

Rachel Schroeder  
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins  
Interviewer

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

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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 Rachel Schroeder -RS  
3

4 AJ: So, hello. My name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral  
5 History Project at the University of Minnesota. Today is February 23, 2016, and I'm in Apple  
6 Valley, Minnesota, in the home of Rachel Schroeder. I hope I'm saying that correctly, but I'm  
7 going to give you an opportunity to state your name, spell it for us, tell me, Rachel, what is your  
8 current gender identity today, what was your gender assigned at birth, and what are your  
9 preferred gender pronouns.

10 RS: First of all, my name is Rachel Schroeder. It's spelled R-a-c-h-e-l. My preferred pronouns are  
11 female. I was born male and I started my transition December 15<sup>th</sup> of 2014.

12 AJ: Wow.

13 RS: Yeah.

14 AJ: That's really quite new.

15 RS: Yeah, I've come a long way.

16 AJ: Thank you so much, Rachel. Just to get us sort of in a good frame of mind, tell me what is your  
17 earliest memory in life.

18 RS: I've thought a lot about that. I would have say it was definitely before puberty, between the  
19 ages of 8 and 10. I was definitely very curious about my mom's clothes and stuff like that. I  
20 definitely experimented with crossdressing and stuff at a very, very early age.

21 AJ: OK.

22 RS: And then, I don't know – it kind of went underground a little bit during my high school years,  
23 and then shortly after getting out of high school, a couple of years into my first marriage, I  
24 realized that these feelings are coming back. I was raised in a very masculine environment so it  
25 was something that I struggled with internally because I had a lot of feminine feelings and stuff  
26 that absolutely wouldn't have been accepted. So, yeah. My first marriage, when this came out  
27 after five years and two children, ended because of my gender identity. And then when I met  
28 my second wife, she'd seen me through my divorce with all this stuff on board – not the  
29 transition piece but lots of . . . I hate to call it even crossdressing but back then that's really what  
30 it was geared towards.

31 AJ: And that's the language that we had.

32 RS: Exactly. I belonged to a group in the Twin Cities called CLCC.

33 AJ: Oh really, you were a member of CLCC?

34 RS: I was, like in the very early 1990s.

35 AJ: Is that still ongoing?

- 1 RS: It still exists but I'm not a part of it, but it still exists.
- 2 AJ: And it's CLCC, that's the City of Lakes . . .
- 3 RS: Crossgender Community.
- 4 AJ: Crossgender Community.
- 5 RS: I think is what it stands for. So during my first divorce there was a lot of . . . I was dragged  
6 through the mud by my ex-wife, so my family and everyone else involved on either side of the  
7 divorce was well aware of my gender identity issues. I was court appointed a psychiatrist that  
8 would evaluate me to be a fit parent. It was just a lot of mudslinging on my ex-wife's behalf due  
9 to my gender identity. And so, after making it through all of that and doing it with flying colors  
10 and having the full support of the psychiatrist and court-appointed people, I fought for custody  
11 of my children and eventually achieved that.
- 12 AJ: OK.
- 13 RS: Yeah, which was a process in . . .
- 14 AJ: Full custody or joint?
- 15 RS: Sole legal and sole physical.
- 16 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 17 RS: But that was after a few years of really battling.
- 18 AJ: How old were your children at the time?
- 19 RS: At the time, they were very young. I had two kids from my first marriage and I think at the time  
20 they were like 5 and 3, something like that. And then when I met my second wife, like I said –  
21 she did see me through my divorce, and so she was a big support. But she had made it clear to  
22 me that those things were, more or less, to be kept behind closed doors. It wasn't something  
23 like . . . I wasn't out at all even though I considered myself to gender blend very well, like very  
24 androgynously. A lot of the clothes that I would wear would be women's clothes, but not skirts  
25 or dresses – more like jeans and androgynous-type tops. I had very long hair and manicured  
26 eyebrows. I was expressing as much as I could, as much as I was allowed. And then about five  
27 years into my second marriage, I experimented with hormones and about three weeks into my  
28 hormones is when I realized I really wanted to transition and I felt like I was at a crossroad  
29 because I had a woman that I loved very much and my kids. At that point, I'd already had my  
30 first child with her, so that was three kids at that point. I realized that the consequences of my  
31 transition back then would have been an end to a second marriage and then putting my kids  
32 through back-to-back divorces due to my gender identity. So, I remember where I was, I  
33 remember what time of the day it was – I remember everything about that day when I made the  
34 decision not to transition.
- 35 AJ: What year was this?

- 1 RS: Oh gosh, it had to have been like 1995, 1996. I had a lot of stuff going on, obviously. My new  
2 marriage, a new baby, my two kids from my previous marriage, so there was a lot of  
3 expectation, obviously, by everyone for me to fulfill being a parent and the best dad that I could  
4 be to my kids. And so, knowing that and loving the woman that I was with, I chose to . . . I had  
5 to bury this girl as deep as I could. I took up marathon running, body building – kind of like  
6 Caitlyn Jenner in the sense that if I have to do this, I’m going to do it better than everyone else.
- 7 AJ: OK.
- 8 RS: When I was a marathon runner I was usually placing in the top 10% of all my races.
- 9 AJ: How many marathons have you ran?
- 10 RS: I did seven marathons.
- 11 AJ: Wow.
- 12 RS: And then with the body building, at one point I was benching almost 400 lbs. I was full of rage,  
13 full of depression, full of anxiety, and I didn’t know why. Years of struggling with that, it kind of  
14 came to a head. I realized that I was unhappy and that I was depressed and that I was full of  
15 rage, and through counseling and everything else it was just enough to peel back the layers just  
16 enough for me to realize that this person that I buried is me. Once I figured that out, I more or  
17 less picked up exactly where I left off. From the time that I really figured it out, I would say it  
18 was two weeks before I was on hormones and I self-treated myself at first. I did my homework  
19 on the internet, I was able to get a hold of hormones and t-blockers and everything that I  
20 needed to start my transition. About three months in, I figured I should see a doctor because  
21 there was a lot of changes going on in every way – both emotionally, physically. I was really  
22 concerned and I did reach out to the U of M at that time and . . .
- 23 AJ: OK – the Program in Human Sexuality?
- 24 RS: Yes. And that was the only program that I could find on the internet that was where I could . . .  
25 Family Tree was . . . it was before their program opened up and I was part of their mock trial  
26 over there before they opened their doors to the trans community.
- 27 AJ: Oh, wow. OK.
- 28 RS: And, I did end up over at Family Tree only because the medical insurance that I had at the time,  
29 the U did not accept – or it was denied. So, I ended up on a sliding pay scale over at Family Tree.
- 30 AJ: Where is Family Tree?
- 31 RS: That’s off of Snelling Avenue out in St. Paul.
- 32 AJ: St. Paul.
- 33 RS: Yeah. I’ve been over there for at least eight months now – at least, almost . . . I would say about  
34 eight months. But since then, I’ve gone from the pill to injections and lots of different things  
35 have happened.
- 36 AJ: Wow, you have shared quite a bit.

