted to say coming to the end of the transcript?

PB: So, this was the end of summer in 1989, if I remember correctly.

AS: Yeah.

PB: And, you know, the Hart House Farm retreat was a very powerful event. I think there were about 16 people there. And some stuff really began to come to a head after that, around these exact issues. Around trying to establish the organization as having an anti-racist and anti-sexist basis of unity. And there were, to say the least, very strong differences of opinion on this. So, some of that starts to come to a head in the fall of 1989. I know that, like, immediately after the retreat, George and I had had some discussions about this, and it didn't look like there was much chance of a resolution on this. So, I think what happened, then, is that some members of the organization, most notably, my good friends, Renee and Karen, were very, very, upset with what had gone on that summer and at the Hart House retreat, the basic rejection of these things. So, they called together a group of us who they thought would be sympathetic to have a meeting, which I recall was at the apartment of Greg Pavelich. It would have been in the early fall of 1989. And this was coming out of the Hart House retreat, coming out of the trip that Karen and I and others had made to New York, earlier that year. I remember this meeting very, very well. There was a wide-ranging discussion about how things could go.

Basically, what Karen and Renee were proposing was an amendment to the constitution, to give more power to the general members meetings, and less overall control to the Steering Committee. And while I was sympathetic to this position—I thought there was some merit to it—I really didn't think it had a very high chance of success. I did think it might be a good idea to bring this forward and bring up some of these discussions. But, in the meeting that we had, we essentially came into a blockage because, while we agreed we would put forward this idea of an amendment to give power to the general members meetings, we had a disagreement over how we should proceed down this line. Basically, Renee and Karen were absolutely opposed to the idea that we should let other people on the Steering Committee and in the organization know about this before we presented it at a meeting. Essentially, this was because they had no trust that this could be done without it being, you know, crushed before even being presented. Greg and I felt pretty strongly that these are people that we worked with, we've worked with them a long time, they would not appreciate something being presented at general members meeting that they did not know about beforehand.

AS: They would feel betrayed, or...?

PB: Exactly. However, I mean our position was extremely clear that this would only be presented at a general members meeting. It would not, at that same meeting, be voted on and adopted. There was no question that this could be anything like stacking a meeting or anything like that. It was absolutely clear that this would be presented for discussion and for, perhaps, eventual adoption. Going through process that would, you know, inform people about it, and have some decision taken at a subsequent meeting. So, this discussion went back and forth for quite a while at this meeting. And it was basically Greg and me on one side and Karen and Renee on the other.

AS: Do you remember other people who were at that meeting?

PB: It was a small meeting. It was the four of us. I know that Michael Smith had been involved with Karen and Renee around some of this stuff, but he was not at this meeting. I think Shawn Syms was at the meeting, but he didn't participate a lot. So, it might have just been the five of us there. And so, I remember I eventually said something like, "well if there's no moving you on this, I think, you know, if you're adamant that this is how you want to proceed, I can support this. Because, in fact, if they may feel blindsided we have the full knowledge that we are not planning on forcing this to be adopted, we want a full democratic discussion of this. So, you know, I can defend this position. I'm still not sure it's the best way to proceed, but I'm absolutely willing to defend it, as not being undemocratic." And so, once I said that, Greg agreed with me, and that's the way we decided to proceed.

AS: Was part of their logic about doing the thing that they were arguing for, saying new things could arise from the membership meeting?

PB: Absolutely. That was the motivation, that having seen the energy at ACT UP up in New York and the way things are presented from the floor, and that AIDS ACTION NOW! they didn't perceive, and I certainly didn't perceive, had that same level of energy and new ideas flowing all the time. There was a significant amount of control that came from the Steering Committee. And, you know, the other complication of this, of course, is that the Steering Committee was pretty adamant about maintaining the majority of HIV+ people, which was great. But you know, New York had other ways with dealing with this, and we thought that should be looked at, right? So basically, what happens is that at the next general members meeting, we may have had more meetings for this, but we prepared a resolution to put forward. Michael Smith introduced it. I mean, I think I stood up and called for it, and then, Michael did the actual introduction of it.

AS: Renee and Karen were there at the meeting?

PB: Yeah. So, as we had expected, a number of the people in the organization did not react very well to this. They accused us of blindsiding them and trying to take over the organization, which we were pretty clear that we were not trying to do. And, the decision that was taken at the meeting was to set a committee to look at these issues and bring back a recommendation. I was on the committee, Renee was on the committee, George was on the committee, I don't remember who

all else was on it – Glen I think. And, so, that was happening. But, subsequent to this, there was a lot of anger directed toward us. And I think towards some of us more than others. I was at work one day shortly thereafter, and Glen called me at work very, very angry. I was working at CKLN and I was in the news office when he called. And basically, he was engaging in this significant critique about us being undemocratic and a number of different things. You know, I engaged with him on this level for a while. Finally, I said, “I don’t think we are going to agree on this. We’ve been tasked with moving forward. Let’s try and do that.” And so, we discussed that for a little bit. And then, he launches into the attack on me and my friends a little bit more. I said, “You know, we’ve just agreed not to do this. Let’s proceed.” So, it was very difficult.

AS: Yeah. It sounds really painful.

PB: Yeah. And then I know we had arranged to have this meeting at George’s house. And George phoned me at home a couple days later and said, “You know, I don’t think we should have the meeting here because, you know, Renee won’t feel comfortable coming here. So, we should have it at your house.” I’m not entirely sure what that was about. But he says we shouldn’t have a meeting at his house—you can’t really argue with him. So, we did have a meeting. And I don’t really remember it in the same kind of detail. But, basically, it came back to the general members meeting without a recommendation for much change. And there was still this significant level of hostility. I do remember the general meeting when this came back to it. And the first meeting where it was introduced took place at Church Street Public School. I remember it being at the gym there. And the subsequent meeting took place at the 519 at a room in the back. And because I was working at CKLN, I was often late going to these meetings, because I worked until 8. So, I remember walking up Church Street to go to this meeting—and it would have been sometime after 8 that I walked in there—and I came into the meeting and there were maybe 16, 18, 20 people sitting around in a circle. And there were only two empty chairs left and they were the two chairs on either side of Renee. So, I would have been happy to go and sit beside her, anyway. And, as it was, I had no choice. [laughter] So, I went and sat beside her on one side. I remember a few minutes later Greg Pavelich arrived and, of course, sat on the other side. The three of us were all together. And, one thing that happened there early on is that Gary was teaching at Memorial University, and he had written a letter, which I don’t know whether you have a copy of, or if he’s been able access it. The letter was basically—he made the argument, because in part of the way the argument had been framed against us, were there were “those” people who were primarily advocating for treatment access and others, “us,” who were advocates of social change. Gary wrote this analysis that basically was that these are the same things. That changing the ways we access treatments for HIV positive people is a form of social change, and it’s through social change advocacy and efforts that we accomplish this. I remember Bernard read the letter out from Gary at the meeting, but there was essentially no discussion. And, you know, fairly quick rejection of what we had put forward. In retrospect I feel this was not an unpredictable defeat. I don’t think there was the basis for the change that we wanted. And, in retrospect, I think that putting it forward the way that we did was not that helpful. And probably not the best strategy. I think that what we were trying to do was a good thing.

AS: And why do you think it wouldn’t—what do you think were the conditions that meant that it couldn’t move forward, that there couldn’t be that kind of transformation?

PB: I think that kind of transformation would have taken longer than the actual process that we tried to use would have foreseen. There would have been the requirement for more educational work, bringing in people from ACT UP, things like that. It could have been pushed for in a more medium-term length of time, rather than this immediate thing.

