

Jay Critchley 2009

Greetings. Well, I think where I'd like to start is... In 1980 the Provincetown Drop-in Center closed. That was a ten year.... it was around for ten years. It was a free community health center, 24 hour crisis intervention, medical services and the biggest issue at the drop-in center was anal warts and STD's. I mean, that was the crisis. On January 11th, on my birthday, of 1980, the drop-in center closed its doors - it was actually locked. It went bankrupt and I was working there. That kind of marked the end of an era of hippie invasion and the whole bohemian counter-culture in Provincetown and, low and behold, about a year later, there was an announcement in the New York Times, I heard from a couple of people on the street, about a gay plague that was happening. Of course, it was a couple of years or so later that, you know, it was identified as HIV/AIDS. But initially, initially it was described as the Gay Plague.

Of course, I was without a job, in January, the winter of 1980. I had no idea what I was doing in Provincetown. You know, I had just come out a few years earlier. I had a son I was supporting and I had no job. Of course, I went on unemployment. That's actually when I became, or started to become an artist. A born again artist is how I describe myself, at the age of thirty-three. So I ended up working at the Moors Restaurant, which was probably one of the most exciting, unusual places to work in Provincetown. It was a historic building. It had been rebuilt after a fire in 1953. You know, stories about people in town coming with their cars, and having headlights, putting their headlights on and rebuilding and bringing all their memorabilia and maritime artifacts to create the Moors. And so I was working as a busboy and wondering what I was doing with my life and that summer, one of the ex-waiters of the Moors, who I didn't

know, died suddenly. That was, I believe it was 1981. You know, people just started talking about this strange thing that happened to this guy. I mean nobody knew anything about it. He went in the hospital and before you knew it, he had died. We actually took up a collection and planted a tree.

So I was working as a busboy at the Moors Restaurant and it was one of those places where all the oddballs in town ended up. Mylan Costa, my boss, liked artists and people who were different. Thank goodness, cause I lasted there for fourteen years. I think the second summer I was there, one of the ex-waiters who I didn't know, just died all of a sudden and everyone was like wondering, "Well what is this about?" We didn't think at first it had anything to do with him being gay, or having to do with sexuality. We didn't know. We took up a collection and planted a tree on the corner of where, of course, the Moors has been torn down like a lot of places in town, and I'm not even sure if the tree is still there. But we planted it on the corner of the parking lot right on Bradford Street.

That was the beginning of this mysterious disease that began to percolate into the community. A few of us started having meetings at Preston Babbitt's place. He was one of the early people to respond to HIV. Alan Wagg, Alice Foley, myself and a couple of other people... we started having meetings saying, "Well, there's a few people in the community getting sick and what can we do about it?" We started trying to think about what it was about and get some kind of idea and some help in understanding. That was the beginning, that was the early eighties. Of course, before long it became quite clear that this was a very serious, very tragic occurrence going on in the community. In the early days of HIV, of course very little was known about it, and a couple of friends of mine, literally died within one or two weeks of contracting HIV... of pneumonia, in

the hospital. They were sick, they went in, they died. It was that simple because there wasn't a treatment for the pneumonia, or it wasn't evident at that time, of the treatment that was necessary. So that's how a lot of people died initially, I think, was from pneumonia. Several friends of mine died really quickly and that was really scary.

So, anyway, we started meeting and then there was the first Forum in Provincetown that was at Town Hall. I have a poster that I actually made the poster for and the logo. It was held in 1983 on July 18th. Doctor Don Butterfield was there and a couple of other medical professionals, who I don't recall. It was at Town Hall and this was the first forum that was held. Now this symbol, this symbol was a symbol I created that combines the peace sign, the idea of the peace sign with the lambda sign which is a Greek, the eleventh letter of the Greek alphabet. It was initially used by an AIDS, not an AIDS but a Gay Liberation group in New York City in the seventies. It kind of means a lot of different things but it can mean a catalyst, it can mean synergy, and of course everybody knows about the Greeks and their sexuality and their relationships, men/boy relationships. So, anyway, I adapted that in it and this became the logo of the AIDS Support Group when it first started, for several years. That was the first Forum. We also had several fund raisers.

