

Interview: KI002X04 10-13-04

I: This is key informant interview KI002X04, INT04 interviewing, and it's the 13th of October of 2004. We're back on and we're back on. Thanks for all of that. There's some water there if you want some.

R: Oh yes thank you.

I: Grab it there. What I've got here is an interview guide. So it covers a whole series of lists of questions that they're not fixed questions, they're just blocks of ideas that I'm going to refer to, just to make sure I cover the territory. And if I jot on this it's because I'm trying to remember something to come back to later on. I just don't want to interrupt your flow at that time or things like that. And I'll stop around on this because I often follow my own nose rather than the interview schedule. It terrifies the research team. I suppose the first question is what caught your attention about the study? Had you heard INT01 talk about this?

R: I heard yes INT01 mentioned it to me. I first met INT01 early this year at the Conference1 in Massachusetts and actually I met him it was during breakfast on the last day at the conference. He came up to me and we chatted a little bit. He introduced himself. We exchanged business cards and he said that when we get back to New York to feel free to keep in touch. And what I did was during that weekend I amassed a list of some 25 contacts and I put them all together and what I did was I just sent out a generic email to everybody, all those contacts, thanking them for meeting them and everything. And just to reintroduce myself and said here's my email address, let's keep in touch.

I: Did you present something on your work in the parties and things like that at that conference?

R: Yeah well what happened was this was my first conference. And I knew about it --

I: Conference virgin. You survived to tell the tale.

R: Virgin yes, not a virgin anymore. Now what happened was I heard about the conference about a month before it actually took place. And so I thought well it would be something worthwhile for me to attend being a private party owner, a sex club owner. And what I did was I went up there with the intention that I was going to keep my mouth shut, sit in the back row, take notes and just smile and nod my head. After the first day I couldn't do that because I had to voice my opinions, my concerns and put in my two cents' worth. I didn't make any formal presentations per

se but I did participate in a few of the workshops and in that case I mentioned who I was --

I: What you were doing.

5 R: And what I do, that I am in the position of what I am and that's a sex party owner.

I: And in this particular study what attracted you to this one in particular, or is it one of many studies that you're interested in?

10 R: I'm open-minded to any and all research involving the gay community, especially the HIV-positive community because I'm personally am HIV-positive since late '83 or early '84.

I: Wow.

03:03

15 R: I don't know why I've lasted this long. I'm not going to question it and --

I: Congratulations.

20 R: Thank you and pretty much I've changed my career. That's because of the work that I do with my parties and how they have grown over time. I've pretty much said OK I'm going to get away from the nine to five office and I'm going to dedicate my career to this and studies such as this, whatever I can do for input, knowledge to pass on or to put knowledge together to help contribute to our society I'm all for it.

I: It's great for us, that's for sure.

25 R: It's great for me too, thank you.

I: Yeah. I knew about the parties. And you call them -- there's two -- I heard of two names, one's what LIKEUS and the other's FUN'S PARTIES? Or is it the same --

30 R: It's the same thing. FUN'S LIKEUS Parties is the actual name of the party. But it started even before that. It manifested. And LIKEUS is my website, LIKEUS.com, which is something I just started recently on my own.

I: And that's a personal website or is it a --

35 R: It's a personal website. What happened was when I first started, when I first started hosting the parties I--it was difficult to get the word out, especially anonymously in a way without going up to somebody and say hey I'm HIV-positive, are

you HIV-positive. Things back then ten years ago were very different. It was very hostile.

I: And it was ten years ago that you started --

5 R: About ten years ago, yeah, in the mid 1990s. What happened was I started with an email address as a way for people to get in touch with me because the Internet was just starting back then.

I: Yes that's right.

10 R: And in New York I was the first private sex club, first private party, that used the Internet as a way to reach out to people. I have the original copies of MAGAZINE1 and MAGAZINE2 where my party is the first one listed there. And now as you see it's all listed. So to forward the clock now, the Internet was a way for me to really branch out on a global scale that many other people couldn't do and because of that reaching out very early on my guest list is now totals over 10,000 people.

15 I: And from all over the globe.

R: From all over the globe, yes.

20 I: So when people are coming through New York from elsewhere they check in to see what your party schedule's up to and things like that.

25 R: That was the entire idea. What happened was with the Internet it's a fabulous tool and it's also quite scary too. One thing that it's a fabulous tool is because here in New York City we have a very unique opportunity that this is a tourist destination and also it's a business destination. A lot of commerce comes through New York.

06:25

30 R: We are the capital of the continent if not of the world. So besides relying on just the local participants, local people of New York, to attend my parties, I advertise in Chicago, Los Angeles, Dallas, Seattle Vancouver, Montreal, Europe and Australia. And very soon I got people coming in from -- either tourists or businesspeople who were attending my party and said oh I heard about you -- your party on the Internet, he's from Paris so he's in for the day, yeah and this is how they found out.

35 I: Wow and you have 10,000. So that's permanent list when it rolls out.

R: I stopped counting at 10,000. Give or take. I have six WHOOP!

clubs at about 1,000 people apiece. I have two EMAIL1 accounts which is close to 1,000 on that. Through the website now. The website, the reason for the website is because with spam laws cracking down and with my email information getting longer and longer, providing more information to my guests, a website made sense because this way instead of me sending spam out to them or to the wrong address embarrassing somebody I just tell them hey it's all on the website, come over here and check it out. And now the website, there's a -- Boston gave me a call, some people up in Boston found it was quite intriguing because here we take sex, the concept of sex, and we mixed it in with advocacy and we mixed it in with general information and knowledge and health information all under one umbrella which was the website and they thought it was common sense because sex is a major part of our lives as a community.

I: You said we mixed it in. So is there someone else helping you organize this or --

R: No. I do that sometimes because over the course of time I am developing a split personality in a way I think. I'm leading a double life and what happens is I think when I say we I say we being the community or maybe in general it's -- I'm the only one who has direct access to the list, my master list, to the website. I have all the passwords, codes and everything. And I am the entire organization. I am the advertising department, I am the funding department, I am the public relations department, I am the human resources department, everything all rolled into one. And there are times I'm not afraid to say, there are times when I'll walk down the street and I'm talking to myself and having a conversation with myself.

I: So the advertising department does occasionally talk to marketing --

R: Yes, yes, and it keeps me sane because a lot of times when I am walking down the street or walking along a drive or just having a moment looking up at the stars, that's where I get a lot of my inspiration from.

I: OK so ten years ago it starts. I mean, did you hear about similar kinds of parties elsewhere or concept -- gay men have had sex parties forever but was it that that -- what started the idea of a LIKEUS party in your mind and got the whole thing going?

10:23

R: This is for the record and this is going to be the first time that this is acknowledged. You're very lucky, very lucky. I hope I don't bore you with it though, no. I was living in

Florida, in Tampa, Florida. A friend of mine had a boat, a 42-foot cabin cruiser. And every Sunday we would take maybe about 35 guys, 35 guys could fit on the boat, pay \$10 for gas and everything, and we'd go out on the Intercoastals, we'd go out into the Gulf of Mexico, strip off all of our clothes and we're having fun and sometimes there's sex, sometimes there isn't. But I'm bored with Florida because I hate it, it's too slow, it's too flat, I like the New York lifestyle. I was born and raised, second generation from Greenwich, Connecticut. So I'm moving to New York and I'm thinking to myself I miss this. I'm HIV-positive. So New York City's got it for me. When I go up there it's going to be set up and ready to go.

I: Why, because there's more positive --

R: For sex parties.

I: -- that there's more positive people in New York?

R: Yeah well I'm figuring since the early '80s to the mid '90s that's a good ten years let's say average ten years by this time there should be something in the city of New York at least for HIV-positive people to go to, lesbians or gays or straights to go to to meet other positive people without having to go to a clinic, without having to go and see your doctor, without going to support groups. Because no offense to these institutions, they're desperately needed in society, but I am not a support group guy, I don't want to listen to other people complaining, bitching and moaning about their problems. I'm past that stage. I have bills to pay, I have to go to school, I have things I have to do, I don't want to hear about complaints. So there has to be a social outlet or some sort of sexual outlet for guys who are HIV-positive to get together. There wasn't any.

I: You searched in MAGAZINE1 and all those kind of places.

R: I searched in MAGAZINE1, I went online, I went to other magazines, gay magazines and newspapers and things and the Internet. And there were a lot of sex parties. Some just said *sex parties* and some said *barebacking*.

I: Really, this is this long ago.

R: This was back yeah, back in the mid '90s, and there was one site that caught my attention and it was a bareback website.

I: Do you remember the name of it?

R: Yes, it's called PRICEY.

I: All right. That was going then.

R: That was going even then. And I know ARIZONA CRITIC, not personally, but we've exchanged over the years we've exchanged email and stuff and kept in touch. And then all the other bareback sites came up out of that. So what happened was I said
5 OK I'm going to have a sex party. I'm going to have it in my apartment because that'll help pay the rent.

13:26

R: So I started a party and it was called Fun Party2 and that was strictly for young guys and it was a safe sex party.

10 I: It was a safe sex party.

R: Safe sex party. Condoms were required. But then I'm HIV-positive and I'm thinking well I still have to ask guys if they're positive or negative.

I: Because --

15 R: Because --

I: Even though it was a condom party.

R: Even though it was a condom party there's still the risk, and this is something that we need to explore in general, is the concept of safe sex. Now is it possible to bareback safely and is it possible that using a condom there is risk involved?
20 Condoms do have a tendency to come off or break. So there is realistically a degree of risk. But if you bareback and you pull out of a person before you come isn't that considered safe? Where do we draw the line? We have a gray area and we need to
25 do further research on this part. So there was no ten years ago and ten years into the epidemic there was nothing socially privately for guys who are HIV-positive. So I started FUN PARTY2 and then I'm thinking, I'm walking up and down the Hudson River over here, and I'm thinking to myself what if, what if I
30 started a party for guys who are strictly HIV-positive. Well first thing, it would have to be advertised as such. I would put it, deliberately put it in MAGAZINE1 and MAGAZINE2. So I know right off the bat I'm going to have to put in words that this is a poz party. I would also have to go and come out
35 myself publicly as being HIV-positive. And I'm deliberately looking for other people who are HIV-positive. So how will I get my message across? Well first thing is they need a contact number, so that's done, and the answering machine on the contact number would be that this is a poz party for poz guys only.

40 I: And you'd then contact them back once --

R: Exactly, exactly, exactly. But then I took it a step further

and I thought I have to call these people back. What if they call from other parts of the country? I don't want a long-distance call on my phone bill. The Internet. The Internet is available 24 hours a day seven days a week rain or shine and it doesn't call in sick and it doesn't get tired.

5

I: Unfortunately sometimes.

R: And anybody can access it from anywhere in the world. I needed an email address. The first party was called FUN PARTY1. And it was advertised as FUN PARTY1 because it was a sex club and it was for guys who are positive and it was in New York City.

10

I: Was it in your home though --

R: And it was in my private apartment which was up by Street1, right here in New York. So I went online, surfing online, trying to find chat rooms and just anywhere where I can get the word out.

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16:56

I: So you would go into a chat room and just put a message out in the chat, just general chat board saying party's happening here, contact this?

R: Yeah now I had two themes going at the same time. I had the magazine articles in MAGAZINE1 and MAGAZINE2 which had the email address, so some guys who saw the magazine would email me. But then when I was in the chat rooms, well I'm HIV-positive looking for other guys who are HIV-positive to come to my party. Well that's a lot of writing and I'm a very slow typist. I have not even to this day not learned how to type and I still peck. So I had to shorten the message down even quicker. I'm HIV-positive you be too. Then it was just the letters, HIV with a plus sign with a U, the B and 2. And that was easy. And that went like wildfire. I could type that out in a second. And then guys started typing back. And then I found other websites like PRICEY and things and then I put that in the profile.

25

30

I: So you set yourself up as a member of PRICEY --

R: Yes.

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I: -- and then put something in the profile to the same effect.

R: Yeah and the reason why I went with that route of PRICEY or of that site or those type of sites was because the word unofficially was that if you bareback you're HIV-positive. But then --

I: Where did you hear that from?

R: That was through friends and people who were starting to attend the parties. My first party I only had eight people attend. It lasted for about four or five hours and it was very unique
5 because we just met, took the clothes off, there was some socializing, discussing meds and discussing new treatments and discussing doctors, and then we started getting horny and having sex and then take a break and talk some more. So now it became as part of a social group or a support group.

10 I: But you didn't like those I thought.

R: Go figure, right? So here I am, I created a new type of support group and with the Internet just starting out and reaching out I thought well -- if I can advertise it here in New York why not Chicago? So I started looking for other cities. And I pulled
15 out a map and I said OK I'm going to this city, this city, and I started plotting out parts of the country where I could get my message out. And first it was the major cities because those are the business travelers and those are the tourists. Then they started showing up. In about three months I had 60 people
20 attending my party, because that's the amount I could hold in my apartment.

I: My God, that's a lot of people in an apartment though.

R: Yeah and then I started hosting them twice a month.

20:07

25 R: And then people were starting to ask me over the course of time they started asking well when are you going to do one in this city, when are you going to do one in Chicago, when are you going to go into Dallas, I said well start it, start it up, do it. And then the concept -- now the problem here is how do you
30 get paid for a concept. It's virtual reality, it's an idea, a thought. There's no way that you can put a price tag I think on a thought, especially if it benefits society.

I: And how can you own this, you can't take copyright out on something like this or a patent or something like that.

35 R: Right, because anybody, any two people who get together who are HIV-positive, they can do it.

I: Anyone can hold a party.

R: Exactly and that was my idea was to -- because I'm not going to go all over the country because I can't afford it, I'm still
40 working a nine to five job at this time.

I: You still were then.

R: Back then I was when I first started doing these. And I
couldn't, I couldn't go around the country, that's ridiculous
and it's too expensive. But they were going to do it anyway
5 whether they had my permission or not. So but something else
took place at the same time too and that was we were becoming
comfortable with who we were because that's where serosorting
comes in. Because when you get two people who are the same HIV
10 status, in this case let's say positive, a lot goes on besides
sex. There is first the individual has to become comfortable
with who they are and their HIV status, they have to become
aware of their HIV status. And they have to accept that. So
15 that's one psychological drama, episode we have to deal with
there, that individual thing. When they become comfortable with
that to the point where they go out searching for another person
that's another psychological step. So now you have this magnet
of two people meeting who are the same HIV status. But then we
20 have to take the concept even further because if they're
deliberately looking for each other to hook up and have sex or
even just a basic relationship that is a form of prevention
because as I stated in an article with Magazine3 in 2002, we
don't need negative guys anymore, meaning we don't need to look
25 for HIV-negative guys or have sex with HIV-negative guys because
we have HIV-positive guys that we can play with, and have sex
with, and therefore the prevention is it stops the spread of HIV
dead in its tracks, because the positive community sticking with
itself, yes you're building a wall and some people will say it's
30 discrimination. They can say whatever it is. But the reality
is that it stops 100% dead in its tracks to prevent the
transmission of HIV.