- 1 RS: But there's all these little details in-between that are just . . .
- 2 AJ: There are some details in-between that we're going to try to get at in a little bit.
- 3 RS: Oh my gosh – yeah, yeah.
- 4 AJ: But first of all, I just kind of want to know just a little bit more about you. Where did you grow  
5 up?
- 6 RS: I grew up out here south of the river, out in Burnsville. I went to high school out in Burnsville,  
7 track and cross country. Yeah.
- 8 AJ: What was elementary school like?
- 9 RS: It was OK. I went to elementary school out in Savage. That was pretty good.
- 10 AJ: Yeah, OK.
- 11 RS: It wasn't . . .
- 12 AJ: No bullying, no teasing?
- 13 RS: I wouldn't say any more than the regular kid, it was pretty normal stuff back then.
- 14 AJ: So, your gender identity concerns were sort of under wraps.
- 15 RS: Right. It didn't really become an issue for me publicly until a year or two into my first marriage  
16 and then I realized that this was something much greater than I thought it was when I was eight.  
17 And then, of course, with all of this comes the social pushback, the homophobia, all that stuff  
18 that we get from the public. But I think that that is what scares many of us away from  
19 transitioning. I'm a part of the Minnesota Transgender Health Coalition, I've been a part of that  
20 almost since the third month of my transition. I have seen some really, really amazing stories,  
21 I've seen some very sad stories. I've seen some people from greater Minnesota that live in very  
22 small communities that definitely identify as trans and the consequences and the social  
23 pushback that I think that they're fearing in many cases is so much that they don't transition. To  
24 me, I think that that is the saddest thing ever because in my personal beliefs, I believe that the  
25 Lord created all of us and made us each very special and unique. I use the analogy of a rose and,  
26 you know, I've seen myself as just a budding rose – just a bud, and then as I transitioned and  
27 became myself, that's me blooming and showing the world my beauty. I see so many people  
28 that are just too afraid to open up and to be themselves due to the social pushback and  
29 everything else, and the consequences.
- 30 AJ: Which are real.
- 31 RS: The consequences are absolutely real. Most of the people that I've talked to, their marriages do  
32 not survive, it's a very small percentage. I think that my now ex, you know, did make as many  
33 concessions as she could but having gender re-assignment surgery on the horizon and living full-  
34 time were things that she couldn't accept, even after 23 years of marriage. I certainly don't  
35 blame her for that because that makes her a lesbian, more or less, to be in a marriage with me.  
36 Yeah, so . . .

- 1 AJ: So you're divorced for a second time now?
- 2 RS: Yes, and both marriages failed due to my gender identity.
- 3 AJ: That was the sole issue.
- 4 RS: It was.
- 5 AJ: Wow. That's tough, I'm sorry to hear about that.
- 6 RS: With that also has come the loss of my parents, my brother, my kids. It's . . . yeah, it's pretty  
7 tough.
- 8 AJ: What was life like with your parents growing up?
- 9 RS: It was OK. I grew up in a trailer park so it wasn't like . . . I worked on my grandparent's farm and  
10 spent most of my summer vacations there with them. I didn't really ever have a super close  
11 connection with my parents. It was kind of like . . . I think we all grew up with the parents that  
12 were like, "We'll see you when it gets dark."
- 13 AJ: OK.
- 14 RS: You can come home for lunch but basically just leave. Yeah.
- 15 AJ: So the trailer park wasn't on the farm then?
- 16 RS: No, that was just out in Burnsville. I didn't think of myself as not having anything less than  
17 anybody else, but yeah – it was certainly part of my upbringing. Not a lot of support with  
18 anything, whether it be my athletics or with anything such as my business or this transition.
- 19 AJ: And your parents were together during your growing up years?
- 20 RS: Yeah, they're still married.
- 21 AJ: Still married.
- 22 RS: They've been married a long, long time.
- 23 AJ: So, you grew up in a two-family household? Siblings?
- 24 RS: Just one brother – younger.
- 25 AJ: What's your relationship like now with your folks? You just said you lost them.
- 26 RS: Yeah, there just isn't. At month five . . .
- 27 AJ: Do you have any conversation or do you go visit at holidays?
- 28 RS: No, not invited. They live just right down the road; they have my phone number. They don't  
29 call me. Every time that I've reached out to my boys, I get shut down – immediately. Like, "Lose  
30 my number, don't talk to me." My oldest daughter kind of came back to me for a little bit,  
31 maybe a month or two, and she seemed to be accepting it and doing well with it and then she's  
32 out again. So, she's kind of in and out, I guess. I give them as much running room and leeway as

