

**A C T U P**  
**ORAL HISTORY**  
**P R O J E C T**

A PROGRAM OF  
**MIX – THE NEW YORK LESBIAN &  
GAY EXPERIMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL**

Interviewee: **Joy Episalla**

Interview Number: **036**

Interviewer: **Sarah Schulman**

Date of Interview: **December 6, 2003**

## ACT UP ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview of Joy Episalla

December 6, 2003

**SARAH SCHULMAN: If you could say your name, your age, today's date and where we are?**

JOY EPISALLA: I'm Joy Episalla. Age? 46. In my home – in New York City, on 5th Street. Today is the 6th of December 2003.

**SS: Now before we get started, you were going to tell me something about why you have a Playboy candle over there in the corner.**

JE: That was my dad's – it's from the Playboy Club that used to be in New York. I have now the candle and the key. As a lesbian – for me, I wanted to be James Bond and get the girl and have the gun. So I was really happy when my mom finally let me have that. Which is interesting, because actually how I got into ACT UP has a lot to do in a way with my dad. My dad had died in 1989, and I was very close to him. And it was quite devastating. The rug had really been pulled out. So a lot of things were in transition, I think. And Carrie – my girlfriend – and I had actually been through a lot of dead parents, within a succession of a couple of years. So we were both in this very tentative place. I think as much as we were taking care of each other, we were also sort of scrambling a little bit, and looking around. She and I have been through a lot together. We're together 25 years, so right there is probably -- so actually, around the beginning of 1990 is how I started with ACT UP, and it was through James Baggett.

I had been freelancing at *Elle Decor*. I'm an artist, and to make money I was doing freelance. Actually, we were still cutting and pasting then. To finish off a magazine was usually a two-week gig production and that magazine was really crazy. It had these really crazy French guys. So we had to stay in this room to lay out the

magazine – finish it off – for the end. And James would come in every so often, and we kind of noticed each other. And to get released out of that room, I get to go back to his cubicle and smoke a cigarette. And when I go back to his cubicle, he had all of these really interesting graphics on the wall, and they were stickers and posters, and they were all about AIDS and this thing called ACT UP -- which I didn't know what it was. When I started to come to work at *Elle Decor*, it was sort of like I'd re-entered the city, because I spent a lot of time taking care of Mom, after my father died. So, my life was really back and forth from Yonkers to here. So now I was sort of back in the swing of things, and he started telling me about this group called ACT UP. And he said, "You'd be really good, I think you'd really like it." He said, "You have to come with me on Monday night." Yeah, sure. He and I really hit it off. So he took me to my first meeting, and at that time it was at Cooper Union. And that's how I ended up there.

Tape I  
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**SS: Did you know anyone with AIDS, before you came to ACT UP?**

JE: No.

**SS: Had you ever been involved in any other kind of political movement?**

JE: Yes, anti-war demonstrations, anti-nuclear – politically, that way.

**SS: Okay, so when you were in those movements, were you involved in a kind of nuts and bolts, going to meetings, creating projects?**

JE: Yeah, we'd done – Carrie and I and some other friends had done t-shirts for one thing, a banner for something else. This really odd looking sculpture that we took down to the march on Washington in the '70s – so figure – '80s. I can't even remember exactly. So, in that way –

**SS: In that way, your participation was really in making art. You were making t-shirts, making banners, making sculptures.**

JE: Yeah. I mean, we would go to demonstrations – I had my thoughts or opinions about it. But yeah, coming into ACT UP – from high school – I've always had a real mix of friends. Like, I was the person who sort of moved around a lot. And so coming into ACT UP, I felt like I was home. I met some of the most amazing people and it changed my life completely.

**SS: What was the mix at ACT UP?**

JE: It was this wild bunch of crazy people. The energy was amazing. Walking into the room for the first time, I think I was in awe really – just watching these people get on and off the stage, talking about all these things. And the more you listened, the more you thought – I think my first thought was, this is interesting. And I could see the desperation, I think. And I felt like I could give something. I felt like it was a very good fit for me. Maybe this goes back to my father – growing up with my father, everything was on the fly – just all kinds of things. He was this self-made person and always had his own business. I'd worked with him from when I was seven, down at the New York Coliseum selling trailers. So I'd done all these things –

**SS: Like RV trailers?**

JE: RV, yeah. My father started family camping on the East Coast with Coleman stoves and sleeping bags, and he graduated from those to trailers to motor homes. And I was a part of this the whole time, so I worked with my dad. Even when I first moved to New York – first, he finally had a showroom for all these things, and he broke it up into a restaurant. I made pizzas and tended bar at that restaurant, when I first

moved to New York. I'd go back and forth. I don't know – I guess what I'm trying to say is I'd always been in situations that were on the fly and could adapt very readily. And I think I had learned something. So ACT UP seemed to kind of fit me, and I felt like I fit it, in that way. Something would come up, and I'd be like, “Oh, I can help do that.”

**SS: Was your family involved in politics or community –**

JE: Again, my father – more when my brother and I were in school. He did stuff with the school board and things like that.

**SS: Did they ever try to impress upon you any kind of responsibility to behave in a certain way, socially?**

JE: My father was a very fair person – very. He would always take in a situation and see all the sides and then come back and figure out what he thought – always very fair and honest with people. And it was something I grew up with. And he was quite a character, as well – very charismatic – walk into a room and would talk to everybody. Growing up as a kid with him – if he came into my classroom, he might like actually pick up my biology teacher and give her a hug – who was the most conservative person in the world. And I would be like, “Oh God, I'm going to die, I just want to crawl under my desk!” And eventually, I got used to him. I think it took me a long time, but there was something about him that was so natural and so personable with people. And he could sell you anything. And I learned that, and I could use that. That was a tactic that eventually I could use a strategy in a way.

**SS: And he was Italian.**

JE: My dad was Sicilian, my mom's Italian – he would make that distinction.

**SS: So, what happened when you came out – in terms of your family?**

JE: Oh goodness.

**SS: And you were young. When you and Carrie got together, you were 21.**

JE: We were five. We were promised at birth. Carrie and I met in Rome. And when we'd come back from – we were going to Tyler School of Art. So we came back, Carrie went back to Tokyo, I came –

**SS: And were you out before then, before you met her?**

JE: Probably not. At the time I didn't know about being out or not being out.

**SS: To your father.**

JE: Oh to my dad – no, no – that came later. I guess what I was saying is when we came back from Rome; I wasn't going to go back to school. I had been going in Rochester, going to school on student loans. So I just thought, I'm going to go anywhere I want, and I'd always wanted to go out to California. So I was going out to California College of Arts and Crafts, and Carrie was coming back via Tokyo to go to Wesleyan – to finish out at Wesleyan. So we met up again in California and then she went to Wesleyan and we had this long distance relationship for a year. Well on Christmas of that year, I came back home to New York and met up with Carrie. We stayed at a friend's house in New York – in the 70s – my friend Bev, who I'd gone to college with. And we had this fabulous weekend together and we were supposed to – maybe it was a couple of days before Christmas or New Year's – that is what it was. And I went back home to see my family. And I was very happy with Carrie, very excited, and decided that I'd tell my mother, just because I was really excited. I had also been taught as a kid that anything I was really happy about or into, or whatever – they were behind me 100

percent. So I figured, why not this? I'm very happy. So I told my mother, and I didn't seem to see any reaction, and then I went away for a couple of days down in New York and I came back. And when I came back, my mother wasn't talking to me. It was very strange.

I found out later what went on. My mother, basically, got very upset and didn't talk to my father and he thought that she was mad at him. Well I got sat down for a sermon basically, by my dad at nine o'clock in the morning. I think it ended somewhere about four in the afternoon. It ended on the note of – “I've put a roof over your head” and yada, yada, yada, and “If you're a lesbian, well bye-bye, see you around” sort of thing. And I just thought, well this is a bit of a shock for them, and they just probably need to digest it – and I just basically kind of ignored him. And, I sort of left and went back down to New York to be with Carrie and went on my merry way and went back to school.

Well this goes on for about a year, and I come back to New York – I'm finished with school and I'm living with my friend Bev, and Carrie and I are still together. This one day – I go back and forth to Yonkers to work in my father's bar. And this one day he'd been looking for me, and he calls up Bev and he says, where am I? He'd been trying – and she says, “You know where she is, she's at Carrie's.” And he says, “Really?” And he says, “Okay Bev, I've got a question for you. Who gets on top?” And my friend Bev says, “Okay, Chick” – that was my dad's name – Charles, but Chick for short – “with you and Joy's mom, who gets on top?” And my Dad says, “Touché Bev, that's very good. Don't tell her I called.” So of course she did tell me he called. Anyway, I go up to the restaurant that night and I'm thinking here it comes, right? And I'm in the kitchen, and he

comes up next to me, “You know, I want to tell you something – if you're happy, I'm happy.” And that was it. And then, when my Dad died in 1989, by the side of the chair – this was his chair, actually – was a photograph of me and Carrie that he kept the whole time. So, I think he just needed time to figure it out. That was important, just to watch his whole flip-flop through it. I think I was lucky.

**SS: So, if you had so much family support, and you had such a stable relationship, were you guys ever part of the gay and lesbian movement or the feminist movement, before you came to ACT UP?**

JE: Yeah.

**SS: What did you do?**

JE: It's hard to even remember anymore. Well I lived out in California, and I joined all these lesbian groups. We had that big vote – what was it?

**SS: The Briggs.**

JE: Yeah, the Briggs Initiative. And, then there was something else going on. And I was living in Oakland, so I got to know some people out there. And you know, I think I was going to school and making art, and I'd go to these meetings.

**SS: Did you tend to put yourself with lesbians, or with the mixed gay and straight women's movement, or with gay men and women? Because in those days, those were three distinct –**

JE: Yeah, but I think this is probably where I was very – I don't think I thought of anything completely specifically, in that way. I think I thought, “Yeah I'm this gay woman, this lesbian, I can be with you, I can be with you.” It was more about conversation I think, and whether I thought we were of like mind, going after the final –

to get to that point. The goal that you wanted to get to. So I didn't really have any problem identifying myself as whatever was necessary – it simply seemed more of the point for me.