I: Can I ask you --

23:42

I: I'll come back to that in a minute because I want to talk a
35 little bit about HIV prevention a little bit later on but just
in this early -

R: I'm sorry yeah.

I: yeah, no, no, that's fine, I wanted to hear the history anyway
because that's really good, helps me think about where I want to
ask some questions. Let's take not so much I want to ask you a
40 question about the parties now in a minute. I want to ask you a
question about the parties by the time they reached maximum size
for your apartment and you had to start thinking about other
things like venues when you were just branching out in New York
and you were getting 40, 50 to 60 people at these parties, just
45 walk me through the choreography of a party. How does it start?

What happens? How does it go on? That side. When you were doing like that.

5 R: At the location of the party guys could show up at a designated time on a designated date. It was always the same date of month. I tried to keep it regular.

I: Like a Saturday evening or something like that?

10 R: Right a Saturday, it's maybe the second Saturday of the month and this way made it easier for them because it's a no-brainer. Then at a certain time, let's say between 9:00 and 11:00 show up. The door time.

I: Then you shut the doors.

15 R: And then well technically I don't shut the door because I never refused anyone because anybody for me personally I don't like to discriminate against people, I don't want to say no to somebody because we have so much rejection in our community. They don't need to hear it from another one. So I will leave the door open. But during that time it's preferred, come on in. All right so everybody's coming in. They come to the door and I have a donation at the door.

20 I: How much was it then in those days?

25 R: It's \$20 and that was because it's not a required donation. It's just if somebody gave me \$1 I'd accept it but it was for my time and effort invested into planning all of this, putting it together, plus paying for lube, condoms. Ever since the first party I've always provided condoms. And snacks and drinks and everything that they needed --

I: So you'd lay the lube and condoms out on tables and stuff like that?

30 R: Yes on tables, paper towels around, it was in the living room, it was mostly a social area and they had a porno playing or something, some music. And then in the bedroom they used the bedroom as a play area. And the importance of segregating that was because then you can play but then if you needed to take a break and you needed to relax and just get out of the mix of
35 things you could do that. And if you met somebody and you wanted to talk to them, get to know them a little bit better, you had an intimate space that was very friendly and inviting and you could talk and chat and you could meet people.

26:49

40 R: Now the whole concept of a sex club or sex party was designed

for the fact of other guys networking and deliberately meeting people. Because if you met somebody that you liked and you got it on and things were great, exchange telephone numbers, go out into the world, New York. Have a great time, meet somebody.
5 Now they became boyfriends or they became friends. Some people became lovers.

I: At your parties.

R: At my parties. I have gotten guys coming in. So they meet, they take their clothes off, there's a donation at the door,
10 they pay that, they take their clothes off. They can either be nude or in their underwear. Because it sets the mood. And then they can do whatever they want. If they want to watch, sit down and have a -

[someone walked in]

15 I: Not right now.

R: They can just watch. Or if they want to be the center of attention and have everybody and do anything they can do that. No attitudes, no limits, as long as nobody pokes an eye out.

I: Good thing.

20 R: Well my mother always said don't poke an eye out. So I have to put mother's wisdom out there. And as long as everybody's OK with whatever they're doing and they don't trash the place fine.

I: And so you had no rule, like I know that in the old days the jack off clubs had rules, tried these parties, they said no lips
25 below the hips or something or other.

R: No --

I: Had to be a safe party, the condoms were there, if people wanted to use them they could.

R: Right, right, see and this was important because me, I go both
30 ways, I use condoms and I bareback. It depends on my partner, I let them know. If my partner wants me to use condoms I'll use condoms. And it depends on my position. I only have sex with guys who are positive, that's my number one rule for me personally.

35 I: Oh I see.

R: And either top or bottom. And it's something --

I: But even within that condoms, you don't mind condoms being used

in sex with other positive guys.

5 R: No I encourage it. I was hoping that there would be more condom usage. But I've noticed that when we are given a choice, and this is something that we need to do more research on, is if the poz community gay and straight realize that their immune systems are compromised, why are there some who choose to bareback? Because they know the risks involved. They know the dangers involved and yet they do it.

10 I: So do you have an answer to that question yourself? Why do you think some guys do it?

R: I think it's because for those of us who are older like myself we remember what it was like before AIDS and it was a sense of freedom or a sense of comfortability or attachment to feel natural, one with the other person.

15 29:55

20 R: And then condoms came in and that was forced upon us. It was like this dictatorship in society said safe sex, you're using condoms or damn you all to hell. And nobody takes change through force. And that's what we were doing. Back then early on in AIDS you were trying to change society on a massive scale to do -- go from barebacking into mandatory safe sex. And that was a radical change back then that some people accepted, some people didn't. And I think why barebacking is starting to come back is because those of us who remember those days miss those days plus the drugs out there say well you can live longer. You can cure it and stuff. And the younger kids who are barebacking now I think is a disgrace. I think it's sad because they don't understand what they're getting themselves into and I think what we need to do is educate them more. But the parties in general, the philosophy behind the party was that it was very laid-back, easygoing, comfortable with yourself, comfortable with whoever you're with. And uh --let nature take its course.

35 I: Did you over the years -- we'll move up to the current parties in a minute but over the years did you ever have anybody either complain to you about the fact that someone tried to have sex with them without a condom or --

R: Yes, yes.

I: So how did you -- did you actively have to police the party in any way?

40 R: No, I don't actively police the party because the party is -- it's an experiment really. Because it's a miniculture where you have -- it's guys who know that their immune systems are

compromised and they know they have the choice and they choose -
- some choose to bareback, some choose to use condoms. And
those who did come up to me and say, "Well this guy tried to
fuck me without a condom, what's with that," I would just remind
5 them that some people do bareback. And more importantly it's OK
to say no. It's OK. Rejection is OK. We get that every day in
our lives and God we don't want to be rejected, but there are
times where saying no is actually a good thing. And the idea of
both people if somebody wanted to fuck somebody without a condom
10 for that other person to understand that that rejection is not a
negative rejection of saying like anger, you just say hey no.
That's not my preference. So now there's respect and
understanding taking place at the party.

I: So but you're still on the door. You're collecting clothes. So
15 you don't get to participate in your own parties?

R: No, no. It's a rule that I have because being the host of the
party, this is where my upbringing comes in. Born and raised in
Greenwich, Connecticut. I am the host. It is my responsibility
to make sure that the participants at the party are having a
20 good time. I am there to make sure that the condoms are there,
make sure there's lube, make sure there's paper towels, make
sure that the bathrooms are clean, the toilet isn't backed up.
There are times, there are times when I had to go and play Mr.
Plumber.

25 34:01

R: I had to make sure that there were chips and drinks, make sure
that the music was playing, make sure that people were having a
good time. More importantly making sure that nobody is stupid
enough to do -- to take drugs at the party and OD.

30 I: Is there a rule, no drugs or is it --

R: It is a rule, it's an unwritten rule that no drugs, I don't
tolerate drugs at my party. But what people do before or what
people do after I can't say. So I am the eyes and the ears.
I'm the daddy.

35 I: What about alcohol?

R: Alcohol in the beginning I was providing that free. Because it
loosens people up. It was a social thing. But then somebody
complained and said well you can't have alcohol at the parties
because it is a negative side effect of the medications that
40 we're on.

I: Oh I see.

R: Which seemed to make sense. Right so it could happen. But then some guys started bringing it in. So I still had where OK I'm not going to provide the alcohol but if you bring your own you're taking it upon yourself, we are all adults here, and we
5 all know the responsibilities, we cannot claim ignorance here, we know the difference between right and wrong and if you want to do something, there is no law in this nation that says I can force you to do something against your will. So now I'm just saying OK if you're going to drink, if you're going to party or
10 if you're going to bareback, be responsible. So now I'm taking the concept, the theory of don't drink and drive --

I: Yeah got you.

R: And I'm applying that to the party but I'm also applying it to the drug scene. If you're going to do drugs don't be stupid
15 enough to overdo it or to be to be crazy about it and stuff. Be responsible.

I: So in that first five to seven years because I want to ask you about the Halloween party that's coming up shortly.

R: Every -- that's the talk of the town.

20 I: I can imagine. But what's the great parties you can remember, what makes a great party and what are some great things that have happened at parties that make it really special?

R: A great party, I've been asked that 100 times and then some.

I: I thought it was an original question. [LAUGHTER]

25 R: What makes a great party? The attitude. I can have ten people show up to the party and if they have the best time of their life and they leave with a smile on their face that is a great party. If I had 100 people show up and they're sitting around
30 bored out of their minds that's the worst party. So a great party is that the participants of the party leave with the inner feeling of satisfaction that they are -- they got their money's worth.

I: So it's not about the sex itself -- great party's not about a fabulous orgy. It's just about the whole experience.

35 R: No, it's about the whole experience because --

37:25

R: -- and I have no problem telling people this and this is for the record too is that nobody has to attend my party. I could be there all night and nobody shows up and that's OK because I

know, I realized within the first couple months of my parties, hosting them, that they can go anywhere they want to. But if they come to me and they take time out and say I'm going to FUN'S LIKEUS Party, I need to make sure that they understand that I appreciate them coming. And that's why I'm at the door. Because I greet everybody at the door, hug them, give them a kiss, shake their hand, welcome them. And I try to do some -- say something stupid, silly, to make them smile or at least try to make them break the ice because then they're going to have a good experience. And equally so it's important that I am at the door personally thanking them for attending. So it's that attention to personal customer service. That's where the customer service department comes in.

I: I have to ask you, they're wearing no clothes, what do you wear?

15 R: What do I wear? I wear usually white socks, underwear, boxer shorts or briefs, and a T-shirt, and that's it.

I: Apartment block where you can open the door just wearing your underwear.

20 R: Well yeah when I had them in the apartment it was just by the way I was situated on that hall in the floor that my door opened up to a wall across the hall. So it was OK. Now I host them in hotel rooms. I always make sure I peek out and I always get the room at the end of the hall. So nobody sees me. But there are times when I would be -- my hair would be punked out or something, I would wear glitter all over me. Over the course of the years I've gotten articles of clothing as gifts. I've got two pairs of chaps. I've got a pair of biker boots. I've got a harness, a lot of leather stuff, a vest, underwear, T-shirts, things that my guests say hey, especially around Christmas time or my birthday, say hey you would look good answering the door in this so wear it. So if they're going to take the time out to buy it for me I will wear it for them.

I: And do you screen at the door on people being positive? I presume you let people know that they must be --

35 R: In the beginning I did. And --

I: Woops.

R: Woops, that's OK. On that note --

I: On that note, I'm going to have to move you a little faster because I'm fascinated --

40 R: I'm sorry.

I: No, no, it's not your problem, I'm the one that's supposed to be moving this along.

5 R: So yeah and so what happened was I would personally meet everybody in the beginning and let them know I would meet them at a separate location and let them know it's a poz party only. And I'd ask them. Now I don't because it's a brand name, FUN's LIKEUS Party, all right.

40:40

10 R: And it's also in society, we're 20 years into the epidemic and people know that there are parties, poz parties, going on throughout the country. And for me personally you know what you're getting yourself into if you attend my party. If you're negative I will turn you away and I have done this before, I have no problem with that.

15 I: But if someone doesn't tell you?

20 R: If somebody doesn't tell me I'm going to assume that they're positive because I have no way of knowing whether a person's positive or negative. Now I can do -- they have these tests like rapid testing, rapid testing. Now the problem is I don't have the facilities or the manpower or the financial resources because I'm not sponsored by anybody except me. What do I do if an HIV-negative person comes in, I give them a rapid test, HIV test, then it realizes he's positive and he never was tested before and he freaks out.

25 I: Yeah, no, that's reasonable, yeah.

30 R: But also I'm hoping to encourage others to get tested. Because negative -- see what happened with the poz party is there was a huge change in society in our culture just because now positive guys were looking for positive guys, we had the poz parties, we were announcing our status online. So did the negative community. So now the negative community is also saying well we're looking for our own kind. So I cannot understand why somebody who's negative comes to a poz party. I can't.

35 I: OK I'll come back to that in a minute but first I wanted to just find out some more about the -- let's go to the upcoming party, this Halloween, what do you think's going to happen, who's going to come, what's it going to be like?

40 R: My Halloween party is a whole history in itself because when I started doing the parties my timing was off. I started it in the spring and late spring, summertime, and the numbers were low. I'd only get ten, 12 people showing up. But that was in the middle of the summertime.

I: Of course people were away, yeah.

R: Then my favorite time of the year was Halloween anyway. That's my best time of the year. So I'm thinking OK how do I draw them in? I have to be unique. I have to do something different. I
5 am any other sex club in the city of New York. Except for me I am crazy. And I have no problem with doing something totally wacked and off the wall. So for my first Halloween party at my apartment I decorated the entire apartment as a haunted house and I had candles and I dressed up. And people thought that was
10 hysterical. They were like, "What's going on? - this is a sex club," but this is something totally -- so now the theme party came into our culture where each holiday season I decorated my apartment to match the season, match the holiday. So that was a theme. So for my Halloween party now I would decorate the hotel
15 room. I have guys helping me out. We get there about six hours before the party.

44:25

I: And these are friends or people, party participants?

R: No, friends, friends.

20 I: Friends.

R: Yeah, about three or four friends of mine come in and we're going to decorate the room. And I have signs. I have webs, cobwebs up. I have a stuffed owl, I have a stuffed spider, I have a crow, I have pumpkins. I have carved out pumpkins,
25 plastic -- not plastic, wax pumpkins as condom-holders. I have three miniature little coffins for business-card-holders. I have the whole theme, the whole hotel room will be transformed into a haunted house with a smoke machine and everything and I will be dressed up. But what makes it really fun is that
30 besides the fact that you're walking into a sex club that's decorated as Halloween because nobody else does that, when they leave I give them a trick-or-treat bag. So if I have 50 people showing up at the door I have 50 trick-or-treat bags because it's Halloween. And if you're going to come and ring my
35 doorbell you might as well get a treat and so it's a joke because my line is -- well if you didn't get a treat at the party here's your treat --

I: Here's your treat now.

R: And guys would laugh.

40 I: Oh that's good.

R: Now where did that concept come from? The idea of that, and I

do that at a lot of my parties, is I give guys safe sex packets or I give them candy, I give them something, a little toy or something. The idea came from Studio 54. Because when Studio 54 back in its heyday when you left Studio 54 you always got something as you were leaving, a treat. And that's how that idea came because I wanted to copy that idea of Studio 54. And Studio 54 was like a giant sex club. But it was a nightclub. So that's what I wanted to do my parties based on.