AS: Right. So—and this is the next question that we haven’t talk about—in the Toronto context there are all these different groups that are more or less organized around identity, or subjectivities, right? So, there’s ASAAP [Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention], there’s Black CAP [Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention], there’s COMBAT [Community Organizations Mutually Battling AIDS Together]. And there’s Gay Asians of Toronto [GAT], right, that later becomes... There’s PASAN [Prisoners with AIDS Support Network], there’s all these groups that are doing community-specific work. And a lot of these seem to be organized as NGOs or non-profits, or many of them are getting funding. So, one of the dynamics that I’ve wondered about, or thought about, is the way that AIDS ACTION NOW! continues to be unfunded and able to do a lot of political work because of that.

PB: Yes.

AS: And somehow a lot of the work around racialized communities gets kind of hived off, or directed into these other places. Was that what it felt like at the time? Or was there...

PB: Well, I mean, the question of funding was very, very, deliberate on the part of AIDS ACTION NOW!, of course. One of the very few Steering Committee meetings I ever went to, I remember extremely well. And Tim and others, I think quite rightfully, being absolutely adamant that we would not be applying for any grants, we would not be applying for any kind of government money, no matter how much people thought it might be no strings attached. This is not a road we should be going down. You know, occasionally people would come up with the idea of applying for this, or applying for that. And, by this time, it was very firmly established that we would not be doing that.

AS: Right.

PB: So, it does allow us to have that political independence that I think was so vital and made much of the work we did very valuable, right? But there was that money available for other groups. And there was, you know, a lot of on the ground support work and educational work that absolutely needed to be done, right? That was not our mandate, right? So, it’s an interesting division there. You know, we did have, like, Jackie from COMBAT came to our retreat and was peripherally involved. But, I mean, there wasn’t a lot of overlap, right?

AS: I mean, there are people who are really involved with AIDS ACTION NOW! who are also involved in these other groups. Like, Anthony Mohamed was involved in many of those groups and then there’s these kinds of—like, when we’ve talked to people, it’s like, “Oh, of course, we would call on AIDS ACTION NOW! for this particular kind of, you know, a demonstration was happening. So, looking at the interviews, it seems like there was

definite collaboration. And, I think, one of the things that I haven't been able to understand is the degree to which having the racialized or culturally-specific groups organized as funded things, if the existence of those groups and the way that they were organized was at all a factor in the discussion or the conflict in AIDS ACTION NOW! around shifting to have a basis of unity—an anti-racist, anti-sexist basis of unity—or this change in the decision-making process proposal...

PB: Yeah. Well, I can imagine, you know, this anti-funding position was held very strongly by a lot of central people. This could, in fact, be part of what their concerns were about expanding the organization that we would dilute some of those fundamental principles. I'm not sure that was true. There were enough of us who held these positions—and they were good positions that weren't hard to convince people of.

AS: Right.

PB: You know, there were a couple people around who kept bringing this up for a while. But, it was a very widely supported position that this is what we should be, right?

AS: And it's holding a different role in the ecosystem, yeah.

PB: Yeah. Exactly. So, I should think more about that.

AS: So, you mentioned Jackie. Do you want to say anything about her and about COMBAT? Did you do any work with COMBAT?

PB: So, my first recollection of Jackie is we interviewed her at CKLN.

AS: Oh!

PB: And that's when I first met her. And then she became a little bit involved in AIDS ACTION NOW! and came to that retreat. I did end up doing some work for her. She had this plan to educate a bunch of young people about some fundamentals about AIDS, so that they could go out into the community and do more educational and support work within the Black community. And she approached me to see if I would be willing to set up a short, like, six-week course to give to these young people. I mean, I agreed to do that. It was a group of about 10 or 12 young people. The majority of whom were not Black. So, we did this series of six educationals, where I taught them some fundamentals. I took them one of the evenings to the AIDS Committee of Toronto [ACT], showed them the library, and how to access things there. I know it was a very engaged group of people who were largely University and College students. How this ended up transpiring, I don't really know.

AS: How was Jackie connected to them?

PB: I don't remember that, either, Alexis. It was...

AS: A long time ago.

PB: It was a long time ago. [laughter] I remember Jackie lived in the same building where Gary and Brian lived. I remember going and meeting with her a couple times there. And I don't know that much about her history or where she went after this, but she was the driving force behind COMBAT. I don't know how much more there was besides her in COMBAT, but she was very energetic and was trying to do things.

AS: Do you know how she got connected to working on HIV and AIDS?

PB: I don't know that, either.

AS: I really want to find her and talk to her. Had you done other courses like this for people? Like, was this a normal thing that you did?

PB: No. I hadn't done this before. You know, we were involved in this, and Sean Hosein he did so much of the treatment stuff, as a regular guest on my radio show. And it was a milieu where we all absorbed some of this very basic knowledge, right?

AS: Right. And then you could teach it.

PB: Yeah. I mean it took some work, but these were young people who largely knew nothing about AIDS and HIV.

AS: Right. So, in the aftermath of some of those conversations and conflicts that AIDS ACTION NOW! after the retreat, after the resolution not going forward... Is there any reflection you want to have? Did things just kind of go back to what they had been like before the retreat and before those conversations in the organization?

PB: Well, I was still involved. I think, essentially, for some people, for Karen and Renee, this was the end of their involvement in the organization. And both had been very centrally involved. Renee had essentially been the secretary of the organization, dealing with all the mail that came in and responding to things and bringing that to every meeting. Karen had been very involved in the Public Action Committee. I remember her playing a very important role at numerous different demonstrations, right? This was her strength. This is what she had been doing for years in the U.S., right? So, they dropped out. I was still involved. I was still doing some media work, but it's not that long after that that I left Toronto, as well. I think, I don't actually know a lot about what happened in the period after that.

AS: And so, you left Toronto and went to Nova Scotia, then? Or Newfoundland?

PB: So, Gary, as I said, began teaching at Memorial in the fall of '89. I went there in the fall of 1990, in his second year there to live with him. So, I left in early November of 1990, I left Toronto.

AS: And was there anything happening in AIDS activism in Newfoundland?

PB: Yes. [laughter]

AS: Do you want to tell us about that?

PB: Well, when I arrived there, and I'm sure Gary would have more to contribute from his time, there were two different AIDS groups. There was the, sort of official government funded, I think it was the AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador, if I recall, or maybe just Newfoundland at that time, and there was this other group called The AIDS Association, which had been founded by people who didn't really feel they were welcome in The AIDS Committee. So, Gary had gotten involved in The AIDS Association and I did somewhat, as well. I remember going to a fundraising supper shortly after I arrived in Newfoundland and meeting some people. I think this was a group of people who had, partly their core had been a friendship circle around a couple of gay men who had become sick. And they wanted to be able to do more direct support work and some political work around that, that they felt The AIDS Committee wasn't doing.

AS: And what was it like to move from the organizing context of Toronto to this much different space?

PB: It was... So, I only lived in Newfoundland for just under a year.

AS: Yeah.

PB: But it was a very amazing time, because we were doing some of this work on AIDS and we also got involved, both Gary and I, probably me more centrally, in the local queer group. And I think there was also a queer group at the University. So, I became quite involved in that. And also, shortly after I arrived there, on my birthday, in fact, was the start—it happened in the middle of my birthday party, I remember this, it was the start of the first Gulf War, in January of 1991. So, it's like you have a birthday party and people certainly become preoccupied with the television. [laughter] Quite understandably. So, I think for both Gary and me, a central part of our political work there became anti-war organizing. So, there's a lot we could say about this, but we are not going to do that in this interview. [laughter]

AS: No. Although for me one of the things that has mattered doing these interviews is noticing the ways that people were always involved in many different struggles, and that those weren't—those politics in some ways aren't—separate, right?

