

Diana Green  
Narrator

Andrea Jenkins  
Interviewer

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

June 27, 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 Diana Green -DG  
3  
4 AJ: So hello. My name is Andrea Jenkins, and I am the Oral Historian for the Transgender Oral  
5 History Project at the Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota Libraries. Today's date is  
6 June 27<sup>th</sup>...  
7  
8 DG: Yup.  
9  
10 AJ: ... 2017, and I am in Richfield, Minnesota with Diana Green.  
11  
12 DG: Hi.  
13  
14 AJ: Hey Diana. How are you?  
15  
16 DG: You know, I'm not fond of saying great but I'll get better. [Laughs].  
17  
18 AJ: Yeah. [Laughs]. Yeah, what's better than great? [Laughs].  
19  
20 DG: Uhm. Next level up is, uhm...  
21  
22 AJ: Extraordinary?  
23  
24 DG: Well, things can always be better. That's what Thomas Jefferson said about democracy. It's  
25 never going to be perfect, but it could be better.  
26  
27 AJ: Yes.  
28  
29 DG: And I think that's great. Better is achievable. Perfect is impossible.  
30  
31 AJ: Absolutely.  
32  
33 DG: So go Thomas Jefferson.  
34  
35 AJ: So, Diana, can you just start us off by stating your name, uhm, your gender identity today...  
36  
37 DG: Mhm.  
38  
39 AJ: ... your gender assigned at birth...  
40  
41 DG: Mhm.  
42  
43 AJ: ... and your, uhm, pronouns that you use?  
44  
45 DG: Certainly. My name is Diana Green. I have no middle initial. Uhm, my old friend Sarah and I  
46 decided on one day, well she doesn't remember this and it was going to be Celeste, but I never  
47 added it legally.

1  
2 AJ: Uhuh.  
3  
4 DG: It would have been nice. Uhm, my gender identity I define as female, and I am transsexual...  
5  
6 AJ: Mhm.  
7  
8 DG: ... which is a facet of that but I don't... well, we'll get back to that. And pronouns, uhm, feminine  
9 down the line. She/her/hers.  
10  
11 AJ: So, I don't want to assume, so what was your gender identity assigned at birth?  
12  
13 DG: Uhm, biologically male and socialized as male.  
14  
15 AJ: Okay. Alright. Well thank you so much, and it's, uh, a pleasure to be here with you again.  
16  
17 DG: Yeah.  
18  
19 AJ: This is our second interview.  
20  
21 DG: Yeah, well technology is not always our friend.  
22  
23 AJ: Yeah, not always.  
24  
25 DG: But most of the time it works pretty well.  
26  
27 AJ: Yeah.  
28  
29 DG: It's a benevolent dictator.  
30  
31 AJ: [Laughs]. So, you know, one of the, one of the questions that we started off with the last time  
32 was talk about your earliest memory. And if I recall you had a pretty vivid first memory in life.  
33  
34 DG: Well, the first thing I actually remember was being born.  
35  
36 AJ: You remember being born?  
37  
38 DG: Yeah. I remember darkness. I remember light. And I remember pain and breathing. And I didn't  
39 have the language for it but I do remember being born and various small things after that but  
40 the first conscious memory I have around, uhm, gender issues relates to my little sister who's  
41 two, two and a half years younger than me, I think. She was born in July two years after I was  
42 born.  
43  
44 AJ: Uhuh.  
45  
46 DG: And, uhm, we were on my grandpa's farm, and we were outside. I was supposed to get my  
47 haircut, and we were hiding cause Teresa didn't want me to get my haircut.

1  
2 AJ: The baby sister?  
3  
4 DG: Yeah.  
5  
6 AJ: Okay.  
7  
8 DG: And, uhm, mother finally found me and took me in and said, "Why don't you want to get your  
9 haircut?" And Teresa, "Well, if he doesn't get his haircut then we can both be girls and play  
10 together." And I didn't say anything but I thought, "How did she know?"  
11  
12 AJ: Wow.  
13  
14 DG: And then that long later I thought how did I know...  
15  
16 AJ: Uhuh.  
17  
18 DG: ... cause I wasn't overtly aware of it up until right that second.  
19  
20 AJ: Right.  
21  
22 DG: But I was, uh, 5 or 6. I'm not sure except the exact age because that was around the time my  
23 parents divorced which is why we were on the farm already.  
24  
25 AJ: Mhm.  
26  
27 DG: And at that point I had, uhm, four siblings and a fifth one on the way or three siblings and a  
28 fourth one on the way.  
29  
30 AJ: Oh wow. So where did you grow up?  
31  
32 DG: Uhm, earliest years I was, uhm, in New Mexico for a little while.  
33  
34 AJ: Mhm.  
35  
36 DG: Uhm, my parents were Air Force. I was an Air Force brat, and they were stationed in Roswell  
37 which kind of explained a few things. [Laughs].  
38  
39 AJ: Yeah. [Laughs].  
40  
41 DG: Uhm. But mostly Minnesota, uhm, I was in southern Minnesota on the farm belt in a little town  
42 called Springfield— Sandborn near Springfield...  
43  
44 AJ: Mhm.  
45  
46 DG: ... until I was about 6 or 7 and then we moved up to the Iron Range up to Grand Rapids area. Got  
47 a little house out in the country...

1  
2 AJ: Mhm.  
3  
4 DG: ... near my grandparents' resort. That was my grandparent's idea of retirement. They bought a  
5 resort so they could, uhm, get up at 5 in the morning instead of 4 cause they're farm people.  
6  
7 AJ: Wow. Okay. [Laughs].  
8  
9 DG: And, uh...  
10  
11 AJ: That was very relaxing for them. [Laughs].  
12  
13 DG: Uhm, I lived there until I was 15 and moved back in with my dad in Wabasha, Wisconsin. Lived  
14 there until I was 18, moved back in with my mother after a brief period of homelessness. Uhm,  
15 and, uh, bounced back and forth between North Minnesota and Madison for a while.  
16  
17 AJ: Yeah.  
18  
19 DG: And ended up settling in Minneapolis, uhm, as a result of the company I was working for at the  
20 time, transferring me here...  
21  
22 AJ: Mhm.  
23  
24 DG: ... and even though I had family here and they didn't know the real reason why I wanted to  
25 come here was because I knew about the gender program.  
26  
27 AJ: Okay.  
28  
29 DG: And I was married at the time and scared the hell out of my wife.  
30  
31 AJ: Did she return to Minnesota with you?  
32  
33 DG: Oh she came with me but she didn't know everything I was thinking about doing. She knew... I  
34 told her I was either a crossdresser or a transsexual, and I back peddled on the full truth  
35 because, well, we're getting ahead of ourselves.  
36  
37 AJ: No, you...  
38  
39 DG: Oh, okay.  
40  
41 AJ: ... go, go ahead.  
42  
43 DG: Well, I didn't want to admit it to myself first of all. I was scared as hell. And I didn't want to  
44 acknowledge it to her because I wanted to marry her.  
45  
46 AJ: Mhm.  
47

1 DG: You know? And I wanted, I wanted to marry her because I loved her.  
2  
3 AJ: Sure.  
4  
5 DG: And, for the other reason, cause, you know, I just finished reading Jenny Boylan's book, and she  
6 phrases it so much clearer than I did, than I do saying that, you know, maybe love will save me.  
7  
8 AJ: Mhm.  
9  
10 DG: I think, I think I had something of that in me. I think we all do.  
11  
12 AJ: Yeah.  
13  
14 DG: I think we all hope for that kind of redemption. Uhm, but, as I observed in the past, that's not  
15 the way love supposed to work. When you love somebody they're supposed to come first, and  
16 you're supposed to take care of them. And that's reciprocal, and you work together to  
17 accomplish something larger.  
18  
19 AJ: Mhm.  
20  
21 DG: Uhm, and if you have that big of an agenda and you keep it to yourself I don't know how loving  
22 that really is. I'm still in contact with Linda, my former wife.  
23  
24 AJ: Yeah.  
25  
26 DG: And, but our lives have gone in very different directions. Uhm, she had, she had the kid she  
27 always wanted, which sadly the kid died in a car— in a bus crash when the kid was 19.  
28  
29 AJ: Oh no.  
30  
31 DG: It was awful. And the weird thing about that was, even though I hadn't no relationship to the kid  
32 whatsoever...  
33  
34 AJ: Mhm.  
35  
36 DG: ... a small, a small part of me felt like it was my kid.  
37  
38 AJ: Yeah.  
39  
40 DG: Cause I watched her grow up from a distance but I watcher her grow up. I was peripheral but I  
41 was part of her life.  
42  
43 AJ: Right.  
44  
45 DG: And Linda's brother outed me to her when she was like 5, which I thought was very cruel...  
46  
47 AJ: Mhm.

1  
2 DG: ... cause it's none of his business. Uhm, and she was fine with me all along, but part of me felt  
3 like she was the kid I didn't get to have and then that was gone.  
4  
5 AJ: Wow, sorry.  
6  
7 DG: Yeah. Thanks.  
8  
9 AJ: What, what was life like with your siblings and, and your parents?  
10  
11 DG: Oh boy. [Laughs]. Well...  
12  
13 AJ: And you said you guys moved quite a bit.  
14  
15 DG: Well, we didn't, we settled in pretty, pretty much once we got the house. Once we got the  
16 house that was pretty much it.  
17  
18 AJ: Mhm.  
19  
20 DG: It was a small house, and it had electric heat. And it was in very rural North Minnesota. Our  
21 nearest neighborhood was a mile away.  
22  
23 AJ: Hm.  
24  
25 DG: And, uhm, there are a lot of things I loved about it. I loved the quiet. I loved, I loved, uhm, being  
26 able to take walks in the woods. I loved being able to be by myself. And I loved being able to be  
27 by myself because I wasn't at school being beat up.  
28  
29 AJ: Oh boy. So you got bullied a lot at school.  
30  
31 DG: Oh, relentlessly. And the, the, I was gonna say paradigm, but it's not, paradox. The frustration  
32 and hypocrisy around that is that shortly after the divorce I had no idea what was going on  
33 because my mother never told me my parents were divorced. I found out when I met my dad's  
34 second wife.  
35  
36 AJ: What? [Laughs].  
37  
38 DG: Yeah, uhm, I was 15, and we went to visit them. "Hi, this is Audrey." "Okay, hi Audrey." "Well,  
39 you do know your parents are divorced, don't you?" "Oh, oh, yeah, sure. Uhuh."  
40  
41 AJ: [Laughs]. Why...  
42  
43 DG: The weird, the weird thing is I found, I found...  
44  
45 AJ: Were, were your mom and dad still in a relationship?  
46



1 DG: Oh, no, but the weird thing is I found out just a couple of years ago from my step, my half-sister,  
2 my sister through my dad and Audrey...  
3  
4 AJ: Mhm.  
5  
6 DG: I have a sister and a brother through them that they didn't tell them either.  
7  
8 AJ: Oh.  
9  
10 DG: Woah. So I felt like we were being singled out but it turns out, no not really. [Laughs].  
11  
12 AJ: [Laughs].  
13  
14 DG: Uhm, but anyway, back to the other thing. So mother told me, I, we were sitting in the car at  
15 night, and mother said, "Well, you're the man of the house now."  
16  
17 AJ: Mhm.  
18  
19 DG: And this was after the thing with Teresa, so I already didn't think I was a boy and now I was  
20 supposed to be a man. And I was supposed to be in charge. She didn't mean to do it but that  
21 was a very, very cruel thing to do.  
22  
23 AJ: Hm.  
24  
25 DG: She wasn't trying to be cruel. She was just trying to tell me something about my role in the  
26 family.  
27  
28 AJ: Sure.  
29  
30 DG: And...  
31  
32 AJ: Which is a fairly common thing to say to the oldest male child...  
33  
34 DG: Yeah, yeah.  
35  
36 AJ: ... in a household. [Laughs].  
37  
38 DG: Yeah, and I had an older sister who should have, was actually more pragmatic than I was, even  
39 at that age. And she was much more capable of being in charge of anything than I was.  
40  
41 AJ: Being the man of the house. [Laughs].  
42  
43 DG: You know, but my sisters and my older younger brother were the ones that saw me get beat up  
44 on the bus. And I get home, and I'm supposed to be in charge after all of that. And not even  
45 feeling like a boy in the first place...  
46  
47 AJ: Hm.

