

Interview With Margaret “Peggy” Jones

CCQAP

Narrator: Margaret “Peggy” Jones [PJ]

Interviewers: Mary Waters [MW] and David Weisman [DW]

Interview Date: June 06, 2021

Location: GALA Pride and Diversity Center, San Luis Obispo

Length: Approximately 1 hour, 40 minutes. Interview starts at 0:00:12.4.

Transcript prepared by: Steven Ruszczycky

0:00:12.4 Mary Waters [MW]: So it is 3:38 PM on Saturday, June 26, in San Luis pok, California. This is the Central Coast Queer Archive Project, interview with Peggy Jones. So I'm going to start off with asking you, where you were born and raised.

0:00:34.9 Margaret "Peggy" Jones [PJ]: Actually, I was born in the central Valley, in Tulare.

0:00:38.3 [PJ]: Oh, really?

0:00:39.5 [PJ]: Yeah, we moved back to Oklamhoma because that's where my parents were from. Grade school--started high school in Oklahoma, then we moved out here in 1965.

0:00:56.6 [MW]: 1965--

0:00:56.6 [PJ]: --64, 1964, we moved out here.

0:01:01.3 [MW]: Alright, so 1964, you moved to California. What differences did you notice between the two places, if any?

0:01:11.8 [PJ]: Besides the weather. People are always curious. Especially meeting new people, you have an accent, which I've tried to lose. For me, it was a new start because I had been on medications with living in Oklahoma and I got off of them, so I opened up my world again...

0:01:42.8 [MW]: What were those medications for?

0:01:44.6 [PJ]: Just testosterone shots. I was started on testosterone at 13 because I wasn't maturing into a boy, I looked like a girl, very tall girl, and it's a genetic condition, congenital hypogonadism. Also, it's the same as Klinefelter syndrome. So genetically, I was prone to grow breasts, to have tall, thin, long arms, hands and feet, no muscles because the body didn't make testosterone. I was the biggest kid in grade school--not biggest, I was the tallest kid in grade school and junior high and started high school as one of the tallest, but when you already have breasts high school can really suck. So out here, it wasn't any different. School was the same, it was miserable, but at least the whether was nicer.

0:03:04.7 [MW]: At least it was that. So at what age did you realize that you weren't like little boys that you knew?

0:03:13.6 [PJ]: It's one of the nagging feelings you have, little, knowing you're different, but without the words or information you can't really express that it was until I was nine, nine years old, that's when I found out what the difference between boys and girls were. And I immediately went home to my parents and says, "When is this damn thing going to fall off down there so I can finally be a girl like I'm supposed to be?" which led to about two, three days worth of conflict in the household, of which, the end of it was, is my father had a business there, and one of his clients was a professed psychiatric professor, at the University of Oklahoma, who was also a resident at the state mental hospital, so he wound up diagnosing me as being homosexual at nine years old. I didn't even know what it was. I received two rounds of Electroshock Therapy to cure me. That's what they said, they said, You're cured. And what it cured me of is keeping my mouth shut. My personality totally changed. I was an outgoing, gregarious, adventurous child who wanted to explore everything

to somebody that wanted to turn into the wallpaper on the wall and not be noticed, Electroshock is devastating to the personality because it actually does bringing damage and it will change you.

0:05:09.0 [MW]: What age did you receive that? What age did you receive the Electroshock treatment?

0:05:15.7 [PJ]: What age?

0:05:16.9 [MW]: Yeah.

0:05:17.6 [PJ]: Nine. It was nine years old. It was within a matter of a month from the time I came out to my parents. I had a whole medical history that my parents never told me about until much later in life, that they were afraid, I think at the time, for me. Because I was born with ambiguous genitalia, and by the time I was four years old, I'd had multiple surgeries. I never felt attached to it down there, and as much as the surgeries work, there was a few issues that I had to live with, and one of them was discomfort while urinating. In other words, you get up in the morning to pee and it burns, and its done that all my life. It would be sore to grab it and direct it, so as a little kid, I wouldn't aim it 'cause it hurt to grab it, so I would always sit on the pot to pee because it didn't hurt as much. So I wasn't happy with it. By the time I got to be nine, I knew I didn't have to have one. It wasn't me, there's something wrong. So after the Electroshock, everything went quiet.

0:07:00.2 [PJ]: My parents, who were not religious, sent me to church every Sunday. In Sunday School, the teacher would come by and pick me up every Sunday morning to take me to Sunday school, 'cause they figured, Okay, I need religion, but unfortunately, most religions don't teach you

about that sort of thing anyway, they just say, "Don't do this," and you're not really sharing what "this" is. So it really didn't have that kind of effect. When I 12, my brother died, my older brother, committed suicide, which is a whole complete story unto itself, but anyway, at the funeral, one of my dad's customers came to pay condolences to the family, your son, and your daughter, and my dad just didn't say anything, he just kind of looked back and I'm standing behind my dad, so the guy could see me, he just assumed that I had a sister, 'cause we looked a lot. I was going out with my girlfriend, she was a girl scout, she would loan me her Girl Scout uniform and we'd sell Girl Scout Cookies door to door, and he was one of her customers that we sold cookies too.

0:08:32.7 [PJ]: At 13, that's when I was sent to medical doctors and not a psychiatrist, at which point I had one more surgery because I had severe cramps maybe every other month or so, and I would pee blood occasionally. What it turned out to be was an immature uterus trying to shed its lining and the only connection to the outside was through the urethra, and then I was placed on testosterone and I hated it. Testosterone shots are very powerful. I was happy with who I felt I was. Testosterone made me feel more alien. My voice dropped, I went from a Soprano to an Alto, but it never dropped that low for the simple reason that I never really had an Adam's apple. So my voice is now the lowest it's ever been. Today, this is as low as it's ever gotten. So when we moved out here from Oklahoma, I got off the shots because we didn't have insurance, and I was happy. One other thing, when I was 13, my breast size was a good solid B+ but then my breasts started going when I was 10, and I hid that for my parents, because the shit I went through at 9. I knew who I was, but I knew that they would hurt. I would be hurt. Doctors would hurt me, so I kept it hidden.