**SS: What about in your artwork? Was your artwork socially engaged in that period, before ACT UP?**

JE: I would say early on, not. It was more abstract. By the time I moved to New York, it had become more specific. In the late '80s, I'd been working with some photographs of – maybe the early '90s – I had some photographs that were given to me by my grandmother, of her sister and two other women. My grandmother thought I would be a good repository for these. They're amazing photographs. They're all from like 1917 through 1919, and these women are just very beautiful together. They hold hands; they have their arms around each other. They're standing on these marble steps, and they've got the most fabulous clothes on, and they're looking at each other very deeply. And their toes – the shoes – their toes are touching on the steps. So like an archeological dig, I started to re-photograph these, and usually just honed in on these moments – like those toes touching, or their hands, or something about the curve of their chin. And I had worked with these images in a lot of different ways, and some of them were almost like filmstrips. These were images that were photographed and re-photographed and then Xeroxed, and sort of made into these ghostly, more slightly graphic images. And these things would be put together one on top of the other – like a filmstrip, and they would be like these big scrolls in successive images. And that thing of memory, and you know when you're watching an old film, and it starts to burn, or the sprockets go and it slows down and you see frame, frame, frame. Well to me, that way of

Tape I  
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thinking and memory really are very close. And it's something that's still in my work I'd say now. So, in that way of investigating and trying to figure out what it was about these women that was so appealing and curious. And there was also this thing of – these were people I was related to, too.

**SS: There's always that searching for the gay ancestor.**

JE: Yeah. I guess, yeah.

**SS: So James Baggett brought you ACT UP, you walked in, and how did you plug into the organization?**

JE: Well you know, I sat down in our row with James and I met these other friends of his, and one of them was Tim Bailey. And I met Jon Greenberg and Dennis Kane and John Stump and Mark Lowe Fisher and eventually, Steve Mishon and Barbara Hughes.

**SS: And how many of those people are still alive?**

JE: Barbara Hughes is here. James Baggett, Steven Marchand – I think he's in Holland now. B.C. Craig, Ruth Finkelstein, Carrie Yamaoka, Michael Marco.

**SS: That was your group at first?**

JE: People came in and out – Ken Bing. But we all had a lot to do with each other during those next couple of years. And a lot of us were in this affinity group of ACT UP called the Marys.

**SS: The famous Marys. Can you tell us about the Marys?**

JE: An unbelievable group of people – incredible.

**SS: How did it first get started? Or, how did you come into it?**

JE: The Marys already existed when I came into ACT UP. They had just done the FDA action, and that's when they started together. And they were the ones that had the cardboard headstones. I think they went through a number of names, and we ended up with the Marys – that stuck. I mean it always had Mary in it somehow – oh, you're such a Mary, hey Mary, or whatever. So they were this affinity group, and I think when I first got to know some of those people – I think the first thing I went to, or helped with, was at the Waldorf Astoria. George Bush Sr. was there and we were going to throw money that we had printed up. That was the first action, and I think it was that fall. The next thing I think I did with them, Cuomo was speaking –

**SS: What was the money you were throwing out the window?**

JE: It said, “George Bush – Blood On Your Hands” kind of thing. I probably have a piece of it somewhere.

**SS: And you threw it out onto the street?**

JE: We took a room at the Waldorf Astoria and I think when his car pulled up, all this confetti money came down – you know, accusing him. I think that was that September.

**SS: So they were sure to get the room on the front facing out.**

JE: Recognizance. They were all very good at it already. So that's 1990. Date-wise, I'm not going to be great with you guys.

**SS: How often would you meet?**

JE: We came in every Monday. I was there every Monday night after that – after I went the first time, I don't think I ever missed a meeting.

**SS: The Marys would meet on Mondays also?**

JE: Most of the Marys would go to the meetings, yeah.

**SS: But how often did the Marys meet?**

JE: Well, it really depended on what was going on. As soon as there was something to be meeting about – an action was coming up, or we were getting ready to do something. Then we met quite often, and it would usually be at one person's house or another.

**SS: Can you just take us through an action with the Marys – how you would hear about it?**

JE: Sure. Well, Day of Desperation is probably a good one. We were very busy. It was the Gulf War, and we decided that we were going to hit *McNeil-Lehrer* – and a number of the other affinity groups had picked different stations – CBS being one. And that was actually when I really got to know Steven Mishon and Barbara Hughes. And Jon Greenberg. I remember we met out in the hall, behind the Great Hall – there was that hallway out there. And everybody was in their group, and everybody was talking about ideas in front of me about *McNeil-Lehrer* and breaking into Channel 13. Part of me thought they were completely crazy, and the other part of me thought yeah, it makes sense to me. So, we started getting down to brass tacks of what and how that was going to come off. I'm actually not remembering the whole sequence of events completely, but I know that that happened the night before Day of Desperation, because they all went to jail. Anyway, long story short I guess – we started meeting. But we ended up doing five different things that weekend, into that Monday, into that Tuesday. I can't recall the exact days.

**SS: Well, what happened at *McNeil-Lehrer*?**

JE: What happened was, a couple of Marys had gone into *McNeil-Lehrer* for a tour of Channel 13. So, they had scouted out the place. We also – through a certain person – had gotten a badge. And I made badges for everybody that was going in that looked quite authentic, because that was what I was good at. And I remember being in the car with Dennis Kane. Channel 13 was up near St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital – 59th Street, I think – and we had to meet and I had to give them their badges, which were on silver things, to get in. We were driving uptown like two maniacs in the car, and I've laminated them and I'm trying to put the silver chain thing that they go around the necks through. And I'm driving at the same time, and Dennis is having a complete fit saying, “Don't do that! Don't take your hands off the wheel, we have to get there in one piece!” And I'm like, “Don't worry about it, we're going to get there!” Because by this time – that was the other thing – once we had committed ourselves to something, it was like clockwork I have to say, working with everybody. Everybody was going to do exactly what their job was, and we were going to be in sync with each other, in this way. You could just look each other in the eye, and you knew that you were there for each other, and you were going to watch each other's backs and we were going to go and do this thing. And so we all met, and everybody had their ID. Tim Bailey and John Stump were at his house watching *McNeil-Lehrer*, because – somebody had a cell phone, at that point. And they'd gone in with their badges and they were somewhere near the green room, I believe.

**SS: They got into the green room?**

JE: And right when they got the phone call that they were on the air, they went in. I, in the meantime, was with Dennis. We were in this diner waiting for the signal,

because we were going to do the PR – I even think we sent out a press release, if I'm not mistaken. You can ask James about that, he would know it. And, the news showed up with cameras – and I think we had already started to pump them for why we were doing this. The other thing was that Tim and Jon were at his house because they were going to tape what happened, which they did. In fact, if you see a tape – and James Wentzy has footage of this – *McNeil-Lehrer* goes off the air.

**SS: What happened?**

JE: Well, they broke in and they said – they did say that they were peaceful – and they started to handcuff themselves all over that room. Some were handcuffed to pipes. I'm trying to remember who was handcuffed under his desk.

**SS: On the set?**

JE: On the set they had handcuffed themselves. And when it went black on the air – this is terrible, I can't remember who was in New York – McNeil or Lehrer? McNeil is in New York, Lehrer is in Washington. It goes black in New York, they shift to Washington and Lehrer is saying to McNeil, “What's going on there?” And McNeil says, “Well, I have these AIDS activists here and they are here to say that there's a war at home. The war is at home. The war is against AIDS ...” and basically tells our whole message. And very succinctly. It was brilliant.

**SS: So the philosophy was that if the news program was not on its own going to accurately represent what was going on –**

JE: We were going to have them help us to make it the accurate thing of what was going on, because the war was at home.

**SS: Help us understand the mentality of people who thought that they could actually force a corporate news program –**

JE: I think that we thought by any means possible – I think that was part of the thinking. And also, we also knew about the 30-second rule which was you could do anything in 30 seconds and nobody would react. And within that 30 seconds, if you were fast enough and could put your message out there, it would be found and it would be seen. At that time you could do things that way. I don't know if you could do the same things now.

**SS: You couldn't get in with a fake badge now – it wouldn't scan.**

JE: Though I must say, except for the scanning, my fake badges looked real. But things have changed a lot. At the time it was having a lot of nerve, and we totally believed in what we were doing. We thought we were right, and that that was the message that needed to get out there because otherwise, more people were going to die. And if there wasn't some sort of groundswell and attention brought to the AIDS crisis, then it would get nowhere. It was really because of ACT UP and the things that people were doing, which is why it came into the mainstream. So I don't think we questioned ourselves at all. I mean, I think it was just that was what we thought, and so we were going to go ahead with it.

**SS: So what of the other people in your life – who had not made this kind of commitment, and didn't have this confidence of vision – what did they think about you doing things like this?**

JE: I think it got people interested. I think they got to know more about what was going on. I would have people just be telling me, please be careful.

**SS: Do you think that that was consistent with who you had been all your life – to take a stance like that?**

JE: Yeah. It felt absolutely – like I said, when I first came there I thought I was home. I understood it. And I understood the tactics. It was also a new mind thought. I found a place to be. I found a place to be myself, too. That wasn't any kind of leap. And that weekend – to give you an idea – there was a march for Day of Desperation from the World Trade Center, uptown, and we carried a coffin I believe. We took that coffin and hit the Citicorp building at lunchtime, where we dumped the coffin with bloody bones – they were actually chicken bones covered in ketchup – that got dumped in the Citicorp building at lunchtime, and we had a sign shoved in the middle of it, and I'm not going to remember, unfortunately – but it was that whole thing of how many bones and ounces of blood – do you remember it? It's a whole listing about people that died from AIDS, and it was quantifying how much blood and bones of these people was gone. At the same time that the bloody bones got dropped from the atrium there, we dropped these flyers down which were of all these different people of different genders, race, age. And it said on the back, “This is a person who died of AIDS. They can be your brother, your sister, your mother, your lover, your father. They had dreams and they had hopes and they were interested in this, and they were interested in that. This is what's been lost.” And those flyers came down, and there were the bloody bones, and there are these people, eating their lunch. Well we went in and out, like that. And again, recognizance had been done by Dennis Kane and his boyfriend, Bob Henry. In fact, we'd gotten together for a meeting – I think it was at Steven Mishon's place – and saw slides of the Citicorp building – how we were going to enter, where we were going to do this.

