NEW YORK CITY TRANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

https://www.nyctransoralhistory.org/
http://oralhistory.nypl.org/neighborhoods/trans-history

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

JAMIE BAUER

Interviewer: Michelle Esther O'Brien

Date of Interview: June 5, 2017

Location of Interview: NYU Department of Sociology

Interview Recording URL:
http://oralhistory.nypl.org/interviews/jamie-bauer-c0a4qm

Transcript URL:
https://s3.amazonaws.com/oral-history/transcripts/NYC+TOHP+Transcript+015+Jamie+Bauer.pdf

Transcribed by JG Bradner (volunteer)

NYC TOHP Interview Transcript #015

Michelle Esther O'Brien: **Hello, my name is Michelle O'Brien, and I will be having a conversation with Jamie Bauer for the New York City Trans Oral History Project in collaboration with the New York Public Library's Community Oral History Project. This is an oral history project centered on the experiences of trans-identifying people. It is June 5th, 2017 and this is being recorded at the NYU Department of Sociology. Hello.**

Jamie Bauer: **Hi.**

O'Brien: **So, let's start off, tell me about where you were born and where you grew up.**

Bauer: **So, I was born in New York City, I grew up in Stuyvesant Town, which is a small, middle-class housing development on the East Side of Manhattan.**

O'Brien: **Or a large housing development. [laughter]**

Bauer: **Or a large, Yeah, okay, it's a large house—[laughter]. I grew up there, I went to PS 40, the public school there. And then to Hunter High School.**

O'Brien: **Okay, and what were your dynamics with your family like?**

Bauer: **So, my family is Jewish but secular very secular, and they just wanted a nice Jewish girl. And I popped out of the womb as a tomboy. And there were a lot of bad dynamics about that. So...**

O'Brien: **Tell me about some of them.**

Bauer: **So, um, lots and lots and lots of early, you know two, three, four, five-year old discussions about dresses, and what I would wear and what I wouldn't wear. And I have an older brother who's two years older than me and I was always stealing his stuff and always trying to go out in it. And always tearing up whatever my parents got me, to destroy it so that I couldn't wear it. So, a lot of that kind of very typical, I think, young child stuff. And my family pretty much got what was going on and didn't like it, and really just tried to force me to act like a girl. And I just rebelled, rebelled, rebelled against it.**

O'Brien: **What were your parents like outside of home. Do you know the kind of work they did and what their lives were like?**

Bauer: **So, my mom was a homemaker and my dad worked for a very, for a firm that made brass plaques, he was like a salesman. And he was active in our local synagogue, again sec—like with the youth group and stuff, not very religious. And my mom took care of me and my brother and you know was very sort of narcissistically attached to having us be good kids. And had a real problem with my non—nonconformities.**

O'Brien: **What was Sty Town like in the '60s?**

Bauer: **It was a little piece of suburbia plunked down in Manhattan. So, it was first of all, seg—racially segregated, so it was only white people and the few people who were not white were African diplomats from the UN. And it was very, well it was very straight, and people lived there because they wanted to live in Manhattan but not have all of the difficulties of living in the city. So, it had its own little police force, and a lot of rules and regulations about what you could do and what you couldn't do there. So, it was a very regulated part of the city compared to the rest of the city.**

O'Brien: **So, Sty Town's also in the middle of the what's now the East Village, was what the Lower East Side, then?**

Bauer: **Yeah, it was beginning to be the East Village. And one of the issues in Sty Town was like which public school district you were in. Because if you were in the PS 40 and junior high school 104 district, that was very white. If you were a little further East, and a little further South, then you had to go to the regular East Village schools which were considered much more mixed and therefore less desirable.**

O'Brien: **Do you remember in your childhood being around the East Village, what that was like?**

Bauer: **I do remember being around it, I was much more interested in it when I hit like 12 or 13 [laughter]. But I remember as a kid that my parents would go into the more central Village and drop us off in Washington Square Park and tell us what time to meet them back at the fountain in Washington Square Park. And we were allowed to roam for 2 or 3 hours by ourselves.**

O'Brien: **Oh wow, was that common?**

Bauer: **I think, yeah, I mean I think it was common to let 8, 10, 12-year-old kids do their thing.**

O'Brien: **And what was Washington Square Park like?**

Bauer: **It was a lot of fun because there were performers and hippies and different kinds of people. We weren't allowed to like leave the park, but there was plenty to amuse one's self with there as well as playgrounds. It was just very interesting and happening.**

O'Brien: **So, when you were a teenager you started engaging around the East Village a little bit more?**

Bauer: **Yeah, a little bit more so...**

O'Brien: **Can you tell us some early memories of that?**

Bauer: **Uh, going to listen to music. You know at the time no—in the 70's nobody carded anybody and as long as you had the money, people were happy to let you into bars and happy to let you buy a beer and happy to have you listen to music. So, you know, the whole Central to West Village was very accommodating.**

O'Brien: **What were your friendships like?**

Bauer: **So, I went to Hunter High School, which at the time my year was still all girls, and very intense. And for me as a not-at-that-point-out queer kid but definitely being the way, I am now; was the way I was then in a lot of ways. It allowed me to skip the entire dating and boys' issue. And I had friends and I hung out and I had friends from all over the city and went to every neighborhood and you know, it was, it was a really nice time to live in New York.**

O'Brien: **So, you won the fight with your parents around gender presentation?**

Bauer: **You know I would say that it was a constant battle without much giving in. And you know the thing that changed everything was in 1968, the city of New York changed the rules that girls did not have to wear dresses to school. And from that point on, I never wore a dress to school. You know before that like every day it was a battle. But once they changed the rules so that girls could wear pants to school, it was pretty clear I was never putting a dress on again. And so, I would only wear a dress for what I called state occasions and I haven't worn one since 1975.**

O'Brien: **Congratulations. So, Hunter High School, what did, how did you spend your free time in high school?**

Bauer: **Listening to folk music and smoking pot [laughter]. Uh, reading. Hunter was very intellectually, pretentiously intellectually oriented, so we pretentiously went to foreign films and museums and read books we didn't understand and tried to act like we were part of the New York intellectual.**

O'Brien: **And so, you had some exposure to it sounds like a hippie counterculture?**

Bauer: **There was like a hippie counterculture, there was a lot of anti-war stuff and particularly at Hunter it was sort of the tail end of the Vietnam War and so we went to demonstrations and...**

O'Brien: **And were there, did you develop many relationships in the movement or the scene?**

Bauer: **No, I was, you know I think prior to, so I came out like the moment I left home to go to college.**

O'Brien: **Yeah.**

Bauer: **And that allowed me to make a lot, to make more connections to people.**

O'Brien: **So, before you came out you were a little more socially isolated? Had some friends, but?**

Bauer: **I had friends; I had a girlfriend. But we were like best friends, but we were in love. And she ended up self-identifying as straight but always sleeping with women on the side, and still**

to this day. But I think you know for me sorta in 1975 discovering sort of butch culture gave me a way to place myself in society other than just being like eccentric—that there was, there were words for it and that was sort of liberating.

O'Brien: Tell me what's your first memory of encountering butch culture as you say?

Bauer: Well, definitely the first was Bonnie and Clyde's in New York. Because you walked in and like half of them looked like me, and the other half were really attractive [laughter]. Then so that was—

O'Brien: Where was Bonnie and Clyde's?

Bauer: That was on West 3rd street in the Village, and I went there a couple of times while I was still in high school and was seriously underage.

O'Brien: Tell us a little bit about it for those who might not know anything.

