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Interview #6
Appalachian Resiliency in Sexual Minorities

Those Present: Carrie Nobel Kline and Michael Nobel Kline

TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE

Carrie Nobel Kline: (...) we even start this, we just want to hear your story and you're the expert on your story.

#6: *[laughs]* Okay.

CK: Paint us a picture of where you're from, the kind of person you are, who was around you.

#6: Alright. Well my name's. . . . I go by . . . now. I grew up in . . . county which is just south of I've - was raised- My family was middle America, I mean middle class type. My mom was a schoolteacher. My dad was a welder. I grew up a typical - I guess typical male life in that I played with trucks and the dirt and I was in the woods. I never played with dolls, but I did have - about the age of five I put on my first dress.

CK: You what? 00.6

#6: I put on my first dress at the age of five. And then there was a period of time I remember dabbling in it, but I don't remember a lot of details when I was that young. I put on my first bra when I think I was twelve. I dated-

CK: What was - You've got to tell us what all that meant, you know, what, why, how come you

wound up putting on that dress and stuff?

#6: Well, that -- that's the problem. I don't know. It was just pretty. It just - I liked it. It was red velvet. I just thought it was pretty, and I don't really know why I started this. It just -

CK: Who's was it?

#6: It was my sister's. She was younger. Of course when I got it on I couldn't get it off. It was stuck *[laughs]* because I'm a little bit bigger. And so I play with mom's lipstick. I put lipstick on. Mom caught me a few times. And she just - Back then it was always viewed upon as "Some boys go through that stage in life," you know, doing the dolls or the lipstick or putting on mom's shoes. But today I challenge that belief that some boys go through it - I feel that some boys just learn to hide it better. So-

CK: Some boys learn to hide it better? 01.6

#6: Yeah, some boys do -- may grow out of it, but I think a lot of us just learn to hide it, as I did. So - I've never been interviewed so it's kind of hard to keep track of things.

CK: Well I'll help you.

#6: So - But at five - I'm in - We lived out in the country, out It was very country-oriented. It was not - Many - Any kids my age right around me to play with, but I did go in the woods a lot. Dad, he had a little workshop and he built things, and I found some old clothes occasionally and I - I remember putting them on during this period of time. But I don't know why, I just liked it. It just made me feel good or whatever. I don't really know. I just did it. Then at, like I said, age twelve I put on my first bra. And my aunt - I was always a little chubby - So my aunt - she said, "If you get any chubbier, you're going to have to wear a brassiere." So I

thought, well, this might be interesting. So not long after, I tried on my first bra, and, of course, you know, it's been with me ever since. And I -

CK: That item of clothing's been with you, you mean?

#6: No, the - Just the desire to cross-dress and then - I always wanted to be a girl. I know that. I don't know why I get - say - maybe somewhere I just know that they were treated differently, or they were treated more special, or I just wanted to be pretty. I wanted to wear the pretty clothes. I didn't like wearing boys' - suits growing up. I dated girls in high school, but I didn't like to wear the tux to the prom. I wanted to wear the prom dress. 03.3

CK: What's that represent to you?

#6: The -

CK: What were you after that that appealed to ?

#6: I don't know that I was after anything other than I just didn't feel like I was in the right body. I felt that I should be a girl, but I wasn't attracted to guys. And so - And back then I remember - I finally learned about the word "transvestite" or "transsexual" so I'd look it up in encyclopedias and they'd have one little paragraph: "Transvestite: The one who likes to wear the clothing of the opposite sex." And that's about all I could find when I was growing up.

CK: How did you find that, down at the - 04.0

#6: I was at the library, just I decided to look it up in the dictionary. I was - just grabbed a dictionary and looked up the word and learned more what it was. And a transsexual - of course they had it in there, but very little was known because the first transsexual in America didn't come out until, I think, 1952, Christine Jorgensen, and I was born in '53. So here this is

very new. I'm just kind of ahead of my time in a lot.

CK: '53?

#6: I was born in '53, but the first surgery here in America – Now they'd had surgery elsewhere - was in – It was Christine Jorgensen. She was an ex-G.I. So -

CK: Tell me how that word came into your consciousness.

#6: I think I heard it or I heard it on a radio or a news or something. It just - That's how - It just - I found out about it. I don't remember exactly how. So, of course, it - Back then there was no books available so I just basically grew up with these feelings, hiding them. Nobody knew until I got married at the age of twenty. I told my ex-wife that I like to try - that I like to put on women's underwear. Because it really starts out as a fetish and so - with a lot of people. So I -

CK: A fetish? 05.3

#6: Fetish-yeah, the - My fetish is more the bra and panties fetish. Some - some people have fetishes for just lingerie or high heels or suck toes, you know, that's fetishes. And so mine was bras and panties. But because of sexual suppression I never had sex before I was married and I was in church deep, even dealing with all this I was still in church. And so I didn't have sex until I was twenty and I really thought that some of these desires to be a girl could be sexual suppression, that it just -

CK: What do you mean by that?

#6: By - It was just a way to - Because it leads to masturbation and - and maybe that - And I was thinking that that was sexual - I was just - I couldn't have sex with - and go to church. That was kind of an abomination or that was fornication and so I allowed this to be my route through

this sexual period other than being with a female. So I - I let what was already in me start expanding more and so when I got married I thought it would quit. I thought my desires would go away.

CK: Because they'd be – You'd be with a woman. 06.4

#6: Right, I'd have - I would be with a woman and I would be around her with her clothes and she would dress and I would be closer to someone and so - But it didn't last very long. Six months, a year, I was putting stuff back on. She didn't know it. And she didn't find out until eight - eight years - six or eight years into our marriage. It's been a long time ago now. And so she told me I was sick and, of course, we went to counseling then. But the counselor finally said that if - If you love this person you've got to decide if you want to stay with them, telling- that she was telling this to my ex. You have to decide if you want to stay because chances are you can let him dress all he wants to, but chances are it will not stop. And that's pretty well the rule. It - If it's in you, it's in you, and it's not going to go away. Some people learn to hold it in - hold it in longer - And I made it until I was forty. I was thirty-nine when she actually asked me to move out. But I couldn't deal with it no more. I couldn't keep - I wanted to do it more. I want to become - I wanted to become what I always felt I was. So when I was thirty-nine was when we separated. And then I started taking hormones when I was forty-two and then surgery was - And my body kept changing - Surgery was just eleven months ago. I'm covering a broad range right now, but - -

CK: Okay.

#6: - and then we can zero in.

CK: Umm hmm. 07.9

#6: I started taking hormones, and, of course, I started changing. Work - you'd see through my T-shirts I was - This one guy asked me, he said, "Are you lifting weights?" I said, "No, I'm just - I'm just--", I said, "I guess it's just the medication I'm on." Which it was. *[laughs]*

CK: So you told him, but you didn't tell him?

#6: Right. I never did come out – for a long – I did finally come out. - One of- A few people come up and asked me, said, "What's this I hear? You're a man by night- a man by the daytime and a woman at night?" They said, "Is that true?" And I said, "Well, yeah it is." And they said, "Oh, okay." Because, see technically, they can't, you know, they was afraid of getting into gray areas. So in time-

CK: What do you mean by that?

#6: Because of harassment policies at work. So they was - No one's really bothered me through all this. But we had meetings. I actually come out five years ago at a Christmas party. I mean they already knew or suspected, and I had told some people, but I really come out five years ago at work, at a Christmas party off hours.

CK: How did you come out? And what did you come out as? 08.9

#6: I came out as ... *female name*] at work wearing my -

CK: How many years ago?

#6: -wearing my dress and Christmas outfit and went to a Christmas party. Of course, all hell broke loose. The next week work stopped. They had to have meetings. They called counselors in. They tried to - of course - I would - I'm ... this time in history because it all fell in place for

me and I've been very fortunate. A lot of people lose their jobs, they lose their friends and homes and family. I've maintained a certain degree of respectability through all of this because my attitude that this is how God's made me and I will - and I - I'm very secure in that and always have been. So even though they had meetings and I agreed to let them ask me questions and thrash me and let them tell me it was wrong and some of them called me a "pedophile." And I said - That, that's really bothered me. But they said, "Well, if we accept you, do we accept pedophiles too?" So some in the same category -- It's their ignorance. It's people's ignorance that they - Yeah, I don't know how they ever got that. But this - They was afraid. They don't know what to say or they didn't know how to handle me. I said, "Just treat me like a person." I said, "I'm not going home with you. I'm not in love with you. You're not going to bed with me. Just allow me to be happy." And so - But it took three months for the three of the guys I work with in the same office - It took three months after that before they'd even talk to me, even respond. And it took a year before things were pretty well back to normal. And they stayed pretty well back to normal until I had my name changed and - which was a year and a half ago - and they - They technically was supposed to start calling me ... *[female name]*, which a few never have. A few still call me ... *[male name]*, and I'm going to give it until two years and then I'm going to go to management and say, "You know, it's time." If they don't call me - They don't have to call me anything if they don't want to, but don't call me ... *[male name]*. . . . *[male name]* doesn't exist no more. But that caused the issues to blow back up and people quit talking to me again. It's the same group though that wouldn't - that caused me problems the first time caused me problems the second time.

