

Melissa Harl
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

The Transgender Oral History Project
Tretter Collection in GLBT Studies
University of Minnesota

January 30, 2017



The Transgender Oral History Project of the Upper Midwest will empower individuals to tell their story, while providing students, historians, and the public with a more rich foundation of primary source material about the transgender community. The project is part of the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota. The archive provides a record of GLBT thought, knowledge and culture for current and future generations and is available to students, researchers and members of the public.

The Transgender Oral History Project will collect up to 400 hours of oral histories involving 200 to 300 individuals over the next three years. Major efforts will be the recruitment of individuals of all ages and experiences, and documenting the work of The Program in Human Sexuality. This project will be led by

Andrea Jenkins, poet, writer, and trans-activist. Andrea brings years of experience working in government, non-profits and LGBT organizations. If you are interested in being involved in this exciting project, please contact Andrea.

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1 Andrea Jenkins -AJ
2 Melissa Harl -MH
3
4 AJ: Good afternoon.
5 MH: Hello.
6 AJ: My name is Andrea Jenkins, and I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral History Project
7 at the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota libraries. Today is January 30, 2017.
8 We're on campus at the University of Minnesota, and I am here today with Melissa Harl. Am I
9 pronouncing that right?
10 MH: Harl. Yeah.
11 AJ: Harl?
12 MH: Yeah, it looks like Carl, but not quite. Melissa Harl.
13 AJ: Hi, Melissa.
14 MH: Hi.
15 AJ: So, again, I'm going to ask you to state your name, spell your name - so we make sure we have it
16 all spelled correctly -
17 MH: Okay.
18 AJ: And then tell me your gender identity as you claim it today, and your gender assigned at birth.
19 And then, just to make it really complicated, what pronouns you use.
20 MH: Thank you. I - I'm grateful for the opportunity to participate, as I've told you. My name is Melissa
21 Harl, H-A-R-L. I also have a second surname, S, as in Sam, E-L-O-E-W. First name Melissa, M-E-L-
22 I-S-S-A. You don't need my date of birth or anything like that?
23 AJ: Don't need your date of birth.
24 MH: Okay.
25 AJ: But -
26 MH: Okay.
27 AJ: Your gender identity...
28 MH: Yes. I identify as female, with a transgender experience and history. I was assigned male at birth.
29 I use female pronouns, she, her, and hers.
30 AJ: Okay.
31 MH: And I frequently mess up with other people's pronouns, so...
32 AJ: As do I, so...

- 1 MH: Yeah.
- 2 AJ: It - it's only when it's done with mal-intent that I get -
- 3 MH: Right.
- 4 AJ: - deeply concerned about it.
- 5 MH: Right. Same here.
- 6 AJ: Yeah. So, Melissa -
- 7 MH: Or with my friends, which I really try not to do.
- 8 AJ: You know, we do have a pretty powerful audio recorder -
- 9 MH: Okay.
- 10 AJ: But I am going to just ask if you can just - you know -
- 11 MH: I will try to speak -
- 12 AJ: - to the point that you feel comfortable -
- 13 MH: I will try to speak up.
- 14 AJ: - speak up a little clearer. Just to - I - 'cause I'm - I know this is going to be an amazing
- 15 conversation and I want to make sure we capture it all.
- 16 MH: I will do my best.
- 17 AJ: Yeah. So, just to get us going, Melissa, like, tell me what's the earliest thing you remember in
- 18 life?
- 19 MH: At all?
- 20 AJ: Yeah. Doesn't have to be related to your gender identity -
- 21 MH: Well, and -
- 22 AJ: - although if it is -
- 23 MH: Yeah.
- 24 AJ: - it doesn't matter, but...
- 25 MH: Well, for one thing, I should warn you, I'm a - I'm a bit of a literal person, so -
- 26 AJ: Okay.
- 27 MH: The first thing I remember that I feel confident - I don't remember just because I've thought
- 28 about it so much since - is when I was about four years old and I was in a car ride with my family
- 29 -
- 30 AJ: Sure.

- 1 MH: Driving from Milwaukee to Detroit. But the earliest thing that relates to my gender identity is a
2 year older than that - a year younger than that, I should say - when I was three.
- 3 AJ: Okay.
- 4 MH: And I don't remember from the moment of being three. It's not that I remember what I felt
5 when I was three. But my family noticed that I was tending to wear my sister's clothes.
- 6 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 7 MH: My sister's a little less - less than two years older. And they, I guess, from what they've told me,
8 they found it rather cute for a couple days, but not after that.
- 9 AJ: Oh, so this was a - an ongoing thing.
- 10 MH: Yeah. I - well, okay, here I am, I'll let it all out. I was wearing my sister's underwear.
- 11 AJ: Okay.
- 12 MH: After I was probably, you know, no longer in diapers.
- 13 AJ: Right.
- 14 MH: I was a big kid, you know? And -
- 15 AJ: You've - you've made it pre - I mean, post-diaper.
- 16 MH: By that time, I hope. Yeah. And - I think my mom, esp - I don't really know what my dad
17 thought, 'cause I didn't talk to him much about things, but - but my mom, I think, presumed that
18 I was just trying to be like my older sister, you know? And -
- 19 AJ: Fair assumption.
- 20 MH: And that's true, but - in more ways than either she or I probably -
- 21 AJ: Right.
- 22 MH: - understood at the time. And her response was to send me to a psychologist that was a family
23 friend -
- 24 AJ: At three?
- 25 MH: Yeah. That was a family friend. And it wasn't the only reason. You know, as far as I can
26 remember, or have been told. They told me that I - I don't know. I mean, in retrospect, they
27 told me that they were worried that my development was slow, and...things like that. And yet
28 my memory, which might be different from what some other observer might have seen -
- 29 AJ: Sure.
- 30 MH: Is that what triggered it was my insistence on wearing my sister's clothing.
- 31 AJ: And then the - the rebuke, or...
- 32 MH: Yeah. The correction, shall we say.

- 1 AJ: The correction. Yeah.
- 2 MH: And it wasn't physically violent, or anything like that, and -
- 3 AJ: Right. Right.
- 4 MH: Nor do I - did I feel scarred by it, per se. But that - in the gender story, that's the oldest I can
5 extract.
- 6 AJ: Sure.
- 7 MH: And even that is largely because of family discussions later -
- 8 AJ: What people have told you?
- 9 MH: Yeah.
- 10 AJ: Yeah. Yeah. Wow. Where'd you grow up?
- 11 MH: Milwaukee. I was born in Milwaukee. When I was five, my parents moved just out of the city to
12 a suburb.
- 13 AJ: Which suburb?
- 14 MH: Mequon, Wisconsin, which at that time was a -
- 15 AJ: Mequon?
- 16 MH: Maquan. M-E-Q-U-O-N.
- 17 AJ: Oh, wow. Okay.
- 18 MH: One of the local regional names that is a appropriation of some version of a Native name.
- 19 AJ: Yeah.
- 20 MH: Milwaukee is -
- 21 AJ: Pretty -
- 22 MH: Milwaukee is as well.
- 23 AJ: Milwaukee is as well.
- 24 MH: Ozaukee -
- 25 AJ: Minneapolis is as well.
- 26 MH: Our county was Ozaukee county.
- 27 AJ: Ozaukee county. Yeah.
- 28 MH: And the smallest county in the state of Wisconsin, and the most rigidly Republican and
29 conservative, it turns out.
- 30 AJ: Wow.

- 1 MH: But -
- 2 AJ: Wisconsin itself is a derivative of Native American language, isn't it?
- 3 MH: I - I hadn't thought about it. I'm sure you're right, though.
- 4 AJ: Yeah.
- 5 MH: It - when I just think about it now. But we moved out to the town that was basically a farming
6 community with a few big summer homes on the river, or something, and - we had a yard, and
7 that kind of thing. I think - I mean, I was five. I liked having a yard.
- 8 AJ: Yeah?
- 9 MH: By the time I was eleven or twelve or thirteen, I wanted to go back into the city, and have a
10 more interesting - and at first I was able to do that, 'cause my mom would drop me off at the
11 Milwaukee Central Public Library while she shopped.
- 12 AJ: Oh, wow. So it was a pretty close suburb?
- 13 MH: Started age ten or eleven -
- 14 AJ: It was not very -
- 15 MH: Ten miles out.
- 16 AJ: Okay. Yeah. Wow. But...
- 17 MH: A - a very typical small town becoming a suburb in the - in the extra reaches of - of - regions of a
18 city.
- 19 AJ: Yeah.
- 20 MH: In the fifties and sixties.
- 21 AJ: So no sidewalks...
- 22 MH: No.
- 23 AJ: Cul-de-sacs...
- 24 MH: I was on a dead end road.
- 25 AJ: You were on the end of a cul-de-sac. Yeah.
- 26 MH: I - basically. Yeah.
- 27 AJ: Right.
- 28 MH: In a little summer home that had been turned into a year round house. My father was a church
29 musician and teacher.
- 30 AJ: School teacher?
- 31 MH: Yup.

