

**“HIV in My Day” – Interview 77**

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**Interviewee: Jackie Haywood (JH); Interviewer: Ben Klassen (BK)**

**Ben Klassen:** Thanks for being here, Jackie.

**Jackie Haywood:** You're welcome.

**BK:** So excited to get to hear your story here.

**JH:** Good.

**BK:** Just to get started, how did you end up in Vancouver?

**JH:** I was living in California, and it was the late '60s, and I was part of a movement, I think, in my heart, of back- to-the-land, anti-Vietnam, and this resistance that was growing. A group of us used to get together and talk about coming to Canada. The draft was going on, I was young, and it was a resistance movement, so I headed north with a family, a husband and children. And we were staying in Portland for about three years, and I got very involved with the women's movement there, women's liberation movement. And our small group did more resistance work, and Betty Friedan called for a women's strike day, so my seven-year-old son had his placard and off we went. That was a wonderful time in Portland, such a cool city. Anyway, and from there we immigrated easily across the border and into Canada, Vancouver area.

**BK:** So, you had a few different experiences in political organizing and social movements.

**JH:** In California it was the big lettuce boycott, and for the farm workers, Cesar Chavez was the leader of that movement. It was a lot of working and marching and boycotting grapes and lettuce, to speak out about the conditions of the migrant workers that lived in California, so that was my first big bite of activism.

**BK:** And then the women's movement in Portland.

**JH:** That is right, that was awesome. We did one strike action, we stood at lunch hour in the downtown, in the core and the financial district, and we stood on the corner and we whistled and checked out the men that came out of the buildings on their lunch hours. As women have been objectified, and we whistled, and talked about, "Hey, look at that butt," and, "Hey, honey, look over here." That was really cool, really fun, and I taught a class at an alternative high school on women's changing role in society. That would have been 1970.

**BK:** When was it that you got to Vancouver then?

**JH:** '71.

**BK:** And what was the city like back then?

**JH:** I was a mom with young kids, and it was a culture shock – I have never had seen gravy with French fries. It had a real British tone to it, however 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue was very cool, 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue had a hippie vibe. Although we weren't hippies, we were probably a hippy at heart, but we were employed, and our children went to school – we did that sort of thing. It was a wonderful little city. It was still different from Portland, although there is the whole Portland, Seattle, Vancouver, and even San Francisco, that – the west coast, left-leaning cities, but 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue was a real vibe, starting to become a vibe, it was great to be there.

**BK:** Were you staying politically involved in any of these movements?

**JH:** Not at first – getting feet on the ground, and roots in, and I didn't know too many people. However, there was an underground railroad that aided draft dodgers coming across the border. First, I said no to your question, and then I remembered this, and it operated out of the planetarium, the museum planetarium that is still here.

**BK:** Wow.

**JH:** I know, around Kits area, and these were people that didn't immigrate, they were draft dodgers, and there were jobs provided for them, and we met down in the basement of that building. There are a lot of artifacts and people would meet there, so there was a little bit of an underground movement. A lot of the draft dodgers went further east, and the islands, Lasqueti Island was humming with draft dodgers, and back-to-the-landers, mainly Americans. And then I got involved with – I really missed the women's movement, I didn't have any connections. There were some workshops offered at UBC that – Jane Rule put on these workshops and classes, and she was a writer and quite a wonderful, out lesbian writer, and I attended some of those. Because in Portland, I had done some work with people coming out of prison, halfway houses, and the women's movement and the lesbian movement in Portland, they crossed paths. And there wasn't – at the time, it was straight women and feminists and lesbians, but we didn't use the word feminist that much, it was women's liberation. Some of us were involved in setting up a coffee house for women who didn't want to meet at the bars, and younger lesbian women, or younger women from women's liberation, they didn't have to be a gay woman, a safe place where women could meet each other and scheme and laugh and support each other.

**BK:** And that was in Portland?

**JH:** Yes, in Portland, so back to your question. So, this workshop that Jane Rule had put on, I met some women from there, and I went to a few meetings. But I think about that time I moved into White Rock, and there was more involved again with being a mom, and all this. And White Rock area – but I started getting involved with the White Rock Women's Centre, and they hired me as an advocate and a fundraiser and little jobs, so that was – I was reaching out and meeting more women.

**BK:** At that point you hadn't interfaced with the gay community so much?

**JH:** Not so much, but that – okay, so rolling right along into that, so when I was in White Rock at the women’s centre, I was getting restless and wanting more activism, and coming out, and so that moved towards me leaving White Rock and the marriage, and wanting to move into the city. And I remember running an ad in – what was it? Could have been *The Georgia Straight*, it might have been *Angles*, to find a roommate, and I found a great roommate, [name] – okay, names. Okay, wow, [name], my roommate, and she had children, and I had children and we were really just so compatible, it was great, as friends. So, I moved in with – we moved in together in a place, and she was very connected to the lesbian scene, and I was just a newbie, so [name] was quite a bonus. And she was a – she was involved with SFU and criminology department, and she was academically plugged in, so I met a lot of the women that were involved with Press Gang Printers and the whole Commercial Drive scene. So, that was my foray into that group, and I went to a lot of conferences and workshops, and I went to this Video-In at the time to take a course in filming. Okay, so Video-In...

So, before Video-In I got hired at Media Watch in Vancouver. Media Watch is a national organization that looks into and speaks out about images of women and girls in the Canadian media, and it is a hotbed of feminist activity, and no bullshit, and making images of women and girls truthful and not demeaning. And so, I was – I got a great job there, I travelled all around Canada, ‘cause we had a representative in every province and both territories, and my job was supporting all those reps. And we did lots of cool actions here, climbed up on billboards in the night and changed wordings of things. It was a great job, perfectly suited me. And I was on an open line – I remember being on an open line talk show in St. John’s, Newfoundland, and I was all fired up and young activist women. power to women. and this guy called in, and he said, “I bet that she won’t even let her husband change the oil in the car.” And he was – that just reminds me of that. We planned a lot of conferences, women came from all over Canada, and so I branched out into Vancouver, branched out into Media Watch, and now I know people all across Canada.