- 1           they need with this. I've done the best that I could explaining to my kids why this didn't happen  
2           sooner. Telling my boys was the one thing that was very, very, very difficult for me. I did not  
3           want to do that. I was hoping that they would have heard through my family or through the  
4           grapevine that this was taking place and I ended up having to have a conversation with them. I  
5           did explain to them that the reason I didn't do this 16 years ago was because I was busy raising  
6           them and doing what was expected of me as a dad. That's another thing that I allow my kids to  
7           do is to use . . . call me dad, versus mom or something.
- 8    AJ:     Yeah.
- 9    RS:     But my female pronouns are super, super important to me – really important. If I get mis-  
10           gendered it is hands down the worst thing that you can say to me.
- 11   AJ:     Oh boy, I'm sorry.
- 12   RS:     I don't typically get mis-gendered but sometimes I think people use it as a microaggression –  
13           clearly I'm presenting female and yet they still call you sir? There's no reason for that, it's a  
14           microaggression in my opinion. I used to be a very passive-aggressive person and what this has  
15           done is that I stick up for myself now.
- 16   AJ:     Really?
- 17   RS:     Yeah, I don't care how many people are there, it's like, "Hold on a second, you just mis-  
18           gendered me. Let's get this straight."
- 19   AJ:     Good for you.
- 20   RS:     Yeah, but it's because the bad pronouns are the most awful thing. I didn't get the pronoun thing  
21           when I first started transitioning and it was talked about, it was a big topic in our group. For me,  
22           I get it. I mean, when you're living it full time and you're out there you see the homophobic,  
23           you see the people that are naïve to this and many times I get smiles. It's like I tell my girlfriend,  
24           Billie, that we are representing and we're educating every time we go out.
- 25   AJ:     Yes, every single day.
- 26   RS:     Every single day. That's something that I do take pride in. When you're walking in a store and  
27           somebody makes that eye contact and then they smile, it's . . . I smile back. It's like, "Yeah, I'm  
28           living the dream. I'm doing this."
- 29   AJ:     Wow. So, what have been some of the challenges beyond losing your family, two failed  
30           marriages . . .
- 31   RS:     My kids, my friends.
- 32   AJ:     Your kids, your whole friendship circle. Have there been other challenges?
- 33   RS:     The challenges that I struggle with the most are having to make a phone call – a simple thing as  
34           making a phone call and having to deal with somebody that can't see my physically. You know,  
35           obviously with that, and I try to get my name out there immediately. "My name is Rachel . . ."  
36           First clue. I do try to make my voice just a little bit better but I don't want it to be fake and it's



- 1 just another battle that all of us trans women have to go through. It's hard to change our voice,  
2 you can't change your hands. You can go through a lot of surgery, but we are what we are. I  
3 think we're special and unique. So, yeah.
- 4 AJ: Wow.
- 5 RS: But I would say the phone calls, that's an everyday struggle. Sometimes I get exhausted in  
6 certain public situations. It's, you know, you've had a bad day, you're feeling insecure and you  
7 have to go into Cub to go shopping. You're just like, "Gosh, I'm just not in the mood to be  
8 eyeballed, I'm not in the mood to be mis-gendered." It takes a lot of energy and, I would say,  
9 internal strength and energy to get through those tough times – especially early on in my  
10 transition when I absolutely did not pass and was . . . silly things like carrying a purse in public  
11 were big huge deals. Wearing make-up and living full time and, like I said, not passing . . . I look  
12 back on that now and I don't know how I've gotten through it. If it wasn't for the fact that I'm  
13 truly religious, I don't know how I could have made it this far because I've lost so much to get to  
14 where I am that it's been amazing. I mean, there have been some days where I try not to let the  
15 loss and stuff creep in because if it does, it's really, really hard to close that window again. Every  
16 day it's like, "Keep your chin up and be as happy as you can be, don't let the negative stuff creep  
17 in on you." I think in the trans community, suicide and depression and a lot of related things are  
18 a part of this community. I had one day where I let that creep in on me and I cried  
19 uncontrollably – all day. I've never been that way. I've been to funerals and I've grieved and  
20 I've been sad, but that was just like, "I can't control this."
- 21 AJ: Well you've experienced quite a bit of loss.
- 22 RS: Yeah . . . yeah. And that continues even now where now I find myself for the first time in my life  
23 alone, independent, having to be strong enough to take on everything that I had help with  
24 before and having a support network like my family or my wife or my kids, and now suddenly I  
25 find myself absolutely on my own. What I tell people is that my other life . . . because I had a  
26 different identity and a different life. So, what I've been doing for the first 14 months of my  
27 transition, is trying to put my old life behind me and move forward with my new life, but with  
28 that has come so much change both emotionally and physically, more than I ever would have  
29 expected and it's continuous. I thought 13 or 14 months into my transition that I'd be able to  
30 take a deep breath and things would be settling down – you know, that the bulk of my transition  
31 would be done. It's just not . . . it's constant change. I'm just going with it.
- 32 AJ: You mentioned to me earlier that you do have a relationship with one of your children.
- 33 RS: My daughter, my youngest. I've got an 11-year-old that loves me unconditionally.
- 34 AJ: Oh, wonderful.
- 35 RS: She has been my rock, she's been the only one that loves me . . . I think she loves me more than  
36 she did before.
- 37 AJ: Really?

1 RS: Yeah, because I'm a much more open, loving, caring person. I have so much more to give now  
2 than I did before because I feel good about myself, even though it seems like how could you –  
3 you have so much sadness. The one thing that I think so many people take for granted is being  
4 comfortable in their own flesh. Being able to express your gender identity is . . . it's absolutely  
5 something that the general public absolutely just does not get, they don't get it – what it's like  
6 to spend most of your life as something that you're not, as something that you're expected to  
7 be because you were born with genitalia that says you're from the other gender.

8 AJ: Sure. Tell me this, Rachel, what are some of the positive aspects that you've experienced.

9 RS: Well, I get a lot of positive attention. On dating sites it's been ridiculous. I've had a lot of . . .

10 AJ: You do the online dating thing?

11 RS: I do. Some days I have to shut it off just because, you know, with all the good does come a little  
12 bad. But, I've had more men reach out to me just to say, "Not for me but I respect what you're  
13 doing, it takes a lot of courage, you go girl!" All this good support. There has been a small  
14 number, but they do happen, of people that say, "You'll never be a woman," "Really?" Just all  
15 kinds of snarky comments like that. For the most part, I think, we have tough skin because we  
16 have to but there are days . . . I'm like anybody else – I have good and bad days. On a bad day  
17 when I'm feeling insecure, a statement like that can really . . .

18 AJ: Yeah, send you over the edge.

19 RS: Well, it can really get you. But I would say that the positive attention that I've gotten, the new  
20 friends that I have made are such good quality friends. I never identified as anything in the LGBT  
21 community and suddenly I find myself identifying with almost every letter.

22 AJ: How so? Tell me.

23 RS: Well, I consider myself very attracted to women, which would make me a lesbian.

24 AJ: Yes.

25 RS: I find myself attracted to men for the first time in my life. I didn't think that that could happen.  
26 I was told at the beginning of my transition that that was a possibility; I said, "Absolutely not,  
27 that's never happening, that's never been there." And then about four or five months into my  
28 transition I found myself flirting and I would analyze that situation when I got away from it and  
29 reflect on it. It was like, "Am I flirting?" With that . . . that has been part of this too and it's  
30 been something with my transition that I did not expect, but I have embraced. I see myself  
31 being married to a man someday.

