

## “HIV in My Day” - Interview #89

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Interviewee: Troy Hecoeks (TH); Interviewer: Ben Klassen (BK)

**Ben Klassen:** Great, just sitting down with Troy this afternoon. Thank you for agreeing to be here and share some of your story with me. Just to get started, could you tell me a little bit about how you first started interacting with the gay community, or engaging with gay life?

**Troy Hecoeks:** I would say in the—when I was seventeen—in the, it would be 1982. I was living in Coquitlam and then I heard about Davie Street. And I was fascinated, so I, you know, maybe when I was fifteen I ran away from home a few times. For two, three days, and I was on Granville and then I checked Davie Street. And that was maybe my first encounter, I would say at that time. And then I moved to the West End when I was seventeen. And that would be in 1982, ‘83 the first time I moved to the West End. Now I’m fifty-four. I haven’t lived here the whole time, but I’ve lived in maybe in Metrotown and some other places, but now I’m back in the West End. But I first encountered the gay life more, when I—maybe ‘83, ‘84—and I was going to, there used to be a nightclub called Buddies that I used to go to. It was beautiful, at Burrard and Burnaby here. And Numbers of course is still there, and Celebrities. *Celebrities* used to be called The Rock Palace in the eighties, it was a so-called straight night club that one there. Well right here. It was called The Rock Palace in like ‘82, ‘83, ‘84 around that time and then it changed hands. But the West End’s changed. A lot of the – some of the gay, unfortunately some of the gay people died of AIDS and that so there’s a lot families and ethnic people moved in, so it still has a gay feeling but it doesn’t have the same feeling as it did maybe in the eighties to me. But it’s still, I’m still happy, it’s still a nice place, it’s evolving but it’s not as gay as it was in the eighties. There’s lots of Chin—not picking on them—there’s lot of Chinese that moved here with their families, nothing wrong with that, but it’s just people maybe died this and that and the next thing. But it still it has the gay feeling, but I don’t think this is, in my humble opinion, I don’t—it does—it still—it’s not as I don’t know if gay is the right word but it’s changed. For the better or for the good or for the worser, I’m not entirely sure. In some ways good, too. But go ahead if you want to.

**BK:** Yeah, what did the community look like in the eighties. Are there thoughts about that?

**TH:** Well, I went to all the gay parades and that, it was good. It was more vibrant in the eighties, Davie Street. It was a different feel, they’ve done some nice things, but it was there was – I think there was more gay clubs too. A lot of them went by the wayside, a lot of the gay clubs like I could name The Gandy Dancer, that was in Yaletown. The Love Affair, that was on Seymour if you went down Davie then turned right, it was a beauti—it was like a—I was in New York, in Manhattan a few times to visit and The Love Affair reminded me—it was the one nightclub in Vancouver that reminded me of a New York kind of New York nightclub. It’s gone, but all the—even Richards and Dicks on Dicks and all the there’s not—even some of the the straight, Vancouver doesn’t have the same – like you know how all the movie theatres are gone now almost, like there’s the few left, and the same thing with gay clubs, there’s hardly any left like there was, there’s at least maybe seven or eight or ten that are gone. Even on Robson, on the top of the hill they had a beautiful gay bar there called Neighbours I think it was called, on the top of

the hill—you know, on there on the side that’s gone, I mean I can name... And then they had a leather bar called, in that area too they had a kind of a neat butch leather bar in there and that’s gone. I’m just trying to remember the name of the place—*The Shaggy Horse!*

**BK:** Yes, with the shag carpet.

**TH:** Yeah, *The Shaggy Horse*. I would go—like I just went in there because I was fascinated to—I heard stuff like coming to Davie Street. I was fascinated about Davie Street. I grew up, I wasn’t really gay – I don’t like to say gay, straight, or bi, but I had girlfriends growing up. I played hockey and I grew up in Coquitlam, went to school and all that, and I never really had my first—like I fooled around at home when my dad got remarried, the boy of her, we—him and I—kind of fooled around, but not like screwing but just kind of playing around like that type. But he liked girls too, I guess that’s maybe common but I never really. And then I was on the street, that’s another story I don’t want to sta—but then when I moved here when I was eighteen, I started hustling and a little bit at the time and the Boystown was on—the Boystown was on Broughton if you went up Davie to Broughton, and they were all by the church there and it was that like in ‘82, ‘83. And then in around ‘84, ‘85 they did a thing called “Shame the Johns” here. And it was called “Shame the Johns” and you know they were all like that, and they wanted to move—the women were up there too, the women were on Bute. The women were together up there. And then they moved them all down to the Boystown, I guess, what they’ll call it. Were all down there for awhile. And I did that for awhile.

So I’ve been very fortunate no to, not to—and it’s not a bragging or anything, I’ve just been—whether it’s a, what’s that called, a thing of god you know, that I say that I haven’t got infected with the HIV, really. It’s a—like I didn’t go around, like I was mentioning to you before the interview, I didn’t—wasn’t like I really—I wasn’t promiscuous really or that type of thing. In getting screwed, I was very careful. Especially when the AIDS virus started. I was doing movies in California, some porn—I was in the porno industry, around ‘85, ‘86 in Los Angeles. And I remember when Rock Hudson died, I was there in ‘85 I think like that, but after that happened and some of them, I just knew that it could happen to anyone. And I had friends here that had it, they had you know and that. But the gay thing in the West End was, I really loved it around that time. Remember they had a place, I don’t know how long you’ve been here, but they had Fresco’s the restaurant up there – do you remember that? No?

**BK:** No, I don’t.

**TH:** But I fell in love with the West End, and the gay life and that. And the people.

**BK:** Yeah, it’s also interesting to think about how prevalent sex work was in the West End in those early years.

**TH:** Yeah, the women were working on Bute up there, my sister—and a funny thing, I have two sisters and a brother and one of my—when I ran away and I was here, when I was seventeen, eighteen around here and I was hustling a little bit. I do one or two tricks a day, I think, or around there. And I didn’t have a drug, I just smoked a little bit of pot and have the odd beer, I never did crack cocaine or needles or anything. I don’t know how I got hepatitis C, maybe in Mexico – I

went a couple times and I got sick. But you can ask me how I contacted, how I ever got the hepatitis C, I really don't know. Because I never put needles in my arm, but I guess you can get it other ways. But yeah, the West End is an interesting place. I think it's the most interesting street in Vancouver, Davie Street, in some ways.

**BK:** Yeah, they sure have cleaned it up a lot.

**TH:** Yeah.

**BK:** Not for the better in a lot of ways.

**TH:** No, and I never saw so many people sleeping on the street. I don't really keep, maybe keep a diary or no one is but how could you not notice? I mean on Granville now, you saw one time I just saw—it's just like an epidemic of people sleeping on the—on the streets now. I don't think they really have to, sometimes they just—I don't think—I'm hard-pressed to think that people can't get a place or find a place. I mean, maybe the odd occasion when somebody moved to Vancouver and they didn't have a place or something, but usually they'll put you in a place or help you out, you know, and that type of thing, if you're over seventeen or eighteen or something. So, I just didn't understand, what are they trying to embarrass the city by sleeping on the streets, you know? I don't think it's as bad as like when you see all those people. Maybe in Los Angeles as I saw I think recently about all the people in Los Angeles on the streets is phenomenal, more than ever. Recently anyway, like something like five or ten thousand people in a part of downtown all together in a tent city. I saw it about two weeks ago. But here, like you saw lots all over the place, I don't think it's like—we're not—I didn't come here to talk about that—but I don't think that—don't think that it's as bad as it looks. I think just some people like to be there, maybe on the – like that type of thing.