0:10:35.7 [PJ]: But like I said, with the incident when I was a late 12, that kind of all came out in the open and they said You're not maturing, your testosterone level for someone your age is not

there, so I was placed on testosterone and within two years, I had a beard. I managed to... Facial features started to change. I actually started growing more, 'cause I thought I had topped out when I was 12, I was about 5'10", and after I'd been on the shots for a year, I was 6'1", and I would look at myself in the mirror and just cry because I knew from seeing that person in the mirror, I could never be who I thought I was. It was like a dream that was totally trashed. But it wasn't something I totally forgot. I just kinda gave up hope.

0:11:49.2 [PJ]: A new beginning out here in California, 'cause I was off the damn shots, I was feeling better and my breast started growing again. By the time I was in high school, I was a full C cup. Being nice and young, they were upfront and perky, now that I'm over 70, they're kinda talking to my navel most of the time, unlike those breasts enhancements that just stay forever perky. High school sucked the first half of each year. But by then, they got tired of teasing me 'cause I didn't really react the way they wanted me to, so they would leave me along for the second half, then next year would start over again.

0:12:49.6 [PJ]: I remember I graduated from high school at 6'4", 190 pounds, and I cannot do one push-up, I cannot do one pull-up. I went out to try out for wrestling because they had a weight machine, and I figured if I could exercise on that machine, I could build some muscles. No, I never did, and I was not allowed to be on the wrestling team because I couldn't. I wasn't strong enough. 19, this is 1968--. At 18, 1967, my dad took me down to the Marine Corps recruiter, because you're 18 years old now. So we're gonna get you out of the house. So he's chumming it up with a Marine recruiter, it was down on I think Chorro street at the time. I walked next door to the Navy recruiter and listed in the Navy. They were all happy. I scored tremendously on all their tests and "Oh, you can have the fields you want," which was I wanted electronics because I have a ham license, I got a

ham license when I was in high school. My mother got her ham license in high school too, so we took lessons together and I enjoyed it. So we go, recruiter takes about five of us down for the Navy physical and we come back and everyone's chatting, two days later, the Navy recruiter calls me and says, "Well, the Navy is decided to deny your enlistment. You have too many medical issues, we do not wish to deal with."

0:14:45.6 [PJ]: And I go, huh? What medical? I might not be strong, but I can get strong, I can man up, and basically, if you're okay, and now I'm subject to the draft. Back then, they drafted half a million young men that year, 1968, I was drafted here in San Luis [Obispo] and 55 of the local kids here were put on the bus and sent off to LA to go through their inductions, and as we're running through all the physicals, I had two guys attack me, because when you're running through, physically the only thing you have on is underwear, so I'm walking around like this, you know, put your arm out for blood tests, do the arm out for blood pressure, and I finally had an interview with the doctor, so I sat down and relaxed, put my arms down and lean back, two guys that were sitting in chairs on the row opposite me, came over, each one of them grabbed a breast each. In high school, when they did that to me, they called it a titty ringer because old door bells used to twist to make them ring. So that started a fight. The doctors came out of their little cubicles and broke up the fight and everything, and the doctor is looking at me, he says, "You and in my cubicle now," because I didn't notice I was bleeding. They grabbed me so hard they tore the areola. So he's treating me and he's starting to ask me questions, but he's not asking the standard question, "do you have a medical excuse?" And I said, No. "Do you have this?" No, no, no. "Do you have any reason you shouldn't be in the service?" Not that I know of. I expect to be drafted, then he starts asking me about my childhood. He asks me, "Do you know how much you weighed when you were born?" and I said, yeah, I was just about 10 pounds. "How tall were you at this age" And, I couldn't answer,

all I could say was I was the tallest kid in my class. He interviewed me for two hours. During this time, everyone else, there was about one hundred guys going through it. When I came out, I was the only one there, and took my folder from the doctor, and the doctor's instructions was Follow the yellow tape on the floor, because through the induction center, they had colored tape on the floor to direct you from one station to the next. He said, Follow the yellow tape. So I did. It took me back to the locker room so I could get my clothes, and I hand in the forms and I says, I'm in the right place. And you said. Yeah, looking through. He says, Yeah, they're sending you home. I said, Why? It doesn't say, but they'll probably call you back, so don't worry.

0:18:14.1 [PJ]: Actually, I was called back two more times to the induction center, I didn't have to go through the complete physical, I just went up to the office and saw that same doctor, and the only additional thing they did was blood tests and blood pressure check, that sort of thing. And they sent me home. At about six months later, I get a letter from my draft board stating I am now classified "4F: Unfit for Military Service." And they didn't tell me why. So it's one of those things where you're happy that you're out of the draft, but you're going, Why? What's wrong with me? I didn't think I was anything wrong. I went to my doctor. And he says, "Well, you've got gynomastia. But that's about all I can see." He didn't do any tests or anything. Anyway, so in 1968, you're 19 years old, and you're no longer subject to the draft. That's a big deal, because nobody would hire me until I'd been in the service, because who wants to hire someone out of high school and have them drafted it out from under them.

0:19:48.2 [PJ]: So, you couldn't get a job. So I went to college, went to Cuesta, enrolled at Cuesta, took electronics. I wound up graduating from Allan Hancock in Santa Maria. I had a first, what they call a first phone license, which allowed me to be responsible for radio and television broadcast.

There is-- Every TV station in the country had to have a first phone responsible for the transmitters for each station. That's what I wanted to do. My degree from Hancock with electronic communications, which I never got to use because I got a job at Vandenburg, and I had that same job for 44 years and four months.

0:20:42.4 [MW]: What did you do?