5

I: So who's going to come? What sort of men? Describe them to me, current party scene.

10

R: The average, it is known that the average guy is white professional who's in his mid 30s. I don't discriminate against age, body type or race. There's going to be a lot of new faces because over the course of time a lot of people -- there's going to be maybe 10% regulars who's come from the very beginning. I have guys coming from the very beginning.

15

I: Still.

R: I have a guest coming down from the city of CITY1 representing the city of CITY1 because while I was up at the CONFERENCE1 I met a friend of his in his apartment, and they want me to do something in CITY1 and they took a look at my website and thought it was interesting and so we're going to discuss it even more where I'm going to be helping the city of CITY1 to some extent. To what extent I don't know. We're going to learn about this more. I will have people coming in from all over. I-

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47:43

I: How young? What'd be your youngest? You say mid 30s. Do you get men in their late teens?

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R: I get them like 19, 20 years old --

I: Anyone younger?

R: No.

I: You turn them away?

R: I turn them away. So far nobody -- the reputation that I have is that it's more of a middle-aged crowd. I don't know why. But I am working on trying to -- with the website trying to organize it where I can get a younger crowd because there's a lot of younger guys who are HIV-positive. More importantly in the city of New York I will be starting the first poz party for men of color, specifically geared towards a younger Latino black

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community. And the market will be a younger men of color party.

I: So can I ask you a question about the hotel? Does the hotel know what you're doing?

R: No.

5 I: So they think you're hiring it for a party, though, do they?

R: No.

I: They think you're just staying there for the night and --

R: Yeah.

10 I: So you have to do all the cleaning so they don't know what's going on?

R: Yup. I don't know what they think of me.

I: This is a place down in TOWN1 --

R: TOWN1, yeah.

I: How many have you held there?

15 R: TOWN1, I started going to TOWN1 to that hotel three months after it opened and that was --

I: And you've been there for how long now then?

R: Now I've been back there, it's probably been about a year. I go there once a month.

20 I: Once a month.

R: See, the trick is that it's a thing of respect. I go into the -
- first of all I call up the regular telephone line to make all my reservations online and book the rooms. And I make it a point to let the person know that I want to get the largest room available, a suite, the large suite, they call them executive
25 suites. And on the fourth Friday of every month for at least six months I get a discounted rate, they like to do these things. So when I show up to the hotel room I'm dressed in casual clothes. I'm with my suitcase in hand, which has all my
30 party goods in there and stuff. I check in just like anybody else. And when I go up to the room I immediately -- I have it down to a science. I take everything, all the things that are breakable, and I take them down and I put them underneath the beds or I put them in the closet. I hide them, I put them away.
35 It's common sense because it's respect. I don't want to break up -- I don't own this place so I have to treat it with respect.

I cover some of the furniture and things.

50:44

R: And I baby-proof the place.

I: What, plastic?

5 R: Well no, no. Baby-proof is expression that I have that I push away some of the furniture to the walls. I make it more roomier, more crowd-friendly for crowd control. I rearrange the furniture and things for a clothes check area and a sitting area, a socializing area. I set up the conference table as a banquet table. The bedrooms I make sure that the lamps and
10 clocks and phones are put away and things. Just baby-proof the place so nobody breaks anything and stuff. And then I let the party take its course. As the party's in progress I have myself and two helpers or something and I would go around the party
15 picking up cups, picking up paper towels, picking up condoms, making sure that in the bathroom all the towels are hung up, make sure that the spills are wiped up off the floors, make sure that the toilet flushes, making sure that it's neat and clean. At the end of the night after the party I have a lot of trash.

20 I: And you call it a halt at a certain time, you said it's going to go on for so long? Or does it --

R: No, no, it goes on to whenever. Sometimes -- my cutoff time is 3:00, 3:30 in the morning, and I've had times when maybe 20
25 people were still there. At about 3:00 I say hey guys I got to clean up and stuff, I'm giving you the 30-minutes warning. And sometimes it just naturally dies out. No two parties are alike and it has a life of its own. So what I do with the trash is I have a lot of trash. I have large black plastic bags or just large garbage bags full of trash and I can't leave that in the
30 room because the maid is going to have a fit. So what I do, I take the trash out. It's 3:00 in the morning, there's nobody in the hotel, everybody's asleep, and unfortunately hotel security, there is none. So I don't care what they say, there's nobody at the front desk, nobody security in the halls. So I can go scurrying about on different floors. Because I don't want to
35 leave all the trash to one person on one floor. So I go throughout the hotel. If I have four trash bags I go to four different floors, drop off a trash bag, usually where the vending machines are and stuff and put it inside there because that's where trash goes. So the room when I leave the room and
40 I take Windex and everything, the room is aired out, all the furniture is put back, cleaned down, all the surfaces are wiped clean, everything's put back the way it was, it looks better than maid service.

I: Just one more question on the participants. Do you think what you're attracting to the parties is gay men who identify as gay men, they'd say they're gay if they were asked? Or are you getting men who call themselves bi or men on the down low or stuff like that?

R: I don't ask.

I: You don't ask.

R: I don't ask.

54:08

10 R: What happens is I would assume that the majority of them are gay men and this is where I welcome research because we have an opportunity here. We should have done this 20 years ago. In the sex clubs with researchers as to go into the trenches and find out what is going on, why is AIDS, why is there HIV, why are people doing what they're doing. But nobody did that. And then I started doing the parties and it wasn't until recently where somebody came in and said -- we talked about it for a while -- and said we're going to do research at the party. And it made perfectly good sense because now you're getting hard evidence, hard facts.

I: So what, they would do a questionnaire at the party?

R: There was a questionnaire at the party and in the beginning we were nervous about it because we're taking two separate cultures and you're merging them into one. You're trying to make them to get along. And that's never been done before. But then it started to work. And then what made it unique was that the representatives of the survey team were there. So if there was any questions or answers. So the participants of the study were comfortable doing the study because they knew that the representatives of the study were there and they could interact if they needed to. So now we're getting incredible information.

I: Which team?

R: I can't say right now because -- but everybody knows everybody in this very small world that we live in.

35 I: That's true, that's true, all right.

R: But anyway so it's mostly guys who are gay. There are some bisexual guys who are coming in. There's a lot of guys who are coming in for the first time into a sex club. And it's important that they feel welcomed.

I: Not under any sort of pressure.

R: Right, exactly.

I: Just one last question on this, then we need to move on --

R: Why, why, why?

5 I: I love talking about it but we might have to keep going, we might need a second interview. Have you had any really bad experiences? Have you had a party go wrong or something like that?

R: Yes.

10 I: So what happened? What made it wrong? What does it look like when it goes wrong?

R: Yeah, I don't allow it to go wrong -- overboard. Case in point, there was a gentleman who came in and during the course of the party he started to have a seizure.

15 I: Good grief.

R: And there was myself and another person who was there and he knew a little bit of first aid. And when you're in a situation like that, me, my instincts kick in that you have to contain the situation before it gets out of control.

20 57:13

R: So we took the guy just before he started getting bad and we brought him into the bathroom and we took everything that we could to pad the area around him and just let him go through this motion and we had to -- the other guy knew more than I did,
25 but he had to make sure that he wasn't going to bite his tongue and all this other stuff. And then he went through it and it lasted maybe about five minutes and then it was over. It turned out that he didn't take his medication. He didn't take his -- he had seizures as a regular thing. The reason why we did that
30 is while the party was going on and somebody noticed he had a seizure we took him out of the environment. And then this way it avoided widespread panic, and the party kept going on while we were attending to this. And then after he was done he got himself together and he left. I had a person who had a popper
35 high who got up and then he fell over and he fell down and fell on the floor. We just took him, we gave him water, we took him out of the area. And we just cooled him down and let him get back together again and stuff. I have never had anybody get hurt. Not even a cut. There were no fights. There was no
40 arguments. There's no violence, there's no breaking of

anything, and it's probably an unwritten rule that I establish early on is that I'm the host of the party and I don't have to raise my voice, I don't have to speak loud or anything, if I tell you once, once is good enough and you get the point across. And if I have to tell you again I'm going to ask you to leave and you're going to do it.

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I: You don't have a bouncer?

R: I am the bouncer.

I: You're the bouncer.

10 R: I wear many hats. Needless to say I'm crazy. Let me emphasize that--highlight it.

I: Clearly the shift to the Internet from email or the telephone service has made a big difference, you've described some of that already. So I don't want to go over some of that again in terms of expanding your national scope and then now your international scope.

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R: It pioneered the city of New York.

I: Yeah exactly and what do you consider now looking on almost ten years of Internet work probably what do you think it's done to change your parties? And when you say New York how do you see the Internet as playing a part? There's more there if you want.

20

R: Yeah. The Internet is why we have barebacking today.

I: You think so?

R: Yes.

25 I: Explain.

R: Because the fact that it's so easy to reach out to people of all walks of life anywhere on the planet and interact with them in real time, your personal preferences, in the safety of your own home, with somebody else with a similar likes and dislikes, that's what's making it a firestorm.

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60:39

R: Because now guys can hook up with a couple clicks of a mouse and keyboard there and they have their profiles and pictures listed. Now the profiles and the pictures, they may not be 100% accurate, but it creates a fantasy. And now we're taking -- and this is because of -- it's a cause and effect. Because of the crackdown especially here in New York of closing and trying to

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subdue the sexual culture of New York not only in gays but in straight people as well, you are taking--you haven't gotten rid of the problem, you just moved it somewhere else. It was like when Mayor Giuliani cleaned up Times Square. I'm all for that and I think it was great. It's a great move for the city because it brings in a lot of tourism. But you didn't get rid of the problem, you just pushed it somewhere else. The correct thing that should have been done was if he's going to close down Times Square he should have set up a red light district and moved it there.

I: Do you think stuff moved to the Internet?

R: Yes it did in a major way because the Internet is on 24 hours a day seven days a week and it's right there in your home and you have the privacy. You can be totally naked masturbating or be with friends looking at pictures on the Internet of some guy in Europe and chatting away. Web cams, web cams are like the thing of the future where they're taking now real-time you can have a show, you can put on a show for somebody in a different part of the country or right next-door in the safety of your own home. So we took the sex clubs or we took the concept of the sex club or cruising in the parks from a physical outdoors thing and we put it into the home. And we put it into the workplace and we put it into where the person now if you're going to get busted well first they need a search warrant to get in, there's a legal barrier now, the privacy of the American home. That's what this country was founded on. So now the Internet is exploding because it's so convenient.

I: So which bits of it do you specific -- you've obviously been playing with it for a long time and you don't use every website of everything --

R: No, it's impossible, yeah.

I: You're using WHOOPI, you're using --

R: EMAIL1.

I: So what bits do you use specifically for the party? I'd like to ask what you use yourself at some point, but for the party --

R: For the party right now I use WHOOPI.

I: And that's using a chat room in WHOOPI, a couple of chat rooms?

R: No, no. What I've done is -- see also there's the evolution of the Internet, before there was WHOOPI there was a thing called e-groups. E-groups had e-clubs and they were small little Internet communities of similar subcultures, people of a similar

interest, and you would join this group, and they would send you email. But the beauty with email, you could also send pictures. And so the small group or club as it was called started to blossom out where you now had a mini webpage. And then WHOOPI bought out e-group.

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64:15

R: And when WHOOPI came in then it became WHOOPI clubs and then transferred it over to WHOOPI groups. Now I've got about seven of these because the beauty of this is for free I can put -- I have a mini webpage, I have a picture on the home page and I have a brief description of --

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I: Of you or of the party?

R: No, it's the poz symbol or the symbol of a poz. And then I have a brief description of the party, the concept of the party, and what the group is all about. Then off on the side there is a members, how many members are joined. The date, time. It has a chat feature. It has a photo gallery where now anybody who's a member of the group can post their photos. And then they can have a message board.

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20 I: LIKEUS.com you're talking about now?

R: No.

I: The WHOOPI group.

R: This is the WHOOPI group and this is what happened because when I joined these -- well I joined e-groups first and with e-groups came the idea of a website for me but that's a whole new history in itself. But what happened was with the WHOOPI groups there were free mini Websites and I noticed that the guys can interact with each other through the message board and through sending out messages to each other and if they wanted to they can see the profiles of the guys who are the members of the group. So now there was this whole interaction. OK now if you're HIV-positive no matter where you are in the world, if you're a member of my group you can interact with each other, which was great. Because now you can network. If I'm going to visit Australia I can hook up with you because I see you're a member of my group and I'm going to say hey I'm coming down to Australia, let's have some fun on Friday night. OK cool, we do it.

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I: So that's going on around your parties.

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R: That's going on, that whole outside of my party is this whole culture, this serosorting culture that's going on 24 hours a day

seven days a week all around the world if you're a member of my groups, and there's seven of these.

I: And you said that's about 6,000 men --

5 R: There's about 6,000 members on that, on those groups. But then the website came in because as the lists started to expand and because my information, sending out to my guys, first it was just the party information. But then I got involved with charity groups. The AIDS Ride from Boston to New York with CHARITY1, and I said, "Hey guys I'm going to be in here, donate to this charity, help me ride." But I would send a web link to 10 the website so they can donate and they can see what I'm doing. So they knew I was legit. But then I figured wait a second. Guys come to New York from out of town, maybe I put the weather channel in there too so they knew what the weather was going to be like. Traffic information and oh God the subways. So now I 15 have an information link to the MTA.

67:30

20 R: Oh gosh but then there's news because there's always something going on. So I have the news links there. And then my mail got longer and longer and longer and I said well wait a second, this is the city of New York, I have a lot of people in the city of New York, maybe they need to know how to get in touch with other resources in the city of New York, GAYORG1, CHARITY2, GAYORG2, all these other things. So I started sending out these links. 25 And I said this is fun. But it got too long and a lot of it started coming back because their mailboxes couldn't handle all the information.

I: Exactly, exactly.

30 R: And over the course of time for years I've been asking people do you know how to build a website, do you know how to build a website, do you know how to build a website, a lot of people said yes but they didn't do it. So out of frustration, going to college to get a business degree so I'm trying to know what I'm doing but also to build a website. And I build a website on my 35 own putting together -- class time and off on the side -- and now it's a website that has four pages, I have room for one more page. It's got maybe over 1,000 different links. I advertise for my social events here in the city. I advertise for social events in Los Angeles, California with Person1. In Boston they 40 do something up in Boston, I advertise in Boston. I have links to various cities around the country with their email address, preferably email address, for anything from in Tampa they have the GAYORG3 and they also have other sex parties down there. So I'm providing - I'm a directory of resources now. I also have a 45 link to the UN. I have a link to translation links because

people don't all speak English, so there's free translation, you click the link and you copy and paste whatever you need to have translated and you can translate it for free. So now I'm the only sex party in the city of New York that takes sex, advocacy, research, information in general and valuable resources all under one location, plus you can translate it into -- I have 25 different languages for search with Google search. There's also a thesaurus. There's also a dictionary.