James and I ran off those flyers where we worked. All those magazines contributed a lot. They have no idea, and I thank them. They contributed quite a lot – lots of Xeroxes.

So, we did that action that week – in those couple of days – it was that day. And the night before was *McNeil-Lehrer*. So this happened, and it was Barbara Hughes, Steven Mishon, Neil Broome, Anna Bloom, Mark Lowe Fisher and Jon Greenberg – they went in. When they came out they were all arrested, and we were there – me and James and Dennis and Bob went to the precinct on 42nd Street – that's where they were held. We finally got them out of jail at like – it was late – something like three, four, five o'clock in the morning. It was freezing out. Absolutely freezing that night. And then we went back to Tim's to watch it, because we wanted to see it. Then we went down to the World Trade Center the next morning. Then we hit the Citicorp building, and then we hit – remember at TKTS, there was a Marine recruiting place? We hit there with a second coffin and more bloody bones and the same thing. And then we went to Grand Central for Day of Desperation. That was within 48 hours.

**SS: And what happened at Grand Central?**

JE: It was all worked out. All these different affinity groups and people knew that they were going to meet at Grand Central at a certain time. At that point, we would take over Grand Central and the trains would be blocked, and people couldn't get on their trains. The message, again, was all about the AIDS crisis and the war at home, and a person died every couple of minutes from AIDS. I can't remember the exact numbers. I'm sure it's here somewhere. So, it was unbelievable. The amount of people that were in Grand Central – it was completely filled with us. And there were camera crews there, because again, ACT UP's media had done a great blitz. I remember because I think it

was – I want to say it was Sue Simmons from Channel 7 or whatever – and I was standing with Tim and Carrie and at this point, already someone had gotten on top of the clock, and they had gotten on top of the thing for where the trains come in, and they put the banner up. And down the steps they came with those purple balloons, and they went up in the air with the Silence = Death banner and the whole thing – your breath was taken away. These foghorns went off. It was unbelievable – you felt chills in your body. I remember standing there with Tim and Carrie, and I think all of a sudden Sue Simmons is there and she starts to talk to me, and I said, “No, talk to him.” And there's footage of Tim. I think we were all completely overwhelmed.

Tape II  
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**SS: What was the affinity group structure within the organization? How did that function?**

JE: The affinity group – basically we were going to do an action, but it wasn't really under the “auspices” of ACT UP in a sense, so that ACT UP legally was not to be held responsible –that being done by the affinity group or any of the affinity groups took on that responsibility. So it was sort of covert, in that way.

**SS: Could anybody start an affinity group?**

JE: Yeah.

**SS: And could the affinity group do whatever they wanted?**

JE: They could do whatever they wanted.

**SS: And, if you got in trouble – like you guys getting arrested at *McNeil-Lehrer* –**

JE: We would line up a lawyer beforehand.

**SS: An ACT UP lawyer?**

JE: An ACT UP lawyer, yes. There were lawyers that had decided they wanted to work with ACT UP pro-bono. So when a big thing was coming down – like Day of Desperation – that stuff to some extent was in place, except that you as the affinity group would then also have to get a hold of this group of people and talk to them and you'd probably take them aside and tell them – you might not tell them all of what you were doing, because you kind of couldn't – but you'd say, “We're going to probably need a lawyer.”

**SS: What finally happened with those *McNeil-Lehrer* people? Did they have a trial?**

JE: No. Community service, probably. That, I don't remember. That's something that Barbara Hughes would definitely know.

**SS: So, what were some other things that you worked on in ACT UP?**

JE: Well basically, I was always working with the Marys within ACT UP, so that was January '91. So I think our next huge Marys work in conjunction with other people was Kennebunkport. And the other thing was that both Dennis Kane and John Stump were both getting more sick through that year. That was the other thing – here you were, working with people incredibly closely – it was like family, you know? You were very close to each other, even though I don't think we all knew what each other did in the outside world. That didn't matter. You met people that you'd probably never meet in your entire life under any other circumstance, and here you met – you got very close, and that was it, for life.

**SS: How much time did you spend with each other?**

JE: We were definitely seeing each other probably once a week at ACT UP, and probably at least another time of week for a meeting. And as it got closer to Kennebunkport – for Kennebunkport, we did recognizance – it was James Baggett, Tim Bailey, myself, and Ken Bing. We got a rental car. It was June – it was the same weekend as the Yale graduation, because on the way back from Kennebunkport we hit Yale because Bush was speaking there. We had to get that in there. It was never dull. And, we went up to Kennebunkport to check out the town. We also met with ACT UP Maine.

**SS: How big was ACT UP Maine?**

JE: ACT UP Maine was not very big, but there must have been at least 20 people. There was a wonderful woman, and I'm not going to remember her name. And there were two guys and in fact, they're in this picture. James Baggett would know their names. They were very hospitable and really lovely people, and we went on the town and got up as close as we could to the gates of Kennebunkport.

**SS: Explain the action a little bit.**

JE: Well, it's George Bush Sr.'s – and I guess the whole family's – summer home. Obviously, it's where they vacation and whatever. I guess they spend a lot of time there. And we knew that he, supposedly, would be there. I think it took place in September – Labor Day weekend. And we went up, checked out the town, kind of made friends with some people, and then we had ACT UP Maine there. Our whole thing was that we were going to bring up all these AIDS activists to do this march basically through the streets of Kennebunkport, to the home of George Bush, and leave him with a banner basically, which was all what George Bush could do about AIDS. It was numbered – big

long banner. I think it was probably 30 feet long or something, because I did a lot of painting on that banner. I laid that banner out, so I remember. And we were going to deliver this to George Bush. So we found hotels for people to stay in. I remember Peter Staley and Vincent Gagliostro – I did all the graphics with Vincent. The pictures in my bathroom are of all of us there – so for names, we have to look at it for a second. And there were vans and buses that came up from New York – from Housing Works, from Stand Up Harlem – just across the board. We had people from a whole bunch of different states that came, too.

**SS: How many people came, would you say?**

JE: A couple of thousand, easy – five thousand. I mean they were coming in from all over the place. It was unbelievable. Anyway, we went up the night before and tried to check everything out, and we had the big banner with us, and we had this loose idea basically of how this would go off. It was truly wild. We had food. We thought of every single angle. We got toilets – you name it. We tried to cover our bases in every way so that people also were taken care of, because a lot of people who came up were not well.

**SS: So how did the people of Kennebunkport respond to –?**

JE: Actually, quite well – very solicitous. People were giving out water as these people marched down the street, all the way to Kennebunkport. When we got to the entrance there, we laid out the banner and the speeches were made. Jon Greenberg gave that amazing, amazing speech, which I'm sure James has the tape.

**SS: Do you remember what he said? A word of it?**

JE: He was angry. I remember just finding it overwhelming. I found the whole thing incredibly overwhelming. And also, I think, because my part in it was just to make sure everything went smoothly. Things happened very quickly. I'm probably saying this for myself, but almost everybody I know who was involved in ACT UP – I would say that your project here is a really good idea, because I don't think a lot of people really talked about this stuff. I think we did it and went onto the next thing because we were in a war. There wasn't a lot of time to sit back and go, wow, wasn't that amazing what so and so said. It was more like, wow, you are incredible – and you went on with it. There wasn't a lot of pause. Even in terms of the Marys, things were starting to come to a head. So Kennebunkport was very successful and we worked on that for months. And there was that Labor Day weekend, and it went off and I have to say they did – after we left and we left the banner there, they made sure that a cop car ran over it. And, I don't know – I can't remember exactly how we got that banner back, but we did get the banner back because it comes in very handy later. So now we're in '91, and both Dennis Kane and John Stump died that year.

Tape I  
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**SS: Now, were you also involved in their care group? How did that work?**

JE: Yeah. Dennis was at home, Bob was there and his mom. They were taking care of him. We'd go and visit. At the time there was this experimental drug called Peptide-T that Anna Bloom was getting and we tried to get Dennis to take it. Figured he didn't have anything to lose. And with John – John lost his short-term memory. We took him to the hospital at one point and they were saying to him, “Who's the President?” He didn't know what the day was, but I think he was still trying to say it was Reagan. I remember James Baggett took care of John a lot and I remember being

over there one day just to hang out with him, because somebody would have to be with him. He was just such a sweet guy – just lovely. Very, very funny. He had a great sense of humor. He'd say things to me – when we'd be at an ACT UP demonstration and they'd be saying, “ACT UP, Fight Back, Fight AIDS!” – he'd be whispering in my ear, “ACT UP, Fried Eggs!” He was just this really funny and smart guy. Anyway, I was over at his house this day and he had this great cat that fetched, and John didn't know who I was – I was Carol. And when somebody called on the phone – and I've never known who called that day – he'd pick up the phone and say, “Oh Carol's here with me, everything's fine.” That was hard.

**SS: When those guys died, did you guys process it? What did you do?**

JE: We went to the memorial services.

**SS: And who organized the memorial services?**

JE: Dennis's was at the Gay and Lesbian Center.

**SS: Did his boyfriend organize that?**

JE: His boyfriend Bob Henry organized it, and his mom. I remember that.

About this time, the Marys were starting to meet – we'd been meeting, but we started to talk about David Wojnarowicz's book *Close to the Knives* and the passage in there that says, “Every time somebody dies of AIDS, I think their lover, their friends, should drive with their bodies 100 miles an hour down to the White House, and throw their body over the White House fence.” And we started thinking – goddamn right, that sounds just about right to us. So we decided that that's what we were going to do. We were going to put this out to anybody who was willing to do it. And we had certain people who would have to do a videotape. Anyway, we called it Stump Kane – after John and Dennis – and

we started to – that year, it was on the back of *Anonymous Queer*, the paper that was put out for Gay Pride, and it said, “Stump Kane.” In fact, I think it's here. And that's June – so this got put out in June 1992.