PB: Now, at the same time that this was going on, of course—you're probably going to ask me a question about this, but I'll start into it, anyway—is that I did become involved in somewhat of a controversy in Newfoundland. So, to give the timeframe for this, so the war starts in January. And I had moved there in November. And I hadn't been back to Toronto, but at one point, Peter Wood, who was involved in The AIDS Committee, he had come from Nova Scotia and he was the Executive Director of The AIDS Committee. He was supposed to be going to some kind of meeting or something in Toronto, and was unable to go because he had some other commitment, but he had this plane ticket. And, of course, this is before 2001, so we could still, at least if you were the

same gender, use someone else's plane ticket. [laughter] So he offered me his plane ticket to Toronto to go for four days, and I accepted it. I had people I wanted to see, and I knew that Michael Smith was not well and that I wanted to go visit him. So, I accepted this ticket. And as it turned out, a couple days before I went, Michael Smith died. So, I was going to be in Toronto for his funeral, which is not the preferred thing I wanted for the trip, but it was something that was important for me to do. So, I did go on that brief trip to Toronto and was there for Michael's funeral, which I attended at the funeral home on Sherbourne, or one of those streets around there. After the event, the crowd actually took over the street, which was a very powerful thing. And it seemed so appropriate for Michael.

AS: He would have wanted a political funeral?

PB: Exactly. Yeah. But, where I'm getting with this, is back in Newfoundland. So, I fly back to Newfoundland and it's the beginning of, I don't know what they called it at Memorial but it was some lesbian and gay awareness week, or something. And the newspaper there was about to publish a supplement. And one of the people who was involved with the newspaper was a student there and had approached me about writing something for it. So, when I came back from Michael's funeral, I was somewhat energized to write something for which. I thought a lot about Michael and how he had lived his life and I wanted to do something he could have been proud of. So, I remember going to the University on that particular day. I think it was a Sunday, there was a huge, huge, snow storm. And, so, we basically get snow stayed into the office there and this student and I write this article about safe sex. And, what I did in this article, what I pushed for, is, you know, there's all the regular kind of stuff about how to do safe sex, but it included these three paragraphs which were essentially descriptions of sexual encounters, first person descriptions of sexual encounters, and incorporating safe sex stuff. Now, I had planned for when this would be printed for them to be sort of like, called out in a separate typeface in boxes, or something. The layout when it turned out didn't come that way. It was just, like, paragraph after paragraph with these three paragraphs inserted into it. And I had written these three paragraphs basically thinking about certain events in my own life. [laughter]

AS: And they're hot. I've read them.

PB: And, you know, you're not the only person that's ever told me that. [laughter]

AS: I think that might be a sort of universal response to those three paragraphs. [laughter]

PB: I remember when I was living in Newfoundland, someone called me from somewhere in Western Canada and introduced himself and said, "I just want to tell you that that porn you wrote was incredible." [laughter] Which is not exactly the way I thought about it. Anyways, so I wrote this, and you know, I went home. I had come home from this funeral and I went to sleep and I thought, "That's a good day's work I've done." So, then it gets published. And then, as they say, the shit hits the fan, right? So, a lot of people are attacking *The Muse*, which is the newspaper at Memorial, for publishing this "Horrible stuff about AIDS," and "It's just pornography," which I'll admit to a certain extent it was. [laughter] But so, you know, I'm not a student, right? At this point. I've co-written this with someone who is a student. So, I'm trying not to be too much of a

spokesperson for this. So, other people are coming forward. Gary speaks publically about this. One of the guys from *CODCO* [Tommy Sexton] speaks at a press conference. Some women at the University speak in defense of it. But then, of course, the whole thing magnifies, because many school newspapers across the country take up and reprint the article. It turns out to be by far the most widely published thing I've ever written. [laughter] By far! You know, a couple hundred thousand copies, right? [laughter]

AS: Yeah.

PB: And, needless to say, the same kind of thing happens in universities across the country. And, I know at least two school newspapers were temporarily closed down, as a result of this. A lot of flak. A lot of people defending it. I remember doing a couple of media interviews. I did one interview in French. But the idea, of course, behind it, was to not just talk about AIDS, but to talk in a positive way about at least gay male sexuality, right? Which is what I was familiar with. [laughter] So, it was a pretty tough six-week period, because there was a lot of very vicious attacks on these newspapers, on me, on the people involved. But I mean, there was some good defense, too. A lot people came out of the woodwork and said, "This is exactly the kind of ways we need to talk about safe sex and our lives," right?

AS: Yeah. And those newspapers that were taking it up, I mean, they knew what they were doing, right? They were publishing it.

PB: Yes. By that time, they knew more than, probably, we initially knew at Memorial, right?

AS: Yeah.

PB: And, yeah, you know, in the years since then I have occasionally spoken to people who... I've met a couple gay guys who were university students in different places then and who remember reading that article. And, you know, ten or fifteen years later had met me and finally, at some point in our interactions, they discovered I was the author of that, and told me how important it was to them. So, you know, if I read it now it's not a great article. Like, we sat down one evening and just wrote it and published it, like you do often in university newspapers, right? But it did have a huge impact.

AS: And can you reflect on how, coming from Michael's funeral, was part of that work infused in the way you did it and how you did it?

PB: Absolutely. You know, having come from Michael's funeral... Michael, you know, we often hear about this concept of internalized homophobia and self-loathing and things. I like to think I don't have a lot of that. [laughter] But, you know, it's been there at times. But Michael was one of the most out and pro-sex people I knew. And it was in that context, in thinking about him, that I wanted to do something that was pro-sex, which was not really what I had most done. Although, I guess, this is the second thing you could call porn... [laughter]

AS: What was the first thing?

PB: Well, *Rites* one time decided they wanted to do some safe sex photographs. And I had this idea—you know a lot of safe sex stuff back then was on men and their beautiful bodies and stuff—I said, “We should have some alternative body types.” So, we did. And the alternative body types were me and Gary. [laughter]

AS: That would be a good name for your band. [laughter]

PB: So, yeah, this was it. This was earlier. This was 1987. And it got published in the Pride Day edition without our heads.

AS: But people knew that it was you?

PB: Yeah, because Gary used to go around signing his name—his autograph—on his leg in this. [laughter] I may have done this, too. [...]

AS: So, this article was the second for it?

PB: Yes, but the article, I absolutely know that the space I was in, the mindset I was in, when I came back from that is, “I want to do something different.” And we did. [...]

AS: So, at some point that controversy dies down, goes away?

PB: Yes. When Gary and I moved away from Newfoundland in the end of the summer in 1991, one of the local columnists wrote a letter column in *The Evening Telegram* about Gary, basically. And, saying, you know, “Good riddance to him.” Basically, that St. John’s in Newfoundland would be better off now that he’s moving away. And basically, “You may think this is a huge group of people who were doing all this work with him, but I know for a fact that it was a small group of only 30 or 40 people working with him.” [laughter]

AS: And how many people do you think it actually was? 3, or 4?

PB: 3, 4, 5, 6? [laughter] So I always thought of that as an example of how a small group of people can do a lot. [laughter]

AS: Yeah.

PB: So, yeah, that was a lot of fun. Newfoundland was a great experience. We worked with some wonderful people there. The other thing that happened, the year I was there, was shortly after we arrived, the Mulroney government was cutting funding to women’s centres across the country. And there was, in St. John’s, was the most successful occupation of the government offices around this. I remember doing a lot of support work around that.

