

Jim Rann December 2008

Hello, my name is Jim Rann. I'm 65 years old, I moved to Provincetown in 1972 on a year-round basis. It's a great town. I love this town. It's been really good to me. Some of the history that I remember about Provincetown and how it takes care of itself as far as health wise goes..... I remember when I first came to town it was an era of peace, love and tie dye, free love, there was a lot of sex going on, a lot of anonymous sex between hippies, so therefore we started having STDs, venereal disease and things happened. Everything was about being free so they started a free clinic in Provincetown called the Drop-In Center. It was located on Bradford St. near Town Hall and when something would happen we would go to the Drop-In Center and they would take you in.

They didn't record things so there was no trouble for you as far as government goes, stuff like that. The doctors were Doug Heebler and Frank Zampielo, the nurse was Alice Foley and they took care of us. That was in the seventies. In the eighties, HIV started happening and my first recollection was hearing about this really handsome guy that worked at one of the restaurants. I did not know him but I knew who he was. I admired his looks, you know, very attractive, and he started losing a lot of weight and then somebody said, "He left town, to go home to live with his folks".

Then I heard, not too long after that, that he died. Also, at that time, we started getting news of some kind of gay related infection, GRID. I would buy the New York Native, it's a newspaper, sort of like the Village Voice, but in a gay version, and they would have lots of news about what was going on in San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles - people getting pneumonia and dying; eleven people died in the last six months - that kind of stuff.

So, I remember, standing in the Atlantic House alley after the bar closes, it was a big local dance bar, standing in the alley, right off Commercial Street and talking with other guys and saying, "What's going on? What's happening here? These people are getting sick." You know there was a fear that was coming around, a wonderment. That was my first things with HIV, then it started happening. It got a name, GRID, as I said and more people started getting sick in Provincetown, more people left town. The first person that I heard about that was a relatively well known figure in town, he was a bartender at the Atlantic House, it was a little bar, which was sort of a hangout for everybody, and he started having problems and I heard about him through my friend, Glen Lane, who worked for me.

I had a hair salon, Waves and Glen worked for me and he was a good friend of this guy, Billy. He would take Billy to Boston for doctor's appointments and tell me how he was worried about Billy and Billy didn't want his bosses to know. He had to keep this secret because, if his bosses found out that he was sick, they would fire him and he needed the money and there was no help for him really.

Glen went to Boston and took a training at the AIDS Action Committee, which had started but had a different name at that point, in Boston,.... how to take care of people. Billy got really sick and then the town found out. Alice Foley, Preston Babbitt, Rogers Baker, Alan Wagg, people who started the AIDS Support Group, took care of Billy and Billy died. I remember them having a hearing, they were all over at Billy's house waiting, cause they knew it was going to happen, that kind of a thing, a death watch.

When he died, his family showed up, and, of course, Billy had said, "I'm rich, I'm doing fabulously, no problem whatsoever." They expected to find money here and a great wealth that

they could take back, though they had rejected him because he'd been gay. It was tragic really. They cleaned the house out, left town, that was it. "Do with him what you want."

So that was the first, that I know of, first actual case that the AIDS Support Group took care of. From that, they realized that we had to do something, Provincetown had to do something. As a group, they hired Doreen Devlin as an administrator, Alice was the head of the organization, and they started having "buddy" trainings. When I heard about the first "buddy" training, I did volunteer to become a buddy along with my then partner/roommate, Jeffrey Maienza, we went through the buddy training. It was a twelve week thing, it came from the Shanti project in San Francisco, videos, exercises, all kinds of things to teach us how to help people who were ill. Before the training was over, I ended up getting a buddy, a young man, Kevin George. He was very young. He was in his twenties and he was a karate kid, did Tai Chi and just very bubbly, vibrant, high, high energy. We used to go, before he was my buddy, I would see him dancing at the A-House, he was just very lively, anyway he needed care and we tried to help him. One of the things that he started... he ended up having to leave town because he thought that he could get better care in Boston, but just before he left, when this group was starting to happen, he suggested that we have communal dinners once a week for the people who had AIDS in town.