- 1 AJ: Which -
- 2 MH: High school - high school music teacher.
- 3 AJ: What'd your mom do?
- 4 MH: She worked part time when we were young. She was a disappointed attorney. She wanted to be
5 an attorney, but growing up in her family, that wasn't allowed, that girls go to college.
- 6 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 7 MH: And she did eventually go to two years of junior college. But when we were young, she worked
8 running a - a children's choir at church, typing up invoices for a local business at home, teaching
9 piano lessons, and then when we were in high school and later my sister and I - just the one
10 sibling - she went back into the workforce as a secretary at a business.
- 11 AJ: Oh, wow. Do you play - I mean, having two musical parents, are you -
- 12 MH: The great gift I've been given from having two musical parents is I realize I'm not talented.
- 13 AJ: Oh, okay!
- 14 MH: I have great appreciation for music. I need it. I was - been at two concerts in the last week.
- 15 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 16 MH: I have a piano at home that I play if there's no one else in the house. But just a little bit.
- 17 AJ: Oh, I'm sure there's a little talent lurking in there.
- 18 MH: I wish I were exaggerating, but thank you.
- 19 AJ: Oh, wow. So what was school like, Melissa? I mean you had this sort of...
- 20 MH: Did my face just fall when you asked that question? Well, I had - in many ways, I think a typical
21 experience. I don't know how to say this properly. I - I was pretty bored in school.
- 22 AJ: Yeah.
- 23 MH: After fourth grade. I did really well at school the younger years. I was seen as a teacher's pet by
24 some of the other students -
- 25 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 26 MH: - for that reason, among others. I probably acted like one, too.
- 27 AJ: Were you bullied for that?
- 28 MH: Oh, sure. Among other things. I was...much of my life until college. I was called all sorts of
29 things, like - I - I don't really feel comfortable using my first - my original name, but -
- 30 AJ: That - and that's fine. You don't -
- 31 MH: But I will.

- 1 AJ: - don't - need to.
- 2 MH: My given name - I'm just saying, I'm uncomfortable, but I will.
- 3 AJ: Oh, okay.
- 4 MH: My - my first name was Philip. P-H-I-L-I-P. And I would be called Phyllis or Phil the Femme, or a
5 girl, and it was really interesting. Even in the moment, because I'm - I overthink everything. Have
6 you figured that out yet? So that's part of my nature, okay? So even - more or less in the
7 moment, I'd think, well, you know, they're right.
- 8 AJ: Right?
- 9 MH: And I'm not - I'm not - bothered by the fact that they're right, but I'm really bothered by the fact
10 that they're trying to hurt me.
- 11 AJ: Yes.
- 12 MH: And that I had to learn to try to defend myself physically. I got beat -
- 13 AJ: Was it -
- 14 MH: I got beat but not badly. Not to the extent that I needed medical attention, you know.
- 15 AJ: Right, but -
- 16 MH: Yeah.
- 17 AJ: You were sore, and -
- 18 MH: Yeah.
- 19 AJ: - your feelings were hurt, and -
- 20 MH: Oh, yeah. All that stuff. Yeah.
- 21 AJ: - embarrassed, and -
- 22 MH: Of course. Yeah. And so I was one of those people who -
- 23 AJ: And you were physically assaulted, which is a crime, actually.
- 24 MH: Yeah. I mean it - I didn't feel it that way at the time. It was the rough and tumble of boys -
- 25 AJ: Yeah.
- 26 MH: - is how I felt it.
- 27 AJ: Yeah.
- 28 MH: And I just wasn't a rough and tumble boy.
- 29 AJ: Sure.
- 30 MH: And so...I, you know.

- 1 AJ: How long did that persist?
- 2 MH: Basically from fifth grade until junior year of high school.
- 3 AJ: So people had some sense that you were...feeling feminine, or internally...
- 4 MH: Well -
- 5 AJ: Like, I'm not quite sure what...
- 6 MH: I - I wish I could that kind of self understanding. I think they may saw - may have seen something
7 in me that I didn't realize -
- 8 AJ: Sure.
- 9 MH: - completely. Because I - I wanted to fit in.
- 10 AJ: Right.
- 11 MH: I -
- 12 AJ: You wanted to conform.
- 13 MH: I was in Little League -
- 14 AJ: Yeah.
- 15 MH: I was in Boy Scouts. It's true that privately, my friends were girls, almost entirely.
- 16 AJ: Yeah?
- 17 MH: Starting in fourth or fifth grade, I would talk for hours on the phone at night to girls as a friend.
- 18 AJ: As a friend, not as -
- 19 MH: Yeah.
- 20 AJ: Like, you're trying to -
- 21 MH: No.
- 22 AJ: - court them, or -
- 23 MH: Not in my mind. I don't know how they always experienced it.
- 24 AJ: Okay. Right, right.
- 25 MH: To the point that my parents complained, because of course in those days, I didn't have my own
26 phone or anything.
- 27 AJ: Right.
- 28 MH: And the phone was just busy for hours. And I knew this was kind of girly behavior, and I liked
29 that. I - but...or, I didn't mind it. Maybe that's more realistic. I - I didn't mind that. I - I've always
30 been nourished by women friends, and girls, and self-identified females, I guess I would say. But

1 not only, of course.

2 AJ: Yeah.

3 MH: I - I still have a couple dear friends from those days who are men.

4 AJ: Really?

5 MH: Yeah. Who were much more the masculine ideal, and we got along.

6 AJ: Even as an out woman -

7 MH: Yes.

8 AJ: - of trans experience?

9 MH: In both - in both - in both cases. Yeah. One of them has had a harder time dealing with that, but
10 we had seen -

11 AJ: I almost thought you were going to say one of them had a heart attack, but - a harder time.
12 Okay.

13 MH: Actually, a different person said, "Have there been any heart attacks since your
14 announcement?"

15 AJ: Oh, wow.

16 MH: And...because I think I did a fairly good job.

17 AJ: Of conforming?

18 MH: Of conforming to - and - and I know that people will object to this. This is a real self -
19 understanding of myself, so if I may just say it.

20 AJ: Please.

21 MH: Of being a - just typical boring middle aged middle class white guy.

22 AJ: Yeah.

23 MH: Cis het white guy. Cisgendered, heterosexual white guy. And I play that role for a couple
24 reasons, and one of them was to be able to get along.

25 AJ: Safety.

26 MH: Yeah, I guess so. But -

27 AJ: And love.

28 MH: But it didn't - it - love was a lot of it. I could talk about that. But some of it was just, I knew that
29 as a person taking the - I mean, I remember thinking about this in my early twenties as a
30 graduate student. When some of my friends were complaining that the hiring system was now
31 privileging women, they thought.

- 1 AJ: Yeah.
- 2 MH: 'Cause actually, they were willing to interview a woman, maybe. Or -
- 3 AJ: Right.
- 4 MH: You know. And thus be, you know, inclusive. And let's not even talk about race, or sexual
5 orientation. And - and I just told them, I think the best people are going to get the jobs in the
6 future. But I didn't say "Shut up about women."
- 7 AJ: Yeah.
- 8 MH: And I thought, in my own case, that continuing to - in retrospect, pose, or adopt the identity of a
9 male - was helpful to me. I don't deny it at all.
- 10 AJ: Yeah.
- 11 MH: It's - takes a personal toll, but...and I know very well to this day, they won't - I'm on sabbatical
12 this year, but next year - I'm a college professor - next year, I'll be returning to the classroom,
13 and I know I'll have a different experience of those strange young people in the room that I've
14 never had before. I visit my female colleagues who teach, and they have to fight sometimes
15 for...for acceptance as authorities.
- 16 AJ: Yeah.
- 17 MH: As knowledgeable people.
- 18 AJ: For control of the classroom, right?
- 19 MH: Yes, yes. Yeah.
- 20 AJ: As the holder of the information -
- 21 MH: And I get questioned, but not on the basis of my knowledge. I get questioned if people seriously
22 disagree with me, and they want to debate me man to man, so to speak.
- 23 AJ: Yeah.
- 24 MH: But...
- 25 AJ: Will this be your first -
- 26 MH: Yes.
- 27 AJ: - semester -
- 28 MH: Yes. I only -
- 29 AJ: - presenting as -
- 30 MH: Yes.
- 31 AJ: - Melissa.

- 1 MH: I only came out at work six months ago.
- 2 AJ: Wow.
- 3 MH: It's been a process that you probably want to talk about, but, yeah.
- 4 AJ: I would love to. And you work at the University of Minnesota?
- 5 MH: I do. I've -
- 6 AJ: Before we begin -
- 7 MH: Yeah.
- 8 AJ: - that conversation -
- 9 MH: Yeah.
- 10 AJ: - though, I mean, let's - let's go a little bit linearly.
- 11 MH: I do - I do ramble.
- 12 AJ: Let's go a little linear here.
- 13 MH: Okay. Whoo! I'll try.
- 14 AJ: And we can skip around.
- 15 MH: Yeah. Yeah.
- 16 AJ: But I - I don't want to lose track of this.
- 17 MH: Yeah.
- 18 AJ: When did you first realize that you were not the gender you were assigned at birth?
- 19 MH: Okay. I told you that when my mom wanted to go shopping on a Saturday, she would drop me
20 off at the -
- 21 AJ: The library.
- 22 MH: - Milwaukee Central Library.
- 23 AJ: Yup.
- 24 MH: I was a precocious reader. I'm talking about when I was eleven years old or so.
- 25 AJ: Yeah. So was I. I hear you.
- 26 MH: Yeah. Yeah, I bet you were. And I tried to figure this out, 'cause my little small-town library had
27 no resources, and I didn't know how to ask an adult and I wasn't going to ask an adult.
- 28 AJ: Right.
- 29 MH: Including my parents, of course. And - but I did some digging, and I remember Dewey decimal
30 system, and finding something called Human Sexuality, or Human Psychology, and there they

- 1 were, these big books that I'm sure I didn't understand very well. And the closest I - where I
2 could find myself was as a sick person. I mean, that's the polite word.
- 3 AJ: Yeah.
- 4 MH: And I - the - the best - it didn't - didn't identify me actually, but the - the way they wanted to
5 describe someone with my kind of feelings was as a homosexual boy. And I found that very
6 confusing. Not the boy part, because I had accepted that - some - through some weirdness,
7 that's what I apparently was.
- 8 AJ: Yeah.
- 9 MH: You know, that's what everyone told me, that's what -
- 10 AJ: Right.
- 11 MH: I was in the Boy Scouts, you know?
- 12 AJ: Not the Girl Scouts.
- 13 MH: But - and I mean no disrespect by this, but I've just never felt drawn to men and - and I knew
14 even then that homosexual meant - because you heard it in the culture.
- 15 AJ: Sure.
- 16 MH: Quietly in those days. But you heard it. That when you were called a faggot or a queer or a
17 homo, which I was, they were responding to what they saw that was feminine in me. I knew that
18 at the time.
- 19 AJ: Right.
- 20 MH: I didn't know what to do about it. I - I - I figured out what to do about it, but I didn't know what
21 to do about it at that age. And that just confused me more, to be honest, Andrea,
22 because...what little sexual feeling I had at that age, which was incipient at best, you know, I
23 just...started to feel drawn to people, I guess you might say. It's always been girls and women.
- 24 AJ: Towards women?
- 25 MH: Yeah. Still is.
- 26 AJ: Yeah. It's beautiful. So you're at the library, you kind of started discovering these books and
27 things, and that's - that's where you came into a sense of your -
- 28 MH: Oh, yes, that was your question!
- 29 AJ: - identity?
- 30 MH: That's when I came to understand that I didn't understand my identity.
- 31 AJ: Okay.
- 32 MH: Okay? I - the - I didn't have access to these terms. I'd heard of - I might have heard - around that
33 time, I probably heard about the woman who went to Denmark, the pilot. Christine Jorgensen.