(Catherine Russo, director, "What happened at the Forum?")

Well, what happened at the Forum was that several speakers gave their latest interpretations of what was going on and latest medical information, which was very scant at that time. People asked questions. People were very scared. People were afraid. People were in shock, is what was going on, because people were literally dying as we spoke.

Now also occurring at this time was....the media started picking up AIDS and HIV, the straight media, in '83, in particular in Provincetown. So what happened was that some of the TV stations from Boston were coming to Provincetown. Of course, it was the spring. There's no one here anyway and they were taking ... they were showing shots of the beaches where nobody was on the beaches. They're saying, "Everyone is..." You know, they were scaring people away from Provincetown basically. They would say, "Well Provincetown, this gay resort, is... look, look there's nobody here." Well, of course, the business community flipped. It was also the same time the police that started using rubber gloves when they were treating people with HIV and that was controversial at the time. The town was getting a lot of negative publicity and it really was affecting the businesses. This was in the spring and, of course, the summer was just starting. This was the summer we had the Forum and this particular image, this lambda/peace, sort of crossover, that I created became the image that I used in a performance ritual that I did in September of 1983, called Immunity Mandala, a Community Ritual. I actually was going to have it in the summer, but it became evident to me that that wasn't the right time to do it because businesses were struggling. It would be a better time to do it in the fall when the community could participate in it and enjoy it and, you know, enjoy the performance. It was designed as a ritual. I had just been to Australia and New Zealand and had been studying the native populations, aboriginals and so I had a lot of ideas about creating a ritual. It was out on the beach behind Marine Specialties. There were six dancers; Paul Fonsecco was the choreographer for it. He has since died of AIDS, about three, four or five years later. We came in by boat, we were in costume, there was drumming, Jacky Maslin was drumming and some other people. We created a sand mandala. We created this community mandala out of colored sand at the edge of the water. It was meant to be washed away by the incoming tide. I had a prayer that I read. I

created this lobster claw helmet which I didn't bring today, but maybe we can get a shot of it another time. The whole idea was that this Immunity Mandala would be created and there was dance that we did around it but the whole idea was that the mandala would be washed away just as in primitive rituals and ceremonies. The objects the masks and things that are created are used to illicit the spirits to come into your body but once the ceremony is over these objects are often discarded, so the idea was that it would wash away, this mandala. I brought the prayer that I read that day, that I wrote. This is a fish skin covered book. Shall I read it?

"We stand on the edge of a vast ocean which never stands still. Twice daily great volumes of sea water fill and drain our harbor. Wave action continuously shifts the sand, the beach we stand on, persistently by unharried in nature's ways. We, like past inhabitants here, come to the waterfront to greet this liquid movement, to be cleansed and purified once again after a beautiful, but trying summer. We are uplifted by the winds which move the sand and beckon us to breathe deeply and exhale the pain, the anxiety and tiredness we have carried. Let us pray.

Oh God of the Universe, give our community the strength and resilience to continue our upward movement on this fragile, spiral spit of sand. Give us the energy to fulfill the historic and spiritual mandate of our community. Opening our arms to artists, writers, gay people and tourists from around the world, providing refuge and nurturing to all those lured here by these shores. Give us the strength and the pride shown by the women of this community, who have many times stood on this shore in vigil, in silence, waiting for the beloved fishermen, who often did not return. Through this mandala offering we gather together and pray for health and wholeness, especially for those suffering from unknown and strange diseases. That each of us may continue to rejoice in hope and celebration of the life cycles around us and for our short but exuberant life together here. Amen."

That was the only spoken work in the whole ritual. The rest of it was dance and drumming and movement. There were probably a couple hundred people there.

So, 1983 was a very significant year in terms of the beginning of the community, visibly, forcefully responding to HIV. I think the AIDS Support Group was founded that year and the first Forum was held. I would say by 1983, 1984, in the mid-eighties... every week someone would die. It would just be one after the other. For me, when I walked down the street, if I didn't see somebody for more than a week or so, I would immediately think something. You know if they were gay. At this point, in Provincetown, most of the people with HIV were gay. So, if you didn't see someone for a week or two you start wondering, "Are they still alive? Did something happen?" You'd start asking people or calling them. "Have you seen Jim? Or have you seen Michael? What's going on?" So, it was very tenuous.