So that was the start of one of the services that still continues in Provincetown through the AIDS Support Group of Cape Cod. Kevin eventually died and it struck the community because he had a lot of young friends who were also into Tai Chi, that he took classes with, he taught them. Some of the kids that were still in high school knew him, young adults, straight, were his friends. That was just the beginning of the things that were happening.

Next person was my best friend at the time, Don Sterton. He was in the training with me. The last, maybe two of three weeks before we finished the training, Don disappeared for a weekend, came home, told myself and some other friends that the doctors had told him that he shouldn't be left alone. That was because he had developed AIDS dementia. So, we set up a support group to take care of Don. We started out with the AIDS Support Group but ended up having to sort of separate ourselves a little bit because he needed round the clock care. There was a group of thirty of us that took care of him, cooked meals, helped him shower, bought his groceries, stayed overnight. It was a gradual thing, it happened very fast but different levels of losing his memory would happen and being able to control himself.

I remember a couple of times the overnight person would wake up, because they had fallen asleep while they were with him, and Don would be out of the house. They would go out looking for him and someone would say, "We saw a guy sitting in his underwear in front of Ciro and Sal's sitting on the fence." Or a fisherman had found Don out on the wharf. So everybody, not everybody, but people knew who he was because of this and knew this was happening. I remember towards the end he had become very feeble, lost a lot of weight, couldn't remember what he ate. He was a vegetarian and we would go into a restaurant for breakfast and he would pick up the little cream pitcher and drink the cream because he thought that's what he was supposed to do. He would order a hamburger, when he didn't eat meat, to eat.

Very strange stuff was happening, in a way it was comical, but we could see that our really intelligent, wonderful best friend was fading away from us. He ended up having to go the Shattuck Hospital in Boston because we could not take care of him in the middle of it all, in July and August, when people just couldn't be there. But just before that, I remember that I was over there and he had to take a shower because he had messed himself and taking him into the shower

and having to watch to make sure that he didn't turn only the hot water on and scald himself because he wouldn't remember; just having to be that close to him to make sure that everything was alright. It was very hard, very hard, and when he died, it left a huge, huge hole in my life, because I spent vacations with him and movies with him and all that stuff.

Another person who got sick around that time was an ex-boyfriend of mine, lover of mine, Stephen Clover. Stephen had, when he found out he was sick, he had decided to go to..... he had a very great antique jewelry store in town, Provincetown and I worked for him, very wonderful store, accent jewelry and antiques but when he realized what was going on, he decided he wanted to go to seminary school, because he had always dreamed of becoming a minister. He left town and moved to California. First he went to Boston, Harvard Divinity and from there he went to San Francisco, Berkeley. He came back in the summertime, I have an image of him and my friend Don, in the summertime, both laying in hammocks next to each other in Don's yard and thinking, "These are the two most important people in my life." and Stephen died when he was out in California. He wanted to be buried in Provincetown, he wanted his ashes in Provincetown and some people from the seminary brought his ashes to Provincetown and we had a memorial service. The memorial service was about three hundred people. He brought in ahe had set this all up.....he brought in a black gospel choir from Boston, which was the church that he had gone to when he was at Harvard Divinity School.. This black gospel choir showed up. They came on a bus. They were all dressed in white. All dressed up in white, beautiful, beautiful clothing and I was executor of his will along with Roslyn Garfield, a lawyer in town and Berta Walker, an art person in town, a gallery owner and we paid for the bus.

You know, he had set this all up with his estate, but anyway , this gospel choir singing in there and there were four different ministers there speaking. Kim Harvey, the present minister of the ... churches in Boston, a couple from out west, San Francisco, all spoke, it was just a happening event, it was unbelievable wonderful and at the same time so horrible, because we were losing this pillar of our community. We took his ashes, after the funeral, after we had sent the choir over to the Lobster Pot for all of them to have dinner before they drove back on their bus. We took his ashes out to Herring Cove, in the gay side of the beach, but in the dunes, there was a little valley, Pasquale and myself and a few others ended up naming it the Valley of the Dolls. And Stephen was there, his ex-wife was there, his daughter was there. His ex-wife ended up, when they divorced, becoming a lesbian, Harmony Hammond. She's a rather well known lesbian artist. The people from the West Coast, we went out and formed a circle, his daughter Tanya and we let go of his ashes there. It was very touching and difficult.