- 1 As a...as a topic of curiosity -
- 2 AJ: Sure.
- 3 MH: And strangeness. But Renée Richards, the tennis player, the transgender tennis player. That
4 happened when I was nineteen -
- 5 AJ: Dr. Renée Richards.
- 6 MH: Okay. I was nineteen or twenty. So that wasn't available to me at age eleven. You know?
- 7 AJ: Right. No. Not at all. No, and I mean, the language - I mean, I'm - you - you mentioned you're
8 sixty-three, so.
- 9 MH: Yeah. And a half.
- 10 AJ: You're eleven - you know.
- 11 MH: I'm proud of my age, sorry.
- 12 AJ: Yeah. No, you should be. It's -
- 13 MH: Yeah.
- 14 AJ: It's quite a feat to live to be sixty-three and a half years old. But you were relatively young, and, I
15 mean, it was young in the sixties -
- 16 MH: Yeah. This is before Stonewall, any of that stuff.
- 17 AJ: There was no language -
- 18 MH: No.
- 19 AJ: - around -
- 20 MH: I'm talking 1964 -
- 21 AJ: - transgender -
- 22 MH: - something like that. Yeah.
- 23 AJ: - and all of that stuff. I mean -
- 24 MH: No. Perversion, illness.
- 25 AJ: Transsexual, I think was a -
- 26 MH: Probably, but not -
- 27 AJ: - fledgling -
- 28 MH: - in my world.
- 29 AJ: But it wasn't a common use -
- 30 MH: Nothing that I heard.

- 1 AJ: Right, exactly.
- 2 MH: Yeah.
- 3 AJ: Yeah. So you're confused, but - and you just kind of buried those feelings?
- 4 MH: Right. And I'll push the story forward just a bit.
- 5 AJ: Yeah.
- 6 MH: I really welcomed puberty. This - this is not the narrative that people expect.
- 7 AJ: No, it's not.
- 8 MH: But when I started getting what I now think of as poisoning from testosterone, I really welcomed
9 it.
- 10 AJ: Okay.
- 11 MH: My voice deepened, my shoulders grew, I got some muscle. I was able to stand up for myself
12 physically better.
- 13 AJ: Right.
- 14 MH: I was not immediately taken to be someone to pick on. And those meant a lot to me. So that I
15 could fit right in, a lot better. I was still on the edges, the margins.
- 16 AJ: Yeah.
- 17 MH: Someone, you know, smart, or whatever. That was part of it in school. Outside of school, just
18 not very athletic, or -
- 19 AJ: Right.
- 20 MH: - male. But nobody really bothered me one I looked like other people, could sound like other
21 people -
- 22 AJ: Yeah.
- 23 MH: - and adopt male behaviors, which -
- 24 AJ: Sure.
- 25 MH: - I certainly have done, and -
- 26 AJ: Social -
- 27 MH: - I'm sure I still have.
- 28 AJ: Socialization, yeah.
- 29 MH: Sure I still have. Survival techniques is how I feel in a self care, looking back way. Trying to be
30 kind to myself. But - and then a month after my eighteenth birthday, I met the love of my life, a
31 woman.

- 1 AJ: Whoa.
- 2 MH: In a college dorm at Macalester College, M-A-C-A-L-E-S-T-E-R. An odd spelling of Macalester.
- 3 AJ: Yeah.
- 4 MH: But we lived in a coed dorm, girls on one floor and boys on another, and saw her walking
5 through the hallway one, and I've just - was intrigued. Didn't realize it was romantic for about a
6 month.
- 7 AJ: Wow.
- 8 MH: Just found her so intriguing, so impressive. One impressive thing was she didn't care whether I
9 was interested in her or not.
- 10 AJ: Wow.
- 11 MH: I'd sworn off girls. I dated a bit in high school, but I wanted to be a serious student in college.
- 12 AJ: Okay.
- 13 MH: And one of the things I decided was I'm not going to do any of that -
- 14 AJ: No girls, huh?
- 15 MH: - I'm just going to study. That lasted almost a month.
- 16 AJ: Yeah. The - the better part of a month.
- 17 MH: No, it was. Well - yeah. You're - you're right. Two or three weeks.
- 18 AJ: That - that - that testosterone was at work at that point -
- 19 MH: Yep.
- 20 AJ: - in time.
- 21 MH: Yes. Yes, ma'am, I guess so. I'm sorry, I think that's the correct term.
- 22 AJ: Ma'am? I have no problem with that. Yeah.
- 23 MH: Andrea, if I may?
- 24 AJ: Andrea is fine too.
- 25 MH: I actually like ma'am, because I've had so many other things thrown in my direction.
- 26 AJ: Yes, I'm - ma'am -
- 27 MH: I've even been called "Miss" by two servers at restaurants!
- 28 AJ: Ma'am is good. It confirms and affirms, so yes.
- 29 MH: It is for me. So I met Kathleen, K-A-T-H-L-E-E-N, at age eighteen and a month. And we got
30 married the day we graduated from college -

- 1 AJ: Wow.
- 2 MH: - 1975, and were married the day she died.
- 3 AJ: So you went to the graduation, and -
- 4 MH: At - graduated at two, got married at eight.
- 5 AJ: Nice.
- 6 MH: In the college chapel.
- 7 AJ: Oh my goodness.
- 8 MH: With our friends there from school.
- 9 AJ: That is incredible.
- 10 MH: And I was privately wishing I was wearing a wedding dress,
- 11 AJ: Yeah?
- 12 MH: I didn't share it with my bride.
- 13 AJ: Ever?
- 14 MH: Oh, eventually. But my self understanding and the culture that I was living in, that just meant
- 15 that I wasn't going to get married, if I talked about that.
- 16 AJ: Sure.
- 17 MH: And my - my - my dear love knew I wasn't a macho kind of guy, and she seemed to like that
- 18 about me. That's the kind of man she was drawn to, but -
- 19 AJ: Sure.
- 20 MH: - I really needed to be her husband in our marriage, and I tried real hard to do that. But I
- 21 eventually shared my story with her, but only two or three years before she died, when I knew
- 22 that was coming. I was very afraid, based on things I'd read in the 1980s and '90s, that people in
- 23 my situation, trans women of one sort or another, who shared with their wives would almost
- 24 always lead to a end of the marriage.
- 25 AJ: Wow.
- 26 MH: And true or not, and I hope much less true now than twenty or thirty years ago - and I don't
- 27 mean to sound self righteous, but I put my marriage above being able to express myself
- 28 authentically. 'Cause it was authentic, my love for her.
- 29 AJ: Absolutely. When did your beloved pass away?
- 30 MH: August 22nd, 2013.
- 31 AJ: Oh, wow. Wow. Wow. I'm sorry about your loss.

- 1 MH: It's five years - it's five years ago that I shared with her, so not long before she died.
- 2 AJ: How did she respond?
- 3 MH: Well, in her way, which was to be quiet and very attentive and loving. But she was very
4 surprised. I was surprised that she -
- 5 AJ: Was so surprised?
- 6 MH: - didn't know. Honestly. I thought she already knew something about this -
- 7 AJ: Really?
- 8 MH: - and just had -
- 9 AJ: Was there -
- 10 MH: - been kind enough not mention it.
- 11 AJ: Were there any - like, crossdressing, or -
- 12 MH: Yes. Yeah.
- 13 AJ: - any episodes -
- 14 MH: I - I -
- 15 AJ: - while you guys were married?
- 16 MH: I didn't like the term, of course, but yes.
- 17 AJ: I don't what the - I don't know. Wearing of the -
- 18 MH: I'm not -
- 19 AJ: - women's clothing.
- 20 MH: Yes. Yes. Even worse, as far as she was concerned, it was her clothing.
- 21 AJ: Okay.
- 22 MH: 'Cause that's what was available to me.
- 23 AJ: Sure.
- 24 MH: And she had a - she had employment that sent her around the world.
- 25 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 26 MH: Sometimes for a month at a time.
- 27 AJ: Okay.
- 28 MH: Or six weeks.
- 29 AJ: So she traveled quite a bit.