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I: So you said you're the only sex party in New York that does all of this. How many other sex parties are there in New York that are on a regular basis and how many of them are positive only parties to your knowledge?

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R: There are only four sex clubs, businesses that I know of.

I: That work the same way yours does --

R: No, no, they're corporations. They're --

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I: They offer parties though?

R: They are sex clubs. They offer parties. There's countless private parties. There's small parties.

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I: But these are the ones that might have a regular event like yours, the ones --

R: Some of them are regular events, a lot of them are regular events. A lot of them you can see in MAGAZINE1 and MAGAZINE2.

70:58

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R: When I first started out if you picked up MAGAZINE1 or MAGAZINE2 there was probably one column. I think there were ten of us in the entire city of New York that were listed. And now there's maybe 30 listed and I don't know how many unlisted because I don't even try to search for that. But I would say there's hundreds of sex parties.

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I: Have you been to many of the others just as a participant?

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R: In the beginning as a participant and also as an observer to try to understand what I do, get a better understanding of who does what, how do we all fit into the scheme of things, and even early, very early on within the first six months I tried to form a cartel where all of us sex owners got together on a regular basis like once a month like OPEC, but we didn't set prices, we set standards. Because being born and raised from Greenwich, Connecticut my standard is higher I think than my competitors', if you want to call them competitors. They're not even

competitors because we all have our own niche. For my
colleagues. Because we have a unique opportunity, we are on the
frontlines, we have a unique opportunity one to battle AIDS and
to get our message across or the message across of safe sex or
awareness.

5

I: Do you all share that as your main -- all of you share that as
your main what you think that's the main task?

R: I think unofficially we do. Whether they publicly say that it's
a priority or not, that's up to them. But I realized very early
on an opportunity that sex clubs in general had, sex venues
have. We have a responsibility to the community because we are
providing a space for sex. So we have to provide a quality, a
certain type of quality. We have to provide an awareness. We
have an opportunity of teaching. We have an opportunity of
leading by an example that if you can do it here at this club
you can do it in the privacy of your own home. We have a unique
opportunity to gather information through research. So now we
are no longer seen as liabilities.

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I: Do you think you were at some point?

R: We are liabilities. We were seen as liabilities very early on
and then --

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I: By whom?

R: By city, state, federal governments, by local groups, by
individuals.

I: Local groups meaning gay groups?

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R: Gay groups, straight groups, lesbian groups. For every person
on the planet earth to say yes there is another person to say
no. And one more person to say maybe because they need
information to make a decision.

I: Sounds like Americans going to the polls.

30

R: Right, that's right, because Australia, you just have --

I: Yeah, we're almost in the same boat but you went one way rather
than the other, yeah.

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R: Well you have a prime minister. But he just got elected to a
fourth term, didn't he? Yeah.

I: Yes, that's right, yes.

74:10

R: So we are no longer seen as liabilities. We are assets because we are on the frontlines. And the research that I'm doing, the pilot study was for about a year and that was the first time a study of that kind took place where in depth, and now it's been
5 before in Washington, DC twice already this year and we'll see if we can conduct the major study, the actual study itself. But it is the first time in the city of New York where a sex club and a legitimate research entity --

I: Have got together.

10 R: Teamed up and said let's get the real answers. Because no offense but all the documentation, all the data before is really not valid because not everybody's out about their status and not everybody -- when you walk down the street and somebody fills out a questionnaire or something for some research, how do you
15 know that research is being used? Now we're taking it from the actual place where it takes place, in the bedroom, in the sex club, what do you do when you are here.

I: Good, got you.

R: It's groundbreaking

20 I: We've been using the word bareback a lot and first I want to explore what you think the word means, where it came from, what's entailed in it.

R: Barebacking, my definition of barebacking is probably the generic term and that is sex, anal or vaginal --

25 I: You'd use barebacking for vaginal intercourse.

R: Well, there was a time when I did women before I did guys and then I did both but then I realized my HIV status and then I went only with guys and I'm gay but there are times when an attractive woman does -- but I haven't had sex with a woman in
30 20 years I guess.

I: So there's no women come to your parties.

R: No. No. But there are poz parties in the straight community. No, so barebacking is a generic term and my definition is unsafe sex without the use of a condom and through anal sex with men,
35 yeah.

I: And when did you first start hearing about the word? When do you think it -- there was obviously unsafe sex, unprotected sex going on before AIDS and certainly in the '80s.

R: In the early '80s, in the early '80s when the big push was to

have safe sex and use condoms, that's when I started hearing about the term barebacking because that was the alternative. If you didn't have safe sex you didn't have safe sex and that was barebacking. And it was a slang term for saying OK we're not going to use condom, so we're barebacking.

5

I: So when did it become popular? Because it was around all that period of time. It certainly wasn't the term that didn't have the same sort of fame that it's got now. So what happened to change that?

10 R: I think I didn't do any research into this but from my awareness of barebacking became popular again was probably around 1990 or '91.

77:55

15 R: And it wasn't until maybe -- I was first aware of PRICEY back in 1996. That's when I first saw the advertisement for him and there was a free website online.

I: What other terms would you use? Are there other terms that are synonyms for barebacking, you can just exchange them?

20 R: Yeah well BB for barebacking, unsafe, raw. Raw is becoming very popular on the Internet. And also slang piggy sex. Piggy sex though is more of a no holds barred unlimited anything goes type of thing from maybe fisting or maybe water sports to --

I: Do you get any of that at your parties?

25 R: Very little. I don't discourage it, I don't encourage it, but whatever they want to do to have fun. And as long as everybody contests to it and it's done cleanly. I don't want to clean up a mess.

I: Well I was going to say it can get rather messy, playing water sports in your living room.

30 R: Well they do it in the bathroom in the tub. As far as fisting is concerned, they can do it anywhere as long as everything is taken care of beforehand, clean up. Yeah piggy sex, raw, unsafe --

35 I: What about the stuff to do with the gift-giving bug-chaser stuff that gets associated with barebacking?

R: I have problems with that because I don't -- and I get angry with that, because when I turned --became HIV-positive I didn't have a choice. We didn't know back then. But today they do have a choice, and I think it's an insult to people like me and

to people who have died who are deliberately looking to become HIV-positive because they think it's a ritual, a rite of passage. I read somewhere, oh, damn, I wish I remember where it was, where some people, the younger gay community, thinks it's a rite of passage to become HIV-positive because they're going to get it anyway. That's bullshit! We have to understand that you don't have to get anything, that actually I wish I was negative. And there's nothing that's going to change that but I have to deal with it. And that maybe is why I'm taking such a passion into these parties and trying to get the word out and the movement behind us of serosorting, is because it's allowing those who are HIV-negative the opportunity to be comfortable with themselves and it's not a member of a group. And this thing of bug-chasing, it's annoying because I'm a target for people like that. I am. I know it. And if there was some way for me to try to stop that yeah, but that's where I need outside help. I need to be sponsored maybe by an agency or by a corporation or something that says OK if we do HIV testing which I would accept at the party that there is other people there, professionals there, who can deal with the negative thing. Because when I was at the CONFERENCE1 and I spoke to somebody from the CDC and they're doing those free rapid testing for syphilis, I contacted him and I said as soon as that comes available give me a call, I will do it at my party immediately.

25

82:01

R: Now when somebody tests for syphilis yeah there's going to be some sort of isolation you have to do, but I'm confident that it can be done in a discreet way.

30 I: Can I just pick you up, when you said that the bug-chasers in a sense make you a target as a positive person, have you found yourself in a situation where you've had unprotected sex with someone who either deluded you and said they were positive or didn't -- for some reason --

35 R: Not that I'm aware of because when I first came out with the party I became comfortable with my HIV status and also comfortable with the fact of announcing my HIV status in the bars and saying hey and this is the reason why the party was formed was because I was going to the bars and other places and I was saying in a casual conversation and stuff and I say OK I'm HIV-positive, and they would say they were negative and they would leave or something and through this constant rejection I said well instead of me going to them have them coming to me. So I was very comfortable with my HIV status and I have no
45 problem announcing that to people.

I: And so you think that means that potential sex partners, they make up their own minds and --

R: Yeah, they make up --

5 I: So is it possible that you've had sex with a negative person and you didn't know?

R: If somebody lied yeah, yeah, there is nothing is ruled 100%. But it's our responsibility, especially today, it's the 21st century, it's the responsibility of a negative person to announce his status and it's the responsibility of a positive person. We have to be respectful of each other.

10 I: We talked about bug-chasers but what about the gift-giver side of stuff?

R: That's disgusting. For somebody in the community, in the positive community, to deliberately go and do that, there is no honor in that, there is no prestige in that, there's no glamour in that. That is a disgrace. That is hurting the cause. There is nothing -- we have a responsibility as HIV-negative community, gay or straight, we have a responsibility of taking the upper hand, of taking control of trying to stop the spread of what we have, of this disease. We are infected. We kill people with what we have. We are lethal, we are deadly to other people. If we do not take our medication we will die, period. If we give the virus to somebody else who's not protected we will kill them. If they do not have proper testing and if they don't -- there is a terrible burden on the negative community because they are free of a lot of pain and suffering that we have to go through, a lot of anguish that we have to go through, because when you're HIV-positive, one, if you don't receive medical attention you will die, period.

20 30 85:24

R: So you have to have your life set up for the rest of your life, either you have a darn good job and you have health insurance to pay for your medications for the rest of your life, or you're on welfare or the state is going to take care of you. Now if you are in a small town somewhere where there's no facilities, you have to move to another location to get those facilities, or you will die. So the disgrace of a gift-giver, I agree with a lot of other activists out there by saying that it is a disgrace and it is -- it needs to stop. And we just have to come to terms, it's something that we have to realize ourselves, that we have a responsibility just like the negative community has a responsibility of staying safe and not looking for us. They are half the problem as well. They can't put us in that position. But we also cannot put ourselves in a position where we --

I: You mentioned earlier on, you talked about safe barebacking.

R: Yes.

I: And define that for me, tell me what you mean by that.

5 R: Safe barebacking came from over the years I have a question
about the concept of safe sex. What is safe sex? Is it
possible -- right now we say well if you have condoms you're
having safe sex. That's not necessarily true because condoms do
break and condoms do come off. So this concept of safe sex with
10 the use of condoms is skewed. Because we do have a limited --
so what's good for one side has to be good for other. What is
barebacking? Is safe barebacking? OK, if you come inside
somebody or ejaculate inside somebody, that is unsafe, period,
and you have the possibility of infecting somebody. Woops.
Saved by the bell.

15 I: Saved by the bell again. Excuse me.

R: So if you come inside somebody when you're barebacking is it
documented? Do we have hardcore evidence that says if you come
in somebody that first time they will get the virus? Or is it
possible that there is a percentage? OK now if we have that, if
20 we have one glimmer of percentage, then there is a sense of
safety there because if you're not going to get it on the first
try 100% of the time, then there is a measure of argument for
safe sex. But then take it a step further. If you pull out
before you ejaculate you're not putting that person at risk that
25 way. That is -- that too is a form of safety. So what we need
to examine is in greater detail barebacking. The concept of
barebacking. Now we have to see to what degree is it safe and
what degree is it unsafe, and we need to analyze that more
because if the community, gay community, is going, leaning
30 towards barebacking, in order to prevent it we need to
understand it and we need to get a better understanding. And
what we need to come to terms with, acceptance, is that you will
never get rid of barebacking for as long -- for not in the
foreseeable future. So forget about going with giving the safe
35 sex message, it's not going to work. You have to deal with both
camps. And that's where serosorting comes in.

[89:47]

I: Do you think among people who are into barebacking now, let's
40 leave the future for a minute, but does it belong to a certain
sexual culture, people that are more likely to be interested in
leather or in fisting or in some of the -- what to call it --
that more tough sex for gay men as distinct from vanilla things?
Does it come in a package, if you know what I mean?

R: I don't know because I'm not that aware of the society in general. This is where researchers such as yourself help me educate myself. My assumption is that I'm 45 years old. And I have seen a lot of sexual activity. So if I meet somebody at a sex club who's younger than me, half my age, it's quite possible that I will teach him something he didn't know. So I think that the majority of middle-aged gay men have experimented more and are comfortable with their sexuality more than somebody who's younger. So therefore you'll probably see a higher percentage of middle-aged gay men doing more fisting, more barebacking, more rough sex or more piggy sex, but it's a comfortability of a person because it's also a matter of trust. If you're going to get fisted, no matter what your age level is, you have to put a sense of trust into the other individual. Same with bondage, water sports, all that. It's sex whether we realize it or not is a mutual respect of trust into the other person. Because if you're having vanilla sex, the concept of vanilla sex, which is very tame or whatever, very romantic sex, you're putting a sense of trust into the other individual which could be a total stranger but this guy does a freak out and does a Jeffrey Dahmer. At the same time if you're into bondage and you're the submissive person you are giving yourself freely 100% to the other individual too, and that could be a stranger. And there too a Jeffrey Dahmer.

I: So you got to know --

R: So it is a sense of trust.

I: Can I ask a little bit about you? You said --

R: You have to ask, don't you?

I: I'm very inquisitive, but you said earlier on in your life that you were mainly having sex with women and then you got into sex with men and women and discovered you were positive. So in the '70s you were -- as a teenager you were heterosexually active rather than --

R: No.

I: No? When did you first have sex with boys? My favorite question.

R: I was a good boy.

I: Yeah right.

R: No, my parents are European. Born and raised in Greenwich, Connecticut, going to SCHOOL1, graduated in 1977, I'm about 18 years old; I was the only boy in the family.

I: All sisters?

R: I have two younger sisters. I didn't smoke, I didn't drink. Well, I drank with my friends but I didn't get drunk or anything. I had a sense -- my parents, they're dead now but I
5 had a sense that my *parents looked up to me as lead by example* or *try to be the good boy*.

[93:45]

R: I had to work around the house and help. So anyway so the sense of responsibility was imbued into me early. So I didn't go to
10 college. I went into the Air Force.

I: Oh really.

R: And that's when I first started having my first sexual experiences with women because I was about 19 years old, 19 or 20 years old and I was living in Tucson and I noticed, that's
15 when I became aware, I was living on my own away from my parents and I had freedom.

[94:00]

R: I went into the air force. And that's when I first started having my first sexual experiences with women, because I was
20 about 19 years old, 19 or 20 years old, and I was living in Tucson, and I noticed - that's when I became aware -- I was living on my own, away from my parents, and I had freedom.

I: So you were on an Air Force base?

R: An air force base, yeah. And I had my own car. I lived on base
25 and everything, and that was when I became aware of myself sexually, because, yeah, I did masturbation and everything when I was younger, but this was the first time when I realized that other people were finding me attractive, and I came to realize that women... I was attracted to women, women were very much
30 attracted to me. And I had my first sexual experience with a woman when I was in the Air Force in Tucson, Arizona. But then I also learned very quickly that I could use this to my advantage.