AS: So, people were occupying the offices to say, “you can’t cut this funding”?

PB: Yeah. The Secretary of State offices, as it was then called. Now it's the Ministry of Heritage, or something like that. But, yeah, I remember being in that occupation numerous times shortly after I arrived in Newfoundland. I was doing support work for them, helping with signs and bringing in stuff. There was a lot going on in that year that I lived there.

AS: And did you participate also in getting Pride going there?

PB: Oh, yes. [laughter]

AS: Can you talk about that?

PB: So, a number of us got together to organize the very first Lesbian and Gay Pride Day, as we called it then, in Newfoundland, in St. John's. So, that would have been, I guess June or July of 1991. It was a small organizing committee of six or eight people, maybe ten, who pulled together like a whole week of events. It was very powerful. I remember I had phoned up Pride Toronto to get a copy of the official declaration that they had tried to use there, and I just rewrote it for St. John's. It was all this stuff about like, the power of Stonewall and self-organization, and all this stuff. And I sent it off to the Mayor. And she phoned me at home one day and I'm thinking, "Oh, I'm going to have a big fight with the Mayor." [laughter] All she did was make one grammatical correction. [laughter]

AS: Really?

PB: And, I remember, extremely well, because... Well there's two things on top of this: a safe sex workshop, but also, I and another person, Brenda Ponick, who was a student at Memorial, she and I organized a video night of films to show at the major hall there the LSPU Hall. But it was also the same day that the Mayor was signing the proclamation. So, Brenda and I curated this video showing. We got stuff from Vtape and elsewhere and we put together what we thought was going to be a decent evening. There had been lots of activity, but we had no idea whether we would get 10 people or 75 people out to this, right? And I don't remember if she was with me, but I had to go to City Hall, though.

AS: To do the signing.

PB: To be there when the Mayor signed it, right? While all the people were gathering at the LSPU Hall. And so, I remember arriving at the Hall way after this signing ceremony in City Hall, and having no idea, as I said, how many people would be there. Walking in the place was packed.

AS: Really?

PB: Absolutely packed. 250 people. Incredible. And I remember being up on the stage with Brenda introducing the evening, and I was like, I felt like I was floating above the stage. Because this was way more, way beyond our wildest dreams of how successful this would be. You know, I had spent the afternoon in the Hall, the empty Hall, like setting it up. This fellow, Barry, was doing all the technical work. Barry Nichols. But I had to leave while the people started coming. In some ways, I

got to avoid all that. [laughter] The anxiety that I would go through waiting for the place to fill up.

AS: If anyone is going to come.

PB: And then I come back to just sort of start it up and it was full. It was very successful. We did a march with, again, several hundred people were attending it.

AS: Can I ask one more thing about the videos, though? How did you come to the videos that you picked? Like, now we'd just look on the Internet. I feel like we don't remember... Like, can you just talk about how you picked the videos? How did you decide? How did you get them?

PB: The part that I remember most is going through, I think it was the Vtape catalogue.

AS: Which would have been, like, mailed to you.

PB: Yeah. And they sent a whole bunch of things to us that we could preview on video tape and look at and decide which ones to use. I remember we used one, by a fellow, Jim McSwain, and I don't actually remember much more than that. It was a variety of short interesting things. There was one about a lotto ticket being stuck on a frozen chicken. [laughter] It was a successful evening. And a very successful Pride Week.

AS: And so, the March. Were there hundreds of people there, too?

PB: That's my recollection, yes.

AS: Wonderful.

PB: I'm conflating in my head with one of the major anti-war marches that we did, because it wasn't cold when we did Pride. Although it was Newfoundland, so it could have been cold in July. [laughter]

AS: Yeah, so, you did a lot.

PB: We did a lot in that year. Yes. A huge amount.

AS: With your 30 or 40 closest friends.

PB: That's right. [laughter]

AS: And then you moved to Nova Scotia.

PB: We did. Gary got a job at Acadia. I didn't want to live in rural Nova Scotia, so we lived in Halifax. And I got involved with the newspaper there, the queer newspaper.

AS: Which was *Wayves* at that point?

PB: That was the precursor of *Wayves*. It was called the *GAEZETTE*. So, I got involved in that. It came out monthly. I had gotten involved in The Red Herring Bookstore.

AS: Which was a coop then?

PB: Yes. So, that's the work I did then. And I didn't really do... I mean, I remember at that time, the Person's with AIDS Coalition was existing in Halifax and I was doing a very, very, little bit of stuff with them, but I really wasn't involved in AIDS and HIV stuff in the year I lived there. It wasn't until the subsequent year when we moved to the Annapolis Valley that I became involved in AIDS organizing.

AS: And how did that happen?

PB: There was an organization that had been founded called The Valley AIDS Concern Group. And essentially founded—you know, it wasn't a particularly activist organization. It was more educational and support. People would go into schools and wherever else they were welcome to talk about HIV issues. And, also, actually supporting people. And there were a couple, some of the interesting characters who were involved, there was a woman who I think you have an interview with her on your site, Mary Ganong, who became a very good friend of ours.

AS: Can you talk about her a little bit?

PB: Mary was a very interesting character in rural Nova Scotia. You know, she has, like, that good Ganong last name, a real Maritime name. [laughter] But she was, in fact, from Montreal. She was a Jewish woman from Montreal who had married into the Ganong family. But, it turns out, she had met her husband in the 1930s, in Montreal, through the Communist Party.

AS: Wow.

PB: Yes. And, my recollection is that she met her husband at a meeting that was spoken at by Dr. Norman Bethune.

AS: Really?

PB: Yes. So, a young communist meeting in Montreal in the 1930s. He's from the Maritimes. They get married and they move back to Maritimes. [laughter]

AS: This completely changes my conception of Mary Ganong.

PB: Yeah?

AS: Yeah. Like it makes sense, then, that she was an organizer.

PB: Absolutely. And they left the Communist Party in 1956, is my recollection. So, reaching back, 1956 is coming into this interview twice, right? So, Mary Gagong leaves the Communist Party in 1956 over the revelations of the 20th Party Congress, and the question of what happened to Hungary in 1956, right? Meanwhile, a couple years before, I have been working outside 390 Bay Street with Eva Halpert who fled Hungary in 1956 after the Soviets crushed what was happening there, right?

AS: Fascinating.

PB: It is fascinating, isn't it?

AS: Yeah.

PB: Mary Ganong used to always say about 1956 is that what you learned is that—she and her husband learned that—they would never wear blinders again to ignore what was really going on in the world around them. They felt they had really been betrayed in the Communist Party. So, that was their background.

AS: Yeah.

PB: But, meanwhile, this is 1991, right? And, so, what had happened in her particular situation is that her husband Reid Ganong, whom I never met... So, I remember someone else telling me in Wolfville... "Yeah. I never understood that they were two different people because when I first came here everyone says, 'You have to meet Marion Reid.'"

AS: [laughter] Marion Reid?

PB: Yes, she thought Marion Reid was the woman, but it turns out it was Mary and her husband Reid. [laughter]

AS: And people would just only meet Mary?

