

Marcus Waterbury  
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins  
Interviewer

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

March 14, 2016



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.

Andrea Jenkins  
[jenki120@umn.edu](mailto:jenki120@umn.edu)  
(612) 625-4379

1 Andrea Jenkins -AJ  
 2 Marcus Waterbury -MW  
 3

4 AJ: All right, so . . . my name is Andrea Jenkins and I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral  
 5 History Project at the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota. Today is March 14,  
 6 2016, and I have the honor of sitting here chatting with Marcus Waterbury. We're in his  
 7 beautiful home in Minneapolis, in south Minneapolis. So, how you doing, Marcus?

8 MW: Fine, nervous.

9 AJ: Yeah, don't be nervous – don't be nervous. This is your story, your life, so you are the author of  
 10 this story. Marcus, can you just state your name for the camera and your gender identity, your  
 11 gender assigned at birth, and your preferred gender pronouns?

12 MW: OK. Marcus Waterbury. Gender is . . . I'm a transgender man, the longer I go from when I  
 13 transitioned, it's getting to be more just male. Not to hide anything, but just fitting in more  
 14 where I belong and less of an emphasis. And, I was assigned female at birth and transitioned at  
 15 40.

16 AJ: Oh, wow. OK.

17 MW: So, 12 years ago. What else did you want?

18 AJ: Yeah, just your gender pronouns which I'm pretty sure I know. But, you know, let's state it for  
 19 everybody else.

20 MW: My gender pronouns are he and him.

21 AJ: He and him.

22 MW: Very much of a 50-year old, not a 22-year old.

23 AJ: That was going to be my comment, Marcus, is that since I've been doing this project I have come  
 24 across many, many, many different gender identities as well as various pronouns that people  
 25 like to be called. So, you can never assume – you've got to ask. Just let me know if you need to  
 26 stop and get a drink or something.

27 MW: OK.

28 AJ: So, Marcus, just to get us going, man, what is your earliest memory in life?

29 MW: Oooh.

30 AJ: And, please don't try to wrack your brain thinking about your gender identity, but if it is related  
 31 to that, that's perfectly fine. I'm just saying . . . I just want to know what's the earliest thing you  
 32 remember.

33 MW: I'm not real good at childhood memories, probably . . . I remember falling off a swing when I was  
 34 little and mostly stories. I remember our house in Golden Valley and playing baseball and going  
 35 off the end of the driveway to break my arm on my bike. All the pleasant ones.

- 1     AJ:     Yeah, those really indelible memories, huh?
- 2     MW:     Yeah.
- 3     AJ:     Yeah. So, where did you grow up?
- 4     MW:     We lived a couple different places, but I grew up here in the Twin Cities. We moved to Golden
- 5             Valley when I was three and we were there and then moved over by Lake Harriet when I was in
- 6             3<sup>rd</sup> grade – right before 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
- 7     AJ:     Lake Harriet in south Minneapolis?
- 8     MW:     Yes.
- 9     AJ:     Cool. And so, what elementary school did you go to? Tell me about elementary school.
- 10    MW:     I went to Noble for two years in Golden Valley; I don't even remember where I went to
- 11             kindergarten. We had a lot of . . . dad worked and mom worked and so we had child care – that
- 12             was not one of my mom's strong points . . . finding good child care was not one of my mother's
- 13             strong points, so they were pretty traumatic different experiences. I went to Noble and then we
- 14             moved to Lake Harriet and I went to Barton for two years and it was too homogeneous, I just did
- 15             not like it at all. And so, I transferred to Field and went to Field for two years. And, that was
- 16             good. My memories of Field were good.
- 17    AJ:     Really? Field School has some pretty sort of historically recognized efforts around dealing with .
- 18             . . . I want to say immigration and racial issues and . . .
- 19    MW:     It was significantly more diverse, which was way more comfortable for me. So, the idea of . . .
- 20             Barton I hated; Noble was fine. I didn't know any better, but Barton – they wanted everybody
- 21             to be the same and everybody . . . if you didn't do everything the way everybody else did, it was
- 22             not going to fly.
- 23    AJ:     It felt very uncomfortable to you.
- 24    MW:     I did not like that at all.
- 25    AJ:     Do you think it had something to do with maybe your gender identity when you think back
- 26             about it?
- 27    MW:     I'm sure it was a combination . . . oh, yeah, the gender piece was a piece of it. I remember in
- 28             one of those . . . 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade, which was the two grades I was there, they had one of these
- 29             pioneer days or something and I wanted to dress up as a boy and nobody else would do it.
- 30             Three or four girls were like, "Oh, yeah, yeah – that would be great." And then they didn't do it.
- 31    AJ:     Yeah.
- 32    MW:     But my mom made me wear a dress or a skirt to school until 5<sup>th</sup> grade. There were no dress
- 33             codes but she just felt that that was the proper thing – yeah. Most of my friends didn't, but
- 34             mom felt that that was important – the proper way to get dressed for school.
- 35    AJ:     What was your thoughts on that?

- 1 MW: I think you can guess, but suffice to say . . .
- 2 AJ: You didn't rebel?
- 3 MW: Rebellion wasn't really an option at our house. There was just too much going on. My dad had
- 4 been really, really sick when I was baby and he was supposed to die and so there was just a lot
- 5 of dynamics that weren't your sort of normal family dynamics. The focus of the family was don't
- 6 upset the apple cart because dad will die. So, you don't upset the apple cart.
- 7 AJ: Right. Wear your skirt to school and . . .
- 8 MW: Yeah. Did I say, "No, I don't want to." Yeah. Did I try to . . . but there wasn't . . . and we didn't
- 9 have any money, so it wasn't like . . . all the clothes were made or hand-me-down. We didn't go
- 10 shopping for clothes, that was completely out of the question – not even a possibility.
- 11 AJ: Wow.
- 12 MW: So, it wasn't like I could go pick something else out of the closet or go shopping for some pants
- 13 that would fit the bill. It was, "Here's what we have, OK."
- 14 AJ: And these are your options.
- 15 MW: Yeah. I was pretty happy when it wasn't polyester skirts.
- 16 AJ: Oh, wow. OK.
- 17 MW: Mom sewed most everything. She taught us to sew and we sewed a bunch of our own clothes
- 18 until . . . it wasn't until probably 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade . . . or 5<sup>th</sup>, that we started to have enough money
- 19 that we could go to whatever the discount . . . we probably went to Goodwill once in a while,
- 20 but even that was sort of a stretch.
- 21 AJ: Wow. Do you have siblings, Marcus?
- 22 MW: I have a little sister.
- 23 AJ: OK.
- 24 MW: And we're pretty polar opposite.
- 25 AJ: Yeah.
- 26 MW: She was a ballerina, very graceful, very much of a girl.
- 27 AJ: Wow.
- 28 MW: When we moved over by Lake Harriet, she had an all pink room – pink and flowers and wanted
- 29 to play the flute and be a ballerina.
- 30 AJ: You wanted no part of that.
- 31 MW: I wanted no part of that. I wanted to play sports. I was probably more of a typical big brother
- 32 than . . . I was the one who would harass her about her dolls or . . .

- 1     AJ:     That's interesting.
- 2     MW:    Yeah, so I think some of my stuff was gender, but some of it was just that I don't . . . I don't
- 3            know how much of it is gender, I just didn't need to fit in. She did, she fit in very well. We're
- 4            two years apart. She lives out in DC with her family and raises money.
- 5     AJ:     Do you guys . . . are you connected with your little sister?
- 6     MW:    Yeah, I mean, we talk but we are much better suited to be in different parts of the country.
- 7     AJ:     OK.
- 8     MW:    Half a country away seems to be about right. A day, two-day visit is about right. We get to
- 9            three or four and . . . you know.
- 10    AJ:     Things start getting a little testy.
- 11    MW:    Yeah. The family vacations were . . . there was a demarcation in the seats and it wasn't long
- 12            before mom figured out that a cooler was about the right size – the big coolers in-between the
- 13            two of us.
- 14    AJ:     Wow. So, when you were at . . . Barton, was it?
- 15    MW:    Yeah.
- 16    AJ:     Did you feel like you were being bullied or teased?
- 17    MW:    I was always teased. I was the kid . . . probably Noble was the least and Barton was the worst. I
- 18            was the sucker that they put a "Kick me" sign on.
- 19    AJ:     Oh, wow.
- 20    MW:    That was a regular occurrence. I think some of that is just because I don't get social cues, so I
- 21            was pretty lost. And then you put the gender stuff on top of it and I was really . . . like didn't
- 22            know which way was up and whether people were laughing at me or with me or whatever.
- 23            Luckily, I was tough enough, like at Field . . . I did get in a few fights, but that seemed to fix that
- 24            problem. I never started them, but I didn't shy away from them.
- 25    AJ:     You didn't back down.
- 26    MW:    Yeah, I didn't back down – no. I learned pretty quickly that was a bad idea but where it was less
- 27            on that front and more on sort of the social . . . just social bullying front, which was more at
- 28            Barton, that was hard because I just was a complete sucker for it.
- 29    AJ:     Yeah, it happens. I think that's one of the reasons why it came up as a part of the questions . . .
- 30            just to kind of get a sense do trans-identified people, as children, experience more sort-of
- 31            harassment or feelings about a message and you kind of said you did. But, I'm glad to hear that
- 32            things got better at Field.
- 33    MW:    Well, they did. My challenge . . . they did, a little bit – yeah. I mean, it was much more diverse
- 34            so I didn't have to look and be like everybody else.

- 1 AJ: Where did you go to high school?
- 2 MW: I went to Bryant Junior High and then Minneapolis Central.
- 3 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 4 MW: For three years and then finished the curriculum there and my mom wouldn't let me go to
- 5 college early. At that time, the only school in the Twin Cities that had classes I hadn't taken was
- 6 SPA. All the other private schools . . .
- 7 AJ: OK, St. Paul Academy?
- 8 MW: St. Paul Academy. All the other private schools didn't have any more classes than Central did, so
- 9 that didn't do any good. I actually ended up going to Exeter where there really was quite a bit
- 10 that I hadn't taken.
- 11 AJ: Wow.
- 12 MW: And that was fabulous.
- 13 AJ: And that's in . . . on the east coast?
- 14 MW: Yeah, it's in New Hampshire.
- 15 AJ: New Hampshire – yes.
- 16 MW: But, they bullied kids there. I wasn't the subject of it because it was very . . . (1) it was
- 17 reasonably diverse, not like Central but they went to a lot of trouble to be diverse. But kids
- 18 were bullied who weren't very smart. Everything else kind of didn't matter – gay, lesbian, color
- 19 of your skin, where you were from. Many, many of the kids were not from the U.S. and so there
- 20 were a lot of accents – none of that mattered. If you weren't smart enough to get the
- 21 conversation, it was not pretty.
- 22 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 23 MW: Because the kids were really smart and there would be all sorts of esoteric conversations and
- 24 humor and things like that. Somebody who couldn't keep up, I wouldn't have . . .
- 25 AJ: Just got pushed to the side, huh?
- 26 MW: The boys, there was a lot of harassment, but I wasn't in a boy's dorm. The boy's dorms were
- 27 pretty brutal.
- 28 AJ: Wow.
- 29 MW: They were not a pretty scene, but I think they were an equal opportunity . . . I didn't get the
- 30 impression that they picked on one more than the other.
- 31 AJ: When did you first realize that the gender you were assigned at birth was not the gender . . .
- 32 your true gender identity?
- 33 MW: Well, I know my mom has told me that I asked to be a boy and she told me I couldn't when I was
- 34 really little – so, probably three or four or something like that. Then I remember through

- 1 elementary and early junior high, just really wanting to be a boy and having a lot of trauma  
2 around getting my period. I'd always try to do sports with boys and make sure I measured up,  
3 but after that I sort of . . . I must have buried it because I sort of figured that that wasn't going to  
4 happen at some point in elementary school or something. I completely buried it.
- 5 AJ: Right, it just seems like an impossible dream.
- 6 MW: Yes. But, it was really buried. It wasn't sort of lingering there, that I can't do it – it stopped  
7 being.
- 8 AJ: Just stopped.
- 9 MW: Yes. And then . . . but I did do a lot of things where I was making sure that I was as good as the  
10 guys or better. So, working at a hardware store and doing set work and building and things.
- 11 AJ: Set design – like . . .
- 12 MW: No, building. So, I was a master carpenter for summer stock theatre in college.
- 13 AJ: So, for theatre – right.
- 14 MW: Yeah, for theatre – not the design part though, the actual building part.
- 15 AJ: The building part of the set, OK. All right. So, yeah, that's incredible.
- 16 MW: Yeah. Suzan-Lori Parks was a year ahead of me at Mount Holyoke.
- 17 AJ: Is that right?
- 18 MW: Yeah.
- 19 AJ: She's a pretty significant voice in American theatre.
- 20 MW: So, it was cool . . . I didn't do much alongside her but there was a lot of overlap and stuff. The . .  
21 . yeah, so I did that and then it was . . . when I started dating women, figuring that out seemed  
22 to be a good thing. And so that sort of . . .
- 23 AJ: You say that kind of casually. "When I started to date women . . ." That was not necessarily a . .  
24 .
- 25 MW: Casual thing.
- 26 AJ: Yeah.
- 27 MW: No, I got involved with my roommate at Exeter, who was sort of my first love and we dated  
28 completely . . . well, we thought, completely hidden.
- 29 AJ: Nothing is ever really completely hidden, Marcus.
- 30 MW: No, no, no – we found out later that that was very much not the case as I ran into somebody  
31 who was on her freshman floor in college and they all said, "Oh, yeah, we all looked up to you."
- 32 AJ: Oh, wow.



- 1 MW: So, that seemed to make things a little bit not as urgent, I think, being able to have those  
2 relationships. When I finished college, I came out to my parents. I figured it was better to wait  
3 until they wrote the last check.
- 4 AJ: Right – good idea. Even though, knowing your parents . . . I know your parents and I think you  
5 would have been able to finish college had you decided to tell them ahead of time. But, maybe  
6 I’m wrong. You know them much better than I do.
- 7 MW: I think the people who knew my parents from . . . whatever, 50 years ago or 40 years ago, a lot  
8 of them were really surprised I told them.
- 9 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 10 MW: That they have some pretty strong opinions on a number of things – things like divorce, which  
11 they are perfectly happy to tell me how they feel about and it’s not nice. So, just because it  
12 affects their kid doesn’t mean that they’re nice about it.
- 13 AJ: Wow.
- 14 MW: And they were both reasonably, my dad especially, reasonably active in the Republican party  
15 and had grown up a Southern Baptist. So, there were lots of reasons to not necessarily . . .
- 16 AJ: Come out.
- 17 MW: Yeah. But, I came out to them and moved to Boston a week later. I figured that was safe. If it  
18 went poorly I was going to be on the other coast and . . . we were not a close family. Everybody  
19 talks about going to school and being homesick . . . I went to Exeter . . . it wasn’t a big deal.  
20 There was one phone for our whole dorm and I don’t . . . once in a while I’d wait in line to use it,  
21 but probably on two hands could count the total times in a year that I did.
- 22 AJ: Wow.
- 23 MW: So, it was not something – and probably half of those were logistics.
- 24 AJ: “Mom, pick me up from the airport at . . .”
- 25 MW: Yeah, yeah. Or, “What flight am I on?” Or, “When are you coming?” Whatever. So, that part . .  
26 . the idea that I would pick up and move to Boston if it didn’t go well. It did, I left them with a  
27 bunch of books. It wasn’t until my late 30s, after a few failed relationships where I figured out it  
28 had to partly be my fault, and that I really needed to look at what was going on. I was doing the  
29 women’s social and I had the whole issue of transgender and how that fit into it really made me  
30 have to sort of have to look at that question. There were . . . and I think now, a long time later,  
31 some of the decisions I would keep the same, but some of them I would widely change. But,  
32 just the whole conversation was around . . . I wasn’t that comfortable with it. So, I was your  
33 typical sort of person who, when you’re uncomfortable and you’re scared, you push away.
- 34 AJ: Right.
- 35 MW: And, that kind of forced me to say, “Well, why does this matter so much to me?” And, looking  
36 at that piece, why does it matter, made me sort of say, “OK, yeah, it matters.”

- 1     AJ:     It matters – because it does.
- 2     MW:     It does matter, but I do think that that’s how . . . that’s certainly how I did and I think it’s not  
3             uncommon for people when something is really scary, to push it away.
- 4     AJ:     Yeah, I don’t think that’s uncommon at all. In fact, I think when something that scary, speaking  
5             from experience, I know people push it away quite frequently.
- 6     MW:     Yeah. And I was pushed on it and, at the time, I was with Jacqueline and she was very helpful in  
7             that piece of really pushing me on why . . . why do you care so much? Why is this so important  
8             to you? Once I put the pieces together, then it was sort of . . . then it was easy. It was like, “OK,  
9             this fits,” and then just went forward. There wasn’t a lot of . . . I had seen so many people in the  
10            closet as gay and lesbian and how much pain that caused, mostly to them, that it wasn’t a hard .  
11            . .
- 12    AJ:     Nobody else knows because you didn’t come out yet.
- 13    MW:     So, I figured it out and I went . . . I was like, “I have to tell my parents.” And Jacqueline was like,  
14             “Do you think you could wait a week?” “No.”
- 15    AJ:     Why? Why did she want to wait a week?
- 16    MW:     Oh, she just . . . I don’t know. I mean, I think a lot of it was her stuff. I think . . . I don’t know. It  
17             would be total conjecture.
- 18    AJ:     I mean, it doesn’t matter . . .
- 19    MW:     It doesn’t really matter. They were . . . my dad was so . . . he knew I had something to say and  
20             he was so afraid that I was going to say I didn’t want to be in the business anymore that when I  
21             said I was transgender, they were like, “Oh, that’s good.”
- 22    AJ:     Phew.
- 23    MW:     Exactly.
- 24    AJ:     “Oh, just that.”
- 25    MW:     “It’s just that.” So, I was lucky in that way and I was also very lucky – one of my classmates from  
26             college who I had done some stuff with, Christian fellowship and a bible study and trying to  
27             figure out who I was and be OK with who I thought I was but who I was then is being a lesbian,  
28             and that person, it was a pretty small group of us that had decided to have a more liberal Bible  
29             study and a number of us had come out as lesbian – like there were eight of us and six of us  
30             came out.
- 31    AJ:     Wow.
- 32    MW:     But, one of those people had transitioned a few years before I did and it was somebody who I  
33             had sort of stayed in touch with. He had been the best friend of my first wife, so we weren’t  
34             that close, but I had realized that he had transitioned so I was able to reach out to him. It was  
35             Justin Tanis, it is Justin Tanis, who has also written on transgender in religion, that was his  
36             dissertation. And, I was able to go stay with him for a couple of nights and just sort of

1 understand his process. We used a lot of the connections that we had made with the gay and  
 2 lesbian community to meet other folks.

3 AJ: OK. So, Justin . . . how do you spell his name?

4 MW: Justin . . .

5 AJ: I mean Tanis.

6 MW: T-a-n-i-s, I believe.

7 AJ: T-a-n-i-s. OK>

8 MW: Yeah, I can show you his book.

9 AJ: That would be great. So, was Justin the first transgender person you met?

10 MW: No, I had known a number of people in the Twin Cities.

11 AJ: OK.

12 MW: I probably knew you before that. In fact, I'm sure I did because you had come to my women's  
 13 social.

14 AJ: Multiple times.

15 MW: Yeah. So, no, I knew a number of people. There weren't that many trans men that I knew and  
 16 that's still a struggle and I don't have a good answer. I would love somebody to have a good  
 17 answer because we are so invisible, whether we want to be or not. I can't . . . as a lesbian, I  
 18 could put a picture up in my office or talk about the person I was with and that would out me  
 19 without clubbing the other person over the head or making any assumptions about where the  
 20 other person stood on the issue. It's really hard as a trans person to do that.

21 AJ: Yeah. You look pretty much like a white guy walking down the street, Marcus. I'm just going to  
 22 say.

23 MW: Well, that part was hard too.

24 AJ: So, no one can visually tell.

25 MW: No, although on the phone I still sound like a woman apparently. That happened today. I was  
 26 not very polite with the person on the other end of the phone.

27 AJ: Really? Wow. Is that right? How does that affect you?

28 MW: It unnerves me. It bothers me. I think my name is fairly masculine.

29 AJ: It's masculine.

30 MW: And a lot of times it's Mr. or it has my gender someplace on it. Sometimes it feels almost as if  
 31 somebody looks by it. Now, Anita will give me exercises that, if I did, I probably would work  
 32 better.

- 1 AJ: Who is Anita?
- 2 MW: Anita Kozan.
- 3 AJ: Anita Kozan, a voice coach.
- 4 MW: A voice coach, yeah.
- 5 AJ: So, you worked with Anita.
- 6 MW: I worked with Anita before I ever knew I was trans – before I sort of re-discovered it, because I
- 7 lost my voice and I was sent to her.
- 8 AJ: Really? That’s interesting – you were sent to the Twin Cities leading transgender voice coach.
- 9 MW: But she wasn’t at the time.
- 10 AJ: And you weren’t identified as transgender at that time.
- 11 MW: I identified as lesbian and, at the time, she was just in the very early stages of figuring out
- 12 coming out as bi. She was not out as bi. Yeah, so we got to be friends. She got my voice back,
- 13 which was amazing. I was on some meds because of my allergies that had really hurt my vocal
- 14 chords and my throat so I had completely . . . and, it was early in the Lynx tenure so shouting at
- 15 the Lynx game on top of that was not helping anything.
- 16 AJ: So, you’re a basketball fan?
- 17 MW: I am, I am. I played basketball sort-of OK in high school. I was one of the white kids on the
- 18 team.
- 19 AJ: You’re an athlete – you went to practice every day.
- 20 MW: Oh, yeah – three sports in high school.
- 21 AJ: Really? What sports?
- 22 MW: Swimming and badminton, which at that time was a women’s varsity sport in Minnesota. Now, I
- 23 think it’s mixed but it’s not your backyard game, which most people . . .
- 24 AJ: Yes, it gets pretty competitive.
- 25 MW: Most people, once they see it outside America, everywhere else it’s really a very serious sport.
- 26 It was a lot of fun.
- 27 AJ: No, it’s quick reaction, very quick reaction. There’s strategy, there’s physicality, there’s chance
- 28 for injury even – pretty significant.
- 29 MW: Oh yeah – oh yeah.
- 30 AJ: So, wow – I just learned something. I did not know you were a young athlete.
- 31 MW: I did. I figured out how to do it. I’m not widely gifted in any of them, but enough hard work and
- 32 just a little bit of luck.

- 1 AJ: It's all about desire, I think. Do you want to do this or not?
- 2 MW: I was the one who could read everything that was going on and I got more steals than anybody.
- 3 I think I made one layup. That was a form of bullying – they called me, “lead booty” because I
- 4 couldn't get down the court very fast.
- 5 AJ: Oh, wow. OK.
- 6 MW: They could all run . . . I'd be a guard and pick off the ball and both teams would be at the other
- 7 basket by the time I got there.
- 8 AJ: Funny.
- 9 MW: But, we got the ball.
- 10 AJ: So, when you identified as lesbian, did you identify as butch?
- 11 MW: Much more butch.
- 12 AJ: OK.
- 13 MW: There was no risk of me being a femme lesbian.
- 14 AJ: Did you use that terminology or you just kind of . . . ?
- 15 MW: I didn't, and part of it was the time – and I went to a women's college. So, that whole concept
- 16 of gender roles was sort of not in vogue. The idea was to break down . . . this was the 1980s,
- 17 early 1980s, and it was sort of break down all the gender roles – not just in lesbian relationships,
- 18 but in all the relationships. I found it interesting that we had a professor who was quite good in
- 19 women's studies at the time. She talked about what she thought were the nature versus
- 20 nurture of gender. I don't know what your experience has been, but mine has been a lot of
- 21 them are sort of polar opposite – like the things that she thought would be taught were much
- 22 more of a natural; and things that people thought were just natural, I think, were much more
- 23 taught.
- 24 AJ: Learned.
- 25 MW: Societal.
- 26 AJ: I think that some of that is definitely a part of my background and experience. So, just . . . I
- 27 guess, can you just talk about . . . and I think you have talked about this a little bit, but what are
- 28 some of the challenges that you have faced since you've decided to express your true gender
- 29 identity?
- 30 MW: I struggle, personally, with just how to go through the world sometimes. The whole power
- 31 dynamic is so subtle but is really important. I'm going through thinking I'm doing things the
- 32 same way I've always done, but they're being heard and responded to totally differently.
- 33 People are saying, “Well, you told us what to do.” It's like, “I asked a question.” And they said,
- 34 “Well, you just seem like you know what you want to do and you don't want any input.” It's
- 35 like, “Well, which part of asking a question didn't you get?” I think . . . I don't know, it just feels
- 36 like as a woman in order to have any space at the table, I had to be much more forceful and

- 1 even with a lot less of that as a guy, people just feel like I'm just barging ahead. That isn't what  
 2 I'm intending. I struggle a lot with the whole community question because I think as a woman I  
 3 thought when I transitioned that well, I'll just go find a bunch of guys as friends and hang out.  
 4 But, there's not a lot of community with guys.
- 5 AJ: True.
- 6 MW: They sort of get together to drink beer or hang out, but there just isn't . . .
- 7 AJ: Watch sports or play sports or something.
- 8 MW: Yeah. A lot of competition, a lot of jockeying but there isn't just sort of a comfortable  
 9 community and I've found that a lot of the women in my life, there's just a whole different  
 10 reaction. So, even as a lesbian, I could show up with another woman and people would think I  
 11 was just out with a friend. Now, if I show up with a woman, everybody assumes that there is  
 12 something else going on. I don't . . . I mean, I don't know that for sure, it's just the looks and  
 13 stuff.
- 14 AJ: But, you feel it.
- 15 MW: Yeah. So, that's really hard because it's fun to just to have a bunch of people to hang out with.  
 16 So, I'm still struggling with all that. I was really surprised at how big a difference the surgery  
 17 made. It was really . . . the first set of surgeries was kind of what I needed to do legally with  
 18 chest and a total hysterectomy. But, the genital reconstruction was really enormous as far as  
 19 feeling inline, a sense of alignment, which I was not expecting at all. I did it because I was going  
 20 to date and I didn't really want to explain things. It was better to explain that I'm little than it  
 21 was to explain totally different anatomy.
- 22 AJ: Right, exactly.
- 23 MW: And, it's not like I've not been completely open with everybody long before that came up, but I  
 24 think I was not expecting at all the sense of alignment and the sense of things sort of coming  
 25 together with that.
- 26 AJ: So, you feel . . . wow, thank you for sharing that. I mean, that's literally one of my questions and  
 27 I didn't even have to ask it – it works out sometimes that way. So, you really feel alignment with  
 28 men, you identified as a lesbian, you sort of came of age during second-wave sort of feminism –  
 29 you know, abolish gender roles and these kinds of things, do you identify . . . do you classify  
 30 yourself as a feminist today?
- 31 MW: Oh, yeah – absolutely. It's much harder to do as a guy, so I'm still figuring that piece out. I think  
 32 the more comfortable I am, and the surgery had a lot to do with it as far as safety and other  
 33 things, the more comfortable I am standing up to guys and saying, "You didn't really mean that,  
 34 did you?"
- 35 AJ: Right.
- 36 MW: Or, "That's not very appropriate," or that sort of thing.
- 37 AJ: Sure.

- 1 MW: I'm blown away by how sexist guys are and how demeaning they are to women.
- 2 AJ: Even with your own experience with womanhood, you see it at a different level – because  
3 you're on the inside now.
- 4 MW: Yeah, it's really hard sometimes. You know that whole space, there's just a lot of treating  
5 women like objects and a lot of sort of degrading or not being terribly respectful and that's  
6 really hard – partly because I haven't really figured out how to respond in a way that's  
7 constructive.
- 8 AJ: Yes.
- 9 MW: Sometimes it's guys who just don't know any better. I am learning that a lot of it is just how  
10 they see the world is so different that they don't understand why women are doing whatever it  
11 is they're doing.
- 12 AJ: Yeah, they've been socialized in such a way that they think women want that.
- 13 MW: You know, I think it's just a different view of the world because I've also experienced, as a guy,  
14 women just expecting me to provide. As a woman, with another woman, it was much more of a  
15 partnership and I really appreciated that. Getting that, as a guy, seems to be really hard – just  
16 this incredible sense . . . even with a number of my friends like, "Well, no, that's the guy's job."
- 17 AJ: Right.
- 18 MW: I don't have any intention of whatever it is. I've struggled with that – how do . . . that doesn't  
19 feel comfortable to me. I'm happy mowing the lawn, I'm happy shoveling the walk, I'm happy  
20 building and things like that. But, I'm not real happy if somebody is like, "I'm never going to do  
21 that," because they're a woman. That piece I haven't run into, but the idea that I'm somehow  
22 supposed to . . . if I'm with a woman that I'm supposed to provide for them, whether they work  
23 or not, I don't do well. I would have been perfectly happy if it was a joint activity to raise kids,  
24 but just in a couple with nothing else going on.
- 25 AJ: Sure.
- 26 MW: But, that seems to be very much of a societal thing and a lot of the guys wouldn't dream of not  
27 doing that or not feeling guilty about that. It's just kind of interesting.
- 28 AJ: That is, it's fascinating in fact. What have been some of the positive aspects of expressing your  
29 truest gender identity?
- 30 MW: Just being comfortable – like not being . . . just a sense of alignment and a sense of being who  
31 I'm supposed to be and not . . . and understanding why things didn't make sense. Being a lot  
32 more comfortable. I'm perfectly comfortable in a suit and tie, which most guys are running for  
33 the thing . . .
- 34 AJ: Right.
- 35 MW: But, I'm just so happy to put on a tie instead of nylons. I'll wear a tie all day.
- 36 AJ: Oh, wow. That is interesting.

- 1 MW: So, yeah. To be able to have a beard is really cool.
- 2 AJ: Yeah, it looks great too.
- 3 MW: Well, that's cool too.
- 4 AJ: Did you ever think that that would happen when you were 15 years old?
- 5 MW: No, no. But, it was one of those things that's like, "Oh, wow." When I was younger watching my  
6 dad shave and wanting to be able to shave and not being able to. My dad never grew a beard, I  
7 don't even know why. We asked him at one point, but I always thought, "Why doesn't he grow  
8 a beard?" Because he can.
- 9 AJ: Yeah, it's just not his thing.
- 10 MW: No, he's a Marine . . . well, he wasn't a Marine, he was Army, but he's got that Eagle Scout piece  
11 to him.
- 12 AJ: Sure. Oh, boy.
- 13 MW: But, just feeling connected and feeling in the right place is well worth it.
- 14 AJ: That's awesome. So, it sounds like your relationship with your family is . . . I mean, I know you  
15 said it's sort of a distant and not a close, close relationship, but does that level of closeness still  
16 exist?
- 17 MW: Yeah. I mean, I talk to my parents a fair amount but we don't get into any sort of real intimate  
18 subjects very often. That's fine, that's what I'm comfortable with, that's what they're  
19 comfortable with.
- 20 AJ: Right.
- 21 MW: My mom is pretty close to my sister but between all of us, I don't think there's a lot . . . that's  
22 just now part of the picture. They're very supportive, my whole family – my whole extended  
23 family, has been very supportive. My parents are really awesome in the sense that they figured  
24 out early on when I was out as a lesbian that a lot of things that people said that were really  
25 bad, didn't have to do with me – they had to do with whoever is talking.
- 26 AJ: Oh, good.
- 27 MW: So, when I came out as trans they told me right away, "Well, if anybody says anything bad to  
28 you or has a problem with you, we're not going to tell you, because it isn't about you."
- 29 AJ: Right.
- 30 MW: And, it doesn't do any good to tell you. We'll deal with it and we'll talk to them if somebody is  
31 unhappy or angry or anything. I had a great aunt who we all loved, but it was very much of a . . .  
32 in a religious area that . . . I don't remember if it was Southern Baptist, but she didn't like the  
33 fact that I was a lesbian. Dad was doing everything – he was helping her with all her bills, he  
34 was doing her taxes and everything, and she just wouldn't leave the subject of me being with a



- 1 woman alone, and so he just walked away from it. He just said, "You go deal with it because if  
2 you can't accept my kid for who they are, then I don't have time to do this."
- 3 AJ: Wow, that's a powerful story.
- 4 MW: Yeah.
- 5 AJ: Did she ever come around?
- 6 MW: I don't know, I don't even know if she's still alive. I asked my dad if she was still alive, he didn't  
7 know.
- 8 AJ: Oh, boy. OK.
- 9 MW: But, he was . . . I'm quite sure she's probably not. If she is, she'd be over 100 now. And she was  
10 a spry person, she could have been, but they've been very supportive in that way. So, that piece  
11 has been unexpected but really wonderful. I would say to any parent the best thing you can do  
12 for your kid is just believe in who they are. If you're going to protect your kid, that's how you  
13 protect them.
- 14 AJ: Wow. Marcus, talk about this . . . this is not a question that I typically ask, but you made me  
15 think about it. Just, what . . . if you can describe what it's like to move from one gender and be  
16 totally engrained and socialized and then to move to this new gender. Everybody I'm  
17 interviewing experiences this, but I haven't really asked this question in this way.
- 18 MW: Yeah. It's a good question and I think it's different . . . I really was. I was out there pounding the  
19 pavement for lesbian rights and feminist rights and just very much in that space. And,  
20 sometimes it feels sort of like I'm an alien or something – just so different and so not . . . sort of  
21 not one of the changes any of us ever expect really. It wasn't in my list of things I expected to  
22 do before I died.
- 23 AJ: Right.
- 24 MW: And, it really has been eye-opening in that the work I was doing pounding the pavement and the  
25 feminist work was . . . it reaffirmed that none of that was sort of made up, that everything that  
26 we were talking about – you know, we talked about . . . I remember talking about going to the  
27 Minneapolis Club with another friend who is also a woman, and this was a while ago. They sat  
28 us toward the front of the restaurant and didn't serve us very quickly.
- 29 AJ: Right.
- 30 MW: Just this idea that we were just women so we didn't have jobs to get back to.
- 31 AJ: Right. And, you didn't deserve to be in the . . .
- 32 MW: In the serious part. Luckily, I was on a committee at that point and brought that up quickly and  
33 found other people that had the same experience and we were able to make some real changes  
34 there. But, I think in life, a lot of times, you go to a restaurant and how many times they look at  
35 me and they never look at the other person.
- 36 AJ: Right.

- 1 MW: How many times they give me the check – even when we’ve indicated to the server that they  
2 should be split or some other arrangement. How often they look to me to make the decision  
3 and . . . I don’t even remember . . . going shopping with a friend for something for the house and  
4 they’ll look to me. Even after I’ve said it’s for them, I’m just here as a support.
- 5 AJ: Right.
- 6 MW: I don’t know how we fix it other than just be aware of it and sort of pound . . . you know.
- 7 AJ: Yeah, there’s a lot of inherent sexism and patriarchy that is deeply engrained in our culture and  
8 society.
- 9 MW: Yeah. So, seeing all that is a shift. I mean just . . . that’s probably the biggest thing, just the  
10 personal interactions and what that’s like. In a way, I think I was more confident as a woman  
11 because I didn’t know that . . . I didn’t totally fit in my body, but I had memorized many of the  
12 social cues so I could move smoothly and I was much more comfortable speaking than most  
13 women. I think some of that is that I’m a guy and so I wasn’t hesitant, I wasn’t looking for some  
14 guy’s approval – that whole message that I was supposed to wait for a guy’s approval didn’t click  
15 with me. And so, it was easier to have a voice and be out there then it is . . . now, I find myself  
16 sometimes a little more hesitant – and a lot more careful about trying to make sure that the  
17 women that I’m with are noticed.
- 18 AJ: Right.
- 19 MW: And not take advantage of where I’m sitting, but that’s really hard because so much of it is  
20 subtle.
- 21 AJ: Right.
- 22 MW: And unless I’m paying complete attention, it’s really hard to see sometimes.
- 23 AJ: So, now you’re learning all these sort of new social cues as a white male in our society.
- 24 MW: Hopefully.
- 25 AJ: I mean slowly, you’ve got to pick up on them eventually.
- 26 MW: Yeah, I’m slowing learning them. I’m still trying to figure out things like when to open doors and  
27 when not to open doors and all that stuff. I’m still pretty much of a neophyte on that.
- 28 AJ: Wow. You talked about medical intervention, where did you have your surgery?
- 29 MW: Here I had . . . I really wanted to be able to do as much in the Twin Cities because I feel like  
30 because I am in a position where I’ve got some more money. We’ve been very active, so we  
31 have some noticeability, that I knew there were a lot of trans guys and trans women, but  
32 especially trans guys with chest surgery and how important that was. Many of them, there were  
33 one or two surgeons here that were pretty clumsy and otherwise guys were going away. So, we  
34 had a couple of family friends that are fairly well known in the plastic surgery world and went to  
35 them. One of them put me off on his partner and I just said . . . you know. The other one was  
36 happy to do the surgery and I learned a lot about plastic surgeons and where they were coming

- 1 from because both of these folks I trust inherently – you know, very much. She talked about the  
 2 horror stories in their professional world of doing surgery on trans women and then having  
 3 them figure out that that wasn't where they wanted to be and suing the surgeon and how  
 4 unqualified she felt to know . . . she could do the surgery really well, but she had no  
 5 qualifications to say whether that was an appropriate surgery for that person.
- 6 AJ: OK.
- 7 MW: So, she does it now and is very available, has done a lot of work, but she does it all through Deb  
 8 Thorpe who was the OB person. But, it has given access to lots of people to a very, very fine  
 9 surgeon who really just does cleft lips and chests.
- 10 AJ: Oh, wow. Because you . . .
- 11 MW: Because I pushed it . . .
- 12 AJ: . . . decided to stay here and re-educated her.
- 13 MW: Yeah.
- 14 AJ: She took a chance and . . .
- 15 MW: She took a chance. It was really funny . . . plastic surgeons are artists.
- 16 AJ: Yes.
- 17 MW: And so, she looked through . . . this was 2006, and so she was like, "OK, what chest?" So, she  
 18 was looking through all the magazines of all the movie stars and she's like, "OK, Brad Pitt."
- 19 AJ: So, you've got a Brad Pitt chest?
- 20 MW: That's what she was aiming for. So, she's got the magazine out and she's like, "Well, can you  
 21 come in the night before the surgery?" She's drawing all over my chest to figure out how she  
 22 wanted it to look so she didn't have to do that . . . she could take her time.
- 23 AJ: In the morning, right.
- 24 MW: So, that was kind of fun. She had it all in whatever marker.
- 25 AJ: Marker, yeah.
- 26 MW: You know, your Sharpie – she had the Sharpie out and she's doing all this.
- 27 AJ: Oh, boy.
- 28 MW: So, that was kind of cool and she's learned stuff since.
- 29 AJ: Were you pleased with it?
- 30 MW: I am pleased with it. I suspect the work she does now is phenomenal so I was the first one . . .  
 31 she usually was doing . . .
- 32 AJ: Do you have a significant scar?

- 1 MW: I don't think so. I notice it, other people don't notice it as much.
- 2 AJ: OK, because I've seen a lot of trans men and the scar is extremely prominent – there's no way
- 3 that no one notices it.
- 4 MW: I think if somebody looks . . . I've been really blessed. After . . . again, I think it's alignment, I
- 5 think my body was just so happy to have the genital surgery and it all fit – the hair growth and
- 6 everything took off, and so I actually have quite a bit of hair growth around the scar so it's not as
- 7 prominent. But, if someone were looking . . . you know, went like this, they would . . . but, no,
- 8 I'm quite happy with it. I knew there was some risk, so I knew that I wasn't probably going to
- 9 get the same job as I did if I went to one of the top surgeons someplace else. But, I also didn't . .
- 10 . I went under once and had both the OB and the chest all at once.
- 11 AJ: Oh, really?
- 12 MW: Yeah, because I figured the hardest part was coming out of it. And both the surgeons were
- 13 thrilled because there was something to distract me from the pain they caused.
- 14 AJ: OK, the other pain. So, you couldn't decide which pain was worse because everything was
- 15 hurting.
- 16 MW: And then the genital stuff I went to Dr. Meltzer in Scottsdale.
- 17 AJ: OK. Toby Meltzer.
- 18 MW: Toby Meltzer, and he did a phenomenal job. It was five surgeries, one of which was a revision,
- 19 but the rest were all to get me . . . and one was because I'm not the skinniest kid on the block so
- 20 they did something that was like . . . I guess it's the same thing they do for tummy tuck, so
- 21 everything lifts it up and it's more visual. That was close to the most painful one.
- 22 AJ: Yeah, I've heard tummy tucks are really, really painful.
- 23 MW: Yeah, I was not expecting that.
- 24 AJ: Yeah, it sounds so cute – tummy tuck.
- 25 MW: Yeah, yeah. Well, apparently, they take the band out that is what kind of holds the baby up,
- 26 that is just extra skin if you don't have a baby to hold up.
- 27 AJ: Right, yeah.
- 28 MW: But that was five surgeries over the course of a year.
- 29 AJ: Boy, wow.
- 30 MW: But his team was magnificent and . . .
- 31 AJ: And that was just for the bottom, the genital surgery.
- 32 MW: Yes.
- 33 AJ: What was the cost on that?

- 1 MW: I think it ended up being around . . . almost all of my surgery was covered by insurance.
- 2 AJ: OK – awesome.
- 3 MW: I think the total was probably around \$50,000. I did have some lypo because they don't shape
- 4 women's thighs the same as men's.
- 5 AJ: Right.
- 6 MW: So, there's some issues with things hitting things.
- 7 AJ: Yeah – yeah.
- 8 MW: So, I had that corrected along the way and that was out-of-pocket for me. It was \$1,000 or . . . a
- 9 couple grand or something. But, almost everything else was mostly covered. He makes you pay
- 10 up front, which I was able to do – thankfully, but got reimbursed relatively quickly.
- 11 AJ: OK, wow. That's great.
- 12 MW: Yeah.
- 13 AJ: And, you had that all sort of worked out prior to make sure the insurance company was going to
- 14 reimburse you before you dished out the cash.
- 15 MW: Yeah. I was blessed in that for a lot of different reasons, I was in a position where if I needed to,
- 16 I could pay for it. So, I was able to go into more with, "Well, I'll fight the insurance company and
- 17 get whatever I can out of them," than I was, "If they aren't going to cover it, I'm not going to do
- 18 it."
- 19 AJ: Got it.
- 20 MW: And, when I did the surgery in 2006, which was completely the wrong way to do it except that it
- 21 worked.
- 22 AJ: OK.
- 23 MW: Which was, I didn't go in asking a lot of questions. I went to both doctors and said, "In as much
- 24 as you can, please don't go into a lot of detail that this is gender re-assignment," because at that
- 25 point most of the insurance wasn't going to cover it, but I also recognized that they have
- 26 licenses and rules and I said, "Don't do anything that . . . I don't know what your standards are,
- 27 so follow your standards. Within that, if you can . . ."
- 28 AJ: Well, plus you want to get the reimbursements so you're going to have to tell them something.
- 29 MW: Yeah, yeah. But, I got all the reimbursements so I give my employer a lot of credit for that.
- 30 AJ: That's amazing – that's really, really cool.
- 31 MW: But Toby does, I do think that they have different payment plans and all sorts of things like that.
- 32 And there are ways that people could do it so it would cost less than the way I did it. So, some
- 33 of the people end up figuring out some sort of rooming situation, they won't stay down there as
- 34 long. I was able to stay in a hotel room and have family or friends be with me.

- 1 AJ: Sure. So, the five surgeries . . . you already said this, they happened over the course of a year.
- 2 MW: It was over a year, yes. Most of them . . . yeah, they were pretty much . . . he's got an order that
- 3 has to do with . . . it's not like pick and choose.
- 4 AJ: Right, you don't get a menu – first I'm going to do this, then next visit we're going to do this.
- 5 MW: Yes, so that it has the highest probability. Because going from female to male is more
- 6 complicated with things like urinary stuff and so they have to do it . . . and I really wanted to be
- 7 able to urinate out the penis.
- 8 AJ: Your penis, yeah.
- 9 MW: I haven't spent . . . anyway, I haven't spent the time to practice so that I feel comfortable doing
- 10 this in public, but . . . people don't realize that.
- 11 AJ: You need to do it couple times a day though, don't you – at least.
- 12 MW: Oh, yeah, but it takes being someplace where you can do it and get it all over yourself to figure
- 13 out how to do it without it . . .
- 14 AJ: Without getting it all over yourself. OK.
- 15 MW: And, that's the piece I haven't done. I mean, little kids learn it when they're little – most boys
- 16 learn it when they're this high and there's somebody to clean it up after them.
- 17 AJ: Right. So, you're still working that little piece out.
- 18 MW: Or not, I've just sort of resigned.
- 19 AJ: Just have a seat and just keep it clean.
- 20 MW: Yeah, keep it clean, have a seat – yeah. Every so often I get motivated but not very much.
- 21 AJ: Yeah.
- 22 MW: Wow.
- 23 AJ: I did not know that that was an issue. I never knew that.
- 24 MW: Well, you have to choose. They don't . . . going from female to male, they don't have . . . you
- 25 have to choose between size or feeling – you either get erotic feeling or you get size. I choose
- 26 the erotic feeling, which is not much size, which means it takes more training to . . . I'm sure had
- 27 I gone for size, it wouldn't have been an issue.
- 28 AJ: Got it, got it. OK.
- 29 MW: Yeah, they haven't figured out how to get it so that you can actually get good feeling and size –
- 30 because size, they take skin from someplace else.
- 31 AJ: A graft.

1 MW: Yeah, and they haven't figured out how to get that skin to have . . . it has feeling, but it doesn't  
2 have erotic feeling.

3 AJ: Got it, yeah.

4 MW: Someday they'll figure it out.

5 AJ: So, you opted for erotic feeling?

6 MW: Yes.

7 AJ: Which was going to be one of my questions is that do you have . . . are you able to have . . . I  
8 don't know, I guess, orgasmic sex?

9 MW: Absolutely. Still learning more about it, but yes, I am.

10 AJ: That's wonderful.

11 MW: It's small enough that I end up using some sort of prosthetic dildo for the other person's  
12 pleasure, but for my pleasure I do just fine.

13 AJ: That's good.

14 MW: The women haven't minded not having something so large that they've got to figure out what to  
15 do with it.

16 AJ: All right. So, the women, the women – the women. Dating, love, relationships – what's going  
17 on with you? Who do you date?

18 MW: I date women.

19 AJ: You date women.

20 MW: Yeah, that hasn't changed.

21 AJ: Are you in a relationship right now? You've loved women all your life and that is still . . . it's  
22 probably because you were internally a heterosexual guy.

23 MW: I was always a straight guy. Yeah, I'm learning about the whole thing – about dating straight  
24 women, because they are not the same as lesbians. It's a very different dynamic.

25 AJ: Different expectations.

26 MW: Very different expectations. I haven't figured it . . . I'm still figuring it out. I don't have any  
27 answers and . . .

28 AJ: Right, yeah – well.

29 MW: But I seem to do pretty well at it, so I can't . . . they seem to . . . it's a lot more of the social stuff  
30 and how you work together on everything else. I have not had any bedroom issues – at all.

31 AJ: That's good news. The hard part of a relationship is when you're in the world, right? How do  
32 you deal with that stuff?

- 1 MW: Yeah, I think the women . . . it took a little bit for them to sort of . . . the women that I have had  
2 more intimate . . . I've had lots of dates, and those all seemed to go well. The response was  
3 always people were so surprised that I was so easy to talk to, because apparently guys aren't  
4 easy to talk to. I didn't know that, but apparently, they just kind of show up and go, "Uggg,  
5 hmm." They don't ask interesting questions or listen or engage, I guess. I don't know. But, the  
6 ones that I've been more intimate with I think it's fair to say that there was a little bit of them  
7 kind of adjusting to it not looking quite the same. But, once they did, I think they were very  
8 happy with everything.
- 9 AJ: The outcomes, huh?
- 10 MW: The outcomes.
- 11 AJ: Oh, boy. Wow. Are you in a relationship right now?
- 12 MW: Sort of.
- 13 AJ: OK, OK. It's complicated.
- 14 MW: It's complicated – life is complicated.
- 15 AJ: Life is complicated. But, it's really just wonderful to know that trans people, transgender  
16 people, are being loved and being able to return love and share love.
- 17 MW: Yeah. I would say that one of the things I've discovered probably was a big issue before I  
18 transitioned was that other people, people I was with, loved my body and I didn't.
- 19 AJ: Right.
- 20 MW: Which created a lot of trouble in bed.
- 21 AJ: Yeah.
- 22 MW: And I think had a lot to do with my earlier relationships not working was that they were in love  
23 with somebody that I didn't . . . I couldn't stand really. And, so now I think . . . the challenge of  
24 the relationships is more of just learning what it's like to be a guy and just everything else I  
25 brought into it that doesn't have anything to do with being transgender. So, just all sorts of  
26 family stuff and how do we go through the world and who are we.
- 27 AJ: Yeah.
- 28 MW: I'm finally at the point where that's the question instead of, "Am I really me showing up?" So, I  
29 would say it is the difference – somebody who is transgender will . . . I just, from my own  
30 experience, find it really hard unless somebody is more in the middle. But, if they really are in  
31 the wrong body how anybody can really show up and be present in a sexual relationship until  
32 they've transitioned. So, it's not only can you but you kind of have to, I think, kind of transition  
33 to really be excited and present.
- 34 AJ: That's interesting – excited and present . . . for the person sexually?
- 35 MW: Yeah – for myself and for that person. Both people kind of have to be there and be present.



- 1 AJ: Absolutely. You talked about who performed sort of the medical aspects of your transition, but  
2 there's also sort of a psychological transition as well as social transition, which is a whole other  
3 thing. Did you go to programs at the University of Minnesota at all?
- 4 MW: No.
- 5 AJ: No, how did you approach that, did you go to a private therapist?
- 6 MW: Yeah, I went to a private therapist, so once I figured it out I asked around and in the T-men  
7 group, at least at that point, the U . . . there were a lot of problems with the U as far as trans  
8 men go. Trans women loved it, it was their savior, it was the best thing. But, the trans men  
9 repeatedly had all sorts of trouble getting letters and being dragged out for a long time.
- 10 AJ: Right.
- 11 MW: So, I decided I didn't want to do that. I found a therapist, Diane . . . I can't even remember her  
12 last name. I should. I went to her and it was sort of like I showed up and we talked and she  
13 said, "Well, you need to be in therapy for X period of time." I showed up . . . I think by the third  
14 time she said, "Well, haven't I given you that letter yet?" I think I had done so much of my own  
15 work by the time I got there . . .
- 16 AJ: Yeah, you were ready to go.
- 17 MW: I was ready to go. I was 40, or 39, so I didn't have the issues of child birth or somehow taking  
18 away my ability to propagate, so that wasn't an issue. Since then, most of the therapy . . . I  
19 found a men's group with this wonderful man, Sigurd Hoppe, who has since retired.
- 20 AJ: Can you say his first name again?
- 21 MW: Sigurd or Zigurd . . . Sigurd.
- 22 AJ: OK. How do you think he spells . . . ?
- 23 MW: S-i-g . . .
- 24 AJ: S-i-g . . .
- 25 MW: Maybe e-r-d, a-r-d. German.
- 26 AJ: OK, and his last name is?
- 27 MW: Hoppe. H-o-p-p-e.
- 28 AJ: OK, all right. Thank you. I'm sorry for interrupting but yeah, that name threw me off a little bit.
- 29 MW: OK, yeah. Depending on whether you say it . . . he's German, he was a German immigrant to the  
30 U.S.
- 31 AJ: But you go to his group?
- 32 MW: I went to his group and he retired last November. At 83, he thought it was time to retire.
- 33 AJ: OK.

- 1 MW: But, he was just super sharp. He'd be sort of half dozing in and he'd be like, "Boom," and ask
- 2 the perfect question.
- 3 AJ: Right.
- 4 MW: So, I started going to the group probably in 2005 or 2006, really, to kind of have a community
- 5 where I could be safe asking questions.
- 6 AJ: Sure.
- 7 MW: That wasn't just . . . I'd been to a number of trans things and met a lot of people through the
- 8 activist work and stuff, but it was all a trans perspective. So, I wanted to get guy's perspectives
- 9 and have them say, "Well, that's not really how it works," or, "What about this?"
- 10 AJ: So, this was not a trans man group? This was a men's group.
- 11 MW: This was a men's group.
- 12 AJ: A men's group.
- 13 MW: Yeah, at the time I joined I think there were eight or nine of us and there were two guys that
- 14 were gay and then myself, and everybody else was straight. It was the whole gamut of truck
- 15 driver to noted surgeon.
- 16 AJ: That is awesome.
- 17 MW: So, they've been really helpful. I still, every Wednesday, go and sometimes they'll say, "Well,
- 18 that's what it's all about," and other times they say, "No, really, you can do this," or, "You
- 19 shouldn't do that," or whatever. So, it's been really helpful.
- 20 AJ: And they know your transgender status?
- 21 MW: Yes.
- 22 AJ: Nice, I love it – I love that. That is so cool.
- 23 MW: Yeah. And I've done a couple of other things where there were more intensive sessions and
- 24 every time I've insisted that people be aware that I'm trans, that I don't want to be stealth.
- 25 Most of it is selfish, because I don't want to have to change my story, I don't want to have to
- 26 edit what I'm talking about.
- 27 AJ: Right, yeah.
- 28 MW: And, I would – if I'm in the closet . . .
- 29 AJ: Yeah. Holyoke is just not going to really . . .
- 30 MW: Yeah. Or, if I want to talk about sometime when I was identified and lived as a woman, I don't
- 31 want to have to try to re-gigger that story so that it fits. But, all the rest of it – the other
- 32 intensive work and what not has been with just straight therapists, some of whom have since
- 33 then acquired a number of trans patients.
- 34 AJ: OK. Wow.

- 1 MW: But, I haven't . . . it was just more about the social pieces and that part of it. When I
- 2 transitioned, they did a big . . . my parents threw a big party for me.
- 3 AJ: Oh, really?
- 4 MW: At the Minneapolis Club and I think we had a few hundred people there.
- 5 AJ: Sort of like a coming out party.
- 6 MW: It was a 40<sup>th</sup> birthday/coming out party.
- 7 AJ: Oh, cool.
- 8 MW: So, that was pretty cool. Along the way, and it's been so long that I don't do this as much
- 9 anymore because it doesn't come up as much, but along the way I just kept trying to look for
- 10 opportunities where I had some privilege to bring up the question and say, "OK, how are we
- 11 going to handle this?" Or, "How do we make it safe?" Or, that sort of thing.
- 12 AJ: Have you been involved with any LGBT organizations?
- 13 MW: Besides NCTE?
- 14 AJ: Well, NCTE. What is that?
- 15 MW: So, I was on the board of the National Center for Transgender Equality.
- 16 AJ: All right, gotcha.
- 17 MW: Someday they'll get you.
- 18 AJ: One of these days, they're trying to reel me in, Marcus – they really are.
- 19 MW: You'd be a great addition to that.
- 20 AJ: They're in DC, right?
- 21 MW: They're in DC. They're the national organization – THE national organization that does policy
- 22 work for transgender folks. They are not a lobbyist organization, they really work with the
- 23 administration and in all other areas of government where policies are being made. Sometimes
- 24 there are policies that then go to Congress to be turned into a law, but a lot of times they're just
- 25 straight policies. So, they have a lot to do with Social Security gender changing, driver's license
- 26 policy, policies for the veterans for the service, for the government employees.
- 27 AJ: Immigration documents.
- 28 MW: Immigration documents. When TSA was . . . somewhere along the line here with TSA they . . .
- 29 oh, when they started to have those big new scanner things where you'd go in and do this stuff .
- 30 . .
- 31 AJ: Body scanners, yeah.
- 32 MW: And everybody, "You were going to see too much." So, we worked closely with TSA and we
- 33 collected every sort of prosthetic that a trans person would use – anything anybody could find,

1           and worked with TSA so they had people in there looking at what all these looked like and  
2           helping train them. Anytime there was a trans event someplace that we knew about where  
3           people would be flying in, go to that TSA and train them.

4   AJ:     Wow.

5   MW:    So, if there was a conference, like the Philly Health Conference, we'd go to the Philly airport  
6           right before the conference and train the TSA agents on here is what these things look like, here  
7           is what you can do. A lot about if you need to be patted down, who does a trans person . . .

8   AJ:     Feel most comfortable with.

9   MW:    Most comfortable with, but is TSA OK with that.

10   AJ:    Right.

11   MW:    Because TSA has their own hang-ups. And the piece that we weren't so successful at, and I  
12           haven't checked it lately, but at least through about a year, year and a half ago, is you  
13           technically can't be trans and work as a TSA employee.

14   AJ:     What?

15   MW:    Which was a big issue, but there's some bizarre something somewhere . . . oh, I know what it  
16           was. They were arguing back to the pat down that they needed every agent to be able to do pat  
17           downs and if they didn't know what gender the person was, they couldn't do . . . like, they didn't  
18           know . . .

19   AJ:     But they know people's gender.

20   MW:    So, the camera should swing around now and see the look of disbelief.

21   AJ:     Yeah . . . are you kidding me? Oh, man.

22   MW:    Yes, because when people come through and need to be patted down they ask for a woman or a  
23           man. And, if it's a transgender employee, which one are they? So that the traveling public is  
24           comfortable. One time, though, I had a lot of fun. I was in there and I needed to be patted down  
25           – and they never asked me. So, I'm there pretty . . . long before beard, long before I was on  
26           hormones, so I'm pretty asexual – butch, but asexual. And nobody asked me. So, they're like,  
27           "Female pat down." The agent comes and looks at me and then you hear, "Male pat down."  
28           The agent comes and looks at me and then you hear, "Female pat down." And then this butch  
29           agent comes and she's just like, "OK."

30   AJ:     "Whatever, let's do this. Get your ass on the plane."

31   MW:    But, I had plenty of time and I was just being amused. The other thing I like to do is in a group of  
32           guys that are . . . your basic white arrogant yuppie guys. Before . . . oh, I know, we were talking  
33           about schools and it's really easy with sports to get them to talk about where they went to  
34           school. And then the question is, "Well, where did you go to school?" And then I say, "Mount  
35           Holyoke." And one of them says, "Well, isn't that a women's school?" And I say, "Yes," and  
36           then I leave.

- 1 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 2 MW: And then they are just . . . they can't figure it out. They're looking at me, "Je-je-je-je . . ." Look
- 3 at me, "Je-je-je-je . . ." And I just . . . it's so much fun.
- 4 AJ: Wow, that's a good one, Marcus.
- 5 MW: Just leave them very, very unsettled.
- 6 AJ: Where do you think the transgender community is going to be in 50 years?
- 7 MW: You know, I think it's so interesting where our comfort zone is. We are very comfortable as a
- 8 society. I don't know about the rest of the world, but certainly here, with gender and with
- 9 people fitting into a gender and following the gender norm. I see the transgender acceptance
- 10 actually being way ahead of gay and lesbian in the not too distant future – not necessarily the
- 11 gender queer because that leaves people sort of unsettled and just like what I said, people don't
- 12 like to be unsettled.
- 13 AJ: Yes.
- 14 MW: And so, I think, reasonably quickly the idea that somebody is whatever gender, people are going
- 15 to be fine with because they would much rather see me as a guy than in a more asexual space.
- 16 And they'd much rather see me as a guy with a woman than they would see me as a woman
- 17 with a woman.
- 18 AJ: Right.
- 19 MW: I think the challenge is standing up for ourselves. I think it's us talking for ourselves, I think it's
- 20 not letting all the different organizations that are primarily gay and lesbian talk for us, and that
- 21 really is difficult for me to see how much of what's going on is not being led by trans folks.
- 22 AJ: Yeah.
- 23 MW: We had our voice taken away from us by the medical community and a whole bunch of people
- 24 who acted like we didn't know how to handle our own bodies.
- 25 AJ: Right.
- 26 MW: But now we've almost given it over to the gay and lesbian community to talk for us. Instead of
- 27 saying, "No, if you haven't been doing trans programming, before you go out and raise money in
- 28 our name, we need to be part of this and we need to be leading this."
- 29 AJ: I love that. So, let me ask you this controversial last question. Do you think the L, the G, and the
- 30 B should be included with the T?
- 31 MW: No. I don't think so. I do know the history of it though, because I asked this question. A
- 32 number of the people on the NCTE board were big studies. Marissa, especially, is a history
- 33 professor and had studied civil rights, a lot. And, she talked about how . . . and Meredith Bacon
- 34 also was a professor and studied civil rights, there were two things that were clear to me. One is
- 35 that . . . the biggest one is the trans group is not big enough by itself.

- 1 AJ: Right, at least prior to . . . people weren't coming out.
- 2 MW: It's not clear whether it still is. There's a critical mass you need and the gay and lesbian has it –  
3 not hugely, they sort of just have it. It's somewhere in the 10% range. So, I think . . . I don't  
4 know that there's anybody that's suggesting 10% is transgender.
- 5 AJ: I don't think so. I don't know that for sure, but I would be deeply shocked if somebody thought  
6 that 10% of the world's population or the United States population, or even Minneapolis'  
7 population was transgender identified.
- 8 MW: It's a pretty big number we would need to have, as a group, even with . . . then you have  
9 supporters and that's all sort of built in, but if you don't have a certain size of group, you can't  
10 move policy. And so that is two things – one it's this idea that we're going to pass a policy and  
11 we'll add trans later, it won't get added. Because we're not big enough and historically we  
12 haven't added to civil rights legislation. So, back in the 1970s and early 1980s, the transgender  
13 activists realized that they needed to align with a group. And, the choices were sort of more of  
14 a feminist group, the ERA and things like that, or the gay/lesbian group. I think at that point you  
15 had a fair number of trans women who were with women and the lesbians group was not very  
16 strong. So, when I came out in 1986, the lesbian was in a similar space to where trans was when  
17 I came out in 2004. So, I watched that part of the community build and gain some power, but I  
18 think it was an easier place. I think a lot more of the women who were very powerful in the  
19 women's rights movement, didn't like the idea of including transgender, which was really trans  
20 women at that point.
- 21 AJ: Right.
- 22 MW: And so, they took the easier of the two routes. I actually think it's much more of a gender issue,  
23 which would put it with feminism and women's rights, which are really gender rights.
- 24 AJ: Right, exactly.
- 25 MW: Feminism really isn't about women, it's about all of us.
- 26 AJ: Absolutely, absolutely.
- 27 MW: So, I think the transgender is really just an extension of all of that. And, our struggles come out  
28 of the fact that, as a culture and as a community, we have gender roles. If we had no gender  
29 roles and no gender expectations, being transgender wouldn't be a big deal.
- 30 AJ: Right.
- 31 MW: So, I think that that would be a more appropriate place and I don't . . . I feel like we're very  
32 welcome, this is going to tick . . . who knows who watches this anyway, that we're . . . until there  
33 was money and there was no more marriage, we weren't that interesting. But, as soon as there  
34 is no more marriage to raise money and all of a sudden, these organizations don't know what  
35 they're going to do with themselves and how they're going to survive, we look like a pretty good  
36 target.
- 37 AJ: Yeah.

- 1 MW: So, I don't really feel loved by the gay and lesbian community. And, since I identify as straight, I
- 2 feel regularly misunderstood. A lot of people don't understand I'm not gay, I'm not . . .
- 3 AJ: Yeah, bi.
- 4 MW: Yeah, I'm just an ordinary old straight guy. As much as that sort of horrifies me, the idea that I
- 5 would be an ordinary straight guy was . . .
- 6 AJ: Because that is not who you were.
- 7 MW: That is not who I was, that's not who I was. But, I've learned that it's a really bad idea for me to
- 8 say, "I never," or, "I couldn't be caught dead," because usually . . . I said I'd never go to a prep
- 9 school and I'd never go to a women's college, so it wasn't . . .
- 10 AJ: Yeah, you kind of failed at those too.
- 11 MW: Yeah.
- 12 AJ: Well, Marcus – wow. Thank you for your insights, thank you for your openness, thank you for
- 13 your honesty, and thank you for your time that you have shared with me today - but, more
- 14 importantly, committed to this movement overall. I just want to say thank you.
- 15 MW: Well, thank you. Thank you for doing this work and documenting this.
- 16 AJ: Absolutely.
- 17 MW: I think it will be huge for a lot of people.
- 18 AJ: Yeah.
- 19 MW: And, just kind of giving our community some . . . just some sense of being and mattering and . . .
- 20 AJ: And some visibility.
- 21 MW: Visibility.
- 22 AJ: Yeah. Well, until we meet again, my friend.
- 23 MW: Yes, thank you.