What was going on in the community was that the fishing industry was in decline. You had this amazing sense of melancholy coming over the community. People were dying of AIDS/HIV. The fish were dying in the ocean, there were fewer fish. There was the beginning of the decline of the fishing industry, which, let's face it, that's what created this town, the whaling industry and the fishing industry. So there was an evolving conflict, a subtle conflict going on in the town. The town of course was amazingly responsive to HIV and AIDS, but it was till at a time when being gay in Provincetown was still considered to be... you were still considered to be kind of an outsider and a minority. It wasn't until the mid-nineties that Provincetown became... that gays and lesbians in Provincetown became a majority, the new majority. The process was beginning in the mid-eighties. So, there was a lot of melancholy and sadness and sense of

tragedy in the town in the eighties from different places. When Seth Robine did his movie in 1989; Seth Robine filmed four people in Provincetown, over the course of the year. It happened to be the year that there was this explosion about a sign that was carried in the parade in Provincetown. "Legalize Butt Fucking, Legalize Clit Licking". It was a Gay Pride, ACT UP March really....it wasn't a Gay Pride; it was more like just a silent sort of vigil. That happened in the summer of '89 and then that created all this....you know the wound in the community that had been festering....in terms of gay/straight, rich/poor, tourist/resident, summer/winter. All those issues that were changing, also because of the economy, the economics, came to a head at that moment and everything exploded in town. They cancelled the Carnival Parade. They had State Police here. A rift had been opened at that point.

I think there was a whole concern about the identity of the town. There was a concern about the economy of the town and it was true. I was involved with a Whale Watch business at the time and people would call up in the eighties and they would ask, "Are there any gay people working on the boat? Is it OK for me to come into town with all the gay people with HIV?" Straight people from out of town, tourists were very wary of coming here or at least they were concerned, so it wasn't, I wouldn't just say it was the straight people in town. I think the whole town was trying to deal with this epidemic in terms offirst of all in taking care of the people that are sick; second of all trying to mitigate the effects of the homophobic media, in particular, outside of town. This was happening, of course, everywhere. I think there was, there had been a sense for a long time in the community that gay people in town are taking over the town. Well, it's happened. It happened a while ago. But I think in the eighties there was this shift, there was a recognition of what was going on and by the mid-nineties it had already happened. In terms of the number of gay people who owned businesses, who certainly were running the government in

the town. That was quite evident. I don't know if I answered your question?

(Catherine Russo, director, "Yep. A lot of people with AIDS were artists, so you developed projects to save their art?")

Yes, in the eighties it was also a time.....the first real estate boom occurred in the early eighties, mid-eighties and there was a sense that, even back then, that things were changing economically in town. There were a lot of artists living here. I mean, back then, families with kids, young families, artists, people on the edge, people of the fringe, people were coming to Provincetown to create, to meditate, to retreat. There were a lot of people in town then. A lot of people with HIV were also artists, so a lot of those artists were dying and a lot of the rents were starting to increase. I saw it, at that time, as really this was the beginning of the end of the substantial, significant, year-round artist community. The Provincetown Community Compact had a project where we were archiving artists who had died of AIDS work, mostly in the form of slides and information, although we had some original work.

We ended up with a list of about a hundred and seventy-five artists, writers, playwrights, drag queens, performers, actors, actresses that died of AIDS that had a Provincetown connection.

That's a lot, I mean, it's a lot of people, it's a huge number of artists, when you think about it, in this small little town. There are a number of archives around the country that are archiving people with HIV and their work. We were connected with a couple of organizations. So, we do have some documentation. We have some work that was donated to the Provincetown Art Association, some work at the Pilgrim Monument and some archival material that we presently have.

(Catherine Russo, director, "Want to describe the process of how you were involved?")