**SS: Can you show the other side, because this is quite a famous document. “Wake up queers or we’re all through.”**

JE: So that's June of '92. That's what we've been thinking a lot about – like, how we would do this, and we started to look into it. We went and saw –

**SS: And this was an overt conversation with people who knew they were going to die of AIDS – Jon Greenberg, Tim Bailey.**

Tape II  
00:15:00

JE: It was Tim and John and Mark Lowe Fisher.

**SS: And they were saying, I know I'm going to die, and I want you to put my body –**

JE: Actually we went around the room. We were in Steven Mishon's apartment, and we all talked about how we all wanted to die – like, when we died, what we wanted to happen. Burning of bodies on pyres was very high on the list. But I think during those discussions, to hear Tim and John and Mark – to talk about things it was very serious, and very like, you as a participant just knew that whatever it was they wanted, that's what we were going to do. But, it wasn't just about them, it was about me and Barbara and everybody else, too. We were all saying what we wanted. That was what made the dynamic in the group so amazing. We were very much there for each other.

This came out that June, so that's now almost a year after – anyway, we did the *Anonymous Queer* things and we had this idea that people would come to us and we

would videotape them saying what their wishes were, and that we would sort of carry out this mission, in a way. I'm not really sure what we were thinking, exactly, but that was the idea. To think about it now, it's wild. Anyway, what happened was I knew somebody who knew David Wojnarowicz – Gene Foos – and, I went to see Gene to say I knew that David was sick. I didn't know how sick he was. I went to sort of say that we wanted to use David's writing, and that we were thinking of this idea, and we wanted him to know – that if there was something that he personally was interested in. And Gene came back to us saying that David was too ill to make that kind of a decision. That was that summer. I remember because I was out in Fire Island with Tim, and I got the phone call that David Wojnarowicz had died. I called all the Marys and we realized that we wanted to do something, but we knew that the community would want to do something – David Wojnarowicz was really important to a lot of people. So we approached – through this friend of mine, Gene – David's lover Tom [Rauffenbart] and David's friends. And I went to David's apartment to talk with them.

**SS: The movie theater.**

JE: The movie theater. Carrie came with me. That was probably the hardest thing I've ever done. It was terrible. Most of those people didn't know who I was. I was an intruder. I had to basically convince them – suggest – that there were many, many people in the AIDS community that wanted to honor David and what they were thinking was this procession, but that we really would like their participation. Some of his friends were very against the idea. It was really hard to enter this room where these people were mourning this person.

**SS: Do you remember who was there?**

Tape II  
00:20:00

JE: Tom – all I remember was his boyfriend Tom, who was a very amazing person. He told me that he wanted to think about it – that it sounded very good to him. This all happened within a couple of days. It was very short notice – right after David died, and it was all very quick to happen. I mean, I could tell you the date of it. If this came out in '92, June, David Wojnarowicz died – the memorial was Wednesday, July 29, 1992. So it was so close after. It was a Wednesday. I think I probably had to – I mean, I'd been at David's house; it couldn't have been far before. The next thing I knew, they were in agreement. And still some of his friends were very protective, I'd say.

What we had figured out to do was a procession from David's house down Second Avenue, past Tompkins Square Park, through the Village, and we'd end up at the parking lot at the corner, near Astor Place. When we got to the parking lot – this was amazing – we decided that we wanted to put up this slide with the text from *Close to the Knives* – “Every time somebody dies of AIDS, I want them to drive ...” So, that text we had had it made – I remember I was at some magazine with Vincent and James Baggett, and we made up these posters for David, and Tom allowed us to use this picture of David. We had this slide, which I have here.

**SS: Can you just read that text?**

JE: “I worry that friends will slowly become professional pall bearers, waiting for each death of their lovers, friends and neighbors, and polishing their funeral speeches. Perfecting their rituals of death, rather than a relatively simple ritual of life – such as screaming in the streets.”

And that's what this procession was. We had these – what we called clackers. They were little pieces of wood. There was a slide of the White House, with the text over

it that at the point that the procession got there – up would go the slide on the side of this building, because the building happened to be white and it would work with the slide. The thing was we needed a place for the slide projector to plug into. And lo and behold, we were looking around out there, and we talked to the guys in the parking lot and they wouldn't let us plug into their booth, and James says, “What about this?” We look down at the bottom of the street light and the plate is knocked off, and sure enough isn't there a place to plug into – so we do. So Carrie drove our little red Toyota Corolla pick-up, with Tim and Bob Henry and the slide projector, and they got this other lens and as soon as the procession came down, up went the slide and there was a reading of *Close to the Knives* by one of David's friends. All of his friends were there and Tom was there, and they were carrying posters of David and David's work – the piece with the shot of the buffaloes going down the mountain. And big sunflowers – these beautiful big sunflowers.

Well, Barbara Hughes and I – and we had this huge banner that said, “David Wojnarowicz died of AIDS,” and the dates. It was a big black banner with white lettering that was carried at the front of the procession. People off the streets came into the procession – it got huge. I remember Bob Rafsky being there – walking alongside of me and when we got to Houston Street he said, “We can't just go down there, we have to continue longer!” Bob always had such incredible energy. But we did manage to get it down to where we thought this would be, and Barbara Hughes and I decided that once we got there we'd get the van, and we'd light it on fire and we'd have this pyre.

We searched all over to get – say, “Do you have fabric that's not fire repellent?” We wanted something to burn. We thought we had found it. So there was a huge group

of people and we had this can of lighter fluid, and we were dousing this thing in lighter fluid, and they were trying to light it, and I've got lighter fluid all over me. We were insane, in a way. Finally the thing took, and we pushed it out into that whole area between Cooper Union and the parking lot. In fact, there's a shot in the bathroom – it's burning, and they start throwing these posters – the posters they were carrying, and the sunflowers, onto the pyre. It was unbelievable. So in a way, that was the first political funeral. From there it was really wild. That was July. We all did the Holland Tunnel action.

Tape I  
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**SS: And Dirk --**

JE: Roundtree was the person that read the piece from *Close to the Knives* at David Wojnarowicz's memorial procession. I just wanted to say it, because I think it was very hard for David's friends to come around to this idea and they really did in the end, and they were incredibly supportive.

**SS: So let's talk about the Holland Tunnel action.**

JE: The Holland Tunnel action had to be that August. It was that summer. It was because they were trying to, again, get rid of Roe vs. Wade – it was about abortion rights. It was actually a whole conglomeration of different groups that did the Holland Tunnel action – it wasn't just ACT UP. It was across the board, many, many different activist groups.

**SS: This was the second action that ACT UP did – the first being Stop the Church – in which abortion rights was a major demand. Why do you think that that was so? That ACT UP was so involved in something that had to do with abortion?**

JE: Well I think first off, there were many women in ACT UP, and abortion rights was a real issue for women. Whether you were straight or lesbian or whatever, I think one recognized that women should have the right to choose what happens to their bodies and what they want to do with it. It's nobody else's business. And on that level, that's not a hard stretch from what people with AIDS were fighting for as well.

**SS: Yeah, but did ACT UP get involved with a lot of other non AIDS-related issues?**

JE: I think in terms of – I think they would give their support behind something. It probably would depend on what it was. I don't think they would say no completely to something. I think it would really depend on what it was. This was a no-brainer.

**SS: So there was no tension inside the organization about doing things that were not AIDS-related?**

JE: I'm sure there was tons of tension all the time about everything.

**SS: But in this case, you don't remember specifically?**

JE: I don't remember specifically about this, but I guess, also in my mind, there was no tension. [LAUGHS] I decided the tension wasn't worth – I didn't really care about the argument.

**SS: Right, for you it was organic.**

JE: Yeah, if I thought this was what I wanted to be doing, and that was the right thing, that was what I was going to put my energy into. I think there were a lot of people in ACT UP that thought that way, and I think there were probably a lot of people who didn't think that way. I just always found that to be a waste of time. And we didn't

have a lot of time – that's what it always felt like to me. You know, there were tons of arguments on the floor of ACT UP.

**SS: Do you remember any?**

JE: I'm sure I do, but you know it doesn't stick out to me at this point, because that was – you know, you could argue about – what was it? About the CDC in the *New York Times*, that was going to cost us a fortune to do it – sixteen thousand dollars – the full-page ad. Wasn't that about women and AIDS? I think that's what the big who-ha was about. Well in the end, it went, it happened. Who wants to sound off this way or that way, but I think in most cases they tried to do – one, of a group – I think you try to do what you really thought was the right thing, the thing you believed in. I don't know, maybe I'm not answering this question.

**SS: Well this gets back to that question that we talked about earlier about the personality type that was attracted to ACT UP. I mean, there was so much discussion and so much debate and confrontation about facing and dealing with differences on the floor.**

Tape II  
00:30:00

JE: You know I have a feeling that by the time – these years for us, for myself, my involvement – by the time I was watching my friends die; I didn't have any energy to get too involved in that. Not taking a moral stance or something righteous or anything, but purely because it was a total waste of fucking time.

**SS: So, you felt that that level of –**

JE: I thought that the level of commitment as far as the Marys -- I can't speak for the whole floor –

**SS: But that that level of discussion, you felt it was a waste of time?**

JE: Not a waste of time. Nothing's a waste of time, but I think if it takes away from what your primary objective is – I don't think you had a lot of time for those kind of discussions, completely. I think it felt way more close to the bone, and way more – people were dying. It was a fucking fact. You'd see somebody one week, and the next week you could find out that somebody was really ill, sick, and now dead. I mean, it went like that. And, if you then had spent any time with someone on a really close basis – I probably have a really, at this point in my life, strange attitude about dying and death and all those things. I mean and life, in a way – I think it's short, and I think you really have to cram in as much as possible.

**SS: Was there ever a time when you weren't sure what was right, inside ACT UP?**

JE: Maybe more towards the end of when I kind of broke away from ACT UP. But at that point I was working with City AIDS Actions – so, I'm kind of jumping ahead.

**SS: Let's get back to the Holland Tunnel.**

JE: I don't know – the next couple of things I'm going to say to you all happened between '91 – when people in my affinity group are dying, or die – and '93. It's basically an unbelievable, overwhelming time – and under great, great strain and duress, and we were pushing through. Anyway, the Holland Tunnel action happened, and I was in one of the first waves to come out with – I also by this point was part of a group called Fierce Pussy – which was a lesbian public art collective of women who were lesbians and artists and we all got together.