- 1 MH: Yeah. Often only a week or two. And that gave me an opportunity to, shall we say, express
2 myself.
- 3 AJ: Yes. Exactly.
- 4 MH: According to the song. And - and so I did, and I think that was an important outlet for me. I
5 didn't do that socially. That was something I did privately at home. Didn't have the gumption to
6 go out in the world that way until just a few years ago, if gumption it is now. Now it's - at least
7 where I live in Minneapolis/St. Paul, it's - I don't feel threatened -
- 8 AJ: Good.
- 9 MH: - by being myself. But I certainly felt that way a few years ago.
- 10 AJ: Absolutely.
- 11 MH: I know I'm rambling again. Sorry. So yes. I think the point of your question was - is that
12 something she would have known about, my wearing her clothes. I was pretty good at hiding. I
13 had my own stash in the attic -
- 14 AJ: Yeah.
- 15 MH: - and those kinds of things that people do, apparently. Or did.
- 16 AJ: I think it still happens. I mean, I'm sure it does.
- 17 MH: Once she came home early and found some stuff in the bed, and I'm positive now - and I was
18 then - that she thought I'd had another woman in the house. 'Cause she asked me, "Who are
19 these?" You know, "Who do these belong to?" and I said, "They're mine." But typically of - of my
20 dear wife, she asked nothing.
- 21 AJ: Really? So she just accepted it.
- 22 MH: I wouldn't say that, no. No, no, no. She just didn't want to talk about it.
- 23 AJ: Got it.
- 24 MH: And - this is part of her character. I'm a talker, you can tell. I blab. I go off. She was quiet. She
25 was the silent type.
- 26 AJ: Wow.
- 27 MH: Kept her feelings to herself almost all the time. Not on this one, when I finally came out to her.
28 She was terrified for my safety, even though she was quite ill and couldn't leave the house
29 much, she wanted to go shopping with me so I wouldn't blunder and get into trouble.
- 30 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 31 MH: She - she was a stylish gal, and she disapproved of my early shopping choices. Not rare, for
32 someone in my situation.
- 33 AJ: She - she helped steer you in the right direction, huh?

- 1 MH: Well, in a negative sense. Like, she'd just tell me how horrible that was.
- 2 AJ: Oh, my goodness. Okay.
- 3 MH: In a loving way. We had a relationship - Andrea, I should tell you. You know, we'd been together
4 for -
- 5 AJ: Forty -
- 6 MH: - almost - we'd been married for thirty-eight years, and together for forty-two years when she
7 died. As a couple.
- 8 AJ: Right.
- 9 MH: In college we couldn't marry for various reasons. And we grew closer every year. WE had some
10 ups and downs, but her illness, which was a - a bone marrow cancer, blood cancer, leukemia,
11 various things - made her completely dependent on me. For five and a half years. With a six
12 month prognosis, so it was good in that sense - she lived a lot longer than she should have -
- 13 AJ: Yeah.
- 14 MH: But she was a strong fighter, and - not to get off track completely - my point is, it changed the
15 dynamics of our relationship somewhat, because she'd been very strong and quiet and un-
16 needy emotionally, which for some reason, appealed to me. Even though I don't disapprove of
17 neediness. And so - and I'm very emotionally needy myself, so. Too much information? I don't
18 know. So -
- 19 AJ: Whatever you are -
- 20 MH: I -
- 21 AJ: - up to sharing.
- 22 MH: I got tremendous satisfaction in a strange way being her caretaker. Still the best thing I've ever
23 done.
- 24 AJ: Sweet. Any children?
- 25 MH: Excuse me. Yeah.
- 26 AJ: Yeah?
- 27 MH: One son. He's twenty seven, pushing twenty eight.
- 28 AJ: Okay.
- 29 MH: A very - very proud of him.
- 30 AJ: Yeah? He lives here locally?
- 31 MH: He might soon.
- 32 AJ: Okay.

- 1 MH: He's getting married in August to his fiance, a guy he met in college.
- 2 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 3 MH: And he's twenty seven now, so they've known each other for a few years.
- 4 AJ: So, wait - he identifies as gay?
- 5 MH: He's gay. Cisgender. When I first came out to him, a month after his mom died, or his other
6 mom, if you prefer, but he uses that idea -
- 7 AJ: Sure.
- 8 MH: That she's his mom mom. He was very knowledgeable. Probably knew more about some of this
9 than I did.
- 10 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 11 MH: We had a two hour conversation, and that's him. So -
- 12 AJ: So he was pretty accepting then.
- 13 MH: I think so. It hasn't been easy. He had just lost his biological mom.
- 14 AJ: Right.
- 15 MH: And he was, you know, twenty four and had watched her for six years, so. So -
- 16 AJ: It was really difficult?
- 17 MH: Yeah. And so I was kind of piling on, but I had - the only - the only request Kathleen made of me
18 when I came out to her - the only request that meant anything to her, I should say, was that I
19 not share my story with anyone that knew her until she was gone. And I honored that.
- 20 AJ: What do you think that was about?
- 21 MH: I think primarily, and almost entirely, it was about the fact that she was in a tremendous
22 struggle for her life. Undergoing chemotherapy and radiation several times every year, no long -
23 never longer than three weeks without treatment. And she had put her energy into - into that.
24 Trying to stay alive. And she didn't - I've told you already, fair to her or not, that she didn't like
25 to talk about her feelings.
- 26 AJ: Sure.
- 27 MH: And I think the idea that her friends and family would call her and say "Oh my god, I can't
28 believe that what's-his-name - "
- 29 AJ: Yeah.
- 30 MH: " - is doing this to you now while you're in your - you know, in this situation."
- 31 AJ: Yeah.
- 32 MH: And that's completely fair.

- 1 AJ: No, that's - it is. Absolutely.
- 2 MH: And I probably would have asked for more, in her situation. I'm sure I would have.
- 3 AJ: Boy. So...to the point that you feel you - you okay, dear?
- 4 MH: Yeah.
- 5 AJ: Yeah?
- 6 MH: I'm going to take a drink of water.
- 7 AJ: Sure.
- 8 MH: I still miss her.
- 9 AJ: Yeah. I can tell. I'm going to move -
- 10 MH: Yeah.
- 11 AJ: - on to some questions. A little bit about you.
- 12 MH: Okay.
- 13 AJ: Please answer this to the point that you feel comfortable.
- 14 MH: Okay.
- 15 AJ: Have you undergone any medical interventions or anything that -
- 16 MH: I'm - I'm okay talking about it.
- 17 AJ: Yeah.
- 18 MH: It's why I'm here. Well, I'll be - I'll give my own answer to that.
- 19 AJ: Yeah.
- 20 MH: So five years ago this month, I sought treatment at the Center for Sexual Health in - Program in
21 Human Sexuality here at the University of Minnesota.
- 22 AJ: Okay.
- 23 MH: And was - received the official diagnosis at - they called it at the time - of gender dysphoria.
- 24 AJ: Wow.
- 25 MH: Now called gender identity disorder. Which oddly made me happy, because it confirmed -
- 26 AJ: What you already knew.
- 27 MH: I'm the kind of person that somehow needs some external confirmation once in awhile, and - so
28 that's the start of it, as I see it. And so a Ph.D in psychology and sexual identity gave me this
29 diagnosis, so I felt right. Okay, someone else believes me, you know?
- 30 AJ: Sure.

- 1 MH: That's important. I don't know if anyone had up to that point, if they knew. She's the one - my
2 therapist is the one who drove me to tell Kathleen. So I won't - I'll try not to get off on that
3 tangent, but if you want me to, I'll come back to it.
- 4 AJ: You haven't - so you had never told anyone prior to going to PHS?
- 5 MH: I have one friend who lives out of town who was sensing something like this about me, but not -
6 not explicitly that I'm a transgender person.
- 7 AJ: And so five years ago, you're in your late fifties.
- 8 MH: Yes. Yes I was. And been hiding for a very long time. And feeling a responsibility to hide, in some
9 ways, but being my wife's husband was really important to me. Being my son's father wasn't as
10 important to me as being my son's parent, but that other thing seemed to be really crucial at
11 the time.
- 12 AJ: The husband part.
- 13 MH: Yeah. So anyway, after six months or eight months or nine months of therapy, I requested a
14 referral for hormone therapy or other medical intervention, and the - the medical doctor's part
15 of that clinic discouraged me, on the grounds of my health history, and said she would -
- 16 AJ: Which history?
- 17 MH: My health history.
- 18 AJ: Okay.
- 19 MH: Just general stuff for someone like me, my age. Type two diabetes, high blood pressure. From a
20 medical point of view, overweight, although I'm trying not to be fatshaming about myself.
- 21 AJ: Yeah.
- 22 MH: But how I love -
- 23 AJ: Don't.
- 24 MH: - love my people now, and - you know? Anyway, so that was very disappointing. I was I'm being
25 explicit here - the doctor at that center here at my own university refused to refer me. So I went
26 through two and a half therapists, meaning I got started with a third there because there's such
27 a call.
- 28 AJ: People were super busy.
- 29 MH: Super busy. I was given people with only temporary appointments who came and went, and I'm
30 sure they saw me as an - a non-urgent case, which is true. I wasn't in danger of self-harm. I
31 actually was figuring out who I was. I wasn't at a stage of - oh, I wasn't in trouble with my family.
- 32 AJ: Sure.
- 33 MH: Because lots of people have - I truly believe that - that they were right to make those decisions,
34 but in my case it was somewhat uncomfortable, because I had to start all over again with three

- 1 therapists -
- 2 AJ: Yeah. That's -
- 3 MH: - in two and a half years. So I left the system and went to private care, paid for largely by
4 insurance. But - so that side of it. And I switched doctors - I found a doctor who I was
5 comfortable talking to, a medical doctor. Started with a physician's assistant and shared with
6 them before I did in public generally, my true identity and my hopes. But the first person didn't
7 feel comfortable prescribing hormones for me, not because she didn't approve or didn't think I
8 was appropriately for it, but because she just didn't have the experience.
- 9 AJ: Sure.
- 10 MH: And so I moved to Smiley's Family Clinic here in Minneapolis, down at - down by - I don't know
11 what the neighborhood is, 'cause I'm a St. Paul person -
- 12 AJ: Oh, okay.
- 13 MH: - but Cedar and 28th.
- 14 AJ: Cedar Riverside, I would say.
- 15 MH: Yeah. Lovely walk in, and almost all the people waiting and working there are apparently Somali,
16 or - or South Asian. I just felt like - yeah, it's great to feel that I'm the only one in the room who
17 looks like me. I - I mean that very sincerely.
- 18 AJ: Wow, okay.
- 19 MH: And I feel that way all the time as a trans person.
- 20 AJ: Yes.
- 21 MH: But I don't get - and I'm glad I don't normally get - I'm not going to pretend. I'm just saying, it's
22 interesting.
- 23 AJ: Yeah?
- 24 MH: Anyway, they were - they're wonderful. Commercial, Smiley's Family Clinic, Minneapolis.
- 25 AJ: Yay, Smiley's!
- 26 MH: They - right from the start of treating me with nothing with respect, even when all my medical
27 information, my - my insurance, my ID, everything had my old name and gender on it. 'Cause I
28 couldn't get it until I had talked to them and had some stuff done, you know.
- 29 AJ: Right.
- 30 MH: So I started hormones only ten months ago.
- 31 AJ: Okay.
- 32 MH: I'm waiting to put in my one year sentence on hormones - I'm sorry, I love the hormones -
33 before a surgeon will treat me further. So I have -