Bauer: So, it was a bar, it was sort of a working class very racially mixed bar, with a lot of butch women and a pool table and beer. And you know I wouldn't say it was like really friendly, but it was there. And it was a place where a 16-year-old or 17-year-old kid could go and have a beer and relax and watch and just being able to watch was really important. And just to see other people. So, I did run into one of my gym teachers there. [laughter] Who knew I was underage so we both swore each other to secrecy, which was fine.

O'Brien: And did you have a sense of kind of what the broader landscape for butch/femme communities were like?

Bauer: Not until, when I really came out, and then I—I went to school in Boston, and I really sort of came out more fully there. And there was a bar called The Saint which was like a famous dyke bar, and I went there a lot. And went to demonstrations and sort of got more, felt like I was more a part of the community.

O'Brien: What kind of demonstrations?

Bauer: So, there were—so like in the mid '70's, so were talking like '76, '77, '78, there were the Anita Bryant demonstrations, there were gay rights demonstra—I mean there were like even though people had come out, there was no rights, so there was no legal protection for anything. Bars were raided, I was in a bar when it got raided. You know so people had the lib—sense of liberation but no rights. So, there were a lot of demonstrations just for very basic things.

O'Brien: So, these are gay rights organizing?

Bauer: Yeah, gay rights.

O'Brien: So that brought together both gay men and–what word did you use for the community of women at that time?

Bauer: **Yeah, you know I probably identified as gay, because I always had that problem of identifying as female or a lesbian and I never really embraced that as comfortably as I thought I was going to. So, you know I identified as gay, I identified as butch.**

O'Brien: **And did you have a sense, so this gay rights movement context in what, the late '70's?**

Bauer: **Yeah. Yeah.**

O'Brien: **Did you have a sense of what its relationship was to other movements at the time?**

Bauer: **You know I was aware of all the splits, because you know there were, there were sectarian left, there were lesbian separatists, I was not really interested in lesbian separatists...**

O'Brien: **In the Northeast they were quite ambivalent about butch/femme.**

Bauer: **There—right, yeah and—I wasn't too into the sectarian left. I actually was most comfortable with the liberation end of the gay liberation as opposed to the assimila—. There was still the same thing we have now between assimilation and queerness. So, I sort of ended up even though it wasn't called queer, it was more liberation-oriented vs rights-oriented.**

O'Brien: **Tell me about how you all thought about the liberation, and at that time what the politics of that were?**

Bauer: **So, I think it was about freedom of expression, freedom to be a freak, freedom to be visible, freedom to flaunt it. Which was very appealing after having been told one's whole life to like conform, conform, conform. You know so there was part of the movement that was like no, we're just like everybody else, and there was a part of the movement which was like no we are just not like everybody else. We are our own thing and that was much more appealing.**

O'Brien: **How did people decided which, which side they were on? Like what led people to one path or the other?**

Bauer: **I think if you really did want to conform, if you really did just want to just get like married and move to the suburbs and have kids, all of that rights stuff, was really important because you couldn't do it. You know and you know absolutely people certainly have the right to do all that, that was not what I was, was interested in. And you know there was a tremendous amount of discrimination and you know people couldn't adopt, people women who had been married and had kids were having their kids taken away from them, so you know the rights stuff was really important. It just wasn't where, where I was emotionally.**

O'Brien: **Were there butch women, butch people on the rights end of it?**

Bauer: **Oh, absolutely, absolutely.**

O'Brien: **So, on both sides?**

Bauer: **Yeah, yeah.**

O'Brien: **Was each side class diverse?**

Bauer: **You know I don't think I paid a lot of attention to class at the time. You know and I would say that overall, every aspect of the movement had issues with race and class. And Boston was a very segregated city because they just had the Boston Busing riots in '75. So, you know the movement was almost exclusively white. You know it was probably somewhat class diverse but definitely very—you know because Boston is such a university city. It was very student and people who graduated from those universities dominant, so I think it was not that not as class diverse as it could have been.**

O'Brien: **And were you ever exposed to the African American gay community politics at any point during this?**

Bauer: **Only by reading.**

O'Brien: **What did you read?**

Bauer: **Well, I forget when *This Bridge Called My Back* [This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color by Rosario Morales] came out, but that was just like classic.**

O'Brien: **Yeah, 1983.**

Bauer: **Yeah.**

O'Brien: **Or '84. Yeah.**

Bauer: **So, that was a little later. You know I had read Audre Lorde and you know, so I had read it, but it wasn't...**

O'Brien: **It wasn't your day-to-day life.**

Bauer: **Right and it was a little weird because having come from New York, where you know as segregated as New York is, my high school was not as socially segregated, and so I always had black friends, I had Puerto Rican friends, I had Asian friends, and you know. And Boston was much more difficult, and I did have Black friends in college and in like New York I never though like what movie theatre are we going to, and what restaurant are we going to, is it safe? And in Boston we really had to think about, if we were going into Boston like what neighborhood, and was it safe.**

O'Brien: **Because of homophobic violence?**

Bauer: **Homophobic violence and racial violence.**

O'Brien: **Oh, interesting. Woah.**

Bauer: Yeah, you know There were areas that were fine, like Copley Square was fine but there were other areas that were just like we knew not to go there.

O'Brien: And you mentioned Anita Bryant stuff, give us an outline of what that was about and your involvement.

Bauer: Ok let's see what I can remember about it. Anita Bryant was the spokesperson for Florida Orange Juice and was also a real homophobe and very anti-gay and spoke quite a lot about being anti-gay. And so, people organized orange juice boycotts and demonstrations and there was a boycott to get Florida Orange Juice out of all the gay bars and the gay bars were— it wasn't so easy. And to get Florida Orange Juice out of all the campuses and that was not so easy and if we couldn't get it out, to boy—to not drink it. And that was, that was the organizing.

O'Brien: Was she—I've heard about her, but I don't know a lot. Was she also an elected official or businessperson?

Bauer: I don't think she—she was a businessperson; I don't think she was an elected official. She had been— I want to say she had been like a Miss America or something but that may be completely wrong. She was a prominently known person who was slightly a has-been by that time. And was the, the voice of Florida Orange Juice, was her gig.

O'Brien: Like in advertising?

Bauer: Right, right. So, she was very visible to people and separate from that she was doing this whole anti-gay crusade.

O'Brien: And targeted political boycotts, that has a history in the 60's around grapes and the UFW [United Farm Workers] and Coors Beer, around apartheid in the 80's and do you— was that a tactic you had heard about before?

Bauer: It was a tactic I had heard about, what I didn't realize was how long lasting it is. I mean I still don't drink Florida Orange Juice.

O'Brien: Yeah. [laughter]

Bauer: You know it's like once you get that into your system it's really hard, you know I just gave up orange juice. You know as a kid who grew up drinking Tropicana every day, you know when it came to that point I was just like, well do it. And you know I still, you know it's like a carton of orange juice hasn't come in my house you know in 40 years.

O'Brien: And what was your involvement in the organizing, were you at meetings, where did you go to the bars?

Bauer: I went to demonstrations and there wasn't, there was a little gay group on our campus, but it was really a social group, not a political group and it was all men, so it really wasn't...