**SS: Who were some of the other people?**

JE:     Myself, Carrie Yamaoka, Zoë Leonard, Nancy Brooks Brody, Pam Brandt, Allison Frawley, Suzanne Wright. Those were a lot of the founding members. Jean Carlomusto was involved. In fact, Jean had one of the best baby pictures, ever. I was really involved with that, as well. There was a lot of crossover with Fierce Pussy and certain things for the Marys and ACT UP. But, we'll get to that later. I say that because the Holland Tunnel action – those were the other people I was very involved with. So we, in fact – a bunch of us in Fierce Pussy – I think we were one of the first or second out the door of this building in which we all were hiding in, and basically we're chained together at the waist, running into the mouth of the lane that goes into the Holland Tunnel into this huge group of dark blue suits, which were the police with Billy clubs.

**SS:     They were waiting for you.**

JE:     They were waiting for us. They didn't know where we were coming from, and we did take them by surprise.

**SS:     How did they know you were there?**

JE:     They'd heard a rumor – and they'd been looking, and they knew it was going to come off on that day and there was press. You were given an address on a piece of paper to show up at a certain place.

**SS:     And who were the organizers, do you remember?**

JE:     I don't totally remember. It was actually quite an amalgam of people, as I remember.

**SS:     Did you ever feel that there was any kind of informant or police –?**

JE:     Totally.

**SS: Into that action, particularly?**

JE: There was an informant, and I can't remember who this person was but in fact, the place where I was, they kept that person in the building, because we were pretty sure that that was the person –

**SS: It was someone that was one of us, who was revealed to be an informant? Or someone who –**

Tape II  
00:35:00

JE: Somebody who joined in. But they were pretty sure that there was something not kosher with this person. In fact, they didn't let them out of the building. We got out before they did.

**SS: And did you ever see that person again, after that?**

JE: Do not remember.

**SS: Just because, other people have pointed to this.**

JE: That was really quite a stressful maneuvering to get us in that building and out of that building. But it was successful, in the sense that we did close down the Holland Tunnel, and it was on the news, and I think it was very successful.

**SS: What marked the success of an action?**

JE: I think two-fold. I think you knew it in your heart, whether it was successful or not. I think press was important – what got out to the public. You certainly weren't doing it for the converted, even though it was the converted that was there. I think you were doing it so that the world would know what was going on, and draw attention and have to make them read some information. If you could get some information there, I think it wasn't a hard jump thinking, “Well, wait a minute here, what

is this about?" Or "Oh, really? That's what's going on?" I think that those things were really important, and I think the tactic worked at the time.

The other reason I bring up the Holland Tunnel action is because it actually had a huge impact on us. Mark Lowe Fisher was one of the people that did the Holland Tunnel action. We were all given community service afterwards, which was to clean up Tompkins Square Park. Mark got garbage duty, and I think – they were told that he was HIV-positive. I think that was the start of – he was already sick, but I think doing that work there wasn't – that was my belief, anyway. I think that he got sick from that. Worse. So, that was in August or September -- the year wasn't really great. But we were all going to meetings and we were still doing this Stump Kane meeting – we were still meeting about that. Tim went to the hospital. He had a collapsed lung, and I drove him up to St. Luke's Roosevelt. This is all right before the election of Clinton. And Tim goes in the hospital – I believe, that week before. So like November of – I can't remember anymore.

**SS: So you had at least three friends who were really sick at the same time – Jon, Mark and Tim. Were you talking to them about their treatments? Because they took radically different paths.**

JE: Yes. Jon was very holistic. Jon was very smart. I think they all did what seemed to be the best way to deal with their health. I was the most involved with Tim. I was his health proxy.

**SS: We've interviewed people who were in ACT UP who never were close to a person who died of AIDS. And then, there were people who were close to many**

**people who died of AIDS. Do you think that there was something or in your personality that brought you closer to people when they were in a health crisis?**

JE: I wonder about it now. Not because of AIDS, but because of – it made sense to me. I never thought about it. Also, firsthand seemed to be the best way to learn too, to understand and also to see – I would go to the doctor with Tim quite a lot, and just the decisions one had to make and looking up information. The other thing I should say to you is TAG – the Treatment Action Group – I’ve been involved with those guys for years, as well.

**SS: Are you still in TAG?**

JE: Yes. I actually have now been made a Board member after all these years, as of May of this past year. But, TAG broke off in 1992 – they were Treatment and Data group – T&D – and they broke off to become TAG. But, those guys are my friends – Mark [Harrington] and Gregg [Gonsalves], who's now with GMHC, and Peter [Staley] and Spencer [Cox]. They're very smart people and I have always relied on being able to ask them questions. They've been very, very helpful. And so it was, at that time.

**SS: So, you were consulting with them?**

JE: I would consult with anybody I could get my hands on.

**SS: You were saying?**

JE: One thing I was saying – I’d been thinking about why I couldn’t totally answer your question about when did you have meetings. It was that, in fact – because of our life, really. I mean, there wasn’t like “Oh, let’s have a meeting.” It wasn’t like that.

It was like, you need to be talking to somebody on the phone all the time, or you were going to be at so and so's house. A lot of times we met at Tim's.

**SS: What happened to your other friends?**

JE: I probably didn't have any other friends, after a while. I mean, I had friends – people in the art world. I'll tell you, at a certain point I would say, that year and up until – there were just a lot of people that I just didn't talk to for a long time, because I felt like I was in a different zone. In fact, you couldn't really have a conversation with me very easily. I don't know – that's what it seems like now. A lot of people I'm sort of back in touch with now. It's very interesting. It took me a long time. It's not all too dissimilar to, after my father died, there were a lot of people – I'd made my list, if you know what I mean. I think people do that, you know, after people die. It's like, do we have something or we don't have something. Do I have time for this? I don't have time for this. So I think unconsciously you make your list, and I probably did that – right, wrong or indifferent. And then time goes on and your life changes and I think my life's gone through lots of changes, and you come around, in some way to certain things.

**SS: Did you ever have overt conversations with friends who were not in ACT UP about the different paths you were on?**

JE: More maybe, they'd say, "What are you doing?" And I'd tell them. Most people would find it very interesting and curious – especially if they didn't live here in New York, or they were involved in certain things, as well.

**SS: Did people call you when they became infected or if they needed help?**

JE: I got phone calls when people needed help. I still do.

**SS: So, I want to get back to Tim and TAG.**

JE: So, I was involved with TAG. In fact, I was following Hypericin for them.

**SS: So now you were doing science, also.**

JE: Well I was learning a lot – firsthand really, going with Tim to the doctor a lot. In fact, he'd been having this chest pain. He was amazing. He would get up and move around with a chest pain. And I'd say to him things like, "I don't think that sounds right." I mean, we're talking layman here, but I honestly don't think it sounds right that you have this major pain in your chest. And, I took him for a chest X-ray. I've been to this place too many times – it's the diagnostic lab on 58<sup>th</sup> Street, which is part of St. Luke's Roosevelt. Sure enough, he had a collapsed, punctured lung and he was walking around like that. That's another thing – most of the people that I had first hand dealings with – it's beyond being a trooper. It's like, the will to live and want to live their lives, and why shouldn't you – all of those things. Spirit – just blows your mind. And, it makes you feel great. I've always felt like, I'm the witness. I'm still here. I'm still here to tell a story. I owe that to my friends too, to be able to do that. It was kind of hard back and forth. You never feel completely okay with that. Those people were my age.

**SS: Were there questions about what kind of treatments? Peter and those guys were totally in the know about the most advanced treatments. Were they recommending things?**

JE: Don't forget, triple combination was not there yet. So we're looking still at AZT, ddI and ddC. And gancyclovir if you had CMV retinitis. Tim eventually had it all. But, the reason I was telling you about Tim was because he went into the hospital with a collapsed lung, and he was to have surgery. They were going to staple it back

Tape III  
00:05:00

together. He was amazing. And I kept a notebook. Anytime Tim went to the hospital, I had a notebook, which I still have. I'd write down everything that went on. It was the only way I could keep track, and be able to keep track of his temperature, and all those things, because they would make a difference. In fact when Tim went down, I went down all the way to – before he goes into surgery. He says, “Well you better have the Mariachi band ready for me when I come out.” Tim was totally fun – absolutely stunning and fun. I remember they put the cap on him and they start to run – I think it was vancomycin, and I said, “He’s allergic to it.” And they said, “No he’s not,” and I said, “Yes, he is.” I had my book there. Sure enough, what they were going to give him he was allergic to, so they didn’t give it to them. Hello here – but all right, you still have to put your trust in this whole situation when so many times, you ran into things where people didn’t know what they were doing, or they’d give you a shot of something in your IV, but they don’t clean the port. Clean ports, clean anything – still, to this day – hospitals are not the cleanliest places in the world.

**SS: Did you ever have a conflict with a friend about their treatment?**

JE: No. I mean, not in the sense that I might say, well what about this or what about that. I would never argue. What did I know? I just was going on my intuition and what I’d learned, unless – I don’t think so.

**SS: So, I guess Jon died before Tim?**

JE: No, Mark died.

**SS: On the plane.**

JE: Tim was in the hospital with a collapsed lung. He came out of surgery and they put him on what we used to call – it was the waterfall machine. It re-circulates the

air, and you've got a chest tube here, and he had these big staples in the back of his shoulder. And, he's laying in bed and we seem to think that he's progressing okay, and I get a phone call, and it's Barbara Hughes. I'm in Tim's room, and she says, "Mark's very sick, he's on his way back from Rome." Oh, this is the thing – Mark had gone to Rome, to Italy, and before Mark left, I said to him, "You've got my number, if you need me for any reason, you call." And I think Barbara had done this with him, as well. So he didn't know – I don't think he knew that Tim was in hospital. I don't remember if he had left before that. So I got this phone call and she said, "Mark's very sick. He'll come in at the airport, and they'll rush him to St. Luke's Roosevelt emergency." I said I'd go downstairs and look for him. But I'm talking to her slightly code – not saying all, because Tim's in bed, and I didn't want to get him worried.