CK: Not everybody? 11.2

#6: Not overall. One thing that a lot of people told me was they like me as a person and that they didn't necessarily agree with what I chose to do in life *[laughs]*, but they like me as a person. And I've maintained that status no matter what, how many - No matter how many other people were upset at me, they still, most people like me. Even the guys that are upset and won't talk to me much even now, they still like me as a person, but they just - They're redneck and they won't be - They're just hard-nosed about it and some people when they make a decision to make a stand against somebody, they're not going to back down because then that makes them look weak. So they're not going to back down. But overall, I give my life a eight point five on a scale of ten for how things have went and how things are still going. But the plant doctor was behind me, that was one of my big strong selling points is that he - He was - He's a very religious guy, but he really knows that people are born gay, gay people are born the way they are because he's a medical doctor. And he really believes that in his heart and he really believes that I was born this way. So it took - With his support, we worked through all this. And occasionally I did some things my boss said, "I wish you hadn't done that." And -

CK: What would make him say that? 12.6

#6: Maybe it was when I - I can't remember exactly what I had done. I think I told him that my name was going to be changed before they was, they had made the announcement. And, of course, that started causing problems and my boss said, "I wish you hadn't have done that." I said, "Yeah, but I feel so much better getting it off my chest." He said, "Yeah, but it's caused me a lot more work." *[laughs]* Because he had to run interference and get the counselor and or -

And finally it come to the point to where the guys won't talk to counselors because this is my problem and it's not their responsibility to learn anything about me or learn anything about my life. And it's my problem and I should be the one to change. And they even wanted ... to fire me. That's how dogmatic they are about this. Even now my name's been changed for a year and a half and some of them still won't call me, won't call me ... *[female name]*. They won't talk to me unless it's work-related. They might-I might get a - If I walk around a corner and we run in face-to-face, and I say, "Hey, .. *[coworker's name]*" or "Hey, ... *[another coworker's name]*", they might respond, "Hey," like that, because I catch them off guard, but most time they don't-They told the boss, they said, "We don't want to talk to him. We don't want to enter- We don't want to enter into conversation about anything period with him." So there's like five or six --

CK: ... 13.8

#6: Yeah, which is funny. A lot of people's getting the pronoun "she" down pretty good now. It's working. They're getting used to me. ... *[male name]* is gone. They don't remember ... *[male name]* much anymore. So the-It's -The pronoun is coming in time, and my boss does real well. And, but management has pretty well been behind me because once my name was changed, they told everyone - They had meetings - And I worked with them. I took off work for a week on vacation. I said, "This would be a good time to announce my name change if you want to." Even though it was May, it wouldn't be official until July. I said, "If you want to make the announcement while I'm off to give everyone time to get a little adjusted." So some were still uncomfortable with calling me ... I said, "Well, you can call me ... *[shortened version of*

*female name*J or I said, now I told a lot, I said, "You can call me ... [*another shortened version of female name*] if that would help." And a couple of them said, "I like that." And they've called me ... [*shortened version of female name*] ever since, which that's fine. But still calling me ... [*male name*] is beginning to get old. There's a point where, give it up. It's not going to change me. I'm not going to go back to being ... [*male name*] just because you want to call me ... [*male name*]. So in time-And I-And I haven't whimpered to management when people's treated me a little odd. I've kind of let bygones be bygones to kind of let things smooth out. And they've smoothed out a lot, just, without me - without me making any big issues or reporting them for doing this. And they were scared that I'd report them for everything, but I didn't. I just - And they'd apologize to me sometimes when they'd call me ... [*male name*], they'd come up to me and say, "I didn't mean to do that. It slipped." You can tell sincerity, and you can tell when they're just flat out calling you ... [*male name*] without even trying, or calling me ...

CK: So there's really a mixed response? 15.8

#6: Yeah. But like I say, overall everyone in the group, even whole ... [*company name*]. It traveled fast. I mean there were people over in the big ... Bank heard about me after I went to the Christmas party. People that work at the ... plant-I work at the ... - We're really separated from the ... plant and I was talking to a friend of mine whose brother works at down there and we was on the phone talking about this merger one night and I said, "Has everybody down there heard about me up here on the hill?" [*laughs*] And he started laughing and he said, "Who in the hell ain't heard about you?" So I pretty well made an impact on the whole valley. I mean, ..., everyone's knowed about-The kids -There was two girls, grade school kids

walking up - I was washing my car, and one of them said, "Where is it ... lives?" *[laughs]* She said, "Shh, right here." So - And I've made some good friends. I don't - Because of people's negativity, I would not let any - I don't go out on steps and talk to them because I went outside and got my paper one evening and they hollered at me. There was about a half a dozen of them over there and my neighbor. And they hollered at me, "... *[her name]*", you know, hollering and they come over and we sat - I sat out front and they asked me a few questions and, but I would never let them come in because of people's misunderstanding. So I keep my distance from kids just for safety's sake. But all my life, church has been a very big part of my life. I was saved when I was twelve. I was Sunday school superintendent when I was seventeen. So church has been a very big part of me and still is. But I had to deal with this all my life and the fact that I had to deal with being an abomination. I had to deal with being a filthy rag and that God would spit me out unless I complied with what He wants from me. And so I had all the condemnations so I didn't have very much self-esteem growing up because I had this in my life with no one to talk to about it. Because back then they would do shock treatment. I didn't know that until later, but they would - Back in the early days they would do shock treatment for people trying to get them to straighten up.

CK: In ... county? 17.8

#6: No, just in general, in the psychology realm. They would - They still did a lot of shock treatment even in the '50's and '60's the way I understand it now. I haven't really done a lot of study on that. I don't know. Where do you want to go from here?

CK: This is great. This is that overview that you were talking about?

#6: Yeah, yeah. It's - That's kind of the overview. Now one thing, I've done it lately is - Like I said, I come out five years ago to the Christmas party and that's when all hell broke loose. This year I was a hostess of that same party, one of the hostesses. So I turned things around and showed - It's just a positive attitude that you can, you can make a difference. One person can make a difference. And everybody just loved getting - They just - We just had a good time. We laughed. They got to hug me a little bit. We didn't talk a lot about my life or nothing because people don't want to know a lot about anybody's life really. They just - You know what I mean? So there would be a few things we'd talk about and, but we basically just did our job on our committee, get the party done, and it just - It went fine. And, of course, my ex, she was - We work at the same lo- We work at She works up there too so I - She was at the party too. And I still love her, and she knows that. I think she still loves me, but she just won't give in. She's one of those that won't give in. For whatever reason, she'll never back down because I've - She says she's forgiven me for hurting her. And I know I've hurt her. But I don't think she'd ever, because of people's feelings I don't think she'd ever allow herself to feel for me again. And-

CK: Because she wouldn't want to be in a lesbian relationship with you? 19.3

#6: Right, that, that's - Yes, a good point. Yeah, that's a big part of this is that she's even commented that she didn't want to be considered a lesbian. And if you don't want to be considered that then - I understand because I didn't really like - For a long time I fought hard for people thinking I was gay because I put on a dress. And I would fight that. I would make it a point to let people know that I'm not gay. And - But finally I give up on that. It's - It goes with

the territory. So why fight it. Just let them think what they want to think. And I have - I have tried a couple, not relationships, but a couple of things with men, but I'm not turned on by that. And so out of just curiosity and everybody says, "You don't know until you try." And so I tried it. I'm not. I am gay now because I've had surgery, but I'm gay lesbian. So women is just what turns me on and not men, which nobody understands that.

CK: Is that an unusual situation for a person to have a sex change operation to be in a same-sex relationship then? 20.4

#6: It - The odds - I think the way they figured is that seventy-five percent of transexuals end up with - They are gay before their surgery. They like the - Men like men and when they have a sex change they still like men. Twenty-five percent of us go the other way and we like women before and we like women after. And the - It is a minority of us, but still is a lot, large - And we're finding out there's more and more of us all the time. So maybe even them statistics ain't quite right.

CK: Right. So it wasn't up around sexuality for you, it was around gender. Is that it up there?

#6: Right, completely gender.

CK: Is that a fair . . . ?

#6: It has nothing to do with my sexuality. It has nothing to do with sex. I didn't have - There's no guarantee I can ever have an orgasm again. It goes - That's just the risk. And so - People can't understand the thought of never having an orgasm. I mean -- Yeah, it feels good when you have them, but my sexuality was going downhill. It started going downhill when I was thirty-five, and the last few years of my marriage I was pulling away because I was afraid every time I

got close to her she'd think we wanted sex, or I wanted sex. And I didn't. I wanted the affection. So we started drawing apart and - Because even now it has nothing to do with sex. If I had to do it again, I would do it again tomorrow.

CK: Do what again? 21.7

#6: Have surgery. I do not regret it in the least bit. Even if I could never get off again, it doesn't bother me. *[laughs]* My wife - I got so many other things that's more important. If some day I do, great, and I look - I would hope so. But it's only been eleven months and they say it could take two, three years before you know. And then I may not really know until I'm really involved with someone and it starts clicking the right buttons. And you know - I do have some dreams occasionally that I feel horny. Some dreams still take me back into being a male and having a hard-on, and, but a lot of times those dreams are just from where I got to pee. *[laughs]* And I don't get piss hard-ons. I don't miss - I never did - For the last two years of my hormone therapy before I had surgery, I didn't get piss hard-ons and I did not miss those at all. So that's a good sign though that if I'm feeling those feelings in a dream that I used to feel as a male, at least there's feeling starting to come back there. That's how I view it. So there is some type of activity there. So - Because I think I really wanted to change sexes so bad that I just turned off my male, my maleness and I was having trouble having - That's before Viagra - I was having trouble with orgasm and keeping it up and all that. So it was hurting our marriage. But I think I just turned it off.

CK: So it wasn't your maleness, but it was maybe your sexuality that you kind of turned off to not confuse the issue for you . . . ? 22.9

#6: I don't know. I just think I didn't like performing. It was too much work for me. It always was a lot of work for me because I really wanted to be the girl. So it just didn't work. Then I - And I was getting older and I thought well, if it's this bad now, it's going to get even worse as I get older, or at least that's typical I guess. I don't know, as a male. If I'd stayed a male it would continue to go downhill. So why keep it if it don't work when I really want to be a woman anyway? So that was kind of a deciding factor. And then my real deciding factor to go ahead with surgery was my sister - We had a fall sister's - We had a falling out Thanksgiving a couple of years ago. And that's what really said, made, turned me around and said, "Okay, it's time. Regardless of what they feel." Because I almost, I almost committed suicide because I was just tired of dealing with it. And then I said, "Now wait a minute. This - We could - This is the only way I can survive, and I'm going to go do it." So it was the next week I called - I started making phone calls. And so - And really it's that, that falling out what's pushed me to go ahead and do what I would have gone to do anyway. But I'd been on hormones for three years anyway at that point. So basically, I was headed that way anyway. And, of course, hormones kills your sex drive anyway, but the hormones start making your skin softer. I'm told my voice is a lot softer than it used to be. But things start rounding out more. And of course, my hair, I started letting it grow. I use Rogaine. It's thin, but it's my hair. *[laughs]* But since surgery I've even - I've noticed a change even more so in my features and how I look, I look, even without makeup, I look very much female now. I go to electrolysis every week and it will be years more - It will cost as much as my surgery. So that's a big expense. I've been going for like five years with that so, and I've still got a long way to go. Still got all this underneath my chin. So -

CK: Tell me about- What about like being ... [*male name*] trying to, feeling that- Well, did you say that you felt like you were in the wrong body or - Tell me - Recall that, how you understood that. 25.1

#6: Some people claim that, that - And that's how they feel so I'm not trying to discredit it. They tell people that they're a woman trapped in a man's body. I never really made that claim. I just wanted to be a woman. I just felt like I was, but I never made the claims that I'm trapped in a male's body. I never - I don't know. It's like calling black white. It's like a lot of them will say, "Well, they're not really male, they're female even though they have a male body." I mean that's - You still - Everybody's different on that viewpoint. I just felt that I knew that I should always have been a woman or felt that I should have been. I think it more so, I felt like I should have been a woman, not that I was a woman trapped in a man's body. So I don't know, that's kind of -

CK: That's different. I see that. 25.8

#6: Yeah, it's - There's something different about that. That's how I've always felt. I didn't name ... until I started - My ex-wife actually helped me go out. She helped me get ready a few times and go out in public.