32 AJ: Really?

33 RS: Yeah, I do.

34 AJ: Have you dated men?

35 RS: I have, yes. And been active and . . . but that's all recent.

36 AJ: You've had sex with men?

- 1 RS: Yes, but that's all very recent.
- 2 AJ: How was it?
- 3 RS: Well, the first time it was with a pansexual couple and I went to go meet her. I had no idea he  
4 was a part of this and towards the end of that visit, I kind of let my walls down and I opened up  
5 to her and then that became something that became a wonderful evening for me and it gave me  
6 confidence that I so desperately needed because I was struggling with the whole thing – of  
7 being into men and how am I going to be perceived, how am I going to be treated. It's been one  
8 of the most validating things that I've had.
- 9 AJ: So did he treat you like the woman you wanted to be?
- 10 RS: Yeah, the men that I've been with have been . . . I absolutely feel 100% as a woman, like  
11 everything that I ever thought that would be, it was and still is. It's a very positive thing for me,  
12 but it's been new – like so many other things.
- 13 AJ: So, there's been some positive aspects to your transition.
- 14 RS: Yeah, lots of positive. Not to mention just being able to have the freedom to express my gender  
15 identity – that's a big thing. Being able to go shopping in the lingerie section at Target and not  
16 be stared at or laughed at or pointed at – just being able to have those simple freedoms have  
17 been just life changing and wonderful. And then to have proper pronouns used without having  
18 to ask somebody. Those are all gifts of my transition.
- 19 AJ: Bathroom. Where do you go?
- 20 RS: That is a good question because . . . I never go to the men's room. I clean buildings for a living,  
21 that would be the only exception. Otherwise I tend to avoid the bathroom situation. I don't  
22 know why, because there's a lot of people that I know that have no problem using the ladies  
23 room.
- 24 AJ: How do you do that? You can't avoid the bathroom – you're a human being, aren't you? You're  
25 not an alien.
- 26 RS: It's like you said during one of your poetry things about getting the bladder infections because  
27 you don't feel like you can go to the bathroom. It's something that I try to avoid. If I have to use  
28 the bathroom, if there's not a neutral gender bathroom there, I will use the ladies room. But  
29 like with every other part of this, there is fear, there is anxiety.
- 30 AJ: Have you ever encountered any problems using the women's room?
- 31 RS: Never. As a matter of fact, at the Mall of America, there was . . . it was a really busy day at the  
32 Mall of America, near one of the entries is where the bathrooms are usually located and I had to  
33 use the facilities and did it right in front of security in a very busy bathroom and I had no  
34 problems. I've never had an issue using the ladies room but there's still, for me at least, there's  
35 still tensions evolving around that. If there's a gender-neutral bathroom, I'll absolutely use that  
36 first.

- 1 AJ: Yeah. So, you've kind of gone through this a little bit, but to the extent that you feel  
2 comfortable, can you tell me about what medical interventions you have undergone to date and  
3 that you maybe intend to take on in the future?
- 4 RS: Well, I've been on hormones since December 15, 2014. I started on a very strong dose.
- 5 AJ: Really?
- 6 RS: Yeah, I started on 8 mg of the pill and then 200 mg of spironolactone to block the testosterone.  
7 So, then to the point where I got on my injections, I was on 10 mg of estrogen, which is five pills  
8 a day – which is a lot of estrogen. But my labs were coming back decent where my estrogen  
9 levels were right where they wanted them – like right around 130, 150, certainly well below 200.  
10 And, then when they put me on the injections then everything really changed - I had breast  
11 development. I've been on the injections now for at least seven or eight months.
- 12 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 13 RS: Yeah, so I'm doing all that. I've got a pending top surgery, breast augmentation. I'm going from  
14 a B cup to DDs, so that will be a big change but one that I'm looking very forward to.
- 15 AJ: You'll get lots of dates then.
- 16 RS: Yeah. Obviously, for me, SRS is definitely part of my thing. I can't wait to have that, I do have a  
17 lot of dysphoria over my stuff and it's something that as far as the dating is concerned, I've  
18 really had to develop a tough skin. I don't understand how somebody can be very attracted to  
19 you and like your personality, but when it comes to something that is very private and personal,  
20 and that I see as almost a birth defect, it scares away so many. So that has been very difficult.
- 21 AJ: So, thanks. Any electrolysis or anything like that?
- 22 RS: Oh yeah, I've been through a year of laser. For the most part I'm done on my face, or still doing  
23 electrolysis to get the white hair and the other stuff that comes out. But, for the most part I'm  
24 done. But as part of your prep for your SRS you have to also have permanent hair removal done  
25 on your genital area because it will be all used and put inside and you don't want hair growing in  
26 there. So, I've been going – actually, this Friday will be my second appointment; second out of  
27 most likely four – at least.
- 28 AJ: Is that painful?
- 29 RS: Yeah. This was way worse than any tattoo I've ever had; this was so painful getting the laser  
30 done. Basically right in the center of your face . . . oh, I cried. It's very painful. This is no  
31 exception, it's been a process . . . a process of surgeries and everything else. I have a lot of  
32 friends that are also transitioning and going through surgeries and I feel very bad for a lot of the  
33 dysphoria that they have because they're beautiful people and yet they see themselves as not  
34 passing. It bothers me when somebody just can't love themselves for being themselves – for  
35 being them. It's like . . . it just seems like for many of us that there is this . . . all these things that  
36 everyone feels like we have to do to pass. For me, at least at this point – and the reason I say  
37 that is that this has been about nothing but change, and even change that I'm not expecting