I founded the Provincetown Community Compact, which is a non-profit, 501C3 organization, in 1993. We really didn't start collecting work, I don't think, until the '90's. The Provincetown Community Compact was formed for several reasons. One was.....the purpose of it was to enhance the well-being of the community, very broad, on the lower cape, it wasn't just Provincetown, but it's focus was Provincetown: to integrate the arts, the environment and the economy together in various projects. Of course, the Swim for Life was one of the major projects that came under the umbrella of the Compact, because at the point the Swim for Life.....we haven't even talked about the Swim for Life yet. The Swim for Life was founded in 1988 and it really wasn't until 1993 that it became under the auspices of the Provincetown Community Compact. That was one of the reasons for forming the Compact, because it needed a fiscal agent and it needed a legal entity to continue, as it was growing and expanding. So, also, the Provincetown Community Compact was meant to enhance the arts, environment and economy - integrate them in the community. It became evident to us that a lot of artists were dying; that a lot of their work was just disappearing. This happens to artists anyway, they don't plan for what happens with their work. So, we started contacting some family members and certain artists gave us a few pieces. Kevin Driskel was a perfect example. He was a really unique artist. He was very "in your face". He also performed, dressed up. He did a lot of the posters for the A-House, for years Reggie Cabral commissioned him to make posters for the A-House parties and things like that. I remember one time he came, before he died, he came to me and he just handed me this box. I'm like, "Kevin what is this?"

“This is my headdress that I made.” Well, it was a box of tubes, like clear plastic tubes, that he had gotten in the hospital, when he was in the hospital, blood flowed through them, or whatever they were used for.....and he had created this headdress out of them. So he just like, “Here, you can take this.” he says. Another time, someone handed me a box. I’ll have to think of the name of the people, like they were moving and just gave me this box of stuff. It had videotapes in it. It had paintings. It had drawings. I remember one time I stopped going to a yard sale, you know, I love going to yard sales, and I went to this yard sale and there was this artist with all these amazing paintings, you know, selling them. I went like, “Who are you?” And it was his family that was selling; he had just died of AIDS. They didn’t know what to do with his work. So, I got photographs... I’ll have to give you some of the names of some of the people... I do have whole list, to read the list of artists would be an amazing thing, just to read the list, each name.

So, you know, after awhile you just, you just couldn’t attend; you just couldn’t attend any more memorial services. You couldn’t, you couldn’t, I couldn’t, I say you couldn’t... You know, Kim Crawford Harvey was a blessing to the community. She was at the Universalist Church, the Meetinghouse, sorry, I didn’t mean to use the word church, the U.U. Meetinghouse, Kim, Reverend Kim Crawford Harvey showed up at a propitious time and that became, really, the spiritual center of the community, in terms of dealing with HIV. That church had, literally there were five or six members in that church before she showed up. On Sundays it was like, packed and I think that became the spiritual center of the community during the eighties and early nineties. She would also officiate at a lot of the memorial services... I remember going to one

for Don Sterton, who was just the sweetest man, very spiritual, monk-like. He was an artist. He had this little place on the beach. I remember going to his memorial service that Kim Crawford Harvey officiated at. It was on the beach, in the morning, we were all in a circle. It was a cloudy, kind of a misty day, kind of mysterious kind of day. One of the most astounding and memorable experiences of my life was when Stephen Clover, who was an ex-boyfriend of mine... he had recently become a minister with the black Baptist Church in Cambridge. His memorial service at the Meetinghouse was just... I get shivers still just thinking about it. Stephen was this amazing person. He ran a jewelry shop for years. He worked as a dealer in New York city with some of the well known artists of the time, Liechtenstein and Rauschenberg. He had some of their pieces and he came to Provincetown and he like collecting folk art. He had a bunch of Susan Baker pieces. He and I were boyfriends for a while and he just decided he was going to become a minister. So, he went off to ministerial school and theology school and a couple of years later he was the Reverend Stephen Clover.