0:20:44.0 [PJ]: I am a metrologist, which is the science of measurements. Since I was trained in electronics, I had a radar endorsement on my license, so I could work on microwave equipment, so everything that's used on Vandenburg that makes a measurement has to be certified and calibrated, and that included all microwave equipment, transmitters, everything that's used to make a measurement. So I got a job there and I stayed there, like I said, for 44 years. It was during that time I got married. She had three kids. I didn't have anything. And it was the best thing that ever happened to me is having a family, 'cause I wanted a family badly, but at the same time, I did not want to be a father, and I had developed that earlier in life saying, I don't wanna be a dad. I don't want that role. That isn't me. I don't wanna be a father, but I was perfectly happy being a parent because I wasn't the father, but I was the parent. In the end, I wound up having to take on that role, and I wound up adopting all three kids, who are still in my life today. Right now, my oldest is 53 years old, and the youngest is-- just had her 50th birthday. And all, my grandchildren and great-grandchildren. So that was the best thing that ever happened to me. But it had its own issues and problems, and that goes back to my time in Oklahoma when I was taking testosterone shots. I had been diagnosed as homosexual. I'm now taking testosterone shots, as any trans-man will tell you that they've never been that horny in their life, until they were on testosterone. Here I was very tall. By 14, I had a beard and mustache. I was horny all the time. And doctors had told me I was gay. So,

I went out to find sex with gay men. So that went on for about a year. And by the time I was 15, I really realized I'm not gay. A gay man wants somebody because they have that appendage down there. I didn't want it, I wouldn't let them touch me there, so that had conflicts, but anyway. So I just-- I was celibate the time I was 15 to 24 when I got married, 'cause I made the assumption: "I'm not gay therefore I'm straight." I didn't know any difference. There was nothing else in between, it was either gay or straight, period, those were the only choices my life.

0:24:29.7 [PJ]: I remember my wife asked me, since she had been married before, she asked, "Well, how many girls have ever been with?" it's one of those loaded questions that the husbands get sometimes, especially if they are older, and I had to lie to her. I told her, yeah, I had lots of experience with women. Of course, she was the first woman I ever slept with. And as much as sex felt good, it felt good when I was going out with men. Sex is rewarding unto itself, but it's not fulfilling if there isn't that connection. If that attraction wasn't there. I loved my wife very much and I tried very hard to make her very happy. To do everything I could, I worked very hard at it. After the kids had all moved out, graduating and going on their way, my wife eventually got the idea that I was gay, because I've always had a more effeminate attitude, my view of life, my view of me, the things that I like, the things I'm interested in, are not typical masculine things. Now, I do have masculine things, I do like, 'cause I like cars, I don't like sports, I don't like the bravado of bullshit. I care about people, I want to know how somebody's feeling...

0:26:29.6 [PJ]: I didn't fit into the masculine world that I was put in. I had to develop strategies so I wouldn't appear to be gay, because that's the worst thing a man can do is to appear effeminate. So, I always had to be on guard by the things I said, the actions I took, my mannerisms and gestures. Little things, you know, as a kid, I played hopscotch in grade school and I loved it, and I'd be

walking down the sidewalk as an adult and some kids had scrambled on the sidewalk hopscotch squares and if no one was looking, I would do it. Things like that. I wasn't into sports, didn't care for baseball, football, basketball, and yet I always got pulled into those because I was so tall, but I never was good at it 'cause I didn't have the muscles to do it. Even on testosterone, I remember going to the gym, enrolling in a gym to build muscles to make me look more masculine and it didn't work. My body has a strange deal where if it has a high testosterone level, my body thinks, Okay, because the male will now take about 10% of the testosterone and turn it into estrogen, which males need too.

0:28:20.1 [PJ]: Unfortunately, my testosterone would be down on the floor and my body would be, Oh, you have plenty, let's make estrogen. So every time I wasn't on testosterone shots, my body would change a little bit back. By the time I decided to transmission, I was already a C-plus/D-minus breast size already, because it would grow in spurts, and I know they were growing because they were sensitive, you didn't wanna hit them, you didn't wanna bang into something, you couldn't wrap something around you, or hold it to your chest. I meant was a unique experience. I've seen life from both angles, from being totally accepted in male culture, the male world, with male friends, the guys I worked with, some for as long as 30 years. I didn't approve of how they behaved, but I knew I had to fit in. And the things they would do would. I would wind up being disgusted. How could you do that? You cheated on your wife. How could you. She should kick your ass out. I couldn't understand the connection that says sex is okay if you're a man, but with the woman, you have to have love along with it, otherwise it's meaningless, and that was my attitude. Sex without love didn't mean anything, so if you loved your partner and you were trying the best you could to have sex, it was meaningful, and I always had issues performance-wise, during my marriage. I was using the one that had the headache, as it were. But I was good at it. But it took a big toll on me.

And when my wife finally left, we left on very amiable terms--the kids had all grown up and everything. I lost my reason for existence, I managed to let myself go. I hit about--I was well over 350 pounds. I had diabetes because of that. High BOD pressure. My knee and ankle joints were giving out. My Achilles tendon gave out I had to have that repaired. I walked on crutches, I couldn't hardly walk 15 paces without my feet hurtin, and I'm going, I can't live like this. 'cause I was dying slowly. I also know I was eating because I was suppressing feelings, and my feelings were, I'm not happy with this body, I didn't want this body, and I finally get to the point were I decided that I didn't want to die in this boy, in this way this way.

0:32:10.0 [PJ]: It was kind of an epiphany moment, I didn't really understand that I was trans at that time, because I really never heard the explanation for being transgender. It was never brought forward in my life whatsoever. What I had decided to do is accept my body for what it was. When you're 40 years old and you're binding your chest so it would look more masculine, and you were taking testosterone to man up, those things were killing me, and I finally decided that, No, I got to live with what I have. So I started taking care of myself. I quit hiding my breasts at work. You know what, nobody noticed. When you're fat, when guys get fat, they tend to develop "fat tits," I call them, they're not really the same, they're not the same shape, but it was more acceptable to be fat than it was to be thin, and I just realized all my clothes through my entire life time through high school, we're always clothes that were too big for me, shirts that were oversized, jackets that would hide all the way down to your fingertips practically to make sure that no one could see what my body. Because I was paranoid as a young child after I had the Electro Shock that nobody could see me once my breast started growing, 'cause I was hiding from them. I wanted them, but I had to hide him at the same time, so I just started going natural. And as I lost weight, got thinner, suddenly my breasts are sticking out further than my stomach again, and that hadn't happened for quite a while.