**BK:** So, when did you first hear about HIV or AIDS?

**TH:** In the eighties, when it first—'81, '82—when it first came out, you know when you first started hearing about it. And then it was terrifying, because everybody knew what AID—then you heard jokes about AIDS. “You know what AIDS...”—they used to say, when it first— “...what AIDS stood for? Americans in deep shit.” That's what they were joking, like they're not joking but you know. Or they maybe blame on them and all because some people said it came from Africa, remember—and when it first came out kind of, people were kind of analyzing, analytical, where did it come from, where did it originate from? You know, this thing. This powerful, I don't know if they were—and some people said from a monkey in Africa and all that, but I don't even know today if people—I don't even know with all the studying and the money if anybody really knows. They have theories about where it you know originated from or something like that. You know I've heard—you've heard some things bantered about, but I don't know. It's like they blame Africa or something like that sometimes. I don't know if they blame Africa, it could've maybe could've come from there but I'm just saying, you know. And I've heard some other stories but thank god they...

Thank god that's almost cured, because people used to get that Kaposi. You know? The Kaposi was when you saw the purple spots and stuff and then they – when they first came out, they had

that medication, I think it was called ADT or AZT or something and they had and that was controversial that medication. And it was – I hate to say fascinating but it was a scary, it was so scary at that time when it first came out, you would think that it was—because people have sex, right? So, it’s like, it’s like the plague and like the you know it just like—it was scary. You thought any time you have sex and I was—I was sometimes when I wear—even when I did porno movies in the ‘85, ’86, some of the things were making people were condoms at that time, and it doesn’t really maybe look good on film or whatever, per se. But everybody was—I shouldn’t say everybody—but it seemed like there was a fear and it was all over the news, like I said. And then when Rock Hudson died and... And then Freddie Mercury, you know, from Queen. But at the time, if I were to go, turn back the clock and go back those years and reflect what the—what it was like, it was almost hysteria, people were petrified. And there were some people—there were probably some gay men who didn’t think—I won’t get it or they knew that it was probably there. When it first came out, no one could maybe believe it too, like they knew that maybe it was true. And I’m sure some people were still—I’m sure some guys still just went about their same business and they knew that like the—but if you look at it, we’re not taught but today versus today it’s just amazing like that the hep—they can prolong your life, I mean. And you don’t get—you don’t see Kaposi.

And before you used to maybe, maybe years ago they had to take maybe thirty to a hundred pills, or I’m not sure, I wasn’t, I didn’t have to do that. And maybe now it’s just take maybe whatever they’re doing, so everything is—they’ve modified, it’s been modified wonderfully, everything. Everything’s less pills and this and that. So they’ve, again, come a long way. The technology or the advancements in science and stuff is just remarkable and it’s wonderful. It’s too bad it wasn’t around, or you know, it’s kind of—I’m maybe a little bitter at that time when it first came out, they could’ve saved a lot, perhaps they could’ve saved a lot more lives. But anyways it’s—that’s history, but yeah, I had lots of friends who died of AIDS. There were people that I knew and I saw lose weight, at the time. Like some people—some people lost, and I didn’t really ask, but some burly guys went down to like a hundred-and-twenty-pounds or something. You can’t eat and all that stuff, but I’m glad that they have all these advancements today for the people and it’s good for the gay population that they can, you know. But yeah, anything else you gonna ask me? Anything, I used to do the porn, you probably—and I worked on the street. Considering I did porn and worked on the street and I was—that’s why I said I was fortunate maybe I didn’t get, that I didn’t contact it. Maybe not even AIDS, I never got syphilis, and that was rampant.

Apparently, syphilis was rampant or it was going around in gay men recently when they did a study here. Two years ago, they told me, “Would you like to be tested for syphilis?” You know, sure do everything. I didn’t think I had it. I sound like a hockey player who didn’t—who made it to NHL and you didn’t, like you knew you were good and you made it, and you go I didn’t think I had it but I guess I do, or whatever, I guess I was better than I thought. I don’t think they would say that, but I’m just thinking of the words, I guess I had it. But I didn’t. But anyways, it was going around at that time and that’s scary too, especially not—because that’s one of those diseases maybe I never studied it, but you know, you heard when it—because you don’t really know you have it and then if it gets to that third, so-called third stage or something, and then it can go to the brain. And so, I mean I was fortunate I never got that as well. I was saying with the AIDS how I wasn’t super promiscuous, but you know I had my moments. And...

**BK:** Was there information about safe sex?

**TH:** At that time? Well, they tried—they pushed condoms and stuff like that, you know. That a lot of people would say, you would hear a lot of people, because I was in some of the clubs and I heard the rumblings. You can, you know when you're—you heard the talk, chatter among gay people whether at a coffee shop or in the gay bar or friends or something. But a lot of them would say it's like wearing a glove, like the proverbial glove type of thing and that doesn't feel good. Doesn't, you know, I'd hate to say I can't blame them for not wearing it, but I guess you—well, if there's a virus going around, you should you know wear one. But it didn't feel good. That was a thing. They had lots of condoms, but they had a lot of people, some people would refuse to wear them too. Either from they didn't like it, or they just thought I won't get AIDS. It won't happen to me. But I can't totally—see, back then in '82, '83, '84, they didn't have a cure and that so they didn't have—it was either condoms, just condoms. That's all you could really do, it's not like you could inject a cream, you know, before or after sex like a woman taking the morning after pill. And you could inject something like you know in your anal—or something, or something whatever it's called those things to kill any, if there was any whatever, something a virus or whatever, it would just clean it, it was good. Multipurpose. Like an enema thing you could do or something. That was a chance you wouldn't get, if someone had maybe HIV or some venereal disease or something you did that it would help, it wasn't guaranteed or. They didn't have those type of things and I don't think they have them today.

You know they just push condoms. That's all there was. Condom. How about condemnation. If you didn't wear condoms, they gave you condemnation. I don't. It sounds the same, same word. But I never wore condoms that much either, all the time, to speak of it. I didn't like them, I wasn't a big fan of condoms, but I did wear them. I did use them. Because if I was getting it, when I was in the movies, sometimes they wore them, they had to, but I was very fortunate didn't contact it, I think. And thank god for that. But I was scared too. So, I didn't go out to the clubs when I was in Los Angeles. When I was doing—I just kept to myself too, I didn't really – I lived in L.A. maybe seven months or eight months or something, in '85 when I was twenty. And I didn't really—I didn't go to the nightclubs, I just kept—I would just go to bed early and I did the few things I was there for and that was it. But I was still, I was careful maybe too.

**BK:** So maybe you changed your behaviour in some respects?

**TH:** I did, yeah. Right away, as soon as the—like some people, it changed right away and some people it took awhile, and some people thought they would never get the virus. They knew it was there, they knew it existed and that in the back of their mind and that, but I think they just went in with a vengeance, that I won't get it. And then you know there's another top—but how many men knew they had HIV and still went out and had sex without a condom. That's another topic, that's a negative thing. I don't really want to go there. If somebody asks, I really don't know who, I don't know anybody you know, I'm just saying, but that's happened. It's very vicious. And sometimes I think like what those type of things, it's who knows what they were thinking, but the only thing I could think of would be, and you would probably agree is, they're so angry that they got the virus, that someone gave me AIDS. They wanna—they're—you know maybe know that they were dying, they just think fuck it, I'm going to give it to everyone else. They're angry and like that, I don't care, someone gave it to me. I'm gonna give it to some—that type of

retaliation or anger I think. I would think that's what would be—I think that would be their psyche. The ones that did that, deliberate, kinda deliberate. Knowing you had the virus but you were still going to Stanley Park and Lee's trail and those places and having sex without a condom and you knew you were – had HIV positive is—I don't know if there's a word for that. That's almost first-degree murder. Because it's pre-meditated in a sense. You knew you had it and yet you were doing—and you didn't inform the other person. See?

A lot of people would just—well can you imagine when you had AIDS, some people, who's gonna—if you went around saying you have AIDS, which you should do, you're never gonna have sex, but who's gonna have sex with you? Doesn't justify it, but that's probably, you know. Unless you had sex with someone else that's HIV. I guess that I'm just, you know, making light of it. but that went on, lots of people spread the virus. I don't know who, I'm not pointing fingers, but it's went, there's stories that that's happened. But I'm just glad that they have a cure, and they—all the medication, I'm not sure all the stuff, the latest advances, see I never had it—but I know people who have it—some I'm not sure the latest advancements that they have, or some of the—maybe you would know more, how many pills do they take now? Like I know they – is it cut down to one a day or they don't have to take pills or they've really done remarkable I think.