CK: Your ex-wife?

#6: Uh-huh.

CK: So she got used to the idea?

#6: She tried. I don't - I mean she really tried hard to love and to keep things going, but she just finally couldn't deal with it no more. She said she married a man and she wanted a man. She let

me shave my legs the last few years of the marriage in the winter, but not in the summer.

[laughs] I love shaving. I love pantyhose. I love dresses. I don't get to wear them at work unless I'm having a meeting or something I'll get to wear them. But the plant doctor told me then, he said, he said, "I want you to wear female clothes as - Once you change your name I want you to start wearing as often and get - get them as used to you as you can as quick as you can." Because technically you're supposed to live a year as a female before you can have surgery, but since I had really been out for five years and I did everything other than work and visit mom and dad as ... *[female name]*, I pretty well lived my life long enough to know that, hey, this is what I want. And my counselor, she never doubted for years - She said - When I finally told her I made a decision - Of course, I don't see her anymore. I'm pretty well graduated. When I told her I made the decision to change, she said, "I knew you would." She said, "You just, you have all the traits of a gender dysphoria and you are very - everything about what you do and who you are is, that's just what you are. You have gender dysphoria."

CK: What is that? 27.2

#6: It's just where sex - Your sexual identity does not match -. *[Phone rings]* It's hard for me to pull off the male on the female, the female on the phone.

Michael Nobel Kline: Who was it that told you about this gender- was talking to you about this gender dysphoria?

#6: Dysphoria. My counselor. But it is a very typical term, gender dysphoria. 27.4

CK: Say again what it is?

#6: Gender dysphoria.

CK:Ummhmm.

#6: And it's just where your identity, your birth identity does not match your mental identity. See, sex is between your legs and gender is between your ears. So that's pretty well, well accepted anymore. And - But still there's, there's still a lot of misunderstanding. A lot of people are - And it's hard to get any group - Like it's hard to get a group of gay people to all agree on the same thing. So there's still people in the transgendered community that - It's just hard to get everyone to come together and say, "Okay, this is how it is, and this is the guidelines, and--" But anyway, you're supposed to live for a year full-time and that was set up through a person named Harry Benjamin to try to derail some people who, who were just messed up psychologically and didn't have gender dysphoria but thought they did. And they'd have surgery, and it was a mistake. And some people's even had to try to go backwards and become a male again. And it just - You can't go back. Just like you can become a female - A male can become a female very simply, but a female cannot become a male very easily. It's just not in a makeup. But we're all born generic - I mean we're all conceived as genetic - We're all females until the hormones basically kick in at six to eight weeks. And then we become male or female. So the default sex is female. So I guess it goes back to the, where males always have it better compared to a female in the world. It stands true for a male wanting to become a female. He has - He can become a female much better than a female can become a male. Now a female can take hormones and her clit will grow and start to form a penis because it's the same tissue based on whether you get female hormones or male hormones. It's the same tissue so it will grow. But then they have to do skin grafts and it will never function as a normal penis. It will be there.

Interview #6 - 01/17/01
Appalachian Resiliency in Sexual Minorities

It's functional, but it won't do the erections and all that stuff. So anyway, it was - For \$14,000, you can change sexes for, from a male to a female. I mean, yeah, from a male to a female.

CK: When you were talking about the, when ... [*female name*] came to be. 29.4

#6: Yeah. That was - I guess when I really started going out - I started going to gay bars as a place to fit in or try to fit in even though I went there seven years and I did drag shows for seven years.

CK: While you were married, you were talking about?

#6: No, this was after the divorce. But - So I needed a name to - So I chose ... because - Back in '85 or '86, '87 somewhere in there, that's when ... came out with Burt Reynolds and so there was a hooker on there. Her name was ... And she was the prettiest girl I remember seeing at that time so I chose that name because she was so pretty. Of course, she got a shotgun blast through the door and she died early in the movie, but still she was a pretty girl. [*laughs*] So I started going by ... or I didn't - That's kind of what I chose and then when I started doing shows they wanted - They said, "You need a last name, something to, just to give a little more catch to it." So about that time I seen a *Playboy* and it had Miss October ... [*year*] was ... So that's how I chose my name.

CK: So you changed your last name as well? 30.2

#6: Umm hmm. The judge asked me why I did that when I had my court hearing. And I said, "Well," - My mother, one time she said, "You don't go by ..., do you?", which was my maiden name. And I said, "No, mom." So since she was negative about that, I chose to go with the complete change because she - And she's still somewhat embarrassed. She was at teacher in the

county and it's always weighed- She was always in-high status - more of a high status quo. She was principal and – So I really caused them some a lot of heartache too, and big in the church and stuff like that. So, but I wrestled with it and I talked to my counselor at that time. I was just going to go with . . . , which is my name, but because of heritage or whatever I put my whole name as . . . , like I was married, because a lot of women keep their maiden name as part of their full name. And I didn't want to be I wanted a girl's middle name so I chose this big long . . . Of course, a lot of the credit cards can't put all that on there. And I'd sent a letter - I had to change like fifty things when I had my name changed. It took me forever to get this done. But I'd get a credit card or something in the mail and they couldn't put it all on there. So I started, sent a letter with it, say, "Just put the card or just put the account in the name of . . . Leave out the middle." So that started working pretty good. So, and we did that. But it was a lot - It took a lot of energy and a lot of effort. At the court hearing we somehow got on the docket to be there before we was scheduled, like a week and a half before we was really scheduled to -

CK: A court hearing? 31.5

#6: Yeah, to get my name changed because you have to go through the courts to do that. And so we went early even though we wasn't supposed to be there for another week and a half. So when we went in the judge said, "I'm sorry, you'll have to come back to the original hearing," because you have to advertise in the paper that you're changing your name and that way it gives people any chance to appear in court the day of your hearing in case you're trying to hide from bills or debtors or whatever, so we had to come back. And so after the court- I had to go on the stand and swear in and I had to answer questions.

CK: Questions, were they relevant to your – ? 32.0

#6: Just "Are you - Have you ever been in trouble with the law?" just law questions. "Are you running from debts?", things like that they'd ask you. So when it was all over, the judge said, "I grant you your petition to change your name." And he said, "I want to apologize to you again for bringing you into court a second time." And we was getting ready to leave, to go out the court. I turned around and I looked at him. I said, "That's okay, judge. I got to wear a different outfit this time." And that court just went crazy. Because the first time I went, you could see people was intentionally standing in the doorways from the law chamber watching for me. I mean you could just tell, you could see them peeking in because they wanted to see what this person looked like because there's not a lot of people changed their names to female in West Virginia.

CK: So because you were going from ... [*shortened male name*] or ... [*male name*] to ... [*female name*] they - 32.6

#6: Yeah, they had to see the -

CK: That was what they were looking at?

#6: Yeah, it was very obvious, which I didn't care. I've never cared for anybody to know. I have friends, they say, "Is it okay if I tell somebody so and so about you?" I said, "It doesn't." I said, "I'm out." I said, "That doesn't bother me. I'll answer any question." So I'm - I just always had this attitude, "This is me. If you want to know about me, I'll be glad to talk about it. If you don't want to know, I'm not going to be in your life anyway." It's not a "screw you" attitude, it's like, "Just let me live my life. You're living yours, let me live mine." I don't want to say, "Screw you." I don't have that attitude.

CK: Tell me more about this process though. I mean you weren't actually - When you were young, you did care a little bit when you were five or whatever and the gradual unraveling of not caring and being out. Was that sort of a process for you? 33.2

#6: You mean – I'm not quite sure what you -

CK: To come out. You know now it's probably different.

#6: Oh, yeah, right. Yeah, because it was always looked upon as negative. But after my - Once my divorce was final, I really knew in my heart that I would never go back because I had - I was on this journey and it was God-ordained. My life had just - The way things had went in my life, I just knew, because I had been in church so long. I just knew God was leading me down this road. And I've learned so much down this road so after the divorce, I pretty well didn't care if anyone knew. I didn't advertise it, but if they ask, I never denied it. I never once denied this. Like before they really knew at work, I think I had a little - You know how mascara's hard to get off if you're not really paying attention. And a couple people noticed I had mascara on, you know, the little places. And people started noticing, but not one time did I ever deny any of it. And that's been good for me because I'm always honest to myself. If you lie, then you're lying about yourself too. I mean you're hurting yourself if you tell a lie and I mean, I know some lies you have to protect people, but in this case this was good for me. It just let me just say, "Hey, this is me." And it's not going to change how I act if you know or don't know, so I might as well just be truthful. That way I found if I always told the truth, I didn't have to worry about who I didn't tell the truth to. So no matter what I told, it was always the same story. So that was good, and I've - It's really worked for me. I never have to worry about, "Oh, gosh, did I - Had I told

them already or did I tell them a fib before?" *[laughs]* So I always tell everybody the same thing or I try to.