Tape III  
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I got off the phone and he said, "What was that?" And I said, "Oh, it's Barbara, I told her I'd call her back." So I leave the room, and I go down the hall and I call her back. By the time I call her back, she said that Mark's died and he won't be coming in. I think I had even gone down to the emergency room, to look for him. I can't even remember. But anyway the next phone call I had with her – oh I think she called again in his room and I said, "Let me call you back." She told me that Mark had died 20 minutes outside of Kennedy Airport, on the plane. He was going to be taken to Redden's Funeral Home, which is on 14<sup>th</sup> Street, and we were going to meet that night at Mark's apartment. They had gotten into Mark's apartment with Steven. I knew that all that planning for Stump Kane – it was about Mark. I think maybe we all knew that, somehow – that we were going through the motions, but it was about one of us somehow.

So I went back to Tim's room, and he said, "I just took a valium. Now you can tell me what's the matter." I started to tell him, and I got very upset – and you know, he let me cry. So, when I left Tim in the hospital that night, I went to Mark's. It turned out that Mark had left everything in order. His Rolodex was completely color-coded as in what order we were supposed to call people – all to do with what was now going to happen, which was what we had decided. So, we knew all this stuff – we had been meeting with someone who was an undertaker, who was actually Barbara Hughes's brother-in-law at the time. So, he knew the ins and outs, because it turns out that you have the perfect right. You have to be embalmed – you can't move a body, without being embalmed – but once somebody's embalmed, you can take them wherever you want, as long as you bring them back to the place of origin, which then goes to wherever – cremation or burial. So we knew all this stuff.

Steven and Barbara had talked to Redden's and the decision was made that we'd have him lie in state, basically, at Judson Memorial, and that we would then process his body out of Judson up Sixth Avenue, to Bush headquarters. And it was the night before the election. Well, Mark died on – I believe it was a Friday, if I'm not mistaken – and I think this was on a Monday night? So we all went into gear, and we got a slip-lid casket, which in the Jewish religion is what they use, because the top slips off. So it wasn't like opening a casket, you could just slip the lid off. It was a complete frenzy, and I was going back and forth to the hospital to see Tim and we talked about what was going on. He wrote a note to Mark, that I was to read. It was very hard. It was very hard to watch Tim and Mark be dead and you were supposed to keep your brains about you, to move forward and not get upset. You didn't really have time.

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**SS: You had to do an action.**

JE: Yes, but it was also – I don't think we at all forgot that it was about our friend – our comrade, our friend, and we were going to do what he wanted us to do. So that was the bottom line – and everything else fit in around it. So this was all happening at the same time. We got Mark from Redden's, and we went to Judson Memorial and practiced walking around the room with him, with the casket up on our shoulders – because he wasn't light, even though he looked really skinny. And so it happened. There was the memorial, and James has footage of all that. People got up and spoke, and then people left the building. Then one more time, we picked him up and we had taken the lid off, and we then processed out of Judson, onto the street there and then down to Sixth Avenue, where we passed Tim's apartment, where we had a big banner hanging off of his building. I remember that morning. Carrie and I were living in Hoboken at the time. So, we were going back and forth. And that morning we woke up and it was raining out, and Carrie and I said, "Oh my God, Mark's going to get wet. We have to get umbrellas." We went to the wholesale district and bought 40 huge black umbrellas. Then, we were back at Barbara Hughes's house, before we went to Judson. We had the black umbrellas, and we made those pyres that we'd used a number of times before – it's basically a broomstick with an empty paint can that you can buy to mix paint in, with toilet paper saturated in kerosene, and you light it. So we had these torches. I think we were all shaking and we were all in complete shock. We'd spent a little time with Mark at Judson before everybody got there. So, we saw him.

So, we did this procession down Sixth Avenue, all the way to Bush's headquarters on 45<sup>th</sup> Street. It was actually pretty amazing, because as the cops and everybody had

started to come along as we would pass, and Mark was covered with the umbrellas. They started to take their hats off, and they turned off their radios. Once we got to Bush's headquarters we put the casket down, and lo and behold, we had thought about the banner from Kennebunkport and thought it would be so perfect, because Mark had worked so hard on that – and where was it? It turned out that it had gone down to the action at the Republican convention and it was with – was it with Scott Sawyer's mother? Somebody's mother – and we literally called this person on that weekend before, and she FedEx-ed it up to us. It was meant to be. And we put Mark down, and the banner went all the way down 45<sup>th</sup> Street, and it covered up to here on him on the casket, and there were speeches made. Another Mary, Michael Cunningham, was there and he made a speech. And Eric Sawyer made a speech, and I want to say Michael Marco but who was it? Bob Rafsky. Then, when we finished there – we had a station wagon, and we put Mark back into the station wagon and we brought him back to Redden's. And you know, it was a big blow.

**SS: Was his family involved in this? How did they respond to him?**

JE: I have no idea.

**SS: You never saw them?**

JE: I never met his family.

**SS: And what about David Wojnarowicz? Was his family involved in that?**

JE: You'd have to ask Tom. The only dealings I had – Steven Mishon was one of Mark's executors, so he had dealings. That was a big, huge thing for Steven – taking that on. That was very difficult.

**SS: Because the family was hostile?**

JE: I don't remember.

**SS: I'm just getting at this because you told us earlier about how present your father was for you, and you're talking about people going through the most important experiences of their lives and having others – basically strangers – become the people who are responsible for them. Did you ever talk with them – with other people – about their absence of family around their illness?**

JE: Tim I know the best, in that sense. Jon Greenberg's brother Neil was around for Jon. You know, there's probably stuff I'm not remembering, because I can't or don't want to. But I would say that – also things happened so quickly, and because of what Mark wanted or Tim wanted or Jon wanted, we followed through with their wishes. And I'd also say, about one's family – the crazy part of all of it too was that in fact, in one way, you felt like you knew each other incredibly well, and on the other hand you probably didn't know who their parents were or about their family. There wasn't enough time, somehow, either.

**SS: Yeah, but there's a meaning and a value there, that this group of gay and lesbian people assume that each other have to take the responsibility – even to such a degree that these people that you're so close to that they're dying with you, and you don't discuss with them the fact that their families are absent. I mean, how do you understand that now?**

JE: I don't know. Is it understandable? Barbara might have something to add to that. I don't know. I say that, in terms of Mark. I don't think I thought about it after a certain point. That wasn't important anymore.

**SS: Right, but that's interesting that you didn't think about it.**

JE: You'd be amazed – we just believed in what we were doing, I think, for each other. That was the bottom line. The bottom line was Mark, and what we could do for him.

**SS: Let's move on to something else – the TAG split. What was your understanding of what was the cause of that?**

JE: I think they basically had gone to a certain point, and I think they were incredibly involved with treatment to such a degree that that was their main focus, and so much so that they were going to actually have dealings with government officials, pharmaceutical companies. That was the only way to push this agenda to get treatment. I don't want to speak for them – they can speak for themselves. But I would say that they thought that that was most important, and the only way they could do their work well and succinctly, was to go out on their own, so that's what they did.

**SS: When did you leave ACT UP?**

JE: I don't know if I ever felt as though I left. It was more like a drifting, at that point. I know that it was probably not until '96. I'd been working with City AIDS Action. Which actually comes in later.

**SS: What is City AIDS Action?**

JE: City AIDS Action was also a committee of ACT UP, and I believe we actually started in '92. When Giuliani came into office, we decided – it was a line of Marys – B.C. and Ruth and all these people. We were really interested in AIDS issues in New York City, and so that's what we kind of galvanized around, to go after Giuliani. The first day he was on the job we had the action at City Hall, and job one was AIDS, in

terms of what we thought. And he was there to dismantle basically DAS [Department of AIDS Services] and any kind of safety net for New York City anyway, which – it's probably been done in many ways, certainly.

**SS: Who did you work with on that committee?**

JE: That was Barbara Hughes again, B.C. Craig, Lou Finkelstein, Carrie was involved. David – I can't remember people's names.

**SS: You've spoken so eloquently and honestly about positive experiences that you've had with other people in ACT UP and being enriched by your own contributions and your interactions with other people. Was there any element of ACT UP that you felt personally uncomfortable with?**

JE: I was just there to do the work. I don't know.

**SS: Did you go to parties? ACT UP parties and benefits and that kind of thing?**

JE: Yeah, I remember doing the ACT UP auction one year. I defended a Chihuly. I basically guarded it because it was glass. There were so many people there. That kind of thing.

**SS: So looking back now – because now, you've been out eight years of ACT UP – would you say that there's a lasting reflection in the artwork that you're making at the moment, of that experience?**

JE: Yeah.

**SS: Can you explain what that is?**

JE: I think this idea of witness and memory. I think that's probably – it stays with me in that way, and it colors things. I mean, if you looked at my work – I don't

know if it's the first thing that jumps out at you, but I think if you stay with it a little bit, I think something comes across. It's almost like – which was sometimes, in a way, in which ACT UP could work too – seduction. And then, boom. Wait a minute, how did I arrive here? How did I get to that thought? Why does that leave an impression on me? I think that's important.

**SS: Were you attracted to any particular materials because of your experience in ACT UP?**

JE: I'd always done photography. I still use photography in my work. The work has become more installation based, in some ways. Some of the photographs work more like sculpture. I'm really interested in this place where sculpture and photography intersect – so it's more active maybe that way – I don't know. I mean, in thinking back – at the time that I was doing the photographs of the women, was at the time when Tim was probably the most ill. I mean, before he died. And it's really interesting, because I got to show him that work, but I think it was sort of the first time I'd gotten to show him work – which is really funny, in a way. But, it was really meaningful, too.

**SS: Because you were an artist in your capacity to create things for ACT UP, but people weren't seeing your work.**

JE: Again – oh, I did this benefit once and it was for making a mask, and I burned this American flag and molded it into a mask, and it had pearls over this part of what might be the eye. Tim went and he bought it. I didn't know he was going to do that – that kind of thing.

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**SS: This is my last question. Looking back on ACT UP – just from your point of view, what would you say was its greatest achievement, and what would you say was its biggest disappointment or unfulfilled wish?**

JE: I think its greatest achievement was putting AIDS in the main light of the public – to get attention so that we could save people’s lives, basically. I don’t look at things in terms of regret, so I think it did its job at the time it existed. And I think it made a big impression on a lot of people, and I think it changed a lot of people’s lives. I know it did mine.