**BK:** Yeah, some people are taking a pill a day, some people are taking a couple still.

**TH:** Yeah but that's still—compared what it was.

**BK:** Yeah, it's pretty amazing.

**TH:** I'm happy, I'm really happy with—they have a cure recently they said for Parkinson's disease, on TV, or they think they have—they're close to finding a cure for Parkinson's disease. Just in the last week I saw, they're very close or have or something, so everything's looking good. We're going to leave the world in a better place when we go.

**BK:** That's the hope.

**TH:** That would be in the perfect world or, but...

**BK:** I think some of those HIV positive folks who were maybe transmitting the virus to other people, they probably assumed that if somebody didn't want to use a condom, that they were also HIV positive.

**TH:** Yeah, I didn't think about that, that's a good point.

**BK:** And if you were HIV negative, you might be thinking the same thing. Right?

**TH:** See that's an interesting thing because a lot of people did—knew they had it and just did it like that, so I don't blame them, but that went on probably more than people realize. That's not responsibility, but I guess, I don't know. But anyways, that's history. And I'm happy to be here to discuss any of that stuff. Because it's interesting and current and fascinating.

**BK:** Where did your information about safe sex come from? Were you learning about that from organizations or folks out in the community or the media?

**TH:** Yeah, all of it, and also a couple times I had contacted like gonorrhea and chlamydia—not bragging, I’m just saying, I’m trying to tie it in—I had that a couple times. If you don’t use condoms, you’re going to get those things. I’m not complaining that I got them, I knew I probably would get gonorrhea or chlamydia. I didn’t want them, and I wanted to say something between you, most of the time when I got—and I’m not pointing the finger, because it’s just, you know it’s my fault for maybe not using a condom—most ninety, almost every time that I got chlamydia or gonorrhea it was from a woman. I’m not blaming them, but they just, you know just saying. But anyway, while I was there getting treatment, talking to the workers like that were there in the eighties, they would push condoms and give you and stuff like that, in those clinics. And through the television or through the—all over the place they were pushing condoms and stuff like that. And some commercials too. Ramsay’s. But safe sex is the way to go. Dolly Parton had a good saying, she said to young people, “Pretend every day’s a rainy day and wear your rubbers.” Of course, they never took her up on that. A few maybe. A few maybe perhaps took her up on that. But it was—she meant well. Again, rubbers maybe don’t feel exactly good. But they keep you safe. But to some people it was more important that they felt good at the time, than the safe part. So, it shows you we live in a hedonistic society. We’re all for glory. We want glory poured on us.

**BK:** And hey, in the mid-1980s, the gay community especially was really exploring sex and pleasure.

**TH:** It was unbelievable. I was in New York, I was in San Francisco and Seattle, and all the gays clubs. Seattle had some S&M things, one bar was called Big Daddy’s or something, but I wasn’t into S&M really, I never let anybody like pin me down and stuff like that, or I wasn’t, I mean I enjoy it a little bit but I was scared too when somebody was like that. I didn’t know, you know. I know people have some S&M places in the West End where they have a two-bedroom—some guys have two bedrooms and one bedroom is—one of the rooms is all designed for that. Like I saw a guy in Burnaby Street when I was working in the paper, and I went over to his place and I was scared for my life. Like that when I went to, he was nice, but I was scared. So, he said, no you can—I’ll—you know—so he had me like, tie him up and do, you know not hurt him but just do a few things. But I was still scared to be in that environment. I tried one time. Through—I had an ad in the *West Ender*, I was working like, massages. Maybe for a couple years? And that’s the one experience I remember, going to Burnaby Street and I remember. But there’s a lot of people have S&M rooms and stuff. But anyway.

**BK:** How was the community responding to all of this in those early years?

**TH:** Yeah. I just don’t think – like you saw it spread. so I just think people were... I don’t—I just think that most of the people just still went on about their business and had sex and didn’t give a—because it spread. You saw how it spread, right. And even after it was on the news, so I just think that—I just don’t think people thought it—I don’t think the world took it seriously. In my—you know, looking back on it in retrospect, in my humble opinion, I don’t think it weakened the nation. But I don’t think, I just don’t think the world—people went out and still...

Like, they knew that there was that virus, it wasn't like—but people put it in the back of their minds and just kind of thought it won't happen to me and different things. Because it—and they weren't using condoms, not everybody was using condoms. And I just – but then there was that fear factor. I think after about two, three years, until about 1987, '88, then people really realized that hey we got something serious, and then that's why it's kind of cut down. Or people – more safe sex, they cut it down maybe. Some gay guys probably didn't want to, but they were using condoms and they realized—because once you see three, four friends die or you heard and that, I don't think—I think early on they knew the onset at the very year or two, or three people heard it on the news and you were bombarded. You know, with the HIV virus and like you saw – I don't know, you were born around that time too, '85. When you were born, what year?

**BK:** Not until '91.

**TH:** And I went to Expo 86. Listen to this, I'll go back. Expo 86 here, I was twenty-one. Because I was born in sixty-five, you know that and, at the—but you can't experience everything. Like I would've like to have seen Bobby Orr or I would've like to been alive maybe to see, you know, people are gonna say I got to see Gretzky see, I don't really care about hockey. And then maybe people who were born, he retired in nineteen—think about people who were born later, I didn't get a chance to see Gordie Howe. I'm not a hockey player or maybe you can't see everything in life.

**BK:** Yes.

**TH:** It would've been nice to be born three hundred years ago or two-hundred years ago and experience those things, you know, you should've been like a—you should've been alive a hundred year ago. You know, it's just I'm happy to be alive and you can't experience everything. But back to the AIDS thing, I just think that people—I just think that people were apathetic and didn't care. Like they didn't think they were going to get it. I think it was partly people didn't—I think people didn't think that they would get the virus. And they liked playing Russian roulette too. I think there was some Russian roulette in there. Like they knew, they just—and I think, and I'm kind of in a weird, perverse, maybe slightly inexplicable, I think some people were—wanted to get the virus. And they would never admit it. But I think in a maybe, you could say who, what do you mean who would want that virus? I think people were—people did, without sex, without thinking, they just like playing Russian roulette. I think that that was part of it. I don't think they wanted it, like they were going, oh please, give me the, you know. But I think some people were – they just didn't care one way or the other and they were fascinated by the whole thing. You don't hear people talk about maybe that aspect of it or maybe, or maybe not put much light on that one. You know. You're talking about cures and medications and stuff but what about the behaviour patterns and stuff, like I said.

But I'm just guessing, I don't know that, but I just think sometimes you know that people were fascinated, and you know, their friends have AIDS and they wanted to have it and join them or something. It didn't mean that they wanted to die, but they thought if they get—some people thought if I get the virus, I'll fight it and I'll beat it, it won't take me down too. Which is a good way to be, they have that bravado. That macho bravado. You have to, maybe. You know, even if I get it I'm gonna fight it and beat it. It's not going to take me down. And people were probably



thinking that while they were maybe at that, some of the gay people at the time maybe had that in the back of their mind. Although they were scared about and they knew people died of AIDS, and they knew maybe it was there. But you just can't believe at that time it came out. What's AIDS? And all that, you hear about it and it would just—but then—and so it spread quickly at the beginning. So, I really don't know, maybe if you could even all the historians when they study it would know and maybe know what—why at the beginning people just went like in, with all guns a-blazing. It's part—there's four, five reasons, maybe many reasons, you know it's just, but the part that I said about the fact that, I'm not sure if I'm right or wrong, but I just had – some people didn't want the virus but they just didn't give a crap, I think and just went in there. Didn't think they would get it and they thought if I get it, I'll beat it. But I'm not wearing a condom. And I know that AIDS is out there and my—I have a friends who died of AIDS, they knew all that yet! Or yet, they would still go using without condoms, taking that Russian roulette chance. There's a euphoria to it. The euphoric feeling of having sex like that and playing Russian roulette seemed like shoplifting or something. There's like that AIDS is out there, you don't think you're going to get it. That's not the whole, you want to have fun. But that would be maybe could—could've been maybe part of it.