CK: You must have been raised right or something. 34.6

#6: I guess. Yeah, mom didn't do too bad a job, but she feels like she's failed. She still deals with that a lot, that her and dad did something wrong. And they didn't. I had a good childhood. I mean I don't remember being neglected. I don't remember being punished or beaten up or anything that someone might want to attribute me being this way. A lack of love, I don't-I always felt I got - I really felt - I don't really ever feel my sisters getting treated differently than me. But God, I hated mowing the yard when my sisters was inside and I was outside mowing because I was the son. And I'm the only son. And I was out mowing the yard, and I hated that. But I succumbed and did the best thing I could. I never did like wearing men's suits. You probably can count on your fingers how many times I've wore a man's suit. I wore a tie a few more times than that, but not many. I just, I hated them. I hated that part of being a male. That's my ultimate stand against being a male is I wouldn't wear suits. I wouldn't even wear button-up shirts because that went with suits. Even now I have a few blouses that's buttoned, all buttoned up, and I don't even like them. I wear them some, but I like - I don't like them that well. I just think it's an ultimate stand about malehood. And I don't like sports of any kind. I don't like to talk about them. I don't like to listen to them. Give me a radio station that don't have sports.

CK: How did you survive being a kid and not liking sports? 35.9

#6: I don't know. I played – Now I did play - I played baseball and there was softball and stuff and we had neighborhood kids because when we got - When I was sixth grade – My family, my

mom and dad, they built a house and moved to an area where they had more kids and - which is the way it worked out, not for the kids, but just the way it worked out. So I played touch football and sleigh riding, flew model airplanes, did model rocketry, burned a few grass fields with cherry bombs. *[laughs]* Dad said, "Get up here. You done put the field on fire." Anyway -

CK: ... voice?

#6: *[laughs]* Yeah, with the cherry bomb, it didn't go off. It kind of fizzled. It was in the summer and it dried the grass because - so it caught on fire. I just went in. I didn't pay any attention to it.

CK: So you weren't doing that with other boys. 36.6

#6: No, we all - All of us played with cherry bombs and fire crackers and stuff like that, illegal as it may be. Don't do that now though. *[laughs]* But I'm left-handed so nobody else I grew up with was left-handed and so I always had to use a glove on the wrong hand. It always fit awkward. And I never could throw a ball like a boy. I always throw like a girl. I was told that. I don't know why. Nobody ever showed me. Dad - he never showed me how to throw so I couldn't throw. So I couldn't even throw - If I was playing outfield, I couldn't even throw to home plate. I couldn't throw that far. I'd be good - I could throw it to second and let them throw it in.

CK: What would the guys say to you? Anything?

#6: Oh nothing. It just - We all just - we was just buddies and we - we rode motorcycles together and we did all that stuff.

CK: You had good buddies?

#6: But yet - yeah - but at the same time I had all this inside that nobody knew about. I even sat up on nights watching *Chiller* on Saturday nights. I would make - I would take towels and sew them together and make a dress and then I would rip them out, rip them back apart after I put the dress on for a while and watched TV. That was teen years, in my teen years.

CK: Had you seen models or how did you even just decide? You just watched your sisters, "Well, I want to get as close to that as I can?" 37.9

#6: Well, I didn't really - I don't know. I just wanted a dress. I really didn't get into makeup much until the later part of my marriage. I didn't - When I was real little I'd put on lipstick and stuff, but I didn't do much makeup. Didn't learn makeup until I started doing shows at the drag, at the gay bar. And they taught me - they taught me a lot. I learned a lot about being a female there. I guess I learned a lot about being a female is watching the males try to be females. So I said, "I don't want to look like a male in a dress." So I had to unlearn certain traits of being a male. Some traits we learn, some traits we're born with. And so I had to unlearn certain things and relearn other things. The gay bar was good. It served a purpose in my life. Everyone there's just looking for something they can't find. It's not an answer, but it filled a void for me at that time. And I'm pretty well - And I liked the attention. I was on stage every Friday and Saturday for a while, but then later it was just every Friday, but I liked the attention. I - It just really - It's just something about, when you get hooked on stage. It just - You get a lot of attention. You're somebody. You're not just somebody walking in the door, but you're one of the stars of the show. And I wasn't a fancy dancer or a - because we had some that could do flips and acrobats and they could dance good and I was just kind of a classic entertainer. A lot of people called me

"classic." I did a lot of country. So - and I learned how to do makeup and they taught me how to fix wigs and -

MK: Classic entertainment? 39.4

#6: Classical like -

MK: Classical.

#6: Like you're just someone who is always the same. You're just you, you're classical. You're not trying to be- You're not really trying to be Loretta Lynn onstage. You're not trying to be Cher necessarily. You're just a classical type entertainer, someone who they know they get that is going to be basically the same all the time I guess.

MK: So what did you do? What was the act?

#6: I was just- I did a lot of - We'd pantomime. That's what we did. And we would just -- I might dress up like Loretta or Dolly. I do a good Dolly because I've got the boobs to do it. And I show a lot of cleavage.

MK: This was -- this was comedy? 40.1

#6: Not always. I mean, no, there was some serious songs. There were love songs. There were typical, typical country songs. A lot of people do a lot of modern music because a lot of the young kids come in. They like to hear the modern stuff, rap music. And you just dress up and get out there and twirl and dance and point and get tips and kiss a few people and just - It was entertainment. That's all you were. You're just an entertainer. And we got tips. I didn't make a lot of money on tips, but I did get tips. But it filled a void that kept me going and give me purpose.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE

SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

#6: ... I'd see someone I was really attracted to, but later I'd think, "What did I ever see in them?" So over my course of this, that's why now I'm at the point to where I don't need that in my life. If it comes, I'll be glad, but it's not something I really worry about no more. Because I kind of like sleeping in a queen size bed by myself. And that's kind of neat. And I don't have to worry about working over. I don't have to worry about making phone calls or making arrangements for - I just live my life. Yeah, it's alone, but it's not - I don't think we all have to have somebody in our lives. That's just society's kind of little standards. And I - But I think God has given us the desire to have companionship and to want to love and the ability to love. But I had that. And I had good love and I had a good relationship. And so if I don't have it again, I've still had what a lot of people never have.

CK: In your marriage or in your girlfriends?

#6: In the marriage, yeah. The girlfriends were just - Basically they - This one that lived with me six months, she's the one that come on to me. She's the one that fell in love with me and I was real slow to fall in love and then as soon as I started falling in love then she changed. And so she just- but she really liked women and she told- she told everybody she thought I was a woman even when she moved in with me, but she knew. We'd played around a little bit even though- So she knew. But anyway, she had a lot of background problems from her childhood with her dad and I think I reminded her too much of her dad. I don't know why I didn't. Basically I was always ... [*female name*] because the male just didn't function well anyway.

Most time it didn't function at all.

CK: Cause you were on hormones? B02.0

#6: Yeah.

CK: Yeah.

#6: At that point I was pretty heavy hormones, and she knew I was going to have surgery. And - But no, it's my ex. If I never love, if I never have a love again, if I never have a relationship again, I have good memories that I had a good one. Even at the last minute of it, it was still a good relationship. And I hated that it had to end the way it did. And maybe someday God will - Maybe we both have lessons to learn and God's got us out there just making a little sidetrack and we'll zero in someday. That's hope. You've got to have hope. You've got to have dreams. And if it don't happen, then, you know. I'm - I kind of hope it does, but if it doesn't, it's okay.

MK: So you'd go back with her? B02.8

#6: Maybe not in the extent like move in, controlling, have a controlling relationship, but as friends, as the ultimate friendship, yes. And - Because we would never have what we had before. But there's certain aspects of who we are - We grew up together. I was married when I was twenty. She was seventeen. So at that point I really knew when we got divorced, I knew her longer than I knew mom and dad because up until five, six, seven, you really don't know mom and dad, not really. There's a certain point to where you just like - I don't remember anything before five or putting this dress on. And then even then I don't remember much before ten. So there's a period there you don't really - You know they're there, but you're not really aware as - Does that make sense? So I was with my ex longer, so we grew up together. And so I think

that's why the separation's been so hard on both of us is we just we know a lot about each other and, and that's the thing about not having a relationship now that bothers me is that I don't have anybody to reminisce, "Do you remember when?" I have a lot of friends that know a lot of parts of me, but no one knows everything like my ex does. And I really feel that if we ever got back together it would be just like we had a skip of a heartbeat and that's it because we were that close. Yeah, there's a lot of stuff in the middle that we have to fill in, but it's not like it's important. That's love.

CK: God, you're eloquent.

#6: What?

CK: You are eloquent. *[#6 and CK laugh}* B04.6

#6: Oh, thank you. I'm just trying to be me. *[phone rings}*

[Tape recorder turned off and back on}

#6: Okay... is always considered one of the poorest counties in the state as far as I know. I guess out there a lot of things were viewed as negative. A lot of- there's a lot of little churches, a lot of little family churches. Don't know of anyone that - I didn't even know - I found out later I did go to school with some people who were gay and there was a point where people always wondered, but we didn't talk about those things. Back then when I grew up, if a girl become pregnant before she was married, they'd send her away. You just - It was just things like that were just too different for them to adjust to. They just couldn't handle it, embarrassments. So I just - I didn't - Back then though I didn't really look at aspects like this, so I don't - I just tried to - I went to church and I hid things that I thought were negative.

CK: What was church like?

#6: I don't really know how to explain it. Just- It was just church. We had groups, youth groups. They did things that I didn't quite understand a lot of times like they had a meeting to not have - They didn't want to have guitars in the church because -

CK: Have what? B06.1

#6: Guitars. They was - or drums. I guess they were signs of the devil. The preacher - like I never danced when I was growing up really because it was viewed on as being negative. I guess of the devil. The music was of the devil. Guitar music - That's back when Elvis was becoming big and even he went through hell for his - So - And I think our - I think I grew up in a typical United States county. I mean as far as not - We're not talking prejudice here because - Well, in our county there wasn't even black people at all. So I don't think it's prejudice toward - We didn't deal with that aspect of America, but we dealt with just the backwardness of - You don't talk about sex. My mom and dad never did talk to me about sex that I remember. They just - certain things they just didn't get into. And that - They was very strict on Bible beliefs. You couldn't take - You couldn't have any drink You couldn't take drinks of any kind. You couldn't dance. I don't know. It's hard. I never thought about describing it before so you'll just have to pull it out of me.

