

Interview Summary – Trans Activism Oral History

Interviewee name:	Deirdre McCloskey
Interviewer:	Evan Taylor
Date of Interview:	January 30, 2020

Summary:

The interview opens with Deirdre talking about her family relationships - she talks about her mother's loving acceptance, but about the pain of losing her marriage to the love of her life as well as losing her relationship with her children and not meeting her grandchildren. She talks about forging friendships with other women in her church and community and about joining the Anglican church. Deirdre talks about losing sexual sensation after her surgery in 1996 and how she has adapted and begun to see sexuality as something like a curse.

She talks about growing up and her first awareness of her gender - as well as cross-dressing early on and throughout her marriage. There was a cross-dressers group that she joined in Iowa city and she recalls going out bowling with them. There were also other groups she recalls from the early days - including meetings in hotels where the owners loved them because they were unobtrusive and polite.

She went to a conference and, on the long drive home, had an "epiphany" and knew she wanted to transition. She told her wife when she got home, who had suspected as much, and they separated a few months later. Also, Deirdre's sister had her committed to a mental institution for being trans, however they now have a positive relationship.

She discusses her book, *Crossing: A Memoir* and the potential for turning it into a film, as well as her best friend, who is Australian, but whose name she can't remember. She also talks about reading *Conundrum*, by Jan Morris and what a big influence it was on her.

Deirdre was in Holland teaching in 1996 and went to Australia for her gender surgery - stopping in New Zealand on the way back to speak at a conference. She discusses the process of coming out to her family and regrets that she left the conversation to her wife to have with their children. Part of her reason to be public about her transition is that it was going to be public anyway, but also that she felt it was her responsibility, as a tenured professor, to take the risk to be visible. She mentions Lynn Conway and talks about the activist and education work they both did online to combat the damage of Michael Bailey's work.

Deirdre then talks about the process of writing her book and some of the creative decisions she made throughout, as well as how much it means to her when people resonate with her observations about gender and gender expression. Specifically, she talks about how important it is to her that other women accept her as a woman and that she can relate to other women now. She talks about Caitlyn Jenner being in the news and then reflects on herself being on the Oprah show, and the notoriety of it.

She also discusses the role of the internet in modern communication and how it has facilitated access to knowledge for trans people. She reflects on various historical and political contexts of news and information access, as well as her fears for trans rights in the future under the Trump administration.

She doesn't locate herself as central to trans activism, and would like her legacy to be more for her professional work as an economist and the many books she has written.