I can't get inside someone's head, not that you'd want to, like they say. Who knows what motivates people or their, what their psyche is. But I'm just—those are all things, you know. Nobody knows, nobody may never know those things exactly. Even in five hundred years or a thousand, you may not get all those answers. It's not important to get answers all the time and know everything. Some things are meant to be a mystery, somewhat maybe, I'm just guessing maybe, or maybe they're not, like maybe those things. Perhaps, or maybe they're not, like those things. Perhaps, you know, I don't know. A few things are not meant to be known. Just a mystery. Like most of us are here by fluke pregnancies, my grandfather used to say. What, I'd never heard that you know, when people say you're a fluke. Well a lot of us are here by fluke pregnancies, unplanned pregnancies. So, we're all flukes. Unless somebody planned the pregnancy then it wouldn't be. Otherwise it's a fluke pregnancy. I remember him saying that, I didn't necessarily agree with it, but I thought it was an interesting take on that. But anyways, you know, condoms, they were advertised and they drummed at it. Condoms, condoms galore. Even the eighties and nineties, everywhere, and then I mean and the porn industry was using them and that told—so that spoke volumes that the porn industry was using them. When I saw them using that, that spoke volumes. They were making a serious, you know endeavour or effort to curb it. To curb the virus. At least they made it an effort.

**BK:** Were there organizations that were forming at the time that you were aware of at least?

**TH:** Well just the men's, the ones like The Loving Spoonful that was here and some of those, AIDS for some of the—the—I heard just that type of thing. Because I was—see for me, I was bisexual or—and I've had girlfriends and I mean I still like women, I don't know why sometimes. I mean I don't hate them, I love them, but I like both, I'm just kind of a free spirit. But I forgot what I was going to say, I got sidetracked, or derailed. You were saying something. Usually I don't, but sometimes it happens to the best of us.

**BK:** I was just asking about whether you were aware of what was going on in terms of organizations forming.

**TH:** Oh yeah they had some of them but I—like, I read and stuff, but I didn't, you know I didn't—I knew it was going on but I wasn't like totally involved with them.

**BK:** Immersed.

**TH:** Yeah, that's a good word. I wasn't totally immersed in the whole thing like some people are. But I was aware. I was careful because I didn't spread, in case I had it, I didn't want to get the virus and I didn't want to spread it, so I did my part too. And I'm just ecstatic, like I said to you many times, about how far just with the technology and the advancements with medication and that, it's getting better all the time with everything, so just totally impressed with the science world.

**BK:** Do you remember when HIV testing became available?

**TH:** Tuesday of last year! You know, you can say when someone says when did we...

**BK:** No, not a date but...

**TH:** Want to hear a good line that I heard? I don't use it, but when did we meet? Tuesday of last year. Or you know you can just say, you know, it throws people off because usually people say, they don't think you're going to say Tuesday of last year. Which Tuesday, could you be more specific perhaps? But yeah, the—I just thought The Loving Spoonful and some of them, but I didn't—and when people died, I went to that memorial in the park down there every year, they had a AIDS thing, and I did you know, some stuff. But then a few people I knew, like maybe five or ten people I kind of knew, died too, so I just kind of – but you know, it's sad but it was part of life. But then I knew that they were making advancements, but I kept up to date with stuff. And still today, you know, I'm happy to do my part or to help or whatever, you know. You know, somehow, we all pitch in and do stuff, I think we can accomplish great things.

**BK:** Did you find yourself supporting friends who were living with HIV back then?

**TH:** No, I didn't, because I didn't have the virus, although I knew some people, but it doesn't mean that I thought I was – I just didn't really get too much involved. Like, I'd visit people in the hospital and I did that stuff, but I didn't get so much in—I didn't—I donated some money to some of those things, a little bit, but I didn't get involved so much with the organizations and stuff like that, but I was aware of them, happy that they had those for people like you said, a coping thing. An outlet that people could go to in that time, in that time of pain and stuff, to have those things is psychologically amazing, to have those places that people can turn to if they want to, you know, to know there's somebody there and that's wonderful. They have the AIDS centre, the Doctor Peter's Centre over here and that. I saw a guy today, I know was in there, that he used to live in my—I live in Nicholson Tower over there. And but they have a lot of things for people now, it's excellent. For women and for you know for a lot of things that they've done. Women get more stuff down—I used to work at the Carneg—I mean, I hate they get that, women get like all those things like the women's centre and all that stuff for them. What about men, can we have some more of those things?

But yeah, I would, I mean, I was down here, I was literally in, when the AIDS virus started kind of when they first heard about it maybe in '81, '82, I was seventeen, so I was really—you know, I was at that age where wasn't like it—it wasn't like I was maybe eight or nine at that age when it first started. So, when you're maybe like seventeen or something, you're more cognizant or more aware of what's going on so you—intellectually—so you can, you know, I knew I was more aware of what's going on at seventeen than say other things. At that point it was fascinating like I say to live through—not to live through—but to be alive during the genesis of AIDS, at the very infancy of it, at the beginning, and to see it you know, and it just—every three, four years they made gains, in increments. People were dying, and people were donating money. You saw all these things and stuff. Just people went full-steam ahead. They did—they cured AIDS with—because they went full-steam ahead. And it's cured now almost, I would say it's cured, I mean it might still be there, but I think they've cured it almost. Or it's on the verge or they're really—they definitely have medications that say if one were to get it, that you know, but that's a...

Another thing I wanted to tell you what I thought too, I wanted to—was an interesting—you know when you look at a pyramid, people say look at it from different juxtapositions or different angles, what about—what about the fact that, let's say that all the gay community knows now that they have all this wonderful medication, to prolong one's life. Or you know, if you were—if you were unfortunate to get the virus, that you know in the back of your mind that they now have advancements in technology that can prolong your life thirty or forty years. Now that's good, but on the other hand, or the other side of the coin, that means that people will just say fuck it, I'm not going to wear a condom, I'm just going guns blazing, because even if I get it, they have great medication. So, there is that aspect of that part of it too, that the—which is good, but people feel confident enough that the medication and all the pills and everything is better than ever. That they can go in and maybe just—they're less fearful of getting the virus. Which is one way good, but then there's that—that other maybe a little bit that people should still maybe. You know, but that's—I thought, I think that when they make advancements it's good but people might still go out there and not – and just have sex without condoms and stuff like that because knowing that they can be cured and stuff. So, but I still think it's better than it was, you know, like in the eighties.

**BK:** It's sure a lot more manageable now, I think.

**TH:** Yeah it's more manageable now, there's no Kaposi, people don't lose weight that much, and it's just, you know, they maybe give them steroids but they have all these things now to keep people healthy and everything, it's just amazing and they almost cured the virus I think. They're very close. They said they're very close to—they're very, very close to even knowing where the you know, and all that stuff so it's just amazing. We won't even be talking about AIDS anymore, it'll be obsolete in awhile. There'll be something different, not strong, but it'll be, you know—AIDS will be—AIDS is gonna be like—AIDS will be like something that happened, and you know, like and then it was cured. And then gone like something, I don't think—you know that's what my belief is, I think it's almost cured and it'll be gone. We did it, we cured it. All my billions of dollars that I invested.