CK: You're doing a good job. I'm not from a rural county so I'm trying to imagine.

#6: Oh, okay. Everybody pretty well knew everybody else's business. Here in the city, I mean I've got friends around me - I know it's really not a city, but ... is to me. But ... is kind of a suburb city. It's a small - It's just burbs. A lot of people don't know a lot of things about you.

They just know what you share with them most time because you come and go - Like I don't see people, my neighbors in the winter hardly at all unless I visit or they're on the street on a sunny day. It seems like out in the country everybody's related to everybody else in some form or fashion. *[laughs]* I always got teased growing up about being, everybody being a cousin. Because - And that's almost true in one aspect, you'll find that sooner or later in the line you're related to every - You find you're related to just about everybody you know. It may be tenth or twelfth, but you find that somebody in the past. And that's kind of the way - Where as the city's not like that like that. It's more - The city has drawn people in from all over, different parts of different counties. And they've come into the city to live and so you don't see that, that type of bonding.

CK: What did people do? What was the community like? Where did people hang out? What did they say to each other? B08.7

#6: Well, there wasn't anything - There wasn't any place to hang out. You went to church. Church was three times a week. Sunday, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night. Football games. I was in the band in high school, and of course I played the trumpet so we had to go to band. The band played for the football team. And I didn't - I wasn't in the band for the football. I mostly never paid any attention to it most of the time. I was there watching the majorettes and their little leg makeup and I always wanted to put leg makeup on and wear the boots and wear the little skirts and all that stuff. *[laughs]* That's why I was in the band. And - B09.5

CK: What did that feel like, knowing that about yourself without other people knowing that?

#6: I don't- Most of the time I felt bad about myself because - I don't know why I felt bad. Because it wasn't something you heard people sit around and talk about, "Boy, if I ever run across a transexual, you know, I'm going to . . ." – It wasn't talked about so it's not like they- My condemnation basically come from myself! guess, through going to church and knowing that this can't be right. I'm a male and if I have these feelings, this can't be right. So I must be an abomination. I must be unworthy for God even though I kept going to church and kept going. I just felt like I was - I got saved, but yet I didn't feel like my life changed. I've always been a meek person to a point and saved at twelve. I didn't understand exactly what it was. Your life doesn't have to change. Being saved doesn't mean you change, it means you accept Christ that died for you. Now if there's things in your life that Christ is not pleased with, that can mean change can come, but at the age of twelve, I hadn't done anything. I was born, that was my sin. And that was it. But yet I had these feelings. So then I had to start wrestling with these feelings. So I thought well, this is, can't be right. So I basically a self- self-condemning.

CK: What did the church say that you felt was the condemnation of you?

#6: Just goes back to the simple teachings of the church. You can't covet, you can't do - They had so many "can't do's" and never talked so much about "can do's." And so if they never talked about as okay, then it must be not okay, that type of attitude. And there is one place in the Bible I later found that says it's an abomination to wear a dress if you're a male and to wear men's clothes if you're female.

CK: That's in there? B 11. 5

#6: Yes, actually it's in there. It's in Deuteronomy 22:5. But you've got to read more than just

that verse. If you read just a few verses past that, you'll -

MK: Twenty-two-

#6: Twenty-two, five. If you read past that, which I encourage you to do, there's a lot of other things that says are abomination - You're supposed to stone your children if they disobey. I can't remember all the different - This has to do with laws. And the new - Christ done away with the law. But then when you get, read the whole big picture of what is this whole scripture, it's talking about the - What's the word? It's talking about idol worship and what the other religions of the nations were doing. And God did not want this part falling into, certain things falling into the Jewish belief. And they - You've got to do the whole study of the goddess, goddesses - I can't - I'm tongue-tied now because I can't - It's been so long since I've read it. Because I had to come to terms with that a long time ago. But you really have to see the big picture of what's been told there. It's not just all at once blurting out this statement. There's a lot of background to why this statement is said. And it has to do with there were - there were men going into the tents of the women and having sex with them and that was forbidden. So they would dress as women to get past - whether it was the king's harem or whatever, I don't know. And men - And women were dressing and going into the temple, which was forbidden. So you've got to study-you've got to look at the whole picture. Just like the sin of homosexuality which is played upon by Sodom and Gomorrah, that's what everybody thinks they were destroyed for. Well, when you start studying you find out that they were destroyed because their lack of fellow - of- they - I can't think of the word. Hospitality. They took advantage - See, one of the worst - One of the best ways to belittle someone or to make them feel less

themselves is to rape them. And they wanted these men to rape them. But it also says that everyone wanted them, not just the men. So you've got to go back, and you've got to do a lot of studying to get it. Because the church doesn't go into it. They just lay it - They're narrow-minded. This is the way it is. This is what it says. But the modern-day church forgets that these are translations. And that translations don't always translate exactly word for word. And there's another thing, in church, growing up, they voted that the preacher could not preach from any book, any Bible, except the King James version. So you get real narrow-minded when you start doing stuff like that. So I don't think that they - they wouldn't go into because they don't want to know more. This is a good logical explanation. That's the way it's always been, but that's been this generation. You go back to the Greek and Hebrew and translate some of this stuff - like the big things back when I was growing up was to - When they come out with the Bible that talked about where Mary was a "young woman," instead of calling her a "virgin." That caused all kind of hype. But in Jewish terms, if you called someone a "young woman," she was a virgin, flat out. She wasn't referred to as a young woman if she wasn't a virgin. So see that's - We play on these words and people get so hung up on some of these things that - That my bottom line for religion and God is it's how I treat you and you, and how I love God. Everything else will fall in line. All the ten commandments will follow, fall right in place if you obey those rules. Love your neighbors, yourself, and love God with all your heart, soul, and mind. So that's how I've come to terms with all this in my life too.

CK: Is that a Christian God then? B15.4

#6: Yeah, it's Jewish. I mean it's the -

MK: Judea-Christian.

CK: Judea-Christian?

#6: Yeah, you're right. It's Protestant. I'm Protestant basically, Baptist background so -

CK: Do you still conceive of yourself as a Baptist then? B15.7

#6: No, to me I'm just a Christian. I see in the obituaries, "He was a Baptist" or "He was a Methodist." I just consider myself a Christian.

MK: Well, would you have gotten church at the age of twelve if they had known?

#6: If they had what?

MK: If they had known what was, who you really were.

#6: I think they would have probably tried to pray demons out of me because I've seen that.

Some churches like - I've seen them pray for demons for people who have epilepsy. They think it's demons. I've seen people prayed for for demons in them. I'm not saying that you can't be demon-possessed, but I think we take some things to the extreme, like the demon of cigarette smoking or the demon - Now, of course, alcoholism can be a demon I guess. And they can call it a demon and it can destroy your life and lives. But there's certain things I don't think necessarily refer to as demons. Some things are just choices in life.

MK: But this church that you were raised in would not have understood, would not have understood who - B16.8

#6: No.

MK: -- who you really were.

#6: No, no.

MK: And they would have -

#6: No. Even right now they would not understand. That's why my parents - I know they're embarrassed.

MK: How do you make peace with that? How do you - how do you - Why do you hang around Christians?

#6: I know. That's a good question. And I don't know. It's like God has got me on this journey and for some reason He keeps me with enough faith that He's chose me to live this life and I'm going to live it the best I can for him because I've always believed in God and Jesus Christ. So I don't know. I question myself. Why do I have a - That's why I go to churches now who accept this. They're okay. I go to ... Methodist. They have gays in that church too. I go there Sunday morning. I go to the ... *[another church]* on Sunday night. So I found a group of people. See, if the family turns away from you, you still need family, so you create a new family. So I've created new family members and yet kept God at the center of everything. And -

CK: Not just God, but the same sort of God that you grew up with? B18.0

#6: The same God I always grew up with. It's just that everyone was trying to tell me who He was instead of me understanding who He was, instead of what, how I felt who He was. It's like you love him in a different way than his mother loves him. That's kind of how I felt with God. I love Him because I'm who I am. This is deep.

CK: It's interesting. You tell

#6: I hope I'm answering, making sense. But I've often - And I've told mom a few years ago. I said, "Mom, if the family doesn't, or any of my friends doesn't back away, and quit being so

condemning, then I will create a new family. And I would hate to lose you all." But I said, "I'll do it in a heartbeat if things don't change." Because I had to survive and survival is first-most. It was the most important thing to try to do, even though I almost failed at it. So I had to - You just have to release - No matter how much hurt is there, it's always there. It's always in the down here. It's always in the back of my mind and I - Even coming home today, I wish I said - and I was thinking about my ex - I said, "I wish I could take a pill that would make me forget." I wished I had amnesia sometimes. I'd like to wake up one morning and not say, "Who am I?" And at that point I would look and "Oh, I'm a female," and would never have a doubt about that. That would be a good feeling. Of course, memories is what made us who we are. So you can't take away everything, expect everything to remain the same. But there's times I wish I could forget some things to make it easier. Because it's not easy. Even though my life seems well-adjusted and everything seems in control, there's a lot of underlying things that still are very hurtful, very - They wear me out sometimes. But when I get up in the - When I go to bed at night and when I get up in the morning, I have peace in my heart that I've done - The choices I've made have been right for me and I haven't made them for my ex or my family or anyone else. I made them for me. And I've been told that's selfish for me to want what's good for me because I have caused so much hurt to everyone else. So for me to want to be happy is selfish. And I've been told that. So that's - And I deal with that. But when you turn it around and look, it is selfish for them to expect me to be what they want to make them happy. So the selfishness works both ways. But when you have so many people trying to tell you that you're selfish, and you've got so many people against you then it's hard. You have to really get kind of hard-

hearted to know that this is what's good for me though. Yes, I've hurt you. Yes, this has caused a lot of pain, but this is good for me. And we're given our lives to live, our lives. And I'm glad I wasn't born in another country where it would have been worse. I'm glad I wasn't born a woman in Islam belief. I'm glad I was born me. I finally come to - I didn't love me until a few years ago. And when I realized I loved me, I looked in the mirror, I cried. And that was a big awakening because I had finally reached that point. Hey, I'm finally starting to love me. I never did before. So it's just been a very long, long battle.