**SS: Okay, thank you.**

JE: I have to say. Can I say one thing? The only thing I would have spoken about was Tim’s funeral and that’s the only thing we didn’t get to – so I feel –

**SS: Do you want to talk about that?**

JE: Is that okay with you? Do you guys have that?

**SS: Please tell us.**

JE: I think it was really important. I just have to say that – poor James!

**SS: Of course.**

JE: After Mark had died – that was in ’92 – as we came into ’93, Tim had gotten really ill, and you were talking about family before, and I had met his mother now on a couple of occasions and his sister and brother. So it was Gay Pride that year, and by this time Tim had been in the hospital for about two weeks, and he had lost his short-term memory and he had CMV retinitis and it had traveled to his brain. I’d promised him that we would only be in the hospital for about a week and now it was two weeks. They were basically telling me there wasn’t really anything they could do anymore. So, Tim wanted

to go home. And so, we did that. Then it was sort of a process of making him really comfortable, and I'd gotten a nurse to help out. She wasn't quite a real registered nurse, but she was HIV-positive herself, actually. She was a sweetheart. And Tim – I'd had really wild experiences – which we don't have time for – in the hospital with him at St. Luke's Roosevelt.

**SS: You're not going to tell us, after that build-up?**

JE: Well, things like – because he'd lost his short-term memory, he really wanted to smoke in the hospital. And I also had to keep looking for a roommate that would – it was hard to be with somebody who was really, really sick, as well, in the same room. Not that everybody wasn't sick, because it was really the AIDS ward – but who was a little more ambulatory – let's put it that way. Because the first roommate we had was on an oxygen machine, and was really not well. Tim wanted a cigarette, and we couldn't smoke cigarettes in the room. And I'd be pointing out the sign to him, and he said, "What kind of hotel is this?" And we'd go on, and he thought it was a hotel, and I'd keep a dirty ashtray in the drawer and say, "Look, you did have a cigarette." I felt terrible about lying like that, you know? But there was no real way to totally make sense of anything anymore. He always knew who I was and there was total communication, it's just that he didn't know where he was, exactly. And he was starting to lose his sight, as well.

Well anyway, Tim was the menswear designer for Pat Field. So he was very into clothes and his appearance and everything. Anyway, one time I got a phone call – I was working at another magazine by then, actually it was *GQ* – freelance – and I got a phone call from the hospital saying they had tied him to the bed. Well, basically what happened

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was, he'd gotten out of bed and he was trying to put the sheet on, and he was asking the nurse, "Would you help me gather it here?" They obviously didn't want to help him out with his dress. So, they tied him to the bed. So I left work, went running over to the hospital – because that's what I did. Basically I was at the hospital all the time. And I was furious with them. They were like, "Well, you have to have somebody here with him." It was terrible stuff. It was at that point that I changed his room, because I thought it was better if he was with somebody who maybe got up and walked around a lot and whatever. I would stay with him really late at night at the hospital until he went to sleep, because by this time, he would have these really, really bad headaches. I would massage his head and eventually get him to go to sleep and then say, "I'll be back in the morning." I'd sneak in really early in the morning. I figured my way into the hospital so that I could get to see the doctors, because they always made it really inconvenient, if you follow me. So I out-foxed them, and I had my whole routine, and I was written into Tim's chart that I would have 24-hour access to him, because I was his health proxy. Anyway, I changed him to this other room, and this person actually was quite able to get around, and I'd explained to this person – actually, before I asked for Tim to be moved, would it be okay? And I told this person how sick Tim was.

So the first night in, he recognizes that he's not in the same room, and he keeps saying to me, "Are you sure I can be in here?" And I'm saying, "Yeah, it's fine – everything's cool." And James Baggett was there that day, and we helped move everything to the other room. So Tim was falling off to sleep and really, he'd been in this way of not really recognizing things and stuff. I knew where things were going – we're definitely on the downswing, not the up. He had made certain requests for after he died,

and I think there was a part of me that wanted final confirmation, if you know what I mean. Anyway, we had the curtain drawn and it was later in the evening. All of a sudden, he was wide awake. He was there – very present. And, it was my moment. We had this great conversation, and he was totally present. And I said, wow – I’ve been waiting for you. We talked about his political funeral, and that’s what he still wanted. I said, “I’m going to get you out of here, and we’re going to go home.”

**SS: Did you believe that when you said that?**

JE: Yeah – over my dead body would be any other way. And at some point at this point, a nurse walks in and says, “You have to leave.” I said, “Excuse me?” And Tim says, “I told you we were in the wrong room.” I said, “No, no, it’s okay, we’re not in the wrong room.” She comes back in and says, “You have to leave.” And I’m like, “Excuse me, I’m written into his chart, I don’t have to leave.” The lights were off now, and I was trying to get Tim to go to sleep because I didn’t know what was going on, and I wanted to make sure he was okay. The next thing I know, the door swings open and there’s somebody with a flashlight on me, and it’s the guards, and they’ve come to take me out of the room bodily. Tim sits up, and his eyes – I’ll never forget it – and I said to this guy, “What do you think you’re doing? Get out of this room right now, I’ll come out and talk to you in a moment.” And it took me a little while, and Tim was, “See, I told you, I told you, it wasn’t my room.” He said, “Where’s the car?” Because he knew I had the car there. I said, “It’s okay, it’s okay. You know what? I’ll take you out of here tonight, if that’s necessary – absolutely. But right now, I really want you to relax and just calm down. I don’t want you to be upset. Everything’s going to be fine, and I’m going to come right back, and you just take it easy, it’s going to be okay.” And when that guy

came in the room, I had that feeling of leaving my body and looking down at the situation thinking, this is very fucked up. What is wrong with this picture? And I thought, just be really calm.

So Tim was okay, and I left the room and I was shaking, and I got up to the nurse's station and I was holding onto that desk, and I was surrounded by four cops, guards, whatever you want to call them – security. I said, “You look through that book, I'm written in there, I have 24-hour access.” The nurse who had watched this whole thing was behind me, and he wouldn't stick up for me, and he knew. Well this went back and forth, back and forth – and finally, they couldn't find the page, but something happened where they tried to negotiate with me and she said, “Well you can stay here, but you have to sit in a chair outside of his room.” They finally got the guards to leave. But, what they did was completely illegal. And of course, the page all of a sudden turned up in the file, and later the nurse said to me, “That was completely outrageous what they did. You could file a suit against them.” I always thought about doing that, but things just happened really quickly, and the most important thing was Tim. I wanted him to feel safe in this place that obviously wasn't safe. It was so crazy.

**SS: That's really painful.**

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JE: Well anyway, there was this really terrible hospital experience. What was very interesting about it is on one hand, there were a few people in the hospital that definitely knew about people with AIDS and how to treat them. And then, there was a huge amount that did not. So, this was a good example of it. What you also figured out was that by being an activist, which Tim was and I was – so, here you were in this

situation where you were dependent on this hospital to give you what you needed. At the same time you could have these really, totally off the wall experiences. How you bridged the gap and how you handled it was all about the way in which this person would then be treated. So you had to be really careful, is what I'm saying, I guess.

I mean, I had another time with him – it was actually after the collapsed lung – I had my notebook with me. They hadn't told me he'd come into recovery, and I could see him in recovery. I stood by the door and I waited for the doctors to come out. I had seen that they'd knocked over the little waterfall machine, but they picked it up – it was accident, they backed into it. When they came out the doors I was standing there, and I had my notebook under my arm, and I said to them, "Listen, I'm Tim Bailey's friend and healthcare person, and I'd like to know – could you just tell me what's going on?" And the doctor hit me on the arm and said, "So what? So you can have a malpractice suit? What do you have in that notebook?" They had just brought him into recovery – hello. Again, it was that same kind of thing of like, separation from your body and you're watching it.

**SS: And these were people who worked with people with AIDS. These were his doctors?**

JE: Yeah, these were his doctors!

**SS: How do you understand that?**

JE: I don't understand it, at all! I think what goes around comes around, is all I can hope for.

**SS: Is that true? Promise me that that's true.**

JE: I hope it's true. It's got to be, because it was absolutely outrageous, and I had to think – pretend you're the nice sweet little Italian girl who's really dumb, and you're going to go, "Oh, I'm so sorry doctor – what was I thinking? This is just so I can remember, because I've got to call Tim's sister and mother." Say anything, but just give me what I want. Because you realize that they were functioning on this whole other level. Well it turned out sure enough, a week later, doesn't this huge malpractice suit come out, in the papers and the *Times* from St. Luke's Roosevelt. That's what they were freaked out about. So whatever – who knows why? I just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. I don't know. Anyway – just to give you an example.

So, you were jumping through a lot of hoops in the hospital, right? By the time – his doctor told me, there was nothing they could do. Because I basically was saying to them – listen, all the stuff that you're running here, I can do at home. I don't see any reason in keeping him here. And they were like, "Well, if that's the case, you're going to have to do it differently now – you're going to have to let him die," kind of thing, is what they tell you. Now you make your mind up, and you tell me what you've decided tomorrow morning.

**SS: What do they mean? To stop all the meds?**

JE: Yeah. They're going to make him comfortable. It's such a way to talk to people. The bedside manner is really – there's not a lot of care. Bedside manner is really pfft. Anyway, by the next morning, I got there really early, so I could be there and tell them hey, we're going home. So that's what we did. And James came and had my car and got Tim in a wheelchair, because you've got to go out in a wheelchair and he couldn't really walk anyway. He was wearing his light blue denim shirt, and he put on

his leopard skin printed silk scarf, and his sunglasses, and he looked his fabulous self, and we put him in a car and drove down the West Side Highway, and it was a beautiful day.

It was me, Tim and James and Tim Hamilton – Tim’s friend from Ohio – they went to school together in Ohio, and they’d both moved to New York around the same time.

Those were a lot of Tim’s support group. And James said – what’s her name – has come out with a Barry White song. Taylor Dane came out with that song, and James is talking about it and he turns the radio on and what is it on but that song? He turned it up really loud, and Tim’s really getting into it in the front seat, and we’re driving downtown – here we were, together again. This was great.