1  
2 DG: Why am I not a boy in the first place...  
3  
4 AJ: Mhm.  
5  
6 DG: So everything I did around the house was couched in this lie.  
7  
8 AJ: Mm. Yeah.  
9  
10 DG: And, uh, that went on for quite a while. Uhm.  
11  
12 AJ: Why do you think the beating up was happening?  
13  
14 DG: I was femmy. I carried my books like a girl. I walk like a girl. I was very slight build.  
15  
16 AJ: Mhm.  
17  
18 DG: Uhm, and I liked hanging out with my sister's.  
19  
20 AJ: Yeah.  
21  
22 DG: And I wanted to sit with them cause they were my sisters. And all the boys were in the back of  
23 the bus, and it was only a mile to school but they sure squeezed a lot into that mile.  
24  
25 AJ: Oh.  
26  
27 DG: And eventually they started getting tired of it, and I just sat with the girls and that was sort of  
28 the end of it. And summer came, and I didn't really talk about this part until I put it in this  
29 graphic memoir I'm working on. Uhm, I know it's okay to talk about it. Uhm, summer came, and,  
30 uhm, I was having a good summer.  
31  
32 AJ: Mhm.  
33  
34 DG: I realized school was gonna start again. And one day I went out to the swing set that we had in  
35 the yard right by the big tree that we always climbed.  
36  
37 AJ: Mhm.  
38  
39 DG: And you know how the old swing sets have the crossbar and the little "A" there.  
40  
41 AJ: Yeah.  
42  
43 DG: Well, I climbed the tree partway. Stood on that crossbar, tied a couple knots in a piece of twine.  
44 Tied one end around the support bar of the swing set...  
45  
46 AJ: Mhm.  
47

1 DG: ... opened up the other end, put it around my neck, and I stepped off.  
2  
3 AJ: Hm.  
4  
5 DG: And for a couple seconds, half a minute, I don't know, I just hung there. And I somehow got my  
6 footing. I wrote in the book that it might have been my guardian angel, which being raised  
7 Catholic, I believed it at the time cause I was, I was pretty devout. I loved being an alter boy. I  
8 got to wear that dress.  
9  
10 AJ: [Laughs].  
11  
12 DG: But I never told anybody in the family. Just went back in the house and that was that.  
13  
14 AJ: Wow.  
15  
16 DG: But I think getting my footing again was when I made a decision. I made it again later.  
17  
18 AJ: Mhm.  
19  
20 DG: That's when I made the decision that I'd rather be alive.  
21  
22 AJ: Hm.  
23  
24 DG: Even if it hurt.  
25  
26 AJ: Mhm.  
27  
28 DG: And shortly after, that was in August. That November was when I started swiping my sister's  
29 clothes and dressing whenever I could.  
30  
31 AJ: How old would you say you were?  
32  
33 DG: 10.  
34  
35 AJ: Hm.  
36  
37 DG: 9. Somewhere between 9 and 11. I think 10.  
38  
39 AJ: Okay.  
40  
41 DG: And I remember it because it was Thanksgiving the first time I did it. And there was this one  
42 dress. I just loved that dress. It was this bright pumpkin orange sleeveless, zip up the back, slight  
43 pleating to the skirt, uhm, and pantyhose hadn't been invented yet so garter belt and stalking.  
44 And I stole a little bit of makeup. And I stayed home from school sick every time I could get away  
45 with it.  
46  
47 AJ: Huh.

1  
2 DG: And mother had errands to run sometimes. So she left me home alone.  
3  
4 AJ: [Laughs].  
5  
6 DG: And one day I decided... The whole family was out, and I decided, and I decided that I just  
7 wanted to stay home that day. And I was just, so I was even running around in the yard, and a  
8 car drove by and saw me.  
9  
10 AJ: Hm.  
11  
12 DG: Oh, big scary. And, you know, for a little kid I looked okay. And I decided, "Well, I'm just going to  
13 stay this way. And when everyone gets home, I'm going to tell them this is, this is who I am."  
14  
15 AJ: Uhuh.  
16  
17 DG: This is how I want to be treated. And I chickened out. Of course, I chickened out.  
18  
19 AJ: Yeah. Well, it's pretty scary.  
20  
21 DG: It can be.  
22  
23 AJ: When did you come out?  
24  
25 DG: First time I said it out loud even alone after I had a name for it, which I had gotten a name for it  
26 when I read an article in Newsweek when I was 14.  
27  
28 AJ: Mhm.  
29  
30 DG: And then mother got a copy of Christine Jorgensen's biography, and I read that so I had little  
31 pieces of stuff.  
32  
33 AJ: What, why do you think she bought, I mean why...  
34  
35 DG: She bought, it was just a book. She bought a book.  
36  
37 AJ: Just a book. Yeah.  
38  
39 DG: You think I've got books? She, she couldn't move because of the books in the house.  
40  
41 AJ: Oh wow.  
42  
43 DG: When, after, every time one of the kids left the house more books and stuff came in. And she  
44 was something of a hoarder.  
45  
46 AJ: Uhuh.  
47

1 DG: And I've got some of that in me too, although I try to keep it in check. I'm about due for another  
2 edit. That's the end of the discussion.  
3  
4 AJ: [Laughs].  
5  
6 DG: Uhm, yeah, and if you look around you can see there's a book or two to be read.  
7  
8 AJ: You, you have a couple of books.  
9  
10 DG: Yeah, two or three. [Laughs].  
11  
12 AJ: [Laughs].  
13  
14 DG: Uhm, but, uhm, I stayed home a lot. Where was I going with that?  
15  
16 AJ: You, you read Christine Jorgensen's book.  
17  
18 DG: Oh, I was, oh, the, the first time I said it out loud, the first time I dared to say that this, that it  
19 was the T word, I was about 17 or 18.  
20  
21 AJ: Mhm.  
22  
23 DG: And it was, I was living with my dad by then, and I was just finishing up high school, which I  
24 didn't quite stay with my dad through the whole time. I left, uhm, I moved out on my own when  
25 I was seven— when I turned 18. I graduated a few months after that. That's a little bit of a  
26 diversion. Uhm, there was this guy in high school named Dave Barons, and this is 1972. And he  
27 was an out gay boy in high school in 1972.  
28  
29 AJ: Wow.  
30  
31 DG: He got endless crap.  
32  
33 AJ: Mhm.  
34  
35 DG: And he used to wear the most beautiful lip gloss to school. Uhm, well one night dad and Audrey  
36 took Joey and Eric, my stepbrother and stepsister on a trip, and they left me home alone.  
37  
38 AJ: Mhm.  
39  
40 DG: So I found Audrey's clothes, and I actually shaved my legs for the first time.  
41  
42 AJ: Oh wow.  
43  
44 DG: And big scary. [Laughs].  
45  
46 AJ: [Laughs].  
47

1 DG: I thought it would be real neat but it turned out to be kind of a chore. [Laughs].  
2  
3 AJ: Yeah, it's work. [Laughs].  
4  
5 DG: Uh, it is still real neat though. Uhm, and I found Dave's phone number in the phonebook and  
6 called him up and said, "Listen..." I was gonna say, "Listen, I don't know what's going on with me  
7 but I think I might be gay too. Can you come over? Can we talk?"  
8  
9 AJ: Mhm.  
10  
11 DG: But he didn't answer. So that was that. That was the first time I came close to actually saying it  
12 out loud to anybody.  
13  
14 AJ: Uhuh.  
15  
16 DG: I said it out loud to myself right around that time. Uhm...  
17  
18 AJ: Even though you weren't really gay.  
19  
20 DG: I didn't, I was, I was a little confused about stuff because I didn't know how I felt about guys. I  
21 didn't know how I felt about girls.  
22  
23 AJ: Mhm.  
24  
25 DG: And I, I was sexually aware, if not sexually active...  
26  
27 AJ: Mhm.  
28  
29 DG: I had my first real sexual experience about a month after I moved out of the house and that was  
30 with a woman. Uhm, I was scared sex. It was hell being with guys.  
31  
32 AJ: Mm.  
33  
34 DG: Uhm, I'm not scared anymore. Now I think they're kind of scratchy, and they smell funny.  
35  
36 AJ: [Laughs].  
37  
38 DG: There's still guys I'd go out with but it's pretty rare. Mostly I like girls. Uhm, but it was a couple  
39 of months after I finished high school, and I moved back in with dad. And I was walking along the  
40 railroad tracks. There was some railroad tracks that ran this one block on the way home from  
41 school. And I don't know why I was walking home from school because school wasn't in session.  
42  
43 AJ: Mhm.  
44  
45 DG: But I was walking along the tracks, and I decided, "Well, if I get back to the house, I'm gonna  
46 make some phone calls, and, you know, call the mental health line and see what I can do about  
47 this."

1  
2 AJ: Hm.  
3  
4 DG: And by the time I got home, I chickened out again. I was too scared. I just couldn't do it.  
5  
6 AJ: Hm. Wow.  
7  
8 DG: And treatment in the early 1970s was, I found out later, scarce and let's just say inconsistent. So  
9 I probably would have made it through, but it wouldn't have been as good as it turned out to be.  
10 So in that sense maybe it was for the best, even though there were some wasted years in there  
11 that I kind of regret.  
12  
13 AJ: Hm. So, uhm, you still haven't said when you came out. [Laughs].  
14  
15 DG: I came out officially, I came out to my wife a little bit before we got married in 1978.  
16  
17 AJ: Mhm.  
18  
19 DG: I came out in inches after that as I gave myself permission to do more. I got more involved in the  
20 crossdressing community. I met someone in the crossdressing community that had taken  
21 hormones, and they gave me some advice. And, uhm, I started getting more and more  
22 interested in the idea of fully living, and the more interested I got in this the angier and more  
23 resentful Linda got cause of course she didn't, you know, she loved me but that wasn't what she  
24 signed up for.  
25  
26 AJ: Sure. Linda was your wife.  
27  
28 DG: Linda was my wife. And, uhm, first time I actually said it out loud to another person without any  
29 reservation or anything like that was when Linda and I were in a therapy session at PHS in 1985.  
30  
31 AJ: Okay. [Yawns]. I'm so sorry, I don't know.  
32  
33 DG: You've had a full day dear. Just cut yourself some slack.  
34  
35 AJ: 1985. PHS.  
36  
37 DG: Yeah. And we had a good therapist, and I showed him some pictures of me on film as it were.  
38  
39 AJ: Mhm.  
40  
41 DG: And he was very diplomatic, very good looking both ways. Yes, I am thank you. [Laughs].  
42  
43 AJ: [Laughs].  
44  
45 DG: And, uh, at that point, I had been out to my mother as a crossdresser.  
46  
47 AJ: Mhm.