CK: What did you see in the mirror? B21.4

#6: I just seen me. I looked, I stopped, and I cried. And I - then I just kind of smiled. And for the first time I knew what it was like to finally start liking me. Because I -

MK: Do you want some feedback?

#6: Yeah.

MK: You're real lovable.

#6: *[laughs]* Like you.

MK: It doesn't surprise me that you've come to that conclusion. *[laughs]*

#6: That's what I tell everybody. I'm real loveable, real likeable. It's just that people - and when people give me a chance, they find the same thing.

MK: Oh, yeah. B21.9

#6: No one can honestly sit down and talk to me and feel that you really haven't changed my mind. Not that - and I tell my story, not to change your mind, but just to let people know I'm a normal person. I'm normal within my realm of normality, within the group of person I am, I'm

very normal. I'm just not normal like my family is normal or what they expect normal to be: I still live in a box, but my box is not square. My box is like a box like that chair come in. It has more than - it's more than four-sided. But I still live in a box. I still have values. I still have goals. I still fit within this little cage. Just like the birdcage movie. We all fit in - we're all birds in a cage. And we're trying to get out. We're trying find meaning and - So my cage is just not a simple little cage, it's got many sides to it, many corners.

MK: When you were a little boy, did your father and your mother teach you to stand up for yourself, to take your part, as they say, in the country and to defend yourself, to stand up for what you thought was right or who you thought you were? Were you taught to take your part as a little boy?

#6: No, not really. Mom was probably the more domineering one in the family which they blame that on. That's one of the things they blame - If the woman is more domineering than the male then the son, the boys in the family can get screwed up and get their - That's - I've been - That's just things I've been told. Mom wasn't that domineering though. Dad, when he cracked a whip, I jump. I guess my parents just instilled values that, of just honesty - I never seen prejudice in them at all that I remember. And I guess just their values of just what it's like to be part of society. I mean, you work. You get a job, you work. You go to church. You just try to be a person, an honest person. You just try to live your life, but I don't remember any overt indulgence in "You've got to pull your weight. You've got to - You need to make a difference. You need to - " I think our family was more of mediocre, mundane. They take things as they come.

CK: Mondune? B24.2

#6: Mondune, like, boring. Is mondune. I always called it "mondune." It's like just day in, day out, nothing changes. It's just, you exist. And here I've lobbied for hate crime legislation. And I really think I've made a difference in a lot of people's lives. Not that everybody has to agree with me, and that's not my goal, like I said before. But just let me live as a person. I can still make contributions. I have a tender heart. I can - I can show you love in a way you never understood. I can show you that being bitter is not always the answer. I had a temper when I was first married and even as a teenager. And I've worked on that hard, and I'm pretty well feel like I'm getting past all that now and realizing there's more to life. I can't ever imagine arguing with someone again. I'd just - I'd walk away first. It's just not worth it. This is so - It usually hurts both sides. You say things. Don't get me wrong - when I was married, we had our arguments and our fights. But I - but everything has changed for me now. I've just - I look at things a lot different than I used to. It's - I try to look positive, but I do - I can get very negative too in the fact that this is just day to day, nothing means nothing. Tomorrow's going to be the same as today and the day after that is going to be the same. And nothing I do is going to make any difference. So I have to guard against that. And I do that by being active. I do that by staying in church. I do that by speaking to others. I'm going to ... College in March. He's invited me to come up. I speak to their gender class. And I'll be going back to ... University probably. And hopefully down to ...'s [*professor's name*] again. I'm going to contact ... State and ... State Police and see if they want me to speak.

CK: ... Police - Try them too? B25.9

#6: Well, I didn't think about that. I could do it. But see, our training facilities is right here so start there first and because they need sensitive - Yeah - And they work on it. I mean they want that training, but they probably don't think of- They want them, but they don't know they need it because they don't really think of it as being out there because they're not made aware - But I've had other people have told me they've been pulled over while they was wearing a dress and - But - And I've told other people what-They've asked, "What would you do?" I said just to be honest. I've said, I made a card up and carried with me for a long time. And I put on the card "I am transgendered." The name on the operator's is correct. I cross-dress. And told it right up front. I said, "I pose no threat to you." And so - and me being honest I expect him to be honest back with me, but I never had to approach that. But I just tell everybody, I said, "If you ever get pulled over, just tell them the truth. Don't try to lie. Don't try to hide because if he catches you in one lie, he thinks you're trying to hide more than just that. It's just always be honest."

CK: Is that something your parents said? You said that twice. It's just such a smart thing. B26.8

#6: Oh, no, I don't - No, I don't think so. Well, yeah, my dad did do something to me once that probably made the biggest impact on my life. Is - I was - I don't know how old, early teens. We was walking through my neighbor's - He had a big field-And we was walking through there, and I'd seen a stick and, you know, you walk through the tall grass, you break the grass off. Well, I broke this stick and dad said, "What did you do that for?" He said, "That's a little tree." And I didn't know it was a tree, and I'd broke the top off of it. I just thought it was a stick. It looked dead to me. I don't pay any attention. But my dad made me go to the neighbor and tell him what I'd done. He wouldn't do it for me. He said, "You done it." He said, "You need to

want to go explain it to him." And I guess that's probably the most important thing that happened that I can look back and see, that he made me stand up for what I had done. So that's probably the main thing that's instilled that in me. And -

CK: I wonder where he got that from, what kind of a - ?

#6: *[laughs]* I don't know. I don't know. His dad, they called him "Bull" because he was such a bull all the time, just grumpy. But he was not so grumpy, but he was a strong man too so they called him "Bull."

MK: Your grandfather? B27.8

#6: Yeah, my dad's daddy. They called him "Bull." "Bull" That's what they called him, even though his name was Of course, with a middle name as . . . , you'd have to be a bull to take care of yourself. *[laughs]* I don't know. But his name was . . . , and my dad was always pretty strong too. But I wasn't. I wasn't- My bark was worse than my bite. I looked like I was real husky and big and strong, but I wasn't. I hated moving stuff. I hated doing a lot of manual labor. I ran a jackhammer in a labor gang for a while. I hated that, God, I hated that. And there was a girl working with me, but she never run the jackhammer. But she got paid as much as I did. I'm not against women in the work field, but if they get paid what I get paid, they should do the same amount of work. That's - I just feel that way. But I think she has just as much right to be there as me, but don't make me do all the labor just because I'm a male. But the problem is a lot of females can't do that type of work, but they shouldn't have been in that type of position. They should've got another position to where if they wasn't strong enough because - It would be hard for you to lug around a ninety pound jackhammer. I mean that's just facts. But this woman

was very capable of doing the same job I was doing. She was big enough to handle it, but she didn't do it. I did it, so - . If I was really against women, why would I want to be one, so - ?

[laughs] I kind of like where I'm at. It's very interesting.

MK: We once interviewed a gay psychiatrist in . . . *[city]* and I think what he said was, "Who would choose to be this different? It's nothing but a pain in the butt." B29.2

#6: Yeah, literally. *[laughs]*

MK: He's - Nobody would - nobody would choose this. This is - He said, "I love gays, and I love being gay, but I didn't choose to be gay. I - "

#6: Exactly, yeah.

MK: That's who I am. Nobody would choose it.

#6: No, and see and I've told a lot of people in my case what's, what happens is - You can be gay and you can go anywhere and no one really knows you're gay unless you tell them or they've seen you. They don't know. But me as transgendered, for a long time people knew. If I was going to cross-dress in public, people knew I was a guy. So I couldn't live my life as a female without other people knowing it. So it's like to be transgendered, you're exposed more than you are if you're gay so it puts more pressure on you in that aspect if you choose to go in public.

Now if you don't - Now even a lot of our members - a lot of them's still in the closet, very much in the closet and they're scared to death if they'd come out that they'd lose their job or their family would disown them, so a lot of people's still, still very much in the closet.

MK: The consequence of differences.

#6: Umm hmm, yep, there's a price to pay. A lot of bridges - I try not to burn bridges. A lot of

them had to be burned, but there have been bridges burned that I didn't have no choice in. Somebody else burned them for me. It's like my ex. I didn't want the bridge burned, she made me choose. And we'd already talked about it. She knew the night she told me she couldn't deal with it no more that I either had to quit or else. And I said, "You know the answer." And she said, "I know." I said, "I'll find an apartment tomorrow." And that's how - that's how it come about. There was not much discussion about it. There was a lot of tears later, but she already knew the answer because she knew how deep it was inside of me. We cried a lot. We fasted. We prayed. I had people at church that we would - I went to Assembly of God a lot when I was married too, Pentecostal. So we prayed. I had the church pray for me, even though they didn't know what I was requesting, that I just had a deep issue in my life that I wanted God to take care of. So the church prayed, and we fasted, and we cried. And, but, never ever no solution.

CK: But she had even helped you at some points too? B31.1

#6: Right, and that was the problem. See, at Christmas, she bought me stuff, ... [*female name*]. And then in the end of January, she said, "That's it." So it was mixed signals. I didn't really expect it and just come up - And then later she told me, she said, "I don't know what I was thinking that I could handle all this by myself." Her saying that. So I know there's always - Just because we talk and we've talked in the past, and we -- . And she married, but then she divorced, but now I think she's seeing him again, but she - No one - She said, "He's not you and he never will be." She said, "He's just different." Just in the way we talk, we know that we still care about each other, and she, but she can't - But her mom - even her mom - Nobody likes her husband, or her ex-husband. Nobody really liked him in the family. I was a hard act to follow, I

guess. *[laughs]* But I was always there. I was always just ... *[male name]*. And - So it's been very difficult on her. It's just- it's sad, but it has to be.

MK: Where's ... *[male name]* now?