PB: Or both. Once they figured this out. [laughter] So, what had happened is—the timing of this is vitally important, because Reid had a heart attack or developed heart disease and had surgery. Now, I am trying to get the date of this correctly. It's my recollection that the surgery took place during that window in 1984, 1985, when testing of the blood supply had started in some other countries. My recollection is, perhaps New Zealand starts in '84? But it was nine months later in Canada. It was during that window that Reid had his heart surgery and received blood transfusions, which lead to him becoming HIV positive. So, exactly when they knew this about him, I don't know? My recollection is that he died, perhaps one or two years before 1991, when we arrived there. So, by this time, Mary was a widow. Reid had died from AIDS. I never knew him. I don't recall exactly what, but Mary was very involved in the founding and the ongoing work of the Valley AIDS Concern Group. And she was in her late seventies at this time, but very energetic and very outspoken. And especially outspoken on the idea that was extremely important to her that there was no distinction—as was often made in the mainstream media and by many people—

between so-called innocent and guilty victims of HIV. She would go into schools and all this stuff and she would talk about sex. And, yeah, she was a very interesting woman. And did this for quite a few years. And, so, she became.... Gary and I drove her to Halifax for this event. She became the first person in Nova Scotia, and perhaps one of the first people in Canada, to receive government compensation for what happened to her husband. If I recall, she got a cheque for \$50,000. I remember having a discussion with her, where I pushed her a little bit to not accept the compensation. I didn't push her, but I did make the suggestion that, because of the fact that Reid was infected exactly in that window, I thought would have made a very good court case about negligence on the part of the Red Cross and the government. As it ended up, the compensation they gave her was much more general, but there was that window when this should have been happening in Canada, and many lives could have been saved by that, right? If they had have been on the cutting edge of this. Like, I believe, New Zealand was, right?

AS: Or even the sort of middle edge, right?

PB: Exactly. So, she chose not to do that and that was fine. And, you know, she did get this cheque for \$50,000, which even then was not a lot for a human life, right?

AS: Yeah.

PB: But I think she was definitely the first person in Nova Scotia to get that. It was a meeting that was taking place, more generally, with the Minister of Health, but she went early and we took her early, to actually get this cheque from the minister.

AS: And so that wasn't part of the case that Randy and Janet brought as part of the hemophiliac blood supply intervention?

PB: Good question. I don't remember those details.

AS: We can find that out.

PB: That's a good question.

AS: I wonder if someone's working on that, right? Like, because, one thing that has been held important is—this is a thing that Janet has said a lot when we talked to her—is this kind of consistent refusal from the people who were being lifted up as innocent victims to acknowledge that. Or to think that that was a good distinction, right? And, I mean, one of the things that Janet said was, "We always thought that there should be a class action suit from gay men who contracted HIV and AIDS because of government negligence." And spreading the word and doing basic... Yeah, so there's these political complexities that get erased because of the ways that people wanted to talk about deserving and undeserving victims.

PB: Mary would make the point that, you know, she could easily have become infected through sex, right? Which, as she said, "Would that make me one of the guilty people?"

AS: Right.

PB: She said, in fact, that the reason this didn't happen, was because after Reid's surgery and the medication he was on, it was no longer a possibility for them.

AS: Right.

PB: But, she said, "Otherwise I'd have been there, I wouldn't have known." And she used to use that to say that she was just like gay men this way.

AS: Yeah. "This is ridiculous," right?

PB: Yeah. Exactly. So, Mary died several years ago. She was very, very old. I think about 97.

AS: She lived a long time.

PB: Yeah. She did. So, we had lots of fun with Mary. [laughter] One of the events I remember being at... You know, her history was quite phenomenal. We had a meeting once. It was at the Red Door office in Kentville. And I was chairing it. This was the Valley AIDS Concern Group. So, I remember being there. There were ten or twelve. It was a lot of regulars, but there was this new woman who had come to it, who had somehow contacted us. And she was a Black woman from Annapolis Royal or somewhere further down there. I was chairing the meeting, and there was this other man about Mary's age, who was quite involved with our group. He was a Baptist minister. And he had done some of the funeral services for some of our guys and was very involved. And, also, one of his central involvements was around supporting people who were in treatment for alcohol use and stuff. So, he was a somewhat interesting fellow, but I wasn't that particularly close to him, right? My spidey senses go off around some of these religious people. Some of them. Anyway, so we go through this meeting and this woman from down Annapolis Royal would say things, and this minister guy would sort of not agree with her. I'm trying to figure out what's going on here, right? I'm trying to keep the meeting rolling, but not keep him being so dismissive of her. I remember afterwards, Charlene was there, who was very involved, and Mary and I were talking afterwards and I said, "So, what was going on there? This didn't make any sense to me." And Mary turns to me and says, quite simply, "Patrick. Don't you know plain old-fashioned racism when you see it?" [laughter]

AS: You sweet innocent boy. [laughter]

PB: And I thought, "Oh my god. What has happened to me?" [laughter] "I should know better than this!" [laughter] But I was like, trying to look for other explanations for what was so clearly racism, right?

AS: Basic racism.

PB: I felt horrible about that. I remember being at a conference not long after that and there was this workshop I really wanted to go to, but there was this other one that was on race and how to

recognize things. And I said, “I have to go to this because I need this. There’s something wrong with the way I reacted here.”

AS: Did that woman ever come back?

PB: No. No. That’s bad. I’ve always felt bad about that. But I was grateful for Mary, at that point.

AS: Yes. It’s good to have comrades who can point that out.

PB: Exactly.

AS: So, in the Valley AIDS Concern Group, you said there would be, like, ten or twelve people in a meeting? How would people hear about meetings? How was it organized? What did it do?

PB: It was a network of people. One year we did this fundraising walk through Wolfville and towards Greenwich and stuff. And I remember, Charlene and I several weeks before, drove the length of the Valley down the old Highway 1 putting up posters, going into schools, and giving them posters and stuff. So, we did a newsletter and whatever media work we could do. And there were people involved, like this woman, Jali, was involved in palliative care. There were a couple teachers involved. This minister, as I said. You know, in Wolfville it’s not hard to make connections. It’s a university town and small, so you can get people involved there. But, there were centrally three HIV+ young men who were involved. One was this guy from Scotch Village, which is across in West Hants county. Another guy from Bridgetown. And another guy from New Minas. All of whom died within about a year of each other. So, I got to know their families and I remember going to their homes to visit them.

AS: When they were sick?

PB: Yeah. Or in the hospital. In the Kentville hospital or Soldiers Memorial in Bridgetown. And, I remember one of these young men was on welfare and he was having a terrible time meeting his bills. He was living in an apartment in New Minas, and he had gotten behind in his electric bill. So, Nova Scotia Power had just been privatized at that point. And so, I went with him to the welfare office in Kentville, and we met with his worker. And the worker says, “Well, you know, I used to have some leeway when Nova Scotia Power was still owned by the government, but since it’s been privatized they don’t listen to us at all. There’s nothing we can do.” But I mean, this was 1992, probably. And, you know, he’s basically saying to this young man, Dwight was his name, saying, “Well, you need to find a roommate.” And, he says to Dwight at one point, “But it can’t be a woman. It has to be a guy.” And I said, “Explain.” And he says, “Well, you know, we have to assume a relationship if it’s a man and a woman living together.” [laughter] I remember just looking at this guy and saying, “Do you have any idea how ridiculous what you’re saying is to us?” And he says, “I know, but this is the law. These are the rules as they stand now. There is nothing I can do about that.”

AS: And, if Dwight was in a relationship with someone, then his welfare would have gotten

cut off?

PB: Well, he could have easily been in a relationship with a man because they would have refused to recognize this, but any member of what they would have perceived to be opposite sex living with them, they would automatically assume a relationship and take her income into account in assessing whether he was eligible or not. So, he ended up having to go live with some family members. So, you learn a lot from these experiences.

AS: Yeah. And this quality of just the number of people sort of living ordinary lives like that that are affected.