1  
2 DG: And I called her up and started the conversation the way we start a lot of our conversations  
3 talking about Lord of the Rings, which was a really big deal in our family.  
4  
5 AJ: Mhm.  
6  
7 DG: It's a very sad story around that. It's a good story, but it's a sad story.  
8  
9 AJ: Did, did you tell me once that you guys, with, on holidays, like everybody comes as...  
10  
11 DG: No, no, no, no. No, no, no. We don't costume.  
12  
13 AJ: Okay.  
14  
15 DG: We don't cosplay.  
16  
17 AJ: Alright.  
18  
19 DG: No, no. We're, we're much too, uhm, midwestern for that. [Laughs].  
20  
21 AJ: [Laughs].  
22  
23 DG: No, uhm, mother came home from, uhm, her painting class when she started taking a painting  
24 classes...  
25  
26 AJ: Mhm.  
27  
28 DG: ... as soon as the youngest of us started school, uhm, we had a little bit of... didn't need as much  
29 care.  
30  
31 AJ: Mhm.  
32  
33 DG: And she said, "Okay, I don't usually do this, but these books just came out in this country, and  
34 they are important books so I will pay you 25 cents per book to read these four books." It was  
35 The Hobbit and The Lord... and the trilogy.  
36  
37 AJ: Mhm.  
38  
39 DG: And everybody else was like, "Meh." And I said, "That's a dollar. I could buy eight comic books  
40 with that." [Laughs].  
41  
42 AJ: [Laughs].  
43  
44 DG: I love comic books.  
45  
46 AJ: Yes.  
47



1 DG: Always. Uhm.  
2  
3 AJ: And you don't have to tell us about your fear...  
4  
5 DG: Yeah, in time. Uhm, so I didn't really understand them, but I read them all. And I went back and  
6 revisited them every now and then. Mother's study of them became very serious, and she  
7 became quite the Tolkien scholar on her own.  
8  
9 AJ: Mhm.  
10  
11 DG: And we opened a lot of our conversations with talking about Tolkien.  
12  
13 AJ: Ah.  
14  
15 DG: And I used that as talking about Gandalf and magic as my bridge into saying, "Remember I told  
16 you last year, well, I got something more to tell you." And she said, "Are you planning on a trip  
17 to Sweden?" Cause she thought Christine Jorgensen...  
18  
19 AJ: Uhuh.  
20  
21 DG: All these days its's mostly Colorado but yeah. And she took a breath and said, "You're my kid no  
22 matter what."  
23  
24 AJ: Hm. Dear old mom.  
25  
26 DG: Yeah. A few weeks later I got a letter from her that said, "I agree that this feels right, but be  
27 careful."  
28  
29 AJ: Mhm.  
30  
31 DG: "Sometimes the relief of having made a big decision can be confused with it being the right  
32 decision. I don't think you're wrong, but I want you to think about that a little." Okay.  
33  
34 AJ: It's actually good advice.  
35  
36 DG: It's very good advice. She had a lot of good advice. When I was with my partner, Jenny, Jenny  
37 couldn't come with me to visit her one time. And I said, "Why, I gotta get home. Jenny is waiting  
38 for me." "Well you got a good friend there." And, uhm, I started getting my pride up, and I said,  
39 "You know, Jenny and I are much more than just friends." And she cut me off and said, "Don't  
40 knock friendship. Lovers come and go. A good friend is a rarity."  
41  
42 AJ: Wow.  
43  
44 DG: Mother is pretty sharp.  
45  
46 AJ: Yeah. [Laughs].  
47

1 DG: She had her ways. My sis— my sister built a house on some of the land that we grew up on, and,  
2 uhm, I'll tell this real quick cause I went too far off topic. Uhm, the first time she had fuel oil  
3 delivered, the delivery man said, "Did you know the lady that lived in the house that was up on  
4 the hills?" "Yeah, that was my mother's." "Oh, I used to hate delivering there." "Really, why?" I  
5 said. "Well, after the delivery I would come in and have her sign for it and pay for it, and she  
6 would have me, she would offer me a cup of coffee. And we would have the most fascinating  
7 conversation for an hour, and I would be late for my next delivery." [Laughs].  
8  
9 AJ: [Laughs].  
10  
11 DG: So that was Mother, oh.  
12  
13 AJ: Oh wow.  
14  
15 DG: Anyway, she was supportive.  
16  
17 AJ: Uhuh. That's great.  
18  
19 DG: And, uhm...  
20  
21 AJ: Did she ever remarry?  
22  
23 DG: No. No, she was raised Baptist and converted to Catholicism while she was in college.  
24  
25 AJ: Mhm.  
26  
27 DG: And she held to her faith very dear and in the eyes of the church you weren't allowed to  
28 remarry unless you had a special sanction, and she stuck to that.  
29  
30 AJ: Hm. Wow.  
31  
32 DG: Dad converted to marry her, which is, I found out just recently from my sister. I thought it was  
33 the other way around. But dad converted to marry her. And he really didn't care about his faith,  
34 which is an interesting because late in his life he went all, uhm, Baptist and was convinced that I  
35 had demon inside me and that's why I was doing this.  
36  
37 AJ: Hm.  
38  
39 DG: Yeah, thanks dad.  
40  
41 AJ: So your relationships with your dad was not as...  
42  
43 DG: No.  
44  
45 AJ: ... comforting as it was with your mother.  
46

1 DG: No, it was always strained. For one thing, she was there, he wasn't. And when he showed up to  
2 try to be a parent, make up for lost time, some of it was to erase her, to erase my mother. One  
3 of, one of the goals of dad and Audrey was to have all five of us come live with them. And they  
4 said it was because they didn't think mother was a good parent, but the truth is I think they  
5 wanted to erase dad's first marriage, make like it never happened.  
6  
7 AJ: Hm.  
8  
9 DG: And we fought. And I resented... this will sound so selfish but it's true. I resented his relationship  
10 with my half-sister Julie because it was the relationship that I wanted with him.  
11  
12 AJ: Sure.  
13  
14 DG: And the one I couldn't have. Cause fathers and daughters are a very different thing from fathers  
15 and sons.  
16  
17 AJ: I think it is. I think you're right.  
18  
19 DG: And I did not get that.  
20  
21 AJ: Hm.  
22  
23 DG: And even when he met me as me, I didn't get that.  
24  
25 AJ: Are either of your parents still alive?  
26  
27 DG: No. No, my dad passed about a year before I had surgery. And my mother passed in 199... in  
28 1993... 2003 cause she was 73 and she was born in 1930.  
29  
30 AJ: So Diana what medical interventions have you undergone related to your gender identity?  
31  
32 DG: I've been taking hormones since about a year after I started therapy so I've been taking  
33 hormones for 34 years, not counting a couple of years when I couldn't get a prescription or  
34 couldn't afford them.  
35  
36 AJ: Mhm.  
37  
38 DG: Uhm, I've had, uh, genital reconstruction, genital correction, I guess is the current popular term.  
39  
40 AJ: Or...  
41  
42 DG: But I had a vagina built.  
43  
44 AJ: And some people [laughs], some people call it gender confirmation.  
45  
46 DG: That's better. I like that.  
47

1 AJ: Yeah.  
2  
3 DG: That's a good one, that's a good one. And, uhm, I was talking to the surgeon, getting ready, and  
4 I'd sworn all along that I was just gonna go with whatever nature gave me. But, "Do you want  
5 breast implants?" "Yeah, okay." [Laughs].  
6  
7 AJ: [Laughs].  
8  
9 DG: In retrospect, I, that may not have been the wisest decision but it hasn't really caused any real  
10 problems.  
11  
12 AJ: Uhuh.  
13  
14 DG: I have minor loss of sensation in some areas but it's very minor and basically I gotta go with Kate  
15 Bornstein said, "The plumbing works, so does the electricity."  
16  
17 AJ: Yeah. [Laughs].  
18  
19 DG: Oh Kate, such a pistol.  
20  
21 AJ: Kate Bornstein, yes. Uhm.  
22  
23 DG: She is such a pistol.  
24  
25 AJ: Well, I'm glad everything is firing off.  
26  
27 DG: Well...  
28  
29 AJ: As it should.  
30  
31 DG: These days it's mostly theoretical, but yeah.  
32  
33 AJ: Yeah. Wow. [Laughs]. So, uhm, where, where did this happen?  
34  
35 DG: I had the surgery at, uhm, at the hospital downtown, the one by Elliot Park. Hennepin County  
36 Medical Center.  
37  
38 AJ: Yeah.  
39  
40 DG: Dr. Sheridan Stevens did it.  
41  
42 AJ: Sheridan Stevens?  
43  
44 DG: Yes.  
45  
46 AJ: Huh.  
47

1 DG: He's passed now.  
2  
3 AJ: Yeah.  
4  
5 DG: Uhm, he retired about ten years after he did my surgery, and he passed on, I think, around 2000.  
6  
7 AJ: So, what, what year did you have your surgery done?  
8  
9 DG: 1989. April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1989.  
10  
11 AJ: So this wasn't related to the University of Minnesota's Gender...  
12  
13 DG: Well...  
14  
15 AJ: ... confirmation...  
16  
17 DG: It was, and it wasn't. I mean, I got my approval letters through them.  
18  
19 AJ: Mhm.  
20  
21 DG: I still think the idea that you have to get approved by somebody else to do something you want  
22 to your own body is really insulting.  
23  
24 AJ: It is.  
25  
26 DG: Uhm, but you dance within so, that's the way, that's the way they want to play this, we will play  
27 it.  
28  
29 AJ: [Laughs]. Alright.  
30  
31 DG: Uhm, but, I was, I was getting approval letters from the Program in Human Sexuality, and they  
32 have this rule, or I don't know if they still do but they had this rule that they wouldn't give you  
33 approval letters unless your bill was current with them. I owed them 500 bucks.  
34  
35 AJ: They probably still have that rule. [Laughs].  
36  
37 DG: I wouldn't be at all surprised. It's a very pragmatic, it's cruel in a way, but it's very practical.  
38  
39 AJ: Sure.  
40  
41 DG: Uhm.  
42  
43 AJ: You're very motivated to pay your bill.  
44  
45 DG: Mhm. But at the time my employment situation was getting worse and worse, and my expenses  
46 were getting higher and higher.  
47

1 AJ: Mhm.  
2  
3 DG: So it might as well have been 5 million dollars. One day this friend of mine, I was living in section  
4 8 housing, not, not yet, I was not yet living in section 8 housing. That's where we're going with  
5 this.  
6  
7 AJ: Mhm.  
8  
9 DG: This friend of mine was hanging out with me in Elliot Park and said, "Okay, I just won my social  
10 security case, and I got a big check for backpay."  
11  
12 AJ: Mhm.  
13  
14 DG: "I will lend you the money you need to pay PHS so you can get your letters on the condition that  
15 you quit your job, go on disability, and go on welfare so that the state will pay for your surgery."  
16  
17 AJ: Uhm.  
18  
19 DG: And even though it hasn't been, hadn't been that consistent. One thing I had always done was  
20 work.  
21  
22 AJ: Mhm.  
23  
24 DG: There have been a few times in my life when I haven't been able to work or just didn't even  
25 have a place to work but it's been pretty sporadic.  
26  
27 AJ: Mhm.  
28  
29 DG: Uhm, most time I worked, and I took whatever work I could get cause that's what you do.  
30  
31 AJ: Right.  
32  
33 DG: That's the way I was raised.  
34  
35 AJ: Yeah.  
36  
37 DG: So I had to throw away a big piece of my... integrity...  
38  
39 AJ: Yeah.  
40  
41 DG: ... to claim this. There may have been another way to do it, but I didn't see it. And...  
42  
43 AJ: it's very expensive.  
44  
45 DG: Well, it's about like getting a car.  
46  
47 AJ: Mhm.