O'Brien: **And were you dating in college?**

Bauer: **I dated a little bit but not very seriously it wasn't—so I was at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] and MIT when I was there was about 12% women.**

O'Brien: **Wow.**

Bauer: **So, there wasn't a lot to date and although I went out into the community, I've never been the kind of person to pick people up. I've always only dated people I met socially and got to know so.**

O'Brien: **What was your personality like, how do you think others—**

Bauer: **I was shy and serious and very chilly. And not out—I was shy, so I wasn't really outgoing. I have a partner now who I met when I was 24, so we've been together for 34 years. So, it worked, eventually.**

O'Brien: **So, MIT, going to occasional demonstrations, being very shy sounds a little painful, a little lonely.**

Bauer: **Yeah. Yeah.**

O'Brien: **And then what did you do after that?**

Bauer: **So, then I moved back to New York.**

O'Brien: **What year?**

Bauer: **So that would have been '81 when I moved back to New York. I got a job working at New York City Transit as a urban—I was a Civil Engineer Urban Planning major, so I got a job working there as a planner. And New York City Transit, then and now, does not really plan anything so after a couple years in the Planning Department, I jumped to the Subway Scheduling Department which is where I spent most of my career.**

O'Brien: **So, this is a white-collar job? In the MTA [Metropolitan Transportation Authority]?**

Bauer: **It was a—it was sort of, as much as office jobs and MTA are white-collar, it was a white-collar job. But it was—one really nice thing about the MTA and New York City Transit is that not that it's so accepting, but if you are a hard worker people will look past almost anything weird about you. So as queer as I was and as out as I was, and as open about my politics as I was, and the way I dressed. As long as I was willing to do more work than anybody else people were really happy to have me in their office. So, I sort of settled in there.**

O'Brien: **Were you a union member? Or management?**

Bauer: **I was a union member to start with and at a certain point they changed the structure and took away our supervisory—you know there's like TW [Transport Workers] Union, Supervisory Union. And they took a whole bunch of Supervisory Union jobs and made them quote on quote management—and I got caught up in that. So, I became management even though I didn't manage anybody at the time, so that they could take us out of the union. But mostly we worked with people in the operating departments, most of the people who we worked with had come up through the ranks. Most of the people I worked with had come up through the ranks...**

O'Brien: **What was the Supervisory Union?**

Bauer: **So, it was—it still exists, it's the Subway Supervisors Association and its like dispatchers, train service supervisors. And originally the scheduling departments people came in as conductors or train operators and then became supervisors. And then the supervisors, a lot of supervisors were in office jobs. So basically, what they did is they took the office jobs out of the union.**

O'Brien: **And so, people were respectful of you, your gender, to some extent?**

Bauer: **You know there were comments and things said behind my back and occasionally things said to my face but mostly I would say fairly accepting of my being there.**

O'Brien: **Did you know other gay people in transit?**

Bauer: **Yeah, yeah, I mean because you can pick them out a mile away, because it was such a straight environment that you know you'd walk into the lobby and see them and it'd just be like, you would just know.**

O'Brien: **Would you all avoid each other or connect, or?**

Bauer: **No, no we would all, there was a little underground— so there was a guy there named Sal Licata who wrote, I forget the name of the book he wrote. He was in like the Industrial Engineering Unit and Sal picked me out like the second week I was there and tracked me down and introduced himself so...**

O'Brien: **Was there ever any, I don't know, mutual support or organizing or any sort of effort to—**

Bauer: **No, there was you know individual support but there wasn't really any organizing and there never really felt— people didn't socialize that much, so you know you came in, you did your job, and you left, and you had your outside life.**

O'Brien: **Right. And it sounds like an environment where you all didn't experience super active discrimination that organizing against it was necessary.**

Bauer: **No, yeah you know the only, we fought to get domestic partnership health benefits so there was a little organizing around that.**

O'Brien: **Do you remember when that happened or anything about it?**

Bauer: **That was in like the mid-90's, early 90's. And that wasn't a lot of active organizing either, it was a lot of, when we had these employee meetings with the president and people get to stand up and asks questions and we always made sure that all of us asked that question.**

O'Brien: **Wow. I haven't heard about that, that's very interesting. Okay, so you're living in New York, you get the job at transit, and then how are you spending your time outside of work?**

Bauer: **So, then I joined Women's Pentagon Action which provided me with all the demonstrations I wanted to go to, all the women I wanted to meet, and that was a lot of fun.**

O'Brien: **So, this is in the early 80's, there's some big anti-nuclear, anti-Cold War.**

Bauer: **Anti-intervention...**

O'Brien: **Anti-intervention—**

Bauer: **You know Anti-intervention in Central America.**

O'Brien: **Right, war in El Salvador and Guatemala.**

Bauer: **And Women's Pentagon Action— although it was all women, was people in age ranged in age from early 20's to mid-60's.**

O'Brien: **Very intergenerational.**

Bauer: **Yeah, and mixed straight and gay and really interesting, interesting people in it.**

O'Brien: **And were you going to meetings every week?**

Bauer: **Yeah, weekly meetings and demonstrations and organizing and thinking about things and really starting to think about— it was before intersectionality was a word, but the basis of Women's Pentagon Action was everything is connected. So, you know military violence, patriarchy, capitalism, you know the—made all the connections, and like I said I met a lot of really interesting people including my partner there.**

O'Brien: **When did you guys meet?**

Bauer: **So, we met at like right at the beginning and we circled around each other, because Donna is 26 years older than I am. And so, we circled and circled, and I was attracted, and she was attracted, we sort of both knew we were attracted but we also thought well you don't want to like mess up a friendship and it's not going to work and it's really not going to work, and we**

really shouldn't do this. And after about a year, it was like okay, let's just like sleep together and get it out of our system and here we are. And that was, then it took us like 7 years to move in together because we each had rent stabilized apartments. Even then it was very complicated to give up two apartments to move in together.

O'Brien: **So, Women's Pentagon Action was it a civil disobedience group?**

Bauer: **So, they did civil disobedience, but they also did a lot of what we would now call direct action of demonstrating and also showing up at other people's demonstrations with our own signs and things.**

O'Brien: **How big was the group?**

Bauer: **Maybe you know I would say there were between 30 and 50 people who came to organizing meetings, and we could get anywhere from three to five hundred people at a demonstration.**

O'Brien: **Three to five hundred. And were there internal—significant internal debates?**

Bauer: **There were significant internal debates like every other organization, we were predominantly not-exclusively white, we were not a separatist group, but we were a women-only group so. And our actions were supposed to be women only, so it was really awkward when men showed up at them, particularly the male partners of women in the group. That was an issue. [laughter] You know a lot of discussion about, you know, I think what you have in every group about how much do you try to change the existing system versus how much do you have to start from a complete, you know, revolution versus change. And for which there is never any good answer. [laughter] But there was a lot of discussion about it, and there were a number of artists and writers in the group. So, Grace Paley, the poet, was in the group.**

O'Brien: **Oh wow.**

Bauer: **And Vera Williams, who's a children's author was in the group, and then there were some young people so Laura Flanders, the writer.**

O'Brien: **The current Laura Flanders.**

Bauer: **The current Laura Flanders was in the group, right exactly.**

O'Brien: **Radio talk so host, I didn't know she had that background.**

Bauer: **Yeah so, she had that background. There were quite a few really good thinking people there.**

O'Brien: **And how many people would you say sort of came out of the new left, the anti-capitalist movement, the sort of the left and how many people had a different point of– [inaudible]**

Bauer: I think it was generational, so I think the older women there came out of the anti-war movement and they had gone through the like women are supposed to just like operate the mimeograph machine and make coffee and sleep with us and they were like you know we're not doing that. And the younger women came out of the campus org—, there were a lot of Barnard students, like Laura Flanders was student at Barnard at the time. There was a whole little cadre of them. Some of them came out of the anti-apartheid movement or brought that, I shouldn't say came out of it, they brought that with them, and a lot of anti-intervention in Central America stuff.

O'Brien: So being the Trans Oral History Project, I want to ask some about dynamics around trans people. So, you know, in the early 70's there were quite a few trans women involved in feminist organizing, and then the late 70's, there was this very acute and aggressive turn—

Bauer: Yeah, the Janice Raymond—

O'Brien: — against trans women and some of that sort of language and experience of the anti-war feminist movement included assertions about sort of women's biological nature being linked to peace in a way that was quite turned against—weaponized against trans women.