Then a man that I knew, a guy who had moved to Provincetown, more or less with me from Michigan, Paul Richards. He'd been a hairdresser working for me, he opened up his own business. When he found out he was positive he decided to travel and he ended up somehow or other running into Louise Hay and hearing all the New Age stuff about "If you do the right things you won't get sick." Of course, he got sick anyway, but, I remember, before he took his long trip, he had found a lesion on his leg. What he did, was go to a surgeon and have it removed and went on this vacation, came back.

He got sick and, funny thing, where he really got sick and they brought him back from, he had stopped in Death Valley, California. Anyway, he came back to town and another one of those huge memorial services happened. He had the slide show, music that he had picked out, tapes

that he had made of his favorite music. Before he died, he started a group called "Hearts", healing arts type of thing. People would come together and at the Unitarian Church Meetinghouse and they would have speakers, he would have exercises, where you would pick a person next to you and each give each other back rubs, or massage their feet and they would do yours or you could do meditations. That was a weekly thing that happened and it ended up being like forty or fifty people, all sitting on mats on the floor at the Unitarian Church and thinking positive thoughts, trying to deal with this mourning. The town, Provincetown came out, the people that were there were not necessarily all the gay people, a lot of straight women, a lot of people who worked in restaurants with other people, carpenters that worked on people's houses. Unbelievable. The amount of lesbian participation in this was also unbelievable. Because before that there were two communities in Provincetown, there were the lesbians and the gay guys and we, you know, got along but there wasn't the kinship that we have today in Provincetown between those groups.

After Paul, what happened.....to me, specifically..... well I should go back a little bit talk about the AIDS Support Group happening. At that point it became more of an organization. We started raising money to help the guys that were getting sick and the few women, I think there were two women. The first woman I remember was Liz Wolf. She was tall, red-head, lesbian, gorgeous, big bushy head of red hair, very strong, very nice and very sick. She wasn't too sick when she got here but she died within, I'd say, six to eight months, of the time she lived in Provincetown. The AIDS Support Group was there though and that was being developed. Preston Babbitt was the president, Rogers Baker was the treasurer, Alan Wagg was a member,

Alice Foley was the director of the Support Group at that point and Scott Penn, who was the director of Outer Cape Health was also involved in leadership and they took care of people. The first big fund raiser that I can remember was the auction and that was Pasquale Natale, a good friend, and he said, "Let's have an auction." We went around town and collected art from people, merchandise and gift certificates and had this huge auction and made a lot of money. I don't remember the first auction what it was but it was big for that time. The auctions ended up running anywhere's from \$60,000.00 to \$120,000.00 a year.

We also had one, we needed a car, or a vehicle to take people to Boston and we had this idea, Jeffrey, myself and a couple of other had an idea that we would have a dinner, and we would have music, we would have white table cloths. It would be formal dinner and it was called "The Chef's Night" before "The Chef's Night Out" happened. It was before that and it was at the Mews, the first one. We had Linda Gerard there singing and someone else playing piano. We gave everyone, when they walked in the door, everyone got a long stem red rose. It was kind of an event to raise money and I think we raised maybe four or five thousand dollars. We still needed more money and I remember, Pat Shultz, a realtor in town, called up one the oil companies and said, "We need money. You've been heating these people's houses for years. We need money. Will you give us some money?" and they said, "We'll give you a thousand dollars." Then she called the other oil company and said, "They're giving us a lot of money. What will you give us?" So she sort of got a competition going between these two oil companies to make more money. So we ended up with a van and people could be driven to Boston. By this time now we had maybe fifty clients. It had become more of an organization, it has always been grassroots and we tried to keep it that way but now it was just too big to have that grassroots feeling as well.

Around that time, also, we started the PWA Coalition. The story for that was....one of the guys that lived in town, an artist, Keith Donahue, started getting sick. There really wasn't anything available except AZT at that point for people and we knew that was a toxic drug and, if you could avoid it, you avoided it. A friend of his, a woman friend, Rita Spetcher, lived in town. She told Keith about her brother who worked for the Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York and who was a doctor. She called and said, "What should we do?" He said, "Come to New York and visit this particular doctor.", who was the most prominent AIDS doctor, at that point....AIDS doctor... and, so John, his partner, John Perry Ryan and he drove to New York, went to the doctor's office, said, "We need help.", sat in the office all day long. At the end of the day, about seven or eight o'clock that night, the doctor took his last patient, invited them into the room and said to them, "You need aerosolized Pentamidine. You need to make that happen." He gave them the machines to do it with, the thing to make it aerosol and some of the drugs and sent them back and said, "You need to start a PWA Coalition and start being active about making things happen for these people." So that was the beginning of the PWA Coalition.