- 1 comes my way, but as far as I see it now, my immediate goals are my top surgery and then to  
2 have my SRS, hopefully within the next year and a half.
- 3 AJ: Do you have an idea where you would go?
- 4 RS: I want to go to California to see Marci Bowers. I made sure that she was included in my network  
5 of medical insurance and I do have coverage. Being that I'm self-employed I was actually able to  
6 hand pick my healthcare plan, which many people in our community do not have that privilege.  
7 So, through that I have coverage for my surgeries, my trans-related care.
- 8 AJ: Wow, that's awesome.
- 9 RS: It's very awesome – just a \$2000 deductible and then a \$500/month payment, which is not  
10 cheap, but when you weigh money out/money in, it's definitely a better way to go.
- 11 AJ: So, you have your own business? What do you do?
- 12 RS: Yes, I have my own building maintenance company – full-service janitorial. We employ, I think,  
13 about eight people right now.
- 14 AJ: Have you had any challenges with contracts since you've transitioned?
- 15 RS: Yes, great question. I have not lost any business due to my transition. All my customers have  
16 been very supportive, a lot of them have been learning as we go. The Caitlyn Jenner interview, I  
17 think, was helpful in helping set . . .
- 18 AJ: Wow, Caitlyn helped you out, huh?
- 19 RS: Absolutely. I have one customer that is about my dad's age, in his 60s, that really struggled with  
20 my transition. After the interview, he had a much better understanding of what it was that I  
21 was going through and it at least opened a door for conversation between me and him so he  
22 could understand this better. But many of my customers I've had for 10-15+ years. I bring my  
23 services to my customer so I'm not only there in front of my contact, but I'm there in front of a  
24 lot of other people that don't know about the transition. So, like I said, I think that we educate  
25 many when we go out in public and certainly in a workplace, and I go to several very corporate  
26 workplaces. As I said, I'm definitely educating people whether I like it or not.
- 27 AJ: Have you lost business?
- 28 RS: I think the one account that I did lose was just a one-year annual floor scrub – a scrub and wax  
29 that I did. The funny thing about that one is that both owners are a couple, they're lesbian.  
30 And, when they had called me, they left a message on my business answering machine saying,  
31 "Hey, Rich, we want you to come out and do our floors." Because I never told them of my  
32 transition or my name change. So, I'm like, "Whoa, that was awful, I have to go there and  
33 educate them on the fact that I've transitioned and that my name is different." So, rather than  
34 make that a phone conversation, I actually showed up in person. They did not recognize me and  
35 when they did realize that it was me, they were shocked and very supportive, at that time. I got  
36 hugs and they told me that it wouldn't change anything and then the job got cancelled a week

- 1 later and they never called me back. So, that would be about the only . . . that's about the only  
2 business that I think I've lost as a direct result of my transition.
- 3 AJ: Do you think that was related . . . do you know this term: TERFs, Trans-Exclusionary Radical  
4 Feminists.
- 5 RS: No.
- 6 AJ: Well, then you probably can't answer the question, but there's a lot of people in the lesbian  
7 community that believe wholeheartedly that transgender women have no right to call  
8 themselves women and live their lives as women and come into women's spaces. I'm just  
9 wondering, do you think that . . .?
- 10 RS: Yeah, well I'm on a couple of lesbian dating sites and I have not been reached out to in a  
11 negative manner like that.
- 12 AJ: OK, good.
- 13 RS: As a matter of fact, I've had lots of women reach out to me. Unfortunately, most of them are in  
14 their early 20s, I've got kids that are older than that and that's what I tell them. But, they're  
15 always gorgeous and it's like, "Oh, darn it – I wish you were just a little older."
- 16 AJ: What site is this? No, I'm just teasing.
- 17 RS: But I haven't gotten any push back from women at all, really. I think recently at a Target store I  
18 had a lady eyeball me up and down and I don't think I was getting positive vibes from her. But  
19 for the most part I get smiles, lots of curiosity. In some aspects, I almost serve as a magnet to a  
20 lot of people because of the curiosity. Yeah, I mean that part of it for me has been pretty  
21 wonderful.
- 22 AJ: So, women strike up conversations with you.
- 23 RS: Yeah, and that's one thing – at work, because I'm in social situations at work constantly, is to see  
24 how the behavior of the men changed and how the behavior of the women changed and how  
25 my circles changed. Needless to say, I went from circles with men and sports conversations and  
26 taking about autos to being with the girls and talking about boyfriends and make-up, clothes –  
27 all those things. It's been fascinating to see – number one, how I've been welcomed by the  
28 women and not just at one account but all my accounts for the most part, and women in  
29 general. And then on the other hand, especially the men that knew me and respected me as a  
30 man, because I did body build for five years and I was very buff before my transition, most of  
31 those . . . definitely scared a lot of guys away, for sure.
- 32 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 33 RS: And then a lot of these guys now, this is the funny part – a lot of these guys, being that I've been  
34 transitioning for a year in front of them, are starting to come around and some of them are  
35 actually attracted to me, I think. In fact, I'm positive.
- 36 AJ: Wow.

- 1 RS: Yeah. But it's been really kind of neat to be almost outside looking in on the way that people  
2 behave.
- 3 AJ: Human behavior.
- 4 RS: Yeah, that has been fascinating. I wouldn't change any of it because I think all of it makes us  
5 what we are.
- 6 AJ: Yeah.
- 7 RS: The good with the bad.
- 8 AJ: I'm really interested in this idea of passing that you brought up a couple of times. What does  
9 that mean to you and how . . . do you think it's good for the community or harmful for the  
10 community?
- 11 RS: For passing? You mean passing?
- 12 AJ: Yes.
- 13 RS: Well, I think that . . . society in general, when they go out to a place in the public, expect to see a  
14 man or a woman, they usually don't expect to see somebody that's clearly in transition. And so  
15 passing, to me, means that when you go into a public setting like that, that for the most part,  
16 maybe 90 or 95% of the people that you're passing are accepting you as a woman as face value.  
17 And, you know, it's things like my voice that will give me away or my hands. Just things that . . .  
18 once people question, they just start to question, then those are the things that they start to  
19 look for – they look for an Adam's apple, they look for man hands, they look for man voice. And  
20 so, passing is all about trying to conquer those things to the best of your ability whether it be for  
21 make-up, hair, the way that you dress, your mannerisms. For many of us young trans people  
22 that are just coming into our transition, passing is everything – yeah.
- 23 AJ: Positive or negative?
- 24 RS: I see everything as being really positive, even when I wasn't passing it was something that I  
25 embraced because it was my transition and it was very personal to me. I don't like to always  
26 compare my transition to somebody else's transition because each of these obstacles and  
27 hurdles that I've had to overcome have been by me and they're my challenges. So when I  
28 conquer those things, those are like stepping stones in my growth.
- 29 AJ: OK, perfect. You brought up Caitlyn Jenner, who has rapidly become the most famous  
30 transgender person in the world, I would say. But also along with Caitlyn, there's Janet Mock,  
31 Laverne Cox, there's . . .
- 32 RS: Laverne Cox, yes – people that have been in the public eye for a long time before Caitlyn Jenner  
33 that weren't given the same sort of cred.
- 34 AJ: Yeah.
- 35 RS: I get that.
- 36 AJ: And that's not my point necessarily, but that's the reality.