When I was a younger man and thinner, I wore triple t-shirts of different sizes, a tight one, one that was a little more--one size bigger, then a loose bagging one over everything, so people wouldn't notice. So when I quit dressing like that at work, everybody thought, Oh, you're looking so good now, and I would wear-- male shirts aren't cut for chests, so they would tend to push and because I wasn't binding him, it looked like I had bigger petrol muscles. People say, Oh, you're in really good shape, you get these big pecks! Of course, I was wearing a long-sleeved shirts and no could see my arms, 'cause they didn't match.

0:35:30.8 [PJ]: And it was when I was getting into shape, I saw my endocrinologist again, and he said, Well, we'll put you back on testosterone. At that point, I told him, I think I'd rather die. I didn't go back on testosterone again, and I said that off the cuff without thinking about it, and even I was shocked by what I said, 'cause I really didn't know why I said it. Here, you would rather die than take testosterone and be a man? So that was the beginning of my transition at that point where I really realized, no, I didn't want to be a man, and when I look back on my life, I really didn't ever think I was one. All the things I did to hide it, all the things I did to make people think I was something I wasn't. Because during my lifetime, most of this was a conscious effort. It wasn't something I suddenly realized when I was almost 50 years old. It was something I decided I'm tired of doing. I can't do it anymore. And to accept myself for who I am. Well, even at that point, I didn't really know who I was. I had some more tests done, and that's when I discovered that I was Klinefelter, 47-XXY, means I had two X chromosomes, that and the three sex chromosomes interfered with in-utero development, so nothing ever completely developed as it should.

0:37:39.1 [PJ]: You know, and at that point, I said, I'm not going to live my life as a man. So I decided, I think I'll see if I can transition. Now, I went and I talked to my mom about, this is what I

plan on doing. And the first thing my mom did was start crying and then apologizing. I am going, what? What is this? And over the period of the next two months, I managed to get out my history as a child about the surgeries that I had, 'cause she never told me the reason I was sent to the psychiatrist, the reasons I was sent to the doctor when I was 13, when I wasn't developing as a boy.

0:38:41.0 [PJ]: Suddenly you're sitting there and suddenly your life suddenly makes total sense, where before you're always running yourself down, you're living and your anxieties are high because you don't understand what's going, and suddenly your entire life makes sense from the beginning to that moment, my entire life made sense to me, and I says, Okay, I'm transitioning. There's no way around it. I hadn't even looked it up to see what I had to do to transition, I was just going to have to live my life as a female from that point on, period, whether I was accepted or not, because for 20 years of being on testosterone, it gives you the classical male features. The only thing I looked at in that department was number one, I didn't have an Adam's apple, number two, my voice wasn't that bad, and number three, I already had a pair of girls there for me, and so I said, I've got something going, I'm going to do it. I may be the ugliest girl in the room, but--No, let me rephrase that. I went to McDonald's after I decided to transition. I had nice slacks, shoes. I had a white blouse and blazer, and they were all a women's blouse and a woman's blazer, and it was fun because it fit me, it would fit my chest and I could button a blazer, and I had the figure for it, and I'm sitting there having coffee at McDonald's, and I'm looking at everybody and I'm going, I'm certainly not going to be the ugliest girl in the room. That was kind of another epiphany moment that says, Yeah, you can do this.

0:41:07.8 [PJ]: So I started looking up how to transition. I found-- Actually, I had to go to Santa Barbara first because I had gotten no leads for anything to do in San Luis County. Oh, there was a

Gay and Lesbian Association, but I knew I wasn't gay, and I knew that damn well I wasn't gonna qualify as a lesbian, so this place had absolutely nothing to offer me. So I just ignored it and I was looking at other places. Then finally, the people in the Santa Barbara referred me, Oh, you know, there's a trans group that meets in San Luis every Tuesday, and there's one that meets once a month. Thursday or something like that. I show up and I don't think I missed a week, except for when I was sick, for the next eight years, because I found people. One of the mentors, her name was Susan Golightly, who was the founder of the Trans Tuesday group. She had the expression, "this is my tribe." And I found my tribe. The transition itself was absolutely no different than one that any other trans woman went through, I had all the same feelings, the same dysphoria about body parts, and the only thing I didn't have was doubt about who and what I was. That was not an issue for me. It was physical appearance, the fact that I convinced how I'm never going to pass, but I'm gonna transition anyway.

0:43:10.9 [PJ]: I got involved in Trans Tuesday, then I got involved with GALA [Gay and Lesbian Alliance] because here I am going to the meetings that they're hosting, it says, let me join GALA because I'm using your facilities. I wanna help contribute. So I joined GALA, and I think within two years after that, I was on the board of GALA. I was elected to the board. I became co-facilitator for the Trans Tuesday group. I became a facilitator for the Bi group, Bi, Pansexual, and Queer group that would meet. And I was also running a 501c3 charity called Your True Gender. We did a three-day conference at Cal Poly. We brought in doctors, lawyers, psychiatrists, and it ran a three-day event at Cal Poly. My partner in crime is currently in England, doing work for the National Health Service on diversity training and transgender awareness, and she transitioned here in San Luis County also, and I met her originally through the Trans Tuesday group. Her name is Jessica Lynn. She has gone on to be a recognized Trans speaker. She is the International Representative of

the Kinsey Institute out of the University of Indiana. She currently is on an advisory board of two projects at Oxford University, plus we do colleges and universities all over this country, and in Europe, we-- Our group has done more than 250 different colleges, universities, and businesses in 27 different countries, as far away as Thailand, India, South Africa, Poland, Slovenia, Turkey, Israel, Ukraine, Finland, all of the European countries, Japan. She's such a much better speaker than I am. The times I've gone with her, I have spoken, but I speak on intersex issues, not just trans issues, because there-- In a lot of countries it's considered as two separate things, they're not viewed as the same. They don't seem to make the connection that an intersex person questions their gender. They go through the same issues that anyone who's being trans would, it's just the only big difference is there's a diagnosed medical condition, other than that, it's the same, because I know a lot of trans women that come out knowing that they're different. They feel the difference as a child, and with the educational system, you have no way of knowing or expressing those feelings or what happened to you.