At that time, it wasn't approved by the state to pay for it, so Outer Cape Health was doing it on the sly, not letting anybody know because it was wasn't legal yet and we needed to have it be legal, because we thought that everybody should be on it because it was a preventative measure. So, the PWA Coalition decided to....ACT UP was starting around that time too....the PWA Coalition decided to have a "die in". I wasn't able to do that but about twenty people went out to Outer Cape Health and had a "die in". They all laid in the parking lot on the ground. We called the press, the Boston Globe, the local papers, the Cape Cod Times, and it got publicized

and got to be big news. By doing that, what we did was sort of rush the state to say, "We don't want anymore of this stuff going on." So they ended approving that aerosolized Pentamidine.

The PWA Coalition was more about empowerment, self-empowerment and the AIDS Support Group was about taking care of people while they died. We tried to keep people alive, everybody we trying to keep people alive but there was a difference in sort of the way the disease was being treated. There was a little conflict between the two groups because of that.

We also started an art, actually it was my idea, the Coalition Arts Project, where we started having a second auction. It was to raise money for PWA to have money for art. To buy typing paper for a writer, to pay for art supplies, to pay for classes, to buy music, anything to get the creative thoughts going in people's minds because we felt that was a way of helping people stay well.

We had a newsletter. PWA Coalition newsletter ended up being sent all over the country, all over the world actually. We had a mailing list of a few hundred people, West Coast, East Coast, South, Europe. Even investigated things like herbal treatments, that's the only thing I can think of specifically, or information about the available drug treatments. My partner Jeffrey, at that point, started having problems. He had been going to Tufts in Boston to get dental work done. He had an appointment. We went in there and his gums were bleeding, I guess. They did a blood test and he found out he was HIV positive. This was a couple of days before we were leaving for vacation.

We were going down to Florida because we really needed to get away, you know, we'd gone through Don, we'd gone through another good friend, Chucky Vetter. You know, all these people dying around us.... Paul, so we were going on this vacation and Jeffrey found out he was positive. We went to Florida, we spent ten days down there, we came back and when we got back, Jeffrey told me. He didn't want me to know that he was sick and ruin my vacation. Jeffrey took about a year....almost two years before he died. In that time I...we were living together....in the beginning, it was not a problem, then he started becoming incontinent, had to wear diapers. This was a guy who was handsome, half Italian, half Irish, very outgoing, just a wonderful person I really loved. He started getting weak. The drugs didn't seem to be helping him, this was before the drugs did help people, he started getting weak, became incontinent, losing weight, I was buying him diapers, I was trying to fix meals that he would eat, trying to fix something that wouldn't give him diarrhea. It was a very, very difficult thing.

I was working. We lived above my business, the salon, so in between appointments, I would run upstairs to check on him. He worked as long as he could, was as mobile as he could be for as long as he could be, but at one point he ended up being home, in his bathrobe, in his pajamas, on the couch. I would come upstairs between appointments to check on him. We ended up having a person from the AIDS Support Group come in, Beau Babineau was his name, he was our home health aide he would come in and clean and wash dishes for us some of the time so that I could actually spend time with Jeffrey because I ended up doing a lot of stuff that took me away from him and that was one of the things that the AIDS Support Group was great about doing. At this point, the Support Group had a lot of volunteers. We had maybe fifty, a hundred volunteers doing things in all different ways to take care of people in town. So, Jeffrey would get a check, a monthly check. At the beginning, I think the checks were like one hundred dollars a month,

which would help pay for co-pays. Anything somebody needed who was HIV positive, plus the Arts check that we would get also.