1  
2 DG: Realistically. It costs about the same as getting a new car. If you can finance a new car...  
3  
4 AJ: Cars are pretty expensive though.  
5  
6 DG: If you can get the credit to finance a new car, you can get the credit to finance surgery. The  
7 difference is you have to be able to fully back it because you don't have anything for equity.  
8 What are they going to do? Repossess your parts?  
9  
10 AJ: [Laughs]. Sell you into slavery, maybe. I don't know.  
11  
12 DG: Well, possible.  
13  
14 AJ: [Laughs]. Uhm, so 1989. You left your job.  
15  
16 DG: I left my job.  
17  
18 AJ: Got on public assistance.  
19  
20 DG: I left my job in late '87 or early '88.  
21  
22 AJ: Okay.  
23  
24 DG: And went on welfare with a letter from Dr. Sheridan Satterfield at the Program in Human  
25 Sexuality saying I was not capable of working anymore.  
26  
27 AJ: Mhm.  
28  
29 DG: And I went from making a modest income to living in subsidized housing and getting \$200 a  
30 month plus money in food stamps. The beauty of it was because it was subsidized housing my  
31 rent was negative \$2.  
32  
33 AJ: [Laughs]. So they owed you \$2?  
34  
35 DG: They gave me a check for \$2 every month.  
36  
37 AJ: [Laughs].  
38  
39 DG: For the first year. Then when I got on social security, uhm, it went up to, uhm, I think, \$35.  
40  
41 AJ: Oh wow.  
42  
43 DG: It was, uh... uh 611, no, 610 East 15<sup>th</sup> St.  
44  
45 AJ: Mhm.  
46  
47 DG: And it was a 15 unit building, and 8 of the units were occupied by trans women.

1  
2 AJ: Really?  
3  
4 DG: Yeah. And the neighbors did not like that. And they started calling the place Tranny Tower.  
5  
6 AJ: What was the address?  
7  
8 DG: Uhm, 610 East 15<sup>th</sup> St.  
9  
10 AJ: And there were 11 transsexuals...  
11  
12 DG: no, there were, there were 15 units, and, if I remember right, 8 of them were occupied by trans  
13 women...  
14  
15 AJ: Okay.  
16  
17 DG: ... in various stages and various points in the process. And we're all on social security or some  
18 form of subsidized, public subsidy or some form of disability.  
19  
20 AJ: Mhm.  
21  
22 DG: And we're all in subsidized housing. And most of us just hit the bars a lot. Didn't really do much  
23 else.  
24  
25 AJ: Mhm.  
26  
27 DG: I read, and I made music. And I did my art as best I could cause that's who I was and that's who I  
28 am and that's who I will always be.  
29  
30 AJ: Sure.  
31  
32 DG: You know, comics, art, music, and writing. That's me.  
33  
34 AJ: Mhm.  
35  
36 DG: Uhm, and, uhm, but I'd go bar hopping with them. I'd go down to the '90s. They would help me  
37 with the hair and the makeup. I was pretty thin...  
38  
39 AJ: Yeah.  
40  
41 DG: ... and I looked pretty good.  
42  
43 AJ: Yeah. [Laughs].  
44  
45 DG: You know, wearing the short skirts and the CFMs and [laughs] around town.  
46  
47 AJ: CFMs. Come... fuck me.



1  
2 DG: Yup.  
3  
4 AJ: Pumps. [Laughs].  
5  
6 DG: Yup. Learned to walk in them puppies, which takes some doing.  
7  
8 AJ: Yeah. It's a skill.  
9  
10 DG: Yeah. And I did alright. I mean, my best friend Terry, the one who at the time, uhm, the one who  
11 loaned me the money, she was, she was a stunning blond and she got more guys than I did  
12 because blonds, that's just...  
13  
14 AJ: Have more fun, right? [Laughs].  
15  
16 DG: Well, blonds get more guys.  
17  
18 AJ: [Laughs].  
19  
20 DG: And for a while that bothered me. Uhm, and this guy who used to work for me called me and we  
21 started going out. That turned into a big thing. But I'm getting a little a head of myself.  
22  
23 AJ: A big thing? There's no getting ahead.  
24  
25 DG: Oh, okay.  
26  
27 AJ: This story is your story.  
28  
29 DG: Well, okay, well, there was this guy named Curt. Curt Garde. G.A.R.D.E.  
30  
31 AJ: Uhuh.  
32  
33 DG: Uhm, he, uh, worked for me when I was running the theater in Madison. I ran movie theaters for  
34 Landmark Theaters for a while.  
35  
36 AJ: Mhm.  
37  
38 DG: And, uhm, I came, I transitioned on the job there when I was in Madison, and I quit shortly after  
39 that. I had to because, uhm, they just made it too hard for me to keep working there. And I let  
40 them. I didn't realize until later that's what they were doing, largely because they were  
41 embarrassed by me.  
42  
43 AJ: Yeah.  
44  
45 DG: And they transferred me from...  
46  
47 AJ: About your transgender status?

1  
2 DG: Yes. After I came out, they, the first thing they said was, "Well, we're gonna watch your work  
3 more closely now." And I told Linda that, my spouse at the time.  
4  
5 AJ: Mhm.  
6  
7 DG: She got mad. She said, "Why would they do that? You're the same person doing the same job.  
8 Why would they watch your work diff— look at your work differently?"  
9  
10 AJ: Mhm.  
11  
12 DG: "Okay." And I didn't realize that that was a thing, and she's been a woman all her life. She knows  
13 what to look for.  
14  
15 AJ: Mhm.  
16  
17 DG: Some of this is new to me. So I'm going, "Oh."  
18  
19 AJ: Right.  
20  
21 DG: They have different expectations now. And so I transitioned on the job in Madison. Curt was  
22 working for me briefly, and he would call me every now and then, ask me for a job  
23 recommendation. Once he called, "Can I come see you? I'd like to talk to you about a couple of  
24 things." "Okay." I was living in section 8 housing at the time. He came to see me.  
25  
26 AJ: Mhm. Here in Minneapolis?  
27  
28 DG: Yeah.  
29  
30 AJ: Okay.  
31  
32 DG: At the 610 building.  
33  
34 AJ: The Tranny Tower. [Laughs].  
35  
36 DG: Yeah, which is why I named my comic strip that cause it was an act of liberation.  
37  
38 AJ: So your comic strip is called Tranny Towers? Oh, okay.  
39  
40 DG: Yeah, the comic strip that ran in Lavender Magazine for about a year and a half.  
41  
42 AJ: Mhm.  
43  
44 DG: From, from the inception of the magazine, cause it was in the very first issue of the magazine, on  
45 through the first year and a half and then...  
46  
47 AJ: I remember that.

1  
2 DG: Thank you. It's nice to be remembered.  
3  
4 AJ: Yeah.  
5  
6 DG: I'm gonna do a collection one of these days but I'm wrestling with the title because I've been on  
7 a Jenny Boylan kick lately.  
8  
9 AJ: Why would you change the title?  
10  
11 DG: Because it hurts some people to say tranny. I don't wanna hurt anybody.  
12  
13 AJ: But that was the name then. I don't know. It's just...  
14  
15 DG: I know. I don't want to insult anybody, and I don't want to hurt— I want to tell the truth but I  
16 don't want to hurt anybody. Those two things may be mutually contradictory, I don't know.  
17  
18 AJ: Mhm.  
19  
20 DG: But I don't want to hurt anybody, and I especially don't want to hurt somebody I respect.  
21  
22 AJ: Yes.  
23  
24 DG: And I never met her, and I'll probably never meet her unless she happens to do a signing in town  
25 or an event or something.  
26  
27 AJ: Mhm.  
28  
29 DG: Cause I'm kind of out of the loop on some of that stuff, but I have respect for her. And I don't  
30 want—  
31  
32 AJ: But you can't go back and change the name of your...  
33  
34 DG: I can change the name of the book and leave the name of the strip the same.  
35  
36 AJ: Yeah.  
37  
38 DG: If I wanted to. But I named the strip that as an act of liberation...  
39  
40 AJ: Yes.  
41  
42 DG: ... in honor of that time when we fought like crazy, and we'd dress so well and we were so  
43 fabulous. And we just couldn't stand each other, and we loved each other to pieces.  
44  
45 AJ: Alright.  
46  
47 DG: I saved Cherry's life once, twice, but not Janelle's.

1  
2 AJ: Mm. What happened with Janelle?  
3  
4 DG: Janelle Albright. Her and her boyfriend, he shot her and then he shot himself.  
5  
6 AJ: Mm. Wow.  
7  
8 DG: And... no one knows for sure why. There was some speculation, but I won't dishonor her  
9 memory by giving it a voice here.  
10  
11 AJ: Did they fight all the time or something?  
12  
13 DG: They fought some, but it wasn't as... they didn't fight as bad as the end result would imply.  
14  
15 AJ: Mhm.  
16  
17 DG: No one knows exactly why but there was some speculation as to possible reasons.  
18  
19 AJ: Sure.  
20  
21 DG: No notes were left, and there was no mention of her trans status in any of the news reporting at  
22 the time, which at the time was the right thing to do cause that's the way she would have  
23 wanted it, but I think in the long run she would have wanted her truth to be told so I'm...  
24  
25 AJ: Mm.  
26  
27 DG: ... saying with measured integrity that that's the way she would have wanted it cause I don't  
28 know for a fact. That's just... I was nowhere to be a very forthright person, even though she kept  
29 her own confidence on some things.  
30  
31 AJ: Mhm.  
32  
33 DG: Cause who doesn't.  
34  
35 AJ: Well, rest in peace, Janelle.  
36  
37 DG: Yeah. Yeah, I lost a couple. There was also a sister who, uh, I'm embarrassed to say, I can't  
38 remember her name. She killed herself because they kept tormenting her at work because she  
39 didn't pass well.  
40  
41 AJ: Oh boy.  
42  
43 DG: And, and it was not, uh, what you call?, a liberal sciences job. She worked in, uhm, the boiler  
44 rooms at the U. And it was a bunch of red necks, and they just tormented her endlessly until she  
45 finally just hung herself.  
46  
47 AJ: Oh wow.