0:47:27.4 [MW]: It sounds like a lot of work needs to be done on understanding trans issues in the medical establishment.

0:47:35.3 [PJ]: They're very intertwined. Yeah. It's the best thing that ever happened to me.

0:47:49.6 [MW]: Would you say that there's been improvements recently in the medical establishment's understanding of trans issues, or are there still issues yet to be faced?

0:48:01.0 [PJ]: Oh, yeah, the-- It has improved markedly. Like I said, when I was nine years old, I'm being diagnosed as gay because I told the doctor, I was a girl. My parents withheld the

information from him that I had surgeries because of ambiguous genitalia. They didn't tell the psychiatrist that. So, there was no recognition. If I had known what I knew today, I could not have transitioned as a child or even as a teenager, because there was no help, there was no mechanism, there was no understanding from anybody, including your doctors back then. Today, there is some understanding. Some--not a lot. That's what we do through Your True Gender is our audience is medical students, nurses, doctors, business people, college students, upcoming politicians, upcoming therapists, to let them know, Yeah, there is such a thing as being transgender, and it's an awareness that we preach and put out. So more and more people today are learning about it. What is it, 28 states have now introduced legislation to put some kind of restriction on transgender people this year! So there's still a lot to do, there's a lot of misunderstanding. People think that they're now aware of the word transgender where before they probably had no idea what it meant, but the understanding--And they've heard the word, but they don't know what it means. It means, even though there are trans men, society only looks at trans women because how could a man in our society give up being a man. That is anathema to almost every politician to-- every-- Every mother says, I have a son and I will always have a son regardless, 'cause I'm going to make you one whether want it or not, because society would look down upon them if they didn't. So things have changed, tremendous improvements, but we got a long way to go.

0:50:55.5 [MW]: That's what it sounds like. I'm curious about what your time as a board member for GALA was like.

0:51:08.2 [PJ]: I had one overriding goal when I became a board member, and that was to change the name from the Gay and Lesbian Alliance, because here I am. I know I am trans and I'm intersexed. There's nothing here for me. I would not have-- If I went to the website, I would look

through it and go, There's nothing. One time there was just a little blurb on a calendar, even before the website said Trans Tuesday. If you were looking through a 30-day calendar, then you might miss it 'cause it was in small letters. So I wanted to change the name. I wanted us to be accepting of everybody. I wanted to bring back the acceptance of being queer. Now, that's a term I don't mind using for myself. I know other people hate it, but that's my choice for myself is I'll call myself queer because I both lived as a gay boy seeking out men, to being celibate, to being asexual, to being, trying to be straight, to really thinking, Okay, now I'm a lesbian, because I thought I cared about women to the point where now I realize I'm bi. I have an attraction to both men and women, so my sexuality has been just this big of a journey in my life as my gender has. The two get mixed in together so badly that it's detrimental to both to explore it, to find it.

0:53:16.0 [PJ]: Before I thought I don't like gay men, period, and what it was is I'm just not attracted to people who want a dick Sorry that expression, but I wanted someone who is attracted to me as a woman, so I have developed this attraction. I have an attraction for straight man, a man who has seen me as a woman I can be attracted to, and I've had a boyfriend for two and a half years who sees me as a woman, and that is our relationship, because once I had it taken off, I have my vagina now that I wanted. Always wanted--I had to have it. That was the very first thing I did was have bottom surgery, 'cause I wanted it gone. The first time I had sex as a woman, it was the most fulfilling thing that ever happened to me. Suddenly it was right. Everything was as it should be for me, but I also realized, yes, I still have attraction to women. After two and a half years with my boyfriend, I had a girlfriend for a year, and we were very happy together, but circumstances... She got a proposal, so I wished her happy-- a happy life. And so now I'm back to being celibate again. I guess by nature, I'm more asexual because I don't go out looking for sex anymore. Like I said I did when I was on testosterone shots, but I think that's a fluke, and I feel sorry for-- I empathize with

men and young boys who-- It's all they can think about; it's all they can talk about, because it's not really a choice, it's a little curse that's put on them that testosterone just makes you horny. And then society, male society reinforces that.

0:55:56.1 [MW]: The center here, the center that we're in, did recently change its name, can you tell us the story of that name change and what brought it about?

0:56:08.4 [PJ]: It was the main reason I decided to run for the board because that was my agenda, 'cause I wanted us to be more inclusive. Membership had been going down. The things that the Center used to do, the activities... The gay and lesbian populations were getting older, and they weren't really quite as active. At that point, I think the gay community as such was just kind of dying slowly because, Oh, we have gay marriage now, why are we even-- why do we even have GALA now? And I remember one older gentleman telling me that: Why are we even bothering now, we've got gay marriage, let's say we won and go on. My perspective was, I didn't think of myself as gay, I was trans and intersex. LGBTQI: Hey, I'm on that list. I want others out there to know that GALA can be for them too. I got a lot out of the Trans Tuesday meetings. I don't wanna sound derogatory, but it seemed the only thing like during the Pride was drag queens. That was the main focus, the main entertainment, and I'm going as a trans person, that is detrimental to my public image, because people just think: Oh, you're just a drag queen, you're a guy, in a dress, and that is detrimental to us. You know, there's nothing wrong with it, but that was the sole perception.