And in Vancouver, some women – before my time here, before I knew them – were very involved in the housing co-op movement, and they were able to – they had a woman who was the architect, and they lobbied, and it is still standing there at Woodland and Gravely. So, there was an all-women’s housing co-op being built, and was planned to be for lesbians only and their children, and [friend’s name] was on the wait-list for this housing project, and I was new to it, so I was on the list but way down on the list, because so many women were ahead of me. But time passed and [name] got into that – it is Sitka housing co-op – and I got into Sitka housing co-op. And I think there was about thirty units, maybe about twenty-five units, and it was all women who identified as lesbians, gay women. We all lived in this amazing new – I chose my unit from a blueprint, pretty cool, and the drama and the rules and the meetings and, oh my god, it was just... I wrote a – writing a story about it and I haven’t picked up a that story in a while because the stories – in fact, *Tales of the City*, women looking to see who is coming in the gate and what the Ikea package is, and who has got this women visiting this night. So, I lived in Sitka housing co-op and I was immersing myself here, and as happy as I can be.

**BK:** What a transition.

**JH:** It is a transition. Looking at the Gay Games – what was that? 1990 was the Gay Games, so we – I volunteered for the Gay Games and part of what I did was on a lot of different areas, it was billeting, because we wanted – really, we wanted women to come and stay at the housing, at Sitka and so we would talk about, okay, we want girls from Germany, and we want – oh, let's get some women from Australia, yeah. You know, so everybody billeted, almost everybody billeted everybody, and it was just awesome, it was like a magic land there. There were women from all over, and sporty women and kids running around, and it was great. That was a real interesting time of my life.

**BK:** So, a lot of your involvement in the women's community, the lesbian community, a lot of that was pretty political?

**JH:** I think a lot of it had a political edge. It is just who I turned out to be as a grown-up because I was very involved in the women's liberation, the gay movement, the Media Watch. We were very empowered there at Sitka, and I am not sure if it's – I believe it is still just women and children. I do know somebody that still lives there and we had a reunion once, and I am on Facebook with some of the women that lived there. Oh, the stories that I won't share.

**BK:** Well, you should write them down.

**JH:** The story that I am writing about – although my story takes place in an all-women's trailer court in Arizona in the '90s, but based on some of these – we were all characters and we were all enthusiastic. And there were drama queens and breakups and sadness and illness, everything that you would have in a small community that everybody – and the rules, because the sisterhood, and rules.

**BK:** So, a lot of the community was around the Drive at the time?

**JH:** Yes, it was two blocks from the drive. That whole time, the women were just up and down the streets then. That is when they had the kiss-in at Joe's coffee shop. We all used to go to Joe's to see and be seen, and children in and out, and two women kissed. I am not sure what year that was, but it was all in the gay papers. And it was owned by these Italian brothers and so somebody was yelling, and they had them leave and kicked them out. So, there were protests, men and women protesting that. The good gay brothers that drifted to the Drive.

**BK:** I was going to ask that next, was there a lot of connecting with gay men at the time for you?

**JH:** No, before I got my job at Vancouver Persons With AIDS, I didn't have any male gay male friends. I had some in California, but not here. That has really changed.

**BK:** Was there – from what you were observing, these were separate communities?

**JH:** At the time, yes. There were – there was a type of gay men that hung out or that lived by the Drive, and they were gentle-type men, and they would offer childcare at the women's dances. And we had women's dances at the Capri Hall and take back the night dances and international women's day dances, and we would just dance our B off. And most of us – a lot of us had

children and the – so, the gentle gay men, they were different from the men, in some ways, from my eyes, that were on Davie St. They were more, oh gosh, I would say more artsy, but that might work for an explanation.

**BK:** When did you first hear about HIV? Do you remember when that was?

**JH:** Yes, I believe it was – I was hired and I started at this job, the job I am going to talk about, in 1987. So, we would be – we heard about it in the mid ‘80s but it wasn’t, didn’t hear about it in regards to Vancouver, it was this is going on in San Francisco, or this is going on in New York, and then it started to be the gay disease. And I think it perked up our ears, but I don’t feel that the gay men and women were a group unless they were a kind of sub-demographic, like the leather community, S and M community, and that demographic I believe came together more because it was around their particular interest and who they were and what they wanted to seek out. And so, I think that they came together, but I don’t feel because – ACT UP hadn’t really, I think it had gotten started in LA and San Francisco, everything started happening at once, right? ACT UP. So, how I heard about the job was somebody at one of the bookstores had remembered I had worked at Media Watch. There were lots of gay women that worked at Media Watch, not all, it was a place you could be gay and not have to worry about who you were as a female. And a job – she came to me and said there is a job posting at the Gay and Lesbian Centre, and that must have been when it was on Bute and Davie. And she said, “This sounds like something you might be interested in,” because Media Watch was losing a lot of its funding and our jobs were going to be cut or shortened. And I was a mom in subsidized housing in a co-op with an old Volvo and children, and man I didn’t want to be unemployed.

So, I checked it out and it sounded like there was a lot of advocacy going on, and it was more political, and that was my background, and so I applied. And I had got into the Gay and Lesbian Centre quite a bit, into the library and workshops and things like that. So, I applied and got an interview, and it was an interview with Kevin Brown and Warren Jensen, both leaders in AIDS, this work, and Pierre – I can’t remember his last name and, gosh, there... But I remember Kevin, there was about four guys who interviewed me, and they asked a lot about my political activities and activism. And they were great, great, and I am outgoing and pleasant, and it seemed like, hey, something is going on here. And then they gave me a typing test, on an electric typewriter and I aced that test, and I got the job. So, there I was with – surrounded by gay men and a whole new movement and passion, and people didn’t really – people were as organized as they could possibly be, because the men on the board came from different backgrounds. Kevin worked at UBC and was a teacher, and we had people who were sex workers and florists, and all kinds of different types of backgrounds that were all of a sudden on a board and running the organizations. They had just broken off from AIDS Vancouver and just getting rolling and so that is how I walked in that door.

**BK:** It must have been quite small at the time.

**JH:** We had 79 members, that was one of the first – maybe not even then – but one of the, when we started making membership lists, I remember 79 members. And we were in one room, one room and a closet, at the Gay and Lesbian Centre is where the first, and then we took other

rooms over as they became available, until we had one room, had a couch, a few couches that was a lounge of sorts, and there is a video that Kevin Brown – video, do you...?