#6: She says he's dead. She tells everybody ... died. ... is a figment of my imagination. It's almost as if he never existed. And the longer I'm divorced, the longer, the more it seems that it's almost like I never was married. It was another life, literally. And I don't - I only exist in terms of my mom and dad. I have two sisters, but one's starting to call me ... *[female name]*. I'll always exist there, but I don't think ... *[male name]* ever really did exist in a sense. He was just playing the role. He was a figment of everybody's imagination. And I finally got tired of that and had to be my own- had to become - I had to become real. To become real, I had to be ... *[female name]*. So - I don't think I've ever said it like that before.

MK: That's very prophetic.

#6: You're going to write a book, ain't you? *[laughs]*

CK: It's going to be yours for your book.

#6: Yeah. *[laughs]*

CK: You'll have this tape.

#6: Oh, okay. Yeah, that would be great. I type, I'll show my diaries when we kind of get done.

CK: So here was ... *[male name]* being a facade for ... *[female name]* and then a year ago, you had surgery and before then you were on hormones, but you, you've given your name change. It's official. ... *[female name]* is who's here and now people are meeting you as

#6: Ummhmm.

CK: That's a huge change. What does that feel like? Now there isn't- B33.1

#6: A big weight's been lifted off my shoulder. I felt like as a male I was having to prove who I was. But as ... I don't always have to prove - I can just be me. I don't have to worry anymore about what others really think, even though I'm concerned. I don't want them to think bad of me, but now I feel at more freedom because of the expectations of being a male. The society don't have that type of expectations for a female. And I like where I'm at. I like that I can be different. I like if I want to cry I can cry if I get emotional. I like that. I like the ability, even though I should have done it as ... *[male name]* I like the ability to just be soft-spoken. I don't have to be aggressive. I don't have to fit in that male role. I don't have to always have control of things as a male, which I never really did. I feel like I have more control now. I can go in a room - ... *[male name]* could go in a room and just kind of fit in the corner, but ... *[female name]* can go in a room and turn heads. Not so much in her beauty, but just in that I am very confident in who I am and I'm very secure as ... *[female name]* in any crowd. Whereas ... *[male name]* wasn't.

MK: Because you always knew anyway.

#6: Yeah.

CK: Always were anyway. B34.4

#6: Yeah, so that's why I can fit in at ... *[name of restaurant and bar]*. Only a few people up there know. But I mean- There's probably a lot more that know than I really know know, but I fit in very well. We have one of the most popular tables up there, me and my girlfriends.

[laughs] They're all the time -People come around- It gets aggravating sometimes because

we've got too many people hanging around. God. Then one – We've got a couple that likes to put their arm around you and one bent over and kissed me on the forehead and he said, "Am I ever going to get lucky with you?" I said, "I don't think so." I said, "I don't think I'm what you want." *[laughs]* And I kind of hinted that I - I was kind of started hinting to some that would come on to me that I really liked girls. But I still fit in. They said, "Well, I like girls too." I said, "Okay." So I pretty much - My girlfriends there - Only two of them know that I sit with, the other four or five that come in don't know.

CK: That you sit with - Is this a certain occasion or -

#6: Just on Wednesdays.

CK: Wednesdays? B35.1

#6: Yeah, working women's Wednesdays. So we don't - And the deejay knows. . . ., on the oldies station, he knows. But overall, no one really knows and if they do, I still fit in. They still let me just be me. I'm not sitting at their table. I've got my own table. And we get treated nice. The waiter, as soon as I walk in, he brings me my Diet Coke. He knows that what I drink so he brings my Diet Coke, brings my girlfriend her Diet Coke. Not girl-girlfriend, but brings her Diet Coke. He says, "I've got some popcorn popping for you." So he always pops us popcorn. So we kind of just have our own little group there on Wednesdays. And it's fun. But as a guy, I never would have met this girl. I would never have met these girls. As . . . *[male name]*, I couldn't have done it. And even if I had of, I would have never felt like I - I would have never fit in. It's just different.

CK: So now you're finally getting to meet people who have only known you as . . . *ffemale* .

name}?

#6: Right. My - There is very few - Other than the people I work with, I don't associate with anyone who knew They're just not part of my life, other than my family. Everyone - There's no one that used to know . . . [*male name*], it's all . . . [*female name*]. They're all . . . friends. So things change. Seven years have changed a lot of things. I have no - I have been in touch with - There's only been two people, three people in high school that I've seen as . . . [*female name*}, and I just seen one a couple of weeks ago. I said, ". . . [*classmate's name*}" And she said, "Yes." I said - She said, "Who are you?" I said, "Well," I said, "I'm . . . [*male name*}" "*[male name]*" she said, "What have you done to yourself?" [*laughs*} She already knew - I said, "Well, you knew already." She said, "Yeah, I'd heard, but what have you done?" Our thirty year reunion is supposed to be this year, and I'm very curious if they'll even have it because of me. And if they do have it, will they call me? And if they do have it, and I'm sure - Because I'm out. Everybody knows. If they don't, somebody's, they've got their heads up their butts or something. [*laughs*] Because I'm out. And if they don't have it because of me, it will be sad. And if they're afraid I'm going to show up and spoil things, it's sad because I'm not going to spoil anything. They - If it spoils anything, it will allow - They'll be spoiled, allowing it to spoil it for them. They would be projecting their feelings toward me, but they'll be the ones that make the ultimate decisions to, ruining the party, or say the words, or leave. But I don't want to go and say, "Look at me." I just want to go and say, "Look at me." [*laughs*} I've changed. I think I'd get the prize for the one who's changed the most. [*laughs*}

CK: Maybe the most who's stayed the same, really. B37.7

#6: Well, it may be. Really, I haven't changed. I'm still a person. I've just allowed the better parts to come out more. So, yes, I hope they have the reunion. But I do have two friends that I think would call me if they have it and tell me. Because I was on the committee for the fifteen year, and I'd like to have it just to show that you can live your own life. We've had a couple to die already and a couple have lost their spouses already. And I think it's good just to - Because we grew up together. It's good to share things from the past sometimes, to see how people have changed, to see life has taken its things and turned people - A lot of parts of us are products of society, so a lot of parts of us are that way. We are a product of society in a large aspect, but there's a large part of us, as we get older, we don't want to hide no more. We want to just - We're tired of facades. And so as we get older -

END OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE

SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO

CK: ... just talking about a couple of friends who you still see and -

#6: Yeah, one moved to ..., and the other one worked at a gift shop here. And one actually came here and while I got ready and we went to ... [*grocery store*] together. She was kind of a girlfriend growing up, not in the terms we dated, but our families went on vacation together and so we were always, not close-close, but I guess I've known her longer than about anybody. And of course, we - Everybody always expected we to be together because we grew up - There's baby pictures of us sitting on the bed together, and everybody all expect us to be together, but we never - And she asked me - I nominated her to be Miss ... , which was school queen, and she asked, then she asked me to escort her so I got to escort, but I wanted to - I wasn't the pretty one,

she was. So I had to wear the suit and all that. But we just grew apart. We never dated. I don't even think I ever kissed her. It's just that I wasn't ready when she was, I guess. Because you know how boys are, they're younger than girls are at that age. They probably - and they still are younger as they get older too maybe. *[laughs]* But she - she's married and - But we - we still - After the divorce, we could - Of course, my ex, she was always - I couldn't have friends like that. Jealousy or whatever. Some relationships are. But she lives in . . . , and the other girl that I know, she lives at . . . , but we went to church together and I went down and seen her a few years ago and she's - It didn't seem to bother her at all. She seems very comfortable with it. She said she didn't understand, but she said, "You look great." *[laughs]* So that -

CK: That was her first response?

#6: Yeah, so I don't - Other than those two, that was the only the three that I really met as someone from my past. But there's no one in my - There's no one that I grew up with that's in my life. It's all new, new - And ninety-five percent of those that I am friends with now have all been made after the-, after . . . *[female name]*. And so . . . *[male name]*'s life is pretty non-existent, had been for a long time. Because even when I was married, I wasn't - There was nobody in my life I grew up with. We had church people we went to church with, and church controlled our lives. And like, there was things we should have done when we was married to enjoy it. We should have went dancing. We should have got a buzz occasionally. Just did something different. We should have went to more movies. And we should have had fun. But our life was always too serious, always too serious. What would others think? You've got an image to maintain, and I resent that sometimes. I do resent that sometimes. Would it have made

any difference? I think . . . [*female name*] would have come out no matter what happened. She might have come out sooner, she might have come out later, but she would have come. I really - I don't think - I think she was destined to be here. And if things had been different, it might have been earlier. I wished I'd had surgery earlier. I think my body would have handled it more [*laughs*] because that's - It's still it's - It's still tough. I mean I know I don't have a lot of energy and a lot of it's the surgery. I was under for I think about six hours. And then not only that, is that your body's having to not - It's not just healing, it's adjusting too. It's not like you had a gall bladder surgery removed. You take it out and your body pretty well - Once the scars heal, it has pretty well forgotten about it. But this has taken a whole big change, mentally, physically, and all aspects. So it takes a lot of energy. So that's why by seven or eight o'clock, I'm ready just to forget everything. Just like that guy I talked to a while ago, he said, "You probably haven't read my e-mail yet." I said, "No, I haven't had time this evening." And some days I even skip reading my e-mail. I just - By the time - I do treadmill about every evening -

CK: That's good. 2-04.6

#6: - I do thirty minutes. Sometimes I'll push it and do thirty minutes. I did hit - I did finally hit two miles in thirty minutes and that is darn good. I said, "First time I've ever done it, and then I put last time." [*laughs*] That's too much. That's too much to energy. So now I try to do - I usually just do thirty minutes. That's usually a mile and three-quarter. And I've picked up and try to run some of that, and I can run probably I can run a quarter mile. I break it up and maybe I can run three-tenths, but that's - I don't want any . . . to push it. I'm just trying to get my metabolism up because winter's hard on me gaining weight. I like the clothes I have now, I like,

and if I gain I go into an eighteen and if you know anything about clothes, between a sixteen and an eighteen, there's a lot of style changes. And they just don't fit the same. It's like you go from a - If you wear a sixteen and go to an eighteen, it's like going from a sixteen to a twenty-two. I mean, it's just - They don't fit the same. Whereas sixteen, fourteen, twelve, they're all the same. They're pretty well standard. So I like to try to stay in a sixteen. And so that's a constant battle.