0:58:20.2 [PJ]: So, we had about three or four board meetings and I kept bringing up, how about a name change? And they were like, well, you gotta do all this. This would have to be-- And I would point out, we have to do that. And I says: Look, I've got a 501c3 myself. This is a 501c3. You can

change the name. It would be more difficult for GALA to do it but I didn't really say that. But I said, it can be done. You have to file the right paperwork, you have to by laws, all that have to be changed, and it took the first year of talking about it before-- and we had a whole new board at that time of younger people. We had people on the board that were not gay, but they were allies on the board, and like I said, the older people had been very, "oh! We won the war, we don't have to participate anymore," and I'm like it's just begun because that was-- I came out in 2013, and there was absolutely nothing. In 2013, only five percent of the population even know what transgender was or even heard about it, and then shit hit the fan when Caitlyn Jenner came out, as suddenly recognition went up to like twenty-seven percent of the country now had heard about transgender people and being on the board, I realized that our membership was going down, our revenues and support was on the decline. The place needed a lot of work. We had to expend a lot of money to fix the roof. Do other things. Without an active base we're not going to survive.

1:00:40.5 [PJ]: So I constantly, not constantly-- I would always gently push. We need to change the name. We need to attract more people. We need to attract a wider group of people. We need to attract bisexuals. People who identify as queer. Non-binary makes up a big category. I mentioned there was a study at a university where people were asked to self-identify, and the people that identified as bisexual, the number of that was greater than those that said they were either lesbian or gay combined. So, there was a huge segment of people out there that didn't relate to gay and lesbian. Technically, a lot of us can fit in that definition if we talk about sexuality. Mine has flexed back and forth in those definitions of being gay or being lesbian, but it's not the whole thing, it's only part of the personality. I didn't fit into the culture, and a lot of young ones didn't feel they fit in, so we managed to get a vote and we voted to change, to proceed to try to change the name. And it went unanimous, I believe.

1:02:24.1 [PJ]: Part of the-- also doing this, there was a completely separate group. Technically, it was a group that met under GALA, but wasn't part of GALA, and that was Tranz Central Coast. We brought Tranz Central Coast back into being part of GALA. It's not separate anymore. In fact, our board president was the founder of Tranz Central Coast, Doug Huemann. And they wanted just to do their own thing, become their own 501c3, be totally separate from GALA. And, I'm going no, no, we need one group. Not two groups. So the fact that we brought forward the name change, we brought a lot of the trans community with us to be actively promoting. We had up to 35, 40 people in this room for Trans Tuesday night. Managed to get a lot of them to get interested in GALA because it wasn't at least-- We told them, we're going to be inclusive of everybody, and we wanted everyone to know it. So we had a town hall meeting here in San Luis, and we broached the idea. We had the entire board up on the stage to give what we thought would be good about it, and then open it up to the entire audience to give their two cents worth, and we brought in-- there were several more non-gay/lesbian groups that had kind of been using our facilities, were now brought in under GALA, because now they felt they could be included.

1:04:33.1 [PJ]: Diversity is our strength. If we stayed separate would fall. I think GALA would be gone now if it didn't happen or it'd be really gone down hill, so I felt it was the way to revive, to be more relevant to what was going on in our community, 'cause we had done as Your True Gender some projects at Cal Poly. We did seminars at Cal Poly, and we always had a good turnout, and most of the people didn't really identify either lesbian, and then again, I've had a lot of people that live their life as being either I'm gay or I'm lesbian only to find out, no, actually, they were bisexual, and even then, if they told their community they were bi, suddenly they became outside, because even a bi has to hide their attraction to be accepted in the old community. We got-- We wrote the

by-laws, and go the by-laws approved. We brought in Tranz Central Coast as a partner. I wouldn't say a partner; we brought them into the fold. We brought in a lot of other groups that became more active. We actually paired out one group that was exclusive and not accepting of anyone that was-- I won't give a name, but a lesbian group that thought trans women weren't women, they were simply men in a dress, period. I remember trying to go to one of their meetings and been told, Oh, you've been tainted with male privilege, and that was a shock because I never thought I was privileged in the male world, but then again, when you're living in one world, it's hard to see the other. And for people who don't fit into a specific group, you're not gay, you're not lesbian, you know that you're different, and that difference is what can make us a strong community, because it brings in more people, it brings in more energy, it brings in more creativity, so that things don't die.

1:07:48.6 [PJ]: I had this real fear, I remember that's one of the reasons I decided to join the board, 'cause I had a fear that GALA was going downhill, and I wanted to do something about it. I became very overactive in my life, involved in GALA. I was still involved with my own Your True Gender. I was facilitating groups. And for me personally, I'm autistic. Okay, I was fighting it tooth and nail all this time. Anxieties, impostor syndrome. I mean, you name it, I was feeling it. How can I convince these people? And I don't-- I'm not that sure of myself to begin with, and that was the reason I left the board. I simply became overwhelmed to the point where I couldn't function. I had to back off, and I was so afraid everything was gonna die off and go back the way it was, but it didn't. And I'm happy. Your True Gender is the only thing I'm involved with now, I still have lots of coping mechanisms to be involved with that, but to me, that is well worthwhile to preach to the world about, we're here we exist, and this is who we are. Like I said, our focus isn't on the choir, we're speaking to the audience, not the choir, but the choir still needs its own encouragement, it still needs someone to rally it, but I can't do both anymore. So I just chose the one.