**BK:** I don't think I have seen that.

**JH:** I have a copy, a personal copy, I will lend that to you, and that takes place in the lounge, and you see Kevin, and you can see these men who didn't know what was coming at them, and how earnest they were to make things happen and to get information and didn't – like I said, all these different backgrounds, so it took a while to get cohesive and people started coming in the door. There is a picture of me taking notes and I think I have a boyish haircut and a purple tail about that long. So, those of you who are listening to this interview, it was very in fashion. People, like I said, were coming in the door, and my desk was right there, and there were people that were men, and gay men – they were people, but they were gay men – I remember a couple of men who would stand at the door, in the doorway and lean in, they could barely step into the room. I would greet them and usually one of the fellas, the leaders, board members, or programs, now we started having programs, so program people were around, and they would talk to them and yeah. But we branched out as much as we could in that building until we just outgrew it.

And that was about the time of the Gay Games, because some of the recruiting and the initial work on Gay Games happened in that building, and they still have an archive in the library, they had dreadful staircase, no elevator, no ramp, it was a terrible staircase to get up there. People got, became more fragile and it was more difficult for people to get up there, and some couldn't even come up the stairs, so we needed to move. And we were turned down and turned away, and I remember for the longest time, because there was some kind of a clock ticking, that we wanted to be out because of the Gay Games, there was a time hanging over our head. And landlords turned us down when they found out who we were, and we were too busy to stop and say this is discrimination, and where is my lawyer, we just had to keep knocking on doors, and it was really rough. I was not part of that but the men would come back, and the stigma was terrible then, people were frightened and afraid of people, and all those old sayings, like can't touch the same doorknob, and that's crazy – now it seems even crazier. But they – we did find a place on Hornby Street of all things, Hornby near Pacific, and it was above an autobody shop. It is where the – right next to an Art Knapp's – is Art Knapp's still there on Hornby? Art Knapp's is a garden shop. We found a place there and we got funding for some kind of a contraption that would roll you up the stairs, grind you up the stairs. We were up above this – not sure what kind of shop, seems to me it was something to do with cars, so that takes us to about 1990, yeah.

**BK:** Were you one of the first staff people that they had hired there?

**JH:** Yes, it was a woman, there was a woman who was a volunteer and she was a friend of Kevin and Warren's, and she did some of the, she helped them. So, I wouldn't say she was a staff person but she was doing admin things, and my job was I made the bank deposits and I paid the bills, and I typed the letters and greeted people that came in, and I just did a little bit of everything. The money and the paper, and helped the board as much as I could, and I had some lay counselling from my background from when I worked with women in White Rock, I worked at or volunteered at Langley Family Services, I took some training in family counselling, so I did some of the listening. So, I was the first paid staff person. The second one was Michael, who is

still working there, he was the finance guy. Warren Jensen was the treasurer and took care of the finances, but we needed to expand, and so I was getting more into the programming and we needed an ED, and a man named Chris Sabeau was our first ED. So, now we had an ED and a finance guy, Michael, and I was programming and whatever they needed me to do.

**BK:** What was it like being a woman there in those early years?

**JH:** You know, it was okay. Yeah, it was all right. Every now and then, there could be a snotty guy that would make some offhand remarks or crude remarks, and I was an assertive strong woman and a mom, and I just wasn't – it didn't affect me. I was never, it was never a big enough issue that I was hurt or felt shunned or... I was accepted because my sleeves were rolled up and I was working with people. And I visited hospitals, and I visited – I was part of a group who if we knew somebody had passed away and their parents were coming into town, we would whip over to their apartment and remove anything gay or sexual in nature. And we would cry that they were gone and laugh, "Oh my god, look at this. Can you imagine if their mother found this?" So, I was really a part of that community, so I was paying my dues to be accepted and trusted, and I was genuine and in there for the long haul. We had no idea – now, I mean my tenure was twenty-nine years, that is almost an entire lifetime of some of the people I worked with, so it suited me.

**BK:** It is incredible, twenty-nine years.

**JH:** I know, it is, when I think back about it. So, it was okay to be a woman there. And I was gay, and I was – so, it was fine. There were lots of fundraising events. There was a bar called Doll and Penny's and there was Hamburger Mary's, and even Macs leather was a store on Granville Street and they all raised money for – it was AIDS then, it was always HIV, but it was people with AIDS, that was the name of the organization even.

**BK:** Was PWA mostly getting funded through donations at that time?

**JH:** Probably. Well, we were getting some city money, and some provincial money after the Socreds left, and the feds, I believe there was money coming from the federal government that was pretty decent, and we didn't need a lot because we were small potatoes. But we were hiring more staff and fundraising, we got the most of the fundraising. I don't think AIDS Vancouver were fundraising quite this much, and then there was Loving Spoonful, but that got started with another name but became Loving Spoonful. And it is easy, people can wrap their head around giving money for food as opposed to giving money for activism, computers, yeah.

**BK:** The organization must have been expanding pretty quickly in terms of membership?

**JH:** Yes.

**BK:** How were you dealing with that?

**JH:** Well, we had more people to do things, and it was mainly gay men who came through the door and were on the board and part of programming. And there was a group that was trying to help in wellness area and getting alternative medication, and Kevin and Warren were pounding

on doors in Ottawa to get money for AZT, and that finally came through. And so people, most people who came there were middle class gay men, and they were volunteering, and they were willing to roll up their sleeves too. So, we had more people, but we had help. And then it started to really grow when we moved to Hornby Street because of the awareness, and there were organizations, we had our Walk for AIDS that was very passionate, and very popular. And the women's movement and the lesbians started joining in, and I think what brought them together – I was thinking about this – was the shared stigma as another thing. Many things brought them together, but the stigma around being gay, and I think there was a lot of empathy for that, and then the illnesses that were so visible – you could see people with Kaposi's Sarcoma, you could see people wasting and looking old, old. And it was in your face. The Walk for AIDS used to be a place to go and see and be seen. The women were there and it was fun and it was upbeat and it was quite a deal, it was a real, so the eastside, met westside. And by now, also, the women's population, the women population in the West End, there were more gay women moving into the West End or coming out of closets in the West End, because everything was happening. Davie Street was really the village. Gay Games brought a lot of, brought the men and women together – swim teams, tennis teams, bowling teams, and these different sports brought your sporty women and the men together, and it worked, and it wasn't hostile, that I encountered. They didn't all come in like nurses either, they came in like fighters, too, for ACT UP and sit-ins and die-ins and Walks for AIDS, there was that. So, the shared stigma – is this coming out chronologically okay?