1  
2 DG: And she tried, and she was very sweet. And, I'm not saying this to be mean, but she didn't pass.  
3  
4 AJ: Yeah. It's just the physical reality of who we are.  
5  
6 DG: And it mattered to her.  
7  
8 AJ: Mhm.  
9  
10 DG: And she wanted to. And I'm kind of lucky, you know? Most of the time I do okay. Every now and  
11 then somebody knows, but most of the time I do okay. And I used to wrestle with that like crazy,  
12 especially when I was living with Curt. "Somebody will know. What are people looking at me like  
13 that?" Well, people are looking at you like that because you're going like this all the time.  
14 [Moves eyes back and forth, in a hypervigilant way]. [Laughs].  
15  
16 AJ: [Laughs]. So you and Curt. This is where the story started...  
17  
18 DG: Oh, Curt. Right, Curt.  
19  
20 AJ: ... cause he came over one day...  
21  
22 DG: Curt, uhm, he came to see me from Madison. He said he wanted to talk, and after hemming and  
23 hawing about music and talking about Frank Zappa for a half hour, forty-five minutes, I said,  
24 "Well, what's on your mind?"  
25  
26 AJ: [Laughs]. Cause he came from Madison to Minneapolis...  
27  
28 DG: Right, right.  
29  
30 AJ: ... to visit you. It wasn't like he just came across town.  
31  
32 DG: Yeah.  
33  
34 AJ: He drove 5 hours to come visit you.  
35  
36 DG: Yeah. Yeah. I said, "What's on your mind?" He said, "You." I said, "Really?" "Well, what did you  
37 think I was doing?" I said, "Well, I don't know, are you gay?" He said, "Well, are you a woman?" I  
38 said, "In spirit I am, but I'm not dumb enough to deny reality."  
39  
40 AJ: Yeah.  
41  
42 DG: And most of the guys who had been interested in me had either been gay or bi. And he said,  
43 "No, I think of you as a woman, and that's that." And he kissed me. He said later that I kissed  
44 him, but he kissed me.  
45  
46 AJ: [Laughs].  
47

1 DG: And it was a good kiss. It was one of the better kisses I've had, actually.  
2  
3 AJ: Really? Okay. [Laughs].  
4  
5 DG: And, uh, we started a relationship in which he would drive up for the weekend. He was working  
6 as a computer programmer for the state of Wisconsin.  
7  
8 AJ: Mhm.  
9  
10 DG: Uhm, working in the agriculture department doing mainframe programming. And we, and, uhm,  
11 he was living with his parents still at that point cause he moved back in for financial reasons  
12 after a couple of jobs went south on him.  
13  
14 AJ: Sure.  
15  
16 DG: Uhm, and he comes see me on the weekends, and he'd shower me with gifts. And we have very  
17 energetic and unbelievably powerful sex...  
18  
19 AJ: Hm.  
20  
21 DG: ... both before and after surgery.  
22  
23 AJ: Okay.  
24  
25 DG: He was my first.  
26  
27 AJ: Mhm.  
28  
29 DG: Uhm.  
30  
31 AJ: How long did you guys stay together?  
32  
33 DG: 5 years altogether.  
34  
35 AJ: Hm.  
36  
37 DG: The first time was... he took me to a local fantasy convention...  
38  
39 AJ: Mhm.  
40  
41 DG: ... which was a small convention, and he thought it was going to be a big formal thing so he  
42 bought me a new dress and he bought me a swimming suit because there was a pool there.  
43  
44 AJ: Mhm.  
45  
46 DG: And everybody else was dressed real casually, and I was fairly formal. And the guest of honor  
47 was a writer named Tim Powers, who's done some really interesting work.

1  
2 AJ: Okay.  
3  
4 DG: Uhm, one of his, uh, books was adapted into, uh, Pirates of the Caribbean movie.  
5  
6 AJ: Oh, okay.  
7  
8 DG: And during his talk, during the Q&A somebody asked why he didn't write books with female  
9 lead characters. And he said, "It's too far outside my experience. I don't think I could do it with  
10 integrity." And the person asked the question, "Well, maybe it would help if you got a sex  
11 change." And everybody laughed.  
12  
13 AJ: Oh.  
14  
15 DG: And I was standing there, "You asshole."  
16  
17 AJ: [Laughs].  
18  
19 DG: So we went up to him afterwards and said, "No, unless you meant it, it wouldn't help at all. And  
20 if you want we can talk about it." And he, "Oh, okay." We talked for a few minutes, and he said,  
21 "I imagine that it would be kind of like learning a new language." And I always thought that was  
22 such a great metaphor. It is kind of like learning a new language. It's a new way of adapting to  
23 the world. It's a new way being in the world. And, the way I finally resolved all of this, which  
24 shows up in my graphic memoir, [laughs], which I'm actually very excited about but I don't  
25 meant to demean it.  
26  
27 AJ: Yeah.  
28  
29 DG: Cause it's, uhm, I've made significant strides on since you saw the last part, last part of what  
30 there was to see publicly.  
31  
32 AJ: Mhm.  
33  
34 DG: Uhm, the way I look at it is that there are as many languages of woman as there are of women,  
35 and there's a universal language that overarches that.  
36  
37 AJ: Sure.  
38  
39 DG: And I've reconciled my personal story with who I see myself as in saying that I've learned the  
40 language of women, but I will always speak it with an accent.  
41  
42 AJ: Wow. That's pretty powerful.  
43  
44 DG: I'm never going to understand... I agree with Kate to the extent that I will never understand the  
45 full experience of what it is to be a woman, but I understand enough of it that I can say with  
46 integrity and honesty that's who I am and what I am.  
47

1 AJ: And you're speaking of Kate Bornstein.  
2  
3 DG: Yes, absolutely.  
4  
5 AJ: What has been some of the, uhm...  
6  
7 DG: We didn't finish Curt.  
8  
9 AJ: Oh.  
10  
11 DG: [Laughs].  
12  
13 AJ: I'm sorry.  
14  
15 DG: No, it's my fault, I keep going new places.  
16  
17 AJ: [Laughs]. You took me to a whole different place.  
18  
19 DG: I've been, I've been known to do that. Uhm...  
20  
21 AJ: Yeah. So you and Curt, 5 years.  
22  
23 DG: There's this, there is this weird thing about him. He can get very angry at the drop of a hat, drop  
24 of a pin.  
25  
26 AJ: Uhuh.  
27  
28 DG: And he was very rigid in his views about a lot of things. And he would call a lot of people stupid,  
29 and he would be, I thought, very mean to people sometimes...  
30  
31 AJ: Mhm.  
32  
33 DG: ... if he, if they didn't live up to his standard. He was very driven by the idea of logic. He idealized  
34 Spock on Star Trek.  
35  
36 AJ: Mhm.  
37  
38 DG: He thought emotions were an impediment. He resented having them. And he ignored the fact  
39 that resentment is an emotion. [Laughs].  
40  
41 AJ: [Laughs].  
42  
43 DG: And, uh, these little things started getting worse and worse, and they were starting to bother  
44 me some. And around this time I met two people. First I met a trans woman named Sarah just  
45 by accident in a public library.  
46  
47 AJ: Mhm.



1  
2 DG: And we started hanging out, and, you know, she came over and listened to music cause we like  
3 the same stuff. We're both rockers from the old days.  
4  
5 AJ: Sure.  
6  
7 DG: And, you know, meant for the classics. I played her Procol Harum and then we talked about this  
8 and that.  
9  
10 AJ: Procol who?  
11  
12 DG: Procol Harum.  
13  
14 AJ: Pogo?  
15  
16 DG: Procol. P.R.O.C.O.L. Procol. H.A.R.U.M. Procol Harum.  
17  
18 AJ: Okay.  
19  
20 DG: Their bigger hit was Whiter Shade of Pale.  
21  
22 AJ: Oh yeah.  
23  
24 DG: And so it was that later, as the miller told his tale... anyway, uhm, be that as it may. [Laughs].  
25  
26 AJ: [Laughs].  
27  
28 DG: So we're sitting on my couch and talking about music and just out of the blue, I said, I said to  
29 her, I said, "You know, I'm really attracted to you." And she said, "Yeah, I've been picking up on  
30 that, but I wasn't sure." I said, "Well, this is new territory for me. What do we do about it? I  
31 mean, I got this boyfriend, but he's 600 miles away...  
32  
33 AJ: [Laughs].  
34  
35 DG: ... and, uhm, I'm still attracted to you." And she said, "Well, I got to find out." So we kissed.  
36  
37 AJ: Uhuh.  
38  
39 DG: And we had an emotional, intellectual, and physical relationship for a while. And she was very  
40 patient with me considering that I was seeing her and Curt, and Curt didn't know about her.  
41  
42 AJ: Mhm.  
43  
44 DG: And, uh, a few weeks later in Loring Park I met a young girl who I'll just call Delia. That's not her  
45 name, but I will respect her privacy.  
46  
47 AJ: Sure.

1  
2 DG: And Delia was an 18 year old ex-hooker who had been pretty brutalized by some people. And  
3 we felt a spark between us immediately and just an instant attraction. And we acted on it.  
4  
5 AJ: Mhm.  
6  
7 DG: And some of it was the physical attraction and some of it was the fun we had together cause we  
8 did have fun.  
9  
10 AJ: Yeah.  
11  
12 DG: And some of it was that we were both hurting, and we were both able to try to help each other  
13 through it.  
14  
15 AJ: Mhm.  
16  
17 DG: She was living with her boyfriend. I was seeing Curt and Sarah and her. And Curt didn't know  
18 about any of this, and everybody else knew everything.  
19  
20 AJ: Okay.  
21  
22 DG: And, in retrospect, it was not my shining hour. [Laughs].  
23  
24 AJ: It was fun though. [Laughs].  
25  
26 DG: It was, I don't know if it was fun or not, but it was hectic. I didn't know what I was doing. All I  
27 knew what that I wanted to be with all these people, and I didn't want to disappoint any of  
28 them. I wanted to be with them, and I didn't know what was going on.  
29  
30 AJ: Yeah.  
31  
32 DG: And I was the one that was making it go on. And eventually Curt and I moved in together. I  
33 moved to Madison to be with him.  
34  
35 AJ: Mhm.  
36  
37 DG: And when I finally got to the door with a U-Haul full of my stuff, he opened the door and just  
38 glared at me. I thought, "This may not go so well."  
39  
40 AJ: Wow.  
41  
42 DG: And within 2 months of my living with him, he insisted, because I told him I wasn't, wasn't  
43 always so good with money, which is the truth.  
44  
45 AJ: Yeah.  
46  
47 DG: He insisted that I sign my checks over to him.

1  
2 AJ: Mhm.  
3  
4 DG: He had my mail forwarded to a post office box, so he could screen it. He took the form with him  
5 to work. He asked me to keep track of what I was doing during the day. He kept track of my  
6 finances on a little ledger that he kept on a clip board on the end table by the couch. And this  
7 was the way I lived. And bit by bit he forbade me from contacting different friends...  
8  
9 AJ: Wow.  
10  
11 DG: ... and family. He told me that my mother was crazy, and my grandmother was stupid.  
12  
13 AJ: Mhm.  
14  
15 DG: And my brothers and sisters were kind of okay, but he didn't want me to hang out with them  
16 anyway because if I was with them I ended up hanging out with my mother, and she was  
17 dangerous to me.  
18  
19 AJ: Hm.  
20  
21 DG: And I left him a few times. I left him twice and went back to him both times. One time I left I  
22 went running to a man who I had done some comic book work with. I won't name him here  
23 because he's kind of ashamed of our relationship.  
24  
25 AJ: Yeah.  
26  
27 DG: And he had expressed an interest in me, and he told me later that he fell in love with me the day  
28 we met.  
29  
30 AJ: Wow.  
31  
32 DG: Which is very powerful coming from somebody who is doing what I value so highly...  
33  
34 AJ: Mhm.  
35  
36 DG: ... who's also...  
37  
38 AJ: Making a living making comics.  
39  
40 DG: Yeah. Yeah. Very, very talented and very handsome man who's also bisexual.  
41  
42 AJ: Mhm.  
43  
44 DG: And was living with a woman who was bisexual. And she knew, she knew about his feelings for  
45 me. And she watched, watched him like a hawk whenever he hung out together.  
46  
47 AJ: [Laughs].