- 1 RS: Right, it's something that was discussed in our transgender group because . . .
- 2 AJ: So you go to a group?
- 3 RS: Yes, at Minnesota Transgender Health Coalition – a great, great, great program and I take my  
4 hat off to Roxanne and everyone that has made that a possibility. It was my lifeblood, it was  
5 what got me through each week early in my transition and I still go, even today, just to be there  
6 as a support and inspiration, hopefully, to the younger people that are coming out.
- 7 AJ: The point I was trying to make though is that there's been this really tremendous increased  
8 visibility for the transgender community. You've already identified that, you know – the Caitlyn  
9 Jenner interview with Diane Sawyer, really helped with your transition to some extent.
- 10 RS: What was funny was that right after the Caitlyn Jenner interview, I found myself at a restaurant  
11 right where the lobby was, seated right in front of where everybody was coming in. All the TV  
12 monitors had the Caitlyn Jenner aftermath on the news.
- 13 AJ: No way.
- 14 RS: Yes. It was the last time that I'd gone out in public with my, at the time, wife. And, she wanted  
15 me to dress in boy clothes even though I was a few months into my transition. Obviously no  
16 make-up, I was trying to pass as a guy, which grieved me to no end but I did it. The waiter came  
17 up to our table and said, "Can I help you ladies?" And, I remember smiling, my daughter was  
18 smiling for me, and my wife wanted to crawl under the table. She said, "I'll never do this again."  
19 But the amount of attention that I think I was getting from the people that were coming in the  
20 lobby and stuff, that was amazing – just because you have this transgender movement all over  
21 the news.
- 22 AJ: Sure.
- 23 RS: Here I am living it and going through it at the same time that somebody like Caitlyn Jenner was  
24 coming out. So, yeah. The Caitlyn Jenner interview, I think – at least speaking for myself, it was  
25 very stressful leading up to the interview because I felt like this is somebody that had an  
26 opportunity to educate the public but I was very concerned about how she would represent us.  
27 I cried, I laughed, I related to so many things that Caitlyn said. Some people questioned why you  
28 waited so long and for me, I did what everyone else expected me to do. And, you know, at 47-  
29 years of age when I decided to do this, it's my turn. It's time to take care of myself and live the  
30 rest of my life for me and that might be a very selfish thing, but at the same time, I look at  
31 spending 47 years of my life as somebody that I wasn't is a great sacrifice. So, yeah.
- 32 AJ: Well, you know, I guess I've got to add on a little editorial here because I don't think it's selfish if  
33 you have cancer and you want to survive and live you do everything you can do to survive, right?  
34 And so, I look at this as the same issue. It's not about being selfish, it's about self-care and  
35 taking care of yourself.
- 36 RS: It is, but I think that people that are family members, friends, spouses – I think everybody that is  
37 faced with this kind of change with somebody that they love and have known as a different  
38 gender, I think for many it's just a lot of naïve-ness, a lot of homophobia, embarrassment. I



- 1 think that there is a lot of negative feelings and I think a big part of that is the lack of public  
2 knowledge about what the trans movement, the transgender thing, is all about. I've had several  
3 guys on these dating sites that don't know what transgender is.
- 4 AJ: Yeah.
- 5 RS: If you have to explain it, it's like I don't know.
- 6 AJ: I'm sorry for laughing, but it's true.
- 7 RS: It's true, very true.
- 8 AJ: I've been out for 25 years so I . . . it sort of is humorous to me but it's really true, that there are  
9 people who live on this planet who have no concept of that term.
- 10 RS: I had a guy just yesterday, and now I've gotten to the point where I'm so exhausted with these  
11 guys – because it's so visual for many people, so they see your pictures and they just identify me  
12 as a woman. But now it's to the point where when somebody says, "Hello, I think you're  
13 beautiful," I'm like, "Read my profile." I won't even engage that person other than just saying,  
14 "Read my profile." "I've read it." "You know I'm trans, right?"
- 15 AJ: Yeah.
- 16 RS: "OK, now that we've got that out of that . . . now that we've cleared that, we can have a  
17 discussion."
- 18 AJ: Now we talk, yeah.
- 19 RS: It's just . . . it's been a process.
- 20 AJ: When is the first time you ever met another transgender person?
- 21 RS: When I went to . . . well, excluding the CLCC thing, which back then I think it was a mix of  
22 crossdressers and trans people. But, beyond that experience I would say it was when I went to  
23 my first meet-up, which is . . . a meet-up is a social app and it's geared towards any interest, any  
24 interest, whether it be crafts or whatever. This particular meet-up group was for transgender  
25 people to get together and meet at a museum and get to know each other.
- 26 AJ: OK.
- 27 RS: A public place. So, through that meeting I went and met a lot of people. I had tons of questions  
28 about everything that was happening to my body and obviously I was looking for support and  
29 inspiration and I absolutely got all of that.
- 30 AJ: Great.
- 31 RS: I'd met a handful of trans women, a couple of trans males, that had been doing it for at least a  
32 year and it was something that I needed very much at that time in my transition. And then, they  
33 opened more doors for me – like the Minnesota Transgender Health Coalition was a big one,  
34 getting my gender dysphoria tag over at the U of M was a big one. But yeah, that was most  
35 likely the first time that it really had a lot of impact on what's going on.