He came back to Provincetown, but he also had HIV/AIDS. He died shortly after he was ordained and he was member of this black Baptist church in Cambridge. I went to his Baptism. My friend Dana who is black and I went on Sunday to this church, right on Comm. Avenue (Commonwealth Ave.)... Mass Ave (Massachusetts Ave.) in Cambridge. Stephen was like, in the choir, singing away and he was baptized that day. He and I, and maybe one other person were the only white people in this church. Of course the music was astounding. Well, when Stephen died, a busload of his choir from the black Baptist Church came to the Meetinghouse. You could feel the energy in the air and I think I rounded up everyone I knew that I talked to and I said, "You have to come, you have to come to this memorial service. This is going to

be....you're not going to believe....this is going to be an experience.” So I brought five or six friends with me. There was this black choir, gospel choir from this church and, I'm telling you, people were like in tears, were laughing and sobbing at the same time. They had that church so maxed out. They had that church rocking and screaming. People were screaming. I mean it was just, it was just... you can't describe it... it was... and they sang... this went on for a while. It wasn't just one song, it was throughout the service. The joy that come out of that experience was really the joy of Stephen Clover, you know because he was such a joyful person.

(Catherine Russo, director, Was his family at the church?)

His daughter was. He had a daughter. His daughter was there. His daughter was there and she was a teenager, I think, at the time... maybe twenty. He had been on the Board of Fine Arts Work Center. He was quite an artist and had a very connoisseur eye for things. He actually helped me with my first installation, the first pieces I ever did. He and Don Sterton helped me set up installation pieces at Café Luige in 1981, I guess it was.

(Catherine Russo, director, “It must have been an amazing experience to live among a community where somebody that you had connection with dying.”)

Right, or someone you knew had a connection with someone, in other words, the ripple effect was... maybe you weren't like a close friend but then you were a close friend of a close friend with someone... you know... the fabric was all connected.

(Catherine Russo, director, "And also people came here...")

Many people came to Provincetown. Some people would say, "Well I'm dying." because that was what you were told in the early days of AIDS. You were going to die in six months or a year or two years or three years. So, a lot of people like sold their businesses, their homes, whatever rather than live in them. Where would they want to go if they knew they were dying? They wanted to be in a place they wanted to be; Provincetown. So, yeah there was an, I don't know how much of an influx but I think, there was quite a number of people decided... or they were, maybe they were here for the summer and were going other places in the winter and they decided... let's move to Provincetown. This is paradise, you know?

(Catherine Russo, director, "Can you talk about Swim for Life")

The Swim for Life... Well, I'm a swimmer, and I swim every day when the water not too cold. All summer, but in the fall it starts to, you know... in the spring it's colder than in the fall... but I swim every day. I've swam all my life. So, in 1988 Walter McClain and myself were hanging out on the beach in front of the Boatlip, swimming and just hanging out. It was the summer that a lot of debris was washing up on beaches in New England. Needles and medical stuff and a lot of beaches were being closed and we were just commenting on "Isn't it great that Provincetown beaches are still open and we still have this amazing harbor. Let's see if we can swim across the harbor." So the initial intention was: let's just bring attention to this amazing harbor that we have here. Then we thought, "Let's see if we can swim across. If we can make it ourselves, then maybe we could just have a little benefit, invite other swimmers and have an

AIDS benefit.” Then we spent a little time trying to find a boat that would follow us cause we didn’t want to just do it and I’m telling you a lot of people, a lot of people said, “Oh you’ll never. That’s crazy. The bluefish are biting this summer. It’s dangerous out there.” The ‘S’ word, I don’t use the ‘S’ word. So we’re like, “Fuck you, we’re doing it.”