1  
2 DG: Not, I, I didn't know.  
3  
4 AJ: Uhuh.  
5  
6 DG: And I was working with him while I was seeing Aleida and Sarah. [Laughs].  
7  
8 AJ: Oh wow.  
9  
10 DG: So it was, there was actually a pentagram, and I didn't know it. I thought, I thought it was a  
11 rectangle.  
12  
13 AJ: Okay. [Laughs].  
14  
15 DG: But, uhm, so I ran to him, and then a ran back to Curt. And after him, after, uhm, skip that part  
16 for a minute, let me back up. Things finally settled down a little bit. And come Christmastime,  
17 one day the phone rang. I wasn't allowed to answer the phone so I went and picked it up and  
18 said, "Hello. Hello?" And I said, "Who is it?" I don't know, they hung up. And I said, "Oh, okay."  
19 He said, "What are you up to?" "What are you, what are you talking about? What do you  
20 mean?" "You're trying to make a fool of me. You're trying to trick me somehow. This is, you're  
21 planning something." "What are you talking about?" "Okay, I want you out of my house. I want  
22 you out of my life." Uh, okay."  
23  
24 AJ: This is right around Christmas.  
25  
26 DG: This is right around Christmas or just after Christmas. Uhm, the next morning he got up and  
27 went to work like usual. And I thought, "This is big scary. I don't know what's going on. I don't  
28 know what's going to happen." So I snuck away to a payphone and called a few friends to let  
29 collect to let them know I might be coming back to Minneapolis, and I didn't know what was  
30 going on."  
31  
32 AJ: Mhm.  
33  
34 DG: One of the people I called was Linda, and she said, "You know, you guys have been through this  
35 before. Why don't you just wait, and see what happens." Well, he got home that night, and he  
36 had some friends that were visiting from out of town with him. And the four of us had a pretty  
37 good time. Smoked a little pot. Nice, had, uhm, a few drinks. Nice meal.  
38  
39 AJ: Mhm.  
40  
41 DG: Uhm, his friends left. He left with them. And I was trying to figure out what to do next. And he  
42 came home like an hour later. He had been to a bar. And he just sat out on the couch watching  
43 TV like he always did. And I was wearing, I don't remember what I was wearing. I think it was a  
44 nightgown. And I came out, and I said, "I was hoping we could talk." And his response was,  
45 "Fuck you. Get out of my life." And he threw and ashtray at me, and I ducked just in time and it  
46 didn't hit me. It was a glass ashtray, and it shattered right behind me.  
47

1 AJ: Wow.  
2  
3 DG: And I was barefoot. And I just looked up and said, "Once again I find myself swayed by your  
4 logic." Cause at that point I thought, "What's he going to do?"  
5  
6 AJ: Mhm.  
7  
8 DG: And watching my step, I went back to the bedroom and laid back down. And he came in and  
9 said, "You're not welcome in my bed anymore. Get up and get dressed and get out of my  
10 house."  
11  
12 AJ: Oh no.  
13  
14 DG: He had already taken all the money out of my purse. He had already taken the keys out of my  
15 purse. I was, as I was getting dressed, he kept his arms tightly to the side. He kept walking into  
16 me and shoving me.  
17  
18 AJ: Mhm.  
19  
20 DG: And he had this stupid wicked grin on his face that he got sometimes. Thought he was being  
21 clever. And I said, "What's the matter with you? What are you doing?" He said, "Please push me  
22 back. I would love an excuse to beat the shit out of you."  
23  
24 AJ: Hm.  
25  
26 DG: And all of a sudden, I flashed on. He's got a gun. He gave me, he gave me the gun to hold on to  
27 for a while when I was living in Tranny Towers...  
28  
29 AJ: Mhm.  
30  
31 DG: ... as a safety measure. And he took it back, you know, when he thought things had settled down  
32 there. After Janelle's, uhm, death, he brought the gun over for me.  
33  
34 AJ: Mhm.  
35  
36 DG: He left it there for a couple of months. Anyways, so he's got this gun. And I'm thinking about the  
37 gun all the time. He's doing this. I'm being very careful about what I say and what I do. And we'd  
38 played out this stupid scene where we yelled at each other for a while, and then I left. I called  
39 the cops because I needed a place to stay.  
40  
41 AJ: Right.  
42  
43 DG: And it was a very cold late December night. This would be 1993, I think.  
44  
45 AJ: Mhm.  
46

1 DG: And they tried to get, get him to give me some of my stuff back, but he refused to answer the  
2 door.  
3  
4 AJ: Hm.  
5  
6 DG: Spent the night in a homeless shelter. Next day I took a bus out to a job that I had just got fired  
7 from. Got the check from that and used that money to go back to Minneapolis. And I arrived on  
8 my friend Kim's doorstep for the third time. Almost no money. No job. No education. Well a  
9 little education. I'd been to a 2 year arts program.  
10  
11 AJ: Mhm.  
12  
13 DG: No place to live, and I alienated most of my friends. One night Kim said, "Are you alright?" And I  
14 said, "Nope."  
15  
16 AJ: Mm.  
17  
18 DG: But I was able to get some affordable housing. It wasn't subsidized, but it was affordable. I was  
19 still on social security at the time.  
20  
21 AJ: Right.  
22  
23 DG: And over the course of the next couple of years, I reestablished myself in the community. And at  
24 that point I made another decision, and it was almost as powerful as the decision I made when I  
25 was 7 after I got off the swing set cause, through, in the process of therapy, which was very  
26 helpful, I decided I wasn't going to worry about it anymore. Everybody knows. I'm just going to  
27 go out into the world and assume that everybody knows my history.  
28  
29 AJ: Right.  
30  
31 DG: And the weird thing was as soon as I did that nobody knew. [Laughs].  
32  
33 AJ: [Laughs]. Uh.  
34  
35 DG: Everybody acted like they didn't know.  
36  
37 AJ: Uhuh.  
38  
39 DG: Is that your phone?  
40  
41 AJ: Yes.  
42  
43 DG: Okay. Well, are you ignoring it?  
44  
45 AJ: Yes.  
46

1 DG: Okay. As we were. But the other thing that happened around that. I didn't care for the therapist  
2 I had then but there was one time, one thing to say that was really helpful to me. One day she  
3 was giving me the buck up little camper speech, and I was in no mood to hear it.  
4  
5 AJ: Mhm.  
6  
7 DG: And I just lashed out and said, "Well, you can't control your emotions, you know!" And she said,  
8 "Well, of course, you can." "What?" "Whose emotions are there? They're yours, right? If you  
9 can't control them, nobody can. You have to be able to control them."  
10  
11 AJ: Right. [Laughs].  
12  
13 DG: "They're yours." "Oh, yeah." [Laughs]. So, and I didn't— I saw Curt again when I testified against  
14 him in court. He was charged with assault, disorderly conduct, resisting an officer. And the  
15 charges were reduced to disorderly conduct. He was found guilty...  
16  
17 AJ: Mhm.  
18  
19 DG: ... by a jury. He insisted on a jury trial.  
20  
21 AJ: Oh wow.  
22  
23 DG: And I found, I wasn't there for this part, but I found out later that at the sentencing he actually  
24 argued with the judge.  
25  
26 AJ: Not a good idea. [Laughs].  
27  
28 DG: And I kept trying to check back and find out what happened to him just because I cared still.  
29  
30 AJ: Mhm.  
31  
32 DG: I didn't find anything until a couple of years ago I finally found his obituary. And turned out he  
33 died less than a year after that.  
34  
35 AJ: Really?  
36  
37 DG: Complications of diabetes, I think.  
38  
39 AJ: Oh, wow.  
40  
41 DG: My guess is that he drank himself to death.  
42  
43 AJ: Wow.  
44  
45 DG: And I was sad about it. I was also kind of relived and, uhm, Kim had a couple of things to say that  
46 were pretty helpful. She's kinda been my rock through all this stuff.  
47

1 AJ: Mhm.  
2  
3 DG: She said, "Well, first of all at least he's at peace. And second he's not gonna do that to any  
4 woman."  
5  
6 AJ: Hm.  
7  
8 DG: "Okay." So that's Curt.  
9  
10 AJ: Wow.  
11  
12 DG: So what were you starting to ask me before I so rudely interrupted me?  
13  
14 AJ: [Laughs]. Well, you know, I was thinking about, uhm, what are some of the challenges... and,  
15 and you just talked about some, uhm...  
16  
17 DG: Relationships.  
18  
19 AJ: ... but that seems like... challenges of life.  
20  
21 DG: Well, relationship is a different challenge for trans people than it is for, I think, even other queer  
22 people.  
23  
24 AJ: Mhm.  
25  
26 DG: And that's... last time we talked... last time we talked I said the hardest part was the financial,  
27 and I don't think that's true.  
28  
29 AJ: Mhm.  
30  
31 DG: ... [Sighs]. One of the reasons, probably the biggest reason that I put things off as long as I did  
32 was because I didn't want to be alone.  
33  
34 AJ: Yeah.  
35  
36 DG: I was sure my family would not, would be gone... I was sure I would be unloved.  
37  
38 AJ: Mhm.  
39  
40 DG: And that wasn't what I wanted but I finally decided that if I had to be alone that was the way it  
41 would be. I was, uh, cleaning my studio a couple of weeks ago, and I was going through some  
42 old papers, and I found this old envelope. My family writes things on the backs of envelopes.  
43  
44 AJ: Uhuh.  
45  
46 DG: That's what we do. That's what we got from my grandma...  
47



1 AJ: [Laughs].  
2  
3 DG: ... which is make lists on the backs of envelopes.  
4  
5 AJ: [Laughs]. Right.  
6  
7 DG: And this envelope had a quote from Rita Mae Brown on it from a novel that I just read. And I  
8 don't remember, I've got it in the other room, I'm not gonna go get it now...  
9  
10 AJ: Mhm.  
11  
12 DG: ... cause we're rolling.  
13  
14 AJ: Yeah.  
15  
16 DG: And I don't wanna break the stride. But it was from a book she wrote about someone coming  
17 out, and it was a novel. But it was obviously, you know, thinly veiled as a disguise.  
18  
19 AJ: Mhm.  
20  
21 DG: Long story. And the quote I wrote down was something like, "She might be alone for the rest of  
22 her life, but at least she would be alone knowing who she was. And the price of a life without  
23 integrity is that everybody likes you except yourself."  
24  
25 AJ: Wow.  
26  
27 DG: And I read that after I came out. But, wow, things were really tough. I copied it down. And  
28 somehow I held onto it all these years, and now it's back on my bulletin board.  
29  
30 AJ: Really?  
31  
32 DG: Yeah. And, uhm, [sighs] my last girlfriend, a woman named Denise, who doesn't live around here  
33 anymore.  
34  
35 AJ: Anise?  
36  
37 DG: Denise.  
38  
39 AJ: Denise. Okay.  
40  
41 DG: She's trans, and she had not yet had surgery when we met, and I helped her through surgery...  
42  
43 AJ: Mhm.  
44  
45 DG: ... emotionally and spiritually as much as I could physically. I was there for her when she needed  
46 me.  
47

1 AJ: Uhuh.  
2  
3 DG: And, uh, as soon as, a couple months, about a month after she got back from Thailand, she  
4 called me up one day and said, "I'm moving back to Texas on Tuesday! Bye!" "Okay." [Laughs].  
5 Uhm.  
6  
7 AJ: Wow.  
8  
9 DG: And in the past, whenever I got dumped, I begged, I pleaded, I agonized, I was torn to shreds.  
10  
11 AJ: Mhm.  
12  
13 DG: Relationship was everything. I mean the music, the art, the movies, the comics, that stuff is all  
14 vital. I'd die without my guitar.  
15  
16 AJ: Right.  
17  
18 DG: But, take my relationship away, no. That's death. In the past, that's the way it was, but this time,  
19 I don't know what had changed through the years, but this time I just said, "That stinks. I  
20 deserve better."  
21  
22 AJ: Mhm.  
23  
24 DG: And, I think it was the first time I had ever said that out loud and meant it.  
25  
26 AJ: To her? You said this to her?  
27  
28 DG: I said it to her, and I also said it to myself.  
29  
30 AJ: To yourself, yeah.  
31  
32 DG: And, over the last few years, I've decided as I made my life better, which I think I have,  
33 especially in the last few years...  
34  
35 AJ: Mhm.  
36  
37 DG: ... that I do deserve better. And one of the things I deserve is a healthy relationship...  
38  
39 AJ: Sure.  
40  
41 DG: ... with the right woman. Well, there's this woman I've known for 30 years, another trans  
42 woman.  
43  
44 AJ: Mhm.  
45