**BK:** We never worry too much about that.

**JH:** I am just – you know when you are thinking and then you get another little thought that comes in, and it is hard to park it? So, I think the gay games was really, had something to do with it.

**BK:** We have heard a lot about how lesbians were involved in the course of other interviews, but that is a great point to make, they were also in ACT UP, for instance, they were jumping in in all sorts of different capacities. What was it like having the Gay Games here?

**JH:** Magic, it was great. If you had one of your lanyards on, you could ride the bus free, get on and off the city busses. And another area I volunteered at was greeting people at the international airport, and I remember the Australians landed, right, and they tended to be handsome guys, and they had beige kind of khaki, 'cause each country had a bit of a costume or thing, plus they were gay, so they like to have a little thing going on. And they had these great hats, these kind of bush hats, and they had a little koala, and it would sit on their hat. And they were gorgeous, boots, and they came off the flight and everybody cheered, because it was not just me meeting, there were other people meeting. And then, it became on Davie Street, out and about on different venues, guys that had a date with an Australian, or hooked up with an Australian guy would be wearing one of the little koala's, so that was kind of a little... I remember them coming into the office and looking around and wanted to know everything that is going on here, and here is somebody with a koala. It was just vibrant, well-organized, it appeared to be well organized, and Vancouver is a beautiful city and she showed her best. It was stunning and very West Coast, so we aren't quite San Francisco, but in the village was just alive and vibrating and music and the bars. I didn't see it through the eyes of a gay man, but the bars were all line-ups and dancing in the streets and people off and on the buses. And on the Drive, we had so many women at the Sitka housing and



all the cafés, it was magic, it was so great, and off and on the buses. I don't remember hearing – I am sure there were uncomfortable incidents, but I don't remember hearing any bad things around it. A lot of people moved here and came back on holidays.

**BK:** It sounds pretty magical.

**JH:** It was, and lots of different colours and different heights and different ages and everyone with a different thing going on.

**BK:** It does seem remarkable that the city would have been so behind this, like on the mainstream society scale, kind of being like, okay, take over BC Place.

**JH:** The opening ceremony was just packed. It was beautiful and the feeling you had in this amazing group of people who were all gay, or allies, and there in numbers, don't mess with us, we are going to love who we love. And look at us, and we do sports, and we win medals, and we dance. And there were performers and dancers and singers, and people came in just like in the Olympics – “And here is France!” [Cheers], France! You know, it was fun, it was silly, and it was poignant and proud, and it was great.

**BK:** Do you think that that was an indication that mainstream perspectives on the gay community, or maybe on HIV in some ways, were changing at all?

**JH:** I am not sure how much of a commercial venture was the city fathers twirling their mustaches on that, but there was a lot of tolerance. It stuck pretty much to the downtown area – I don't know about that. I know that the activists were out there at the steam baths and the bars with condoms and all that information, and when people got their packages, this is happening, and in their packages, there were condoms, and here is who you can talk to. And there was a lot of wellness and gay men's health everywhere, it was well done.

**BK:** So, when PWA moved into this new space on Hornby, how did that go? What happens in terms of your role as the organization continues to grow?

**JH:** Well, I was very busy running the peer counselling program, so moved into programming. I think I was the program manager, I think the work program was in my title, and the subsidized housing, which turns out to be Wings subsidized housing sprung out of a – well, when we ran it out of a filing cabinet in my office, there were two of our board members who really worked on this with Victoria, and we landed this great subsidized housing scheme. And so, people could stay and get a regular apartment and a portion of it would be subsidized by the government, so you didn't have to live in a subsidized building. So, that was a lot of work, so there was a board that was formed, and they came up with the name Wings Housing Society, because their logo, Positive Living, then it was Vancouver PWA, their logo was these two wings. And the wings were like freedom, and it was also poignant and about, around people died and a lot of people died, the entire board died during my tenure with them. So Wings – so, it ran out of – by that time, Wings Housing got really on its feet we had moved from Hornby to 1107 Seymour Street, we weren't at Hornby Street that long. We moved to Seymour Street, because I remember the board meetings, and I was – I sat at that table. I don't think I was a board member, but I sat at

that table with the Wings Housing board and the first group. Then they got a building, they bought a building that was across from Positive Living now, right across from the hotel, I think it is now called McLaren House. So, they got into this building, so now people had a building that wasn't, so they could be HIV positive and they had neighbours, but the Wings Housing Society was mainly about subsidized housing, and everybody wanted it, so that grew out of the work there.

And the peer counselling program was fantastic, it was one of my joys, it was great. We did a lot of training, because people were coming in the door, and those of us that worked there didn't really have a lot of time to do a lot of counselling, and we weren't peers, we didn't walk in those shoes. And it was so important for people to sit with someone who has gone through many of the things that people were going through. And now the whole peer movement is huge, it is really huge, many levels, so that was very busy. We had a – over a garage, and it was a flat roof that you could go out, we were on the second floor. You could go out our back door and go out on our rooftop, a flat roof, and so the summer, the place was just, everybody was there, with their shirts off, the men were there with their shirts off, and we had meetings out there. It was – and it was just close to Pacific and the beach, and we were still mostly seeing gay men. I would say 90% gay men were coming there, and there was... People started bringing clothing there, because people lost weight, there was a lot of weight changing, and people died, and so we started gathering clothes, and we put them on a couch in the corner. And that led to the little store that they have now, that we also had when we moved, called Polly and Esther's closet – John White started that. And so, people would come in and look through clothing, and there is always an element of dark humour, a definite element of dark humour in this work, and I think my sense of humour has been helpful for my longevity. And the men started calling the clothes DMC – “Oh, we got a new load of DMCs in,” and they called them dead man's clothing, and yeah. So, that went on there with the DMCs came in.

And people, in peer counselling, we had a little cadre of peer counsellors where people could talk, and there was always the activism that was going on, and the search for grants and trying to get more money. And conferences were springing up, and a lot of the AIDS conferences were medical and scientific, and there was a big movement from our board and probably others, PWA organizations in North America and England, to be at that table. And it was great to watch that happen. I had gone to a couple conferences where PWAs have been invited, and they just stormed open those doors, and they had things like a respite room, and a place, all these different programs and workshops and streams and it... They just took over and said we want to share this, we want to hear your knowledge, we want to hear the science, and we want you to hear from us – who we are, what we need, what works, how can we help you, and cut through the mystique and the stigma. So, there was a big international movement, because other voices, African voices, more European voices. And so now, I haven't been to an AIDS conference in a while, I will just call them AIDS conferences, but the last one I went to was great and my group that was there, we all decided to wear masks, to bring white masks and do a demonstration.

**BK:** I feel like some of that – this is just me brainstorming – but some of that idea of taking ownership over one's body and claiming expertise over one's body, it seems like that might have come out of women's movement organizing, ultimately. It sounds like something you would have been involved in earlier.

**JH:** That is true, too, that could have been, because it was around abortion, around objectification. Yes, that – it is a different dynamic, with women and men in charge, and men in power, it is a different dynamic, but it is, there is definitely some cross overs, yes.

**BK:** I am just thinking that most of your political experience would have come in handy.

**JH:** I am thinking of that now that you mention it and the Media Watch, too.

**BK:** So, when did that organization start to – it is still mostly gay men, it still feels like it was mostly gay men. When was that starting to change?

**JH:** We moved over to Seymour Street, which is more of the urban core, it is not the West End, but it is more of an urban core and we started getting people coming in probably in about '91, '92 – I would say early '93, I think that is when we – let's say early '90s. We started getting people coming in from the Downtown Eastside, for a lack of a better – injection drug users, I don't think that is a correct phrase these days, people who use injection drugs, and people who – sex workers, and people who weren't employed, people who had a lot less resources, and people that – many people that had a difficulty being around gay men and did not want to be seen going into the building, because they didn't anybody to think they were gay. And that was, it was an interesting transition, because I did a paper for a conference called "From Cashmere to Can Openers," and this was about our little store, Polly and Esther's Closet, that we went from people finding, oh, cashmere sweaters, to people coming in who needed can openers, and needed things that – more basics. And some of the campy conversation or gayness of Polly and Esther's Closet was not all right for people, for many people, HIV positive people that did not want to be associated with gay – anything to do with gay men. And also, there seemed to be bigger demands, I want this, and I want that, and I think we were seen as a social service like welfare or social service agency – why can't you get me this? Where is my housing? That was a challenge for people that worked there, for people that came and sat in the lounge, and for people who would come into the lounge with their belongings, their sleeping roll, different language, different ways of interacting – it was tough for the longest time.

We did lose some people that couldn't handle it, they would stop coming in. We had to educate ourselves. I remember a fellow that wrote a street smart guide for different phrases, and that hadn't been my experience, and I started – this is just for me – I started going to workshops and conferences, I started outreach to other, my peers, people working with HIV positive people at Native Health on the Downtown Eastside, talking to people doing similar work. And I need to be – if I was going to continue, I needed to be a different, I needed to be educated different, I needed a different outlook, or not be there, and I wanted to be there. People are people, but we were being – we had to really take a look at rejigging a lot of things, the peer counsellors were finding that they had nothing, they weren't really a peer of some of the people who were coming in. How could they help them? And many people coming in needed basics, they needed a safe place to sleep, or they were trying to get off drugs, or they needed more drugs, and here, they didn't want to talk to a gay man, somebody that might seem more gay or feminine, might make them uncomfortable, so that wasn't working. The peer counselling program was, well, we will educate ourselves, we won't try to change the people coming from the Downtown Eastside, but

we will try to understand them from where they are. I remember that. I remember something we came up with is to have a joint peer counselling training with ten of our demographic and ten of the people that were volunteering or coming into Vancouver Native Health, so we pulled that together, and we had a wonderful trainer come up from California. So, I think it was three days at one of the churches in the West End, and there were – the trainer came up with role play scenarios, and some of the people from the Eastside, just like what? I am supposed to be a what? I don't get it, or I don't want to do this, so it wasn't going well. And he said, "You guys go back and you write some scenarios and we will do some of those," and that was brilliant because they had a different experience, and the training language had to be altered. It was a really good coming together, because many of these folks would not have ever met each other or been in the same place or been afraid of the other one in different way, right?

Everybody wasn't a tough guy, but there was a tough guy, a shield, a tough guy position that came forward. Some people were open to working and some people weren't. So, at the very end of this, it turned out to be successful, and we passed a paper around, and said for those want to keep in touch, please put your name and phone number and we will share it. Well, the fact is there were no cell phones then, people didn't have phones, most people didn't have phones, regular land lines, where somebody could call – you could call and leave a message down the hall. So, real learning, it was, and people had phones from the West End, and people didn't have phones, so you just tried to make this work, and then there is something right in front of you like that. So, the peer counselling program bottomed out for a while because the differences were too much, then the lounge activities had to shift a little bit, Polly and Esther's... Well, the organization had to hire a security guard – that was needed. There were fights in the lounge and there hadn't been fights before, you know, and so the times they are a changing, and we, the organization was open to it, they really were. They were open and willing to make it work for people with HIV, not gay men, but it is a whole study I bet. And then here come the women.

**BK:** Let's talk about the women.

**JH:** I am going to have a little water. I was going through some of my papers just to line up some of the dates, and so what – how the Positive Women's Network got rolling in my memory is that there was a reading of – I don't remember the author, I could figure that out. There was a reading on Commercial Drive at one of the bookstores about a book that talked about being an HIV positive woman, so I went to this reading and the discussion after. I knew a couple of the women there, but I didn't know everybody, and it was a lot of great discussion, because it was so new, about women becoming HIV positive. And who were the women, and how did this happen, and what is going to happen, and how is it going to – our bodies are different and how is it going to work? Can we have children ever? And for years we thought forget it. So, I sent around a paper for people who might want to meet again, because I lived at the housing co-op that had a big meeting space that I could sign out, and so this paper went around, and I phoned later and set up a meeting at the common room at the housing co-op. So, this band of women started meeting, and then as time passed, some of the women in the room came out as being HIV positive, that they were HIV positive all along and now they have a place to say, to talk about it. So, I have a letter that I found – a letter from, it was a later. I needed a letter of reference for something, it was a nomination, the board at Vancouver PWA nominated me for a woman of distinction award, and so this was a letter of reference, and it was signed by one of the women who died that

was in this group. A mom, upper-middle-class mom, woman, and it was dated 1990, her letter. And I have a plaque at home as a founding member of Positive Women's Network, and it says 1991 on it, so that is about the right time.