- 1 AJ: Any one particular person that sort of stands out as a . . . ?
- 2 RS: I would say . . . yeah, Jessica Porter. She moved down south where her family is but at the time  
3 she was up here in a relationship with another trans girl that I know. She had, you know, her B-  
4 size breasts, which I admired to no end because I was just going through my budding process  
5 and all that.
- 6 AJ: Sure.
- 7 RS: And she gave me nothing but valuable advice – like how to grow your hair fast, wear a sports  
8 bra, “You’re at a stage where you need to wear a sports bra.” All these simple things that I  
9 needed to hear and . . .
- 10 AJ: And that you don’t have anybody to really talk to about.
- 11 RS: No, no – it’s like with my first puberty back when I was 12 or 13-years old. At least for me, I had  
12 my mom and she was . . . I knew most of the sex education talk before I started the health class  
13 in school. We had a wonderful relationship. But yeah, transitioning the second time and going  
14 through puberty a second time, this late in life – yeah, there are tons of questions and  
15 uncertainties and . . . yeah. For many of us it’s kind of a blind path, especially early on – like if  
16 there’s not . . . out here in the suburbs, there isn’t any trans support groups that I’m aware of. I  
17 think that they’re starting to branch out a little bit more, I’ve heard of a couple other groups.  
18 But still, at least for me when I went on the internet when I first started transitioning and  
19 looking for a place I could plug into, the U of M was the only that I could really find and getting  
20 in there was a waiting process. And three or four months on a waiting list when you’re first  
21 transitioning is eternity.
- 22 AJ: It’s eternity, yes.
- 23 RS: Because you’re going through so much and you really need that at the front end of your  
24 transition – at least I did. So, through seeking that out and doing my homework on the internet  
25 and making calls, I was able to get hooked up into these groups that I’ve been in. So, yeah.
- 26 AJ: Wow. Are you willing to share your coming out story? That you maybe talked to your wife or  
27 your kids. I know you said the sons was really painful.
- 28 RS: Yeah, with my boys . . . first of all, they were absolutely speechless because I was their male role  
29 model – their dad. My oldest son is a Marine and I think the reason, in fact I know the reason he  
30 joined the Marines was to please me and to measure up in some manly way to me. We were  
31 very, very close – talked daily. He did serve a year in Afghanistan. When he got out he went to  
32 school and moved up here to be with me and the family and that’s right around the same time  
33 that I came out to him. He was . . . I would say he was devastated by it. I think all my kids were.  
34 They lost their male role model and my wife lost her husband and my parents lost their son, I  
35 guess. I didn’t really understand the grieving process that they were going through because I  
36 really felt like this person is still here, even though I’m conveying something else with my  
37 femininity. The memories and all that stuff is still there. So I didn’t understand it until one day I  
38 needed closet space and I had to get rid of all my guy stuff, I had to put it away. And then when  
39 I was putting it away, I knew it was the last time and it hit me when I was doing that as to what

- 1           they were grieving. And then when I moved into this place, I had those boxes and I opened  
2           them up and I was like . . . it almost brought tears to my eyes because, I know, seeing that what  
3           they lost.
- 4   AJ:     Wow.
- 5   RS:     Even though I'm so happy to be me and to be free for the first time in my life, that getting what  
6           they are grieving is something that I understood.
- 7   AJ:     Sure. Thank you so much for sharing that stuff, Rachel. It's a long tough journey.
- 8   RS:     It is. I thought once I got moved and got settled and my divorce was behind me and everything  
9           that I'd be able to take a deep breath and be settled down. It's just constant change, which is . .  
10          . it's good, but I think that after living 30 years in a marriage and in a relationship, I think that  
11          stability and the everyday grind is something that we all take for granted, because with  
12          transitioning it's every day. There's haters out there, there's people that don't understand,  
13          there's good and bad every single day and there's change every single day.
- 14   AJ:     Let's lighten this up a little bit.
- 15   RS:     Yeah.
- 16   AJ:     The L, the G, the B, and the T.
- 17   RS:     So, I identify as bisexual, I identify obviously as a trans person. I identify as a lesbian, especially  
18          early on. Yeah.
- 19   AJ:     What do you think the relationship is between the trans community and the LGB community?
- 20   RS:     A lot of the trans people that I know all say that the T is silent. It's not silent, we all know that. I  
21          think a lot of us . . .
- 22   AJ:     Some lady wrote a book called *The T is Not Silent*.
- 23   RS:     I felt like at Pride that there wasn't enough representation for the trans community there. I  
24          know that the Minnesota Transgender Health Coalition had a booth, but that was about it. That  
25          was my first Pride, which you were the grand marshal at.
- 26   AJ:     Oh, wow – that was your first Pride?
- 27   RS:     That was my first Pride.
- 28   AJ:     That was a little representation.
- 29   RS:     Well, yeah.
- 30   AJ:     A trans woman was the grand marshal.
- 31   RS:     Yeah, but I guess just walking . . .
- 32   AJ:     That was your first time going to Pride.
- 33   RS:     Yeah, my first time.

- 1 AJ: What did you think?
- 2 RS: I didn't even identify with the gay community at all. When I first . . . like before I started this, I  
3 didn't even approve of gay marriage. I have come so far with everything. I was raised by a  
4 Marine Corps drill sergeant and just in a really . . .
- 5 AJ: Have you ever served in the military?
- 6 RS: No, but with the marathons and the weight lifting and the discipline of being self-employed . . .
- 7 AJ: Oh, yeah, you were a macho person.
- 8 RS: Absolutely, I could have done that. But yeah, that whole thing has just been an incredible  
9 process. But, yeah – I used to be prejudiced. There always used to be all this stuff, that garbage  
10 like hate and prejudice that a lot of us are raised with. I think everyone is guilty of being  
11 prejudiced – most people are.
- 12 AJ: Absolutely, yeah.
- 13 RS: President Obama recently had a speech where it was about the Muslim population in America  
14 today and the way that they're being treated because of the terrorism and everything else. He  
15 had me in tears by the end of the conversation because what he was saying is what we wish for  
16 and that is just to be treated like anyone else, like a human being. I got it and it really struck  
17 home – that I have zero right to be prejudice against anybody. But I think for a lot of people to  
18 get to that point, especially so late in life, it takes a revelation kind of like mine to lift the black  
19 veil of racism and hate and everything else that we're exposed to in this world and to turn that  
20 around into love and acceptance and human rights.
- 21 AJ: So what I hear you saying is that your gender transition has opened your eyes to . . .
- 22 RS: My heart, everything.
- 23 AJ: Your heart to a whole range of other intersectional issues.
- 24 RS: The most beautiful people I have met, hands down, have been from this community. My  
25 friends, everybody – they're all part of this wonderful, wonderful LGBT community and just for  
26 that reason alone I'm so incredibly grateful. Number one, to know you – to have you here, but  
27 to be there with these people and be a part of their struggle and support one another, love  
28 another, that's all stuff that I think . . . those are the good things that life has to offer. Like  
29 many, being married for so long . . . so sheltered. This has really made me a much better quality  
30 person in so many way – in so many ways.
- 31 AJ: Wow, that is fascinating.
- 32 RS: But it's true. I'm able to love and I'm able to give, I want to give. Those were qualities I didn't  
33 have before. I think that a lot of us are close-minded and this transition has made me a very  
34 open-minded person just because it's so full of change. It was like when I first started to  
35 discover that I started to like men, it was like with everything else with this transition it's like,  
36 "You know, I'm going with this. I'm becoming myself."

