

Amanda Beech
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins
Interviewer

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

March 31, 2017



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

The Transgender Oral History Project will collect up to 400 hours of oral histories involving 200 to 300 individuals over the next three years. Major efforts will be the recruitment of individuals of all ages and experiences, and documenting the work of The Program in Human Sexuality. This project will be led by Andrea Jenkins, poet, writer, and trans-activist. Andrea brings years of experience working in government, non-profits and LGBT organizations. If you are interested in being involved in this exciting project, please contact Andrea.

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1 Andrea Jenkins -AJ

2 Amanda Beech -AB

3

4 AJ: So, hello. My name is Andrea Jenkins I am the oral historian for the Transgender Oral History
5 Project at the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota Libraries. Today is March 31, 2017. And
6 I am in the very small town of Ellendale - Ellendale, Minnesota. And I am here today with the lovely
7 Amanda Beech. Amanda, how are you doing today?

8 AB: I'm doing just fine. Now that we got together - I was getting anxious. I thought you were a
9 figment of my imagination.

10 AJ: We finally got together. Oh - well, I'm real!

11 AB: And now you're - not a science fiction.

12 AJ: I'm very real. Amanda, can you state your name and spell your name so we make sure we get
13 the correct spelling?

14 AB: Amanda - A-M-A-N-D-A. Beech, B-E-E-C-H.

15 AJ: Can you tell me your gender identity?

16 AB: I'm a woman for forty-eight years, actually - I think longer than that, and I think forever, because
17 I never thought of a change, I just thought - a little correction. That was all I thought of it as, and I am
18 absolutely, sort of on a personal level, horrified by the word trans and this - I'm not across anything, I'm
19 just -

20 AJ: Correction, yeah. You're a woman.

21 AB: Exactly. And this is - I have so enjoyed being me for the last, I think it's forty-eight years. And I
22 have no connection with whoever was before. I knew him, I liked him.

23 AJ: He was a nice guy. So you were assigned male at birth. You grew up as a male.

24 AB: Yes, yes yes, yes. I was a very lovely nice one. I liked him.

25 AJ: Yeah? You have vague memories of him?

26 AB: They aren't so vague, actually, they're just very nice. And because I have a sister, who I think
27 really liked him better than me, has a tendency - sometimes to be a little bit solicitous of me. Not
28 consciously, and not purposely, but I pick up those things.

29 AJ: Solicitous, you say. Okay. Interesting.

30 AB: Uh huh. Yeah. I think I did this too with my mother, who...let us say, she didn't live long enough
31 that we got to know each other as I became, as opposed to what I was. And she was a lovely lady. I still -
32 doesn't everybody miss their mother?

33 AJ: Absolutely.

34 AB: I do. And - so there were some differences there, and I think my only - if I have any regrets, it's

- 1 the people who I caused pain to, not for myself, but I don't like to have - to think that people question
2 themselves because of something I did, had to do, or became. It's not fair.
- 3 AJ: Let me - let me ask you this. What is your earliest memory in life?
- 4 AB: Early memories of myself?
- 5 AJ: Your earliest memory of yourself. Yeah.
- 6 AB: Of myself - I remember a long time. My memories, I think, go back to being two or three.
- 7 AJ: Really.
- 8 AB: And - I don't know how clear or consistent they were, but I have a lot of them. I liked being little,
9 and then I start - I can't say I was pampered. People paid attention to me. I was a beautiful child, and
10 well-behaved, and the things that you like about a child. And that was nice. Then I got a little older and I
11 didn't - all of my expressions were not as you might have expected or wanted, and therefore - there
12 wasn't exactly a shunning, but there was awareness of...where is this going, I think that was about what
13 it was. But I was always treated well, and father of course would have been very disappointed, father
14 was a farmer, a big, good-looking, hard physical-working person. He should have had somebody who
15 would go out and roughhouse in the fields, and fight over traffic with him, and I think...
- 16 AJ: And that just wasn't you. You did not -
- 17 AB: Not at all. Not at all, unfortunately. And - unfortunately for him. And therefore, I think we do like
18 to please those people who are around us, and...I guess I was a little sorry I never could please him, and
19 so I think...
- 20 AJ: Did you try? Or you just didn't even try?
- 21 AB: He? No. He didn't cry. I cry.
- 22 AJ: No, I said - did you try? To try to be this guy...
- 23 AB: Did I try? Yes. I tried to be something...I tried very hard. I didn't do it well. But, you see, I had
24 salvation at about nine or - eight or nine years old, my aunt and uncle who had one child who was
25 eighteen going away to nurses training, they had a prosperous little store and creamery about seven
26 miles from town called Bath. Bath, Minnesota. And when they went there, I believe it was probably
27 about 1934 and it was a bright spot in the middle of everything - in those days, this was before the war,
28 they had free shows and everything. This was of course to bring business to this single store that was
29 out there. People would line up -
- 30 AJ: Before which war? You said before the war.
- 31 AB: Before second world war. Not the first world war. This was the second world war. That one I
32 remember.
- 33 AJ: Okay.
- 34 AB: But they had free shows, all the small towns around here did, to draw in what business they
35 could get. And they did that at Bath and my Aunt Hannah [6:39] had a - next to the store she put up

1 another building and it was simply called the Chicken Shack. She had a special kind of chicken - it wasn't
2 fried chicken, but it was a type of chicken that she cooked especially in this little - and people came from
3 all over, out into the - as that country, and under the oak trees, whatever those trees were, I think they
4 were oaks, they would take it out on the picnic tables and they would eat there. There was a small place
5 they could come in and dine, or there were people who were in suspicious relationships who would
6 come in and get their chicken and french fries and coleslaw and whatever they were having and take it
7 out to their car.

8 AJ: Why do you say suspicious relationships? What does that mean?

9 AB: I think there was probably a little bit of dalliances going on even then.

10 AJ: Some adultery, or...?

11 AB: I think a little adultery. But then, you see, I was very young. I was very young at that time, so I
12 sort of - you take this out to so-and-so, they're parked out here.

13 AJ: Right.

14 AB: Okay. See who's with Harry today.

15 AJ: Oh, wow!

16 AB: So we observed these kinds of thing, or, who was with Reuben? Was Mary not with - anyway, it
17 was a kind of way of knowing things that were none of anybody's business. But sort of being in the small
18 town atmosphere, it was - I hate to think gossip, that sounds so mean. It's news.

19 AJ: Yeah. It's news.

20 AB: Fake news? No. It's real news!

21 AJ: It's real news! Where did you grow up?

22 AB: Well, I still went to school here, but I lived out there from the time I was seven to about
23 fourteen.

24 AJ: Oh - where?

25 AB: Bath. My aunt and uncle, that little town called Bath.

26 AJ: Oh, Bath! Okay.

27 AB: But I did go to school in Ellendale. The high school and everything was here at that time.

28 AJ: Right. So you grew up in Ellendale all your life.

29 AB: Yes. Except for my seven-year excursion to Bath, so I guess I have to include that. Yeah. And I
30 went to school here. I was not a particularly good student. I was good enough.

31 AJ: And you said people sort of picked up on your peculiar expressions. When you say that, do you
32 think people recognized that you were not quite like other boys?