I: In what way?

R: That I started to flirt.

I: Oh right, I see.

R: And I would start to... Like the waitress or something, or, you know, I was starting to use women's attraction toward me for my

advantage so that I would not only get sex but also other favors and things. Like I didn't have to pay for--one time I had dinner, I didn't have enough money, so the waitress bought it for me or something.

5 I: Right.

R: So I would deliberately wear--I bought new uniforms that were, they fit perfectly, they fit in all the right places. They emphasized my physique. Because I was working for so many years when I was younger at home in the yard, physically I became
10 built, I guess, back then. And yeah, but I didn't--I wasn't a whore. I didn't have sex all the time, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I mean, I enjoyed the fact that I was becoming aware of my sexuality and my attraction. And then when I was stationed in Europe, I knew for many years that I was becoming--
15 I guess in high school was when I first started noticing that I was attracted also to guys. But I didn't do anything. I first had sex with women. And then when I was in Europe, I joined a theatre group on an army base, a community theatre group. And we were doing theatre, live theatre shows. And we were doing a
20 show and one of the members of the group was--I was 22 at the time and he was 17, and his name was MALE1. He was Italian, but he was American. And he played Clifford Anderson in our production of Death Trap. And during rehearsals, I was assistant director and he played Clifford Anderson, and we had
25 to direct and everything. And Male1, was, he was gay, but he wasn't a queen. I mean, he wasn't masculine, but he was more in the middle I guess. And I started to be comfortable with other guys. I found some of them attractive and I started flirting, but I never had sex. And with MALE1, I started to push the
30 limit, and he accepted, and he took the limit. And on stage, we would interact and during the show. We had a cast party at his house, and I hope this doesn't get out to the general public, at least for MALE1, because I would like to meet--I want to be able to keep in touch with MALE1.

35 [98:08]

I: We won't be able to use name, so don't worry.

R: But anyway, I want to keep in touch... Anyway, we were at his parent's house, we were having the cast party and everybody was going home. It was late, I was drunk, he was drunk. We were
40 all drunk. And I couldn't go back to the base drunk or else I would've gotten thrown in the brig. So I stayed over at his place, and we were talking, and I was so drunk, and I was so tired, I just wanted to go to sleep. And he was talking and he was carrying on, and I said, "You know, I wish you would just
45 shut up!" I'm saying this in my mind. And then he stopped

talking. I looked at him and said, "Could we go to bed now?" And there was only bed, so we slept together. But what I didn't realize was that, while he was talking--because I wasn't paying attention--he was telling me what he wanted to do.

5 I: Oh I see. Right.

R: And when I'd said, "You know, let's go to bed," he thought I was accepting. But when we were in bed and we were laying down and he was making the first moves, I started to like it. And then he told me something I will never forget, even to this day, and
10 he said, "I would never do anything you wouldn't want to do, but I'd love to do anything and everything with you." And I trusted him. And he was my first, and I never forgot that. And I hold that line true, that philosophy true, to this day. That, even with my parties, I would never do anything you wouldn't want to do, but I would do anything and everything.
15

I: So, what... You still had sex with women for the next few years, yeah?

R: With women, yes. Because when I was in Europe, MALE1 and I were with the theatre group and I had a girlfriend at the time. Her name was FEMALE1. And we were all friends and we would go out to gay clubs together and we would dance, and, in a way, MALE1 was teaching me. MALE1 was my teacher. And I would dance with MALE1 for some songs and I would dance with FEMALE1 for some songs. And the three of us would dance together. And we had
20 our own gay and straight friends as well. And in Europe, it's very laidback when it comes to sexuality. I mean, you can be gay, you can be out.
25

I: So even then you're talking about the late seventies, early eighties.

R: Yeah, we're talking about 1982. We're talking about before AIDS and stuff. And sexuality in Europe is part of who you are. You are not complete as a person, as an individual, if you are not comfortable with your intimate self. And with others, as well.
30

I: Do you think it's different in the States?

35 [101:08]

R: In the States, oh yes, it's very different. Because we are so conservative, and we will scream on the highest mountain, "We're free in our liberties," and you know, all this, and yeah, rightfully so. But also, we have a double-edged sword. We have
40 a closet that we--

I: (laughter)

R: We're in the closet. (laughter) Sorry, pardon the pun. But we are afraid to show our intimacy. We are afraid of being close. We are afraid of showing even the passion and that freedom of expression. And maybe that's why we're so uptight. Because we,
5 as Americans, we--society as a whole--we put a lot of restrictions on our sexual freedom, but also on our freedom of expression, when it comes to advertising.

I: Yes, of course. In all that stuff.

R: And I mean, that in itself is so restrictive.

10 I: So when did you decide it was men only? You said, like, after you became positive, is that true?

R: What happened was, I came back to the States on my birthday, May 23rd, 1983. I came back to this country. I already had a regular relationship with MALE1 of over three or four months.
15 And even though I didn't know it at the time, he was my boyfriend.

I: Oh. And was FEMALE1 still your girlfriend?

R: FEMALE1 was still my girlfriend. But they lived in Europe. So I came over here to the States. FEMALE1 was in the army and she
20 couldn't come back to the States. MALE1 was coming of age. He was becoming 18 and he wanted to go to college, and he wanted to go to college in Boston to go to acting school. So me living in Greenwich and he in Boston, if he came--I mean, we... He would come over to the States, and when he was living in Boston, we
25 would see each other. He came down to Greenwich, I went up to Boston. So we continued the relationship. But then FEMALE1 was in Europe, so I had another girlfriend here. I got a call one day that FEMALE1 was in Louisiana--that's where she's originally from. And the call was that she's pregnant.

30 I: Right, and--

R: And it's possible that I was the father. And what happened was, I needed to be tested to see. And as part of the testing procedure, HIV, they did the blood sample, too.

I: So what date are we in now, do you remember?

35 R: It was the fall of 1983 or maybe January of 1984. I mean, we're so close at that New Year's time. And I needed to go in to be tested, the blood test to see if I was the father. And I didn't know what to do. I was scared, but then I'm saying, "OK, if I'm the father, I'm obligated to go down there," and we were going
40 to have get married. We're going to have to do this. Or maybe she'll come up and live with me up here. And when I was in

Europe in '83, we heard, down on the down low in gossips, there was a new virus out there and it was pretty bad. But rumor had it if you took a shot of penicillin you'd be OK. And it was, like, early, early '83 is when I first started hearing about that. And I had guys, a lot of guys in between the two.

5

[105:21]

I: So, I see. You had, once you started with this guy, I forgot his name--

R: Yeah, it's MALE1. With MALE1.

10 I: Then you realized other guys were available, and

R: Yeah, and we were then. MALE1 and I, I mean, we had sex alone and we had some group sex together, too.

I: Right, got you.

15 R: And stuff. But MALE1 was primarily my boyfriend, and we were together pretty much...

I: So you tested positive?

20 R: I tested positive. I went into the town hall in Greenwich, to the health department and they tested me, and when the test results came in, called me to the office. And it wasn't really an office, it was probably a closet about half the size of this room. Called me in and he says, "You've come back, you've tested positive. You haven't got a year to live, get your affairs in order."

I: Good grief.

25 R: I didn't--there was no name, there was no nothing. There was a number, we had numbers back then. And I think it was your birthday and the date of your test, so this way they knew who you were. And I was in shock. I don't know. It still, it was difficult to register. I mean, how could this happen to me, I mean, I'm just so young and I'm just beginning to come out, and there's all this sex, and I want to have fun and everything, and you're telling me I'm going to die in a year. And that did not register in my mind. And I'm thinking, OK, I have to go home, and I have to call FEMALE1. I have to call down there and I have to tell her, OK, I'm not the father.

35

I: So that was clear, you were obviously not the father?

R: Yeah, but I'm HIV positive. But I, I don't know what... Should I tell her if I'm positive or not, so I said to myself, no, I'm

not going to tell her, because she has to go through the same test, too, as I do. So she probably already knows, too. But I was scared. I was confused, I didn't know what was going on. I didn't know what the outcome was going to be, because I knew I had something that was bad and I knew I was going to die. And I didn't want to spread that anguish out or something. I went home and called her and said, "OK, I'm not the father." That was the last I heard of that. But then my parents and my sisters... We were all living together in the same house, a five bedroom house, six acres of land. But I had a job, I was office manager at CARDEALER1, Incorporated, at their headquarters in Greenwich. I had to go to work the next day, because if I didn't go in, the executives--we had 55 executives there--they wouldn't get their mail. And I also had a car, so I needed gas for that and I needed to pay the insurance, because my parents weren't going to do that for me. So I needed to get that. But then the... Something over the course

[108:46]

of time, past couple weeks, came in and said, "There's no medication for this, I'm going to die." I don't want to tell my family or friends because I don't want them to treat me any differently than they would normally treat me. I don't want to be treated special. So I'm not going to say a word, I'm not going to... So therefore, I have to keep my regular routine. There's no support groups, there's no outlets, there's no... networking system in place at this time for outreach or to say, "Hey, take me in, I've got something here," because we were the devil's seed. We were the witches being hunted. This was Salem back in the 1600's.

I: So you didn't know about any of the gay men's organizations at that point--

R: No.

I: --that had started up about AIDS or GAYORG2. Is there any of those places you knew about?

R: No, I was in Greenwich, Connecticut, and we didn't have that or anything.

I: Right, when did you first find out about those organizations, though?

R: I came into New York with my friends, because at that time also I had some gay friends in New York that MALE1 and I met, here in New York. And I heard about some of them, and I figured, well, I'm going to die, so why... what... I was confused, and I didn't... At a very early age, if I got sick or something, my

mother would say, "Oh, it's all in your head. It'll go away in time," or if a doctor would say, "Well, your son is 40% sick," or something like this. Or, he has -- one time I broke my arm. I think the doctor said, "Well, he has a 30% chance of healing
5 in 30 days." Very early on, well, if there's a 30% chance of that, I'm 60% of the other. So I think I avoided these other organizations because I didn't want to be associated with that and I wanted to masquerade to my family and friends that everything was fine. And that's what saved my life.

10 I: In what sense?

R: Because if I came out and I went to the organizations, like so many others did, and they put me on medications, I would've died.

I: Why?

15 R: And it's not because it was a deliberate attempt to kill people, it was because we didn't understand what we were dealing with. And we didn't understand the dosages, so things like AZT and all this other stuff, yes, a lot of people died from that, but we were the guinea pigs. Time was ticking so fast for the medical
20 community, and also for society as a whole, because we didn't understand what we were dealing with, and we were dying--the moment you got it, you were dead. And so, we didn't understand what we were dealing with.

I: So when did you first go on meds?

25 R: The first day I went on meds was the day my father died.

I: Ah, I see.

R: In 1991.

[112:10]

I: Ah, so that would've been AZT?

30 R: What?

I: Was it with AZT, or...?

R: Yeah, it was the AZT and something else. My doctor was DOCTOR1. And, from what I understood, he was an expert in that Southern Connecticut or New England region of AZT, of HIV. There's a
35 story between, a personal story, between DOCTOR1 and I. Because my father had cancer for a long time, for maybe 15 years, and he had operations and things, and my father was in the hospital. I was in the hospital because I was sick with the flu. I was in

the hospital for a week. DOCTOR1 was my doctor.

I: Oh right?

5 R: And what happened was, the day I was discharged from the hospital, DOCTOR1 came up and he took my records and he looked at them and said, "OK, we're going to go in for the operation tomorrow. You're going to have this, that, and the other thing." And then he looked and I saw the expression on his face and his jaw dropped, and he realized what he was doing. He was reading my father's chart to me, because my father has the same name.

10 I: That right?

R: My father came in the hospital the day I was coming out.

I: Right.

15 R: So my father was supposed to have the operations for cancer. I got out, I spent a week in New York. I came back a week later. A cop came and said, "I'm sorry, your father died." And I go, "What?" And we went up to the top, escorted me up to the hospital. And when I got to the hospital, my father was sleeping, and he was morphined--he was drugged up and everything--and he was sleeping. And I was in that hospital room--I had a cousin with me, and we were just talking. And my father breathed in and breathed out three times, about 45 minutes afterwards. And then he stopped. I looked at my cousin, she looked at me, we looked at my father, and we realized what happened. And I waited, and I waited again. And I waited for about ten minutes, because I wanted -- He gave me the gift of life. And I wanted to give him the gift of peace. And then DOCTOR1 came in because he was my father's doctor--I didn't know it at the time--but DOCTOR1 came in, because he had to pronounce them dead, and that's when I realized that DOCTOR1 was my father's doctor as well. And so, to honor my father, I told DOCTOR1 then, put me on the meds. So in honor of my father, I'm taking medication then.

30 I: We'd better move on.

35 R: Oh yes, I'm sorry, yes, sorry.

I: It's a very important part of anyone's life, and doubly so in the timing for you.

R: Yeah.

40 I: Let's just, just walk for a minute and get back to the sites and things. You used the phrase a couple of times, community,

you've talked about gay community. Do you think there's such a thing as a bareback community?

[115:56]

R: Yes, there is.

5 I: Well, what's in it, what's it like?

R: The bareback community is a subculture of our community, of the gay community, where the bareback community--and we have to, we have to define the term bareback. Hardcore barebackers are a subculture of that community because there's also barebackers--
10 I mean, I'm a barebacker, but I also use condoms, too. So I straddle the line. So we need, when we say the bareback community, we need to go into the subcultures, sub terrain, of barebacking. Hardcore, in my opinion, hardcore barebackers are barebackers who, there's no condoms in sight, no speaking of
15 condoms, you don't even think about condoms. And they live for the fact that they can have sex raw. That could be anything from familiar sex to the extreme fetish. Then you have barebackers who will only bareback if they're with another guy who's HIV positive. But then there's also the subgroup of that,
20 a top or a bottom.

I: Right.

R: Many guys will, if they're positive, will let somebody top them barebacking, because then there's -- the risk of transmission is greatly reduced. But then if you get somebody who's a top who
25 barebacks who's positive, he might use condoms if he knows the other guy's negative. Or he might use a safe, if the other bottom says it's safe, I mean. So we need to get a better understanding of the barebacking community because there's these subterraneans in there. But in the general sense, barebacking,
30 they don't want to know about condoms or see condoms and things. And they are not a militant group, but they want to stand up for their rights as individuals. I mean, rightfully so, because we all have liberties. The freedom of choice is a liberty that we value in this country, and I understand that. And that's why I
35 give them the option of condoms or not, but...

I: As I said, where does that fit? You say it's sort of a subset of the gay community. What's the relationship between the sets? I get the idea of variety within the subsets, but let's clump that together as a whole for a minute and say the bareback
40 community. How is the connection and relations with the gay community? Are they harmonious? Are there problems?