1:10:11.4 [PJ]: My favorite coping mechanism growing up was food, and that's what I used to get through all the stress on boards and committees. I thought the biggest joke was-- Here I am on the mental health committee to help bring in the state funding to be able to afford the fact that we now have a counselor associated with GALA, and I was the one in counselling. Most of the things I did to transition, I did alone, but I did seek out support to find people like me, so that I knew I wasn't alone, and I think that's what happens to most young people that have these feelings and they can't understand, and they think they're alone. That's why we need a very diverse group, that's why we need people that can relate to somebody who doesn't even really know themselves who they are, but can tell them, yeah, I've been there, I understand that. And I remember having someone tell me once when I first started, you have to transition this way, this is the rule, you have to do this, you have to do this next, then you have to do this, and you had to follow in orders, and in reality, you don't have to do any of that, because we're all different, we don't fit in one mold. There's the spectrum. Sexuality, gender are all broad spectrums, and it's perfectly alright to fit anywhere on the spectrum, and I want GALA to be available to any of those people that fall anywhere in that spectrum. That was my main goal and drive behind the name change of GALA.

1:12:55.6 [David Weisman]: And the new name, which we actually haven't heard mentioned yet. Yeah, maybe you could give a little bit derivation of how the word is changed.

1:13:06.1 [PJ]: The name itself was "The Gay and Lesbian Alliance" with the header underneath that said GALA, but we chose GALA as kind of a compromise because number one, it can mean different things to different people. It can refer to being a celebration, which for us to acknowledge who we are is a celebration of ourselves, of the pride and Diversity Center. So we became. GALA,

GALA Pride and Diversity Center! So our outreach has increased. I think our awareness has increased. We started working more with the Pride Center at Cal Poly, especially to do the old archives that we used to have have now gone and I believe to Cal Poly for their part of their archives. Because it was a lot of people interviewed years and years ago of the founders of GALA. We don't want that history lost either, 'cause that's all part of it. Recognize the people who stuck themselves out there and went in public and said, yes, I am different, but we always wanted to recognize those who were left behind.

1:14:56.8 [PJ]: Stonewall, for example, who started the Stonewall riot? It was cross-dressers and trans woman, because in New York, if you had more than three pieces of female clothing on you, you could be arrested. Just three pieces! Shoes, a bra and a shirt, all it took was three articles of clothing, period, and you would be arrested. Well, one of them had enough and once the police were rousting everybody in the bar, she threw a shot glass into the mirror and started to ride inside the bar, which later spread outside the bar, by that time there was a big crowd outside, and that crowd there, and it was at Greenwich Village, they had their first riot. The first Pride was a riot started by two trans women, but that kind of got thrown under the bus because trans people were not really accepted. When the civil rights law was written for discrimination, they put the trans people under the bus because there was opposition to having "men in a dress." You could be gay, that's fine, but you can't be trans, because that would have held up the passage of the civil rights legislation, and even today we're only protected by inference, not by directly saying that it's okay to be transgender.

1:16:52.3 [PJ]: Even GALA at one time when they were first formed, that was part of the bylaws, that trans people could not be GALA board members. That was actually in the GALA by-laws and

things like that get around. In fact, Doug is a good example. Doug became part of GALA as a lesbian, but she felt there was really no place for him to be there as a trans man. So that's why he left, and he started Tranz Central Coast. I don't want that ever to happen again. I want everybody to feel this can be their home away from home, a safe place to be just exactly who you are without fitting some standard box to be here. All are welcome. I remember we had a Trans Tuesday group come in and this older man, he had an older European accent, and he looked like he was homeless, and he came in and everybody is going, who is this guy? You know, whatever, and I sit down and I had a talk with him, and he basically said, "All my life, I've never known who I was." "I know," he says, "I'm not--" He says, "I'm not a gay man, but I don't really know who I am," and after about five minutes of actually talking with him about himself, I said, You're welcome here, come any time you want, 'cause a lot of people don't understand their own feelings.

1:19:07.3 [PJ]: You know, and we want to be a place where people can come and express those feelings. GALA is a safe place to be different, to express an idea that is not culturally accepted. Like I said, we have groups that meet here that have absolutely nothing to do with sexuality or gender, but they're not one hundred percent accepted in regular society, but they make good allies because they realize that, "but for the grace of God, go I." Why should I be prejudiced to somebody when somebody could be just as prejudiced to me for what I believe, so why should I be judging them when I could be judged by others. So that's also a group that belongs in GALA, Gay and Lesbian Alliance, Pride and Diversity. Now diversity doesn't just limit it to gender, and that's why the name diversity had to be in there, 'cause we want to let people know that everybody's okay.

1:20:42.6 [DW]: If I might, I'm wondering about the outreach to youth, and I know there is an outreach to the youth, and how you would compare what you and the others are providing as a

service, differ certainly from your 13-year-old self, what the teenagers today might find in your-- in the environment that's been created now.

1:21:10.7 [PJ]: GALA is a tremendous supporter of gay/straight alliances in schools, high schools. We have a "Q Youth Group" that meets here. We had a young trans group for people from 13 to 26. We had two separate youth groups, we combine them, and it just became, Q Youth--you can make it whatever you think you want it to, but it doesn't necessarily mean anything but Q. And we've had some good facilitators that come in and work with people. We've had people that have spoken at high schools. Your True Gender did Arroyo Grande High School for the local GSA. And we had 800 students attend that assembly, and it was a voluntary assembly too. We do work in England for an organization called Stonewall, which furnishes speakers to schools. Now we're talking like sixth grade through high school, and in England they have a different system, middle school-- I'm not really sure how they work it, but we've had audiences of 300 kids sit and-- Our lectures are age appropriate, but it's to be aware that we exist and are okay. We're not something weird. So youth programs are extremely important. GALA has been working with the local hospitals to do a kind of certification of awareness, LGBT awareness. We've been doing mental health awareness for all the people, the mental health practitioners. We've had issues with some hospitals like Dignity Health, which is a Catholic hospital that hadn't really been dealing with us. They claim they were going to, but as far as I remember, they kept putting it off, but Sierra Vista and Five Cities were always accepting. I was a hospital volunteer for Dignity Health, and even I saw there was a need for LGBT awareness training. And like I said, that's something that GALA is now doing. I'm very happy with that.

1:24:31.0 [MW]: Do you have any memories of when the AIDS Quilt visited San Luis Obispo?