33 AB: Oh, I think that was a well-known fact. But there was something about - there were few families

- 1 and we were all related. There actually - there was the noticing that somebody - I don't know what this
2 line means - implying the feminine, but never the effeminate. I don't know what that means, but I think I
3 like the line.
- 4 AJ: That's interesting, though. Because that's - there's a huge distinction. Effeminate is a man who
5 expresses feminine behavior, but feminine is a woman. And that was your expression - feminine, not
6 effeminate.
- 7 AB: I somehow, when I heard the expression, though not even technically understanding what it
8 means...I identify with that line. I like that. I - always being a - people in this town, we were all kind of
9 related, and I went to school with a lot of people. We knew each other as much - going to school as with
10 family. And we were...I don't know, we did the things that people do. We had dates and we did things
11 and we smoked cigarettes and we went ice skating here and there and...I don't know. We did what we
12 did, and no athlete - I did not participate in that. But something that was a little bit extraordinary in
13 1940s - I was a cheerleader.
- 14 AJ: Really!
- 15 AB: Yes. I had -
- 16 AJ: That is kind of extraordinary!
- 17 AB: Well, I think I was probably - I was a year younger than everybody else, because I - and my sister
18 also, her birthday is in December. Mine is January 1st, and being a small town, I think they needed
19 enrollment. We both started school -
- 20 AJ: Early.
- 21 AB: So even now, the people who are younger than I am - we're finally the same age. I don't know
22 what that means exactly. But - I don't know, we were just all kinds of friends, and there wasn't really...
- 23 AJ: So when you became a cheerleader, how did people respond to that?
- 24 AB: Well, that was okay, there had been in the past five years, I think, a couple of boy cheerleaders.
25 And that was, like, in the late thirties and early forties. And there was a young lady - her name was
26 Kathleen Lonergan - she and I, I guess, were about the same size and in the same class, but they used us
27 as a pair. First of all, for the afternoon games, for this kind of thing, and then we got a little older, and I
28 don't know if we were better, but we would also go to the night games and cheer.
- 29 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 30 AB: Which were then in Blooming Prairie, Bloomington, thereabouts, and that was fine, and then I
31 got to be...I don't know if that was appointed. I don't know how that happened to me, or she and I. We
32 were considered very cute together, whatever that means.
- 33 AJ: Okay.
- 34 AB: And we were friends. And...well, of course, you know, people want to concoct romances. I've
35 had a lot of people I liked very much that I wasn't romantic or interested in, other than just that they
36 were there and were good company. And that was up until I was about fourteen, I think. I was in ninth

- 1 grade, which is junior high, isn't it?
- 2 AJ: Mhm.
- 3 AB: And other than that, there were dates, and there were dances, and things like that. And people -
4 I don't know, at least on my part, it certainly wasn't romantic, but there was some people...that we liked
5 each other. And therefore we did what boys and girls do together, other than...It was dancing and
6 partying, and...do you know, that in those days, I don't know if it existed as it does today, people were
7 sexually active at about nine, but people were not...in my age group, were not...sexually active. They
8 thought about it. But I don't think they really did anything.
- 9 AJ: So you weren't.
- 10 AB: I wasn't, no.
- 11 AJ: Until...college, or high school?
- 12 AB: Oh, yes...
- 13 AJ: Marriage?
- 14 AB: I had had sexual experiences, indeed. Long, long ago. I mean, so long ago that I don't know any
15 other kind of...sexuality. People liked me. I was a pretty child, and you know, when you don't
16 get...fatherly or male attention, you like male attention. And the fact that I wasn't groomed for or about
17 anything, as far as somebody being sinister with me, I just thought...if that's what you like, I'll do that, I
18 don't care. You seem to like me. Well, it took me to get to be a lot older that...before I ever felt used. Up
19 until then, I thought, well this is nice that I have a friend. And it is...well.
- 20 AJ: When did you first realize that you were a woman?
- 21 AB: I've always known it. It was sort of like, I was trying to make everybody else understand.
- 22 AJ: Really.
- 23 AB: Yes. 'Cause I sort of knew from the time...
- 24 AJ: When you began to know yourself? Three, four, five years old?
- 25 AB: Oh, that and before. It is just - whatever is a natural progression. It wasn't just one day, you
26 decide. It's like a growing up and then realizing I don't quite fit this way, and this way, and this way.
27 We'll make do with it. And I just was more comfortable with those kind of things. I enjoyed wearing...I
28 somehow...I wouldn't wear, as all the boys did, they wore jeans, or overalls. Well, I wouldn't wear them.
29 But I condescendingly - and even still today, I wore corduroys.
- 30 AJ: Really.
- 31 AB: Nobody else wore those, but I did, but they would fit into my imagination of me. And that was
32 okay, and mother thought that was okay, and cords were fine, but...where are they overalls and jeans?
33 They don't exist. Not in my mind. So, yes. And then...I worked and had little jobs and had a few dollars
34 here and there. I had a lady friend - a lady friend. We were...well, prepubescent. My neighbor lady,
35 mother's friend, Mrs. Anderson, had a boy and a girl. That's fine. Norman was kind of a hunter and an

- 1 athlete and these kinds of things. He was probably a hair older than I, but he had a sister, who was
2 about this much younger. And we played together very very well. We dressed up and we played and we
3 had dolls and we had picnics out in the alfalfa field, and we did...those were games. I don't know if they
4 were games. They probably were more real part of life than life was. We - even now, I've heard from her
5 since I've been back here. She sent me in the mail a cookbook that her - she's apparently a fine,
6 gracious, fine cook, and a gracious entertainer.
- 7 AJ: Okay.
- 8 AB: I don't know that. I've not seen her since she's been an adult. But she sent me the cookbook
9 that her children had made out of her recipes they used to present to them. And I thought that was very
10 nice.
- 11 AJ: Yes.
- 12 AB: So we still think nicely of each other. And as the community knows of me, and...those years in
13 between, the people who are alive now who are kind of my friends around this town, they're...let us say,
14 they're people who know of me rather than older - rather than older people that are dead that would
15 have known me as a young person.
- 16 AJ: Would have known you. Right.
- 17 AB: And so they know of me, and they know my family, and in little towns, if you come with a name
18 that is known in this town, you're more welcomed. If you are a stranger that arrives here, I think you are
19 watched a bit.
- 20 AJ: Sure.
- 21 AB: It isn't that you are not welcomed. But you do not have...three or four generations of people
22 knowing, farming, living, and knowing that you pay your bills and you look after your kids and this kind
23 of thing, in a very practical way. So I...inherited, I think, that from my father and his people, because
24 they were from around here.
- 25 AJ: Well, you told me a very interesting story, that your family was a part of founding this?
- 26 AB: Of what?
- 27 AJ: Of creating this town? Of founding this?
- 28 AB: Yes, yes. My grandfather, who had the same name as I. (Andrew.) He was - well, he had a farm
29 and he had a flock of kids. But in 1900, when this town was going to be something, he is the one - he
30 had built a school out near where his farm was, so his ten children could go to school..
- 31 AJ: Oh, wow.
- 32 AB: And then somehow Ellendale got his school and he was instrumental in doing it. How much, I
33 don't really know. But then they built a school over here and it was a high school and all of those things.
34 There was a bank here that he was also a part of. How much he was a part of it I don't know, but he was
35 instrumental in building it. And I don't know if you came past that way - there is now a flower garden -
36 awfully pretty in the summer and spring. There was -

- 1 AJ: Is it called Bush Garden?
- 2 AB: Just a - just a flower garden.
- 3 AJ: Oh, just a flower garden. There's no name. Okay.
- 4 AB: It's not historical, it's just the city that is - the city garden that is taken care of by some women
5 who choose to and volunteer their time. But where that is, there was the building that my grandfather
6 had built, probably in the early 1900s.
- 7 AJ: Wow.
- 8 AB: And it was a...it had been a hardware store, it had been a men's clothing store, which I don't
9 know when that was. But it was run by my grandfathers, one of his oldest sons, whose name was Carl.
10 And they lived upstairs with their family. And then, certainly before I was of any age, they had moved to
11 Albert Lea and established a larger clothing store.
- 12 AJ: Okay.
- 13 AB: And I think it was 1930 that my grandfather died, so I did not know him. But I knew of him, and
14 he obviously seemed to be quite a civic-minded man, that the people of that time wanted Ellendale to
15 grow and be something. And Ellendale was something, until after World War II, when everybody had
16 better transportation, we could go further faster, you didn't have to drive thirty five miles per hour and
17 have a gas allowance, that was no problem for fathers because they got gas allowances for their tractors
18 and things. So...but there were rules, and you had to live by them. The OPA, my dear god, in the little
19 store out in the country, it's where I learned OPA.
- 20 AJ: OPA?
- 21 AB: It was the Official Price Administration. Things were...you could buy only certain amount of
22 things.
- 23 AJ: So they rationed everything.
- 24 AB: Mhm. Sugar. You were limited as to how much you could buy. Gasoline was very limited.
25 Sugar...canned goods. You could only buy so much. But the OPA gave you stamps and things that you
26 would present to me, and the people at this little store, in exchange, not that that didn't pay for them, it
27 just gave us...gave us the ability to let you buy them from us.
- 28 AJ: Wow.
- 29 AB: That was during the war.
- 30 AJ: So if you didn't have the stamps, you couldn't buy anything.
- 31 AB: No. Then you were not entitled to buy it. Those were on the items, and I don't remember - oh,
32 shoes! I thought that was wonderful. Because you were entitled to two pair of shoes a year. That had
33 coupons, I think too, with it. And the...I got two pair a year then, but before that I only got one pair a
34 year, and went barefooted all summer. And now I had two pair of shoes, now that was a good thing, for
35 somebody who'd only had one pair, wasn't it?