R: There's problems. Because of course, like we mentioned earlier, there's three people in the planet. Those who say yes, no, and

maybe. And even within our own culture, the gay or gay community, gay society, there's some who say, you know, hardcore against barebacking. And because there are risks, there are risks in barebacking. You know, I mean... undeniably, whether we're positive or negative, there's STDs, there's other stuff, there's syphilis, there's gonorrhea, there's who knows what else, and God knows what is on the horizon.

I: Hmm, sure thing.

R: You know? So if you're going to be barebacking, yeah, there's people who are concerned about what's coming around the corner, what

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we have here, the spread of it. Where there's many of us who are trying to protect our community from this. At the same time, there's other people who say, "Enough is enough, stop telling us what to do." We are... For years, the gay community has always been told, "No! You can't do this, you can't do that, you cannot be yourself." There's a time now where I think we're becoming aware and confident in ourselves where we're standing up and we're saying, "We don't have to take it anymore. We're not the children anymore. We are adults, we can be... We are going to do what we want with our bodies, with ourselves. And if we're consenting adults, then stay out of our lives."

I: Is there any part of the bareback that, I'm not sure if we covered it. I suppose the next connection would be, with the bareback, the gay community, where does the poz community fit into this? Are they all one and the same? Is the bareback community the poz community? Or...

R: This is where research would be good. My opinion, I think it's a very high percentage of barebackers are HIV positive. One, for common sense, and two, because there's a lot of people who are HIV positive who have not come to terms with their status, who are still afraid. Who for, because they need to be quiet about their status, because of their job, their families, their friends, whatever. They have their own issues. But also maybe because of themselves, because they're maybe in denial. And the important thing for our community to do--in fact, society - the American society in general--has to do is take a step forward and say, "OK. It's the 21st century. You're either HIV positive or you're HIV negative. You have to go to work, you have to pay your rent. You know, you have responsibilities." We cannot discriminate against positive or negative people because we don't discriminate against hemophiliacs, we don't discriminate against people with one arm, wheelchair bound. No, we are -- We have created another community, and that is the status

community, whether you're positive or negative. But people are still afraid to come out with their status, and I think where barebacking comes in, because it doesn't announce anything. You leave the question up there. But barebackers primarily, I believe, are HIV positive.

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I: In the period of time you've been going to the parties, I mean, it's kind of a strange question, but has barebacking changed? As an idea or as a concept, as a practice... Sort of in terms of frequency, is there any of that sort of... Has it actually changed, do you think? Is it changing?

10

R: Barebacking is becoming accepted.

I: So is that easier to talk about or easier to do?

R: It's... There was a time when we could've eliminated barebacking. You can't--well, wait, let me rephrase that. You'll never be able to eliminate anything 100%. You'll never get 100% compliance with anything. With that said, barebacking became popular for two reasons. One, it was our way of saying we're fed up with being

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told, "No, get out of our lives," and also, the power of the Internet. Because, like we were discussing earlier, in the comfortability of your own home, the privacy of your own home, you can bareback and hook up with other people at the same... And the Internet culture has expanded also because of this, because of the sexual freedom that it gives. And that's what's fueling the Internet. Because now with web cams, besides teleconferences, you know, conference calls between corporations, you can have an orgy online. Seriously, you can have six or seven guys who have web cams all online at the same time, but they're in six or seven different locations.

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I: So, can I ask you, do you have web cams? Do you use these?

R: I don't have web cams, no.

I: But do you use online personally?

R: No, no I don't. I'm still old-fashioned.

35

I: The thing is, you use the Internet so much for everything else, that's...

R: I, I have... I'm crazy. I don't have a cell phone and I've never had a pager. So I'm old-fashioned. Because I don't want to be contacted. Hence, I don't have a web cam because the

privacy of my own home, my private life is private, and that's the way it stays. And I don't want to invite anyone else in, even though I'm intrigued by visual--I guess I'm a voyeur when it comes to that--but, no, I don't have a web cam. I do not
5 have, or will even fathom to explore, web cams at my parties. Because as an owner and a host, I have the responsibility of confidentiality and privacy. And that's why I never release the information of the people at my party.

I: What do people with their cell phones do?

10 R: I don't have that at the party. They take their clothes off, their cell phones, everything off at the party and stuff. And I became very much, quickly became aware of the Internet. You know, the Internet is powerful, and yes, I did, I started out early on with the Internet in its earlier developments, and yes,
15 I pioneered the concept of the Internet connection for private parties. But when it comes to the computer, I am still amazed. I am ignorant when it comes to the computer.

I: So how do you meet partners?

R: How do I meet partners?

20 I: Do you still go to the bars?

R: I am starting to go out to the bars now. I meet guys through my parties or through friends of friends and stuff. The party originally was a selfish way for me to have the pick of the litter for a boyfriend. But it was a double-edged sword,
25 because if I met somebody, they thought I was the biggest whore in New York because I had sex parties. But then, also, the guys I was meeting at the parties, they were very open with sex and very, you know -- I didn't want to share my boyfriend with everybody. To me, I wanted a monogamous relationship, so I was
30 shooting myself in the foot.

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Then I met somebody at the party that I was very attracted to. And he was like a gentleman. And as we got to know each other-- we grew up 10 miles away from each other, in life. He grew up
35 in one... I grew up in Greenwich, he grew up 10 miles away from me. We were 17 years--I was 17 years older than he was. And I used to hang out the same places he hung out with, I just did it 17 years earlier. Then when I was living in Florida, I lived five blocks away from where his family had a condo.

40 I: Good grief.

R: And then when I got to meet his father, his father's circle of

friends. The outskirts of his father's circle of friends was the outskirts of my father's circle of friends. Because they-- we didn't know each other intimately, but we knew people who knew people who knew... And then his mother passed away. My mother passed away in '89 from cancer. His mother passed away in '99 from cancer. So I thought, wow, this is it.

I: This is a relationship you're still in?

R: No, we don't. It lasted for about nine or ten months. We had difficulties and everything, and since then, I haven't seen anybody since, but I do meet guys on the side. So where do I go to meet guys? I don't go looking for meeting guys. If it happens, it happens. So, but, the bars, you mentioned the bars.

I: You've got this social going on, BAR1.

R: BAR1. It was in the year 2000. I went to the BAR1 on Wednesday nights to hold social events because I was in the bicycle thing.

I: Oh, right.

R: So it was a way for me to get guys to donate for the bicycle thing, but also, because we never had a private social in a bar on a regular basis in New York City. Once again, we didn't have any sexual outlets, but we didn't have any social outlets. We had organizations, GAYORG2. We had the GAYORG1, we had GAYORG4, we had GAYORG5, we had all this, but they were clinical and medical in nature. Never before in the history of HIV in the city of New York was there a poz social at a bar for guys just to meet. To meet!

I: And the bar came to the party on this, or you just sort of started all turning up?

R: No, I approached the bar on this, and I met the owners and I met one of the bartenders, and I said, "Can we do this?" And Wednesday was a dead night, so they said, "Sure." So we had the entire upstairs with a private entrance, private DJ booth, and everything worked out great. They can keep their people downstairs. So the bar was making more money when we were there because we now opened up the downstairs, we brought in a whole new culture. Well, it started getting--it was popular--and it started getting too much for me to handle because I am the person in charge, I'm doing all of this work. And this is a special announcement to anyone who's listening to this that I could use help or any support, please.

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But, so, it died out when I didn't do it anymore. But then

there was a group called GROUP1 who did it once or twice a year, or three times a year or something. But nothing on a regular basis. So I was fed up, and after the CONFERENCE1 in CITY1, I said to myself, "Enough is enough. Who cares if they stereotype me into sex parties. I'm going to do it again." So I went to the BAR1, I knew the bartender there. I didn't talk to the owners. I spoke to the bartender. I said, "Every Friday night, I'm going to bring my positive friends in here." Because I knew the bartender since 1984. So he said, "Sure." So now for the first time in the history of the city of New York, in the history of AIDS, on a Friday night they have a poz night, and whatever happens, happens.

I: Good. Tell me about Adopt-a-Park program.

R: Oh my gosh, yes. Yes. I was in CITY1 for the CONFERENCE1, and I, because I'm coming out, because I'm speaking out about myself and everything, I was invited to GAYORG6 up there, GAYORG6. Fantastic people. And during the summer months, they do live theatre called A Street Theatre Named Desire. And they do live theatre in a cruisy part of their park, which is the fence, it's in front of PARK2. And they do live theatre, these guys who volunteer their time from the organization. And they give out a safe sex message. And they hand out condoms. And they do this live little skit, and it's great. It's so crazy. Because here you are, you're going into a cruisy park hoping to pick up guys and all of a sudden these actors come out, and they're in this little field, and they start acting out a scene. And they give out information. And it's part of their outreach program. And they give out condoms and things.

I: So you decided to do one of your own, of some kind?

R: Well, similar. What it was, was, I'm not going to do the theater part, but I grabbed a bunch of condoms in the fence, and I just started passing them out, and guys were accepting them and thanking me for them, and then I said, "Wait a second, I can do this in New York." And I've been going down to the park-- it's PARK1 here in New York City. It's down by, you go down STREET1 toward the marina, STREET1 Marina. Hang a left. Between the river and the RAILROAD1 railroad tracks, there's a fence. And it's an unofficial park.

I: Oh, I see.

R: It's fenced off because they don't--because RAILROAD1 doesn't want people down there or whatever, so they put up this little emblem of a park, but it's not on the map. So the guys have been going there to have sex during the day, laying out nude. So it's the only place in New York City where you can lay out nude and have sex and not be bothered.

I: You're still living up that part of town, are you?

R: No, I live in the BOROUGH1.

I: Oh, right, right, right.

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5 R: But I have connections in the city with a couple of
organizations. They give me safe sex packs for the parties and
stuff. Now this park, they don't know about. I take out their
information and I put it in my business card. But I have the
safe sex pack. I have the lube and the condoms. Because I'm
10 not funded by anything, so I have to improvise. So I go down
there about 8:00 in the morning on the weekends, usually on a
Saturday. And I'll put out condoms. I used to put out 20
condoms along the trail, just hang them on the trees. Tie them
with little twisty ties. Because if they're going to have sex
15 there, at least let me provide them with the option of, you
know, safe sex. Plus it's good public relations for me, because
they see my business card in there, and they say, "Hey, this is
the only sex party owner in the city of New York who's providing
this." And I don't care if they're positive or negative, just
20 hey, I'm promoting safe sex. Twenty condoms led to 40 condoms,
and then, by the end of the summer, I was putting out 100
condoms twice a day.

I: Good grief.

25 R: Down there. Well, it was, you know, only on Saturdays and
Sundays. Then on that note--

I: We've got a one-sided tape there--

30 R: So we're going to have to finish up. So what they did was, I
called it my Adopt-A-Park program, because I adopted this park,
Park1, where I put out safe sex, where I put out condoms. Now
next year what I'm going to do is, I'm going to put out the
syphilis testing, if they come out with quick HIV testing and
syphilis testing.

I: You're going to put testing kits or information about them?

35 R: No, information. There are business cards in there. So that
this way, on their own, they can go and get the information on
their own.

I: Now what the sort of men that frequent the park? Is it a Latino
community, is it a white community? I don't know that park.

R: It's, yeah, mixed. It's mostly... You get a mix. It's a

Latino community but it's becoming very trendy and going very white. And a lot of gays are moving up there because the transformation of TOWN2, the STREET2, where a lot of men of color came in and they migrated up from the piers up STREET2, now they're in there. And that forced the community up further. Now it's up, you know, anywhere. But in that community, it's mostly Latino, but it's going into white. And the guys that frequent there are mostly white, but you do get men of color in there, too. Younger, stuff... And it's growing. It's becoming popular.

I: Just going back to the Internet a bit. There's been a bit of-- there's a lot of debate about cracking down on Internet use and stuff like that. Do you see that as having... Do you know about any websites that have been shut down, or...?

R: Yeah. PIONEER was shut down. I knew the owners of PIONEER, and he became positive, and he, from what I understand, it's

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the medications. It's the expense into running the site and the expense of getting medications. And you get sick. So as his health deteriorated, he couldn't keep up the site, but they sold off pieces of the site. The Internet, the crackdown on the Internet, is commonsense, because it's an evolution process. As the Internet becomes more popular, people went to regulate it, people went to try to control it. And they'll never be able to do that, because, like New York City and Times Square, you get rid of the one location, but it pops up somewhere else. It just takes a matter of time where you realize where it did pop up. You have to find it now.

I: Has anyone had a crack at you, your site, or your use of the Internet?

R: I've, in the beginning, the first couple of months, I was threatened that somebody would shut me down, my list down, because what I'm promoting is unsafe sex and I'm spreading the disease. And at one time, I had one of my groups, well, not my groups, but my EMAIL1 accounts, shut off, because of that. And I lost about 500 names. And that's why I diversify now and I have multiple accesses to everything. But as it became more popular, I haven't had the threats anymore. But it could happen at any time.

I: You're being a big target though, aren't you?

R: I am a very big target.

I: I mean, people find out that you party--

R: I'm a very big, big target. The thing is, people are, I would assume that they're jealous. People who are also saying, "Well, he's a corporation." Or, you know, people say, "He's just too big for his britches, he's flexing his weight around." I don't want to seem that I'm on a pedestal, I don't want to seem that I'm holier-than-thou or anything, but I'm beginning to realize that I have some clout, that I am able to, if I make a decision, if I say something, it will affect other people's lives. The concept of sero-sorting, where you call sero-sorting. Do I dare say that I pioneered that concept? I mean, when I announced firsthand, and I have the documentation for this, that I publicly, I went out and publicly announced in MAGAZINE1 and MAGAZINE2, I'm a poz party, you be, too. Did I coin that phrase? The rift in society where we're dividing the line between positive and negative communities. And the concept of the barebackers and the gift-givers, am I responsible for that? I just finished an article for a magazine out in California, a national magazine, describing the type of the parties and the sero-sorting and everything, you know. And thinking back and looking, people are going to be reading this and they're going to make a decision. In New York City, I've changed the culture in New York City because I have the copies of MAGAZINE1 and MAGAZINE2 where I used the Internet as a source of communication. Now you can pick it up today and that's all you see is websites and e-mail addresses for communication for sex parties. Because of that, and the subculture that go on with these websites and the language that they use, the

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terminologies, and the fact that I'm realizing that I don't have a degree. I have a high school education, and I'm going to college, but I don't... I'm not a doctor, I don't have any of the knowledge, I don't have the exp... I don't have the credentials that you have. And you called me, I didn't call you.

I: That's right.

R: That says something.

I: Do you think the gay community... see there's the barebacking community or the poz community. Where do you think the larger gay community position is, in a way? Because you're now getting published and you're writing stuff in gay magazines, rather than say poz magazines, aren't you? Things like that.