So, this group of women, including myself and a few others – in fact, somebody else I am going to see if they are interested in coming too, because they were at that meeting, and it is a pretty significant... Women took on different roles – okay, I'll get in touch and see about finances and grants, so they pulled it together, we pulled it together and hired an executive director, and I was on the board. At that time, you didn't have to be HIV positive to be on the board. I don't know if that is still true, but of course they wanted HIV positive women to be, but this was just forming this, and we didn't know that many HIV positive women. And I think that the way that Positive Women's Network grew their membership was through Oakridge, the women's hospital out at – not Oakridge, Oak Tree Clinic, and of course St. Paul's was the hub. And there were two amazing social workers, Judy and Cheryl, and I have seen Judy passed away, I have seen Cheryl out and about at artsy things. And so, the word got out because there were positive women coming in, and so many physicians in the suburbs – and the women tended to be from the suburbs – didn't have a clue to what was going on with them. "Oh, this is pneumonia," or "this is a terrible gynaecological this or that." And we didn't think about it, that this could possibly happen, because it was all about gay men. Or, then the injection drug users.

And as I said, here come the women. So many women were misdiagnosed, and the shame, and it tore families apart and many – it tore relationships apart because often that is what happens. The many stories that I heard was that any of the men in relationship with the women had other lives or other histories that they didn't share, or maybe they had no idea it was going to be, they didn't know what they were walking around with it either. It doesn't matter. So, that is how that organization got rolling, and they moved into – they were first – we, they – on Davie Street, the first place was, then they moved into PARC, which is Pacific AIDS Resource Centre at 1107 Seymour with AIDS Vancouver and Vancouver PWA, and a big beautiful library – the PARC library was awesome – and a small section for the Positive Women's Network, all under one roof. That was about '93 or ['9]4. Not sure when the women move in – they didn't move in right away.

**BK:** They didn't stay there for all that long, did they?

**JH:** No, it was – they were running out of room, for one thing, but it was some discomfort, too, for them. Some women were uncomfortable about being there and being around so many men, and some women weren't comfortable with the neighbourhood because it was – it's not, I don't know how to describe that neighbourhood, Granville Street, Drake Street, near Yaletown. I think by day it is different, and by night it is different. It was a more urban core and we were getting a lot of people coming from the Eastside, and some of the women needed to be away from drug use or temptation from drug use, or did not want to be seen. If they were from the Eastside and they wanted to go to the women's network, they had to come through the same front doors and they didn't want to be ID'd by some of the guys that would hang around the front and smoke, they had to smoke outside then. So, there was some discomfort, and they were running out of room.

**BK:** So, they moved to...?

**JH:** Back to I think it is 1033 Davie – could be wrong there.

**BK:** How long did you stay involved with that organization?

**JH:** Till they were really up on their feet and they had a lot of, enough women to sit on the board that were positive. And oh gee, that is a good question. I have always been a supporter and a donor and an ally with their staff, so hands on probably about four years. And then it was time to step back, and they were doing a great job. I go to the occasional fundraiser because I knew the women and was friends with them, and they would come into Positive Living, or VPWA, and see me around retreats, and I did a fair amount of off the side of the desk counselling.

**BK:** We are talking about your professional life, but in some ways, this would have crossed over into personal life too, right? Friendships.

**JH:** Yes, I mean, I had a vast network of mainly gay men at first, because we did retreats, healing retreats at PWA and then at Positive Living, and I was kind of a one-woman show putting on retreats with a team, the retreat team. And the retreat team was made up mainly of men, once in a while I had a female on the team, but it was mainly men, and we became – team-building is one of my skills and I just love it, and I like training, and so I would take this high performing volunteer group of really keen, positive men that wanted to be a part of opening doors and supporting other men on the land on retreats. And we did skills building once a year and it was rigorous skills building, and there was art therapy, and if you were on the island, how would you build a raft and who would you bring along, and if you have to leave your flashlight, but you could help someone cross a river – there are all these layered team games. I also teach improv, and we can talk about Theatre positive, too.

**BK:** We will.

**JH:** I also teach improv, so I am a big theatre gaming person, so there was all this training and retreats were amazing. We took forty HIV positive people on the land, we mainly went to Loon Lake, which is out by Maple Ridge. And there was massage and there was canoeing and home groups where people talked about goals and hope, and there was laughter, and it was a wonderful program. So, I made some very close friends with men on my retreat team who I still see, we still go for coffee and they want to plan a reunion. Could I have a little break?

[Break]

**BK:** You were talking about the retreats. When did those start roughly?

**JH:** In 1989, '90, a group, the group of men that were there mainly at the office went away for a getaway for a weekend, and the feedback was it was just too much like a party and we needed to have it a little more regulated. We were going to spend the money for transportation and a place to go, and so 1991, I started doing retreats with, and going, attending to have a staff person there, and they are still going on – last year they had a retreat at Positive Living. I remember one year I

was up at the same camp – we tried a few camps here and there, but Loon Lake was great, and they get to know us and we get to know the land, and the man that manages the camp has been the same one since we have been coming to Loon Lake came over and said this is your twenty years up here now and you have been coming here, I have known you. So, it is a great space, it is a really great space, and PAN, Pacific AIDS Network, uses it for their trainings and programs, empowerment and skills building, they go up there too now. It is affordable enough and they know who we are. It is not like, you are who? Oh, there might be children.

**BK:** We have heard so many people talk about those retreats over the course of the interviews

**JH:** Good.

**BK:** It seems like a wonderful legacy.

**JH:** It is. The peer team, the team of HIV positive people, and I in the background, the buck stops here, right? But I am in the background and we meet every night and debrief at just after dinner and do brief, because there are small groups that go on, everybody has to go to a small group meeting every day for an hour and change, and they are all scripted, so everybody is doing the same kinds of things. And it's – we decide who is in what small group, because if there are two people from Victoria, we need to separate them, and partners. And we also, if there is somebody we think might be difficult, or might be afraid, or anybody that we can, and we get surprised a lot, we can't figure out everybody, and not a lot of people are comfortable going away from home from three nights and four days. They bring their cat, or do I have the right clothes? Who is my roommate? There are a lot of fears, but the retreat team that worked with me, they are amazing and they have great senses of humour and they are kind and they want this to be a success for people. And we don't take any guff either – lights out, you have to be quiet at certain time, and you can't smoke here, and there are – we'll send somebody home, we will take them to the SkyTrain if anybody is messing around or really disturbing the whole camp. So, we come across as a caring, big-hearted group that is there to give you a soft landing and support and have fun, but you are part of a community and you are expected to be a good citizen.