PB: Yeah. This other fellow from Scotch Village, Rob, he had been living in Alberta. I think he had worked in one of the hotels in Kananaskis, or somewhere out there. And when he got sick he moved back to be with his family in Scotch River. He had a nice little sports car. I remember after he died, about a year or two later, running into his mother at the Hants County exhibition. And it strikes you there that, you know, you're in an audience where you forget that there are all these people who are also affected, right?

AS: Yeah.

PB: There's one thing that I left out earlier about Newfoundland that I wanted to mention. I talked about the first Pride Week there. But one of the things I organized was a safe sex workshop, which we advertised and held—at that point there were one and a half gay bars in St. John's—the smaller one was hosting this safe sex workshop that I did. Maybe, like, 16 or 18 guys came to it. But there was this young guy that had somehow gotten involved with stuff who was my assistant. And he had this ability, which I have never seen, to pull a condom down over his head [laughter] and just over his nose and inflate the whole thing through breathing in through his mouth and out through his nose. So, the thing would go up and be like [motions] this high above his head.

AS: That's amazing.

PB: It *was* amazing.

AS: I've never imagined such a thing.

PB: No, seriously. It looked like Marge Simpson's hair, right? [laughter]

AS: And, other than illustrating an amazing ability, what did this illustrate in the safer sex workshop? How stretchy condoms are?

PB: Absolutely. Yeah. [laughter]

AS: Good. Very important piece of oral history.

PB: I thought so. [laughter] Where are we?

AS: Okay. So, here we are. We've talked about the Valley AIDS Concern Group. I think I just wanted to ask if you have any perception of the difference in AIDSphobia or homophobia in organizing in a place like Toronto and then these more sort of, supposedly non-central—I mean, of course, every place is central to the people who live in that place—but in more rural places, like being in the Valley, was there any difference in how people experienced or thought about HIV and AIDS in terms of location?

PB: Acadia University was the first university in Canada to have same-sex benefits. So, I have always rejected this dichotomy.

AS: Yeah.

PB: When we moved to rural Nova Scotia, I anticipated that I would find more homophobia and AIDSphobia. This did not happen. So, we buy this house in rural Nova Scotia – clearly I have undergone a metamorphosis by this time on where I wanted to live. We have no idea what's around us, right? So, I soon learn that our kitty corner neighbors just up the road here, this woman lives with them, who is the sister of this gay guy I know in Halifax. The people directly across the road from the other part of our property are the great aunt and uncle of a lesbian student of Gary's. And there's this other retired teacher who lives just on the next road over from us who was involved in the Valley AIDS Concern Group. And she says, "Oh yeah, when you guys moved in people talked about you in the neighborhood. I've been wanting to meet you!" [laughter] So, what I say is there is an incredible awareness out there that those of us who aren't from there don't necessarily expect to find. But it was there. I mean, it's also rural Nova Scotia. It's not like the rural rest of Canada. In that, in rural Nova Scotia, race is much more of an issue and a present thing, because you do actually in Nova Scotia have a significant number of Black people living in rural areas. So, soon after we moved into this house, I discovered that our next-door neighbors were Black Nova Scotians, which is not what I was expecting, either. So, I had a lot to learn and I did.

AS: Yeah.

PB: But I always found rural Nova Scotia and Wolfville and these areas, at least as welcoming as downtown Toronto.

AS: Yeah. And then I remember Simon telling us just how affected people were because of the number of people in the Valley AIDS Concern Group who died very quickly, and how much that was felt, because of the ways that everyone knew each other and were part of families...

PB: Yeah. I remember I once... So, Simon, at that point, was living in Bridgetown. His mother had a shop there where we used to have meetings sometimes. And I remember once, one of the other members whose family lived in Bridgetown was quite sick. And so, Jali and I were going down to visit him. My parents were visiting at the time, so they came with us on the trip to Bridgetown, but I wasn't going to take them to spend time with a sick friend of ours, right? So, they went and drove around the town a bit, and we visited with Jeff, and his parents went out while Jali and I were

visiting him. And my parents come back, and they said, “Oh, yeah we went into this beautiful shop and talked to this lovely English women.” And I said, “Oh, yeah. That’s Simon’s mother.” And they had no idea about this connection, but like, if they had of made that connection they would have said, “Oh, yeah. Our gay sons know each other.”

AS: Yeah.

PB: So, you always have that stuff going on. And it’s true in Nova Scotia as anywhere, right?

AS: That’s right.

PB: Maybe even more true there.

AS: Okay. So, we are moving sort of into the last part. [...] This is the part where we just ask if there are any memories you want to share of people who died? And so, I have various names that I can prompt you with.

PB: Let’s do it.

AS: So, maybe we could start with Michael. You’ve talk about him a little bit, but just if there’s anything you want to say about what Michael was like?

PB: Yeah. His name has come up a fair bit. I admired Michael a lot. We were not really close friends. When I worked at CKLN one of the things I quickly learned was that Michael was one of our devoted listeners. So, if I did something good, I would hear about it from Michael. If I did something Michael didn’t like, I would hear about it from Michael. [laughter] But always in a constructive way. Because he thought the work we were doing at the station was so vitally important. Not just around queer stuff, but around all the stuff we were doing; outreach to the Black community and all these different things.

So, I remember one year, it might have been ’89, we would do this huge fundraising thing and I remember Michael being at the wrap party at one of the places on Queen Street West, which I think is the biggest social event of the year for us at CKLN, right? And I went back with Michael to his apartment afterwards. He was living in the Spruce Street Coop then. I ended up spending the night there, but he was preparing at that time for his one person show, *Person Livid with AIDS*. And he had built himself a coffin, which was part of that play and he said, “You know, I’m getting used to sleeping in this.” Right? ...And, he was amazingly reflective on things, right? And he had the ability to put things right out there like that. And to talk about his body when he was ill, right? In a way that was like, “This just is my body,” right? “I still like to use it sometimes as much as I can.”

AS: Was he literally sleeping in the coffin?

PB: Well, I didn’t see him sleep in it.

AS: But he was getting in it.

PB: He said he was sleeping in it. I was there so there wasn't room for both of us in the coffin.
[laughter]

AS: What was your perception of his getting ready for the play?

PB: I've tried to get it straight in my mind the timeframe of this. I think this was shortly before the play, but I think it was in fact 6 or 8 months before the play as it turned out. So, this was clearly a very long-term project. I remember him telling me one of the stories from the play in somewhat more detail than it came out in the play, about a trip he made to Winnipeg, which of course I was from Winnipeg, and he had relatives from Winnipeg who I was aware of. So, we had that sort of connection. But it was just stuff he really wanted to get out there, because he saw himself as having—he was different from a lot of us, right? He was very in his skin, right? Very comfortable with who he was in a lot of ways. You know, his politics was so central to everything he did. So, he wanted to get that stuff out there. It was really important to him.

AS: And how did he come to that? Being comfortable in his skin and that kind of orientation?

PB: This is an excellent question. I have no idea. I wish I knew that.

AS: Do you know anything about his political development?

PB: Not really.

AS: He was an anarchist?

PB: Yes, he was. And so, he also had an English accent. He was from England. But he also had these relatives in Winnipeg. And like, his aunt was the Deputy Premier of Manitoba when I lived there. And NDP. Probably became very close to becoming Premier at one point.

AS: Wow.

PB: And, I remember watching her once in Winnipeg in the early '80s—the NDP came back into power in 1981 in Manitoba. That's when she was the Deputy Premier. And we were having a fairly large demonstration outside the legislature. A pro-choice demonstration. And the government sent her out to speak to us, which I thought was very cruel. [laughter] But not surprising because everyone knew that her position was different than the one she had to put forward on behalf of the government. But she still did it, right?