- 1 AJ: And you do have plans for -
- 2 MH: I have had a discussion, an appointment, a meeting with a local surgeon.
- 3 AJ: Okay.
- 4 MH: There are technical aspects of what surgeons in Minnesota will do, or feel that they're allowed
5 or capable of doing, so -
- 6 AJ: Like what?
- 7 MH: Well, the person that I was referred to by my lovely, lovely clinic normally works as a cancer
8 surgeon, oncologist. And so he is accustomed to removing testicles. Normally because of
9 testicular disease. And he's willing to do that for me under these circumstances with - following
10 the WPATH recommendations that I'm sure I don't have to waste your time explaining.
- 11 AJ: Well, but it's not for me.
- 12 MH: Oh, okay.
- 13 AJ: It's for these people who may look at this, so.
- 14 MH: Well, okay, the - the - yeah. Well, it's the standards that are set up, and largely by the University
15 of Minnesota, to be fair to us.
- 16 AJ: Yeah.
- 17 MH: On how to -
- 18 AJ: And WPATH is the World Professional Association -
- 19 MH: - Association of Transgender Health Guidelines -
- 20 AJ: - Transgender Health Professionals. Yeah.
- 21 MH: Right, right. And I'm grateful that they have done the work to figure this stuff out. Nonetheless, I
22 chafe at it sometimes, because I just want to get going.
- 23 AJ: Well, and - it has streamlined over time. It used to be known as the Harry Benjamin - what is it -
24 Standards of Care.
- 25 MH: Standards of Care.
- 26 AJ: And - and subsequently it has become WPATH, or the long acronym that we just described. But,
27 you know, there was this sort of two years of living -
- 28 MH: Right.
- 29 AJ: And life of the opposite gender -
- 30 MH: It's so contradictory! How do you do this if you haven't done that?
- 31 AJ: Right, exactly.

- 1 MH: I mean, you know, it's so -
- 2 AJ: And so that has gone away, and -
- 3 MH: Yeah. Sort of. But the surgeon was aware of it, but not for all the rationales behind it. And so he
4 gave me a little speech - appropriately - about having to follow these guidelines, and how I have
5 to have two letters from people with doctorates, one of them at least a medical doctor, one of
6 them at least a psychiatrist, attesting to my right reality. And I'm sorry, I'm not always as
7 respectful of surgeons as perhaps I should be or certainly they're accustomed to, so I pushed
8 back a little bit.
- 9 AJ: Yeah.
- 10 MH: And nonetheless, he is willing and able, apparently, if I schedule it after my one year's up on
11 hormones, I'm taking estradiol. I'm not sure how it's pronounced, estradiol.
- 12 AJ: Estradiol, I think most -
- 13 MH: Estradiol, which is -
- 14 AJ: - most people say.
- 15 MH: - estrogen replacement for many people, but for me - fairly high dosage according to my
16 pharmacist -
- 17 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 18 MH: - who was quite worried about it when she saw it, thinking that - which, of course, I secretly,
19 loved, that "Oh, postmenopausal woman has to take a much less of this than you're taking!"
- 20 AJ: Yeah.
- 21 MH: "Who is your doctor, anyway?" Until I started opening my mouth and talking to her and she
22 figured it out and I told her. And then I'm taking spiro lactone, which is a - developed for lots of
23 other reasons, but has one effect is lessening -
- 24 AJ: The testosterone -
- 25 MH: - testosterone, and Andrea -
- 26 AJ: It's a blocker, right?
- 27 MH: Andrea, within two days, placebo effect or not, it was wonderful, that blocker.
- 28 AJ: Yeah?
- 29 MH: That blocker - wow! I just felt so much more real, and - and I just felt a connection with myself,
30 and there's certain aspects of it that are very hard for me to articulate, but I just felt so peaceful,
31 and I felt so real, and I - I - I - it was like - I - I can't explain it. It's like you just go through this
32 door and suddenly everything is making sense to you in a different way, even though only
33 tentatively, and only - it's only been this morning.
- 34 AJ: Oh, wow.

- 1 MH: And that was the spiro lactone, more than whatever effect of estradiol in two days. Because
2 turns out that one effect was - another effect of the spiro, if I may, is that it elevates your blood
3 pressure. And I've already mentioned that I have high blood pressure. I was on two medications
4 for that. Sorry, it lowers your blood pressure.
- 5 AJ: Right. It lowers, yeah.
- 6 MH: I'm so sorry. It lowers your blood pressure. So now I was taking three powerful medicines that
7 lowered my blood pressure. I started getting dizzy. I fainted.
- 8 AJ: Oh, my goodness.
- 9 MH: And so they took me off of it, appropriately, for a couple weeks.
- 10 AJ: Just like a southern belle. Ohhhh.
- 11 MH: Oh, I wish. Okay. Well, I don't really wish, but you know what I mean.
- 12 AJ: Yes.
- 13 MH: So they appropriately took me off of it for two or - for a month. And damn.
- 14 AJ: So could this -
- 15 MH: Those old feelings came back
- 16 AJ: Really.
- 17 MH: I lost it. I was still on the estradiol, and then they let me come back on half the dose of -
18 admittedly, we started on a full - like, the maximum dose.
- 19 AJ: Yeah. Could - could somehow the spiro lactone replace whatever other blood pressure meds you
20 were taking?
- 21 MH: Yeah. Yes. Thank you. I - both - one of mine was eliminated and the other one was reduced.
- 22 AJ: Okay. So you were able to take more spiro.
- 23 MH: Right. I got - got it back up to the high dosage. I mean, technically high dosage.
- 24 AJ: Or the feel good doorway thing.
- 25 MH: Oh my heavens, yes. And it - you know, the first couple months I was telling all my friends about
26 how - damn, I don't have all those male feelings anymore, it was great, you know? I'm not like
27 one of those male assholes anymore, you know?
- 28 AJ: Right?
- 29 MH: On and on, you know. And - you know, they - they listened to me. That was a male behavior, I
30 suspect, actually in part. But nonetheless it was real, and I have very very patient and loving
31 friends.
- 32 AJ: Good.

- 1 MH: And - and now I measure that a little bit. But I'm very hopeful that the surgeon, despite my
2 being a little annoying to him, will actually remove my testicles in May or June. And then I have
3 to go out of state for anything more. So I did investigate - there's a clinic outside of Chicago. In
4 fact, they came up here and did a presentation that was hosted by the Center for Reproductive -
5 I mean, Sexual Health here at the U.
- 6 AJ: Dr. Schechter?
- 7 MH: Probably. That sounds right. And I didn't talk to Dr. Sheckler, or Schechter, but I talked - I looked
8 at his website, and they do offer genital reconstruction surgery of different sorts, including for
9 people who have already had the orchidectomy - the testicle removal - and I told a trans male
10 friend of mine about this, so excited I could at least have that done, 'cause then I don't have to
11 be on the spiro.
- 12 AJ: Right.
- 13 MH: 'Cause -
- 14 AJ: There's no testosterone being produced anymore.
- 15 MH: And I don't - the - one of the few good sides of not having a female body medically is that I don't
16 produce testosterone anywhere else in my body, like -
- 17 AJ: Right.
- 18 MH: Like other women might. Especially at my age. But anyway, I told a trans male friend of mine
19 that I met here at the U - we have a very strong transgender community -
- 20 AJ: Yes.
- 21 MH: As I'm quite sure you know, and I said "Hey, you know, this doesn't sound - this first surgery
22 doesn't sound too bad," because he said it's an outpatient thing, and you go to the surgical
23 center that they now have here, you go home that night, and - and they said to me with a big
24 laugh, "Well, yeah." They have a lot of foster dogs, and they have a lot of dogs, and said, "Yeah,
25 our vet's done that with our dogs so many times!"
- 26 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 27 MH: You know, just - dog. And I did tell the doctor, "You know, if while I'm under the gas, under the
28 anesthesia, your knife just slips and you take everything off, it's totally fine with me."
- 29 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 30 MH: He didn't find that in the least amusing.
- 31 AJ: He went stone cold red, huh?
- 32 MH: Oh, no. In fact, it was one of the several things that annoyed him in the conversation, I'm sure.
- 33 AJ: Yikes.
- 34 MH: But it's totally real for me, actually. If I woke up that way. I need to -