Bauer: That was not so much an issue in our group, we did not have trans women active in the group, and they probably would, for good reason— probably would not have been comfortable there. I don't know whether they would have been viewed as women or not, they probably would not have been—

O'Brien: Do you remember any exposure to the trans debates in feminism at the time?

Bauer: You know because Women's Pentagon Action was not a, it was feminist, but it wasn't...

O'Brien: Yeah, it was orienting more towards antiwar.

Bauer: Right and there wasn't sort of active TERF-iness [Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminists] the way there is now. So, it really, it was more— what I would say was more of an issue in the group and what we talked about was internalized homophobia and whether as a mix of lesbians and straight women, did the lesbians feel like they had to play to not push their lesbianism in order to keep peace and order in the group. So, there was really no trans issue discussions that I can remember—

O'Brien: So, what would pushing your lesbianism in the group have looked like?

Bauer: So, I think because we were a women's group and not a lesbian group, although we marched in the Gay Pride Parade. What would it have looked like? I think it would have been we—are signs if we brought signs were more women and not and didn't have the word lesbian in it because that would have created some sort of split. You know visibly you know we were there, but and we didn't, and it was sort of that because it wasn't a lesbian group the lesbian issues weren't as prominent.

O'Brien: **So how long did you organize with Women's Pentagon Action?**

Bauer: **Maybe that was like three years, but it was three very intense years, including going up to—there was a women's peace camp in upstate New York, Seneca Falls. So, we went up and spent a week up at the Seneca Women's Peace Encampment.**

O'Brien: **How long was that there?**

Bauer: **That was there, it was active for one whole summer. I want to say '83 and then it continued for a little while after that, but it was a real organizing thing with the women from Greenham Commons, England, and it was a part of a women's peace thing at the time that was very...**

O'Brien: **And was there a nuclear weapons facility there? Or a military base?**

Bauer: **In Greenham, there was an American military base, in Seneca there was a military base also.**

O'Brien: **And the historic Seneca Falls women's convention, interesting. Yeah, I went to a camp like that in Scotland in the '90's. And so that and outside of political work and your job did you have other things going on? Just focusing on the politics?**

Bauer: **No, just job and politics, mostly.**

O'Brien: **And how did you, what were your own politics, was it generally the same as the rest of the group or were they being shaped in other ways as well?**

Bauer: **So, I was struggling, you know I preferred to be in queer-er groups, you know and at the time queer wasn't really as– but I preferred gay mixed groups to women's mixed groups. But I liked the peace politics and the nonviolence politics and nonsectarian politics in Women's Pentagon Action a lot and there weren't like that many groups in New York to pick and choose from. So, you know my dream group has never really existed. And even now I would prefer a queer-er group than– I mean Rise & Resistance is queer but it's not queer-queer. And there are a lot of straight people in it which is fine, but it doesn't have the queer liberation dynamic or trans liberation dynamic to it that I would really like to see. And to the best of my knowledge that still doesn't exist in New York. If you know of one let me know.**

O'Brien: **So, what came after Women's Pentagon Action?**

Bauer: **So, after that came after a quick hybrid into GLAAD [Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation] and then into ACT UP [the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power].**

O'Brien: **So, what was GLAAD like in– what year is this?**

Bauer: So, this is like '85, '86, and I got pulled into GLAAD—GLAAD had a bunch of Gay Activists Alliance people who reformed around the AIDS crisis and around the homophobia and anti-gay backlash from AIDS. And they started out doing some street activism, but they had a really bad manage—not management structure, organizational structure with like a steering committee that was self-appointed, and only their friends, and then they wanted other people to do the work and there was an action committee that did a lot of the action work and that's who I worked with, but it wasn't really it wasn't a good activist model. And that group also had a lot of writers in it.

O'Brien: A lot of what?

Bauer: Writers, in it. So Jewelle Gomez was a part of it, Darrell Yates Rist, Marcia Paley, Vido Russo, so it had some really good people in it, but the structure never gelled, so I was always had one foot in it, and one foot out the door. So, when ACT UP formed, I was very happy to jump ship into ACT UP.

O'Brien: So, tell me about your first exposure to ACT UP.

Bauer: So, my first exposure was being asked by the War Resisters League to go do a civil disobedience training for their first action, which was like maybe the second meeting of the group. And so, I went, and I talked to the 20 people who were thinking about getting arrested and explained it to them and went to the demonstration, and—

O'Brien: What was that demonstration?

Bauer: So, the demonstration was at Wall Street, it was in front of, I think it was Trinity Church, and 20 people just sat down in the street and got arrested. It was actually the only active demonstration that was orchestrated with the police, where they gave the police a list of names of people who were going to get—it was before ACT UP got wild. Because they really, they had just formed, and they didn't know what they were doing. And then I just stayed. And brought with me my organizing skills from other things, which they really needed because not that many people involved with the beginning of ACT UP knew how to– what was legal, what wasn't legal, how to do a demo, what you have to tell the police, what you don't have to tell the police, what you need a permit for, what you don't need a permit for.

O'Brien: So very concrete organizing skills.

Bauer: Yeah, very concrete.

O'Brien: Protester skills.

Bauer: So, I knew all that from my experience, and I brought that with me.

O'Brien: So, how many other people in the group had previous organizing movement work in the way that you did.

Bauer: About half of the women and 1/20th of the men. [laughter]

O'Brien: Yeah. And what movements did people come out of?

Bauer: So, you know, I would say sort of the general LGBT movement, and some anti-war people, a few people who had been in GMHC [Gay Men's Health Crisis] but were very upset doing service provision because they wanted to be out on the street. And then there were, before ACT UP, there was a group that coexisted with us called the PWA Collective [Persons with AIDS Collective] and the guys from the PWA Collective had org—had a lot of skills.

O'Brien: And what were the demographics of ACT UP in those sort of, '87, '88?

Bauer: So, it skewed young, it was skewed male. It was, not as demographically diverse as New York is, but it was not all white either. So, there were—some people of color, African American, Latino, Asian American, Pacific Islander, not as widespread as in New York City as a whole, but not as white as most groups in New York tend to be. And I would say that the bigger split in the group was between people who were HIV-positive and people who were not, or people who knew their status and people who didn't, or people who were sick and people who were not.

O'Brien: And what was that dynamic like?

Bauer: Well, you know I think you always ceded the floor to people who self-identified as people with AIDS. And if there was discussion about what needed to be done, you ceded the discussion to them, so that they could speak. And their needs and issues and voices had priority over everybody else's.

O'Brien: What are some of the actions that you that stand out for you during the '80's, those years you were...

Bauer: We did "Stop the Church", which was at St. Patrick's, which was a difficult but really good action. Lots of anti-Reagan stuff, going to the Center for Disease Control, going to the National Institute of Health. When Bush I [George H.W. Bush] was president, we went to Kennebunkport while he was on summer vacation, which really upset him, but that was a really good demonstration because it made him confront the issue. There were a lot of very good, very large—I mean not very large by like Women's March standards, but large by ACT UP standards, which was like a thousand people.

O'Brien: What were relationships with other movements like at the time?

Bauer: ACT UP was not used to working in coalition except with some of the other people with AIDS groups. So, and also a number of groups sort of came out of ACT UP and then worked in coalition with us. So, like Housing Works started out as a working group within ACT UP so we always worked in coalition with Housing Works once they split off. We worked with People with AIDS Coalition, we did not work a lot with GMHC because they were always accusing us of screwing up, potentially screwing up their funding. So, there was a divide there. There were, not in the late '80's, early '90's, there weren't a lot of AIDS service groups, the way those sort

of burgeoned in the '90's. So, it wasn't like there were a lot of other groups to affiliate with. But mostly we did our own things and invited people to join us, but we didn't do a lot of coalition building.

O'Brien: **And was your relationship to gender in the group, so you're a butch gay woman at this time—**

Bauer: **At that time yeah.**

O'Brien: **And was that a common experience in the group or did people relate to that at all?**

Bauer: **Yeah, people were fine with that, there were never a lot of women in ACT UP. Almost all of them were lesbians, and sort of split between butch and not butch, but there was no it was it was fine. I felt listened to and I didn't feel anybody had any issues with it. Surprisingly—I don't know if I should say surprisingly in ACT UP, at that point there were also, there was very little connection to the trans community which there really should have been in retrospect. But there really was not an active connection between ACT UP and trans women.**

O'Brien: **Do you have any sense of why that might have been?**

Bauer: **[Deep sigh] You know, I think because early in the crisis, people could have come into the group if they were comfortable. But the organizing, I mean it was a survival issue for people. And once people got sick—it took, you either had to have a really good support network to get sick and to do ACT UP, or you had to, it took a particular kind of person to do that. And I don't think the support would have been there for trans women necessarily—**

O'Brien: **Because of greater social isolation.**

Bauer: **It was a very particular kind of gay man with AIDS who came to ACT UP. Of anger, and you know I used to say that it was because it was the first time their gay white male, well that their white male privilege wasn't working for them that they were just furious. And they had never faced that kind of powerlessness before. And I think for other people they had faced plenty of that lack of privilege and so it didn't come as much as a shock and so they didn't have the same anger. I don't know if that's a good analysis or not. But you know the type of people who came into ACT UP were really a very small subset of people with HIV and AIDS.**

O'Brien: **And what were some of their characteristics that were most common in this subset?**

Bauer: **Well, I would say, like I said anger, and an intention to try to make the system work for them. And some of those people were able to make connections to other people and say okay it's not just me that I have to worry about. You know whatever we get we have to make sure it gets to everybody with HIV and AIDS. But you know most people came there because they wanted the information, they wanted the drugs, they wanted to survive, and they were furious that this was happening to them.**

O'Brien: **Do you have a sense of what their lives were like before becoming HIV-positive before the HIV crisis?**

Bauer: **You know it was mixed, there were a few wealthy, connected guys. But I think a lot of them were just guys who had been having a good time and all of a sudden, this thing happened to them out of nowhere and they were young, and this wasn't supposed to happen. And they were unprepared for it, and they were in shock. And so, for them it was like being caught up in a war, and they were going to fight.**

O'Brien: **Yeah. So there have been a lot of accounts. We started off before starting the recorder talking about the ACT UP Oral History archive, about just the incredible range of actions and vibrancy and dynamism of the movement. Do you what are some of the things that really touched you most deeply and excited you most about being in ACT UP?**

Bauer: **I think, one was, so I couldn't walk away from it, I mean I really couldn't walk away from it. And I knew too many people there who were HIV-positive, and I was you know particularly during the Reagan [Ronald Regan] era we were just like, the civil rights issues including you know tremendous homophobia, talk about locking people up, talk about taking away their rights of people who were HIV-positive, so for me the sort of civil rights issues and the solidarity were really, really important.**

O'Brien: **You all cared about each other.**

Bauer: **Yeah. Yeah, and there—you know, it felt like being in a war zone and it was a war zone that no one else saw, we saw it. But if you weren't in it, you know no one, you know that was one of the most infuriating things about being in New York and doing such disruptive actions because we were in this, in this war and no one gave a fuck. People just did not care about it at all unless they were in it. And it was you know it was just infuriating. You know you'd be at a demonstration and someone would walk by and say, "I hope you all die of AIDS"...**

O'Brien: **So, you were in the group from '87 to '95?**

Bauer: **Yeah, '94, '95.**

O'Brien: **Did the kind of actions you all do change over that arc?**

Bauer: **Towards the—they changed a little but not that much. I think what really changed things was starting to get better drugs so there was a point where people stopped dying or at least they stopped dying really quickly.**

O'Brien: **And that was right at the end?**

Bauer: **That was '90—when I was involved, like '94, '95. Now ACT UP has continued.**

O'Brien: **So, how did that change things?**

Bauer: **Well because it felt like things had shifted to where—the work you know, even though we had always said "Drugs into Bodies", "Drugs into Bodies", "Drug into Bodies", things were really changing, and it was clear that medications were working. And they were getting distributed, and they were, people had much more access to them, and that there was not the need for sort of sounding the alarm and haranguing people at the same level that it needed to shift.**

O'Brien: **So, people started getting access to medications, living longer.**

Bauer: **Right, and that changed the group because that was what, people stopped going to meetings because they had gotten their meds. And so, the group sort of really dwindled down and I needed to take a break as well. And so, at a certain point it was like, I just like lost my connection to the group and there were also a number of other groups that had spun off by that point, and so I felt like the circle of people who I had really worked with was sort of dissipating.**

O'Brien: **So how big were the meetings you were at, like at their peak in terms of active people?**

Bauer: **So, you know like 500 people.**

O'Brien: **That's incredible.**

Bauer: **So big that we couldn't fit in the center. So that was like 300 people could probably pack into a room at the center and then we moved to Cooper Union, which was not a great place to meet but it was larger. And we were probably peaking out at like 500 people once a week.**

O'Brien: **And as it dwindled what was–**

Bauer: **It got down to like 75 people and it was just– but it was not, it didn't have the same feel to it, and it was also, I don't want to say it started to be special interest, but it was it you know the people who were left were not doing the same sort of stuff that I was interested in.**

O'Brien: **How so?**

Bauer: **They were more into like, alternative and holistic and they were still doing a lot of needle exchange stuff and housing stuff. And I just felt like I need to take a break—it was much more diffuse and much less around a central issue.**

O'Brien: **And do you have a sense of who left versus who stayed in the kind of early and mid '90's?**

Bauer: **So, I mean first of all we, in the '91, '92, '93 we lost a tremendous number of people because people were dying. And so that was our grief, the grief was really hard to deal with. And then when, I don't want to say it was all of a sudden but you would notice that like a week went by and then two weeks went by and we weren't announcing deaths the same way and so it was really noticeable when things changed.**

O'Brien: **So, I think of the big wave of heart and protease inhibitors as being '95, '96 but your but there were some drugs available earlier?**

Bauer: **Right, yeah. And you could really see the differences in how people survived on them.**

O'Brien: **How was Clinton's [Bill Clinton] presidential campaign and election, how did that how did you all engage that, and how did that affect the work?**

Bauer: **So, we had a big thing called Campaign '92, that was when we went down to Kennebunkport because the sole function of a summer campaign was to get them to talk about AIDS during the debates. If you can believe that one would spend your entire summer trying to convince people to say the word "AIDS" at a debate. But even in '92 it was not seen as a national enough issue to have that discussion. And so, every time any of the candidates came to town during the Spring for primaries, we harangued them, and we protested their fundraisers and then Clinton kept coming to New York because the money was in New York, so every time Clinton came to New York we would go to a fundraiser or stand outside the fundraiser. And then Bush didn't come to New York, so we went to Kennebunkport and the Bush family has a compound in Kennebunkport, and we marched up to the compound and demanded it. And they actually in the long run did very briefly talk about AIDS during the debates so...**

O'Brien: **And Clinton ended up making some promises about investing in a cure.**

Bauer: **Yeah and compared to four years of Bush and 8 years of Reagan. Clinton was a much better president, certainly still anti-gay, not anti-gay but not pro-gay. And you know not speaking out the way he should of and not being sex positive. I mean when you talk about what really should have been done. You know you needed to be sex-positive, you needed to be pro-gay, you needed to be "Drugs into Bodies", you know you needed to talk about condoms, you know it's like the whole. But it was still better than "Just Say No."**

O'Brien: **And I've heard that some people from ACT UP went to work for the federal government and some things after Clinton's election?**

Bauer: **So, you know—it was, it's natural for people to take jobs in the movement, and they have to support themselves.**

O'Brien: **Of course, right, right.**

Bauer: **You know as long as they don't switch sides, you know I really can't blame people for taking jobs in the movement. The big issue in ACT UP came when our Treatment and Data Committee split off to form the Treatment Action Group as its own organization and then they took money from Burroughs Wellcome. And taking money from the makers of AZT seemed like really problematic and a conflict of interest.**

O'Brien: **What year was that they split off?**

Bauer: Later than '92 but not that much later. But that was very problematic.

O'Brien: Do you remember arguments about it?

Bauer: It was very problematic for the group, it wasn't so much arguments it was just like it happened. And some people tried to do both, but it was very difficult.

O'Brien: And you mentioned syringe exchanges and Housing Works and so where, how did, where were poor people in this mix?

Bauer: So, there were poor people in ACT UP and even if you didn't start out poor HIV will make you poor. And we had a small group of people, you know I would say it was assumed, not really talked about, that a vast majority of people got seroconverted due to sex but some through drug use. There were IV drug users in general are not the easiest group of people to organize, nor would one expect them to be organizing. There was a group in ACT UP that did needle exchange and eventually founded some sort of not-for-profit needle exchangey things, which was really good. And it sorta got needle exchange and the concept of needle exchange out there. Same thing, you know you had people with HIV and became homeless because they had lost their jobs and they lost their apartments and you had people who were already homeless who seroconverted. I would say the people in ACT UP more started with the sort of Bailey House, we need housing for people with AIDS rather than there are homeless people who are also HIV-positive who need assistance. Housing Works deals with both and they started out as a working group within ACT UP. But in order to really do it you have to become a not-for-profit and get your act together, and so that's what they did.

O'Brien: So, on the one hand the service groups are spinning off, on the other hand TAG [Treatment Action Group] is spinning off–

Bauer: Right and what's left, there's no center left.

O'Brien: Right. And how did people, was it acrimonious between these three groups or was there–

Bauer: No, no I think I think you know, I think people felt like in order—you know most activist groups don't last for 7 years, most activist groups last for 2 or 3 years, if you're lucky, so they don't have to go through all of this morphing that ACT UP did. Nor do like most of their members die during the process of creating the group so there was also that issue. You know, I think ACT UP, I don't want to say it outlived its function, because it still exists but it, it outlived its original form.

O'Brien: Yeah, how so?

Bauer: Because you can't sustain that kind of level of activism forever, particularly while people are dying. And because AIDS, although it's a single issue in many ways, it's not a single issue and so you did need you know "Drugs into Bodies", you needed needle exchange, you needed

housing, you needed education, you needed education for kids you know it's like you needed, you needed all those things and it just stretched the group very thin. Once it stopped just being "Drugs into Bodies."

O'Brien: **So, in '95 you needed a break, had you, were you like going to things every day during the years you were in ACT UP, or a few times a week?**

Bauer: **So, when I was in ACT UP, I had an agreement with Donna, my partner, that no more than two meetings a week but I could go to as many actions as I wanted to. [laughter]**

O'Brien: **Yeah. [laughter]**

Bauer: **And it wasn't, even though we had a sense of immediacy, because so little was happening it wasn't like there was multiple actions every week, but we did organize both for several large actions during the course of the year and smaller actions. So, I went to almost all the actions just because that's what you do when you're in a group.**

O'Brien: **And what was your favorite one?**

Bauer: **So, I really liked having anything to do with Wall Street, just because of AIDS profiteering, and so we did a couple of different actions down on Wall Street.**

O'Brien: **So those were targeting drug companies that were charging high prices?**

Bauer: **Yeah, profiteering. Because it was an easy way to connect all the dots and very photogenic.**

O'Brien: **Were there a lot of actions charging drug companies on Wall Street?**

Bauer: **Yeah, not so many on Wall Street, we did one out at Pfizer, in New Jersey. Was it Pfizer or Hoffman LaRoche? Forget which one it was. It was in New Jersey. It was a great action because we totally blockaded their plant but then we were arrested in New Jersey which was not much fun. We understood getting arrested in New York or Washington better.**

O'Brien: **Yeah. Do you know how many times you were arrested?**

Bauer: **No—, I'm going to say at least 50. But it was not, you know over the course of 7 years.**

O'Brien: **And did, were the arrests ever really consequential for people's lives? Did people, I don't know, go to jail for periods of times?**

Bauer: **No, I mean they were disruptive, and we got put through the system a couple of times but never, a little bit of community service here and there, but not—one of the good things about working at New York City Transit was they were very tolerant of my arrests and we have really good time off, so I got like four weeks of vacation a year plus compensatory overtime, so I was using them for demonstrating. So, I was always taking days off to demonstrate.**

O'Brien: That's great. So, what did you do after?

Bauer: Small things, nothing, I didn't do a lot of active org—a little bit of stuff with the War Resisters League still because I kept my connections to people in the peace movement. After September 11th, you know more against the war in Iraq and but not, not heavy, heavy duty because I couldn't find a group, I could tolerate working with.

O'Brien: What were your frustrations with the groups you found?

Bauer: Oh, straight male left sectarians. And also sort of very uninteresting and repetitive demonstrations that didn't feel like they were doing any good or going anywhere or even direct at the target you should be. So, it was very frustrating.

O'Brien: Okay. And when did your gender identity start shifting?

Bauer: So, in '89, I pretty much understood that I was trans. And I tried to talk to my therapist at the time about it, who tried to talk me out of it. And I ended up leaving the therapist and finding another therapist who I tried to talk to about it, who also tried to talk me out of it. And at that time, I decided that I was coping well enough as it was, that I would not transition. So, this was like '89 and '90 so it was very– there was not that weren't a lot of resources out there.

O'Brien: What had been your exposure to trans people and trans men up to this point, or gender nonconforming people?

Bauer: I knew two people who had transitioned, female to male, and I knew, I had done some reading. There was really very little going, you know I mean it was pre-internet for one thing.

O'Brien: Did you know them in politic scenes or in like the gay women's scene or where?

Bauer: I knew them, I knew one from ACT UP, and one from sort of prior queer stuff. And so, when I talked to my therapist I said, "Listen, I know I'm really a boy." And she was like, "No, you're a tomboy." And I was like, "No, you know, I'm really a boy." And she was like, "No, no, blah, blah, blah, you're butch and you're doing so well, and you have a relationship, and you have a job and you're coping and blah, blah, blah. You know transitioning is really—you know you're going to have to give up everything." And I didn't talk to my partner about it. And so, I sort of put it to sleep until about five years ago.

O'Brien: Wow, so from '89 to 2012, you just knew it deep down and just didn't, tried not to think about it.

Bauer: Right and tried not to deal with it. And sort of watched everything else change and I had sort of felt like I had you know; I had made my peace with it. And I made my peace with it by also telling myself, which is probably true at the time, that most people who were trans don't transition.

O'Brien: **And the world's changed a lot during that time for trans people. What was that like to see, the sort of explosion and development of the trans movement? Transmasculine communities and—**

Bauer: **Right. So, envy, I remember I was at one dyke march, and there was this person there, who I didn't know, but I could tell that they had top surgery and I can remember just feeling this wave of envy just like [makes whooshing sound]. And just thinking I'm never going to do that. Because there's no way. You know at this point, I'm like still with the same partner, different therapist. Still with the same partner. And you know then there's—so I was one day in 2011 or 2012, I'm sitting in my therapist's office and we're talking, and she said something that gendered me female, and I just was like [slams table] "I'm not a girl, you just like you have to–" And she's like, "I know you're always uncomfortable when I say that." And I'm like, "Yeah, I'm really uncomfortable when you say that. I am not a girl; can we just stop this charade right now." And then we started to talk, and I then I realized that I didn't know what kind of transition I wanted to have but that I couldn't just go on pretending that I'd resolved it or that, or that things were okay the way they were. Things were definitely not okay the way they were, and I really needed to let my transness out of the box and see what happened. So, I talked to my partner, who totally flipped out because I basically told her the truth which meant I had been hiding it from her since 1989 which didn't go over really well. And that—and it also freaked her out because I was honestly, I didn't know where I was going with it. And I didn't know if I wanted to do a binary transition or what kind of transition I wanted to do or and you know what I didn't, but I just had to let it out and so that was really hard. And you know we have struggled together a lot about negotiating name change, you know so I changed my name legally, I changed my name when I was still working, and I went through that with everybody. I had top surgery which was really important to me. I pretty much dressed the way I've always dressed but now I do it without, I can own it a little more. And somewhere sitting at home is a box of AndroGel testosterone that I haven't opened yet and I still don't know whether I'm going to open it or not. But it's there and it hasn't expired yet and it's an option so...**

O'Brien: **When did you have top surgery?**

Bauer: **So, I had top surgery in December 2014.**

O'Brien: **And what was the dynamic with your partner like?**

Bauer: **So—even claiming to be trans, I did not want to go through what I call transition 1-2-3 which is testosterone for a year, name change, top surgery, and that I did not see myself as a straight white guy. And that I wanted to hold onto my queerness, and I wasn't really sure how to balance the, since I'm attracted to women, the queerness with the transness, with the not wanting to have a woman's body, but still feeling more boy than man necessarily. And not feeling like I wanted to do, you know that owning my gender is different than a sex change. And most people when you tell them you're trans they just assume you're going to do a very straight binary and that was not necessarily what I wanted. I didn't really identify with the term genderqueer because I really experienced the masculine end of the—transmasculine seems like a better fit than genderqueer for me. I like nonbinary so I'll just use nonbinary. But I didn't, you know what I decided was that I would just start doing what I'm doing and do what felt**

comfortable and reject what doesn't feel comfortable. Top surgery is a little hard because once you do it, there's really no going back easily. But I also was pretty sure that top surgery was going to be a no brainer.

O'Brien: **It felt right.**

Bauer: **It felt totally right, and it was sort of like getting back my pre-puberty body, which was really nice. Sort of like getting back my boy body. So, I never had any doubts after the surgery about whether or not I had done the right thing. But my partner was really freaked out because it's a big thing to have your partner start shifting gears publicly. And I'm not a very private person in that she knew that I would be—She act—so one of the first things that happened after I told her about this was, she was like, "Is it okay with you if I talk to other people about this?" and I was like, "Fine." I was like "I don't care if you out me to the whole world if you need to talk to people talk to people." Which was great for her, but it became confusing for me because she talked to people before I did. And so, no one knew like what pronouns to use for me or whether I was really, what kind of transition I was doing. So, it got a little complicated; it's still complicated for people.**

O'Brien: **So, I think of 20-something trans people these days, there being a lot of nonbinary identities, and people your age nonbinary identities being less common. Certainly, using the word for example is a lot less common. How do you, sort of how do you think of yourself with respect to this kind of community of non-binary identifying and experimentation with language and non-traditional transitions?**

Bauer: **I think that most people of my generation who transition, transition binary. Or they don't transition at all. And I think there are some people, so there's a group called Trans Men Over 40 on Facebook, that is fairly large and there are a number of people in there who are, fall somewhere in the middle between not transitioning and fully transitioning and who are sort of in the same category as I am. So, there are some. I think it's unusual. I think people don't talk about it. I was sort of surprised because it turned out I have two friends who I'm pretty good friends with who are in almost the exact same place that I am but won't talk to anybody about it. You know and they're both people who don't go by female names and they're both people who bind and let people assume that they're butch lesbians but really feel quite far out on the transmasculine spectrum, in some cases further than me. But they don't want to deal with having to talk to everybody about it.**

O'Brien: **What do you think is challenging for folks of your generation to do like you have, pursuing a non-binary path?**

Bauer: **Well, I think saying that you're trans at all, there are a lot of people who think that you're a traitor to womanhood and a traitor to lesbians and that you know somehow that you're buying into some kind of weird male privilege by transitioning. And that you're sort of jumping ship. And I have lost one good friend over that. But—**

O'Brien: **Another form of TERFism.**

Bauer: **Yeah, you know, yeah, they're sort of unaffiliated TERFs [trans-exclusionary radical feminist]. But that's sort of where they're coming from. You know I think the challenge for most people is that you know what's changed so much has changed for me internally, and I'm so much more comfortable with myself and more talkative, and physically more comfortable. And they see that and so like my partner, who was really not with the program for a while was like, "You know I keep seeing how much more comfortable you are and how much easier you are to live with and how much more pleasant you are." You know she's like, "Not that you were that bad before." But she could see all the positive changes and the positive changes in me have really helped her deal with what we so-called my transition or my transition. And–**

O'Brien: **My so-called transition. [laughter]**

Bauer: **So-called transition. She was most upset before the surgery about my having the top surgery but the next week she was like, well after all the drains and everything came out so maybe it was a couple weeks later, she was like, "I have to tell you that it looks really natural."**

O'Brien: **Wow, how interesting, what an interesting word to use.**

Bauer: **Yeah, she was like, "You really look like you and I can see that you really look like you. And it's okay, it's going to be okay." Which was like, "thank God." You know because she sorta had one foot out the door, during the whole negotiation of it, and it took a while for her to, you know her fear was that she was going to lose me, and she will now say that she got more of me. Which is, which is good.**

O'Brien: **That's beautiful.**

Bauer: **And she knows I have the testosterone sitting in the drawer and she's like, "You do whatever you want, don't you know don't pin it on me that you're not using it." And I'm like, okay. It's my decision.**

O'Brien: **Yeah. What's it like trying to think about whether to use the testosterone or not?**

Bauer: **There's a part of me that would like to use it just so I could say I'm on T because it gives you a lot more credibility as someone who's transgender to be on hormones than not.**

O'Brien: **Credibility with who?**

Bauer: **With other trans people. You know. So, I know so I feel like, even if as a non—someone who identifies as non-binary, you have sort of more trans street cred if you're on testosterone I think than if you're not. Which is a crappy reason to go on it, and I talk myself out of it you know I would say that like at least once a week I go through the like should I, shouldn't I, do I want to do this, do I not want to do this, what do I want to get out of it, what don't, you know. And you know my dysphoria is so much less than it used to be, between changing my name, I use they pronouns, changing my pronouns, and having top surgery, that I don't necessarily feel like I need hormones for dysphoria. I would really like the voice change; I would really like a little bit of the facial shift. I'm not so sure that, I'm not keen, I feel like chemically, my chemical**

hormonal balance is okay internally the way I feel, so I don't feel like I need testosterone to internally feel like myself. Which would be probably the best reason to go on it, and maybe that's because I'm in menopause and I have like no estrogen left in my system probably.

O'Brien: How long have you been in menopause?

Bauer: That's a good question. So, I had, before I reclaimed transness, I had a hysterectomy because I had fibroids and that should've been a hint to me how much better I felt as soon as my uterus was gone. [laughter] And my periods stopped because that was like another form of like horrible dysphoria. But I didn't allow myself—

O'Brien: What year was that?