AS: So, he had this kind of political family? And he was a radical faerie, too?

PB: Yes.

AS: Do you remember anything about that? He would travel...

PB: He would. I don't remember much detail about that.

AS: You know him through AIDS ACTION NOW!, is that how you met?

PB: I may have known him a little bit before then, but certainly that's where most of it came from, yes.

AS: And that quality of being committed to pleasure, committed to feeling good, do you have any memories of how that manifested? Like, how you saw that in him?

PB: I used to... A couple times I would interview him when he was in the hospital. And he would both talk about the horrible things that would be happening to him then, but also like, comments about some of the people attending him. [laughter] But, you know, I think we should let his play speak for him.

AS: It's really evident in the play, too. Would you say anything more about the funeral and what happened there? I know that you weren't there before he died, but what the experience of that funeral was like?

PB: The funeral... What I remember is it having a significant Indigenous content to it, which, you know, in 1991 was pretty cutting edge. He used to go up to Cape Croker and other places and was very, very engaged in Indigenous solidarity. And there was good music. That's about it, that I can say at this point.

AS: And then you came out into the street after the funeral and marched.

PB: Yes. And then, I think there was a reception afterwards at Bob Gallagher's house. But that's not the funeral where I got really drunk. That was a different one at Bob Gallagher's house.

AS: Do you want to talk about that funeral?

PB: Um, Dan Wardock. So, Dan Wardock was a young gay guy. He might have been from Hamilton. But, when I first started doing the AIDS ACTION NEWS! at CKLN he was the news Director. He also lived in the same house with George, Tim, and Richard. So, the first time I met Dan was in a washroom. [laughter] But it was the washroom at his house. And the house that George, Tim, Dan, and Richard lived in was the only home I have ever been in where the washroom also had a urinal. So, I had to go and use the washroom and George said, "Oh, it's right down there." And he says, "I think Dan's in there, but you can just go in and use the urinal. [laughter]"

AS: Yeah. I was going to say that it's slightly weirder to meet someone in the washroom of a private house than in a public washroom. [laughter]

PB: Exactly. That's the first time he and I met. And it was subsequent to that that George connected me to CKLN to do the radio show. So, Dan left CKLN and moved to Montreal and then I became the

News Director. And he phoned me, not long after he was in Montreal, to tell me that he had been diagnosed. And, in the same conversation, he told me what his T-cell counts were, which were not good at all. He subsequently moved back to Toronto and ended up living in one of the apartments that may have been organized through the AIDS Committee of Toronto that were for people who were HIV+. This was similar to the one that Michael was living in, which was the Spruce Avenue Co-op, the City Park Co-op had these apartments and he lived there. And I was on the support team for him there. The support team was established to help him, and he actually died on the second or third day there was a support team fully in place for him.

AS: Very quickly.

PB: Yeah. It was.

AS: How many people were on the team?

PB: A dozen or so. I remember going to a meeting at ACT, you know, a couple days before we started doing this, and establishing our time tables and what we would do. I remember the day that I went and spent six hours with him, was actually the day in the Fall of 1990, the swearing in of the NDP government. We watched the news report and he says, “You know, I don’t really understand what no-fault insurance is.” I said, “You asked the right person because I’m from Manitoba. We’ve had it there a long time.” [laughter] I think that was a Monday and he died on Wednesday, if I recall.

AS: Wow.

PB: And that was a big thing at CKLN, because he had been the News Director there for a while. We did a—well, a couple of the other people who worked there more with him than I had—did a very nice piece about him that we kept playing for, like, a couple weeks.

AS: And the funeral was at Bob Gallagher’s?

PB: Yes. The same place. I had a bit too much to drink. I had a lot too much to drink. It was the only time I’ve ever thrown up from drinking in my entire life. It was not pleasant.

AS: No. But it’s hard to be at funerals.

PB: Mmhm. Yeah.

AS: Do you want to say anything about Bob Gallagher? Were a lot of funerals there?

PB: No, only those two that I remember. But Bob also—so, he was, when I became the News Director at CKLN, he had this role of being the political commentator. So, he used to come in once a week to do his show. and he would essentially have a script, not for himself, but for the host—if it happened to be me or whoever else it was—which was a list of three or four questions that we were to ask, basically verbatim. I’m not very good at that, as it turns out. [laughter] And he was

involved in the NDP. And I think he was teaching at the university in Peterborough at that time and would go back and forth. I didn't know him that well. I just knew him through that stuff and CKLN.

AS: But he got involved with AIDS organizing?

PB: He was sort of in and out, yeah. That's my recollection.

AS: So, any memories of George Smith?

PB: You know, I was thinking about George the other day. So, George was very smart, right? And, as I've mentioned earlier, very, very good at trying to work on these frames for the media and stuff. But, George used to make the argument about how he felt that we were very, very close to the point where AIDS would become a chronic manageable illness. This is like in 1989, 1990. And I was not really convinced of this. But he was always making this argument. And, I thought about that in retrospect. And, you know, when did that really happen? It more or less became the case, probably, in like 1995 or 1996. So, you know, I think he was right in retrospect. You know, unfortunately it wasn't soon enough for George, but for many people he knew it was, soon enough. He died in 1994. So, it wasn't that far off.

AS: Do you know why he thought that?

PB: Well, I thought at the time it was because he had an unjustified belief in science. [laughter] I remember, for instance, during the 1988 U.S. election campaign, he came to a meeting of the Media Working Group, and he said that he had read this article or had seen some interview...and this is when George Bush Sr was running for president, to succeed Reagan. And George had read some interview, or some analysis by a psychiatrist, who said that clearly, George Bush Sr suffered from some kind of mental illness. What exactly it was, I don't remember. But George believed this firmly, right? Now, I actually think if you look at American history he may have been the last relatively sane President. [laughter] But George was convinced by psychiatry that we could say that this person was mentally ill from a distance. So, I kind of had the impression that George sometimes gave too much credence to the medical profession and to medical opinions. But, you know, on this thing about the chronic manageable illness, I think he was right. More right than I was.

AS: And could you say anything about what it was like to organize with him? Or to work with him?

PB: Did I tell a story about the bathhouse before?

AS: I don't think so.

PB: So, one time, someone had wanted us to do a media release for something, and it was a Sunday. So, I phoned George and George says, "I'm busy." And I say, "This is really important, George. We've got to get this done. We've got to have your input." So, George finally says to me,

“Okay. I’m willing to do this.” I had said, “I’ll come by your house.” And he says, “Fine. You can come by and we will do this on the condition that you give me a ride to the Barracks afterwards. [laughter]

AS: And say what the Barracks was?

PB: The Barracks was a bathhouse in Toronto. Not one that I had ever been to. It had a certain reputation for being, perhaps, a bit rougher than the kind of place I would attend. More of a kind of leather—maybe SM—reputation to it. I had never been there. I did go once, subsequently. But, so I said, “Sure George, we can do this.” So, I drive over in my car and we do the press release and we get all this done. He says, “It’s time to go.” And then he says, “Help me carry this to the car.” Which was his kit bag. Have you ever seen those huge hockey player bags? [laughter] It filled up the entire back seat of my car. So, I drive. I know where the Barracks is. And we get there, and we are right out in front and he says, “Back up two feet.” I say, “Okay.” And he says, “That way when I go in you can look through the doors and see what it’s like.” [laughter]

AS: And he took his whole kit bag?

PB: Yeah.

AS: And then did you stay? Or did you go?

PB: No. I was just dropping him off. [laughter] So, he knew how to combine.

AS: So, he could do the work and still play.

PB: Yeah. Exactly. I’m sure he kidded me about that at some point after that.