- 1 AJ: You wouldn't be upset.
- 2 MH: - explicit coming, I would - I need to pee successfully.
- 3 AJ: Yeah.
- 4 MH: Properly, but - so to be practical about "Watch that knife, buddy," you know?
- 5 AJ: Yeah.
- 6 MH: Nonetheless, I'd be willing to make some compromises there, you know.
- 7 AJ: Sure.
- 8 MH: So I'm hopeful down the road possibly as early as late summer of 2017 to go to Chicago and
9 have the full surgery of some sort - a fuller surgery, I should say. I don't know how much - I'll - I'll
10 tell you, if you want to know what I'm really thinking, which is I'm not sure I need the full set
11 that's available to someone like me.
- 12 AJ: When you say full set...
- 13 MH: Vulva and vagina. I know I can't have a full reproductive system.
- 14 AJ: Sure.
- 15 MH: Which would be kind of silly for someone my age.
- 16 AJ: Why - people have sex into their eighties and nineties. What are you...?
- 17 MH: I know they do. And I feel I have to defend it in a way, but not from you, but just generally to
18 myself. I'm not sexually active right now.
- 19 AJ: Okay.
- 20 MH: One of the other major effects of the spiro lactone was a immediate disappearance of sexual
21 drive. Or - or interest level.
- 22 AJ: Yeah.
- 23 MH: Capability. So although I - I -
- 24 AJ: Yeah, there -
- 25 MH: I treasure -
- 26 AJ: There is that.
- 27 MH: - the intimacy, you know? The physicality, the cuddling. I don't - I don't see myself having a
28 sexual relationship again. It may happen. And perhaps I need a vagina in case. But then again,
29 the kind of people I would enjoy having sex with may or may not be down with whether I have a
30 vagina or not. So...I don't need it for -
- 31 AJ: So if you had the surgery -

- 1 MH: - as a birth canal -
- 2 AJ: - what would you - what would you do?
- 3 MH: Removal - removal of the penis. I would like to look sort of as best female in the traditional cis
4 way.
- 5 AJ: I was going to say, you're not going for the Barbie look, are you?
- 6 MH: Not at all.
- 7 AJ: Okay.
- 8 MH: I'll - I'll be - I'll be - I might cry again, but I'll tell you. The main reason is my worry about my
9 future. Both my parents and my wife ended up in nursing homes. Quite vulnerable. And
10 hospitals still today, nursing homes especially, are quite gendered places.
- 11 AJ: Sure.
- 12 MH: And even though when I say that to my friends, they say "Oh, you know, by the time you're
13 there, it will be cool, and - " And I've heard this - there's this LGBT-friendly hospital somewhere.
14 The reality is, we can't control where we end up and when and why.
- 15 AJ: This is true.
- 16 MH: And I know that from my own family. And someday I might very well end up semiconscious
17 some place completely disrespected.
- 18 AJ: Yeah.
- 19 MH: I actually anticipate that.
- 20 AJ: That's the reality for -
- 21 MH: It's my one big worry.
- 22 AJ: - many transgender people.
- 23 MH: Yes.
- 24 AJ: Unfortunately.
- 25 MH: Yup. And I - I actually anticipate it as opposed to just worry about it. And...so...I would -
- 26 AJ: So you want your genitals to match -
- 27 MH: I would - it's - it's -
- 28 AJ: - your identity.
- 29 MH: And this is a part of my entire experience, Andrea, which is I've adopted - I - when you and I
30 met, you may not remember, I doubt you do, but I had a full beard. I'm bald.
- 31 AJ: I re - I recall.

- 1 MH: I'm actually bald. And I had the same male voice I have today, and other things, and I was quite
2 okay with that and claiming femaleness. And that was my genderqueer thing. But...and I - I'm
3 contrary and stubborn, and I thought, "Damn it, I'm not going to shave my beard just because all
4 my friends were saying 'But - but - if you want me to think you're a woman, why you have a
5 beard?'"
- 6 AJ: Wow.
- 7 MH: And I said, "But - wait a second - or - or something," you know? And my - my baldness - and I
8 said, "But I didn't ask for that. I didn't - I didn't say 'Well, you know, give me a checklist here, I'm
9 going to be a woman, but just for the heck of it - "' I'm sorry, I was about to be quite profane. "I
10 want this - I want a beard, and you know, let me lose my hair in a male way."
- 11 AJ: Right.
- 12 MH: "And - you know, I want that deep - not that deep, but - "
- 13 AJ: Yeah.
- 14 MH: "Deep enough voice, and - and all that shit." And -
- 15 AJ: But that's what you've got, though, right?
- 16 MH: That's - that's the - that's what's - that's where I'm living, and - so I resisted for quite a while,
17 and then I went to Gender Odyssey in Seattle, Washington in August of 2015, and heard some
18 great -
- 19 AJ: I was there!
- 20 MH: - speakers.
- 21 AJ: Actually.
- 22 MH: Yes, you were! You and Kate Bornstein, two of my heroes, if I may say that. You can edit that out
23 if you need to.
- 24 AJ: It sounds perfectly fine to me. Kate is one of my heroes, so.
- 25 MH: Yeah. And I liked what you had to say. And I liked a lot of what she had to say.
- 26 AJ: Yeah.
- 27 MH: But anyway, that's neither here nor there. There I was, I was wearing a dress at the conference
28 itself.
- 29 AJ: Yes.
- 30 MH: But otherwise - and maybe some jewelry - but otherwise, hadn't changed a thing. And I joined a
31 church a year and a half ago that same way. I introduced myself - I knew no one there, I
32 introduced myself as Melissa. Never mentioned my other name. Never even mentioned where I
33 lived, or what I did for a living. I just wanted to see how - how it went. And I was received with
34 such warmth and love. And this is not an LGBT-specific community.

- 1 AJ: Right.
- 2 MH: And I thought, "Well, maybe I have to pay attention to how people react to me." And gender, of
3 course, is who we are and who we know ourselves to be, but gender is also - I'm not telling you
4 anything, but maybe someone watching this tomorrow or down the road. Gender is so much
5 how we're responded to and how people talk to us.
- 6 AJ: Right.
- 7 MH: And how people behave around us. And the look on their face. What they say to us on the
8 telephone. And I thought, "I need to give them a little help." And so at first, I thought, "Okay, I'm
9 doing this for everybody else."
- 10 AJ: Yeah.
- 11 MH: I'm shaving my beard, putting on a - a very beautiful wig.
- 12 AJ: Very beautiful.
- 13 MH: And I have another one. Only brought one today. I'm doing it for other people. Let's make it
14 easier on them. Well, that was self-delusional, you know. It wasn't totally wrong, but the reality
15 is, I now think - and maybe I'll be changing my mind down the road, but the reality right now is it
16 helps me, because then people I encounter - including people I've known my entire life, or
17 someone I've known for two days, or someone I've just run into in the hallway - can look at me,
18 and whatever they're actually thinking, if they have any sensibility at all, they know I'm
19 presenting as a woman. They might not know that language. If they're not paying close
20 attention, they might even think in their head that I'm a real woman. Now, I think that all the
21 time, but I'm talking about other people.
- 22 AJ: I was going to say. You are a real woman. And -
- 23 MH: Well, thank you, but I believe we all know, or many of us know, people's treatment of you is part
24 of your self confidence, and self understanding, so turns out - surprised the hell out of me - put
25 on a wig, shave my beard, go all in on the clothing, which I've done since August of 2016, I
26 decided I'm all in, all the time, everywhere, including home.
- 27 AJ: And that's -
- 28 MH: I do take the wig off at night to sleep and in the shower, don't worry. But I don't have another
29 place. I have no place where I present any other way.
- 30 AJ: Wow.
- 31 MH: Including family and in-laws and stuff.
- 32 AJ: And so you've come out here at work.
- 33 MH: Oh yeah.
- 34 AJ: How has that been so far? I mean, you've been on sabbatical.
- 35 MH: I'm on sabbatical, which - you know, a lot of people see as - as really useful, and it is.

- 1 AJ: It is, yeah.
- 2 MH: Because I didn't have to, like, go from day one to day two -
- 3 AJ: Right.
- 4 MH: - with this whole new identity.
- 5 AJ: But even on sabbatical, you still have committee meetings, and...
- 6 MH: Right, and I changed my name and my picture and - on my door, and on the department website
7 on the university faculty page.
- 8 AJ: Wow.
- 9 MH: Everything. It didn't turn overnight as I wanted. My department was very cool about it. They
10 mostly knew anyway, but not publicly.
- 11 AJ: Which department are you in?
- 12 MH: I'm in the department of Classical and Near Eastern Studies. I say it slowly, because I say
13 Classicalandneareasternstudies. We teach and do research in Ancient Greece and Rome and
14 Ancient Israel and Egypt, and my own work relates to Greek poetry and religion and Egyptian
15 Coptic, especially Coptic Christianity. And anyway, so I told most of my colleagues and all the
16 administrative staff about myself, and they knew my name, but it was awkward for them,
17 because at work I was still What's-his-name, Phillip.
- 18 AJ: Right.
- 19 MH: And so that was complicated for them, and awkward, and I needed that for a bit.
- 20 AJ: You've got to make that transition.
- 21 MH: Yeah. And I said, "Okay, this is done," and the Human Resources person, College of Liberal Arts,
22 was great. The technical people running the email were not. They pull out their little folder, and
23 they see what you do when you have a name change. There's no specific - specificity as to why
24 your name was changed. Did you move from another country? Did you get married or divorced?
25 Were you adopted? And so they demanded what they always demand, which is some legal
26 documentation of my name change.
- 27 AJ: Really?
- 28 MH: Yes. Before they would change my email.
- 29 AJ: Oh, my goodness.
- 30 MH: And I fought that for two or three days. This is when I was already known as Melissa.
31 Everywhere else at the University, except my email. So my email would go out under my - under
32 my old name. And I'd get responses from colleagues and friends - "Um - "
- 33 AJ: "Who is this?"
- 34 MH: No, they - well, they knew who it was.