We took care of people in Provincetown. The dinners were going full force at that time. Once a week, you had a home cooked wonderful meal, cooked for fifty people and it would be the churches. Saint Mary's of the Harbor, St Peter's, the catholic church was against all of the things that were happening for people, but yet they were there, the church ladies, the Unitarian Church. They showed up, they cooked the meal, they made desserts, they made quilts, they made crocheted afghans. Those things were just there for the people who were sick.....and the rides to Boston. The van at that point was going maybe four times a week, as many as six people in the van, with the driver, all different appointments, all different hospitals, all different doctors. It was hard work and it was happening, all volunteer.

Going back to the original board of the support group, Preston Babbitt became ill and his partner Rogers became ill. They both eventually passed away. I remember Rogers, he was a big money guy, he was the accountant,... or the treasurer, and he knew all the money stuff. He figured out ways to save some of that money to buy the building where the AIDS Support Group is now, not the whole building, but the condo there and we ended up buying three of the condos in that building to make room for the Support group. But Rogers, towards his end, after he'd done all this wonderful stuff and he started getting sick, I remember seeing him in his wheel chair, somebody pushing him up and down Commercial Street, middle of summer, just having a good time I guess but he knew that he was going.

He was so thin, he went down to ninety pounds, something like that.

What came after that... around this time the PWA Coalition was going, we were doing the newsletters, the AIDS Support Group was active....I ended up finding out I was HIV positive in 1989. Before that I had done all the volunteer stuff, I done the training, you know, I hadn't been tested. I was thinking, you know, maybe I'm going to get away with this. The test was available, you're supposed to take a test yearly, so I went in and got a test. In 1989 I became positive. I'm sure that, I had been practicing safe sex for a couple of years before that . I'm sure that my infection probably happened in the early eighties. Anyway, I found out I was positive and you would go to Outer Cape Health and you would have the test and then they would tell you to come back two weeks later at a certain time. So, I would come back to weeks later. I happened to come in, my appointment was at 1:15. I had a lunch break from one o'clock until three fifteen from my business, my salon didn't have customers, so I came into the place, I sat down, I gave the woman my number and she said to me, "Are you going to be alright with the results of this?" I said, "Oh yeah, I'm fine, I'm really OK." and she read the thing. She said, "You're positive."

Wow, I was positive, I thought I was going to be OK. So I left. She said, "Are you going to be alright? Do you want to talk?" I said, "No, I'm OK." I went home, my brain was going like crazy, of course. I went to my house, I had my lunch, I went into the living room, I picked up the phone, I called my sisters, both of them, said, "I'm HIV positive and I'm OK, don't worry about it, I'll be alright." I decided immediately that I would start telling my customers. You know, I'd been involved in the PWA Coalition and our motto was "Action equals life" basically, and also in ACT UP which was "Silence equals death". I knew that if I hid that, it would not be good for my immune system, so I started telling my clients.

I had clients from all over the town, all over Wellfleet, Truro, people coming in from Boston, a lot of clients, I was busy all the time, steadily booked. These would be Portuguese housewives, carpenters, artists, writers and business people, they were all people I would see every five or six weeks, people had regular appointments with me, musicians. I started telling them. If they would say, "How are you doing or what's going on with you?" Then I would say, "I'm HIV positive, I'm doing Ok, things are great." I just went on with my life.

At that point I ended up becoming, soon after that, the PWA Coalition needed a president, the person who had done it before was ready to step down and I became president of the PWA Coalition. It was called Provincetown Positive and that was the name of our newsletter too. I became president of that, I had gone through volunteer training, but I wasn't an active volunteer with AIDS Support Group at that point, but I became a client of the support group. Becoming a client, I was asked if I wanted to join a therapy group, a long time survivors group that met once a week, Wednesday afternoons, 11:30 - 1:00. I said, "Yes." And became friends with, I was already friends with, but closer to Pasquale Natale. There were about eight of us in the room. Terry Salvagio, Greg Tice, Mark Bulman and we became sort of the "squeaky wheel" at the AIDS Support Group. At that point things were happening. There was a conflict going on, somewhat, with the director of the AIDS Support Group and some of the clients. Other clients would tell us that they were being played favorite or not being taken care of when someone else was, you know those conflicts were happening, and complaints. It does happen in any organization that's all volunteer like that. There was a conflict so we ended up causing a big fuss and Alice got mad at us. She wouldn't... we asked her to make some changes, she would not

do this in a way that things were happening there that we thought were better for the organization.