R: I was first quoted by EDITOR1, who's the editor of Magazine4. Wrote an article about sero-sorting in the edition of MAGAZINE3, in which case he called me and I was quoted. Because he noticed a national trend developing then and he mentioned in the

article, he quoted as saying, FUN, the founder of FUN'S Party, which is the oldest poz-only national party in the nation, or something. I got calls and a lot of things about that. So in 2002 is when I first realized that there was a national following, that strangers contacted me. And then there was a couple of other magazines and newspapers I was in, and of course the MAGAZINE5. And this article is the first one I'm writing because I was asked to write it because of who I am. I don't know what the community thinks of me, and I would like to know, but in a sense, I don't need to know because I'm not in it for that. I've changed. I've evolved. It's no longer a party where I'm trying to look for a boyfriend. It's a party where, if I can use it to help the community in general, either as a way of guys who are HIV positive to look for other HIV positive guys to meet, just to talk to. At the very first sex party, that's what we did, we talked. We'd go back and talk about meds and things. That is still going on today. Because of the sex party, not everyone wanted to have sex. So because of the sex party, came the socials, and the socials came up around the country as well. And I... [LONG PAUSE] There's a lot of people who are making a lot of money off of this and various different variations of this. You're going to be getting maybe funding for this, and you're going to be getting some chunk of change. A school's going to get a lot of publicity or whatever, who knows what. Other studies and other things and stuff. I will not--I only see what we discussed earlier. I'm OK with that. Because I'm not doing this for myself, I'm doing it for posterity in a way. Because they will remember my name.

I: For sure.

30 R: They won't remember yours. And I'm not meaning--

I: (laughter) Don't worry.

R: I'm not trying to say it to be mean or anything, but...

I: It's OK, I understand exactly what you mean.

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35 R: But yeah, your colleagues, whatever degree of hierarchy, they will remember me. And eventually, I will be published in one of your journals of some medical professional journal out there. I don't have the credentials you have.

I: But you're getting a business degree, so this is about actually getting your positive parties business on a sound footing financially? You're trying to get it so it sort of runs itself, but--

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R: I would like to, but I'm 45. And I realize that my chances of getting a job out there that I can rely on any income are probably slim. Probably retirement accounts, probably slim. But I'm getting a business degree so I can better understand what it is I'm doing to serve it better, to make it more better. Because in a way I'm running a business, but I don't see it as that. Because I don't treat it like that.

I: Do you have other paid employment at all?

R: No, I've lost my job and I'm on welfare and everything. But I'm content with that because, as a person, I understand that what I'm doing is for the common good. So where does my business degree come in? So I can get a better understanding with that. But my master's degree is going to be in web design. They have a website, the website is on 24 hours a day, seven days a week and it doesn't tire, but it goes global. I've got a following now for the website. Number one, traffic. Number two, content. I have all kinds of information on that website.

I: But this is free at the moment?

R: It's free.

I: Are you going to try and put it on a pay to use footing in some way, make it fund itself?

R: No, it'll always be free for as long as I'm alive.

I: Then the parties, do they pay for themselves?

R: The parties, yeah, the parties will be--well, here's the trick to the party, because the party will be a donation at the door of \$20. That's never changed. Never will change. But when the studies we're conducting, they'd pay the \$20 at the door, which satisfies my needs. When they've filled out the research, the research people gave them \$20 out of their funding.

I: Oh, I see. Right.

R: So now, I've changed the concept of a sex party where it is a free party and everybody's happy. I'm happy because I get my money.

I: But you've got to pay for hotel space.

R: Right, right, right, but that's where their donation comes in, because the party, this party pays for the next party. It rolls over like that. But the website, where it's going to make money, is that, it's going to be a free access site, but there'll be links on it to BarnesandNoble.com.

I: So you'll give advertising space, basically?

R: Well, they don't pay for the advertising space, but I get a

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5 percentage of the sale, I'm a distributor. So if you go to BarnesandNoble.com or sex.com and you pay, maybe you buy \$100 worth of merchandise, I get 7% of that sale.

I: So they go through that link, got you. We've got a couple of quick ones here.

R: Yeah, sorry.

10 I: You mentioned syphilis before, and so I'm going to ask, beyond the issue of HIV, coming along with barebacking comes the possibilities of other STDs at some time. Where do you see that as fitting into the scheme of things at your party, in the debate about barebacking, in all that kind of stuff?

15 R: Within the gay community, my party, as well as all the other parties out there that allow barebacking, we spread the viruses of STDs, whatever they are, including AIDS. With the importance of sero-sorting, we restrict from one community to the next. That is a significant concept to grasp and hold on to because
20 you're taking society, men and women together, and they're voluntarily making a decision to have sex with somebody of their own status. When that happens, then in reality and in theory, it is 100% HIV prevention effective, because you are, if you're positive and I only have sex with guys who are positive, I am
25 not going into the negative community. That works. When it comes to STDs, if the majority of people who bareback are HIV positive, then the STDs will follow the same route.

I: So you can contain them?

30 R: You can contain them. Now true, we have to understand the negative community. We have to understand their barebacking methods and things and what they do. Because there will be risk there. But you are taking and you're separating now the diseases. You're separating the control groups from the experimental groups and things. There is no cure for AIDS,
35 there will not be a cure for AIDS. There will be no vaccine because it is not cost effective. The cost, where people make the money, is through the drugs, through the treatments.

I: So, just to follow your logic here, would you sort of say then, would you make an argument to say that to the city, to the
40 health department, should embrace the notion of sero-sorting as a technique that you could work with me to reign in, to

eradicate it, things like that. Within the sero-sorted groups of some form, that you could work somehow with that?

R: Yes, and it's not because I preach or I start the concept of something, no it's not that. It's common sense. Because you
5 have a community who is barebacking because they just don't want to be told no anymore. But then you also have the community who goes with the condoms, and they say, "Well, we want to be protected." How do you satisfy both people? Keep them together in the same groups. Now here's something else. Because if you
10 can control this group of positive people and negative people. I mean, you

won't have 100% compliance, and I understand that. But if you get

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15 the majority to do that, the positive community will die off. Because not all of them can take meds, not all of them can afford it. Not all of them have the treatments, so they will die off and the numbers will start to dwindle. You don't need a vaccine. You don't need a drug in drug companies. So what
20 you're doing is, you're taking the drug companies and you're giving them a time limit. And you're telling them, if you don't come up with a vaccine now, then do it on your own and you'll be out of billions of dollars. But they haven't caught on to that yet.

25 I: Yeah, that's true.

R: So that's why, when they catch on to that, I'll be the first target they come to.

I: Just another, a kind of related question. I mean, as you say, at the moment we haven't gotten through sero-sorting. At the
30 moment it's not working at 100% of its possible effectiveness, so we are getting the possibilities of transmission of HIV, we are getting the possibilities of STIs. On your website and in the barebacking community and the people that you're with at your parties, do people talk about risk of transmission of HIV.
35 Is it on the social agenda, if you like?

R: It's on the agenda, we won't talk about it. I took a poll, and if you met another guy and you were going to have sex, would you announce your status. The majority of the guys, I guess 60%
40 said yes they would. Then there was some guys who said that they would never tell their status and some guy who would say only if the other guy mentioned his status. So it's on our minds, because for so many years we're tired of the same thing. That, let's just get on with sex, let's have it. But on the

site, I'm trying to flex a little muscle, and I'm talking about respect and understanding. If somebody mentioned, because--I have to backtrack a little. I always wanted a website where they could post their profile. I wanted a sex website. But my ideas got too out of control and it became what it is today. [LONG PAUSE] But I can change all those other websites out there to meet my needs. Because if I can announce my status in MAGAZINE1 and MAGAZINE2 ten years ago, I can tell others, if you're on any of these other sex sites, announce your status, let them know.

I: So this is where you've got that notion saying you're on FUN'S list as a kind of roundabout way of doing this sort of stuff here.

R: Yes, because now, unofficially, on the down low, I'm controlling the Internet. I'm not doing it in a way like, I'm here, dammit. I'm encouraging the HIV positive community that hey, enough is enough, let's just come out about our status. There's so many other positive sex clubs out there and positive socials out there, why not do it on the Internet? You know, we're doing it anyway, so what's good about with one group automatically is good for the other group. Because now if the positive people are coming out about their status or mentioning their status, the art of sero-sorting, they become comfortable with themselves, become comfortable with others, and then society is comfortable with

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themselves. So when the poz society is becoming more open with their status, we can also understand the severity of the disease. We can get the benefits that we need because there's a lot of people out there who are not coming out with their status who are denied the benefits. Who are--can get these benefits, and it's to their benefit that they get them. But if we come out as positive people, automatically the HIV negative community will also follow suit because they will do that too.

I: So you don't think it's a bit of a danger? I mean, it's a big of a different between two positive people saying they're positive. I mean, in one sense that's 100% of the game. But when you've got two people who say, "Guess what, I'm negative." "Ah, guess what, I'm negative." Well, that's really only as good as your last test result. So it's not exactly quite as certain a state for doing a bit of sero-sorting on the other side.

R: Well, it is, it is actually. Because if they tested last month, and the negative guys are going with the negative guys, then in theory, their test comes up negative again.

I: But you must make absolutely certain that the negative guys must remain having sex only with negative guys.

5 R: Exactly, and they have to be tested. And this is where I mention on the site about the respect and understanding of, when you go out to the dance clubs, when you go out to the bars, when you go out to the strip parties and the pride parties, mention your status. And if somebody says no, no means no and yes means yes. So now on my website, I'm trying to take control of the circuit parties, the pride parties, and the Internet, and
10 telling us to be more comfortable with who we are. And it's better for us psychologically, because if we know our status, we release the burden, and what's good online is going to be good in the bars.

15 I: So you say the Internet is actually now being able to drive some of this kind of stuff and it's not just the way things happen on the Internet, but actually shift what might be happening in the bars or--

R: Yes, that's my intention.

20 I: Right, OK. We've talked a lot about some of these things on my list of questions, which I wasn't going to follow all the way through. We talked a lot about, I think... yeah. We haven't had one little talk about HAART.

R: HAART?

25 I: No, sorry HARRT, Highly Activate Anti-Retroviral Therapy. It's the reason for all the meds basically. I mean, outside of the games we just call it HAART. But I mean, you're on a combination therapy yourself now?

R: Yes.

I: OK. What's your viral load? Do you know?

30 R: Yeah. I was just tested. I go in every three months, down here on 23rd street. My viral load is undetectable and my T cell count, for many years, for maybe eight years or something, my T cell count has always been between 200 and maybe 275. Because of the meds that

35 [160:45]

I'm on now, I was recently tested about a month ago, at the most. They're up to 437.

I: What do you think about the argument that undetectable viral load means that, you know, as a positive person you probably

can't infect anybody anymore?

R: More research needs to be done. Because we don't know what the long-term affects are.

I: Do you think some people believe that's the case about it?

5 R: Some people, yeah. They'll believe. There are some people who'll believe you, because there are some people who say yes, no, and maybe. So yes, there are people who'll believe that undetectable viral load means, hey, we're good, let's go. But there's people, such as myself, who'll say, hey, I still have
10 HIV, therefore, until I get rid of that, if I still have one tiny little cell of HIV virus in me, I'm still contagious. I will not be free of HIV unless I'm 100% free.

I: OK, I see. OK. I'm almost to the end of my que, I'll get to this other stuff. There's a couple of other kinds of things
15 that are being used to prevent HIV, so I just want to sort of get quick answers on some of this stuff. What about the female condom? Ever tried it?

R: No, I haven't.

I: Do you know much about it?

20 R: No, not much. I don't think I've seen one. But I've heard of them.

I: Right. What about microbicides?

R: I've heard a lot about them. Jim Picket did an article for HIV
25 magazine. I read that. My problem is, with that, if it's done anally, we need to do more experiments, more research, because anything anally, even douching water, if you do it too much, you break down the interior walls in there, and you are, even with water, you're subject to infections and diseases and stuff. So, with microbicides, there's still that risk of something going
30 on. My general philosophy is, anything that we can do to help stop HIV, we need to try it. We need to. But we also need to do more research and microbicides...

I: Got you. OK. There's a bit of now just random ones I've
35 forgotten along the way. What about Viagra at parties? Do you think men use it? Do you use it? Do you think it works?

R: I use it. Not all the time, only when I need to make sure. [laughter]. But... That sounded like a sales pitch.

I: Whatever you use, there are other ones too, I mean there's a whole list.

R: Yeah, I use that and forms of it. Because of Viagra, there are more sex, more men having sex. More age groups, longer in time. And that is also what's fueling the need for sex clubs and sex venues, to be seen not as risks but as allies, because we can solve, we can help solve a lot of these problems. Viagra is invented for sex. So if you're going to invent a drug for sex, the

[164:23]

government, society, needs to say, "OK, sex is going to take place." Otherwise, why are you going to do it?

I: Do you think it means more people will want to take bareback because they can keep their erections longer and they can stay hard all night?

R: I think it's going to be beneficial to both communities, because yeah, you keep your erection harder, longer, but also, it's easier to put a condom on.

I: Right, because it'll actually stay on. Stay up, I mean. The condom will stay on, yes.

R: Yes, it'll stay up and the condom will stay on, right. Even after you pull out, after you ejaculate. So, that's a benefit for the negative community or for the safe sex community because it's great for condom use. If I use Viagra and I put condoms on, after I cum and all, I'm so hard...

I: But you don't provide Viagra, men bring it along

R: Right. If they want to bring it along, they can. I don't provide it.

I: One of the things that we, that we're trying to do with this study, you know, is we're trying to eventually connect up with some key people who might be working in this area, either on websites or key players or webmasters and stuff like that. Other people I don't suppose are in the same kind of game that you're in in some ways with parties. Have you got any contacts like that that you could put us in touch with?

R: Yes, I do have contacts from sex parties and sex clubs.

I: We're mainly though interested in their connection with the Internet.

R: I do know from ARIZONA CRITIC, I know some owners of other Internet groups and things. PIONEER, I knew the owners of that, but then after they went under, nobody picked up the ball. I

would like to try, because that's an idea, is, if I contact a couple of these people to see what kind of response I would get. Because I know people in CITY1 who know the owners of MEAT. And if I were to ask them, they could get in touch with MEAT to get in touch with you or something.

5

I: The way I'd like to say it is this. We're gearing into this phase and we're starting to do the interviews just now. Our phase up until now has actually been looking at sites and trying to get our head around them and trying actually to learn some of the language of how sites are. You're learning it faster than we are, obviously, you're setting up sites, setting up web pages. And we're still trying to learn a lot of that. And we've just gone to the end of the phase of doing that. And then we're going to start doing the interview process. So for the next little while, we're going to be looking for particularly some key players who can tell us more about things. We're not ready to run immediately. But if you'd kind of chew that over for a bit, you might want to talk to INT09, I've got her card here.