**BK:** Yeah, donating money to these organizations was an important thing back then too.

**TH:** Yeah it was a lot of people donated money, and they needed money that was—back then for medicine stuff, like for cancer, they really – and lots of people stepped up to the plate and got it going. So yeah, I don't realize how far it's come like this, how the cure is and we don't realize that maybe all the – you just take it maybe for granted that, well, we knew that they would do that but what about all the hard work and all the money. I'll never know what went behind where they've gotten to today. Yeah. I don't know how many times I went to St. Paul's on the seventh floor and visited people up there. Yeah. I've had a lot of friends who've died in that hospital. Not even of AIDS, just like you know a couple senior citizens or friends that I knew. But then death is part of life, so it was like, you know, when you get a dog or a cat, it's just part of the deal, as long as nobody suffers, slowly. Like AIDS, they used to suffer. That's what hurt me the most, when you saw people losing weight. I saw friends with the AIDS. That hurt to see people that you love like that. You don't want them to die, but even the worst thing about AIDS is the suffering when it first came out. How long people suffered was the worst thing. It was frustrating for me to see, for everybody, how you died really slowly. Slowly. Lose weight. You were losing weight and then people's some hair would fall out, it was they were getting Kaposi, some people got those purple things. It's one thing to get disease it's another to have those things. It's not fair. Some people's hair fell out or went white or the teeth fell out or maybe some of—at the beginning. Or things like that.

But the thing about AIDS other than, is that what I see it, because I was around, is that how people died really slowly. That was terrible. You didn't want 'em to die, but they just, like there was nothing, and everybody was just losing weight, getting skinnier and skinnier. They looked like – it's not funny – like prisoners from a Russian revolution camp or something, some of them. They couldn't eat, it's not their fault. And you just saw people, most people they just wasted away, and they died that was frustrating. And now they—now they have stuff to put on weight and do different things, so they've done with the advancements. But people at the beginning, at the very beginning, oh my god, you wouldn't wish that on—people just wanted to die. Some people said why couldn't I, like that. Because some people suffered for five, six years of AIDS and then die. At the beginning in the early eighties before they had stuff. You could be in the hospital and just slowly—it was just a slow, terrible thing.

**BK:** And a lot of them were very young too.

**TH:** Yeah, like lot of people, some people twenty-fo—it wasn't an age. That disease didn't go by age or anything like that. It could've got even—babies got it born, but I mean through sexual stuff, you know I saw—some people were twenty-five, thirty, and you know you couldn't believe it. And of course the word stigma, with the words AIDS, I wanted to discuss that word stigma. Back in the eighties, they used—the word stigma came up on television and stuff that people didn't want to say they had it because the stigma associated with the word “I have AIDS” or “I'm HIV.” People were like, or standoffish or ahhh—as if you were—as if it were—as if you could catch it from them through airborne. People looked at people in the eighties when they had AIDS as if the virus were airborne. Standoffish. And you know, and then if you said you had AIDS in the beginning—oh, you're gay! When you say AIDS, first of all, you're gay. When people say, first of all, with the words AIDS, first of all, a lot of people, like no one, a lot of guys weren't ashamed or embarrassed they were gay. First of all. But it wasn't the gay community, it

was a lot of other people who weren't educated and ignorant, that was the main problem, the ones that, you know. So, a lot of gay people, they were terrified to let people—and they felt embarrassed and ashamed to say they have AIDS. Because first of all, it shows that you must be gay, first of all, nothing wrong with being gay but just saying. And you must get screwed in the bum, or get fucked in the ass, you know, I'm just saying put in layman terms and nothing wrong with that, I'm just saying, but you know, but people would – there's that stigma. And now you have AIDS. So you've got AIDS, you're gay you've got AIDS, so a lot of people were.

And also the word, when you have AIDS at the beginning, people were like ew, as if you had a cold sore or something, maybe. They didn't want to be around you or something. Some people were maybe – people maybe shied away from them. I'm sure people lost friends when they—I'm sure in the gay world, some gay person had their friends when they went to them, say, look I've just found out I'm HIV positive, I'm sure some of them—I'm sure there's—and I'm sure all over America they lost some friends, they just acted strange after that. And that's what it was like with that stigma, and you heard that, just like I said the word surreal, you hear a lot, oh it's totally surreal, how does it... People use that a lot. And years ago we used to be the word mundane I heard people using. "How's your work?" "Oh, it's good but it's kind of mundane," and that was something—every era, there's words that we use, like some use everyday but they seem to be in the psyche or the you know or the news. But back then stigma was—stigma was—that was paramount, that was the word that you heard like that about AIDS.

Maybe not anymore now though, that's totally gone now, with the way that the world's gone. I saw something about the flag in Langley on the news, some people still don't like the flag hung up, you know in the certain things or something, so still not comfortable with the flag everywhere. Maybe here some people still have issues and that but we've come – you know, the so-called straight society is more understanding too, so I think it's good all around. You still have some homophobia and some of that could still be around even in five hundred years, but I think it's a lot less and better than it was. You know you hear certain things, I used to hear beatings – not beatings but certain things, gay-bashers come in the people you know and that—I hate that word. It's a terrible word. I don't like the word bash. It just it conjures up violence or something. But that type of stuff, you hear—thank god, thank god, you hear a lot less of that. Not that god had anything to do with it. I'm just joking. And all those things, and so, everything's good all around. It's getting better, and there's that understanding, I think, that people know, like and I think a lot of people are more—I think a lot of people are bisexual, a lot of people wouldn't believe it, that they are. Like I think people may not even know. Or maybe they don't want to know. But I think it is—in one way, I don't like how the bars have gone and some of the stuff, in other ways, it's good too, but I'm fascinated by everything.

I love studies and stuff like that, you came to the right person in a way because I was—in a sense—because I was around at that time and I was in the—I worked on the street and then I, you know, I hustled in Hawaii, I hustled in – w here else? I was around when I—in Los Angeles on Santa Monica Boulevard a little bit at that time I was doing. So, I was around when that virus first came out, at that time, so I saw on the news all those things and the fear, it was just unbelievable. Now they don't talk about it on the news. You never hear it. You never hardly hear them talking about it because it's like very often now you hear more about you know crack cocaine or homelessness or different things, because the AIDS has come so far and all that. You

don't hear it on the news that much even talked about unless they're doing something like a—you know very often so that's very excellent, in a way that's very good. It doesn't mean they don't care, it's just that it's on the back burner, like they're curing it but there's other things pressing that they've got up front. So, you don't even hear it the news that much talked about. Just like you see Trump everyday on the news, you would see talk about AIDS things at that time almost, like something in the things. We're finding a cure or this and that, right at the beginning when it was happening. How many people died in New York and it's bad and that, and how many men have died and that.

Do you wish you would've been around to see that? Not to see people die, but you know, you don't have to because you can see videos and stuff, you can see back then all that stuff on those things. You would've been sad, you didn't want to—you know at that time, you probably would've, so just be glad in some ways too. And I don't know if glad is the right word but just appreciative but uhm—but uh, it was like I said scary, fascinating. Yeah, at the time that disease and stuff came out, scariest disease I ever heard, so many other ones that come out like you hear tuberculosis and this and that and the next thing, the Norwalk virus from cruise ships and different things, but then when you heard AIDS, like at that time when it came out, you just think of death if you get it, if you get it, it's a death sentence. When it first came out. Scary. It really... Any time someone was having sex they must've thought—I don't know they must've thought is this the time I'm gonna get it? If you don't, you know or—when it was really rampant or came out at that time.

**BK:** How was the government responding back then? Do you remember anything around that?

**TH:** Yeah, they were donating money. You know, I can vaguely remember some of it, but they were involved, they had to be really, really... They wanted to be or had to be, they did their best to donate money and they did stuff. I can't remember all the criticisms back in the eighties because so much has happened since 9/11 and all these different things going on. About so much, I can't be—about what the government was like, but I'm sure they, I think they stepped up with money and donations and stuff like that too. I can't remember exactly, you know like back then. But are you pleased the way it's come? I mean you're not – do you think it's come a long way too with, yeah?