- 1 AJ: Okay. All right.
- 2 MH: They said - no, because they knew me now as Melissa, but they were getting email from Philip.
- 3 AJ: And they were like, "Why - "
- 4 MH: And they said, "Are you a - are you aware? Come on, get your act together."
- 5 AJ: Yeah.
- 6 MH: "Your email still says this, and - " So I - I had to include an automatic notice saying that my email
7 -
- 8 AJ: Was being hijacked -
- 9 MH: - was being held up -
- 10 AJ: - by the IT department.
- 11 MH: They were - they didn't have the capability of turning on a dime on that, and it required - and so
12 I had to wait until after November 9th, 2016, when I had my court date in Ramsey County, when
13 I got legal confirmation of my name change. And reluctantly, the - the judge also confirmed my
14 gender identity. And I was able to - the very next day, go to Human Resources at the U, and they
15 then changed things like medical insurance and payroll, and gave me something I could show to
16 the - in fact, they themselves contacted the email techs, and as of the day after my court date,
17 my email was changed.
- 18 AJ: Made sure everything got changed.
- 19 MH: But the event - there were a few months when - when I had that issue.
- 20 AJ: Yeah.
- 21 MH: It's just one of many. You know.
- 22 AJ: What have been some of the other challenges that you've faced since you've come out?
23 Publicly?
- 24 MH: Yeah. I took a while before - I - okay, the public...My work in time - in part in the religions of the
25 ancient world, including in Christianity, so some of the people I deal with are a different kind of
26 Christian than I am. I'm - I'm a self-confessed Christian. United Church of Christ. But my tradition
27 doesn't take a hard line on traditional gender roles and sexuality, but others do. So I had a great
28 concern that some of my professional colleagues in Minnesota and elsewhere, and some of my
29 students from more conservative, religious backgrounds, be it Christian or other, because we're
30 not the only religion that has traditional views about gender.
- 31 AJ: Really.
- 32 MH: And I use "we" meaning me and my crew. So I was very concerned about that. I came out
33 publicly on facebook and my entire professional contacts on email using the old email.
- 34 AJ: Wow.

- 1 MH: On August 12th, 2016. And within an hour, I had a couple hundred messages on facebook.
- 2 AJ: Oh, my goodness.
- 3 MH: All of them positive and supportive.
- 4 AJ: Oh, that's so lovely. That's so sweet.
- 5 MH: And all but one in my department have reached out to me.
- 6 AJ: All but one, you said?
- 7 MH: That's correct. And, you know, the - the only one that isn't explicitly supportive simply said one
8 word. "Astonishing." But all the others quite explicitly supportive and welcoming.
- 9 AJ: What about the department chair?
- 10 MH: Well, unfortunate - the department chair is someone I've been friends with for thirty years. I'm
11 in that role. It's part of my privilege. And she has been enormously supportive. One of the
12 people I put through the paces, because I came out to her a year before I did to the rest of the
13 department, so she knew me as Melissa, and I asked her to call me Melissa away from work, but
14 then she was in this horrible situation of "Wait, are you Philip or Melissa? What do I say?"
- 15 AJ: Right.
- 16 MH: And - that's one of the reasons I said "Okay." I was going to wait 'til I retired, I should have said
17 that. I was going to wait another couple years. 'Til I retired - just not to go through all that crap,
18 but -
- 19 AJ: Yeah.
- 20 MH: Working at a huge university, there's so many things you have to do apart from all the other
21 stuff you do in - in government stuff. And I - I was afraid of gossip. I was afraid of rumors. And it
22 turned out, Andrea, that gossip is my friend right now.
- 23 AJ: Yeah.
- 24 MH: Because my story spreads without me.
- 25 AJ: It kind of lets people know you're coming, right?
- 26 MH: I don't have to do all the work!
- 27 AJ: Yeah, exactly.
- 28 MH: I run into people at meetings, and conferences, and they say "Oh, hi Melissa!"
- 29 AJ: Right.
- 30 MH: And I've never talked to them about it.
- 31 AJ: Yeah.
- 32 MH: And you know, in certain circumstances, you'd be like, "What?"

- 1 AJ: Right.
- 2 MH: You know? But in this case, I'm just embracing it, because as many of us know, there's a lot of
3 effort put into explaining themselves. And they can talk about me. Fine.
- 4 AJ: Yeah.
- 5 MH: Part of why I did it.
- 6 AJ: Wow. What have been some of the positive aspects?
- 7 MH: I think I've mentioned a few. A feeling of integrity. Again, to sound self-righteous, I didn't wait
8 'til retirement because I felt I owed it to other gender non-conforming people, especially
9 students, to be more visible and not just out to other trans people. Or even half out to other
10 trans people. And that's - that's major for me, so I have some self satisfaction in trying to live up
11 to some of my ideals. That's a very big positive for me. Not having to hide. That's huge.
- 12 AJ: Yeah.
- 13 MH: That's huge. The other struggle I've had, just to say it, wasn't so much public - it's with my late
14 wife's family. I just - it's - it's a struggle that I caused by not talking to them for quite a while
15 about it. I was very worried that they wouldn't understand, that they would reject me, that - I
16 didn't - this wasn't rational, or fair -
- 17 AJ: Yeah.
- 18 MH: - of me. But these were worries I had. They're really important to me.
- 19 AJ: Actually, I would argue that that -
- 20 MH: They're my family.
- 21 AJ: - kind of maybe is a little rational, but...
- 22 MH: Yeah. I mean, they're in a different place. But we've known each other for over forty years. My
23 mother-in-law - my dear mother-in-law - and Kathleen's sister and her husband. Their daughter,
24 her husband, and their daughter, and -
- 25 AJ: Yeah.
- 26 MH: This is the truth. They're the only people besides me and my son who had a claim on my wife's
27 happiness. A real claim.
- 28 AJ: Sure.
- 29 MH: And here I had to admit what I'd done to her in terms of challenging her understanding so close
30 to her death.
- 31 AJ: Yeah, I -
- 32 MH: And I - I'm not over it, Andrea. I mean, I told you that my therapist pushed me to do it, and I'll
33 explain what I mean. Her exact words, repeated to me a couple times. I caved in two weeks.
34 'Cause the first thing I told her is, "I'm never telling my wife anything about this." Very first thing

- 1 that I told her. Before I was diagnosed.
- 2 AJ: Wow.
- 3 MH: And she - she posed me the question "How would you feel if Kathleen died never knowing this
4 about you?" And I pondered that. I overthink. And to this day I can't really answer that question.
5 I'm not sure that it was the right thing to do. I don't - in a sense I'm not sure it was the kind thing
6 to do. And I'm not sure that I deserved to tell her in that moment, waiting so long. You know,
7 we'd been married for almost forty years. On the other hand, when I reframe the question. Not
8 how would I feel if she died without knowing this about me - in many ways, I would have felt
9 pretty good about that, honestly. I'm not proud of that, but that's true. I reframed it as, "Does
10 she deserve to know before she dies?"
- 11 AJ: And your answer was...?
- 12 MH: Of course she did.
- 13 AJ: Yeah.
- 14 MH: Yep. So it's been good. I finally came out on the phone to my in-laws about - in the spring of
15 2016. My sister-in-law visited me for two - for a day and a half in June, and it was awkward.
16 "How do you know that you're female?" she asked me, and - I mean, she was sixteen, and I was
17 eighteen, when she and I met. That was her older sister's boyfriend. And I knew what I was
18 going to say, but I covered it first by just talking about who am I - you know, where is the me,
19 you know, do you believe in a soul, or a spirit, like, how do you know where "I" am anyway, you
20 know?
- 21 AJ: Right. Yeah.
- 22 MH: But I finally just asked her what I meant to ask her all along, which was "How do you know that
23 you're a female?"
- 24 AJ: Right.
- 25 MH: And she was stunned by the question.
- 26 AJ: Yeah.
- 27 MH: She'd never thought about it, of course. And -
- 28 AJ: No one ever thinks about that.
- 29 MH: No. And we talked about that. And we had our day and a half, and I called her a week or so later,
30 and she said, "You know, there was a while there when we went out shopping, where it was just
31 like normal. Just like always. You weren't any different at all." And I didn't know how to respond
32 to that, honestly. She meant it in a positive way, I'm sure. That she - 'cause i was trying to give
33 her a whole lot of space, and as you might be able to guess, I overthought it. By the time I came
34 out to them, I sounded horrible. I probably sounded like I was going to give the worst news in
35 the world.
- 36 AJ: Oh, wow.

- 1 MH: And I learned that the first couple times I came out to people. My sister. My whole manner must
2 have been - like, they're prepared for -
- 3 AJ: Armageddon?
- 4 MH: For something bad.
- 5 AJ: Yeah.
- 6 MH: Like I'm really about to drop it, you know? Kathleen had just died, you know, this kind of stuff.
7 And - not to be unfair to my sister. I love her dearly. But she thought I was coming out as gay.
- 8 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 9 MH: But that's because she knows me.
- 10 AJ: Yes.
- 11 MH: You know?
- 12 AJ: Yes.
- 13 MH: And that's how she could make sense of it.
- 14 AJ: Sure.
- 15 MH: But what I mean is for most people - probably not with her, because she didn't have a horrible -
16 you - you know, response at all -
- 17 AJ: Are you and your sister on good relations?
- 18 MH: We're very close now.
- 19 AJ: Yeah.
- 20 MH: You know, we've lived apart and had different life experiences, and - but she's crucially
21 important to me. I spoke with her last night for an hour and a half on the phone.
- 22 AJ: Nice.
- 23 MH: I was feeling down.
- 24 AJ: Does she live locally here?
- 25 MH: She - she now lives in south Florida.
- 26 AJ: Oh, okay.
- 27 MH: Retired - she's two years older than I am. She didn't know about my wearing her clothes, by the
28 way. Just to bring it around.
- 29 AJ: Oh, wow. Okay.
- 30 MH: I mean, she didn't remember.