- 1 AJ: Right, right. So you'd known that you were a woman all of your life.
- 2 AB: Oh that I was. I simply always was.
- 3 AJ: Yeah. But when did you decide that, "I need to make these corrections," as you stated?
- 4 AB: I always kind of liked boys, and that's because they made me feel...I don't know. Whatever, I
5 think, men were supposed to be, they were supposed to be cossetting and comfortable and protecting.
6 And so. I allowed men to cosset and protect me. God knows what it was in exchange for. It doesn't
7 matter, anymore.
- 8 AJ: It doesn't matter.
- 9 AB: I was not above accommodation.
- 10 AJ: Uh huh. Okay!
- 11 AB: And so, when I went to the city...
- 12 AJ: The city being Minneapolis?
- 13 AB: Minneapolis, yes, yes. And...I went to college. Stayed in the dormitory.
- 14 AJ: Where'd you go to college?
- 15 AB: Augsburg.
- 16 AJ: Augsburg? Okay.
- 17 AB: Augsburg College. And I stayed at the dormitory and it didn't take very long for people to find
18 out there was somebody there.
- 19 AJ: Really?
- 20 AB: For a while, like, with being young, I was not uncomfortable with it. But I became uncomfortable
21 with it because it - we got a little name calling. I was not comfortable with that. I didn't mind...
- 22 AJ: Doing it, but you didn't want to be called names?
- 23 AB: No! I just didn't like having...bad names directed at me.
- 24 AJ: What kind of names? Like...
- 25 AB: Cocksucker. Things like that.
- 26 AJ: Fairy?
- 27 AB: And I somehow could never identify with those names, even as I grew older. And so I worked...I
28 had a job when I went to college, but it was...I became uncomfortable. With - I think, not uncomfortable
29 with myself, but people's reaction to me. 'Cause all of these boys would've been seventeen to nineteen
30 years old, and I might have been a new something to them too. And they were just lunch. That wasn't
31 funny!
- 32 AJ: They were just lunch!

- 1 AB: I couldn't always laugh about it. But - it became...very uncomfortable for me. And so I - think I
2 left there in the middle of my junior year. Worked. Had a job down in Washington. And then later on I -
3 there are certain things that you learn very quickly that are not desirable, and that certain things leave
4 you in jeopardy, like, with your job, and this kind of thing. I think I lost this job because they thought I
5 was doing funny things. Which, I probably was. But I didn't realize that would cause you to lose your job.
6 Well then, shortly, after that...
- 7 AJ: Funny things. Tell me what you mean by funny things.
- 8 AB: Pardon me?
- 9 AJ: Tell me what you mean by funny things. They thought you were doing funny things.
- 10 AB: Well, that I was probably doing things with boys, that was probably homosexual.
- 11 AJ: At work?
- 12 AB: I don't know that I was ever a homosexual.
- 13 AJ: Right. No.
- 14 AB: I think that's such an awful word. And I don't identify with it. But then I....I knew a couple of men
15 who were hairdressers, a very safe profession, and so, I...became a hairdresser for forty years.
- 16 AJ: Really!
- 17 AB: Yes.
- 18 AJ: For forty years?
- 19 AB: I think. Thirty-five or forty.
- 20 AJ: Wow! Where?
- 21 AB: I, well. You see, even that, I started out with whoever was the top person that ran the salon, was
22 Myndell Cain. She had a store on the corner of 9th and LaSalle. I don't even know if it's still there.
- 23 AJ: What's her name?
- 24 AB: She also had shops in the Donaldson department store. She also had them in Rochester. But the
25 one that was her favorite was on 9th and LaSalle, it was where she could do anything she wanted or
26 thought.
- 27 AJ: What's her name?
- 28 AB: Myndell. M-Y-N...M-Y-N-D-E-L-L. Cain, C-A-I-N. And she was - her businesses were very well
29 known, and she was something of a socialite, and she was a businesswoman, you know.
- 30 AJ: Sure. And she hired you?
- 31 AB: Yeah. She liked me. And I think, you know, retrospectively, it was so good - I wouldn't have
32 known this. I worked with...things having names...the thing that had attracted to you, as a business of
33 hairdressing and whatever else, it was...upper class, and the upper echelon of people who could afford

1 and did come weekly, and you...you cultivated these people and you established a, as such, following,
2 that came to see you regularly. Do you know, that after thirty-five or forty years, I was still seeing people
3 as clients who I had gotten way back in 1956 or 55, at Myndall Cain's, and their families! And these were
4 all people in the upper echelons of society and perhaps dollars, and a wonderful...Friday. Fridays
5 were...Jewish days. I didn't know for Jewish, I didn't know for much of anything about such things. But
6 somehow, all these Cohens and Goldbergs and things seemed to come in on Friday. And that was
7 because the night before it was rumored that...Jewish husbands got laid on Thursday night because their
8 wives had their hair done Friday.

9 AJ: Oh!

10 AB: Somehow I thought that was very...But the nicest people. And, like with all people who are out
11 of...I don't know if being Jewish is out of the norm, it's something that comes with a stigma.

12 AJ: Mhm.

13 AB: And the only thing I knew about such things was that they were people. They were fine. They
14 were whatever it was, and they shared things with me. People brought me...not things, but they brought
15 me information, they brought me...history of the town, history of these families and things, that glowed
16 so in the Minneapolis terrarium of things.

17 AJ: So it's true what they say, only your hairdresser knows for sure.

18 AB: Hairdressers know all sorts of things. 'Cause if I see you every week, in those days, every week
19 for - two times a week, which would be a couple four hours, we actually have to exchange something.
20 Because after a time, when you are secure with each other, and it's time for a change, we'll see what we
21 can do, we'll work it out. After that you just talk about them.

22 AJ: Yeah. Life.

23 AB: As you do with all people, you talk about them. And those that came from - I'm not, do you
24 know Lake of the Isles?

25 AJ: Yes, I do.

26 AB: Well, Lake of the Isles, that whole area around that lake, and part of Calhoun, was a very - oh
27 dear, no, there was no such thing as restricted as far as I know. There were - rich people lived there. And
28 rich people, I discovered, from meeting, and - they had a different kind of...It wasn't behavior, they had
29 a different manner, they had a different way of doing and talking about things. And I liked the way they
30 did that. Which, of course, could partly have become - why I'm such a phony!

31 AJ: Oh!

32 AB: I'm not a phony. I'm a real phony. But I learned from them. I learned demeanor, and manner,
33 and this kind of things, and where they were, and what - seemingly important - and to watch their
34 children. I mean, this covers a certain amount of time. From their little squalling entitled children, to
35 people off to college and coming back with their degrees, doctor, lawyer, merchant, chief. Whoever it
36 was. And...the people around Lake of the Isles represented to me everything that I would like to have
37 been. I never was able to get into that area and live in it or work in it, but I knew people well enough I