CK: So your metabolism has really changed? 2-05.7

#6: It may be part of it.

CK: Maybe.

#6: But I've always gained a little weight in the winter because I'm, I sit here and I like to watch TV and I'm just - I'm a snacker. Not a slacker, a snacker. *[laughs]* And I like to snack.

CK: Umm hmm. What other sorts of changes do you attribute to chemicals in terms of emotional or mental feelings? 2-06.2

#6: Some people - Even one of the persons at the ho- told me that she had had surgery and she told me that you'll go through post-operative depression is what they call it. I never did. I've never regretted this. I've been - I mean I go through depression - Don't get me wrong - But I don't - None of it is attributed to having surgery, that's for sure. Mentally I think it's - I'm a lot more well-adjusted. I'm more well-adjusted to taking day by day stuff as it comes along and not worry as much as I used to, what if, what if. And I just take things in stride now, more so. It's kind of mellowed me out. It's - We call - A lot of people call hormone, their "happy pill" because it really has made a lot of us happy. *[laughs]* So we go use "happy pill."

CK: Do you suppose for you it's women's hormones and the effects of them or just being who

you've always been trying to get to be?

#6: A little of both because the hormones, they have given some men who have been sex offenders - One of the treatments is female hormones because it reduces their sexual drive.

MK: And their aggressiveness. 2-07 3

#6: Yeah, their aggressiveness, so I like that feeling. I don't like - I never liked these aggressive - I took male hormones for a while just to try to get my sex drive up and try to be a man again and all that. And I didn't like those feelings. I like where I'm at much better. So I think it's a combination of just of liking where I'm at and the hormones helping putting me there. I like that. I love that feeling. I tell everybody that. I'm glad things are a little more calmer than they used to be. And I - A lot of people won't understand, but I, I heard somebody say on the radio here the other day, "Do people embrace life or are they fearing death?" And that's why they're think they're embracing life because they're afraid to die. I don't - I don't consider myself afraid of death. I don't worry about it. It's to me - and I told people when I had surgery, "If I see the light at the end of the tunnel, I might just stay." As much as I wanted my surgery, it would have been equal as fifty-fifty, I would have took either way. I wanted to say, okay, I'll have my - I'll come back as a female or I'll go and live - I'll go into heaven where I've been taught is a better place. Why do we hang on here if heaven is such a better place? But people do, they're afraid to die. And I don't fear death. I flew an airplane. I took a hang-glider off... *[name of mountain]*. I don't think I do things that's stupid- I do things that's safe that's within the realm that I do them, but I don't - I'm not afraid to do stuff. So -

CK: You're such a resilient person, really. 2-09.0

#6: *[laughs]* I try. I try. I haven't let no grass grow under my feet, even though I do run out of energy. It's getting closer.

CK: Where does it come from? Does it - Where does it come from?

#6: What, all the different things I do?

CK: No, just your, your spirit, your source of strength. Or did you have a grandma just saying things that run through your head sometimes?

#6: No, my whole family - my whole family - They nap every day. Mom and dad nap every day. They're retired. My sister, she naps about every chance she gets. I never was a big napper. I'm a - My ex used to call me a piddle, a piddler. She called me "Mr. Piddle-Poo" because I'm all the time doing things, making things, inventing things, or hooking up TV wires or just doing little things. I'm just - I'm a type that I just don't sit and that's part of my problem sometimes is it's okay just to sit sometimes. But I always - My whole life I've always felt like I had to be doing something. I don't know why. So - Someone said, "You have a lot of courage." And I said, "To me, I don't have courage." I said, "To me, I've just - It's a matter of survival." And it's not like to me I'm having courage. I'm just doing what I have to do. But that is the definition of courage I guess.

CK: Was there people in your community who were in some ways models of people who just got out and did things or just models of good values or things that you brought along? 2-10.6

#6: Well, when we was married - we - we - All of our married life, we helped needy families in ... county. And we did puppet shows so we were pretty well known. And the last year of our marriage, we helped supply a hundred and twenty families with turkeys and dressing, not just a

dinner, but a whole - They took it home. A whole turkey. And they had two-hundred and fifty children and all the children got two new toys a piece. So we helped sponsor that. For a long time, we did it on our own. Up until thirty families, we did it on our own on our finances through our puppet ministry, we did, we supplied that. But then as it got bigger, we got other churches involved and we got the people to help us because we couldn't do a hundred and twenty families and wrap all those - and all the presents got wrapped too. But we had used toys. We'd build a building. We'd give away clothing. People would give us clothing and we hung it out and they'd come and get it free. But the thing that bothers me about the most about that is that after we divorced, people knew that we'd divorced and they actually called my ex-wife and they said, "Well, what are we supposed to do?" No compassion for her whatsoever. It's "What are we going to do?" after all we'd helped. And that kind of bothered - And I know it bothered her too because of all the help we did, all the good we tried to do didn't. So - We lived on a farm. We had a barn. We had horses and for a long time. We had chickens and goats and -

CK: With your wife? 2-12.1

#6: Yeah, we had Saint Bernards and cats and dogs and *[laughs]*. We just - But we was all the time doing stuff. And she had more energy than me, especially in that clothing bin. She'd stay up there until eight or nine o'clock at night sorting clothes and doing it. And we'd help people with - We'd give them - we'd help them with electric bills, but we'd never give them the money, we would write the check to the electric company. So we did a lot in community. And so when this happened, it affected a lot of people.

CK: Did they know why you were getting divorced? Did the community know?

#6: Pretty much, like I say, everybody knows everything after the – They know it. It travels fast. And it was getting out anyway because a woman saw me at Penney's one time buying a wig or something. I found out later so *[laughs]* you can't hide things forever. So, yeah, it made a big impact on the community.

CK: What did your dad do for work in the community?

#6: Dad always worked- he worked at ... *[same company that employs #6]* too. He's a welder. He didn't - He went to church. That's about all, kept his house neat, yard mowed after I left. I'm sorry I left the TV on. This - He was just a, just one of the occupants of the community. Mom, I mean, they don't – They never done any social work, I mean in the community. Mom, she was a principal so she had her duties as principal too, for things like that. But they never done volunteer work other than just what they do in the church.

CK: Have they tried to understand? 2-13.8

#6: Yeah, I've give a lot of stuff to read and even though they didn't go with me until - Dad didn't know about surgery until the day before.

CK: Oh.

#6: But he knew - I told him at one time that I'd like to live the rest of my life as a female. And I said, "There's a lot of rumors going around, dad, and I wanted you to hear it from me." And I said, "I worry about how people will treat you or respond to you once they know about me." And he said, "Don't worry about me." He said, "I'm doing just fine." So - But d a d - I said, "If you ever want to talk about it, we will. If not, we'll just drop it." I said, "Okay." He said, "Okay." So he never - But then later when I had this fight with my sister.

CK: This what? 2-14.6

#6: When I had the falling out with my sisters a couple of years ago. Dad did refer to ... *[female name}*, and said, "... doesn't have to come around here, does she?" So he has referred to her as a person. And - But he didn't know about the surgery until the day - He knew I was a cross-dresser. He does not know that I did drag shows all those years. But it doesn't - It won't - It wouldn't affect the function of his life. It's not relevant to his, to him doing that. I mean for him knowing that. So that he didn't know until surgery, until the day before. And then I had to - I went to ... *[city in which the operation took place]* and I had to take somebody with me. And I asked mom if she wanted to go because I had to have somebody to take care of the catheter, the bag, and I mean I was pretty well laid up. And they had a - they had a - they had on surgery, they had a dildo and they had a plate sewed between my legs to keep the dildo in so it wouldn't grow back together. So I was pretty well bed-ridden for several days. So mom called me the day after surgery. She said, "You know," she said, "we should have been there for you." I said, "It's okay, mom." I said, "I understand." Well, I didn't know that dad was on the phone. I said, "How's dad doing?" She said, "Oh, he's fine. He's on here." I said, "He is?" *[laughs}* It kind of shocked me. And then they come by after I got home and mom would bring me stuff to eat. I don't - They've never seen the surgery. They don't want to see it. But their support is - They're still loving me. So it doesn't matter if they call me ... *[female name]* or they call me ... *[male name}*. It doesn't matter if I can wear a dress out there or I can't. I'd rather keep - I'd rather keep peace and have a little love than not have it all.

CK: She said, "We should have been there?" 2-16.1

#6: Yes, she said, "We should have been there." Because I was all the way in ... [*city in which the operation took place*] and I mean I could have seen the light at the end of the tunnel and stayed, not by choice but because that's what was destined. But - So they have showed, tried to show compassion. But mom doesn't - I don't go around - I don't go unless she has dinners with family and stuff I don't go no more because my sisters - They have one sister - Her little - Her kids - My youngest sister's doing much better with it. Her kids better - Her youngest one's like five so she's just not sure how, what to tell them. So I really wasn't welcome, even though she's starting to call me ... [*female name*] and she's trying to understand. She may be okay with it, but she's not ready for her family to be okay with it yet. So there's still some things we're working through. And my older sister - She has sons that's dating. They're starting to date girls now. They have girlfriends so they don't want to have dinners with me being there. Even though I'll come as generic as possible, no makeup, my hair in a ponytail, a T-shirt - They - I still make the uncomfortable. So that's just - But me and my mom and dad, we eat - we meet to go out and eat, and I wear my nail polish and they don't care about that. I just don't wear makeup around them. But if I - It doesn't really matter that much. I'd just as soon - I would like it to be where I could meet them any time and just - Whether I have makeup on or not would be fine, but then I think it's more important to keep that little connection open to me. Some people, it's not. But if it's not, I could cut them off if I had to. I wouldn't want to, and it would hurt me deeply. But - So as long as I maintain a little then, and they try. But I know there's times when I tell mom things or we talk or I'm depressed. I can tell that I've taken her too deep or she hurts

too much for me. You know how mothers are, they want - They would do anything to make your life better, but in my case, there's nothing that can be done to make things better. She just - That's mothers. So I've got to be careful not to pull her in too far and let her live with my depression with me. I just need someone to talk to sometimes so I really try to be real choicy on what I tell her, things.

MK: Thank you. 2-18.4

#6: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW