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Title: LGBT Oral History: Cassidy Frazee

Date: July 27, 2017

Location: LGBT Oral History – Frazee, Cassidy – 038

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Interviewee: Cassidy Frazee

Interviewer: Liam Fuller

Location of Interview: LGBT Center

Date: July 27, 2017

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Abstract:

Cassidy Frazee was born in 1957 in Cedar Lake, Indiana. Cassidy grew up in Cedar Lake with her younger sister, father and mother. They had a Catholic upbringing, but Cassidy explains she was no longer interested in religious affairs by the time she reached sixth grade, when her questions revolving around Catholicism angered the adults at her Sunday school. Growing up in rural Indiana in the 1960s and 1970s, there were not many positive representations of LGBT people. So, although Cassidy explains she had always felt that she was a girl, she did not learn of the term ‘transsexual’—the term used to describe transgender at the time—until reading one of her mother’s psychology books. After going through two marriages and securing a career as a computer programmer, Cassidy came out as a woman in 2015, after beginning to see a gender therapist in 2012. In this interview, Cassidy gives a timeline all the way through her transition and the experience of going through hormone replacement therapy (HRT); to explain the effect that estrogen has had on her as a person. Cassidy also shares personal, spiritual and emotional experiences that have time and time again confirmed her gender identity.

LF: Okay, so let’s get this interview started.

CF: Okay.

LF: So my name is Liam Fuller. I’m here with the Central PA LGBT History Project, and I’m here interviewing Cassidy. And today is the 26th of July, 2017.

CF: 27th.

LF: Today’s the 27th.

CF: Yeah, today’s the 27th.

LF: Okay, is it now?

CF: Yes.

LF: So the 27th. And, what else do I need to say? I said my name, blah blah blah. Do I have my, your, permission to conduct this interview?

CF: Yes, you do.

LF: Okay. So first off, can you tell me your name, and then can you spell it for me.

CF: My full name is Cassidy Grace Frazee. Last name is spelled F-R-A-Z or Zed-E-E.

LF: Okay. And you don't have any like wacky spelling on any of your names?

CF: No. C-A-S-S-I-D-Y, and 'Grace' is 'Grace.'

LF: Okay, awesome. So we're going to start at the very beginning. So could you tell me a bit about, you know, your family life and your early childhood development?

CF: Okay, well I was born in 1957. I turned 60 this year. I grew up in a town in northwest Indiana called Cedar Lake, about, probably about, 45 minutes or so from southeast of Chicago. My father was from Tennessee, and he came from a rather big family. My mother was from Chicago. All she had was one brother who was actually 13 years older than her. So I had family from different parts of the country. I have one sister, who's two years younger than me.

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: She was. My father was actually semi-illiterate for most of my childhood, due to his upbringing in Tennessee. He wasn't given a lot of schooling. My mother was a nurse. My father was a factory worker. He worked in the Chicago Heights Stamping Plant in, well in Chicago Heights, Illinois. He worked for Ford Motor. We were raised Catholic, but after about sixth grade for me, I kind of completely blew it all off. It's an interesting story that we can have for when we get to there. I spent the first pretty much 24 years of my life there. Small town, 8,000 people total. It was spread out all over the place. We actually had three separate school districts covering the area. To the south was Lole, Indiana, and to the east was All Crown Point. We had the north and the west. The high school I went to, I graduated in a class of 139 people in the class in 1975. So, that's pretty much not a huge place. It was very country, very rural. We weren't upper middle class; we were probably lower middle class. That's really the childhood I had growing up was--with the exception of a few things--pretty normal.

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: Yeah. Except where we get into around six years old where I begin to notice things about myself that I didn't want, want to notice.

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: When I was about six, I began to start to develop the feelings that this whole boy thing they were trying to force on me, it felt kind of wrong. I wanted to be more like my sister. Not necessarily just because of the clothes she wore, but I wanted... I felt like I should be more like her. And at that time, six-seven years old, that was 1963-1964. I mean, John Kennedy was still president when I started having this stuff going on. So we didn't really have a name for it, we didn't have a feeling it wasn't like today, where you could go to your family and say, "Hey.

There's something going on here. I really should be a girl." That just couldn't happen. I didn't even know. Like I said, I didn't even know how to put a voice to it. So I didn't know what to say. I didn't know how to bring this out. So for a long time until I was about ten years old, I suffered from a lot of--I guess you could say--gender confusion.

Through therapy, I think my mother knew. She was a nurse, and she had been working for years on a psychology degree. So I do remember like six-seven years old, she would always correct me with things. Like, "Don't walk like that. You look like a girl. Don't skip around. You look like a girl. Don't hold your hand this way. You look like a girl. Don't talk like that. You sound like a girl." It was always in negative of 'Don't act like a girl. You're acting like one. You shouldn't be doing that.' And I never thought of it that much at the time. It was only once I started going through therapy in 2012 that it actually started to hit me—that I think she kind of understood. My father was always kind of disappointed in the fact that I didn't like doing boy things. I wasn't interested in, you know, sports. I watched baseball because we could get Cubs baseball in Chicago. It was broadcast all the time on one of the local stations. But even that would bore me after a while. I couldn't go to a game and sit and watch it. I would lose interest quickly. I didn't like to hunt, I didn't like to fish, I didn't like to do outdoor things, I didn't like to camp and hike. But, you know, that was something my father just really couldn't understand that much. I loved to read. I started reading at an adult level when I was seven years old.

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: And that was really... Books and music were really the only thing I had to fall back on when I was young. I got into the position where I didn't make a lot of friends at school. I had some, but it was difficult for me to relate to a lot of boys, and it was difficult for me to speak to a lot of girls, simply because, you know, awkward tween years. I came across as a little weird, basically because of my intelligence. [sighs, pauses] I spent two summers in my room, not wanting to come out, because I didn't want to go outside and do the stuff everybody else was doing.

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: So all I would do is I would get up in the morning and start reading, you know. Do a few chores, stuff like that. Just stay in my room all day long, and never go out. For those two years, the only time I went out was when my parents would take us somewhere, or if, you know, I had to go to school. That was about it.

LF: Yeah. So then can you talk about what it felt like to have no words to really address or express what was going on with you at that time?

CF: It was very confusing. Part of it is, I was a pretty intelligent kid. I never had any real intelligence testing done at that time, but later when I got older, for a job interview I was actually IQ tested. It sort of like, "What's your IQ? What's the sort of work you should actually do?" And they told me it was going to be a six hour test; I finished it under two. And when I was done, you know, I came back from lunch, and the guy was just flabbergasted. He said, "Well, we can send the results off to MENSA if you'd like to join." And at that time, the only requirement they had

for MENSA was you had to have an IQ of over 140, which was genius level. And I was like, “Nah, it’s not important.” So, but I mean like when I was seven, I was reading at—I had a reading comprehension and retention of an adult between 23 and 25 years of age. So I was, I was actually kind of smart. But I didn’t, you know, I didn’t know enough about that sort of thing. We had no internet, and you didn’t even know where to begin to look up these things. It was just like you had these feelings: ‘Wow, I should be a girl. And I don’t know how to express that because I can’t talk to my parents about it. I don’t know how else to say it, except to come out and say.’ And with my mother constantly going, you know, “Don’t act that way. You look like a girl. You’re acting like a girl,” you know, it was scary.

I grew up... Needless to say, I was so afraid to even try to bring up the subject that I didn’t start to transition until after my mother died. I mean, that’s how much it bothered me. [sighs, pauses] It was really confusing, especially [sighs] later I started... I had a late puberty. So even in my... By the time I was a teenager, I kind of knew what was going on, cause one of the things that happened when I was ten. My mother had a book on psychology. She was taking college courses. And one day I was leafing through them, and I found this section on homosexuality. I was like, “Oh, well, this is interesting. What is this about?” Cause they started off with talking about how Roman legions were comprised mainly of bisexual and homosexual men [laughs], which I thought was, “Wow, this is rather interesting.” So I’m reading through that, and then they get to the part. They’re talking about lesbians and stuff like that, and I was like, “Ooh, this is interesting.” And at the very end of the chapter, they start talking about what they called then ‘transsexuals.’ And it was people who feel as if they were born in the wrong body and stuff like that. And the more I started to read that, the more I was like, “Wow, this is me.”

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: And there was a section I can always remember. There was a section in that chapter about a boy who had begun developing feminine characteristics as he reached like 11 and 12 years of age.

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: And so they figured, the term then was they said he was a ‘hermaphrodite.’ But because he was developing all these feminine characteristics, they took him in, they gave him hormones, and they did surgery on him to give him a pseudo vagina, to make him a girl. So she lived her life like that, and it wasn’t until a few years afterwards that she actually came out and told her mother, “I was actually taking your birth control pills [laughs] to do this because I had always felt I was supposed to be a girl.”

LF: Yeah.

CF: “So I was taking your pills because I see you take them, and I figured, ‘oh, those must be girl pills.’”

So she was taking doses of estrogen, and, of course, it was accelerating a feminine puberty. So I latched onto that. I latched onto that one. And the other one I latched onto about the same time

was I learned about Christine Jorgensen. So it was like, 'Wow, there are people out there who feel this way, and they have a way of changing them.' But I still couldn't really talk to anyone about that.

LF: Mhmm.

CF: I mean, it was just embarrassing. None of my friends would have ever understood.

LF: Yeah.

CF: The few I had. And, you know, you couldn't start talking to girls about that stuff. This was still, it was mid to late 1960s. You didn't talk about that stuff. I mean, we had a couple of gay kids in our school in the '70s who were constantly getting beaten up. I can't imagine what they'd have done to me if I had ever come out and say, 'Hey, you know, I want to be a girl.' But I can, I do remember like in high school when we would have gym, like seventh and eighth grade gym, and boys were on one side of the gym, and girls were on the other side, and guys would always be talking about, "Oh, look how, you know, look how hot that girl is. Look how foxy she is," and stuff like that. And I was thinking, 'Boy, I should be over there with them instead.'

LF: Yeah.

CF: I really should. It was not like how hot and how sexy they were; it was just like I should be with them. That's who I fit in with.

LF: Yeah. So then going back to your relationship with your father, would you like to talk a little bit more about that or?

CF: I actually didn't have much of a relationship. I mean in terms of us getting along, as I got older, we got along a little bit better, but he always felt kind of let down by the fact that I just didn't like to do stuff. That came out. I went into, I was actually put through therapy when I was ten years old because I was... The only thing I could articulate was, "I just don't make friends." And I had a session once with my mother and father, and my father articulated at that point how embarrassed and kind of upset he was that I just never showed any interest in any of these things. And I don't know if my therapist was starting to pick up on that and stuff I had been saying because I would tell her, "I like being with girls more than I like being with guys," and stuff like that. But it was right after that my family decided I didn't need to go to therapy anymore.

We would talk, but my father and I never really had a whole lot to discuss. That was the biggest problem we had. There was such kind of a cultural gap between us that it just did not fit in. My father was very rural. He was very Southern. You know, I grew up with the whole 'this house is going to rise again stuff,' and there was a lot of racism in our family, which I grew up with, which took me a long time to get out of my system. You know, both my, my mother not so much, but my father was racist. My grandparents -- both of them were racists. So it was kind of an unusual situation to grow up in. And he knew that we didn't see eye to eye on a lot of stuff, so we just never really talked about it.

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: He's still alive, but I hardly talk to him nowadays. Simply because it's so difficult to get in touch with him. My sister is handling, you know, the majority of his finances and everything like that, and she's not happy with me either.

LF: Okay.

CF: So I don't really have, I wouldn't say a great relationship with my father. I mean, we can talk, but as I had mentioned to other people, the last few years whenever we talk on the phone, my dad would always want to discuss the same thing. You know, it was just like he wants to discuss the weather and his health. And that's about it, you know. He doesn't wanna say anything else. So I guess you could say I didn't really have much of a relationship with him. My mother was the one who really was the one I had a relationship with, and it was not a very good relationship, when I look back on it now.

LF: Yeah. And then going back to the summer you were talking about spending a lot of time indoors, what exactly made you so averse to going outside?

CF: A lot of the kids wanted to do stuff like play basketball. I was not very athletic. Play baseball. Again, not very athletic, didn't enjoy it. And I found the boys to be too rough [laughs] I guess you could say. I was more like, 'I like to ride my bicycle. I like to go for long walks. I like to talk, you know. Stuff like that.' There weren't that many girls on our neighborhood, so, you know, couldn't really gyrate towards that very well. So the few friends I had were all boys, and I didn't like engaging in a lot of the stuff they were engaging with. Even then, I realized that I'm just not cut out for this. You know, it's not what I want to do. So while they're playing tag and throwing balls at one another and stuff like that, I would get bored after like five minutes playing catch. And it's like, 'Guy, could we do something else?' [Laughs]

But yeah, I was like the one who, 'Let's go for a walk. Let's talk. Let's walk in the woods' because we had woods out behind our house. I was like, 'Let's go for a walk in the woods.' Guys, you know, nine year old kids, are just looking at you like, 'Okay, what's wrong with you?' You know, and that's generally the feeling I had. I felt like I was kind of an outsider. I just didn't fit it. I wrote a lot of science fiction. Most of the stuff I wrote growing up was a lot of golden age science fiction, so I was way out there, in terms of...

LF: What sort of authors?

CF: I used to read a lot of Arthur C. Clarke. He was my favorite for the longest time. In fact, my first two real adult novels that I read were *Earth Flight* and *A Fall of Moon Dust*. I also read Isaac Asimov. I read Frederik Pohl. Poul Anderson, Robert Heinlein, Doc Smith. I read the *Lensmen* series early on. That was the first real space opera. Well, the *Sky Lark*. *Sky Lark* was really the first one. I'm nitpicking.

But yeah, I had hundreds of books, old science fiction, stuff like that. Then when Stephen King came around, I had first edition paperbacks of all of his. That was the nice thing about growing

up in that era, you know, all of that stuff coming out new. [Laughs] You didn't have to look back at it. I still have my first. It was a first edition paperback of *Carrie*.

LF: Wow.

CF: And when I looked at it, it was like, 'Wow, this looks kind of interesting. I think I'll read it.'

LF: Uh-huh. So then can you go a little bit more into your educational background, what your experience was like in middle school, high school, whether or not you pursued secondary education?

CF: Well, I, we... I actually went to three schools in Cedar Lake, and I can't remember the middle one, but the first one was Jane Ball Elementary, and it was kind of fun. Kind of standard for that period. We had relatively small classes, maybe like 25 people-30 people in a class. I seemed to be a fairly good student the first couple of years. The third year, I started having a lot, I guess you could say developmental problems. I had a lot of nervous ticks, I had a lot of fidgeting, I was having trouble concentrating.

One of the biggest things I had a problem with, and this was kind of another thing that led to a rift between me and my family, I kept saying I couldn't see. I'd go to school, and I'd say, "I can't see the board." Or I'd come home, and I'd say, "I can't see the TV." I'd actually get up close to the TV, and my parents would yell at me all the time. And so for about a year and a half, I kept telling them, "I can't see anything. Everything, I can't see it." So finally in third grade, they gave us an eye exam. And they basically told my parents, "Oh, you're kid is very, very, very near-sighted." So I had to get glasses, which of course they bitched about.

I used to test positive on TB vaccines all the time, which was another weird thing, because the first two years I had them, I always had to go and get chest x-rays afterward, because testing positive on that would show that you had tuberculosis. And so they'd freak on that. Fourth grade was kind of horrible for me. I had a teacher who was kind of an authoritarian, and I just did not relate to her. I was always in trouble. My mother had to come in the school a couple of times and deal with issues, which again she didn't like. Fifth grade I did well. I had a great teacher. He was the sort of person that wanted you to think, so I kind of excelled in that class.

Then when I got to sixth grade, I always seemed to be getting into trouble, and some of it was just – I actually brought it upon myself. I would get bored to the point where I would start spacing out in the middle of class and actually completely lose myself. It led to some bad situations. I was... I wasn't quite on academic probation, I guess you could say but I was like this close all the time to them calling my parents and getting ready, and telling me, "Oh, we may hold you back a year. We may suspend you." My grades suffered. I never read books, I was just content with doing the bare minimum work. I did the same thing when I got to high school. I didn't really care about studying. I didn't really care about getting ahead. I actually graduated in the lower third of my class, even though I had this pretty good IQ. I was pretty intelligent. A lot of people kind of recognized that, but I just didn't care. I didn't put any effort forth.

I had wanted to take a year off from high school before going to college. My mother again would not allow that. My father wouldn't allow it either. So I went to Indiana University and flunked out after one year because I just could not get into the swing of it. So I worked for a couple of years, doing odd jobs, and then finally got a job in a foundry for a year, and then worked at Ford Motor with my family for a year. Got laid off from there in 1979, and then went to... It's Indiana State College now. Back then it was called Indiana Vocational Tech. I decided to go for a degree in computer programming, and ended up getting a two year degree in data processing and computer programming. I learned how to do RPG, I learned how to do Cobalt, learned how to do Four Tran, learned how to do Assembler. All those old time computer languages, and I'm still doing that. I write RPG programs for a living. I work for the Commonwealth. My office is actually about like a five minute drive from here.

So I've been doing that since 1982, you know. That would be, I had not ever went back to college, simply because I've never had the time or I've never had the money.

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: Among other things. But I did just well enough. I actually excelled in my class. I was like, I think I was like... Was I second or third in my graduating class? I think I was second. I don't even remember to be quite honest [laughs]. But I remember I graduated with a 3.75 GPA out of 4, so I did pretty well.

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: I did well. And it's helped me out. By that time, I was... After I was done with that, then I left home and got married. Never did go to California like I wanted to. That was my big dream; I was going to take a year off and, you know, hitch hike to California, which in 1975 you could do.

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: You know, you could get a job washing dishes and [laughs] and it would have been fine, so.

LF: Okay. So, yeah. We were sort of touching on this right now, but can you like walk me through your history with jobs and occupational history?

CF: When I was younger, I mean I got my first job when I was 17 years old. I bagged groceries. I worked for an antique dealer. Let's see, what else? I worked in a computer lab when I was getting my degree in computers. I was one of the first two computer, I guess, lab techs, you could call us. I actually... when we got our first Series One in from IBM, the IBM service guy who came in actually asked me if I would write a special type of program for the Series One because he said, "Atlanta wants to see if this can be done, and I'm told, you know, you could probably figure out how to do this."

So he told me what to do, and I wrote the program that actually got it to work. And they took the results down to Atlanta to show yeah, this could happen.

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: After that, I worked. I mean, I've always programmed computers. First worked for a rail car manufacturing company called Thrall Car. I worked there for about a year. Then did consulting. I consulted for about nine months on a job with an insurance company. Then went to work for a trucking firm in South Bend, Indiana. Worked there for about two years, then went to Chicago for... Early on, a lot of it back then was, it was considered that you change jobs like every two years. In fact, head hunters used to recommend that. They would say, "Don't stay in a place for too long because you'll get stale." So I went to Chicago.

First I worked for a software manufacturing firm, and then I worked for my biggest prestige job of all time. I actually worked for Playboy for a year. I worked in the Playboy building, the old Playboy building. I worked for Christie Hefner, got to meet her my first day at work. I got to be somewhat work buddies with her mom [laughs], which led to some interesting stories as well.

After I left Playboy, I went to for Exo Chemical, which is a huge Dutch multi-national organization. I worked with them for three and a half years, and then I returned back to Indiana and worked at a place called Cellar Manufacturing, that made portable air compressors. I worked for them for 13 and ½ years and was laid off from there in 2008. They actually ended up getting rid of like half the office. There were two days after the 2008 election, they just like got rid of half the office.

So then I was out of work for about three years, and finally got a job working as a consultant for the state of Indiana. I worked for them for about ten months, and then went back to work for another consulting firm in Chicago, and did a job with them for about eight months. And that took me up to 2013, and finally got a call from here in the Commonwealth. They wanted to know if I would come out for a job. The interesting thing was I was not the first choice. I was actually the second, and I said, "Okay." And they called me back like a week and a half, two weeks later and said the person they picked decided at the last minute that they didn't want the job, do you want to come out here and work? So I came out here in August of 2013 and have not went home.

LF: Yeah.

CF: I don't even consider Indiana my home anymore, so this is pretty much my home. I've been here now for going on four years, so.

LF: Yeah. So, for the sake of the transcriber, I forgot if I said already, but we're in Harrisburg, so just so we're all on the same page. And can you talk a little bit about your relationship with the Hefners? I'm just intrigued by that.

CF: With what?

LF: The Hefners.

CF: Oh, the Hefners [laughs]. Well, Christie was a lot of fun. I never met the dad. He, at that point, was, still is, living out in LA. Christie was a lot of fun. She was very down to earth. We... She was the sort of person that if you had to get in touch with her, you could set an appointment, but you could sit down and talk with her rather bluntly. Her mom had a job in HR. It was... Everybody kind of thought it was like she's giving mom something to do, you know, but. Her biggest duty was she worked with the big Playboy blood drive that they had every year. That was a huge event. We'd actually take up most of the main lobby of the Drake Hotel across the street. And you'd actually have Chicago celebrities would come down to give blood. I mean, you'd have like 1,000 people show up to give blood, so it was a huge event. And we used to get almost everybody from inside the office to do it. I was one of the organizers. Well, not organizer, but I helped recruit, and I helped do paperwork. So we had a rather boozy post [chuckles] post-party after that. It really was a lot of fun. I basically sat with her and her sister, and they were always quizzing me on like, "What is it like to live in the middle of nowhere in Indiana?" And they found that really amazing because most of these people, they all lived in like townhouses in Chicago and stuff like that. So they found it kind of interesting that I would spend all this time commuting into the city to work there.

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: But they were actually, Millie and Christie were actually really down to earth people. They were comfortable to be around. They didn't put on airs. Even Christie was like, "Please don't ask me about my dad [laughs]. I don't want to talk about my dad." You know, she would be right off the bat, "Please, I don't want to talk about him. You know, it's boring after a while." It's like any kid, 'I don't want to talk about my parents.' [Laughs]

LF: Yeah.

CF: So, but we had, at that time I was married--married to my first wife--and at the Playboy picnic, my son was throwing a fit, and Christie walks up, and she's got on a pair of shorts and a Banana Republic t-shirt, and her hair was all a mess, and she was not wearing makeup, and you know, she's got on these big glasses. She's like, "Hey, how you doing? How's the thing? Oh what's wrong with your son? Let me go get Mom. I'll have Mom come over and take care of this."

And my wife's like, "Who's that bimbo?"

I was like, "Oh, that's, you know, the CEO of Playboy, I don't know."

And she's like, "What?"

And I said, "Yeah, that's Christie." [Laughs]

And then her mom came over, and my wife was not listening. She was one of those people--my first wife--everything revolved around her, so when Christie's mom came over, she's like, "Oh, what's wrong with your son? What, do you want to get some ice cream" and stuff like that. And my wife started to flip.

And I was like, “Just let it go, let it go.”

And she goes, “Who is that? Who does she think she is?”

I said, “That’s Christie’s mom, okay!” I said, “That’s Hugh Hefner’s first wife! Will you lighten up, you know? You’re at a Playboy function; this is what you’re going to run into.” So.

LF: Yeah. And like what years were that?

CF: That was 1988 and 1989.

LF: Okay. So then can you touch on if there was any sort of religious presence in your upbringing?

CF: My mother was Catholic. My father had actually been raised Baptist, and then he converted. We went to church on Sundays, and then for a while went to Sunday school. I was not big on the whole religion thing. After a while, it just, again like a lot of things in my life, it got to be boring. And then I would start to read about different religions. I was reading about different religions when I was like eight-nine years old. And of course—excuse me—my parents were very dismissive, especially of Hindus and Jews. They hated them. There wasn’t so much about Muslims then, that was not a big thing. But Hindus and Jews, they hated them. My mother had to work with a lot of Indian doctors at that time, so she was not a big fan of anybody who was Hindu.

It’s right around the time I was in sixth grade. I was basically thrown out of Sunday school.

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: The nun who was teaching us had told my folks that I was becoming disruptive. Two insolences she brought up, one of which when she was talking about something about the Dead Sea, I launched into this whole geographical thing about how it’s the most point on earth, and it has the highest salinity out of any body of water in the world, and you, basically everyone, can float on it, and blah, blah, blah. And she was like, yeah. So, but the thing that really tipped her off was...they were telling us the story of Lazarus [laughs], and I was like, “So wasn’t anybody like, afraid of the fact that this guy came back from the dead? [Laughs] “And was just walking around like, ‘Oh, hi, Lazarus, how you doing?’” You know, I said, “No, that’s not right! I mean the guy was dead for three days, and he comes back.”

And they’re like, “No, we don’t want you kid in class anymore. They’re too disruptive.”

And I just said, “It doesn’t make any sense!” You know, so I was telling my part. My mother was upset, she was just crazy.

I said, “It doesn’t make any sense. I’m sorry. The guy’s performing miracles; he’s raising people from the dead. That’s like voodoo.” [Laughs]

LF: [chuckles]

CF: So, I guess you could say I'm kind of like, I'm pretty much an Atheist. Although I really listen to stuff that's kind of spiritual, and I do have some weird, I mean, I do have some beliefs in the paranormal, even though I shouldn't. But there've been instances in my life that have occurred that kind of make me question that, and... But, I'm not a, I've not had a major religious background in my life since I was probably about 10 or 12 years old. It's just not been important in my life, and I kind of try to use reason and logic and judgement to be a good person.

LF: Can you go into any of those paranormal experiences?

CF: Two that really stand out. One happened in... had to be around 1994, because I was back working in South Bend at that time. And I had to go to an IBM conference in San Antonio. So I went out, and I actually, I went to a Mexican restaurant, had a couple of margaritas, made the way they make them down in, you know, Mexicans make them down in Texas, which is pretty strong and with a lot of lime. So I had heartburn. And I was walking along the river walk. I don't know if you're familiar with the river walk in San Antonio. The river walk is actually it's a sunken area a few blocks south of the Alamo, and it's where the original bed of the Rio Grande River exists. So, you know, they've actually built San Antonio up over the years, with landfill and stuff like that. So this is the actual area where the river kind of actually used to be, and the rest of the city was as well. So it's a beautiful place to walk. And there's a lot of people that walk it at night. And I was walking back to the hotel. As I was going towards it, I remember there was this, she could have been Chinese, she could have been Japanese, all I will say, eastern Pac Rim Asian, walking towards me. And as we got closer, she stopped and looked at me, and as I was passing her, she says, "You know who I am."

And it just kind of struck me funny, and I turned around to say something, and there was no one there. You know. And I wasn't hallucinating because I wasn't, you know, totally drunk because I'd only had a couple of margaritas. I was not three sheets out and completely incapacitated. And it kind of set me back on my heels. I was like, you know, 'What just happened? I don't understand that.'

So, fast forward to 1999, and for a while, I used to go to China and do programming because the company I worked for, Solaire, had a manufacturing plant outside in the Shenzhen, China, which is just north of Hong Kong. So on the weekend, I would actually go down, and sometimes stay in Hong Kong, or I would take the ferry down because there was one stretch where I was there for almost eight weeks.

So I would go on these little walking tours of Hong Kong, and there was one day that I went over to the main island, and I went over to Causeway Bay, which is one of the areas. I had lunch, and then I decided I was going to do a walk up to the eastern end of Causeway Bay, and then come back through Wanchai, which used to be famous because that's where you used to find all the bars. When the sailors-- American sailors or British sailors or whatever sailors, would come into port, they'd all go to Wanchai. Going to the eastern part of Causeway Bay, there was this

Buddhist temple. Most of them were kind of small, the old ones. So you can just go in, light your incense, and you know, say your prayers and whatnot.

And I started getting weird chills when I was going into this temple. And I'd been in a couple of other temples in both Hong Kong and up on mainland China, but I started getting these weird chills, like weird sensations, like all the sudden the temperature in there dropped 20 degrees. And I didn't understand it. It was making me really queasy and kind of uneasy, so after about two or three minutes, I backed out of there and just went on a walk.

So I'm going through Wanchai, and I go past a couple of places where they're doing like palm readings and stuff like that. And generally speaking, I never went in for that sort of stuff because I know how it works. They try to get the information out of you, and then basically tell you what you want to hear. But just on a lark, I walked into this one place, and the woman was like, "Would you like a reading?"

And I said, "Yeah."

She's like, "Okay, come and sit down." And I sat down, and she says, "Okay, let me see your hand. And she looks at this hand first [holds up right hand], and she says, "That's not your dominant hand."

Now, I didn't say anything. I'm left handed, so I held out my right hand first, and she says, "That's not your dominant hand. Let me see your dominant hand."

So I gave her my left hand, and she starts looking through it. And she says, "You did have something that just happened recently, like within the last 15 minutes, didn't you?"

And I said, "Yeah." That's all I would say. I said, "Yeah, something happened in the last 15 minutes."

And she's looking at it, and she's looking at my face, and she's looking at it, and she goes, "Were you at the temple?" And she mentioned the name of the Temple.

And I was like, "Yeah, that's where I was about 15 minutes ago."

And she said, "Did you feel cold?" And about this time, you know, I'm not saying anything. So, you know, she says, "Did you feel cold?"

And I was like, "Yeah, a little bit."

And she said, "Have you had feelings in the past that you are not who you are?"

And I said, "Well, you have to elaborate on that one." Because naturally if you say yes.

I said, "You have to elaborate, what do you mean by 'not who you are?'"

And she goes, “You’re not really the man you think you should be. In fact, you don’t think you should be period, because of what’s happened before.”

And I was like, “Okay. [Laughs] What do you know? What are you trying to tell me?”

And she said, “Did you feel like you knew the place?”

I said, “Yes.”

And she said, “And you felt cold?”

And I said, “Yes.”

And she said, “That’s an indication that you were passing into an area that a past life of yours has experienced, because you’re seeking a familiarity with it. You’re cold because it’s your spirit from the past trying to connect with you, a long dead spirit.

I said, “So, who was it?”

She said, “Well, the only people that would be really familiar with that would be the people who worked there.”

I said, “Well, okay, who was that?”

She said, “Well, it was always women who worked there.” [Laughs] So she said, “I tend to think that at one point in the past,” she says, “based upon the cold, it could have been as long as 100 years ago, based on the cold. You were one of the temple workers.”

And I was like, “Here’s my money. Let me go.”

And then just, it kind of blew my mind because I never had anyone come out and just basically come right out and say, ‘you’re not the person that you think you should be.’

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: You know. And to me, I took that to mean, you know, you’re not the woman you should be.

LF: Yeah.

CF: And then when she was telling me it’s a past life, she was basically coming out and saying, ‘As a past life, you were a woman working in Hong Kong.’ So, I don’t know. [Laughs] I didn’t want to explore that anymore.

LF: So then, I guess sort of dialing back a bit, beyond the jobs that you’ve had at Ford, were you just in computer programming from like then on?

CF: Yes, from 1982 on, after I got out of school. I actually taught computers for about a year, and then, yeah, it's all been computer programming since then. I haven't really gotten into anything differently. I shouldn't say that; I actually do write. I've self-published a couple of works, and I run a blog. So I've been working on a series of books for a couple of years now, so I guess you could say I'm kind of like a half ass writer [laughs], but yeah, I do have a couple of things I've self-published, but it's like five years ago. I haven't really bore down and tried to get anything published since then.

LF: Yeah. And then, what was your coming out experience like? You know, sort of family reaction, people you relied on, friends' reactions as well.

CF: Well, I've actually had like three coming outs.

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: The first time, I remember I was about 11 years old. I could still get into my sister's clothes, and actually she had this really cute outfit. And I asked her if I could dress up in it once for her. And she let me do it. And I really loved it. I felt so comfortable and nice in it. And of course, later she used that against me. She used it to blackmail me and stuff like that. So I didn't say anything again after that.

Then I was married to my first wife, and this was probably about 1985 I believe, about 1985 or so. I kind of told her that, you know, I'm more comfortable being feminine. And she did a thing with me where she did my makeup and stuff like that once. Just let me see what it looked like, and then after that she said she didn't want me doing anything like that again. So again she held it against me, and just kind of pushed it down.

When I was off work, I met a woman through an online writing course, and we became pretty good friends. And she was the one I actually finally came out to in August, end of August 2011. We were actually engaged in doing a little bit of storytelling, and there were things that I was doing where I was becoming more relatable to the female characters instead of the male character I was working on. And I finally told her one day. I said, "You know, some of the things that I've been doing that I seem to fall into the female characters more and my male character doesn't seem to have a problem hanging around with women, stuff like that." I told her. I said, "I'm more comfortable looking at myself as a woman."

I didn't know how to come right out and say, "I'm transgender," because even at that point, I couldn't say the words.

And she was like, "Okay." [Laughs] She had no problem with it.

LF: Yeah.

CF: So in 2012, I, when I was living in Indianapolis working for the state, I started seeking out a gender therapist, because at that point I was starting to get like, 'I need to do something with this.' And so I started telling a select few friends online that I was going through this, that I was

starting the process of seeing a therapist that I was, that I believed myself to be transgender, and I was going to start doing stuff on it.

And a few people, right off the bat, were like, “Okay. We kind of suspected that.”

In fact, I had an old friend who I used to know back in Indiana in the mid ‘90s, she even said, “I kind of suspected that the entire time.” I said, “Really?”

We used to role play, and she said, “You knew way too much about women.” [Laughs] She said, “You knew way too much about how they acted and how they dressed and how they did stuff.” She goes, “No, that wasn’t stuff you learn from a gaming book.” [Laughs] She goes, “I always kind of suspected.”

So, and then after I went to my gender therapist for the first time, she kind of confirmed. She said, you know, “You have nothing to worry about. You definitely have GID, you know, you’re transgender.”

And I told my first friend when I came out to about it, she says, “Yeah, well, I always knew that. Come on.” Instead of being surprised.

Now, I was married to my second wife at the time, with whom I have a daughter. And my second wife did not take it well. She was... There was a lot of tears, there was... A lot of it was, ‘how is this happening to me?’ Which, of course, it’s not happening to you, honey, it’s happening to me. It wasn’t long after that that I came out here to Harrisburg. So she never really has been interested in my transition. She never really has spoken about it much. She actually didn’t speak about it or even talk to me about it until 2015 when I was getting my name changed.

LF: Mmhmm.

CF: And that’s when she finally decided she wanted to speak about it. So she was not a great supporter. My daughter, on the other hand, it was not a big deal to her. She’s always kind of supported me on it. She’s had trans friends. She’s had gay and lesbian friends. She told me that when I went back for her graduation at the beginning of June, and she told me then that she’s pansexual, you know, which “Mom doesn’t understand that.”

And I said, “Well, you know, Mom’s not going to understand a lot of the things, like what she did with me.”

So I said, “But if you ever need someone to talk to, talk to me. Don’t worry about it.”

So unfortunately, we don’t keep in contact as much. Most of my friends online were very supportive. I’ve only had a few people that just kind of blew it off, kind of thought at first that I was joking or, you know, just didn’t get what was going on. And there’s still part of, I guess you could say, my Facebook friend list, but we don’t really discuss anything, we don’t really converse or anything like that. You know, we just don’t talk.

Nowadays, a lot of my friends, it's funny, that I'll pick up friends on like Facebook or Instagram or stuff like that, and I don't know how many friends I've had who have actually said, "I did not realize you were trans until you said something." In fact, that actually just happened a week ago. I started practicing with the roller derby team here in Harrisburg. I started at the end of May. And there's another trans woman who's actually on the team. So me, her, and three other cis women went out to Dairy Queen to get ice cream because we were being fitted for mouth pieces—it's a long story. But we went out, and me and the other trans woman started talking about, you know, 'So how much are you taking, and how difficult is it to get? Your estrogen, do you take pills? I do shots.'" Stuff like that, we're talking.

And one of the women who was sitting across from us, she later remarked on my Facebook page. She said, "Until you mentioned that, I had no idea."

And it's like, really? I mean, really? It's been two months, and the entire two months we were training together. She had absolutely no idea.

She said, "No, I did not know you were trans." She says, "That kind of took me by surprise." But it doesn't matter with her. She just did say, "I never realized it." So I still find that kind of interesting that there are, I mean most cis women, they were just like, 'No, I never had any idea until you said something.'

LF: So then can you talk a bit, you sort of touched on it, about your family life as an adult, and sort of your marriages and your relationship with your children?

CF: [sighs] I have one son, who was born in 1984. So he's... At the end of November, he's going to be 33 years old, who I don't speak to. I haven't really spoken to him since 2013. He's a lot like his mom. He just doesn't have a lot of interest in maintaining relationships with people. So I don't know what he's up to. It's a big problem.

My first wife was a rather contentious marriage. You know, for the first year, two years, it was sort like honeymoon style deal, and then after my son was born, everything just kind of levelled off. And then she was content not to just sit around and watch TV and get high and stuff like that. And I got bored with that after a while. So when we got a house, I started having people come over, and we would game and stuff like that. And she wanted to go out with her sister and go to country western bars. And she was the sort of person, she always wanted me to do what she was doing, but she didn't want to get involved with anything that I was doing. And it finally came out one day, she pretty much came right out and said, "You know, I had sex with you just so you'd marry me, just so you'd take care of me." And she said, "I didn't expect that you were going to have a life of your own." [Laughs]

Her idea was pretty much that all I would do was go to work, come home, and sit and watch TV with her. And she was getting upset because that wasn't what I decided I wanted to do anymore. So, you know, after we... The last five years or so of our marriage we were fighting all the time, and just finally divorced. And she was one of these people... She knew how to push your buttons, and she was really good at pushing mine. She could drive me to anger in just a matter of seconds, because she knew just exactly what to say and how to do it. And she had one of these tones where she would just be nonchalantly flippant, and completely dismiss anything you were saying with just a word or two.

So after we divorced, I didn't hear much from her at all. We lost track, except of course when the state didn't get her child support money right away. And then I married my second wife. My second wife's actually from Indonesia. I married her in 1998. And in hindsight, even though we've been married now for 20 years, and she is in the process of divorcing me right now... Even though we're in the process... We haven't really spent the last four years together because I've been living here, and she's been living in Indiana, she decided she did not want to come to Pennsylvania once I moved out here, and she came up with all sorts of excuses about why she didn't want to.

But going back to several years before, she is a very unaffectionate person. There's no kissing. There was no kissing, there was no hugging, there was no even like holding hands, she couldn't do that. She found it to be extremely difficult. No intimacy whatsoever. We went... I would have to say, I haven't been intimate with another woman since about 2004. So about 13 years. I even told somebody at roller derby one night, we were talking about relationships, and I said, "Guys, I don't want to bring you down, but I have to walk away from this conversation because I haven't even had a kiss in about 15 years." You know, it's just... We were married but there really wasn't a lot there.

I guess you could say we were friends, but I was looking for something more. And then, once I started transitioning once the estrogen starts hitting, you know, you want that intimacy. You want that love. And she was incapable of giving it, you know. I was living out here, and I tried to explain these things to her. She really was not getting it, because it's kind of an alien concept to her, I think. The last time I was back for my daughter's graduation, she did continually ask me, like three or four times she asked me, if I had a girlfriend yet. And I kept telling her, "No, I don't. Why are you asking me this all the time?"

You know, and she's like, "Well, I heard you might have one."

And I said, "Well, the other two or three times I told you no, so I guess it hasn't changed. I haven't picked up anybody here."

Yeah, I don't... Now she's like, since I said I couldn't afford to maintain two households any longer, now it's become a case of, "Well, it's time for us to move on." So she's... We're selling the house, and she's divorcing me, and she wants to move on with her life now after I paid for her Master's program and stuff like that [chuckles]. So. Live and let learn.

LF: Yeah. So then, did you begin transitioning in Indiana?

CF: Yes, I began going through therapy in 2012. I had reached the point where I was actually becoming suicidal over the idea of transitioning. After I came out to my one friend in 2011, it began to weigh heavily on my mind, and I finally reached the point, where I was like, 'I've got to do something about this.'

A friend of mine online said, "Why don't you find a gender therapist and start talking to her?" So I went through therapy, and then I was between jobs with consulting and stuff like that, so I couldn't actively begin actually physically transitioning. I was going through therapy.

And then when I moved out here, that's when I actually began the physically active transitioning because it didn't take me long to realize. I'm sleeping in my hotel room one night and going, 'Nobody here knows you. So, you know, don't put the brakes on this anymore. No one here knows you. So what's the big deal?'

LF: Yeah.

CF: So physically, I began going to trans support groups in October of '13. The first time I went out in public...it was after I came back from a trip to Indiana and I came back here and on the way out, I'm driving and I said, "You know, are you going to do something about this or not?"

So the next day, which was 30 March of 2014, I actually went out in public as myself. Horrible. The brows were a mess, no makeup, bad wig, y'know. Just oh god. I look at that picture – 'cause I took a picture of myself, I went to a Panera where I'd been going for months as the other me. I look at the picture and it's like oh my god, I can't believe I had the – y'know the nerve to actually go out in public looking like that. And then I went into HRT therapy in July 7th 'cause by that time I was sort of in the situation where I was out everywhere but at work. So I decided I wanted to go into HRT so I did, July 7th of 2014. Went through the entire last half of the year going to work more or less (___?). Then I'd get home, put on my wig, put on my clothes y'know. The old joke, you know, how do you know a trans woman from a straight – y'know from a cis woman. You put on your bra when you get home.

LF: [chuckles]

CF: Except, towards the end of the year, that was when my breasts were developing to the point where...they were noticeable under my polo shirt and I couldn't wear a bra because they didn't know I was out at work. But they needed to do something. My therapist had told me "you're going to reach a point where you're not going to be able to pretend any longer, you need to come out you need to tell them what's happening because" she said, "It's killing you, basically. I can tell from your depression that it's killing you not to come out at work."

So, finally in January of – early January of 2015, I came out. I told my boss. I said "Look, this is what's going to start happening with me". [pauses, sighs] The state has protections for LGBT people but the next day my boss says "We need to talk." And we're sitting in the room and he's like "We have absolutely no idea how to handle this." You know, they had no idea how to handle a transitioning person. So I said, "Well, I'll tell you what". I said, "Let's give everybody three weeks, tell 'em what's going to happen. The first Monday in February I'm comin' into work as me."

So they had three weeks to get the office in shape. During that time, nobody was asking me any questions like what do you wanna be called or anything like that. My boss did ask me, how are you going to dress. I said, "better than what you can probably imagine". Because I wasn't dressing very nicely as a guy. And so I gave them three weeks. My first full day just going 24 hours was January 31st, of 2015. That Friday night I came home, got in my pajamas. And the next day was like, that was it. But you know, I never went back. Then, my first full day out at work was Groundhog's Day 2015. You know I always like to make the little joke that the

Groundhog came out, saw it's shadow and so we're gonna have six more weeks of winter. I came out at work, saw my shadow, and said "hey, I think I'm just gonna keep doing this for the rest of my life".

LF: Mhm.

CF: So yeah, it's been two and a half years I been out full time now. That's kind of how it went...that's the whole timeline right there. There's just from therapy up to where I am today. An interesting thing though is my gender therapist in Indiana—who has been actually doing this for about 15 years, 20 years—and she once told me that I was the most clinical of her patients. That she had never had a patient who had so many benchmarks that they would set for themselves and then go up and hit that benchmark, and then go to another benchmark and then go to another benchmark and so forth and so on. She said, "I've never had a patient that was that clinical". She said, "After I saw you do that the first two or three times, I was firmly convinced that you were never going to have any problems transitioning". That was why, after about like a year, she said "I don't even need to see you anymore, y'know, if you wanna see me you can contact me if you're having issues with depression and stuff like that but as far as transitioning is concerned, you're on track you know exactly what you want".

LF: Yeah. So then were you ever concerned? 'Cause I'm pretty sure there aren't any employment protections in Indiana, correct?

CF: Yeah, there are not. Well, I was told...I actually came out to my HR director. 'Cause I was going through a period of like really intense, I guess you could say I was having panic attacks and everything else at work. A lot of it was due to therapy, a lot of it was due to the stuff that was going on at home. I was having a lot of anxiety issues. And I told her I was going through therapy and she said that at the state level, they had protections. But it's just like here in Pennsylvania. The commonwealth employees have protections but you know I probably could never get a job in Perry County. In fact, I have one friend she's like "you should come on out to Perry County, you should come up by where I live." She lives in Perry County, she's like "you should come up where I live, we'll go out we'll do somethin'". I said, "There's no way in hell I would walk in any place in Perry County, I would probably get my ass beat". I said, "I'm sorry but those rednecks up there would kill me if they had the chance". I said, "Maybe I'm stereotyping but no, I don't think so, I'm sorry if we're gonna do somethin' we're gonna do it here in the Burg". [chuckles]

LF: [laughs] Yeah. I was in Perry County a few weeks ago.

CF: Yeah, they probably loved you. [chuckles]

LF: It was fine. It was like a farm, where like a bunch of kids work on the farm and my friends are doing the program.

CF: Oh that's not too bad.

LF: Yeah, I guess so I knew the people and everything like that.

CF: But there's some of those towns that'd be like eh, eh, no. 'Cause there's a couple of llama farms up in there I wanna go see, I'd imagine they'd be nice but no for the most part I'd stay out of Perry County.

LF: Yeah, I don't take risks like that.

CF: No.

LF: So, you didn't touch on this but did you sort of have any interactions with the military at any capacity?

CF: The only interaction I had with the military was early on, I was in the Civil Air Patrol when I was like 11 years old. They actually made an exception to allow me to come in because I wasn't supposed to be allowed to join 'till I was 12 and they made an exception because I really was, I guess -- good at being a kid soldier. And that's what it was. At that time, it was a U.S. Air Force auxiliary. The deal was that if you stayed in it long enough, and I was in it for 4 years until I was 16 years old, but if you stayed in it long enough you had a shot at getting into the Air Force Academy. And I had firmly, for a long time, thought, I'm going to the Air Force, I don't have a problem with that. As I got older, however [chuckles]

LF: [chuckles]

CF: Between the issues with y'know my budding gender identity and depression and anxiety and all this other stuff, even though my uncle said he could secure me a spot at the Air Force Academy, I declined. I just said I don't think I could handle it. Literally I felt I am not the sort of person who should be an Air Force officer with people under their command. It would just be a disaster. Now, the only thing I regret there is that if I had gone into the Air Force Academy, I would've graduated in 1979 which was the last class that was non-coed. That was the last all male class. They liked to pride themselves by calling themselves the last class with balls. I would love to go back to class reunion with those guys and go "Hey guys! Remember me?" [chuckles]. I was approached by the Marines and I just was not interested. And that was it, nobody else really wanted me. Part of it was my high school transcripts. Even the guy from the Marines told me that my high school transcripts were kinda weak and they were kinda leery about that. No one paid any attention to the fact that I had this like, high IQ and I was just -- I was an underachiever.

LF: Mhm.

CF: But after that, I was like eh, no I don't really wanna go in. Given that when I was younger my version, I had two male-dominated sport and male dominated issues, I don't think I would've fit in. That was my biggest problem. I could not imagine being in that sort of situation...it just would've killed me. I just—I don't, I couldn't have handled it. I would've been suicidal within 48 hours. You know I would've just been like "I'm going in the shower with my pals here, don't come lookin for me" [chuckles]. I could not have handled it so I did not bother to go that route at all.

LF: And then, do you have any sort of affiliations with any like local LGBT organizations, have you done any work in that domain?

CF: I used to. I used to attend the Trans Central PA. I used to be a member with them but I kinda...I don't really want to say anything bad about them but I had a couple bad experiences with them. And so just kind of stopped attending their affairs. [pauses] I like to help where I can. I've done stuff like, talked about being transgender on my blog. I put up videos and stuff talking about some of the issues I've went through. I usually go to Transgender Day of Remembrance. Last time we had it up to Capital [ph], I was actually interviewed on TV. I got pretty much the first and last word in the interview which was "good". But I like being open about my experiences. I think it's a good thing. And one of the issues that I brought up was that you're never going to learn about us unless you're educated by us. And it helps. The last couple of days, naturally, I've had a lot of my friends who've known me to be trans actually asking stuff like "What sort of medication do you take, how often do you take it, what are the expenses, would you be able to get this stuff y'know in areas in the military?" It's like, "Yeah, here, it's no secret, this is all you need. And this is all I've went through as far as psychological counseling is concerned." So, y'know don't make this out to be some sort of huge straw man. So I try to educate there...I have not really gotten involved with organizations simply because people that I know that have been involved with those organizations have kind of all—[burps] excuse me, have all kind of flitted away so I haven't been able to get entrenched in any of those. And I really don't know what I would have to offer if I could get in there. It's sort of like I've always kind of gyrated to wanting to help but then it seems as if its—and this is possibly stereotyping—but it's always like the same little clique of people that are involved in those groups that are doing things with those groups. And trying to break into that is kind of difficult. So I do what I can, as me.

LF: And then... can you talk about how your identity has influenced other spheres of your life? Whether it's your social life, your family life, your sort of political leanings, things of that nature?

CF: It helped me get a lot more open with my daughter. I mean, one of the things I've always said is estrogen is great for knocking down all the barriers you've built up inside you. It's like all your filters go off. Whatever filters you had to hold back emotions and hold back whatever it is you're going to say, once you start on HRT it just goes away. Forget about it. So you know, you start becoming more open. I've actually had people at work tell me that they noticed within like a month after I came out, that I was far more talkative, far more open, I was willing to address them in more of an emotional fashion rather than just facts and figure, you know that sort of thing.

It hasn't really helped too much at home except like I said allowing me to get in contact with my daughter a little bit more. I kind of understand her a bit more reasonably these days. Although I never had that much of a problem with her, I was always her biggest – to me, I always felt like I was a big supporter, big booster of her. I always wanted to. She's a smart kid and she's doing well for herself. No religious affiliations. Socially, eh I still have issues there. My biggest issue is just – I wanna start dating and it's so hard to date. I mean, nobody – I don't know, nobody seems interested in me which kinda drives me crazy. And it's not like, for want of trying. It's just –

y'know, you start addressing women like "Hey would you like to go out? Would you like to go do something?" They're just like well...I don't know. A lot of people like to be my friends, nobody wants to go out y'know be more than a friend I guess you could say. It's kind of ... it kinda hurts. So you get kinda twisted around about that. I've talked about that several times when there's coming out--while it's helped me stave off you know doing something really ridiculous and suicidal--at the same time it's kinda lonely.

LF: Yeah.

CF: I've really feel...I don't wanna say jealous but there's times when I see couples who one of their partners, husband, their wife or something has transitioned and they're still together. Not bad in sense for them but for me, it's like why couldn't have that have happened. Why did it not happen for me?

LF: Yeah.

CF: Then, you see other people that I know they've got people they're dating and it's like y'know, what did I do wrong.

LF: Yeah.

CF: Don't start crying on me 'cause I'll start crying. [laughs]

LF: [laughs] No.

CF: I can see that look on your face so don't get me goin' [laughs].

LF: Yeah. Yeah.

CF: I'm low on hormones as it as right now so...I'm comin' up on my cycle here so.

LF: Yeah, so then... so you mentioned the effects that estrogen has had on like sort of you're like openness as a person. Would you wanna talk about any other like side effects that it's had or anything like that?

CF: Well, I mean other than physical changes. The physical changes are the ones that I've noticed the most you know. It's been interesting. My emotional stability changed...I remember when I first went on HRT I went through the most incredible mood swings and it's just like oh my god, I would be raving out one moment and then ready to cry the next. Everything else. It was just like horrible. It took me a while to really kind of get a grip on that. But it doesn't take much to flip the bitch switch. You know, when the time comes.

I'm more cognizant now of knowing my cycle so when I get down close to when I need—I do injections every two weeks—when it gets down to that point, I usually try to make certain that I don't stress myself out. I don't put myself in a position where [sighs] I'm going to get depressed or try to alleviate that. So...you're aware of your cycle...I'm on the same type of cycle a

ciswoman is on. So, I've kind of taken clues from some of the things they do and do the same things for myself. Yeah. And then...I don't know what else.

Just beyond the physical and the emotional. You do find yourself relating to things a lot differently. I mean, you know. I can think back to how I used to be before I transitioned. There's times when my behavior is so alien to me. You know, I was filled with a lot of anger. I was filled with a lot of despair and then as I got older, it mostly became despair. The anger went away. Now, I find periods of joy and happiness but I also find periods of like extreme, loss and sorrow and stuff like that. I tend to run a greater gambit of emotional feeling these days.

LF: Yeah. Is there anything related to sort of the greater...your relationship with the greater LGBT community that we haven't touched on?

CF: I don't know, I don't think so. I would like to get involved in more things. I am involved with people in Planned Parenthood, I help out there because I'm very strong with women's issues and for both cis and trans. Politically last year, I worked on the Clinton campaign. I threw myself into that so hard. Because I knew the sort of nightmare we'd have [laughs] that's like happening now, you know. I had not been overtly political until last year and then I got involved in that, I went to the Women's March in January. I went to the Science March in what was that, April?

LF: Yeah. I believe so.

CF: May, March..March. No.

LF: Sometime in the Spring. [chuckles].

CF: Yeeeah, I kind of lost track of that yeah. I was involved in the...there was the workshop stuff that happened out at Dickinson College back at the beginning of April. I was on one of the panels about coming out in the workplace that we had one non-binary conforming, one gay guy, there was me and then two lesbians. I think one of the women was – I think she was non-conforming. Non-binary too, I'm not sure. But I enjoyed that a great deal. I've always said, if I can be of some help or service in getting across a story or explaining my experiences...I want it to be used to help other people. Because you know...I envy a lot of these kids nowadays. Who are coming out earlier, and earlier. 'Cause you really do need to live your life. I don't have a problem with it. When my daughter came and said y'know, "I'm pan". I was like "Yeah, and?" [laughs]. "I kind of figured it 'cause I know you were datin' a couple of trans kids so you know, no surprise here". She was dating a trans boy and then I found out later she was seeing a trans girl. And I assume she was dating her so it was like no surprise, okay. So. I kind of pointed to myself and said "Like I'm going to say something". [laughs].

LF: [laughs] Yeah.

CF: She's like, yeah I kind of figured that. [chuckles]. You know. So I just told her, if you ever run into a situation where you're at college—'cause she's going to college this fall—I said if you

run into a situation at college or somethin' like that, I said "Text me. Call me. Don't be afraid. I mean, even wake me up in the middle of the night if you have to. Don't worry about it."

LF: Yeah. So then...wait I just forgot my train of thought. [pauses] Oh goodness I had a question. I hate this...

CF: I know it happens.

LF: [laughs] Oh! What was that experience like, being on that panel. Can you talk about that a bit?

CF: I actually had wanted... it was kind of strange. We had decided ahead of time to gage the feel in the room. I said you know, half of these kids could be sitting here thinking they're gonna walk out of college and change the world. So we kind of asked about that, "who here thinks they're going to change y'know tomorrow, the minute you walk out of here, the minute you graduate". About half the room raised their hand. The other half was like "none of us is gonna change it any time soon". The interesting thing was there was only one person there who was interested in going into the corporate world. Everybody else was kind of like interested in doing their own thing or going into non-profits or stuff like that. My biggest issue I had was I felt I couldn't bring enough to the table. You know, when they started talking they talked about things like how do you relate to your customers? How do you relate to other people around you? How do you relate to the people that you have to deliver things to or the executives and stuff like that? I started thinking, wow. The job I do is a computer programmer. I don't really get involved in a lot of that stuff. So I felt, while I wanted to help, I felt at the same time like, I'm kinda limited by what I do.

LF: Mhm.

CF: I loved the panel. I loved doing that sort of stuff. I loved getting up and talking about experiences and y'know myself. As you can see. I just felt I wish I could have done more. I didn't feel as if I was doing enough to help anyone or maybe even get across to them. I could tell, none of these kids wanted to work in government anyway. Basically the main reason I'm in government is because of my age. You know, they can't discriminate against me so.

LF: Okay. And then, are there any sort of important events or turning points in your life that we haven't touched on?

CF: [takes a deep breath]. Well, all my coming outs have all been kind of important events to me. It's helped shaped me. It's helped scare the hell out of me. But it's helped shaped me. One of the things I'm worried about that's going to happen in the future is my father passes. I've been told he knows I transitioned but he still calls me his son. I don't try to correct him because he's 86 years old. So I just let it go. My sister [sighs], she was not happy when I came out. In fact, she even – she even said "Are you trying to rebrand yourself?" Which I had absolutely no idea what the hell she was talking about when she said that.

LF: [chuckles quietly]

CF: It's like, rebrand? What am I, a car? [laughs]. So, I've actually told other people, I've said, "I have this sneaking suspicion that she is either A) not going to want me to come to the funeral or B) if I do come to the funeral, she's going to want me to come as that other guy. In which case would be the same as, I'm not coming to the funeral, that's all there is to it [chuckles]. It's not going to happen. She gets really upset when I tell her I'm her big sister now. She does not like that. I – I kind of use it as a dig on her every once in a while and she just does not want to hear that, y'know. She has a big sister now. [sighs, pauses].

Going to the Women's March was really awe-inspiring to me. I mean that whole day I was up for about 22 hours straight. And when I went to bed, I was just like still – vibrating, from the whole experience. That was – it was really tremendous in the sense that you were a part of something huge but at the same time, going there as a woman and kind of just being accepted and fitting in with everyone else, I never had anyone say anything to me. I was judged strictly by who I was and what I was there to help do. I had the same experience at the Science March. In fact, I ended up meeting a few other women and we ended up spending the day together. In fact I took up sightseeing before the march started, I took 'em sightseeing and was showing them like here's the memorials, let's go look at the memorials and stuff like that. We did a tremendous amount of walking around and what not. They were both pretty incredible moments.

The other thing—and this is gonna sound a lil strange—but I have a friend who she works for Planned Parenthood, but she's also on a roller derby team. The roller derby team here we have in Harrisburg. So she didn't have to push me real hard. I ended up going out for a try out. And like I said, we have another trans member on the team. I actually have just been wrapped up in the whole thing of doing all this work with all these incredible women of all different ages and sizes and backgrounds and to have all of them just accept me as just another person who wants to get out there and as we like to say, "Hit bitches" [laughs]. You know...never from day one has anyone questioned me or anything like that. And now they know they've got...they all know they've got two trans members on the team. Then we have a trans woman who's our announcer. But one of the funniest things it did, it kind of – at first, I was like I wonder if my friend told these people about me. And then, one of the early practices...one of the things you have to do is when you spin around 180 degrees they call that a transition. I can do those really well. I mean I started out like "Boom!" I can do that right off the bat. A lot of the people who'd been there for months practicing who hadn't certified yet were like, "How can you do that?" It's just...I don't know how to do it. I just do. So we were sitting around talking and my coach said...'cause I said "I have trouble skating backwards. You know, that's my biggest problem I don't know how to skate backwards". My coach goes, "Well, you transition real well." And I said, "Yeah, but I'm kind of an expert when it comes to transitioning". [laughs]

LF: [chuckles]

CF: Everybody started laughing. And at that moment, I go "Yeah they all know." [laughs] They know. I'm not even gonna try to hide this, so. It's a great experience for me. I've even had people who know about me at work who know I'm doing this, who are like, "You have completely changed in the last two months. You're so like caught up in this right now." So...it's

nice to be involved in a situation where it's totally inclusive. You can feel like, "I'm gonna get out there and practice with people and I'm gonna compete with people who aren't gonna care"...about who I used to be, who are gonna compare about what I can do, at that moment.

LF: Mhm.

CF: And that's kind of what I like.

LF: Yeah. And then can you talk about sort of...looking back on your life the evolution of sort of embracing, acceptance, tolerance of the trans people or the LGBT community in general?

Camera person: Your microphone...

CF: Oh – oh. [fixes microphone].

Camera person: There we go.

CF: How's that?

Camera person: Yeah.

CF: Sounds good, okay thank you. I mean I know what it was like back in the '60s. I mean, we didn't talk about gay people. We knew they – kind of knew they existed but we didn't talk about it. And it was always just like, they were funny people, they're strange people and stuff like that. When...I guess you could say the Stonewall Riots and the situations that began happening in San Francisco when the gay community started coming up. There was a lot of negative contention. I mean, growing up in a small town in Indiana, everybody had an opinion on it and it wasn't a good opinion.

LF: Mhm.

CF: Personally, I see that there's a lot more acceptance. I mean, it's not 100% but then a lot of places where we wouldn't be accepted...they're not accepting of a lot of people.

LF: [chuckles quietly]

CF: It's not just us, I mean, let's face it. We'll pick on Perry County again but...y'know it's not just that they're not accepting of LGBT people, they're not accepting of anyone who's not like a straight white. Let's face it. [laughs]

LF: Yeah.

CF: So you know, I don't feel too bad there. I am kind of really surprised at how, now it seems to be that there is a large mainstream of people across the country that are supportive of LGBT riots simply because they know it's correct, they know there's nothing wrong with us. We're just

who we are. There's probably only two people in my office, that once I transition, they want nothing to do with me. Which I'm fine with. It's just like, okay. Be petty, I don't care.

LF: [chuckles quietly]. Yeah.

CF: For the most part, everybody's accepted me. Every once in a while I still have to correct people you know, who mis gender me and stuff like that. I kind of don't make too big of a deal about it.

LF: [chuckles quietly].

CF: There seems to be a lot more acceptance out there. Or in some cases you know, I find out some people just don't know.

LF: Yeah.

CF: I mean it's like, how do you know gay people? Unless they come right out, and they're with their partner. You know, how do you know they're gay? I know with some trans people, you can tell because of the passing and stuff like that. But I've also noticed, a lot of people don't seem to care anymore. There's a lot less in the sense of well you don't pass, so what? You're still a girl to me or a guy to me, who cares. You know. So I hope that means something. I hope that we're not slipping back into this weird Dark Age. That we had back in the 60's, and even in the 70's and god – back in the 80's too. But we're not slipping back into this weird Dark Age. I think – we're so out there now, that it would be difficult to be it all back in the bottle. I mean I – I'm part of a couple trans support groups on Facebook and one of the things you keep hearing is, "They wanna drive us back into the closet". Meaning mostly trans people. They wanna drive us back into the closet. And I'm thinking, "The only way they can be able to do that is they have to completely eliminate us from society". I mean if they say I can't go into the bathroom, I'm probably – I'm still gonna go. What are they gonna do? Are they gonna check my I.D., check my genitals to make certain that I can't go into a women's bathroom? You know. If I've got people that I'm interacting with, face-to-face, who can't tell I'm trans, how are you going to know if I'm in a department store. Or if I'm at a restaurant? I mean, how are you gonna know it? The only way they could is like, set us up so we could be fired for no cause or anything like that. But so many companies now, they have...so many qualified LGBTQ employees. It would kill them to get rid of these people. I mean, I do a job for the commonwealth that very few people can do.

LF: Hi, this is the second recording of Cassie's interview. We had a little bit of trouble with the battery so we're just going to continue where we left off. We were talking about the evolution of the general LGBT community and treatment of people over time.

CF: ... So, getting back to what I was saying is there are too many qualified now who are LGBTQ who are working in private industries and they're not going to want to get rid of these people. I mean, it's ridiculous. How do you replace them? You might do it at the government level, but we already saw back in the 2000's with Bush, what happened when they got rid of gays who were working as translators for the CIA and stuff like that. It effected them. It hurt them badly. So, what are they actually working toward? You're not going to be able to change

this attitude overnight. You'd literally have to pass laws, that'd say, "You can't hire trans people. You can't hire lesbians, you can't hire gays." You know. That would be the only thing they could do. I don't think that can happen.

LF: Yeah. And is there anything that we haven't touched upon in the interview that you'd like to bring up?

CF: I don't know. I think we've touched on so much stuff. I don't know what else there could be that I could say that would actually benefit or that anything's that's coming up that I haven't thought of.

LF: Yeah. Something that I've been... just with current events and stuff like that, a question that I've been asking people lately is what exactly is it like to be trans during the Trump presidency?

CF: [sighs] So far, it hasn't impacted my life. Yet. It bothers me. I do know I have friends who are supporters. I know we actually have somebody on the team who's a big supporter. But I don't let that – I don't bring that up. I'm waiting for that moment when I'm confronted by someone personally who feels that they can rub it in my face that I'm a third-class citizen. At which point I'm just gonna laugh at them and walk away. I'm not going to let it get me crazy.

You know, if you think back to what it was like in the 50's and 60's and 70's...[sighs] comparatively speaking, I've got it pretty easy. I mean, I had to not have to actually live in the shadows, like so many people back then. I can remember Christine Jorgensen, like I said. She was treated almost like a freak show and that's not where we're at today. I start looking at other women who started coming out...Renee Richards, I can remember her and she was kind of treated like a freak show as well. One who wasn't, however, was Wendy Carlos. She's actually one of my big heroes 'cause I was always into music and I was always into keyboard-oriented music. So you know, "Switched on Bach" was an album that I listened to a lot. And then, later, when I discovered she was transitioning and stuff it just you know, drew me to that a little bit more and I loved the fact that when she scored Tron. Even then, there were Christian groups that were upset with Disney who said "Why are you hiring this person?" and they said "Because we wanted the best electronic keyboard specialist we could get our hands on". And Wendy happens to be that person [laughs] so you know that was just like shut up.

I don't have to live in the shadows and I don't think it's ever gonna get to that point. I am aware that somebody could one day decide to get in my face and wanna do something violent. I am aware when I go out the door, every morning, and when I leave work to go home, whenever I'm out, there's always the possibility that I'm going to be confronted. [takes a deep breath] You have to accept it. You know, you have to say "I'm not gonna let it stop me from being who I am". If...if it comes to that, where you can't go out [sighs]. You know, I don't know what else you would do. I can keep fighting the good fight, I can keep doing things to make certain that I can try to make it a lil easier for other people, but when you're dealing with people who wanna confront you, the only thing you can do is you have to stand up to them. You have to be willing to stand up and say, "Look, why are you doing this? What threat am I to you?" I mean really, how is my existence hurting you? What is it about me that drives you crazy? One friend of mine said that the reason we incent so many men is because we willingly gave up our man card. You

know, we gave up that male privilege. We walked away from it and said, “That’s not important”. [chuckles].

So it’s a scary time. I don’t mind railing against the people who are back to calling us trannies and going on about homosexuals and stuff like that. You know, outdated, antiquated terms. There is this feeling that racism and bigotry is on the rise because it’s being given a new lease on life. I don’t think it’s gonna last forever though. I don’t think...I notice the things that my daughter does. The people she surrounds herself with. The people who are 10-15 years older than her, they don’t buy into that.

LF: Yeah.

CF: The one thing that really harkens me the most is when you see kids that are 5, 6, 7 years old who are coming out and saying ‘I should be a boy’ or ‘I should be a girl’ and they’re transitioning with their parents help. To me that’s like...there’s 1.5 million trans people right now. I think there’s more than that, and given another generation and there’s even gonna be more. I reminded somebody a couple years ago...I said “You do realize that the first generation of trans kids who began transitioning before puberty and have not had to worry about ‘passing’ are reaching the point where they’re no longer teenagers and becoming 20-year old adults”.

LF: Mhm.

CF: And how are you ever going to then who these people are? I mean you look at someone like Jaz Jennings. [shakes head] There is no way in hell she looks like a boy. She never was a boy. She’s always been a girl. She’s been raised as a girl from almost day one. So, at what point do you have other kids who are just like that? How are you ever going to be able to point to them and go “Oh, they’re trans I know they are”. Well how do you know? Because there’s nothing that tells you. Other than the fact that they come out and tell you “I’m trans”. They’re not gonna do that. Because at that point, they’re going to say “I’m a girl.” Or I’m a boy, or I’m a woman, or I’m a man. It’s something you just can’t contain anymore. I mean, you’re not gonna stop that. Maybe you will, maybe you won’t. But they’ll be ways of getting around it. I guess the one thing you could say you know the quote Jeff Goldblum had in *Jurassic Park*: “Nature will find a way”. And we will find a way. They’re not gonna stop us completely.

LF: Okay. Well, I think that suffices unless you have anything to ask.

Camera person: No, thanks.

LF: Okay.

CF: I would just to ask, what sort of gifts are you guys looking for?

LF: Just anything that sort of related to your life, anything that has to do with like trans planning, or anything of that nature.

CF: Most of what I've had is I've kept documented images of my transition from my first time coming out, going up through HRT, stuff like that and a couple of like you know. I have some personal photos...I had a photo taken with Hillary Clinton. I have another one taken with Governor Wolf. That was a very – I actually met Governor Wolf at a – at the Clinton rally in the Mazzone Center and I went up to him and said, “oh by the way”, I should his hand and I said “I'm your other trans employee”. [laughs] He's like, “Really?” and I said “Yeah, I know Dr. Levine, you know we meet all the time, we run into each other” and stuff like...he's like “How's that workin' out? Do they treat you good in your office?” He asked what division I work in and stuff like that and of course it was like, “Well if you ever run into any trouble just call my office”.

LF: Aww.

CF: So yeah, I loved that. I know Rachel Levine, you know. I've run in—I don't know her socially but I keep running into her here and there. But yeah. It was funny when I said I'm your other trans employee. There's a couple of us who work for you. [laughs]. That's really all I have is just you know, pictures and stuff like that, mementoes. I don't have like any really physical stuff. I haven't kept...it's kind of interesting to go back and look at the photos of how I've progressed every year y'know over transitioning.

LF: I think that would be useful.

Camera person: I think so.

CF: I could dig some stuff together.

LF: We don't turn away much. [chuckles] I would say.

CF: I could dig some stuff up and show you or send to you.

LF: Yeah, definitely. I would say you can either drop them off at the center...

CF: Well, they're digital photos so it'd probably be easier to email them.

LF: Yeah, yeah. Email them – so...yeah, either email them to me or drop them off at the center or go to the archives at Dickinson. Whatever is best for you.

CF: Okay. Probably email them to you.

LF: Mhm. Okay.

CF: Since they're digital, I could probably put them together and like, maybe upload 'em to a drop box and then just have you download what you want and take a look at it and see, you know here's an older trans person going through her journey. [laughs].

LF: Yeah, no definitely that would be great. You can stop the recording now.

CF: Okay.