She had survivors, not survivors, 'Founder's Syndrome' is what they call it. "I'll take care of this, don't dare to let anyone else change something." Anyway, it was too bad because the conflict was there. This about the time we were getting ready, the Foley House was being built. That was happening and we were involved somewhat in that. Pasquale did the choice of colors, of furniture, we went to different furniture places and had them donate furniture for the house to make it beautiful. The Board was resistant to our suggestions because they were Alice's Board. She'd appointed the Boards, the didn't have sufficient PWA membership on the Board, the State required this. I had asked her, I said, "I would like to be on the Board. I think I would be a good Board member."

"No, no, I don't want you. You're too much of a rebel." Alice ended up resigning. That was too bad but, at that point, then the Board became more client oriented, more consumer oriented. The Board was taken over, a new Board basically, some of the old Board members stayed, Maggie Bartlett was specifically one, Greg Russo became the new Board president. He stayed on the Board for a couple of years and we reformed the Board. You know, made some changes to running more of the way the Board is now. We got a new director, Len Stewart was the first director we hired. He was a case manager before that. We hired him, he did a great job in the transition and then he left.

It ended up changing directors often, it seemed like a director would last three or four years and then they'd move on. I was on that Board, the Board of Director's, as a client at that point. I stayed on the Board for six years. I had to go off for a year, because they had term limits, and then I went back on for another six years. I became Board President in the second set of years, I

think, and had that job for a couple of years. Big changes were happening. The State was coming in. Things were happeningthe protease inhibitors started happening, people were living longer, people were staying healthier. There were changes in the way HIV was being handled.

(C: When you found out you were positive, did your relationships change in the community when you started telling everybody?)

I don't think so, I think there were some people who may have an idea to stay away from me a little bit because they didn't want to be hurt, they didn't want to have me be their friend, then have to deal with me being sick. I think that was a little bit, but not very much, hardly any of it. So, I continued to work. I worked until three years ago at sixty-two when I retired. I didn't want to go on disability, I could have possibly. In the beginning, I couldn't have because I didn't have the problems. I went on the drug called Peptide T in the very beginning which I took that from the Fenway Health Center and that was a national testing thing that they were doing. I was patient #21, JR21 was my patient number and monthly I would get a physical and I would get my supply of Peptide T. It was a nasal spray and three times a day you would spray this nasal spray into your nose. The idea was, it was a precursor to the protease inhibitors, it was an inhibitor. It would supposed to attach itself to the cells, so that HIV couldn't get in. I stayed on that for five years.

Through that ACT-UP had to become involved in it because towards the end of the five years, when the trials were over, there was rumblings that we were going to stop getting the drug. A lot of us felt it was helping us and so we, through ACT-UP formed the PWA Users Coalition and we

talked to the state about this, the FDA about this to try to make sure that we could still be able to get the drug, with a guarantee. We ended up getting the guarantee that we would be able to get the drug as long as we wanted to. So that was sort of, becoming more involved in state government and going away from how the town reacted to me.

About 19.....let's see, thirteen years ago.....1995, I met my partner, husband now, legalized marriage.....met my husband, Peter and we were great together. I knew this was going to be the one. Jeffrey had died, I had been alone for two years. By chance, I just met Peter, he had just moved to town. So, we were together and I said, "Well, I've got this money, I'm not going to live that long, and I'm going to go on vacation with Peter. Take him to Europe." The two of us went on a trip, London, Paris, Amsterdam two weeks. Before leaving, I had complained in my group that I had started getting headaches. I said, "What shall I do about this? I'm getting these funny headaches."

"Go on vacation. Go. You deserve to go. Go on vacation."