So, we found someone with a boat. We drove out to Long Point and Walter and I got into the water and we swam across. We did it! Nothing happened except this exuberance. So that week we put a little notice in the Advocate and two weeks later - we decided to do it the week after Labor Day because back then the town really slowed up after Labor Day - and we figured, well that’s when the community can participate and sort of end of the season celebration of the harbor and the life giving force of the water and all of that. So we had sixteen swimmers that showed up and we raised, I think, about ten or twelve thousand dollars the first year. So, we thought, well let’s have a benefit. We just put a little notice in the paper and we had about fifteen, sixteen swimmers. The only problem was that we were swimming from the Boatslip beach to Long Point. When we got to Long Point there was nobody there and we’re like “well, how are we getting back?” Finally a boat came over and, you know, we got back to shore and we realized, of course, that we needed to start from Long Point and come back to the Boatslip. But at that point ...the only thing that we had was a gallon jug of water on the beach. That was it, no fuss. There were a couple of people who had AIDS that tried swimming and back then when people had AIDS they were like “sick”. I mean, visible and physically. This one man, and again I have to look up his name, showed up in a gold lame bathing suit and literally a brown paper bag filled with money. What was his name?(Chucky Vetter) That is so terrible. He shows up at the last minute, running in with his heels on and his gold lame dress and a bag. A big brown paper bag filled with crumpled up bills. Saying, “Here I am, I’m swimming.” I’m like, this is going to be

tough. I don't know if this guy is going to make it too far. So, I swam with him when we got into the water and he only went out about fifty yards and he had to get into the boat. That was the auspicious beginning of the Swim for Life.

Also what was going on at the time, the AIDS Support Group there was another organization based on ACT UP principles, ACT UP ideals... to deal with HIV was also a political issue, it was a way of self-empowerment, people needed to have a say in the kind of medication, the kind of health care they were receiving. They should be more pro-active about it. So the PWA Coalition of Provincetown was formed as sort of an alternative organization dealing with AIDS and HIV in the community. The PWA Coalition was formed as an alternative to the medical model of the AIDS Support Group. Initially when the Swim for Life was started, the money went to the PWA Coalition because, I felt that it was important to have an activist group in town that was empowering people, bringing people together being aggressive about how people with HIV were being treated by medical care givers. Also, to connect with the larger political movement that was going on in the country which was significant. So for the first few years the money went exclusively to the PWA Coalition. Of course, there was a lot of friction initially between the AIDS Support Group and the PWA Coalition. Then, probably about three or four years into the event, the Swim money was being divided between the two. Eventually the PWA Coalition became part of the AIDS Support Group and eventually was....it wasn't eliminated, it had a library....it was integrated into the AIDS Support Group.

The Swim for Life became this organism that grew organically. It wasn't that every year it got better or brought I more money but the energy kept growing. Over the course of the years the amount of money raised just, I don't know, I couldn't believe how the event grew. One year, I remember, we had like a hundred more swimmers than the year before, like out of nowhere.

Well, one thing to understand is that ninety percent of the swimmers come from off-Cape. They're not from Provincetown or even Cape Cod. These are people who love Provincetown. They have a connection to Provincetown, maybe they lived here for a while, they vacation here.. This is, sort of, people's spiritual home town. So, it really wasn't that difficult to get people to participate in the Swim for Life because people were looking for a way to, you know, enhance the community, give bring something to the community that they love. The Swim, I think, was kind of just the right, the right time at the right place and also it was the kind of activity that was...it wasn't too much, and it wasn't too little. I mean, 1.4 miles is a significant swim, but it's not five miles and it's not a hundred yards. It's kind of an ideal length to challenge people. I think that for a lot of people who participated it became a personal challenge. Not only were they memorializing and swimming for their friends who had died of AIDS, who were sick with AIDS or Breast Cancer, because, early on we started giving money for Helping Our Women, as well, but also it was a way...it was self-energizing, it was a self-healing process for the people participating. They got so much out of it. They would tell their friends. Next year they would bring three or four of their friends to swim. A lot of people used the swim as a goal for something for them to do. A lot of people will say to me, "By the time I'm fifty, I've committed myself, I'm going to do the swim. Or, "By the time I'm forty." Or, "Next year I'm doing the swim. I'm going to lose twenty pounds and work out all summer and do the Swim for Life." So, there's a built in kind of self-healing that you get out of this event.

This is a t-shirt from the Swim for Life. Paul Bowen did this t-shirt, three, lets see now, two years ago. It's interesting because this is the first t-shirt that was black. You know it just wasn't appropriate to use the color black for years. This was the first time we had a black t-shirt and I think it's really a stunning design.