- 1 could mingle there.
- 2 AJ: And socialize, and...
- 3 AB: And...yeah. It was...it was fine. You know, life is kind of an education. Later on I got a little more
4 curious and a little more money - you know, you do work, and sometimes if you get enough checks you
5 do have a little left over sometimes.
- 6 AJ: Sure. Yes.
- 7 AB: So I start going to school in the evenings. Actually, I think perhaps I have a...I'm probably two
8 degrees short of a masters. In what, I don't know. It's in...art. Art history, languages, things like that. It's
9 a lot of credits with no direction.
- 10 AJ: Liberal - liberal arts.
- 11 AB: Yeah. And that would be it. I went because I wanted to...I don't know. I wanted to learn
12 something. And I still had plenty of time for playtime. Whatever that was.
- 13 AJ: So - speaking of playtime, what sorts of things did you do for entertainment? You were a
14 hairdresser, so - and you're sort of in this socialite environment?
- 15 AB: Yeah. I was the hairdresser. And just about the same time as that, I met this Ronnie that I talked
16 about. Ronnie was at least five if not more years older than I. And he took a liking - well, we liked each
17 other. And we were together for seven years. And he was a G.I. He bought a little house in St. Louis Park.
18 We lived there. For quite a long time. And Ronnie was Jewish, which I don't think is any excuse for
19 anything. But - some people, they get more pressure from their heritage to marry and do this, this, this,
20 and this, and Ronnie always meant to get married. Well, I kept him until he was thirty-five or thirty-six.
- 21 AJ: Mhm.
- 22 AB: And then he did do what - to please -
- 23 AJ: What was expected of him, right?
- 24 AB: I guess. I was not surprised.
- 25 AJ: Marry a Jewish - a nice Jewish girl.
- 26 AB: She was a Jewish girl. She should be pretty, she should be rich, and Jewish. All of a sudden, just
27 "Jewish" seemed to be good enough.
- 28 AJ: Okay - the pretty and the rich part didn't happen, huh?
- 29 AB: So - they married and she lived in - moved in to my house.
- 30 AJ: Oh.
- 31 AB: And - of course I didn't like her. Why should I?
- 32 AJ: Were you - were you heartbroken?
- 33 AB: I was hurt. In a way that...yeah. I still think I'm hurt in reverse. But not quite so much, not since

- 1 we have established - reestablished - I forget how long ago it was. I read her death in the paper, in the
2 obituaries. And I had been on-and-off in contact with Ronnie, because he was - he was handy with all
3 the things I wasn't. He could fix things and make them work. So he would come over and do things for
4 me.
- 5 AJ: Were you guys romantic when he would come by?
- 6 AB: Yes. Yes, we were. We had a busy romance, and...yeah. Yeah, we did. Yes. He was always
7 married, but I was...when he'd come seeing, I knew what he wanted, it wasn't just me. And it may have
8 been...I don't know if that's true or not. I think - I like to think now that he came to see me because we
9 liked and had a bond with each other, and a bond. Sex is a great bond.
- 10 AJ: Sex is a bond. It's a real thing.
- 11 AB: And if we'd done it with each other and been comfortable with each other, one is inclined to do
12 it again, aren't they?
- 13 AJ: Yes.
- 14 AB: And so we did, over a number of years. And - but I was already here, in Ellendale when Vivian
15 died. I remember just simply writing him a note, and...and then his kids were grown by then. One - the
16 little one looked just liked him. He did all the things that Ronnie did. And until he got old - something
17 happened to him when he reached - I don't know if it was puberty. He stopped looking like Ronnie, and
18 his bones grew bigger. I - I don't know quite...he had been such a cute little person, but all of a sudden,
19 his - his skeletal system seemed to have changed, and he wasn't tall, but he got kind of bulky looking. I
20 don't know what that was. And then the little one, he was two, and he was two feet high, and he had
21 two feet of curly hair. And he's the one that ran off. He went to school everywhere - in Europe, and in
22 Israel, Egypt - he finally...I'm trying to remember why I was invited. Billy - that was his name, I believe he
23 calls himself Will now. He had gotten married but hadn't had a party for his friends, so they all came
24 back to Minneapolis and he had a party down at the Women's Club for his friends who didn't get to
25 share in his wedding. And I had an invitation - so I went with Ronnie.
- 26 AJ: Wow.
- 27 AB: And...I don't think he - Ronnie was very - he didn't ever talk much about anything ever. So I'm
28 sure that - though the boys got to know me, and this kind of thing, I - I can so doubt that he ever, if they
29 ever knew we were lovers.
- 30 AJ: Hmm.
- 31 AB: I don't know that.
- 32 AJ: Did you - did you meet Ronnie before your...correction surgery, or afterwards?
- 33 AB: Yes. Yes, yes yes. Both.
- 34 AJ: Both.
- 35 AB: Yes. This first one was 1955, you see. 55 or 6. Up until 1960, and this happened in 1969.
- 36 AJ: 1969. At the University of Minnesota?

- 1 AB: Yes, yes yes yes.
- 2 AJ: And you were telling me about Doctor...
- 3 AB: Doctor Hastings, yes.
- 4 AJ: What do you recall of him?
- 5 AB: I liked him. Do you know that sometimes, I still have that sort of - if I meet somebody and I
6 sense that this is a - I don't know if I sense this is a good person, this is a person that is comfortable for
7 me to be with, whatever my...thinking about things are at the moment. And I was just comfortable with
8 him, and I was - I was...becoming non-comfortable. I had been, you see, Ronnie had abandoned me. He
9 left me. I was very hurt for a long time.
- 10 AJ: Really. Yeah.
- 11 AB: It isn't that there weren't other people there. But the - poking and being poked by, it's not an
12 answer to anything if you've cared for somebody who went along with your other games.
- 13 AJ: Right.
- 14 AB: And so. He was not replaced. And it - and by this time, it was 1960, I don't think you've been
15 here probably long enough to know Gordon Locksley? Gordon Locksley had the Red Carpet Beauty
16 Salon, which was near 10th, on Nicollet Avenue.
- 17 AJ: Mhm. No, I don't know Gordon.
- 18 AB: He was a general character around town. He was terribly important, and he was terribly - lived
19 high, and lived well. And he was openly gay long before people were. Even had a little gay bar up around
20 the...He opened one called Sutton Place up at about 1st Avenue North.
- 21 AJ: Oh! Yeah. I've heard of that place
- 22 AB: And once again, he had the same kind of clientele that I had established over the years. So kind
23 of, when he asked me to work for him, you see, he got more from me than I did from him. I brought
24 business, I didn't suck off his business.
- 25 AJ: Sure. Yeah.
- 26 AB: Anyhow. He liked me, he had known me on and off for years. And I became uncomfortable. Oh,
27 Gordon also went on - I have to talk about Gordon, because he was such a...I don't know. He was an
28 entrepreneur, a loudmouth person. He was always on television afternoon with Jane Johnson, who was
29 the afternoon talk show in Minneapolis. But he knew how to manipulate business and by being on
30 television, oh! He would say terrible things, or be off-color, or something like this. Everybody'd be - but
31 things would light up. We're never going to watch your program again, we're not even going to use your
32 station...
- 33 AJ: Wow.
- 34 AB: Don't you know, they were there the next day to see if Gordon was there?
- 35 AJ: What he's going to say, huh?

- 1 AB: Because Gordon was - I mean, he was, then he started his own art business. He started it right in
2 the salon. And...they were important artists. And then he grew into Andy Warhol, and these kinds of
3 things. Gordon had a huge house over on Mount Curve. And it was - I think he had retired from
4 hairdressing, but he sold it to two boys that had worked for him, and - well, in 1969, he was - do you
5 know, I don't know if you're aware of this, but you know that the gay community is not at all interested
6 in transgender people.
- 7 AJ: I do know this.
- 8 AB: Do you know that?
- 9 AJ: Yes. I do.
- 10 AB: I guess - I don't know if they...they are thinking, we're an imposition, or it's causing somebody to
11 look at them funny, or just what? But I have discovered that the gay people I have known, and there
12 were a number of them, all of a sudden weren't interested in you. And my boss was one of those. That
13 was another one of -
- 14 AJ: Really. Gordon.
- 15 AB: Yeah. Gordon.
- 16 AJ: So once you - once you figured out that you...
- 17 AB: He didn't - transgender - that I was going to do this, and he sort of was very insulting. From a
18 person who I adored and liked, I mean - he was so - we were not intimate, we just...
- 19 AJ: You were friends.
- 20 AB: And I was...I was pretty. I don't know. All my life I've been kind of pretty. And somehow, I never
21 thought much of it until, I think more recently, actually, that -
- 22 AJ: Well, you're still very beautiful.
- 23 AB: It's ridiculous! I think I like that part of me.
- 24 AJ: Yes. Absolutely.
- 25 AB: I liked hearing it. I liked...but yes. I was a very good-looking person, and that's beside the point,
26 but then when he knew I was going to do this, the last day...of 1990...1968 was my last day in that shop.
27 I knew when I left I wasn't coming back there anymore. I tried -
- 28 AJ: Really. What day was it? It was 1968?
- 29 AB: January? Not January. December 31st.
- 30 AJ: Really? So right before your birthday?
- 31 AB: It was - yeah, it was New Years' Eve day, and I knew that I wasn't coming back after that.
- 32 AJ: Uh huh.
- 33 AB: I would no longer be welcome.