Bauer: That would've been like 2007, so that should've been an indication, but it really wasn't. But my internal feeling for my gender right now is very comfortable and part of me doesn't want to muck it up by throwing—I'm a person who doesn't like to take drugs. So, there's one part of me that would really like to try testosterone just to see what it feels like and see if I feel more comfortable or less comfortable. So, I have it, so obviously I wanted to have it so I could try it, but I haven't quite gotten to that point yet.

O'Brien: So, going back to activism a little bit. What are broadly the groups or projects that you've gone to more than one meeting since leaving ACT UP?

Bauer: So, War Resisters League Local, various and sundry little groups that sort of formed and didn't stick, and in November I started working with Rise and Resist.

O'Brien: Tell me about that.

Bauer: Which was interesting for me because one of my decisions about working with them was that I was going to be out as trans from, from the get-go there.

O'Brien: So, who are Rise and Resist?

Bauer: Rise and Resist, it was formed by, or called for by a hand full of men who had worked with either Treatment Action Group or ACT UP New York and they called it as a sort of queer group in response to Trump's [Donald Trump] election, although it is much more mixed now than it, than just queer. And I got the call because people knew me from ACT UP, and they wanted some people with activist backgrounds there and I sort of just got sucked up into it. But I told Donna when I went that I am going to insist on they pronouns, and I'm gonna be open as both queer and trans. And let people figure—if they think that those two things conflict, well we'll just let them figure it out. And Donna is also in it which makes it harder because since we're a couple, people naturally assume that we're a lesbian identified couple. So, I've done a lot of "they explaining" to people. Because the average age there are not people who have had a lot of experience with people who use they as singular. But we've done a lot of anti-Trump demonstrations and other basically things around Trump or Republican agenda, and it's worked out.

O'Brien: **How has it been, the "they explaining" and being out?**

Bauer: **You know so, for a long, not for a long time. So, after I came out, I said that I was "pronoun challenged" and so I'd go to these meetings and people would sit in a circle and go around with their name and pronouns. And I don't want to use she, but I and I don't use he in my regular life. And I hadn't really been using they either, so I just say that I'm just "pronoun challenged" or "pronoun fucked"– just call me Jaime. And skip the pronouns, which was you know you would think that almost nothing is more awkward than using they, but not using pronouns at all is even more awkward. So, I tolerated, you know because most people don't use your pronouns in your presence, they use them when you're not there. I told Donna like just use whatever pronouns you want, and I'm not there I'm not going to object to it. Because she had already told everybody in the world what I was doing and everybody that she knows, knows I had top surgery and changed my name and all this so. But I really didn't want to be in a political group where I'm meeting all new people as well as some people who have known me for a long time and have them use, she. So, I really made a decision to use they, which you know there is some special snowflake-ism to it but I'm more comfortable with it now than I was like three or four years ago. And you know I really want to move away from she, and have people stop using she but I'm not, I'm not really a he either. And so, I just want people to gender me as me. Which is not so easy and is certainly almost impossible with strangers.**

O'Brien: **Could you imagine that opening up more in the future?**

Bauer: **So, this gets back to the testosterone. I think without testosterone and being read as gender nonconforming as opposed to being gendered as male. Though I get a decent male gendering, decent amount of that. I wish that it was as easy to wear male pronouns as it is to wear quote on quote "male genes." You know but it's not. And in this society, it's really not and so it feels, it doesn't feel right for me to ask people to use he pronouns for me. Both, because I don't necessarily feel that he is the best option. And because again I'm not on testosterone, I'm not visually moving more towards you know one's visual looks should not have to match one's pronouns 100% but it's like do I want, how much of my energy do I want to put into correcting people's pronouns for me and how much energy do I want to put into living my life? So...**

O'Brien: **I feel like how a lot of early 20-somethings have dealt with that is to just hang out in a gender queer centered community, right. To like form a subculture where non-conventional pronouns are intelligible to everyone. And to like not deal with the rest of the world.**

Bauer: **Yeah, right but that doesn't work in real life.**

O'Brien: **Yeah.**

Bauer: **You know and eventually it will, you know but you know it's like every year I think they gets a little bit more circulation and will eventually become something people stop thinking about. But I was—actually there was a little demonstration this morning Uptown at the Indonesian Mission about the 140 men in Jakarta who had been arrested in a spa. And so, I was talking with one of the guys there who's my age, a gay man, and he was like, "Oh, I know you**

use they but it just, it's hard for it to roll off my tongue and I said, "Jay," that's his name, and I said, "Jay, do you want to be part of the problem or part of the solution?"

O'Brien: Well said. [laughter]

Bauer: And he was like, "I know, I know." I was like, "you've gotta—" I said, "you know there was a point that people used thy and thou and now we're using they and you have to roll with it." And he's like, "I know" I was like "so roll".

O'Brien: Why do you think that shift is happening? Why do you think we are, seem to be making some progress?

Bauer: So, you know before, I said that there were all these people who were trans who didn't transition, and I think that with so many people who are trans transitioning, that they—trying to find what feels honest and authentic, does not split up on binary and why should you use pronouns that don't feel right, whether they are she pronouns or he pronouns? I mean I just and why should you not transition because neither of those pronouns fits you? So, you know I think that it's great for people to say, you know, whether you want to talk about a spectrum or a continuum or a three-dimensional space or whatever, to find the place they are in now with the understanding that that might not be the same place they're going to be in in one year or three years or five years. And you know I was really concerned when I changed my name to pick a name that one went both ways, that felt comfortable, and that I felt like I could live with. And you know the nice things about names you can either create one or you can choose from the million that are out there and the problem with pronouns is that most of the world only recognizes two and you know it's not like you have to either be Dick or Jane, when you choose a name you've got but with pronouns—You know we have a very inflexible language.

O'Brien: Are there other issues that I didn't ask you about that you would like to talk about?

Bauer: No, I mean I think, I wish I could've done what I'm doing now back in 1989. I wish there would've been a way to do it and there really wasn't. I mean, I would have had to create it myself. I think if I had transitioned in '89, I would've done a binary transition and I'm not sure whether that would have been good or bad. I mean I think I would've lost my job and lost my partner and had to have reinvented myself and started over and I'm not really sure that that would've been a good thing to do. I'm not really sure that it was necessary to wait as long as I did and I'm still really unclear you know why I had that snapping moment when I did as opposed to ten years before or fifteen years before.

O'Brien: When you said you retired from MTA? When was that?

Bauer: Yeah. So, like two years ago, and but I'm still consulting for them.

O'Brien: Right. Right. And you've been able to, you changed your pronouns on the job, you said? Or your name? You changed your name that's what you said but not your pronouns.

Bauer: **I changed my name on the job, but people sort of got the, I mean some people asked me directly and I told them directly, but it was like once I did that flip it's like the name had to go and the chest had to go.**

O'Brien: **Yeah.**

Bauer: **And that was, that was really clear to me. And people were, you know the by and large people have been very cool with the name. Even the people who have known me for like thirty years and who are over 50, and over 50 your brain just does not work exactly the same and it's slow to accept changes but the one thing they did do on my job is that every time someone slipped up, everyone else in the office would say "it's Jaime." Because they were so relieved it wasn't them, [laughter] who made the mistake. So, I actually never had to correct anybody because the people around me corrected constantly.**

O'Brien: **Yeah, oh that's great.**

Bauer: **When I first changed my name, they were, they were quite reasonable about it.**

O'Brien: **That's great. Cool, well thank you so much for spending the time and contributing your story.**

Bauer: **Oh well thank you. Yeah, it's been interesting. At some point I should try to figure out all the dates of everything I did, I'm not a good archivist.**

O'Brien: **Yeah, well if you ever want to be interviewed again, about more specifics on any of it I'd love to hear and thank you for contributing.**

Bauer: **Good and thank you yeah it was interesting.**

O'Brien: **Wonderful.**