Oh that's Old Glory. We haven't even talked about Old Glory condoms yet. So, the swim sort of took on this momentum, especially as the town was losing more and more people to AIDS and also losing people because of the cost of real estate and people being pushed out of town; the whole change of demographics of the town. The Swim sort of held onto that quintessential Provincetown feeling and spirit and I think that kind of one of things that has kept it going. People really feel like this is the heart and soul, this event is the heart and soul of Provincetown or a good piece of it. As a fundraiser, I've always focused on, not how much money we would make....I never really set a goal. Like a lot of fund raising project people say you should set a goal and try to reach that goal. I never....that's not how I approached it. The way I approached it was: my job was to provide an exciting, unique experience, a high energy experience for people who are participating and that is what's going to bring the money in. That's what's going to keep the project going. So every year if I create something new, like a new t-shirt design, new music, different elements I've added - celebration of life concert started by Jim Vincent and John Thomas, fifteen years ago. That was a fantastic addition to the week-end. Helen Rususki started the morning brunch maybe fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years ago. It's just keeping that energy going and personalizing contact with people, like helping people work through their fears, because fear is the biggest impediment to people swimming... doing the Swim for Life... it's fear. People have seen too many movies that 'Satanize' the water and really, I can't tell you how many people have told me, "I'll never be able to do this Swim for Life", because they saw Jaws. Now we don't use the 'S' word. When anyone wants to talk about the 'S' word I say, "we don't use the 'S' word." Although one Swim for Life, a whale, an entangled whale appeared in the harbor, believe it or not, right at the moment we were leaving to go over to Long Point. Now, is this an omen? Is this a sign from another planet? Is this a sign of a spiritual image, a spiritual

awakening? What was this doing here? Why? Why, at this moment, did this entangled whale show up in Provincetown Harbor? Now, my only concern was that the whale never collected pledges.

(Catherine Russo, director, “When your ex-boyfriend, when you found out that he had AIDS...did you worry about yourself?”)

Well, I mean, yes. I had several men, boyfriends or sexual partners...many that have died of AIDS, many.....Dr. Doug Kipler was one of my first experiences with another man, when I came out, who was here. He moved to California. He and I bought a house together here and he moved to California and got practicing out there and he died of AIDS. Well, yeah, everyone was scared....everyone was....the whole idea of what is safer sex and what can you do and what can't you do and where can you touch and where can you go, what parts of the body. It was just a huge learning curve and it was all evolving as the disease became more evident...what was causing transmission. So, it was a constantly, trying to find out the latest information and at the same time, you wanted to have sex. Of course condoms were, believe it or not, I guess they still are, a big controversy. Of all things, you know condoms, like trying to get condoms distributed was like, it still is in this country and a lot of places. There was a lot of negotiating and a lot of soul searching about.....can I get away with sucking someone? Can Iyou just didn't know.

(Catherine Russo, director, "Behavior changed?")

Behavior definitely changed. Yes that was one of the major accomplishments of the gay community; to really force changes in the medical establishment to educate gay men particularly about HIV and safer sex. Unfortunately, that's not the case now. Well, that's partly how Old Glory Condoms was conceived because I was in this vortex of AIDS and death and trying to deal with, personally and politically and in the community. So, I had this idea that, since condoms were, of course the symbol and a means of preventing HIV and they were so controversial. In 1989 Bush number one was proposing an amendment to make it a crime to burn the flag.....a constitutional amendment was being proposed because there had been a case in Texas, Texas vs. Johnson where the Supreme Court had said, "It's Ok to burn the flag. It's just a flag". So I was invited to be in a show at MIT, The Visual Arts Center. So I came up with the idea of creating a patriotic condom and I called it 'Old Glory Condom Corporation, Worn with pride, country-wide'. Subsequently, I made the t-shirt, 'Make Love, Not War' for the initial Middle East War; in the early nineties; 'Condoms with a Conscience'. This became quite a controversial project. Of course, make love, not war is based on the 1960's idea and the flag, the shape of a condom with a flag on it.