10

15

20 R: Oh, great.

[167:17]

I: At some... If you want to, I suppose, think up a few potential players and then check in with INT09 at some point in the next couple of weeks or more, we're not really ready to run for a few weeks yet. And the rules are you're not allowed to tell us anybody's name, but they have to give permission to us. They have to tell us whether they want to be a part of a study, you can't tell us about someone out there who'd be great.

25

R: Oh.

30 I: Because you're sort of, you're outing them, if you know what I mean.

R: See, an idea that comes to my mind--sorry to cut you off--is, what if I were to announce this on my website?

35

I: Well, we don't want it to go that wide, that's precisely the wrong idea.

R: Oh, OK. You want to narrow it.

I: Because we've got, you know, this is just a qualitative study, and in these sorts of studies you only do a small number of interviews. It's not like a big survey one where you go on the 'net and you get up and you take all comers. So we, the way you work on this kind of a study is you pick and choose key people,

40

but you need contacts to get you to the key people.

R: Right.

I: So, what I'm thinking of is first, if you could have a bit of a
5 think about two or three potential players that could be someone
we could talk with, then maybe have a talk with INT09 in a
couple of weeks. You can't mention their names to us. But you
can kind of tell us the sort of person you're suggesting. Like
10 this is a party organizer who uses web stuff, this is a
webmaster who puts up a site. But you can't tell us the name
exactly at this point, because you're not allowed to. Just like
you can't tell us about the research, it's that sort of thing.

R: Well what about a sex club who uses web sites?

I: Well that's why I'm thinking if you could sort of come up with a
15 few and then have a chat with INT09, or me if you want, but
INT09 probably because she'll be coordinating this phase.
There's her details. At some point, if she thinks that sounds
pretty good, you could hand those cards over to those people and
then they can choose whether they want to get in touch. And
20 therefore, they're disclosing their own information to us by
voluntary means, not by being outed in any way.

R: Exactly.

I: That's the ethical way this stuff has to happen.

R: Yes.

I: So I give you those just for that purpose, but yeah, have a
25 think about it. There's no rush. And again, your thoughts on
this will help us think about, you know, what's the kind of
guys, you know, we'd want to talk to. At some point we're going
to be talking to some of the guys and put up profiles on the
sides, some things like that later on. But that's even further
30 down the track. We need

[169:44]

this kind of inside information at the moment, the sort of stuff
you're providing us with. I have two other things to do, but
35 one is, I've got to fill in this cheat sheet on you. This is
one of these things. This one I have, and then I want to ask
you just one or two quick more things, while I've still got a
bit of time. I got to put the date. I know that. Even I can
do the date. Can I ask you your date of birth?

R: May **, ****

I: OK, and you said you're 45 on the last question...

R: I'm 45.

I: And you were born in the States.

R: Yes.

5 I: OK. And it says check one and go on to question nine... Oh, I'm doing that. Oh yeah. Level of schooling. So you finished high school--

R: Right.

I: --and you're now at a--

10 R: I'm a senior in college.

I: And this is a... So this would be, what? I guess your fourth year in college? I say, I'm Australian, I don't know this system. You've been in college for four...

R: Well, it's a... I'm going for a four year degree in two years, so I'm in four my year.

15 I: Right, so this would be the second year if you were doing it full time of a four year degree, or...?

R: Yeah, this would be, no, I'm in the third year if it's a full time degree going for four years, so it's three.

20 I: Got you, yeah. And you're not on paid employment at the moment?

R: No, no.

I: OK. What was the kind of work you did before you lost your job?

R: Office. I was an office manager.

I: And so you keep saying that you've done that since the Air Force, jobs like that of various kind?

25 R: Yes. It was the Air Force experience.

I: OK. Are you able to give me a ballpark figure on what your annual income would be now?

R: Now? It's probably about \$12,000, I guess.

30 I: OK. And this one's a weird one, but... I think some of these are strange, these questions are different for us. But if I asked you what sort of ethnic group--

R: It's only in this country that there's an ethnic issue.

I: Well, it does happen in other countries, but it's kind of asked differently.

R: I would be considered Caucasian.

5 I: Caucasian, right. OK, that done. Now let me just go back. What I want to do is, I want to go back to my cheat sheet here and make sure I haven't left anything out on that. INT01 will just smack me.

R: Tell INT01 I said hello.

10 I: Oh, yeah, yeah.

[172:25]

R: And INT09.

I: Just a couple of quickies as I go down here. If you had your pick of the kind of men that you'd like to come to your party, you know, like I can, but you've got 10,000 comers and you can only fit 20 in a room.

15 R: Right.

I: Who would you want?

R: Young guys, late teens, early twenties, any race. Because they're the ones that are increasing the numbers. More importantly, here's another thing that I'm becoming aware of. To sero-sorting, the kids who are actively, you know, 10, 11 years old, and they're going on to the Internet, they've seen this. That's my target group because they will go into society, yeah. So, young guys of any race, as long as they are legally able to have sex--

20 R: So you're thinking about young poz guys here, aren't you?

25 R: Young poz guys, yes.

I: So you can talk to them and you can position them and yeah.

30 R: So I can get them comfortable with the thought of sero-sorting. And then at the same time, because their peers who are negative. Because if they're comfortable with their status in school and they talked about poz, their status, like you and I are talking about it, that is prevention of HIV.

35 I: Let me tell you, who wouldn't you want?

R: Attending my party? A young guy who's HIV negative. Because of the nature of the party.

I: OK, OK. Oh, I forgot to ask this one. Yes, I did, I really am... You have about 60 at your parties, roughly speaking now?

5 R: Right now, 60.

I: How many do you reckon find out--you said there were something like 10% of regulars that you've had for a long, long time, but how many, what percentage do you think find out about you from the Internet as distinct from word of mouth or something like that.

10 R: I don't know, because I haven't really considered... I don't really consider...

I: But you said something like there's about 10,000 in your communications circle...

15 R: Yeah, so I would say that the majority of them are through the Internet. About maybe 80% are from the Internet.

I: OK. Sorry it's taking me so long.

R: No, it's OK. It's good for me, it lets me catch my breath.

I: (laughter) Right. You're probably aware that HIV is on the rise at the moment in lots of gay communities. The figures are going up in my country, in Britain, here. And some people are saying that it's barebacking that's doing this. What do you think about that?

20 R: I think they're true, I think it's right. But I'd like to know what is the age groups of the increase and also the ethnic backgrounds. Because if it's the younger people, which I know it is, it has to be, because their lack of education, lack of knowledge. They're probably under the false assumption that

25 [176:06]

30 they're too young and it's died out and all this other stuff. We need to educate them. And we also need to know what ethnic backgrounds because I'm starting the men of color party because there's a rise in men of color. But that's also a stigma, there's also that macho thing that they are in denial as well.

35 So, and it's because of barebacking because it's unsafe, it's common sense.

I: I think we've done pretty well so far.

R: Sometimes I just get off on these tangents.

I: No, you're doing, you're doing well. I'm the one who has to also sort of keep my head around all this, too. We've covered a lot of these questions, not because I asked them directly, but you actually covered them in the way you answered other sorts of questions. If they find an instant HIV test, like the pregnancy test, comes out, would you buy it and put it in the parties straight off?

R: I would do it. Only because, as a host, it's my responsibility. But also to string people so I could get a better understanding. Because of the bug chasers. But also under the guidance of a sponsor of some sort, if they are being able to provide maybe the location. If I can get a sex space or something, or a hotel room. But they have to have people there to-- professionals who can handle it as well as know how to deal with it. See the problem with being in a hotel is, if you get somebody who's off the wall, you have other hotel guests, you have other needs. But if I was in a sex space, then that risk is taken away and all you have to do is slip the person out the back door or something. So yeah, under sponsorship. But the syphilis test I'd do. Oh yeah, big time.

I: OK. So at the end of this interview, which is almost now, I'm supposed to have a pretty good idea about you. I mean I haven't got a lot of personal detail, I've got some though. And particularly about where you're moving with the parties and the ideas behind them. Is there anything that I should know that I haven't asked or that you think would be helpful that you can add to what I've already found out about you and what you've been able to tell me about this thing?

R: I will lead, and others will follow. Have trust in me. I have freedom of no sponsorship, which hurts me, but also is my window of opportunity because I don't have to answer to anybody. I don't have to do protocols. But... My overall intentions are only for the betterment of our community, of society as a whole, because I'm realizing that I can do things that other people can't. I can take risks, I can try new things. And like with the Internet, I have my website and I'm trying to teach people respect and understanding and how to come out on the websites. I'm trying to take control of the psychological aspect of a sex site. If I can't have a sex site of my own, I'm going to control the others. I'm not going to control in a domineering way -of the psychology of making the sex sites safer. What I can do on those sex sites, I can apply in the bars, the night clubs. That's why I advertise the circuit parties and the pride parties. And I have on my website, announce your status,

[179:47]

5 it's OK to mention your status. But also understand if somebody else says no that it's a no because you're not his type or it's not right. It's not ready yet. Not a rejection where you need to deck the guy.

10 I: One of the things--I did actually have a question to ask you. You seem to know pretty clearly what all possibilities are in New York of organizations and agencies and forms and support groups and players in the game, GAYORG4, GAYORG2, GAYORG1. But I haven't heard you mention wanting to hook up with them, wanting to be part of their action, wanting to make connections or that sort of stuff with any of them.

15 R: Ever since the beginning, I've always wanted to hook up with them. I've always wanted to be a part of their organization. But I mean, do I dare say that, if you have an opening here in your department, consider me. Because I could learn from it and you could learn from me. But they won't accept me. I don't get invited to any of their parties, I don't get invited to any of their socials, I don't get invited to any of their special
20 events because of who I am. Because I represent sex. I am a whore, I am a sex club. And to have me in the same room as the CEO of a company is insulting to the CEO. What they don't understand is that I've changed the way they do business. Now it's maybe down to jealousy or something. I, to this day, I
25 would welcome any organization to help sponsor me, to help me out. But at the same time, don't tie my hands and say, you know--

30 I: Got you. Are you, just as an ordinary gay man, a member of the clubs? I mean, I'm a member of the Gay and Lesbian Rights Lobby in Australia because, you know, it's a political group that I support. I mean, are you a member of any gay organizations or things that help support gay men?

R: The CONFERENCE1.

I: The CONFERENCE1?

35 R: I am dedicated to the CONFERENCE1 from CITY1 because it's a new way of thinking. It's--when I was up there for the first time, I felt that I was a member of the club, of the crowd. I was with my peers. Like I can talk openly like you and I, and we had something. If we can agree with each other, then that's
40 great. I learned a lot from that and I felt very comfortable. So that is the group, that is the caliber that I want to deliberately join. Some cutting edge technology is what I want to join. But I will not go out and join GAYORG2 or GAYORG4 or anything like this because they're too political, they have

their own agendas, they think they... They haven't evolved. It's not to insult them or anything in any way, but what you keep, when you're in business for a long time, you're set in your ways because what works, the things that make you in
5 existence work, and you don't want to change them. But today is a day for change. There are too many variables out there, too many new technologies, too many new things affecting our

[183:00]

10 community that they can benefit from, and we need to change with that. And they're not changing.

I: OK. I think I'm pretty much there. Have you got any questions for me?

R: Are you positive?

15 I: No, I'm not actually, no. I belong to the same generation. I'm older than you are, but I belong to the same generation and that's always surprised me. Because maybe I was in a different... I was in Australia. The epidemic was in a different part of the country working a different scene at the time it happened.

20 R: That's great.

I: This one's still working.

R: We need more role models like you. We need you to be a poster boy for something.

I: I'd love to be a poster boy. [laughter]

25 R: No, but we need more people like you to be out there giving the message that it's OK to be negative. Because for 20 years, it's always been, the attention's been on the poz community. It's OK. The negative community is chasing--they're bug chasers because they think being positive is where it's at. Somebody
30 needs to be an advocate for the negative community to stop them from coming over to our side. You need, for your community, you need a cheering section. You don't have that. So that's what you need.

I: Any others? Anything else?

35 R: No, I'm done.

I: OK. What I have to do now--

R: This was good, this was fun.

I: Did you enjoy the interview?

R: Surprisingly, yes. Yes, I was very comfortable, thank you.

I: I did, too. Ah, good, good. What I have to do now is give you your money. So this is the fee thing and there's also the four
5 bucks for the subway ticket, the government doesn't pay the taxi, but, there's a hundred, forty, fifty, one, two, three, four, which was the deal.

R: Thank you.

I: What you have to do is, you just have to put an initial like you
10 did on the thing in there and your date of birth there.

R: OK, OK.

I: Let's see. OK now I just write in \$54 and sign it. It's just the number there. All right, you've done the job. The right way round. That's terrific. At this point we're certainly--
15 you've got one of these [CONSENT FORM], haven't you, you kept yours?

R: Yes, it's fine.

I: At this point, I've covered everything I really want to cover. What happens now is this goes to the transcriber and then we
20 tidy it up and we take out the names and a couple of things beyond that that you'd mentioned here and there and have a look at it. INT09 will have a tape and listen to it and things like that. If there's

[185:35]

25 any particular kinds of queries or things I can't understand, at some point I might get back to you.

R: OK, yeah.

I: And just say, "Hey, you said this, what did you mean by that?" But, I don't think we're going to need to go for a second one at
30 this point, because we've covered quite a lot. We've been going, actually, for three hours.

R: Really, you know, I haven't even noticed the time.

I: No, that's what happens.

R: Well, that's very good.

35 I: I forgot this thing, actually this is still on. But this thing I know because of the length of the tapes.

R: Yeah, I haven't even been paying attention to that. I want to thank you for making this such an incredible experience.

I: Ah, good, good. Yeah.

5 R: You know, for me, I am curious as to what your findings are, so whenever you have information available or anything, yeah, I'd like to know.

I: Sure thing, yeah. Just remember we're only coming into year one, and it's a three year project, so it's not going to be out there for a number of years.

10 R: Oh, how exciting!

I: We've still got two years to go in terms of, I mean we just finished the preparatory phase, really. So it'll be a little while. But there'll be some stuff coming around and we'll keep you posted.

15 R: Yeah, because if you have other things down the pike, I'm open into any type of research. And I guess with these other agencies out there and stuff, I'm not going to go looking for them because I don't have the time for that or anything, but if they approach me, I would consider it. But I'm also doing other
20 researching with another group, and that may interfere with that.

I: Yeah, you've got to keep those two kind of managed and separate after all.

25 R: But like I said earlier, I will lead the way, others will follow, and just have faith in that I'm trying to, I'm trying to captain the ship.

I: I can grab that for sure, and let me just stop this thing before [audio ends abruptly].

End of KI002X04 10-13-04 Interview