- 1 AJ: Wow.
- 2 AB: And so, because it was on the 11th of January, 1969, that I went in to the university, and was
3 what you get. Dr. Cullan Markland, under, I suppose, the guidance of Dr. Hastings, led me to this. And I
4 was easily led.
- 5 AJ: Cullan - Dr. Cullan...?
- 6 AB: Dr. Cullan Markland was the surgeon. And...but all of those people I think have since left the
7 university.
- 8 AJ: Mmhm. Yeah, probably.
- 9 AB: He was the surgeon. There was a - same time that I was in having surgery, next to me, there was
10 a - wonder what became of her? Her name was Andrea. Black girl.
- 11 AJ: Okay.
- 12 AB: And she was having surgery at the same time.
- 13 AJ: Someone else asked me about her! And I don't know...
- 14 AB: I wonder if she's still alive.
- 15 AJ: But - do you know Donna Ewing?
- 16 AB: Yeah, I knew of Donna.
- 17 AJ: She asked me about Andrea too.
- 18 AB: But there was that Andrea. I did not know her well. She was in the neighboring room, and she'd
19 come in and visit me, and I - I don't know, but I didn't know all the other people on the program, but I
20 had, you know, some...knowledge of them just because they had been and were probably in some of
21 the same positions I was. But - yeah. Donna -
- 22 AJ: What was the surgery like?
- 23 AB: Pardon me?
- 24 AJ: Oh, I'm sorry, I cut you off. You were going to speak about Donna...
- 25 AB: Oh, Donna Ewing, was just something of a character! And I...before she was Donna, she was a
26 big clumsy fat boy from some farm community -
- 27 AJ: Right.
- 28 AB: That was absolutely...totally unattractive.
- 29 AJ: Mm. Mmhm.
- 30 AB: I mean, that was - you just got my description. And somehow, when I thought that she - was
31 about the same time, maybe a little bit before - that she went in for surgery, I thought, "Oh how could
32 they possibly?" Donna Ewing is an absolutely marvelous person and personality, which she was never
33 any of those things before.

- 1 AJ: Wow.
- 2 AB: She was sort of a - she was a shame. She was...I don't know what she did, if she did it with men
3 or women or whatever she did, I don't know this. I just remember, after she became Donna, she had
4 something to say! She was able to - she was up, around, and talking. She - is Sophie alive, I wonder?
- 5 AJ: You know, I don't know Sophie.
- 6 AB: Well, Sophie and...Donna, were kind of together a lot.
- 7 AJ: Okay.
- 8 AB: And Sophie...I don't know anything of her, except that she - I'd run into her once in a while
9 downtown. And we just talked - nothing much to say to each other. But I think a certain amount of
10 respect for, we'd each gotten on with at least our lives in some fashion or other without hitting the
11 welfare boards.
- 12 AJ: Right.
- 13 AB: So, yes, 1969. I went in and had surgery, and by - I didn't know what I was going to do for a living
14 for sure. What is this going to do to what I know? I think I had saved - a thousand dollars. I had a little bit
15 of cash. And I didn't know...
- 16 AJ: Did you guys have to pay for the surgery?
- 17 AB: Yes and no. You take it if you can get it. And I...I had lost my health certificate, my health...
- 18 AJ: Insurance?
- 19 AB: Policy. Because...American Family had sold me a policy within the last couple of years, and so -
20 as far as I know, it should be fine. But then I was in the university for that previous - before surgery - and
21 the extent of, oh, they knew what that surgery meant, and they dropped me very quickly.
- 22 AJ: Oh, American Family? They dropped you?
- 23 AB: Yes. American Family. And - and that was, I was still working with Gordon and for Gordon at that
24 time, but he fixed me up with his lawyer - Elliott Kaplan, who was a very well known lawyer. I think still
25 practicing.
- 26 AJ: Yeah, I think so.
- 27 AB: And...at least, all they did - they didn't save me having a policy, but they did get me, I think, a
28 return on all the premiums I had paid.
- 29 AJ: Oh, good. So you had some cash.
- 30 AB: Yeah. And then the consolation, that, you know, if we keep you on, you'll be questioned for
31 everything that's ever done to you, or every time you use it you're going to go through this same thing
32 again...
- 33 AJ: And so...
- 34 AB: And I don't know if it was at that time or shortly thereafter, I got a...a policy. I think it was

- 1 somewhere after the surgery. But it was sort of a...it was a policy - what do you call the policies when
2 they take care of high end things and it costs you more? It wasn't a real policy that you used with
3 doctors and things, a...I'm at a loss for words.
- 4 AJ: A rider? I'm not sure. I can...
- 5 AB: Oh, it was for special needs, after that - after you'd spent quite a bit of money. So I had that for
6 a long time.
- 7 AJ: Hmm. So the university did not pay for the surgery.
- 8 AB: No. They did not.
- 9 AJ: You had to pay for it out of your pocket.
- 10 AB: This is kind of strange -
- 11 AJ: Do you know how much it cost?
- 12 AB: No. I have no idea. Actually, I wasn't exactly charged for it, but I was sent a bill from the
13 surgeon, for - I forget what the number was. But I was...very grateful that everything was fine, and I sent
14 him six hundred dollars that - my God, to me, that would be like six thousand or more now. And I sent
15 this to him, and he sent me a thank you note, and...I'm sure he kept it under cover, or whatever it was,
16 but I did pay for that, and therefore, I was not - I didn't have to think of myself as a charity case.
- 17 AJ: Right.
- 18 AB: But you see, I was almost under the impression - and I think it was an impression - there was no
19 contract. I suspected that I should be looked after for a period of time, or maybe a forever, in exchange
20 for what I'm giving you, you know, the university.
- 21 AJ: Right, this opportunity to...
- 22 AB: I think it was probably - I'm thinking in the terms of seven years. I'm trying to think when I got
23 married. 1974. But I was having some difficulty and wanted some things done and the university by this
24 time had simply turned its back on any thing that they may have thought we, I, might have expected.
- 25 AJ: Mmm.
- 26 AB: They were simply not available and appointments became harder to get. This became harder to
27 get, and nobody was interested. I had a few quite unpleasant things happen with - and I complained, out
28 loud, and...it made me feel good. I think it was at that time - I technically don't know where Eli Coleman
29 is now, but the office used to be over on the other side of the university - if you went up...what's that
30 street, is it Washington?
- 31 AJ: Washington, yes.
- 32 AB: And you went up there and the office was kind of around the corner.
- 33 AJ: Okay.
- 34 AB: And I'd walk up there, and being terribly frustrated, and he and a few of the people in his office,

- 1 were at least consoling, which made me feel very good.
- 2 AJ: Really. Sure. So did you have physical problems with the surgery?
- 3 AB: No, not directly. It happened more...after I got married. It was not a total success, as far as
4 usefulness.
- 5 AJ: Yes. So the depth wasn't there.
- 6 AB: Yeah. But it's amazing - I had a number of encounters that worked out just fine.
- 7 AJ: Yeah? Were you able to orgasm or have...?
- 8 AB: Funny! Yes. I was still - I had rented a rather, it was then a very inexpensive apartment over on
9 34th and - on 34th Avenue, I lived on 24th, I lived on 31st, and then bought a house on 34th. All the - it
10 was on the way out to the cemetery, do you know that big cemetery?
- 11 AJ: Lakewood?
- 12 AB: Yeah. But that whole area - I just liked that area. Anyhow. I interrupted myself. Oh, yes. I
13 was...Walgreens was on the corner then of 9th, stopped over there often for breakfast and things. Then
14 there was an...awfully pretty young Black man, named - something Haven. Was it Keith Haven? He was
15 from Jamaica. I was taking a course in a school that was above Bjorkman's which was on 10th Street.
16 And he had come here from wherever he came from to go to school. And we got sort of friendly over
17 coffee and breakfast.
- 18 AJ: Mhmm.
- 19 AB: Well, he came to visit me.
- 20 AJ: Uh huh?
- 21 AB: He wasn't the first one. He came...I felt semi-secure with. And....it was my first orgasm. And
22 that's why it makes me chuckle, because I didn't know for orgasm, I didn't know for this, I didn't know
23 that's what we're leading to, except that he just kept on and on, and I don't...!
- 24 AJ: Oh, wow!
- 25 AB: Somehow or other, Dr. Hastings was still alive, 'cause I called him the next day and recounted
26 this experience to him! And he said "You're very lucky - I think you've just had your first multiple
27 orgasm!"
- 28 AJ: Oh, wow!
- 29 AB: And it was so funny, because they were halfway frightening!
- 30 AJ: Really?
- 31 AB: I mean, it was...
- 32 AJ: You didn't know what the experience felt like?
- 33 AB: No! No - not like that. No. That was...

- 1 AJ: Oh, wow. Was this gentleman large? Was he...?
- 2 AB: I don't know - he was just right, whatever that is!
- 3 AJ: He was just right. Okay.
- 4 AB: I don't remember that he was especially large. I remember he was especially attractive.
- 5 AJ: Beautiful. Yeah.
- 6 AB: And he was especially persistent.
- 7 AJ: Yes?
- 8 AB: That's what kind of - because I thought, maybe you're through - but he was - oh! He was - whoo!
- 9 AJ: He kept going! Wow!
- 10 AB: And I think I saw him a few times after that, but it was not a major romance, but it certainly was
- 11 a...
- 12 AJ: A memorable one.
- 13 AB: Yeah. I wonder if he went back to - Jamaica? He didn't have a funny accent, so I can't think that
- 14 he was Jamaican. Do you - do you know Jamaicans? They have a kind of a bit of a singsong...?
- 15 AJ: They have a...a lilt to their conversation? Hey mon, how you doin' there mon.
- 16 AB: Anyway, this was a marvel, this experience. We - I think he probably went off to school
- 17 someplace else, wherever it was. But that was sort of...interesting. But after I got married I discovered
- 18 that I...my husband was built like Black men are supposed to be.
- 19 AJ: Okay. All right.
- 20 AB: Or, they say they are. And I thought we should do something about this, because - once again,
- 21 Curtis was a marvelous person. He still is a marvelous person. He just sent me - what is this thing?
- 22 AJ: Is Curtis African-American?
- 23 AB: No, no - Curt was - Curt was just white. I don't know, he looked more exotic than that - he had
- 24 very dark hair. He was dark in general, although he was just sort of a Norwegian-Swede mixture.
- 25 AJ: Sure.
- 26 AB: His - but he was very -
- 27 AJ: Very well-endowed.
- 28 AB: Yeah - he. Yes. Yes, that's when I thought "I'd like to get this better" - for him.
- 29 AJ: Sure.
- 30 AB: He didn't have any trouble with it. We worked things out, it was fine.
- 31 AJ: Yeah.

- 1 AB: And that's when the university sort of was no longer interested. So I had some work done with
2 S.S.Sheridan Stevens. He had so many S's in his name, and so many before his name. I think he was
3 down at the - it wasn't in the medical arts building. Is it down on - do you know Elliott Park?
- 4 AJ: I do.
- 5 AB: Where is it? It's down that way.
- 6 AJ: Yeah. It's near - Elliott Park is - the east side of downtown. It's kind of near where the football
7 stadium is now. There was no stadium there back then.
- 8 AB: Elliott Park. It seems to me it was - yeah - it's walking distance. Generally there, that's where he
9 operated. And he...and then I think it was...
- 10 AJ: So he was able to improve the...?
- 11 AB: Pardon me?
- 12 AJ: He was able to improve the surgery?
- 13 AB: I don't know. It was fine for a year and a half. And then...I don't think it was so good after that. It
14 was...let us say it was temporary. And it was certainly a lot more...usable.
- 15 AJ: Yeah?
- 16 AB: For a while. Then it wasn't - it's as if it closed up.
- 17 AJ: Oh no!
- 18 AB: Because I think right now I only have about a...four-to-five inch penetration. And it was much
19 longer, then. Much...bigger. And now - no. But I do think that he...the way they put things in there, I
20 don't know that - I wonder if that person in Trinidad does any better. I don't know that. 'Cause I'd read
21 certain things about it, because I am...it was only a comment from a urologist, that my urethra and
22 things are lower than natural. Nothing that there's wrong with them, exactly -
- 23 AJ: Right - they're just in a different place than they typically are.
- 24 AB: Yes. And consequently, I think they juggled this space and this space, and eventually this took
25 over, and - I also, after that, had for the first time in my life, a few constipation problems. I think - and
26 this I've not had it looked at or checked at since - but I think it may be giving me problems in the extent
27 that my stools are quite often very narrow and unsatisfying. And that doesn't mean they don't - work.
28 But I think they - I'm not younger anymore. I'm not that young anymore. It's not significant. I can live
29 with this so far. But -
- 30 AJ: Yeah. How - so, you said earlier though -
- 31 AB: Pardon me?
- 32 AJ: You said earlier to me, though, that you don't have any regrets about...?
- 33 AB: None. Nothing. Even with what doesn't work as well as I might think, so - no. It isn't that - I don't
34 know. Sex is one thing and I've done it, I've had it, I've liked it, but if, for the last fifteen or twenty years,

- 1 there hasn't been anything, that doesn't still give me this same...it's another kind of pleasure. It's a
2 bigger pleasure, it's the pleasure of being me. And it works for me here. It worked for me in the city,
3 even when I was alone.
- 4 AJ: When you look in the mirror, you feel like you're seeing yourself now.
- 5 AB: I - I kind of like her. It's sort of like, I liked him, I got to know him pretty well, too. And I - I
6 forgave him, I forgive her too, and - I like these people who I've been, and I think sometimes I speak for
7 both of us. Sometimes I think there's...there's really not two of us, but there is kind of two different
8 reactions, or two different thinkings about things, and now after forty-eight years, I don't really think
9 about...him, or it, very much.
- 10 AJ: Sure.
- 11 AB: Only when sometimes my sister will bring up something, I - I haven't thought about it for a long
12 time.
- 13 AJ: For a long time.
- 14 AB: Yep. There's a - she has a picture in her basement she was wondering what to do with that. It's
15 very nice.
- 16 AJ: Uh huh. Oh, wow.
- 17 AB: I have little pictures of him. Somewhere. But I - I guess, I don't live with ghosts. I don't know
18 what - what advice should I give her? If she likes to look at it, that's fine.
- 19 AJ: Sure.
- 20 AB: But I don't want it on my wall.
- 21 AJ: Right.
- 22 AB: And I don't mind having some in-family things. But - that's -
- 23 AJ: Did you have - did you take hormones, or...?
- 24 AB: Yes. We started, I think, when I first saw Dr. Hastings, started out on...I think we started out, it
25 seems to me, it was three. Could have been six. But it went down to three, whatever. All it did was make
26 your titties sore.
- 27 AJ: Yeah!
- 28 AB: It didn't do anything much else that I knew about. It kind of had hoped at that time, before -
29 that the surgery and the hormones would cause this to be better.
- 30 AJ: Your face?
- 31 AB: Yeah.
- 32 AJ: Yeah.
- 33 AB: That's - I think, I don't think there's any solution to that particular problem. I don't think short of