**BK:** Oh yeah, I mean it's not a death sentence anymore.

**TH:** No, no. Like I said they can prolong you and keep you alive and healthy even now with all the stuff, the diet and everything, they taught people diet and the pills and positive thinking and I guess practice safe sex but I just—people don't like condoms. I don't, I can't speak for a lot of people don't, but I guess you have

**BK:** There's definitely some negative associations with condoms.

**TH:** Yeah, people – well, I don't think anybody, not many people would, you know. But people use them, you know, reluctantly. Probably use them reluctantly. And thankfully too at the time, at the time you think, especially if you're getting screwed and someone had one on, you think well it could break. I was petrified sometimes like that – what if it breaks when I was getting

screwed at that time with a condom, like in the movies. And they said, “Don’t worry, we have a condom everybody.” You’re thinking because you heard it could break, condoms can break, and if someone’s too rough and don’t use Vaseline on them because that will break them. You know those type of things were—that was being discussed a lot probably back then, you know condoms, do they break or is this one good and stuff. Just something like that even was in the chatter. What condoms are good, what brand and some—and the fear do they break. Some break if you put Vaseline or heard certain things you couldn’t put on lubrication-wise. You know. And then they came out with Astroglide and stuff like that. But they talked about that, that was a fear thing with me it was about with a condom was if you were getting screwed, like you maybe felt good, but you were thinking please don’t break in your mind or you know or something like that, even though you felt good, and you were having fun but you were probably thinking like that in your mind. Like do a good job but you’re praying please don’t break.

And then I got hepatitis C too, but I haven’t had—I had a hepatitis C and I’ve had some other stuff, and I had a venereal – I’ve been put under a couple of times in the hospital where I had venereal wart—I had venereal wart inside the urethra a little bit, like about like that. So, they had to put me under at VGH and remove it. And I’ve had stuff on my uhm—I had a—something in my anus, like a same type of thing or one of those like I forget the name of them, tags or things that you can get. So, I had to have that taken off too, and that so I’ve had some issues but nothing—but I’ve been lucky so far, not to get some of the stuff. I don’t know if lucky is the right word but anyways, you know, I’m happy to be here. And I’ve carved fifty-four, I don’t look a day over thirty, and I’m fifty-four. Just kidding. But you know.

**BK:** Were you aware of activist responses that were going on back in the eighties and nineties? Was that something that you saw at all?

**TH:** Yeah, you saw lots of that stuff on the streets. That was lots of—considering Vancouver’s like a protest city too, in a way. I call Vancouver a protest city, and it’s a good thing because it’s a, you know I’m not putting it down, it’s like the democracy thing but you know people have a right to. But back then, yeah, a lot of stuff was on the streets, and you know the AIDS thing and people they had Shame the Johns and they had AIDS and then they had, stuff like that I can remember that type of stuff going on in the streets. And about AIDS stuff and get a cure for AIDS and money and that. And it was quite something. I just didn’t—it happened so quickly, and came upon so that epidemic just came upon us so quickly. Just like waking up one day and here and then I like said I when I started was around that time, but I can’t remember exactly all that stuff because so much went on, but I know that they were definitely, people were in the streets and stuff like that. And I think some people were mad at the government, some time they had protesting if I remember about the government didn’t step up at the beginning with AIDS. They felt the government was apathetic towards it because it was gay and a stigma and that, and saying you’re not really just because it’s a gay thing or like a LGBT don’t turn—don’t turn your—or help out more. I can’t, like I said, exactly, but I think that went on at the beginning too where they weren’t really—see, when the AIDS virus came out, maybe people didn’t realize the severity of it, and that too. So, you know but... Sounds like making excuse for the government but they finally woke up after awhile and realized and came to, I can’t remember all they’ve done but they’ve done their share I think. Everyone has. Sonny & Cher.

**BK:** What did you think about that, those activists at the time?

**TH:** Bold. A very ballsy, bold, very good. They stood up like that, anybody that can go out there like that, that takes some balls, some guts and stuff. And they did it for pride. Like the word pride flag, people have pride they went out there, they fought. And a lot of people, you know, you'd have signs like lost my brother, I lost a friend. They'd have stuff like that you know at the beginning when people went in the streets, and they'd have signs with people that have died. You saw a lot of that when it came out, when they had marches like that. Tried to drum up, and they had an AIDS day. And then they used to have things on TV for the movie stars. I think it was '85 they did a thing for AIDS. And they had all the rock concerts at that time, '85. It was in '85. I forget who was there but like all of them like the [Rolling] Stones and that was for AIDS. They did charities like that to get you know, or David Foster I think organized they did some of that stuff. But you don't hear about that as much anymore. I guess they have so much money or it's come so far. I'm sure people are still donating you know to the AIDS and that.

**BK:** And you mentioned going to some of those AIDS vigils, I guess?

**TH:** I did go to quite a few. Down at the park at Davie and Bidwell, I forget the name.

**BK:** Is that Sunset Beach?

**TH:** No it's over—it's over right by English Bay if you go to English Bay where on the top, and right across the street, that park with the nice Chinese thing in there, that was the park I can't remember the name of it, I did. That was the park that they would hold vigils, people would have candles once a, like that—and then people, where that thing I forget the name of it, looks like Japanese thing in the centre, people would have picture or the names of all the—of somebody who died and the date or something like that, all around that thing. I don't know if it's going on anymore but I went to some of those too. Or most like that, in the summertime.

**BK:** Sounds quite powerful.

**TH:** It was very powerful. It really was, going there. Sad yet powerful, yet people were together. And there was that consciousness that everybody knew it was going on, so you felt that there—it would bring responsibility. That was the hope, that yay everybody knows like we're not celebrating the deaths but also the seriousness of it too, the gravity of it. Let's find a cure and let's be a little bit responsible, or more responsible. And not spread it. You can spread your legs and spread rumours and spread the wealth but don't spread the virus. And now with all my advancements and all my billions that I've invested into the AIDS foundation we found a cure. There's a group called the Cure or something, I don't know their songs. You know in the eighties, that was the name, the Cure. I don't remember any songs, they had a couple hits. One hit wonder thing.

**BK:** They're a good band, a really good band. I'm just about out of questions here, just a couple more. How do you think the epidemic changed the gay community as a whole?

**TH:** That's a good question. Yeah, as a whole, yeah. Well, in some ways it hasn't changed them at all. How about that? Maybe in some ways it hasn't changed them, it hasn't changed them at



all. In other ways it has. So, the ways that it has is, see I know so many gay people and I know how promiscuous, you know, how gay boys are. So you know I just, I think they were careful but I just think that be yourself type of thing, I think it—I think they're more aware and stuff like that, I mean the gay community, it probably brought them closer together with the virus. Sometimes it takes tragedies, like you heard, it takes a tragedy to bring you know – if it wasn't for a tragedy sometimes people might not even come together like that. I think that we're a lot closer and there's a lot more love – like they said love is love. There's more love and there's more awareness. But in terms of whether—I think some people even with the virus just continued on with their behaviour the way it was. Some people curbed it, maybe some, but I think some people just, I think they just went on the way they were. But it's brought people—I think the gay community's a lot closer and more aware, so I think it's been a good thing. And in some ways things are better and in some ways I don't like – you know, like I—about some of the, I liked it maybe in the eighties or nineties maybe because I was used to it and there was more. It felt more gay because there was more gay—there was more of an—they say Vancouver's a no fun city – in some ways they have a point. Some ways, it is fun. You have to create your own fun I guess, as people say. But there's—all the nightclubs are gone and most of the movie theatres are gone and that.

**But still**, it's still a great city. The West End's great. The West End has—the West End is doing well, but you know, there's the gay, I think the gay village you know can still, it can still become greater I think. And better. And more loving. I think people, it's more loving, but with all the – it's kind of changed, the West End like that in a way, I don't know for better with all the people that moved in, like Asians and stuff, it's not the same anymore but it's still nice. It's like comparing apples and oranges – you can't compare, it's just different times. You know. Like that saying, it is what it is. But it was neat in the eighties, like '80, very gay and very different and the eighty, like '78 to about '85, it changed around Expo 86, it's still good. There's some of the things I still like about the restaurants on Davie Street that's a good buy. But the gay—the AIDS virus has changed everybody in that way, but it's changed us for the better too, and we learnt lots, the virus taught us all humanity, a lot of stuff. Taught us survival. The AIDS virus if it taught us anything it's how to survive, how to survive and how to beat things and beat the odds. Don't beat your friends, don't beat anybody, just beat the odds. Yep. It was a very sad virus but it's maybe one of those things that it was meant to come maybe to teach us a lesson, I don't know I'm not sure. Teach us what, I'm not sure. The human civilization a lesson or something or to give us, send us, maybe that's why it was here.