So Peter and I left for Europe. We got over to Europe, the headaches got worse. I ended up taking probably as many as twenty aspirins a day, Advil, Tylenol, aspirin all three of those all the time and still having the headaches. Going through the vacation and when we came home, I was really sick with the headaches. They were really bad. I immediately, the next day, after we arrived home, I went in to Outer Cape Health and saw Lenny Alberts, my doctor, who at this point was one of the leading HIV specialists in the country, and told him about the headaches. He said, "Get in the car. Drive to Boston, go the Emergency Room and wait until they take care of you." He didn't tell me what was wrong he said, "You have to do this. This is very important." I went home, told my partner and the next morning I got in my car....I drove myself to Boston. I went to Beth Israel Hospital. They did a spinal tap. I had cryptococcal spinal

meningitis which is a fungus which grows in your spine and goes into your brain and causes swelling. Your brain swells and you die....meningitis. I had to go on a very toxic drug called amphotericin. I had to stop working for about six weeks, while I was on that drug. I lost weight. Going up until that point I'd gotten from 150 pounds down to 121 pounds. I lost thirty pounds. At that point, people could see that I had AIDS. I was starting to get the facial wasting and becoming weaker. I finished the treatment of the amphotericin, went back to work, at that point I did start losing a few clients because they were afraid. Luckily a few years later protease inhibitors came along and I got on the drugs. I was one of the lucky ones.

I'm still living in Provincetown. I'm still a person in Provincetown who people see daily or often at art show, at movies, at plays, shopping in the grocery store and you can see that I have facial wasting and, you know, I have that appearance of someone who has AIDS, possibly. I'm just one of the people in town and people in Provincetown see that. It's become a regular thing here for people to know that this is part of our town. We have perhaps the highest per capita, for a small town, amount of people with HIV in the country and we are treated just like everybody else.

For me the drugs are working. I ended up being able to stay, go back to work and stay working until I reached 62 and I could start collecting Social Security as just a senior citizen rather than going on disability. I had to quit, I couldn't go on at 62 though, my legs weren't holding up. I just wasn't doing that well and all of that time, I used the AIDS Support Group; I used that therapy group that I went to; I helped work on the dinners; I worked on the auctions, along with everybody else; the Swim for Life. I forgot to mention that. That happened way back. I remember the first Swim for Life. I had a friend who I had taken care of with AIDS, Chucky Vetter. He was a local character. He worked at Spiritus as the clean-up person there.

He'd done so many drugs and so much alcohol that he was a little bit on the wet brain side, but still charming and wonderful and sweet and in and out of that craziness. He had been a boyfriend of mine a long, long time ago in the seventies. He'd moved back to town and I ended up being one of his caretakers. The first Swim for Life he ended up getting into this gold lame bathing suit, this skinny little guy, with a long wig and showing up there as a cheerleader, mermaid, whatever he could be, you know. That first Swim for Life there were probably thirty, forty swimmers. Now I work on the registration for the Swim for Life and this year there were a hundred and twenty swimmers...., three hundred and twenty swimmers, excuse me....we're going to end up with four hundred and they swim....we take them out to the breakwater and they swim back to the boat slip beach. They have a huge brunch. All the restaurants give, all the senior citizen ladies are handing out pizza to the guys. We have swimming teams come from Andover, this year there were over twenty young girls that were probably anywhere from age fourteen to seventeen. They come, they have matching bathing caps. We give them a new one but they have the special outfits they wear, they're a team, they raise thousands of dollars. We have one guy who's in his late eighties and he only has one leg, and he swims, along with his son, and along with his grandson, every year they come. Provincetown takes care of itself. That's what you find here. This is the best place.

Another thing you have to remember, I think I sort of mentioned it earlier, the State of Massachusetts has the best care of any state. The State of Massachusetts comes through for people. If you're going to be sick with HIV, this is the place where you are going to get the most service, the best care. The teaching hospitals in Boston, the Outer Cape Health Services, which is a fantastic organization, still grass roots in a way because we know the nurses there, we

know the aides, we know the doctors. That's there. The Town Hall, the town government helps people. It just the right place to be.

I'm doing well, the drugs are working for me. I still take twenty pills in the morning, then I take during the day about another eight pills, I think, twenty eight pills a day I end up having to take. A few of them are vitamins. I take Norvir, Truvada, Rey-taz, Diflucan to prevent the meningitis could come back, Lipitor because the drugs cause you to have fat problems, Trazodone, Elavil. These are pretty strong drugs that I take and they keep me alive. Along with.... I exercise. I stay active in the town. I do the things that the PWA Coalition taught us about self-empowerment and ACT UP taught us about speaking out, and the AIDS support group taught about care. All those things make for a lifetime, for me. I guess that's mostly what I want to talk about. This is a very special place to be.