- 1 AJ: Yeah.
- 2 RS: But to limit myself and say, "Absolutely not, I cannot like men." But then you are limiting  
3 yourself and I think too many people make that mistake in life – whether it be the way that they  
4 were raised, with the way the public television teaches them to hate or whatever. And with  
5 this, there's just been so many awesome changes in my life that even if I wasn't successful and I  
6 was struggling, my quality of life and my opinion has improved 100-fold because I love myself.  
7 And that's something that can't be understated, because to live life and not live it to the fullest .  
8 . . it's like I tell a lot of people, I said, "I'm going to come into heaven sliding in and giving the  
9 Lord a high five because I lived life to its max." Basically two different identities and two  
10 different genders and what a blessing – what a blessing it has been. It continues to be a  
11 blessing.
- 12 AJ: Wow. Do you still work out and . . .?
- 13 RS: No, which is strange because . . . I never wore a shirt in the summer, ever. I would go out and  
14 run, I was a marathon runner – never wore a shirt. Yeah, very proud of my body most of my life  
15 as far as the way I took care of myself. With this transition has come the dysphoria and the  
16 dysphoria is not being pleased with my body, which is new. Last summer I wasn't allowed to be  
17 in the sun, which I love the sun – I tan very well.
- 18 AJ: Oh, because of the estrogen.
- 19 RS: Couldn't do it because of the laser, which is necessary.
- 20 AJ: Oh, the laser, OK.
- 21 RS: Yup. Obviously I couldn't . . . I had to wear a shirt or a bra because . . . transitioning. So, yeah,  
22 all of that is new. At least for me, I don't want to work out because I want to let my body do the  
23 transition to the best of its ability. I don't want it repairing from a workout – so sleep, proper  
24 diet and making this my main focal . . . what I'm focusing on. I do see wearing a bikini hopefully  
25 after I have my top surgery done, being out there and being very prideful – and with that,  
26 hopefully loving my body a bit more. I definitely most likely will pick up some weights again  
27 someday in my life, but it took me five years to put all this muscle on and now I can't get it off  
28 fast enough. That's the one thing I've been trying to get over – so I don't want to life at all.
- 29 AJ: So, what do you think the agenda is for the trans community?
- 30 RS: I think education – educating the public, I think is the biggest thing. I think getting it into our  
31 schools for these kids that are going through this at a young age. I think it's really important to  
32 teach parents out there that just because your child is born with certain genitalia does not  
33 define their gender and to love their kids unconditionally. The reason that I feel so strongly  
34 about that is because I have lost so much. I'm inspired so much by today's younger generation.  
35 Being at the state capital and seeing these young kids stand up for their rights. So, education  
36 number one; number two, is just basic human rights – you know, being called the gender that  
37 you properly identified with, not being . . . this goes for gays, lesbians, anybody that doesn't fit  
38 the norm, there is all this . . . some of it is hate and some of it is just a lack of education, but it all  
39 boils down to just fundamental human rights – just being treated like anybody else and not

- 1           being a target for some people's hate. All those types of things, at least for me being born a  
2           white male and having all kinds of privilege I never realized I had until I did this and now it's not  
3           only being discriminated against as a woman but being discriminated against as a trans woman.
- 4   AJ:     Yes.
- 5   RS:     There is a lot of discrimination, which, again, has helped me open my eyes to not just the trans  
6           community but to the Black community, to the Mexican community, to the Muslim community,  
7           because it applies to them every bit as much as what I'm going through. All those people  
8           experience the hate, the racism. So, those two things, for me, are absolutely at the top of what I  
9           think is important to the trans community – education, number one and then just having some  
10          essential human rights. The bathroom issue is a great example – being allowed to use the lady's  
11          restroom without it being against the law, and it is in some states. South Dakota is trying to  
12          push something through where . . . and Texas I thought recently passed something where they  
13          want to inspect children's genitalia before they use the restroom, which is outrageous.
- 14   AJ:     Outrageous.
- 15   RS:     But it's all a lack of education.
- 16   AJ:     That sounds perverted, to me.
- 17   RS:     It is.
- 18   AJ:     Someone looking at a kid's genitals . . .
- 19   RS:     As a parent that would be absolutely unacceptable to me and I have two girls and two boys, and  
20          that would not be OK on any level. But this is all part of the fear that they're trying to put out  
21          there to the public – you don't want boys in the women's restroom, they don't acknowledge us  
22          as women. So, I consider that to be a fundamental human right – being able to use the ladies  
23          facility, because by going into the men's room not only am I outing myself, but now I'm putting  
24          myself at risk against a hate crime, which does exist. Just recently in my past week of dating, I  
25          was almost raped and that was the first time ever. I didn't know how to handle it.
- 26   AJ:     Oh, I'm so sorry.
- 27   RS:     Yeah, I find myself with a different level of vulnerability, obviously. For many of the cis women,  
28          regular women gender, a lot of them get . . . they obviously get it and they're telling me to kind  
29          of get on board and carry mace and make sure your girlfriends know where you're at. As  
30          somebody that could have been a bouncer at most bars two or three years ago, that  
31          vulnerability, for me, is brand new and so I guess I put myself in a situation that wasn't very safe  
32          and, as a result . . . yeah.
- 33   AJ:     How did you manage to get out of that situation?
- 34   RS:     Well, I ended the date with a kiss that turned into something more – a more passionate kiss, and  
35          then that just very quickly turned into something it never should have been. He had my dress  
36          up, he was pulling down my nylons and was going for my private stuff – all within seconds. It  
37          just happened – like bam, and I was like . . . “Oh my gosh.” Just shocked and then after that

- 1           experience I reflected on it, like I do everything else and – yeah, it was just . . . a light went on as  
2           far as this new-found vulnerability and everything.
- 3   AJ:     Got a lot more stuff to think about than you did three years ago.
- 4   RS:     Yeah, just something that just slapped me across the face and I just wasn't expecting – even  
5           though I hear about it on Facebook every day, about trans suicide, murders. Yeah, I don't think  
6           a lot of us think it will happen to us. Just today I got a message from somebody I don't know  
7           that says, "Be safe." I'm like, "Be safe? What do you mean? Do I have something to worry  
8           about?" Yeah, so there is . . . putting myself out there, both on Facebook and on these dating  
9           sites, is something that I've never seen as a vulnerability and it definitely is because not  
10          everybody embraces us.
- 11   AJ:     Right. Well, be safe, my dear. Be well, be happy. Thank you so much for this powerful  
12          interview and until we meet again.
- 13   RS:     Thank you. It's been an honor – thank you very much.