And I get pranked a lot. I stay in the same cabins as my team, and one memorable prank, because there are some I can't mention, but in where I stayed with the team, there was a living room and a big fireplace and this is rustic camp, right, lodge scene. And they had a huge huge old-fashioned photograph above the fireplace of the area with people in bonnets and old cars or horses and logs, and all this, and there was quite a few people. And the next year we went up, 'cause this prank happened and they are patient, somebody had taken a picture, taken my picture, a picture of me, and cut out my face and put it on one of the women with the bonnet, and it was an awesome match. And I finally saw it with all these men with the mutton chops and the high collars and the women, so it was good. A good team, good people. They were all successful retreats – people grew, they met other people, they... The person from Port Hardy or the person from Kelowna got to see – people would say I have never met a positive woman, I have never known somebody that grew up on the reserve, and now I am having breakfast with this person here, and hearing about her life or his life. The peer work again. I am glad you are getting good feedback, nice.

**BK:** Do we want to talk a little about Theatre Positive and how that got started?

**JH:** Yeah, sure. We were at 1107 Seymour, the larger building, and I knew Jake Thomas as a director about town, and I had been to a couple of his plays. And I am a big theatre buff. He did *The Maids* I think it was. And so, time passed and I saw Jake in the building, and we started talking, and I knew who he was and his theatre background, and we put our heads together and came up with an idea to have a theatre company. And if we didn't write our own material, you can always – there are ways that you can buy or other options to do other plays. So, he knew people that were not necessarily all HIV positive, but definitely allies, but mainly HIV positive, and he knew people who did voice and choreography and clown work and writing, and we started meeting, and we found some scripts that he and I thought would work. And we would have rehearsals, and it was great. We started a theatre company and he was the director and we called me the producer, and we ventured out into the Fringe Festival, which was fabulous, but what we geared ourselves toward was the 1996 AIDS Conference. They had an art stream, and people could display art or photography, and there is always something – not always but often an art stream, just to mix it up. So, these AIDS conferences had come a long way. So we applied.

I had written a story about an HIV positive man in the waiting room and Jake really liked it, and he thought it could be a play. I thought, oh, what do I know about writing a play, eeeek, but I thought sure, let me see. So, I created a one-act play from the story and we were going to mount it and do it, and the man that starred in it, [name] – I can't remember [name's] last name, [name] passed away – he was perfect, too. And I remember when we were rehearsing in the theatre, the big theatre, and I stood there in the dark in the back and Jake was at the front and the actors were, and I thought, this is my wonderful story and here these men and women who are – I think everyone in this, I think everyone in the play was an HIV positive person in this play – it was very moving, and probably one of the things, highlights of my life to see this and cheer from the background. We had a wonderful stage manager, Suzanne Krieger, who I worked with, and Suzanne was awesome – she had the bandages and sewing kits and everything we could possibly need. So, we mounted – the name of the play was *Sole Brothers*, like the sole of your shoe. It did well, we took it to the Fringe Festival, and I think we did three or four Fringe Festival shows. There were other plays too, and Jake wrote a couple of them, and I was an actor in some of them.

It was a wonderful ride, it was great. We made a little bit of money at the Fringe to offset, but I did that as well as my job-job. Sometimes I wonder how we pulled it off, or how I pulled it off – I mean, the energy, but it is community and it is collaborative and even though I am the staff person and this is my responsibility, people's well-being and how we perform ethically and who we are, and we represent not only Positive Living but a population – it suited me. I guess I was young enough to really be full of that energy and the creative, because I love acting and I have always been a bit of an amateur actor, and Jake was lovely to work with, a good man. I mean we had weirdness's and drama and, oh my god, who forgot the such and such, and can you loan me twenty dollars? It is just – we were a great troupe, all the things that happen to major troupe happened to us in a miniature way, and it was empowering and it was so forceful to see these women and men out there on the stage in front of an audience and telling your story. There were a lot of stories being told, and some of the work that Jake wrote was very meaningful and heart wrenching and funny and honest. So, I think that is a highlight, should be a highlight for Positive



Living, and I know it is a highlight for Jake and I, because he has told me many times. So, that was Theatre Positive.

**BK:** Wow, and being able to maybe challenge people's perspectives on HIV positive people.

**JH:** It did, 'cause we had two – I won't name them but we had two or three women and positive women that stood up there in that spotlight. When you are on the stage, all you can see is the spotlight, and one was an Indigenous woman, and another was a heterosexual woman that found herself in this situation and had anger and had hope, and we had a real eclectic group. I was so moved by it. It was good, it was good.

**BK:** And you have quite a performance background as well. Does that tie into this, or how does it tie into this? I am sure it does.

**JH:** When I was at Media Watch, we had an AGM and we had all the big board members – we had Rosemary Brown, who was well known in Vancouver, and Maude Barlow, who worked with the senior Trudeau. We had a lot of really strong women on our board, so the staff at Media Watch decided to have a little fun at the AGM and put on this skit. The skit was a game show and I was to be in the audience as a plant, and I was going to come up on the stage, and we were going to do this comedy thing. So, I needed a name, so I came up with a name of Lovie Sizzle. So, it was the night, and there is a little group of the staff doing it, so Lovie Sizzle was born, and she came up and was a contestant, and it was funny and silly. And as time passed, I got a call from one of the women in Whitehorse who had been at the AGM, and she said that the women's organization up there had a frozen turkey award every year that they gave to the male in their parliament legislature that made the worst gaffe about women. And it was a big dinner and the frozen turkey award, would Lovie come up and present the award? I thought, Lovie? Okay, I can do that, yeah. So, off I went and I put a little piece together and did this, walked on and did this, I came out of the bathroom, many bathrooms lower-key performers change in. I came roaring out into this hotel big banquet room and did some jokes and gave the frozen turkey award.