I don't know how, where it came from like at the beginning. Like people pointed fingers, like the blame game. The blame game went on – where did AIDS originate or where did it derive from. Like that was going—just like the condoms broke, and certain things, and the stigma there were certain things going on at the beginning. But where did it originate from, people were fascinated. Where did that virus come from? And they wanted to blame, was it from the US or from Africa, that was interesting. And I don't even know if anybody knows today. I don't think it's important maybe to know where it came from, just the point maybe like you know some people might say that maturity thing and just point that we've cured and we're you know, it's a lot better now, society. It's happier, I think the gay world is much happier now because there is that cure and there's that, you know, there's that burden off the back that they finally almost made a cure or they made so much things that we can just—we can just maybe enjoy sex more too. I think it's

improved the gay people's sex lives because there's a freedom, it freed up a lot of things. So, the virus is—you know I'm not—it taught us some lessons and brought us closer together. It took evil to do that. But everything is good and as long as people keep donating money and we stick with it like they are it'll just keep getting better. I don't—I don't have all the answers, we just have to keep working together. Like keep doing studies and people keep, just keep working together and make things better all the time and try to tweak. All we can do is tweak with things, right? Some things, you just have to try four, five things and it works or something like you know with certain things, it's all about tweaking and it's just a work in progress. The whole thing's a work in progress. It's unfortunate the AIDS virus is here and all those things, but like I said, maybe perhaps somehow it was a lesson, maybe it was meant to be here, not to kill people or be mean but maybe it taught us something.

**BK:** I think whether—

**TH:** I don't know what, you know I'm just saying but maybe. I mean god put it there for a reason, I can't blame god. But I'm just saying. Look at it from that point of view maybe too. I'm not sure but anyways. I like the way things are looking up and I don't hear hardly anybody dying and just like they have all those things, support groups. And all those support groups like with all those things for people, so there's that emotional, psychological thing that's important too that you know that you have friends there. In the gay world your friends are your family, as you know. How many times have you heard gay people say my family hates me, my family, because I'm gay my brothers, sisters won't talk to me. That's all over the – that's going on everywhere even unfortunately today, in 2020 almost. 2020's like your vision. 2020. Should be 2020. But in the gay world, they used to say that your friends are your family because your family's alienated—the families alienated some of the gay boys. And so their friends are you know, the only ones who are there for them in some cases.

**BK:** Yeah, that concept—

**TH:** That's true. That's the truest thing maybe I've said and I think I could say with conviction. And I can't speak for everybody, but I've heard stories and you've heard that your friends are your family.

**BK:** Yeah, that concept of chosen family.\

**TH:** You get people alienate you when you say I'm—it's like it's a stigma. Like some people say oh I'm gay or something, it's like it's a—people going like that or something. Like I have AIDS or I'm gay or something like that. It's just a lack of education and people are, you know, I had a gay friend of mine he said something witty I'll say it. He said, “The only reason why people—the only reason why some so-called straight guys don't want to suck cock is because they're afraid they might like it.” I'm not saying that's true. I'm not going—that's not on the record. I have no criminal record. But you know, I'm just—he would joke with me, but I mean there could be some validity or truth to that too. Sometimes there's that fear factor or people are afraid to know maybe. Sometimes it might arise desires in people's subconscious that they would rather not know about. They're afraid that, maybe I am bi or something. You know. So that's—some straight guys don't like good looking guys because you're arousing desires in their

subconscious that they'd sooner not know about. They don't want to admit that maybe they have desires. Who knows? It's just an opinion. But do you bring lots of people in for this study?

**BK:** Oh yeah, we've interviewed lots.

**TH:** It's good to have lots of takes and different people have different, you know. I've just been myself, but I was here during that time in the West End and I was in L.A. and I was in San Francisco and I was in some of the places a little bit. But I wasn't totally—because I was like—I had—I go both ways and I have gay friends—I wasn't totally immersed like you said. I wasn't into the, all that, too much of it. But I knew what was going on. There was nothing I could do, I mean, nothing I could—there is a lot you could do, by maybe watching, being careful, you don't, you know certain things—but when the virus arrived maybe none of us could do much that it arrived, you know, it was here so we had to deal with it. And we are. We've defeated AIDS. That's what they can do. We've almost—if not we've defeated it. I mean it took, '82, '92, I'd say '81 it first, around 1981, '82, in that area. So, almost forty years is that what it's been? Took thirty-five, forty years to really get it under grips, that's how powerful it was. If it started around eighty-one, I think. Is that forty years, around there?

**BK:** I'd say close to it, yeah.

**TH:** Close to forty years. So you know, since we first you know, heard about it. So, it's you know, every five years or every ten years or every couple, they've made advances and they just, with all the money that—and a lot of it has to do with the money that people poured in. All the money, all the donations, everything, all the government, all the money that people—all the money that people put in towards AIDS for a cure and for the science and understand the virus, to understand the monster. That I mean, you can't say enough probably about that. All the money and that was why they came, it was the money I'm sure, and the hard work, that's why we are where we are today. But we have to keep doing, you know keep doing that and stay with that. I'm happy to donate more billions of dollars and that, providing my company and all that. I sound like Donald Gates. Donald Trump. Do you like Donald Trump? I shouldn't have said like. Let me re-phrase it. Oh god, you don't. Well I find him—well, I know a lady friend of mine, she read a book on him, she thought he's strong and courageous but she doesn't necessarily agree with everything he's done. But you need someone—I'm not saying, you need someone to stand up to some of those things like he does. And the economies, like China, I'm not saying start a war but at least he has the guts to stand up to some of those, maybe he shouldn't but you know, down the road we'll see. Maybe he – I don't think he'll get re-elected but maybe one day they'll say he was a great president, I don't see how.

I don't see, I don't think you can see how, how did he ever get elected. You know how when Princess Di died, and all these things, 9/11 and all these things happened that were astonishing, I was most shocked when he got elected as president. More shocked than 9/11, more shocked than when the man went to the moon, more shocked when they found a cure for penicillin, I was shocked, more shocked that he was elected as president. I'm joking I mean I'm just making light but I'm saying, I couldn't believe. I know he's a good businessman, but I was so surprised that he got elected as president. And even to this day. That's all, you know. I don't know who could elect him, put him in, like the people put him in there, you see. So it had to be fixed or

something, you have to wonder if Russia really did it—you have to wonder if Russia really did interfere in the election for him to get in. But I have no proof but they talked about it, but how else could he have gotten in? Just kidding.

**BK:** Beats me.

**TH:** How many interviews a day like are you doing with this right now? Do you do one or two a day or three a day?

**BK:** Oh, definitely not three – one or two. We've been doing interviews for quite awhile now, so we've done over a hundred interviews.

**TH:** So, you've seen lots of different—

**BK:** Yes, lots of different perspectives.

**TH:** Have you interviewed people who were HIV positive too in that?

**BK:** Most of them. Yeah, most of the folks we've interviewed are long term survivors.

**TH:** What are they—I wonder what they—what's the consensus lot of them are saying that you would take out of it, I know everyone's different. What seems to be the consensus, from all the interviews? I know everyone had different views and different things. Do you feel that all the gay people—it sounds like I'm giving the interview—do you feel that everybody was, what's everybody the one thing they're all pleased about, the medication, the cure? What do you think would be one thing that they're pleased about the virus?

**BK:** Yeah, I think there's a consensus that the medication has come a long way, but that there still are challenges for people that have been living with the virus for many years. Like long term health effects and chronic conditions that are still difficult to live with for a lot of folks.

**TH:** Oh, they have arthritis too, different things when you have it like that. And they have caregivers, I'm sure you talked about do you have someone taking care of you and all that stuff, different things that they have that you would maybe ask them that you didn't ask me.