- 1 the electrolysis and the things that you go through to make yourself presentable to yourself. I don't
2 think there's any way of that I know of yet.
- 3 AJ: There's - there's feminization surgeries that they do now, to sort of feminize one's face, and...
- 4 AB: Well, it would be nice to be able to have the extra hair problem taken care of. Because even
5 now, every morning before I get up and tend to my natural beauty, I sort of have to look over very
6 carefully to see if anything is coming out.
- 7 AJ: Really? Did you have electrolysis?
- 8 AB: Yes - yes. A lot of it. But it didn't...I don't know that it didn't do any good, but it would have been
9 an ongoing expense that was absolutely ridiculous.
- 10 AJ: Right. Wow.
- 11 AB: And I - I don't know. You see things now that are advertised along with No No and a few of
12 those other things. I'm distrustful of them.
- 13 AJ: Sure. Yeah.
- 14 AB: I manage quite well without it. But it takes a long time for the shadow to go away. And so
15 therefore, when that happens, you're quite a ways ahead of the game. And that's fine. So then - you
16 know...
- 17 AJ: What do you think of all of these bathroom bills that are...?
- 18 AB: Of these bathroom things? Are we talk -
- 19 AJ: Yeah.
- 20 AB: I think it's the stupidest thing I ever heard of. Why are we even talking about it? If one is a trans
21 - I'm just thinking, first of all, of my own, as such, experience. I never particularly thought of it. I'm
22 dressed, I look like this, I pee in the ladies' bathroom.
- 23 AJ: Right.
- 24 AB: I never - it -
- 25 AJ: Has anyone ever given you any problems, ever?
- 26 AB: Never. Never. Never. Never. Never. This is why I kind of think, or thought, that if these people
27 have such trouble with this identity - they're doing something wrong. I - if you look like a lady, if you look
28 like a gentleman and you go to the men's or ladies' room, nobody's really going to be watching you.
- 29 AJ: Right! They shouldn't be - isn't that a - that's a problem, if they're watching what I'm doing. Like,
30 that's the - that becomes the problem.
- 31 AB: I've never had the fact - the thing - the experience of thinking somebody watched me because I
32 wasn't something, or that I was something. I just never had that experience. And I'm glad, but - I'm
33 wondering if the people they're talking about are schoolchildren?
- 34 AJ: Mostly. I mean, that's a lot of what they're talking about.

- 1 AB: I guess a part of that...I don't know how early should one - I guess, you know, my regrets, of
2 which I don't think I have any - regret, I wished it could've been done sooner.
- 3 AJ: Yeah.
- 4 AB: It would have given me more time to be a real person.
- 5 AJ: So how old were you when you -
- 6 AB: I was thirty-seven.
- 7 AJ: Thirty-seven.
- 8 AB: Mhm. That, you see, was pretty close to forty, and forty used to be more deadline-y, I think,
9 than it is now.
- 10 AJ: Yeah.
- 11 AB: And therefore - but also, I'm thinking, when I read about this, are the high schools and the grade
12 schools, and the things full of transgender people in the midst of wearing somebody else's clothes?
- 13 AJ: No, I don't think so. I think there may be a few, and...I think what it is is just, people are much
14 more open about it nowadays, as opposed to when you were in grade school, you knew, but you didn't
15 necessarily express yourself.
- 16 AB: Oh, my dear. It's wonderful to be able to be open about something, but keep your mouth shut
17 for a while, you know?
- 18 AJ: Yeah.
- 19 AB: You don't have to talk about everything, you don't have to tell them.
- 20 AJ: That's true.
- 21 AB: I don't think you need to tell everybody everything. I think that's kind of like, headshrinks might
22 be nice if one uses them properly, you can tell them something with, hopefully, a consolation that it
23 doesn't go further than that. I think people used to use clergy like that, too, but I'm not so sure about
24 clergy anymore.
- 25 AJ: So, Amanda, did you get your driver's license and your college degrees and all of your
26 identification changed?
- 27 AB: Yup. Yup. Yep, changed.
- 28 AJ: How did you come to your name?
- 29 AB: How did I what?
- 30 AJ: How did you come to the name Amanda?
- 31 AB: I just sort of liked it. I was thinking that there was a name I liked a little bit better, and that name
32 was Amy. But there was some old person - some older person that was sort of trying to be on the
33 program about the same time who had taken Emily, and Emily was not that person or not what I wanted

- 1 to be, and somehow or other Amanda popped up and I thought that's very nice, and then somebody
2 said, "Well, Amanda, it's like telling" - I don't think so, Amanda was a very old name.
- 3 AJ: It's like saying, I am A - man - though, or something? I don't agree with that at all.
- 4 AB: Yeah, yeah, and at the same time I thought that didn't make any sense to me. So I sort of liked
5 Amanda. It also was...biblically, if it means anything, it has the same connotation as the name "Andrew."
- 6 AJ: Huh.
- 7 AB: "Worthy of being loved." The translation is supposed to be about the same. I thought that was
8 nice. I don't know how true those myths and legends are, but -
- 9 AJ: So you still - you still have a relationship with your sister?
- 10 AB: My sister, yeah. Mmhm.
- 11 AJ: And, um -
- 12 AB: In fact, she might be moving down here. I'm scared to death.
- 13 AJ: Oh my goodness.
- 14 AB: I think I told you she would take an apartment over there. If I die first, then she can have the
15 house, but at the moment it's my house and we can spend time together, but if you went on a checklist
16 of everything that you think I am and you want a checklist of her, it's - everything is just the opposite.
- 17 AJ: The opposite. What about your parents? Like - they were alive after your surgery.
- 18 AB: Yes. Oh, yeah.
- 19 AJ: How did they respond?
- 20 AB: I think maybe horrified. Father - d'you know, Father, who was sort of missing a lot of things,
21 along the most of my life, was probably the one that told me, when we were having a rather large
22 discussion, that you can always come home. And I think I wanted to hear that.
- 23 AJ: Yeah.
- 24 AB: And that's...I think I wanted that. Mother is...another story. She...she never became comfortable
25 with me.
- 26 AJ: Sure.
- 27 AB: I...Mother was small, tiny. Protective of herself and her children.
- 28 AJ: Yes.
- 29 AB: And as much of herself as with her children or having people talked about would be talking
30 about her. But you know, I'm sure that people have here talked about me. But you know that I came and
31 lived with them and I've just - they just think I'm wonderful.
- 32 AJ: Oh, wow!

- 1 AB: I - I just think that's so neat.
- 2 AJ: I do too.
- 3 AB: Because I have never - I don't talk about myself. I'll talk about myself as a person living in
4 Ellendale.
- 5 AJ: As a person. I mean, you're...
- 6 AB: I'm Amanda. I mean, these people didn't know me before or after they knew I may have been
7 somebody else.
- 8 AJ: Yeah. And - yes. But - you are who you are now, and this is what we need to focus on.
- 9 AB: Yes. But I think the fact that most of the people I grew up are either gone or dead, or this kind of
10 thing, so there isn't - occasionally, like, Sunday breakfast. The Lutherans come over from Geneva for
11 breakfast, and I went to school with a couple of them. And it's sort of like hi, Amanda, or whatever. It's -
12 I think I'm a big nothing. I mean, that's not exactly true.
- 13 AJ: That's not true.
- 14 AB: I am thought of very highly. People like me. I like that. And I like them. And they treat me well,
15 but I think -
- 16 AJ: Who you were is not a big deal.
- 17 AB: I don't think so. I think - I would, you know, from these people in town, who I think of as small
18 town non-intellectual people, they're just sort of accepting for what it is. Somebody came home. Okay.
19 And you looked after your father? That's nice. Okay. And...it is so comfortable, because I personally have
20 never talked about myself to anyone because, first of all, I thought it was none of their business. Second
21 of all, what for? And this, I think, is for something. It is for the good of the project. It is for the
22 recognition of the condition itself, and hopefully it will make something better for somebody. And all I
23 can say is, if you absolutely cannot...cannot not do it, do it. Other than that, forget it. If you can forget it,
24 do.
- 25 AJ: Yeah. But most people can't. It's really hard to forget.
- 26 AB: I think this is true. I think this is very true. When you can't, it's not going to be easy. Even at it's
27 best, and easiest, and - I don't know. I think mine was...because of, first of all, then I - you see, I had my
28 surgery on - January 11th of 1969. Do you know, I was back to work about the 15th of February?
- 29 AJ: No way!
- 30 AB: Well, this is funny, because...I had never...Until I was completely Amanda, legally, I did not dress.
31 I mean, I -
- 32 AJ: You didn't dress as a woman?
- 33 AB: No. It isn't that I didn't, I did sometimes, I'd have a date in the evening with somebody. And that
34 was it.
- 35 AJ: But not full time.