And then Lovie became a character and I did Lovie at other places, in Winnipeg and Seattle and Portland and Montreal and Whitehorse, again as a command return performance. And around town, a lot of things around Vancouver – fundraisers, book launches, all kinds of things. And probably the biggest performance, I performed a lot at the Gay Games, which was awesome because it was 2000 women at BC Place, I think, and I have a skit with another woman who actually was a clown. And Lovie does this thing where she takes off her weird outfit, she has a hair net and a flashy sequined coat and funny glasses, and so I would take things off, and she would be behind me putting them on, and I didn't know that she was there, and people laugh, women laugh. And it is not self-deprecating humour and it's not cutting men off at the knees, it's let's have fun, and it is quirky, it is a little sexy. That's helped me, my humour and ability to not take things that seriously, and grow from them or not necessarily see the humour everywhere, but not be afraid to laugh with people, not at them, but with them. It is helpful, and that's part of my personality, and I brought that to Theatre Positive and Jake, and to the improv workshops at the retreats, which is all about the participants, I just create them. People that you would never think – it wasn't on a stage, it was in a gym, and they would say, "Oh, I can't do anything like that." And I would say just come and watch, and then we would get ready for something and say,

okay, everybody up, and people did these improv scenes with others. They were never alone, and they were never going to, it wasn't something that was going to ridicule people, and we often would schedule them on the first night because they would really break the ice. Up to twenty-two people showed up and most people came and almost everybody that came to watch dabbled in it. It was good for me and it was really good for people to bust out a little and laugh.

**BK:** We are talking about laughter, so how did you prevent burnout doing this work for so many years?

**JH:** I have been asked that a lot.

**BK:** Because it is abnormal in a lot of ways to have been this involved for this long.

**JH:** I am probably a little abnormal, too. It suits my personality, and in the day when people were dying and dying and dying, terrible suffering deaths, and reaching out and asking for help, and without family, and I mean it's – it steels you, it doesn't harden. I don't feel it has hardened me, but it's given me some form of courage, I think, and at first, I hadn't known anyone that had died except my grandfather. These were the men that I was with and had coffee, and sat around the table and made plans with. I just think it can – it gave me courage to beat this awful – I keep wanting to swear, but I won't swear – to beat this terrible thing that was eating its way through the community, and my organization, and my – the guys that I would have to my house for coffee or for breakfast, or meet for brunch at one of the fun places on Davie Street, and laugh and watch them flirt, and watch them talk to me, but look over my shoulder and all those, many times, you know it was... I was welcomed and embraced by many men in my life and I needed to be there and keep going. That's what it feels like. I remember one man who I went to say goodbye to at St. Paul's, and he was dying, and we hugged and had tears, and there were other people in the room. And as I was walking away from his bed, he said, "Jackie." I turned around, and he said, "Please tell them I was funny." And oh, it is very moving, and when I was at his memorial and they asked, does anybody, like to say something, I stood up and said, when this man died, and I told that story. He was quite a hero in the movement too. Every life is important, but he has really given a lot. I remember another man that was in a similar situation that told me he wasn't ready to go and just kept saying he wasn't ready to go, and I could do nothing, I couldn't counsel my way out of that one. It has been very – had a very profound influence on me and it has made me a stronger person than, it has filled me up with stories and love and mischief and comradery, and I am grateful grateful for those men.

**BK:** How has your perspective on HIV changed looking toward the present?

**JH:** I don't think it has. I am a veteran, and I am happy that it's manageable, I am happy that there were no babies born in BC the last time I was at a meeting with Dr. Montaner, stood up, so I am happy that people can have children if they choose to. I don't – I mean I am involved with another organization, HIV organization as a donor and a supporter, and some of my men in my life and especially from my retreat team are still at it, still alive and not as well as other people their same age range 'cause it is all those older medications that the drugs that people were taking, because it was take these or die. And the cocktails have just beaten up their bodies and their organs and – but they are here, they are seeing the cherry blossoms that are coming out

right now and they are ordering their chicken and waffles at Hamburger Mary's, spitting our coffee laughing so hard. We talk about Netflix and holidays, so they are having life, they are living life, and I am happy for that, very happy for that. I think it will only get better.

**BK:** It is amazing to have that after seeing so many people pass away, to see these people that are surviving now.

**JH:** It started to be, to feel like sometimes, I just can't get close to this person because he is not going to make it, nobody is making it. I think that is a short-lived thought, that you either can't be in this work as a healthy person, or you just have to know that that is a naturally human response or observation.

**BK:** I have covered most of what I have had to ask you, but as you know, we also always like to ask at the end, what advice you might have for young whipper snappers out there today based on your experience?

**JH:** In what role are the whipper snappers? Are they doing the work? Or are they...?

**BK:** Maybe people that are moving into roles that might be caregiving roles.

**JH:** So, my peers who are doing the same work that I did. My advice would be to learn about the history, to know where this came from and to be kind and open and wise and try to be – make good decisions, try to not treat it as... It is different though, it is different, Ben, because it's so different, it's so different. So, I think that by knowing where this came from and you, meeting and working with people who are HIV positive and older is important to get a sense and not discard their – discard them and discard what they bring, and listen to them. And for brand new people coming out of medical schools or different universities, I just hope that they continue to bring in people – I think we do that here – that have lived this life. And I don't have any real gems for people in 2019 doing the work, because it is so different. Just be authentic, laugh, and listen.

**BK:** I feel like we have covered a lot of things, but there is always stuff that we don't cover in the course of our questions, so is there anything that you can think of that we maybe have skipped over, or that we haven't talked about at great length as of yet?

**JH:** No. I am disappointed that there is not more for HIV positive women. I hear that in my contacts. I believe that Friends for Life is trying to do more of that, and so that is a disappointment, the funding that might be drying up. And I haven't been hands on working in two years but I hear that that is the funding is moving on and away from HIV, so I just wanted to mention that, that that is what people are dealing with now, too. No, I don't have anything to add. I think it has been a good interview, and I thank you for being able to talk about things to stir up my memories a bit.

**BK:** There will probably be more things percolating as you leave.

**JH:** This has been – I am so glad that I took that path and applied for that job and stuck it out. I am sure it has changed me too, and I don't think that I bear scars, or have a broken heart. I feel that it was – it suited who I was in the world, and I gained so much from those friendships and challenges. I feel like a veteran.

**BK:** You certainly are.

**JH:** Thank you for the interview.