**BK:** Exactly, yeah.

**TH:** I'm just tickled, thrilled the way – like I said, all the money that people put it in. And all that had, that's why we are kind of where we are today. It took billions of dollars. Movie stars donated money, they had every year people were donating to AIDS and all the foundations where there was, what's his name the guy that—Bill Clinton or some of the presidents had foundations and stuff like that or things like that all over the place. And that's just why, I'm just happy. Any other questions that you'd like to ask me?

**BK:** Part of what we're doing with the project is that we're trying to stimulate some intergenerational dialogue between folks who have lived through this period and people—

younger gay men for example, like myself who didn't. So, do you have any advice for future generations or younger folks out there in the community who might not have lived through this, based on your experiences?

**TH:** Be thankful you didn't live through it, but at the same time be aware of it, and yeah, I don't, I'm just—just be happy to be alive and be careful and love one another and just be thankful they found a cure and all the money and everything, the hard work that went into the AIDS. Just be careful and love one another. You know, it's all about love and that, and care for one another, and donate money or people did what they could, and that's why we are, that's why—that's a compliment, it speaks volumes about people how they donated money and did that and all that work, about society. People say they don't care, people do care. Even so-called straight people care. And maybe they didn't, and I think the gay society and the straight society and all that are working better together now. And just be glad you didn't live through maybe or see the—you didn't have to have maybe friends who died of AIDS and be thankful you didn't see them die slowly. And you'd have to go to the hospital – I mean you know if anybody. So, at that time that was quite happening a lot, especially in the early eighties. And be grateful they found a cure. I don't mean the rock group The Cure when I say that, I just wanted to clarify so there's no misunderstanding.

**BK:** Great.

**TH:** But that's just, work as a team the way everybody we have to work together like we are, whether it's donation or—work together as a team. Get rid of Trump. Not that Canada can do anything about that.

**BK:** No, we're a little bit limited in that capacity. Is there anything else you wanted to add before we turn the recording off? We realize that sometimes we don't touch on every aspect of your story. Thinking back to this time in HIV is there anything that you wanted to expand upon or share before we wrap up?

**TH:** Just honoured to be part of the gay community, and I think that's a wonderful community and wonderful people. It's a vibrant community, the West End, and I'm just happy to be part of the community and I think things are looking up, not only with the virus and that but everything else. Just happy to do the interview. I probably didn't—I'd be willing, not for the mone—I'd come in if you wanted to ask other stuff or something but it's not important. And if other than that, I don't have anything else I'm just happy to be alive and happy that things are looking up for the gay community. It's come a long way to have the pride – if you think of Bute there, they have the pride flag. You wouldn't have seen that in the—you wouldn't have seen that—you wouldn't have seen that even at '70, '82, so that shows you that that's, that's the world—that you can put those pride things on the sidewalks that told me that the world—when I saw that, believe it or not, when they put those on the ground that's—that was a good sign when I saw that, that society is come a long way. That's almost symbolic, those things what they did on the sidewalk up there. That's symbolic of how—we have a long way to go—but where we've come between the gay world and the so-called straight world. I say so-called because I don't think anyone's straight. But that they've kind of maybe they've come together a little bit, or there's a better understanding I think in the world with gays and AIDS and that. I think the AIDS virus—I forgot

to say—I think the AIDS virus created a better understanding between people and stuff like that when it came out. It brought the gay thing—maybe it brought the gay—brought more light to the gay world. So maybe that’s what it was meant to do, in the sense not necessarily for attention, but it brought, maybe in one way it was bad but maybe it opened up doors, you know brought light to the gay world or to some of the gay issues. You know. So, all’s good. Was happy to meet you. You’re a good guy and that.

**BK:** Thank you so much for being here.

**TH:** I don’t know, doing interviews is easy but you know you just, you can learn from everybody something anyways. I’m sure everybody had something interesting to say.

**BK:** Oh yeah. I did have one other question actually just, and this is just something that came to my mind. You know you talked about hustling a little bit. Was that a community that was particularly hard hit by HIV?

**TH:** Yeah, a lot of the hustlers contracted or got AIDS virus too, so, that I knew. It was hard hit on the a lot of the prostitutes got AIDS too. Some didn’t. And that’s another story itself one time, you know working on the street and doing movies one time, it wouldn’t, you know, if you could see like the people in the West End know who, like there’s one movie called I think, called *The Young and The Hung* by William Higgins. He’s a porno, a porno—a guy who’s a famous director called William Higgins. Well in L.A. not here. There’s a movie if you ever want to see when I was twenty, it’s called *The Young and The Hung* by William Higgins, you’ll see me on the—in there. And also *Pizza Boy* or *Delivery Boys* you can see me on the box, I’m the guy that brings the pizza to the door in one of the scenes. And gonna go, ah, and I have wine. That’s at the time I was doing at that time. You know at that time, that’s another story in itself. I’ll leave it at that.

**BK:** Big can of worms.

**TH:** But that’s a big, that was interesting being a guy who did porno was at that time during the AIDS virus, right at ‘85, ‘86. At that time, I was petrified but I still went down. It’s funny what people will do for money. Money’s a great motivator. You know like that people will do anything, people will risk their life, people will climb the highest mountain. It’s amazing what people will do for money, including you know, I’m just saying.

**BK:** Well, it changes the dynamic of like, safe sex discussion too if you’re getting paid. It makes it more coercive in some ways.

**TH:** Yeah, if you get paid then they’ll say, well I’m – then you kind of have to. Yeah that’s true, services rendered. But that’s another topic like, working on the street. I mean all the people I met, all the tricks that I met over the years and all that and I’d get into cars and stuff and I thought is this the last time. You know when I get into somebody’s car, you never know if it’s the last time for something, you know. So, I was lucky, like that. Fortunate and lucky. But yeah, but I really did live through that stuff and that, you’re talking to the right guy in some ways. Maybe not in that I didn’t get it. But I was right there. Just a fascinating thing that went on, and

yet scary and like I said, petrifying at the same time. Like I said, I think some gay men it's like they didn't think they would get it and they just played—it's a euphoric, like I won't get it, like how people would jaywalk across the street you won't get hit sometimes. You don't want to get hit, you just think it won't happen to me and it's thrilling to run across and beat the traffic. Or some people maybe shoplift, that's a young thing. The kind of high or euphoria feeling to get away with it. Or maybe when they were doing the thing at that time they were thinking I won't get it. And so what if I get it—oh if somebody else had AIDS, some of their friends, they probably wanted to get it too. Not necessarily, but you just don't know. It's a guilt thing for some people, they think why did they get it and I didn't.

I think some gay guys are angry. They think why did I get AIDS, what did I do to deserve it, and they were angry. So they just spread it. Like viciously. Viciously spread it, a couple of them probably, I'm sure. I heard stories. You weren't around. I heard there were guys went to jail for spreading the AIDS virus and they knew they had it. You heard stories where they got charged, yeah, well they knew and they were, yeah, you know like that, on the news, I've seen over the last thirty years or some cases on the news like that type of stuff went on. But I was just thinking like that, I can just think of their psyche maybe very angry like, oh, why me why did I get it, what did I do, I don't deserve this, and they're just so angry. And they know maybe they're dying and they just said fuck it, I don't give a shit. Someone gave it to me. You know what it is? Someone gave it to me, I'm going to give it to someone else. That's what it boiled down to.

**BK:** Yeah, well there's the famous story in Randy Shilts's *And the Band Played On* about Patient Zero that's often—

**TH:** Yeah, that's a good analogy.

**BK:** It's been disproven.

**TH:** I think that's—

**BK:** He actually lived here.

**TH:** In Vancouver? Did you know Errol Flynn lived here too, he's an old, the guy the swashbuckle? No, I didn't watch, the thirties and forties the famous Errol Flynn, he lived—a lot of movie stars like Vancouver. You're talking to a movie star. A falling star.

**BK:** Anything else you wanted to add before we stop the recording?

**TH:** No, that's good for today. Just down the road if something else comes up or another you know whatever, some discussion or something feel—give me a jingle.

**BK:** Well, thank you for sharing all of this with me.