1 DG: I've always been fascinated with. And we've always been friends. We haven't, we don't see each  
2 other very much. We run into each other every now and then. We've had coffee a few times.  
3 We worked out a couple of times.  
4  
5 AJ: Sure.  
6  
7 DG: You know, run into each other at the same events. We've, you know, gone for walks around the  
8 lakes.  
9  
10 AJ: Right.  
11  
12 DG: And we may have sort of been dating but I didn't think we were at the time.  
13  
14 AJ: Uhuh.  
15  
16 DG: And I don't know if she thought we were or not. I always thought she was stunning. I always  
17 thought she was gorgeous. I'm not gonna show it on camera...  
18  
19 AJ: Uhuh.  
20  
21 DG: ... but I'll show you the photo.  
22  
23 AJ: Okay.  
24  
25 DG: Uhm, and hang on, press to unlock, yes. Yes, yes, you tedious machine... Let's see here. No, no,  
26 no.  
27  
28 AJ: Are you guys seeing each other again or?  
29  
30 DG: No, no. Uhm, I'm not gonna show you on camera, but this is her.  
31  
32 AJ: She's very beautiful.  
33  
34 DG: Oh, she's achingly beautiful.  
35  
36 AJ: Yes.  
37  
38 DG: Stunning. Talented.  
39  
40 AJ: Mhm.  
41  
42 DG: Smart. Compassionate.  
43  
44 AJ: Very smart, yes.  
45  
46 DG: Compassionate. So I've, I encountered her at a social event, and in the, it was a big event so I  
47 wasn't the only person talking to her.

1  
2 AJ: Mhm.  
3  
4 DG: And I said, "This is not the time or place, but I need to talk to you."  
5  
6 AJ: Mhm.  
7  
8 DG: And I said, "Can I give you my number?" And she said, "No, I'll give you my number." And she  
9 did. And I called her and left a message, and she ghosted me. And that's the end of it. And it  
10 stinks.  
11  
12 AJ: Yeah.  
13  
14 DG: And I'm trying to take the advice of a friend of mine, and say, uhm, instead of agonizing over  
15 somebody who doesn't seem to want you try to find somebody who does.  
16  
17 AJ: But it hurts.  
18  
19 DG: Oh yeah. But, you know, try not to think about that elephant over there.  
20  
21 AJ: Right. [Laughs].  
22  
23 DG: And, you know, and this has been building for 30 years. It's kind of hard to let it go. I met her  
24 when I was first coming out and when she was first coming out, I think. I'm not sure what her  
25 full story is. But it's always been there, and it may always be there. And I live with it. And the  
26 beauty part of that is I don't have to have the there's something I have to tell you conversation.  
27  
28 AJ: Mhm.  
29  
30 DG: And I decided that I'm not going to have that conversation anymore. It's a little easier now than  
31 it used to be to say to a potential partner that you're trans.  
32  
33 AJ: Yes.  
34  
35 DG: In my age group, which I think you're pretty close to...  
36  
37 AJ: Mhm.  
38  
39 DG: ... uhm, it's harder in the lesbian community because there's all that lesbian resistance with the  
40 old school lesbian school of thought about how we're interlopers and violating female space and  
41 all this other stuff that just makes no sense to me at all.  
42  
43 AJ: Yeah.  
44  
45 DG: And it's caused so much hatred that I just can't handle it. So that is... in, in the past, that has  
46 impeded my relationships with women, with cis women. Now I'm just, just putting it out there  
47 and saying this is who I am. I am looking for a woman, see if there's something we can talk

1 about, see if we have a conversation to have, see if we have any possibility of having something  
2 we can share together.  
3  
4 AJ: Sure.  
5  
6 DG: And it's become the next hurdle in life because my career is more stable than it's ever been in  
7 my life.  
8  
9 AJ: Mhm.  
10  
11 DG: My art is good as it's every been. My music is the best it's ever been. And, that I say with some  
12 measure of reservation because I make the music by myself. I'm gonna do something about that  
13 soon too.  
14  
15 AJ: You're gonna be doing something about that you said?  
16  
17 DG: Oh yeah. Yeah.  
18  
19 AJ: Okay.  
20  
21 DG: At Pride this last weekend one of the, my ex Jenny came to town and we all went, we always try  
22 to do Pride together.  
23  
24 AJ: Okay. Fun.  
25  
26 DG: Oh, she's a sweetheart. I was with Jenny for ten years. We should talk about that because Jenny  
27 is another trans woman.  
28  
29 AJ: Uhuh.  
30  
31 DG: And we should talk about that. Uhm, but one of the series was Sheetrock, and I talked to them  
32 about their jam sessions.  
33  
34 AJ: Uhuh.  
35  
36 DG: And, uhm, they said, "Oh, this is where we have it." And I said, "What? Is this acoustic or  
37 electric." "Well, it's electric." "Well, I don't have electric." "Well, we will loan you one."  
38  
39 AJ: Mhm.  
40  
41 DG: So I'm going to go jam.  
42  
43 AJ: At Sheetrock, huh?  
44  
45 DG: Yeah.  
46  
47 AJ: Cool.

1  
2 DG: Sheetrock in Hopkins.  
3  
4 AJ: What has been some of the more, uhm, I guess, uhm, positive aspects of being trans?  
5  
6 DG: [Sighs]. Other than being fat I love my body.  
7  
8 AJ: [Laughs]. Well, it's the only one you got so...  
9  
10 DG: Well, yeah, but that wasn't always so. I mean, there was a time when I was, when I was, when I  
11 was with Curt that I actually lost all the weight I wanted to lose.  
12  
13 AJ: Mhm.  
14  
15 DG: And there was this moment. I caught a look at myself in the mirror, and it was just a shock.  
16 Cause it was really me standing there.  
17  
18 AJ: Mm.  
19  
20 DG: And...  
21  
22 AJ: And you saw yourself.  
23  
24 DG: I saw myself the way I always wanted to see myself.  
25  
26 AJ: Sure.  
27  
28 DG: And, [sighs], stupid '90s feminists said, "Oh, that's autogynephilia." If a trans woman likes her,  
29 the way she looks, it's autogynephilia. If a cis woman likes the way she looks, it's health self-  
30 image.  
31  
32 AJ: Right.  
33  
34 DG: What is that garbage?  
35  
36 AJ: Mhm.  
37  
38 DG: Sorry, that just makes me mad. Anyway, I love, I love what my body can do now. I love the way I  
39 move, which is different in the way I moved before.  
40  
41 AJ: Mhm.  
42  
43 DG: Not completely, I still walk kind of wonky, but I love what my body is capable of. I love the way I  
44 respond to society, and, I may be naïve about things but I think for the most part society  
45 responds to me the same way.  
46  
47 AJ: Sure.

1  
2 DG: Like I said before, I think I do alright. Realistically, I probably don't pass as well as I think I do, but  
3 I think I do alright.  
4  
5 AJ: Yeah. I think you do okay.  
6  
7 DG: Thank you. One time, me and Kim were doing acid back when we did acid and, as we were  
8 starting to get going, "Do I look okay? You know what I mean." "Yeah, I know what you mean.  
9 You look fine." "Okay." And that was all I needed to hear.  
10  
11 AJ: Wow. Uhm, talk to me a little bit, we only got a few more minutes...  
12  
13 DG: Yeah, I kind of went off on a tangent there. I just wander sometime.  
14  
15 AJ: Uh, tell me about, uhm, your comic strip and your art. Tranny Towers.  
16  
17 DG: Yeah, when I was, I, I always wanted to be an artist or, and my dad wouldn't let me.  
18  
19 AJ: Mhm.  
20  
21 DG: Cause when I had a chance to go to, uhm, tech college after surgery and having everything paid  
22 for by the state, which was wonderful and I appreciate it.  
23  
24 AJ: Wow.  
25  
26 DG: Uhm, I decided on the commercial art program. And, in the process, I started doing comics, and I  
27 did an apprenticeship with aforementioned man who, uhm, I later had a relationship with.  
28  
29 AJ: Mhm.  
30  
31 DG: And, some of my work can be seen in his comic, which I won't mention by name here out of  
32 respect for his privacy.  
33  
34 AJ: Okay.  
35  
36 DG: Uhm, and I kept at it. I was doing, uhm, layout design and comics, uhm, like editorial comics for  
37 a feminist paper in Madison while I was with Curt, and they had a big outrage about having a  
38 trans woman on their staff. And they raised the issue in the paper and said, "Are we wrong to be  
39 doing this?" And...  
40  
41 AJ: Wow.  
42  
43 DG: ... they got ten letters, and one of the letters said, "No, you're absolutely right. Keep women's  
44 space safe." And the other, the other nine letters said, "You guys should be ashamed of  
45 yourself." [Laughs].  
46  
47 AJ: Oh boy. [Laughs].

1  
2 DG: I still got those from some of the other women. It's called Feminist Voices.  
3  
4 AJ: Uhuh.  
5  
6 DG: I had layout and designed for them for about half a year. Just to keep my chops active while I  
7 was out of school.  
8  
9 AJ: Sure.  
10  
11 DG: I got back here, got back here from, uhm, Madison after things went south with Curt. And I  
12 thought, well, I better take some classes just to keep photoshops fresh and get some work.  
13  
14 AJ: Mhm.  
15  
16 DG: So I started looking at different schools again, and, uhm, one of the schools I went to was  
17 Minneapolis College of Art and Design. MCAD.  
18  
19 AJ: Mhm.  
20  
21 DG: And I said the same tired thing I say to every school, "Well, I really want to study comics but  
22 nobody does that." They said, "Well, we have a comic illustration program." That's it, I'm sunk.  
23  
24 AJ: [Laughs].  
25  
26 DG: So here I am in my late 30s, early 40s going back to college to finish a degree, and I graduate and  
27 was a commencement speaker in 2000, in 2000.  
28  
29 AJ: Wow.  
30  
31 DG: And, uhm, graduated with honors, but not high honors. I got a B average.  
32  
33 AJ: Mhm.  
34  
35 DG: Uhm, I was out of work for about a year after that. Along the way I did a comic strip for  
36 Lavender Magazine called Tranny Towers.  
37  
38 AJ: Mhm.  
39  
40 DG: It was an almost exclusively trans cast. There were some cis people, but they were only there  
41 when it was necessary for them to be there because it was the enclosed bubble of trans people  
42 making community by living near each other.  
43  
44 AJ: Mhm.  
45  
46 DG: And they were all funny animals. It was some people with animal, look like animals or animals  
47 that look like people, depending on how you look at it.