- 1 AJ: She didn't remember that one.
- 2 MH: She was five.
- 3 AJ: Yeah.
- 4 MH: I was three. I was her weird little brother. You know?
- 5 AJ: Yeah.
- 6 MH: And she didn't take - she didn't hold on to that memory the way I maybe did.
- 7 AJ: Yeah.
- 8 MH: No, I'm real close to my sister. She's so important to me, and supports me completely.
- 9 AJ: Wow.
- 10 MH: We talk. I try to support her a lot. I'm a much better sister to her than I've ever been before.
- 11 AJ: Good.
- 12 MH: I had trouble being attentive in the way I should be sometimes in the past. I think gender is part
13 of it. My gender transition has made me aware of how I need other people and they really need
14 me. Not to be all...whatever about it. Just how I feel. And my church is the big positive. I'm not a
15 terrifically religious person. Raised in the church. My parents church musicians.
- 16 AJ: Yeah.
- 17 MH: Didn't attend a lot of church for years. Felt this inexplicable yearning to find the church, and I
18 now understand it as part of my gender journey - which is what I often call it, a gender journey.
19 And part of my wholeness, and to the extent that I feel good and complete and real, and I do
20 feel all those things most days, it's because of that church.
- 21 AJ: Wow.
- 22 MH: To the extent I know God's presence, it's in that church. So whew.
- 23 AJ: Melissa -
- 24 MH: First - First Congressional Church of Minnesota.
- 25 AJ: Oh, okay.
- 26 MH: Marcy Holmes neighborhood, Minneapolis.
- 27 AJ: Wow.
- 28 MH: Just a little shout out there.
- 29 AJ: A little shout out.
- 30 MH: If I'm going to talk like that.
- 31 AJ: S-slash-O. Shout out. So, have you ever worked for an LGBT organization, or transgender-specific

- 1 organization?
- 2 MH: No, I haven't. I've spent my entire adult life in academia.
- 3 AJ: I mean, volunteer-wise, or...
- 4 MH: My first teaching job, oddly, a twenty five year old apparently a man, I was the lesbian caucus
5 faculty sponsor. This was in 1982.
- 6 AJ: Oh, wow. Okay.
- 7 MH: Maybe I was twenty eight or twenty nine. I don't know why, there were women on the faculty,
8 but...maybe it's because I was young.
- 9 AJ: Was it just in your school?
- 10 MH: Yeah, this was Harvard Divinity School, Harvard University.
- 11 AJ: Oh, wow. Okay.
- 12 MH: And this is 1981, '82, and women were coming to seminary or divinity school in much greater
13 numbers, and we didn't have any senior tenured female faculty, of course, but there were three
14 other - I mean, three visible women on the faculty, and I was frank - I actually queried them
15 "Why aren't you asking so-and-so to be your faculty sponsor?"
- 16 AJ: Yeah.
- 17 MH: And I don't remember what they said.
- 18 AJ: Wow.
- 19 MH: And I hold on to this as some sort of confirmation that knowing it or not, they had reached out
20 to me, you know? Of course they didn't know it, and that's not what they were doing.
- 21 AJ: Sure.
- 22 MH: But I don't care. That's how I feel about it.
- 23 AJ: Yeah. That's how - yeah, we get to tell our own stories about our experiences.
- 24 MH: But no, I didn't participate much. I had very serious reservations about the Human Rights
25 Campaign, and still have some, because they weren't trans-friendly as I could understand it. I've
26 never identified as a gay male. I wasn't somebody who went through various stages in that
27 regard, 'cause my sexuality - I guess I'm queer now, but -
- 28 AJ: Yeah.
- 29 MH: But only because I'm being authentic.
- 30 AJ: Right. Exactly.
- 31 MH: But I didn't feel queer in any way, and I felt like that horrible word normal - well, not really,
32 honestly. But in terms of - I got along, okay?

- 1 AJ: Sure.
- 2 MH: I wasn't under any personal threat. I had gay friends who were. I didn't work for until very
3 recently, I'd say - and if we're out of time I understand, but - in just recently, I'd say in the last
4 five or six years, I - I started going to the Transgender Commission meetings here at the
5 University of Minnesota. About ten years ago, I went to a trans ally training.
- 6 AJ: Okay.
- 7 MH: And my excuse to myself and anybody else was that I have trans - I had a trans graduate
8 student, and -
- 9 AJ: Wow.
- 10 MH: I mean, someone who didn't tell me that, but -
- 11 AJ: But you...
- 12 MH: Yeah. And -
- 13 AJ: Figured it out.
- 14 MH: We talked about it later. And -
- 15 AJ: They were your cover, huh?
- 16 MH: Exactly. And I went there and these wonderful people in what was then the program's office for
17 gay, lesbian, and trans - maybe transgender people. Bisexual people, or something. They did
18 some trainings, and they described all the famous things. Gender identity, gender expression,
19 sexuality, physical - this is - and they described me. And that was it, right there. When you - I -
20 maybe that should have been my answer an hour ago when you asked "When did you really
21 understand?" Because I hadn't done the work. I've been a feminist since high school, but that's
22 a different kind of work. I hadn't done the work in exploring - I mean, I tried. In the '90s, I took
23 some surveys online that showed me to be a feminine man.
- 24 AJ: Yeah?
- 25 MH: 'Cause I wasn't ready for surgery, which is what they were looking for. But I hadn't done the
26 work, and so here the - this student showed me who I was. I didn't run up there and say so.
- 27 AJ: Yeah?
- 28 MH: But that's when I joined the group, and I was on the leadership team for five years.
- 29 AJ: Sure.
- 30 MH: And showed up at events at the annual celebrations. I had students come to my office and say
31 "Why were you there?" And I could only be honest in that moment and say "Because I'm a
32 transgender person."
- 33 AJ: Wow.
- 34 MH: This was five or six years ago. I said it to one person, or two people, or three people in my office

- 1 with the door shut, and then they came out to me about whatever their circumstances were.
- 2 AJ: Sure.
- 3 MH: And I learned that...the world isn't as scary a place as I thought, especially if you're willing to
4 show yourself even a little bit. Oh, yeah, it's damn scary enough.
- 5 AJ: It's scary, but I think people respond to our -
- 6 MH: Yeah.
- 7 AJ: - to authenticity.
- 8 MH: Yeah. And I found that for sure. And almost always in a really, really wonderful way. And in the
9 meantime, I - I - I don't have anything to brag about on this. About what have I done for the
10 cause. I got tapped to be on board of 20% Theatre Company -
- 11 AJ: Good!
- 12 MH: - whose mission is centering the experience of queer and trans people, especially female people,
13 and now especially trans people. Not just trans women - people of trans experience, of color,
14 and younger people, because we're a very white organization. We actually skew really young,
15 from my point of view, but the leadership in their mid-thirties think we're a little old, you know?
- 16 AJ: Okay.
- 17 MH: And I was really shocked, just like I was shocked to be asked for this interview, that I was - and
18 sure, I mean, they said, "Well, you - you're such a great sport, you come to all our stuff, you give
19 us money, and - " So there's your brag, but I was really honored. And I've been on that board for
20 a little over a year now. And recruiting other people, and talking it up. I've got cards in my bag if
21 you want them. I know you don't need it. 20% Theatre Company!
- 22 AJ: 20%! Woo woo!
- 23 MH: And I really believe in the power of theater and music and art. And that's another thing that -
24 okay, another possible answer to your question of when did I see myself was on the stage - 20%.
- 25 AJ: Wow.
- 26 MH: That's not the first time I saw myself, but damn did I see myself powerfully on stage.
- 27 AJ: Which production?
- 28 MH: It was one of the Naked Eye.
- 29 AJ: Oh, the Naked Eyes.
- 30 MH: I think the first Naked Eye one, when - like - like, three or four years - four years ago now, I don't
31 know. First I heard of the place. You know, I didn't even know about the company. It's eleven
32 years old now.
- 33 AJ: Yeah.

- 1 MH: And part of that was I was holed up at home for six years with a wife who couldn't leave the
2 house except to go to the doctor most of that time.
- 3 AJ: That's a big part of it, yeah.
- 4 MH: Immunity issues - I mean, like, medical. That's not the right word, immunity. I'm thinking about
5 politics right now, but you know what I mean. So I - I didn't have a lot of occasion to go out, and
6 - but stuff like that. I - I show up. I try to show up at demonstrations and marches.
- 7 AJ: Yeah. Wow.
- 8 MH: Going to be there tomorrow at the Minneapolis Federal Building on Muslim immigrant
9 protection.
- 10 AJ: Really? I'm - we're - your voice is going way down, Melissa.
- 11 MH: I don't feel proud about any of this, so that's why.
- 12 AJ: Okay. Well, you should.
- 13 MH: Just - just doing my thing. Trying -
- 14 AJ: You're standing up for humanity, and that's -
- 15 MH: I'm trying to -
- 16 AJ: - an important thing.
- 17 MH: Just trying to do my little piece.
- 18 AJ: Yeah.
- 19 MH: But - and that probably sounds like false humility, but it isn't.
- 20 AJ: We are going to need to wrap up.
- 21 MH: Okay.
- 22 AJ: But is there anything that I didn't ask you that you feel really compelled to talk about?
- 23 MH: Oh, thank you for that last part. There's a lot of things I could talk about. No. I mean, I just want
24 to express my gratitude to your project. To this - to the Tretter people, and your funders. And
25 the University of Minnesota library system, for hosting this. And it's a - a crucial part of the
26 work. Not just -
- 27 AJ: Why do you think it's so important? That transgender stories -
- 28 MH: Transgender voices -
- 29 AJ: - are -
- 30 MH: Well, because much of the -
- 31 AJ: - recorded, and preserved.

- 1 MH: Yeah. Much of our culture thinks it already knows about us. And they don't have any idea.
- 2 AJ: Yeah.
- 3 MH: One of my favorite authors, Helen Boyd, says "You've met one trans person, you've met one
4 trans person."
- 5 AJ: Right.
- 6 MH: And maybe this is true about humanity in general. But -
- 7 AJ: I think it is.
- 8 MH: But we're human, too, you know?
- 9 AJ: Absolutely.
- 10 MH: And we have our stories to tell, and this is one way of doing it. And I'm very grateful to be part
11 of that.
- 12 AJ: Well, thank you so much, Melissa. Thank you for your authenticity and your courage on this
13 journey, and your willingness to share part of that journey with us today.
- 14 MH: Thank you for your work. Very much.
- 15 AJ: Allrighty. 'Til we meet again, my friend.
- 16 MH: Bye bye, now.