AS: Some people have talked to us about this sort of principle that George had, but that we haven’t found in any of his writing. That in doing organizing work you needed to have documents and demonstrations. So, you needed to have a policy to give to the politicians and then show them that you had the political force to back it up. Do you remember anything about that?

PB: Yes. That certainly is something I would have seen him argue. Certainly, in the Media Committee, doing our press releases and doing our work, the way we would think through things is: you always saw it as doing both these things. It wasn’t just trying to convince them through the logic of our statements. It was showing them that we were going to back it up with something, too.

AS: Do you remember how he talked about generating the documents? Or making the policy recommendations?

PB: Well, all I’m going to say is, you know, I think about his close friendship and intellectual relationship with Dorothy Smith, right? Who could talk to us more about the importance of documents more than anyone I know. [laughter] So, I’m not going to say anything more than that,

but there's definitely a relationship there.

AS: Right. And so, you don't have to say more about it. So, one of the things that I've thought a lot about is what it means to not just look at what the documents are doing, but to try and create documents that change things, right? Like, Dorothy Smith in some ways talked about how documents shape our social world. And it seems to me that George was somewhat talking about how we might create documents that change that shape alongside these other...

PB: Yeah. Absolutely. And because of that history with Dorothy he understood what documents do, right? How people organize around them. And, so, he was quite aware of that. And you could see that in the meticulousness in which we worked on the Montreal Manifesto and other things, right? These were going to be vital in what happened, right?

AS: Good. Doug Wilson?

PB: Doug. So, prairie boys, right? Those of us who are from the prairies, I think of both Doug and Glen Brown, right? I knew Doug through *Rites*, first of all, from, probably, 1986 onward, right? And he was on The *Rites* Collective, and his partner Peter was the typesetter. Well, no, he wasn't originally it was that other fellow who died, whose name I don't remember. And then, Peter sort of took over doing typesetting. I would often have to go by and deliver a copy to their house and stuff. I didn't really know Doug that well. He ran for Parliament in 1988, which I think I spoke to earlier in the interview. You know, historically, he was a very important character in what he had done in Saskatchewan, right? And then he and Peter led this life that was... I remember a number of times going to deliver stuff to their house when there would be parties going on and stuff. They enjoyed their life a lot. [laughter] So, I'm sure Gary would have a lot more to say about them, as they worked much more closely together.

AS: Greg Pavelich?

PB: Greg Pavelich. Greg and I were very close friends. Greg... I read through the earlier part of the interview. And I remember I said when we did the sit in at Bristol Meyers at 390 Bay, that Greg was bigger than I was, which is not true of anyone else in AIDS ACTION NOW!. [laughter] He is both taller than me and heavier than me.

AS: And you're a big person.

PB: I am a big person, but he is like 6'5, right?

AS: I don't think I realized that about him.

PB: Oh, yeah. And I had a lot of good times. Greg had an interesting history, too. Greg was from Northern Ontario from Sault Ste. Marie.

AS: Really?

PB: Yeah. He moved to the big city, had I think gone through some difficult times in coming out and such. He came from a Catholic family. But, then, spent 30 years living in the gay neighborhood and knew everyone. The thing with Greg, unlike the rest of us, everyone liked him. He got along with people, right?

AS: Really?

PB: Yeah. So, you could not walk anywhere around Church Street—or, he lived on Jarvis—anywhere around there without running constantly into people that he knew. He knew all the people in the stores. I remember when they set up the first AIDS memorial behind the 519 that he and I—this would have been around 1990—went and walked through it. It was an incredible experience. Because, for like, every year he would point at these names and sit and tell me stories about what he'd done with these guys and how he knew them. I mean, I'm not just saying one or two people here or there, but dozens and dozens of people, right? And this was not an experience I had, because I was younger than Greg, and I had not lived in the centre of any gay community. But his attachment and centrality in that community was really incredible. I'll never forget that moment of walking through that with him, and him doing that. It was incredibly powerful.

I'm thinking about that today, and today is the day that the Prime Minister is offering his apology [for the Canadian government's purge of gay and lesbian public servants]. I know that Greg had a criminal record for gross indecency. Greg liked to go to parks. Although he also was a teacher, when I first knew him he was working at a store. But then he went back to teaching and was a supply teacher to all over the city. I know that by the time he died he was actually working as a teacher of a class with students with autism, which was the same as what I was doing at the time, actually. Greg loved to talk, to entertain people. One time I was staying at his house, he was out of town maybe visiting his parents or something, and the phone rang in the middle of the night and I answered, "No, Greg's not here." So, he had all these phone friends that he used to have phone sex with. So, I did that for him. [laughter] And he was a lot of fun. And really, we stayed connected right up until he died, which was in 2003.

AS: Oh. It was really much more recent than I understood.

PB: Yes. It was shortly after Mike came to live with us. He never got to meet Mike. But the interesting thing is that I knew that Greg's family had owned a hotel or a motel in Sault Ste. Marie, and that's where he had grown up. And the summer that we were adopting Mike, we had to go a number of times to Sault Ste. Marie. And then it was just in October of that year that Greg had died, very suddenly. It was very important to me that we go to the funeral in Sault Ste. Marie. And we did, Gary and I. I remember talking to his sister, who I had met before, because his sister had for a while lived in Sudbury, where we lived. Greg had come a number of times to stay with us and would visit his sister, as well. So we had met her. I asked her, "I know that your family had a hotel here." So, I asked her what it was. She told me it was in fact the one we had been staying at that whole summer, we'd been going there.

AS: All these times!

PB: Yeah. So, it's funny you make these connections.

AS: Long connections.

PB: So, we went to the actual funeral that his family organized in Sault Ste. Marie, but also the very large and well attended memorial service that took place at the 519 sometime later. So, yeah, that was a pretty hard one. Greg came to visit us in Nova Scotia once, too.

AS: Really?

PB: Yes. When we still lived in Halifax, he came that year, when we were in the process of moving to the Valley.

AS: So, he saw you in all your places? Except Newfoundland. He didn't come to Newfoundland.

PB: No. He didn't. That's true.

AS: Did he see the house in Nova Scotia? Or you weren't there yet?

PB: I remember going to the Valley with him. But I can't remember exactly when it was.

AS: Do you know what it was about him that made everyone like him?

PB: He was just very friendly and talkative. He was not a particularly judgmental person, to say the least. He just liked talking.

AS: He was open?

PB: Yes, very. I used to sometimes, at CKLN, if we were having trouble getting someone on the phone for the phone-in, I would get the technician to phone Greg at home. [laughter] And tell him what he's calling in about. [laughter]

AS: You could do that on a dime? [laughter]

PB: Yes. Of course, it was like 10:30 or 11:00 on a Saturday morning, and they would have to wake him up. [laughter]

AS: So, there's probably lots of memories of other people. But is there anyone else that comes to mind that you want to make sure to remember?

PB: Well, there are a couple of people I feel I should mention. I did mention, earlier in the interview, that we did this intervention in the 1988 election campaign with Brian Mulroney, that David Marriage was there. I just remember that particular intervention with him, and it was so

important that he was there with the banner and such for us to confront Mulrone. I remember he died the first weekend that the American AIDS Quilt had come to Toronto. Someone had written his name on it, which is how I found out that he had died. And there were so many guys that had made such an incredible contribution in a short amount of time, right? So, Greg, of course, to make this clear, didn't die of an AIDS-related illness.

AS: Okay. So, this is the part where any other things that come to mind that we didn't cover or nothing has to come to mind?

PB: Nothing really is at the moment.

AS: Well. Thank you, Patrick.

PB: Thank you.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]