- 1 AB: Oh, heavens no. I thought that would be...I think I would've frowned on myself for doing that.
- 2 AJ: Really.
- 3 AB: Why are you wearing women's clothes? I wouldn't have liked that at all.
- 4 AJ: Uh huh.
- 5 AB: In fact, there was something about me that I was turned off by that idea.
- 6 AJ: Really. Wow.
- 7 AB: And so the people - there was David. In fact, he just died. David Windsor. He was a sometimes-
8 big deal around town in hairdressing. And he was managing the young Quinlan store. And I knew David,
9 and so I said, David, this is what is happening, and this is what is happening...can I work here?
- 10 AJ: Mmhm.
- 11 AB: He said, I think it'll be no problem. And so I went to work there, I think it was the 16th of
12 February, which was certainly less than a month -
- 13 AJ: Wow.
- 14 AB: After the surgery.
- 15 AJ: Uh huh.
- 16 AB: And in the meantime -
- 17 AJ: And that's when you began to dress full time.
- 18 AB: Yeah. Then I was always - I mean, after surgery, I was always Amanda.
- 19 AJ: Right. Yes, absolutely.
- 20 AB: Up until that, I was not Amanda. I wasn't. I wasn't allowed to. I didn't allow myself.
- 21 AJ: You didn't allow yourself.
- 22 AB: No. I couldn't do that. I didn't...like that. So, I went to the University in some pants and a
23 sweater and I had my hair done, I think. And then after that it was always Amanda. But up until then, no.
24 I couldn't - I didn't like that feeling of being in drag.
- 25 AJ: Yeah.
- 26 AB: I think there was that association with it. I think it is also probably part of...the gay idea about
27 the whole thing, they think of it as drag.
- 28 AJ: Mmmhm. Mmhm.
- 29 AB: And et cetera. It's such a whole different thing.
- 30 AJ: Yeah. It is. It's completely different.
- 31 AB: And it was - Donna Ewing, is she in a rest home?

- 1 AJ: She is.
- 2 AB: She's -
- 3 AJ: She's in a rest home. She's, you know...I mean, she's doing pretty well. I think she's healthy.
- 4 She's - she doesn't like being in a home.
- 5 AB: Oh. Is she arthritic?
- 6 AJ: She has some mobility issues. She uses a chair.
- 7 AB: Well, this is - now I don't know if this is true, but I sort of heard it in a roundabout way. At one
- 8 time, she needed to go into a home. She's lived down on...some big apartments on the end of
- 9 Washington. And she needed some help. But they wouldn't take her in some care center that she had
- 10 applied for because of who she was, she might have attracted the wrong kind of people. Now, this may
- 11 not be true. But it's an - part of a story that I got. So ever since I'd heard that, I was wondering what did
- 12 become of her. But she is in a home.
- 13 AJ: She's in a rest home. They treat her very well. They all refer to her as Donna and she and her
- 14 and they seem - you know, she's a character, so they like her. I mean -
- 15 AB: Well, she was always fun and funny.
- 16 AJ: Yes.
- 17 AB: That was - I don't know that she was fun and funny when she was a boy.
- 18 AJ: Yeah.
- 19 AB: I don't know that, because I didn't know her ever that well. But it was after that she became
- 20 Donna that she was fun and funny and she liked to dress funny and she wore this and she wore that and
- 21 she - I think she was at the 90s and she was coat check girl for many many years.
- 22 AJ: Twenty-one years, she said.
- 23 AB: But she had also been at one time an impersonator. But when - after she got to be Donna -
- 24 AJ: Yeah. At the Squirrel.
- 25 AB: She wasn't funny anymore.
- 26 AJ: Some Squirrel, what was it? The Golden Squirrel, or the...Copper Squirrel! Do you remember this
- 27 place?
- 28 AB: That one I don't know, Copper Squirrel. I know the - the Gay 90s, the Happy Hour... those were
- 29 pretty much - Happy Hour was a gay bar.
- 30 AJ: Moby Dick's?
- 31 AB: But I think that the Gay 90s has become, over there, it's totally gay. But it used to be a place of
- 32 great entertainment. A few strippers, a few other people doing things.
- 33 AJ: Yeah. Yeah, vaudeville, yeah.

- 1 AB: And it was kind of fun. And I don't know what's going on on Hennepin Avenue now, except there
2 have been pieces of human semen found in the dressing rooms of some of the places where there are
3 strippers and this kind of thing.
- 4 AJ: Yes! You listen to the news, I see.
- 5 AB: I read the news. I get the paper every morning and I take it and read it while I'm having
6 breakfast. 'Cause it always is nice to know what's going on, even if I'm not there and...but there's
7 something coming that I...did you happen to see the - the play about the Mormons?
- 8 AJ: The Book of Mormon?
- 9 AB: Yes?
- 10 AJ: I have not seen that.
- 11 AB: Oh! Well, it's one of my favorites -
- 12 AJ: Really! Have you seen it?
- 13 AB: I don't know if it's really my favorite thing. I like -
- 14 AJ: Everyone loves it. Everyone - I've never seen it.
- 15 AB: But it's so funny.
- 16 AJ: Yeah.
- 17 AB: And it was so - I'm surprised the Mormons didn't make a little fuss about it.
- 18 AJ: Oh, I think they did.
- 19 AB: You know, the Lutherans wouldn't, but this was just made it - big, and the music was fun, and -
20 but musical comedy is really something I just sort of like a lot. It just sort of - it makes me happy and
21 then people are so energetic and they work so hard and...so, I think I saw mostly at the Orpheum
22 Theater, I don't remember the Pantages. It was another theater, downtown...right on 7th. The state is
23 down there. But, no - just to see something live. The first time I did, I was already quite - not a kid
24 anymore, when I saw my first live entertainment. I just was so pleased! Partly because - well, I supp -
25 wouldn't we all like to be stars? My dear, we would.
- 26 AJ: Yes.
- 27 AB: We would like to be stars.
- 28 AJ: We all would.
- 29 AB: We would like to be seen only at our best, when we're being our - truly, whatever our little bit
30 of...flamboyance in us. I think isn't there a little bit of showgirl in all of us?
- 31 AJ: I think there is.
- 32 AB: I would like to be able to do that, but I'm also kind of shy. I'm - in the extent that I could never
33 stand up there and...no. I don't think - I think I would all of a sudden...cringe and be afraid.

- 1 AJ: Oh, my goodness.
- 2 AB: But - when people can, I am...I'm just so pleased. I love to be entertained. And to sing and
3 dance. Next lifetime, I'm going to be able to sing and dance.
- 4 AJ: There you go.
- 5 AB: And...and I think that will be very nice.
- 6 AJ: Yes. Well, Amanda, this has been a lovely hour and a half. Thank you so much for sharing your -
7 your wisdom, your story, your life. Is there anything that I didn't ask you that you feel compelled to say?
- 8 AB: No. I just...for my own little story, and everybody's little story is a bigger story than they think,
9 or than I think.
- 10 AJ: Absolutely.
- 11 AB: But it is just...I have felt, in the last twenty-five years or more, I have just felt sort of blessed. I'm
12 just so lucky to be me. I'm glad to be me. We've - we're kind of good people.
- 13 AJ: Yes. We're kind of good people.
- 14 AB: And I enjoy myself - in very small ways. I do not do some of the things I used to, nor am I out
15 proving myself that mine are bigger than yours, or...that's not important, it's not what - And I don't
16 know how you could tell a young woman or a young whatever it's going to be that that's not the most
17 important part of it. I think at first one is very...concerned with the image of themselves. And if you just
18 sort of work into it gradually, you'll find your image, but. You're probably not going to be a beautiful
19 showgirl with sequins all over your ha-ha. I don't think so.
- 20 AJ: Wow. That's a great place to end. Thank you so much, Amanda. And - until we meet again, my
21 dear.
- 22 AB: Well, I may get to - oh, do you know, is there at the University, any doctor that is specifically
23 good for transgender people? I see this -
- 24 AJ: As a physical doctor?
- 25 AB: A physical doctor, yes.
- 26 AJ: Yeah, there are. There are a number of them.
- 27 AB: Who are they? Are they - there was somebody I wanted to see one time and I sort of had to
28 manipulate - I'm taken care of through Mayo, but you know, that even with Mayo, I do not...
- 29 AJ: Well, there's a very good doctor at Mayo Clinic that I can tell you about. So - I'm gonna just stop
30 the tape now.
- 31 AB: Doctor who?
- 32 AJ: His name is Doc -