1  
2 AJ: Uhuh.  
3  
4 DG: Like, you know, a cartoon or something. And it's just a clever, classic disguise, shorthand for  
5 character type. The pre-op was a beaver, which [laughs]...  
6  
7 AJ: Okay. [Laughs].  
8  
9 DG: ... uhm, and, uh, the post-op who was actually the model for myself largely was a skunk. And  
10 there was this lesbian couple where one was trans and the other wasn't. And, uhm, I ran it for  
11 about a year and a half. At the time I was also doing editorial comics on trans political  
12 magazines, Trans Sisters and TNT News.  
13  
14 AJ: Oh wow.  
15  
16 DG: And I still got those around someplace too.  
17  
18 AJ: Mhm.  
19  
20 DG: I self-published my first comic around that time, Ink Tantrums, which has a fair amount of trans  
21 content in it. And after the strip died and I finished school, I didn't really do much with comics  
22 for a little while. And then I started getting my toe wet again. I, during my master's at, uhm,  
23 Hamline, I did a comic as part of a project for one of, uhm, Barb's classes. I don't know. Berry  
24 Borch.  
25  
26 AJ: Oh Berry.  
27  
28 DG: Yeah, not Barb. I don't know why I wanna call her Barb. I did a comic for her city narrative's class  
29 on whether we should be afraid to live in the city...  
30  
31 AJ: Hm.  
32  
33 DG: ... based on violence levels. It was called The Street Giveth and the Street Taketh away. And I just  
34 started doing stuff again. Just doing things just to do them.  
35  
36 AJ: So last year you and I, we both teach at MCAD, and you had a, uh, strip in the...  
37  
38 DG: I got, I got...  
39  
40 AJ: ... faculty...  
41  
42 DG: ... I got a faculty development grant to do my graphic memoir, which is called Sharp Invitations.  
43 And I didn't...  
44  
45 AJ: Sharp?  
46  
47 DG: Sharp Invitations.

1  
2 AJ: Invitations.  
3  
4 DG: There, there are three Sharp Invitations in my life. A Sharp Invite— four actually.  
5  
6 AJ: Mhm.  
7  
8 DG: A Sharp Invitation is something that you know is going to hurt you but you're compelled to do it  
9 anyway.  
10  
11 AJ: Mhm.  
12  
13 DG: The first one was when I hacked up my left thumb on a lawn, push lawn mower blade when I  
14 was 5 years old because I wanted to know what it felt like, and I still got the scar.  
15  
16 AJ: Woo.  
17  
18 DG: The second one was when I tried to hang myself when I was, uhm, just barely pre-pubescent.  
19  
20 AJ: Mhm.  
21  
22 DG: The third one was surgery. And the last one was when I tried to, uhm, slit my wrists when I was  
23 living with Kurt.  
24  
25 AJ: Hm.  
26  
27 DG: And it was a pretty half assed attempt.  
28  
29 AJ: Mhm.  
30  
31 DG: And his response was, "Well, you ruined our best knife!" [Laughs].  
32  
33 AJ: Oh.  
34  
35 DG: Thanks for all the compassion, buddy.  
36  
37 AJ: Wow.  
38  
39 DG: So Sharp...  
40  
41 AJ: What an a-hole.  
42  
43 DG: Yeah. So Sharp Invitations are the moments of pain that frame my life and the things that I  
44 survived.  
45  
46 AJ: Okay.  
47

1 DG: And that's what the memoir is about, and I don't think that's all that I am about, but...  
2  
3 AJ: But it's a good sort of being the circle around.  
4  
5 DG: Yeah, and it, it does come back around because... negative feelings never really go away. And  
6 self-worth, I think, is the biggest thing that trans people have to face. The idea that we are really  
7 deserving of decent job, of health care, of compassion, of real love.  
8  
9 AJ: Mhm. Of not being murdered.  
10  
11 DG: Not being murdered is good. We're in favor of not being murdered.  
12  
13 AJ: Okay.  
14  
15 DG: And my heart goes out to the black trans community because, you know, nobody deserves to be  
16 murdered. You guys are baring the brunt these days.  
17  
18 AJ: Yeah.  
19  
20 DG: And...  
21  
22 AJ: But it's not, I mean, you just related a story of how violence impacts, uhm...  
23  
24 DG: Yeah, he could have killed me.  
25  
26 AJ: ... white trans women too.  
27  
28 DG: Yeah, if I would have stayed he could have killed me.  
29  
30 AJ: Well, you talked about Janelle who was murdered.  
31  
32 DG: Yeah, Janelle was killed.  
33  
34 AJ: Uhm...  
35  
36 DG: We think that she was killed first.  
37  
38 AJ: Mhm.  
39  
40 DG: We don't know. Based on the forensics it looked like she was killed first, according to the police  
41 report, but nobody knows for sure because nobody was there except them. And...  
42  
43 AJ: And all I'm saying is not diminishing the fact that black trans women but...  
44  
45 DG: No.  
46  
47 AJ: ... all trans women are sort of...

1  
2 DG: Yep.  
3  
4 AJ: ... uhm, uhm, subject to violence and harassment and discrimination and all of those things. So,  
5 getting to my last question, uhm, and, and maybe it's a multiple question. Given what we just  
6 talked about in terms of, you know, harassment, discrimination...  
7  
8 DG: It's a very different conversation than we had last time.  
9  
10 AJ: Yeah, uh...  
11  
12 DG: So I'm sorry. Please.  
13  
14 AJ: I think it's good. Right?  
15  
16 DG: Yeah.  
17  
18 AJ: Uhm, what do you think is the, uhm, what do you think are some of the agenda items that  
19 should be pursued by the transgender community? And then where do you see the transgender  
20 community in the next fifty years?  
21  
22 DG: Wow. I've changed my views on that in the last three days.  
23  
24 AJ: Yeah?  
25  
26 DG: [Laughs].  
27  
28 AJ: That's why, that's why we're doing this again.  
29  
30 DG: Uhm, I marched with my employer, Claire Housing, at Pride this year.  
31  
32 AJ: Yeah.  
33  
34 DG: And there was a huge contingent of trans identified and non-binary identified youth.  
35  
36 AJ: In the Claire Housing contingent?  
37  
38 DG: No, well, with us and in the parade in general.  
39  
40 AJ: Just in the parade in general.  
41  
42 DG: Pride in general.  
43  
44 AJ: Yeah.  
45  
46 DG: And I was full of, jealous as fuck because they got to do that and I didn't.  
47

1 AJ: [Laughs].  
2  
3 DG: And so proud and so happy with them. I have, I've had students that have come out to me and  
4 thank me for properly gendering them.  
5  
6 AJ: Uhuh.  
7  
8 DG: And I'm out to my students on a selective basis. I, I assume the people know but my favorite  
9 saying is when I got from, that, uh, that guy that I dated, the cartoonist.  
10  
11 AJ: Mhm.  
12  
13 DG: I lived in a closet with a screen door on it. If anybody wants to look in they can.  
14  
15 AJ: [Laughs]. Okay. Wow.  
16  
17 DG: [Laughs]. Uhm, but I hold out hope because now we have something that we didn't have before.  
18 And I don't know if it will last. Now I think we actually have a shot at community. I don't think  
19 we had that before.  
20  
21 AJ: Mhm.  
22  
23 DG: Not in, it's changed over the years but, and this tends to happen every twenty years. So I hope it  
24 sticks this time. Cause we went through the same thing in the early '90s and '90s. Uhm, but  
25 what happens historically is that after, after people transition they can't take it anymore, and  
26 they're done.  
27  
28 AJ: Mhm.  
29  
30 DG: And they don't want to be referred to as trans anymore, and they may not even think of  
31 themselves as trans anymore. And, it's your life. If I don't agree with that reasoning because I  
32 think it's dishonest, but if you're happy with it I'm not going to say otherwise, except that our  
33 numbers are that big to start with.  
34  
35 AJ: Mhm.  
36  
37 DG: If people drop out when they get something we're not gonna maintain too much progress.  
38  
39 AJ: Sure.  
40  
41 DG: I think that the same thing is happening now that happened in the '90s. We're being taken more  
42 seriously and that's risky but good.  
43  
44 AJ: Mhm.  
45  
46 DG: And the reason that's good is that once you're taken seriously people stop ridiculing you. I  
47 remember one, Kate was doing, a signing at Amazon Bookstore during the Q&A I brought up

1 the, uh, resent loss we had at the state legislature, uhm, of a welfare bill that included coverage  
2 of surgeries.  
3  
4 AJ: Mhm.  
5  
6 DG: And how frustrating that was, and my friend Susan Kimberly stood up immediately after I asked  
7 Kate the question of how do we deal with that...  
8  
9 AJ: Mhm.  
10  
11 DG: ... and said what needs to be said that Diana was lobbying and testified in front of the legislature  
12 and she did all that stuff, and they were laughing at us before that and they weren't laughing  
13 when she was done talking. So... I think that we've got a shot now.  
14  
15 AJ: Mhm.  
16  
17 DG: And I think that shot can be amplified if we do things both with each other as a community and  
18 with the larger community.  
19  
20 AJ: Mhm.  
21  
22 DG: You know, I've lobbied for the anti-bullying, against the anti-bullying bill. I've testified against  
23 the state. I've formed organizations. I've done my editorial cartoons.  
24  
25 AJ: Sure.  
26  
27 DG: I've done what I could do when I had the stamina to do it and when I have the time to do it away  
28 from the job.  
29  
30 AJ: Mhm.  
31  
32 DG: I still give money to organizations when I think it's appropriate and when I have the money.  
33  
34 AJ: Yeah.  
35  
36 DG: And sometimes when I don't.  
37  
38 AJ: Huh.  
39  
40 DG: But I think we have potential, and I think that something very positive can happen from it. I  
41 don't know what that's going to look like because aside from some personal victories we haven't  
42 really won on a large scale before. We when we get there, what are we gonna do with it? I don't  
43 know. But...  
44  
45 AJ: The military thing was kind of a big deal.  
46  
47 DG: The military thing, there were a lot of big deals.

1  
2 AJ: I mean, I'm never gonna go serve but...  
3  
4 DG: Well, yeah, but he's rolling that back now. He's talking about rolling that back now. So step  
5 forward, step backwards. I'm always reminded of a little talk I had with my mother when she  
6 became a real bad hoarder. I went, I went into, I was trying to clean up the place and getting  
7 nowhere when I was visiting her once towards the end. I went in to talk to her and said,  
8 "Remember when we were kids and all the uncles and aunts and all the cousins came to visit us  
9 all at once, and there were thirty people staying in the house."  
10  
11 AJ: Mhm.  
12  
13 DG: "What do you think it would be like if that happen now?" And I expect her to go, "Oh, no. I have  
14 to clean this place," and instead she just laughed and said, "Well, it sure would be interesting."  
15 [Laughs].  
16  
17 AJ: [Laughs].  
18  
19 DG: So I don't know what's going to happen, but it sure will be interesting.  
20  
21 AJ: It'll be interesting. Hey, I really thank you, Diana, for, uhm, for being willing to share so much  
22 personal, uhm, struggle...  
23  
24 DG: Yeah.  
25  
26 AJ: ... and, and joy. Uhm...  
27  
28 DG: There is joy.  
29  
30 AJ: ... about, about your life.  
31  
32 DG: There is a lot more joy than we let on.  
33  
34 AJ: Yeah.  
35  
36 DG: And, even with all that stuff, one thing I take away from all this...  
37  
38 AJ: Mhm.  
39  
40 DG: ... I am really happy. I'm... my life might not be everything I want it to be, but I know what I want  
41 to be and done. If I don't get it it's not gonna be because I didn't demand it. [Laughs].  
42  
43 AJ: Wow. Well, thank you so much.  
44  
45 DG: My pleasure. Thank you for doing this again. Maybe, I hope the tape survives. [Laughs].  
46  
47 AJ: [Laughs].

1  
2 DG: Are we good?  
3  
4 AJ: I think we got good sound so.  
5  
6 DG: Okay, thank you dear.  
7  
8 AJ: Take care.  
9  
10 DG: You too.  
11  
12 AJ: Bye.