We get to the front of his house, and James carried him upstairs. And he had this built-in couch by the window – a very lovely little apartment – and got him all settled in. And James left, and Tim left, and Tim Bailey and I are there and he says, “Got a cigarette?” And I think fuck, I don’t have a cigarette. I start looking around the house and there’s no cigarettes and I think, I really can’t leave him alone. There was a deli downstairs – you go down four flights of steps, around the corner is a deli. So I said to him, “Look, I’ll get you a cigarette, but you have to sit right there, you can’t move.” Because I’m thinking, he could really hurt himself. He shouldn’t be alone. And he’s looking at me – he’s got his legs up just the way so he could sort of sit, and I ran down those steps, and I ran around the corner, and I got those Winston lights that he liked, and I ran back around the corner, I ran up the whole flight of steps, and I walk through the front door and I’m huffing and puffing, and he’s sitting there and he said, “I’m still sitting here.” You may lose your short-term memory, but you don’t lose this. So, he had a cigarette – that was fine.

Then, over the course of the next week and a half, two weeks, he really went downhill. He made me go to Gay Pride. By that time we had this woman, this nurse – Alicia? Terrible I can't remember. Anyway, I went to Gay Pride. That was a Sunday. Tim died on Monday. He died on the night of ACT UP. It was me and Tim Hamilton – we were with him. He couldn't breathe, and I called the doctor's office saying, "He can't breathe." And they said there was this machine I could get to vacuum him out. So I drove like a maniac all the way up to 88<sup>th</sup> Street on the East Side, and bought this machine and the thing about it was – two-fold – my aunt, my father's sister, had come to visit me to see this place, because we were thinking to move here. Tim never saw it – he only saw pictures. And they were going to meet me out front. What I did was, I drove by in the car. My aunt had come in with my mother. I said, "Tim's really ill, I've got to go." The ride that I took up the East Side Drive was the same ride I took when I got the phone call about my father, and I used to hate to go that way. I was driving up and that's when I thought, it's over. You're going through the motions, and you want this to happen. I knew. I picked up the machine, and I got all the way back downtown – and we did try to use it. We were out of our heads, really. He was already on a morphine drip. We put on Ella Fitzgerald. And then we stopped doing everything. And he was, like, "Are you all right?" We just kept saying that we were right there with him. You know, it's a real honor when somebody lets you be with them like that.

Tape IV  
00:10:00

**SS: Well, not everybody shows up for it, either. A lot of people flee that honor. It's true.**

JE: It's very special. I think you kind of cross over, in a way. So, I made a phone call to Barbara at ACT UP, and then everybody came to the house, to Tim's, and

we all had martinis with him. Then they came from Redden's, and we went into gear. We proceeded to have him taken from Redden's, out to New Jersey, and we got his mom Dolly and his brother Randy, and his sister Michelle. They all came in to see him. But Dolly didn't want to come to Washington with us, although she knew all about it – his mom. And so, they came to New Jersey, and they saw him from there. And then, Randy came down with us for the funeral, and we had Tim in the van with us. It was the same deal – the slip-lid casket.

Barbara drove the van, and Michael Marco was there and James and Carrie and I, and Tim. We had all these white roses and the banner. And the idea was – Tim had already set aside money to pay for buses for people to go down from here, to Washington. And we were supposed to meet at the pool in front of the Capitol. We drove right by the White House, and we all did have a moment of thinking we should get out right here, right now. But then we thought, no we had to meet up with everyone, with our friends. And, we actually had already stopped at this hotel, to meet up with Vincent Gagliostro and get the sound system from him and Michael Cunningham.

So we passed the White House. We had the sound system. And we drove up, and I remember seeing – I was in the front seat, I think. Barbara was driving. I remember seeing all these people with signs – so, they were already there. And we drove in, and the next thing I know, we're surrounded by undercover police and police. Barbara gets out of the van and I think I wasn't thinking straight – but I got out of the van – we had started to open the doors in the back of the van – this was right at the beginning, and I had the keys to van – that was it. I went out of the van, and I have roses in my hand – as if I could make it look different? I've got the roses and I got back on the van, and I shut the

doors, and I jumped into the front seat and started the car – I as going to take off with him. The next thing I know is, this big guy has come in from the passenger side and he’s fighting me for the keys, and he’s got me by the arm and I can’t remember what he was saying to me. I knew I wasn’t going to give him the keys. I was fighting him off. And Barbara comes in and she’s saying, “Get off of her!” And, it was just like this completely bizarre experience. He finally got the keys – he was undercover FBI. They didn’t want us to leave, obviously. And, I think they thought they were going to stop this, but they weren’t. All these people were there – Eric Sawyer was there and –

Tape IV  
00:15:00

**SS: How did they know about it?**

JE: I’m sure we put out a press release. And, I’m sure – well I mean, all those people with signs were pretty much of a giveaway.

**SS: But they said, got to get the FBI over to that parking lot?**

JE: There was FBI, undercover, park police, and people in riot gear – cops in riot gear. It was unbelievable. Amy Bauer was there. I mean, there were tons of people there. And Amy was like, “Surround the van!” And everybody knew their cue, and everybody surrounded the van. So, there was a blockade between the van: Tim, the van, these people, and the cops. Well, this siege went on from something like one o’clock in the afternoon to six o’clock at night. It rained. Everybody’s emotions went from this to this within five seconds flat. It was completely insane. We were trying – our whole thing was that we were driving Tim’s body down to the White House. We were going to have this procession to show people what a person with AIDS, who’s died – not only looks like, but looks like in its total. This person had a life that’s been lost. This is a terrible crime that you are letting go on, day in and day out, and you’re not paying any

attention. I want you to know that the night of Mark's funeral, afterwards – I went back to the hospital because Tim had done an absentee ballot and voted for fucking Clinton. And now here we are full circle – Clinton's in office, and here we are out in front of the Capitol building, right down the street from the White House, and those motherfuckers aren't going to let us do this? They had the nerve. And that's what we felt.

And so this went back and forth, and we were calling all these people – who knew who in the White House? We're trying all these things. They tried to make deals with us. It's all on tape and I've got tons of pictures. They didn't want us on the six o'clock news. They also didn't want – we had fliers we were throwing over the cops, so that the people who were starting to gather, to find out what was going on here, could get them. You got amazing people. James [Wentzy] has an amazing tape of that day, of people speaking, and saying what was going on. Jim did much better than me in describing them all, but it was truly incredible.

And by around six o'clock, we had made this deal that they are going to let us go down towards Pennsylvania Avenue. So we were all set to do it and then they tried to stop us. Then we just said fuck it, so we opened the back doors, and we start to take Tim out. That's the picture that was in the papers. You've seen it – you see the casket like – and Tim's brother was there, who is not an activist. He'd come down for Tim. Randy was on the side of me – on this side, and I was on the outside of the casket, trying to hold – it was so scary. And we'd had this whole run-in with the cops earlier, before this. They wanted a coroner to make sure that he was dead the proper way. So they actually wanted to look at him. I tried to negotiate for the set of keys back. I got the keys back. I said, I have the papers right here, which I did. I had them down the front of my shirt, so

that nobody could get them. And they did – they examined him, with plastic gloves on. It was disgusting.

Anyway, by the time the whole who-ha happened – when they tried to take him out of the van, which was totally incredibly – Randy was picked off on the side – his brother – and arrested. And Jim Aquino jumped in, to get arrested with him. And we ended up getting Tim back in the van, basically deciding that we were leaving to take him home, and had the banner out. We had everybody behind us. We start going around the Capitol parking lot, and the next thing we know, we start getting cut off from everybody by cops and an ambulance and cops on a motorcycle. And, they start to escort us out of there. And there's a couple of squad cars in front of and behind us, and – I don't know what the ambulance was for. And they started taking us through the black neighborhood of Washington. And we had a sticker on the van that said "Funeral." We had the poster for Tim and we're throwing these leaflets out the windows, and we start to get the black power sign from people on the street. They drove us through traffic – traffic was parted. We went through tolls – cars and ditches through tolls – all the way to Baltimore, with sirens. We get into Baltimore, and we're on the highway, and we're running out of gas. And Barbara's driving. She pulls up alongside one of the cop cars and says, "We're running out of gas." So they take us off the highway, and they take us to a gas station, and we pull in and start to get gas, and the cop car's over there. So, I walk over the cop car and I said, "So, are you going to take us all the way back to New Jersey?" And he said, "No, I think we've all had enough for the day." That's where they left us. It was unbelievable.

Tape IV  
00:20:00

**SS: What did you do next?**

JE: We took Tim back to the funeral home in New Jersey. He was then taken from there to be cremated. His ashes – most of them, went to his family. I had some of his ashes. We were thinking about making a trip to Paris – so some of Tim’s ashes are in Paris. It was pretty unbelievable, the whole thing. And I think we never totally got over it – any of us. About two weeks later, Jon Greenberg died. We had another political funeral for him in New York City, which went to Tompkins Square Park. It was unbelievable.

**SS: Is there anything that could happen in your life now, that you would respond to with that level of commitment?**

JE: Well I hate to have to say it, I just have. I don’t know if you know the painter Frank Moore?

**SS: Yeah, sure.**

JE: Well, Frank and I were very close. I was with Frank in the hospital when he died – St. Luke’s Roosevelt – which was very difficult, on a lot of levels. Frank died on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 2002. I’ll tell you, not much has changed in that hospital. It’s not my favorite place in the world. Frank was also a truly amazing person with amazing spirit and culture. That’s Frank’s up there. That drawing of the arm, which I think probably, says it all.

**SS: But not people dying of AIDS, but is there something else in your life that could happen that you could foresee making that level of commitment, at this stage of things? You’re 46, it’s another era.**

JE: Yeah, sure. Absolutely. I got the fight in me. [LAUGHS] They can’t take me out ’til I’m down! I’m going out with a bang, are you kidding? Not after all this,

and after all these amazing people. That gives you a lot of energy. So, I'm ready. By any means necessary, I'm ready for it.

**SS: Okay we can end there. Thank you, Joy.**

[END OF INTERVIEW]