1:24:40.8 [PJ]: Knew when it was here, but I wasn't-- I was still trying to be the biggest, straightest guy I could be at the time. I think my kids knew more about it than I did. I made sure that my children didn't have prejudice. I remember talking to my son, we were at Paso fair and he came up and he said, "I had this guy try to talk to me and want basically to get to know me and yeah,"-- he was gay and he was being hit on. And I said, Okay, how did you react? And he says, "Well, just like you told me, I just told him, Well, I wasn't into that. And that was all." I had a trans friend talked to my middle son, and they asked "does all this trans queer you out?" And his response was, "no, not at all. My dad raised me right." And all this is the attitude I gave them before I even try to be my real self, because I know what it's like to be teased, to-- you know, being called gay. I knew what that stigma was like, I knew what it felt like, because I actually tried-- I actively tried to be one when I was a teenager, you know, so I was aware of it, but I did not participate. I was still working for the Air Force at the time, so that was, that took most of my time effort because overtime was horrendous. But then again, the money was good.

1:27:07.4 [MW]: Yeah, are you familiar with any of the queer public spaces in San Luis Obispo, like Breezes or Journey's Inn?

1:27:16.8 [PJ]: In the past, no. Nowadays, yes. But in the past, my life was in the South County. I almost never came to San Luis because I worked at Vandenburg. So, every day in my life, I drove through Santa Maria twice today. So Santa Maria became the center, and Santa Maria doesn't have anything, period. They didn't even have a Pride or they didn't have anything, so it wasn't in sight as it were in my world. There were times before I knew that there was a gay and lesbian-- I had a really good friend and we were both into jazz, and we went to a local bar here, and we're sitting

there, it was an all-girl jazz band, and they were really good, and we're sitting in the audience, just moving with the beat. I looked around and I realized we were the only two men in there, and this is a crowd of about thirty people, most were couples. We were technically a couple because we went together, but we both thought of ourselves as straight at that time. But I'm looking around, he says, "Oh, this is an interesting place." Sit back and enjoy the rest of music 'cause it didn't bother me.

Like I said, I have been on that end a stigma as a child, and I knew what it felt like, and I had no-- I won't say I had no prejudices, I just-- It was not a thing for me to even think about. Who cares who you're with? You know. I remember when we were leaving the bar that night, a very-- I don't want to sound derogatory, a very Butch lady came up and said, "Oh, we didn't know too many gays come to this place," 'cause she thought we were a gay couple, and we just said, "no, we just came for the good music." And that was it. Neither one of us had anything we had to defend. Didn't have any ghosts hanging back there that says--.

1:30:12.4 [PJ]: I remember my friend was-- He questioned himself, that he really realized he was straight, but he was a little queer. He wasn't your typical male definition of a man. I think that's why we got along. Because he was so different from the people I worked with everyday. Yeah, people I worked with, some of them would literally strut. "I a man. I am strong. Nobody get in my way, I'll beat the crap out of him!" I would just sit back and kind smirk. Yeah, okay, fine.

1:31:11.0 [PJ]: I transitioned on the job. So here, I know I'm in a hyper-male environment. We have some guys, I would classify them as super male. Come to find out that's actually a term, 'cause there's a genetic condition where you can have two Y chromosomes and an X, and they're called super males because they get double the testosterone. They get a double shot. But anyway, when I transitioned, this guy became a fabulous supporter because "I got the balls to be who I wanted to

be," and that was the phrase he used, and I'm thinking, Shit, I don't want balls, but in fact, that's a male insult saying somebody's got no balls, and that's a male compliment to say "you got the balls, man." That's a male compliment. Society, like I said, reinforces gender stereotypes--gender stereotypes, sexual stereotypes, society blends them both together as one, and that's detrimental to people like us because we have to separate those two to be able to know who we really are. Once you have your gender figured out, you know who you are, then I could start worrying about who I'm attracted to, and I went through that stage too, because from the time I was divorced, 'cause my wife thought I was gay, 'cause I was a effeminate. I was celibate for twenty-five years. I did not seek out a partner. I did not seek out sexually, anybody, because I didn't know who I was. Here I'd gone through both, realizing I don't know who the hell I am or what I want. Once I made it through transition, I have now lived eight years as a woman. I can now say what I want, because it's not based on my gender anymore. I'm free to choose those that I'm attracted to.

1:34:08.0 [MW]: Alright, at this point, I guess, just, do you have any final reflections or parting thoughts?

1:34:23.7 [PJ]: The future is bright, and I look forward to all the changes I know that are going to come. I see all the politicians fighting. They've stepped up anti-LGBT legislation, but I see in the end, that's technically better for us because that suddenly means we get to explain our own narrative to people, because people now know we exist, they know we exist in numbers. People have an idea who it might be, and it is our job to tell them who we are, and I see that as a benefit. So I think the future is bright, even though there's a lot of dark clouds out there. It's a lot less dark clouds than there was when I was a young kid. I remember there in Oklahoma trying to find men as a young teenager. One of them had to let me know that-- it was that I wasn't attractive to them, it was the

fact that if somebody saw them just talking to me, they could be arrested. That's all it take for a known gay man to be talking to a youth. He could be arrested. So like I say, things have changed.

1:36:00.6 [PJ]: I'm not advocating sexuality for youth. You just have to understand. When I was 14 years old, I was 6'1", and I weigh 180 pounds, okay? I look liked an adult, even though I really wasn't one. I still looked like one, and I look back on that now and say, oh, God, that was messed up. I was so messed up back then trying to be what other people told me I was. Doctors, people you trust tell you "You're gay, you're gay, you're not a girl, you can't be a girl because you're gay." And then the testosterone on top of it, just frosting on the cake at that point. I had no choice. It was nothing I could do about it. Hormones are a terrible thing. Once you have them. You have them for life. Once you're sexualized, you're sexualized, maybe not for life, but by God, it suddenly becomes a big part of your life, and unless you finally realize it's not what you really want. Some people are like that, and they don't need it. Love and companionship, relationships are suddenly my big importance in life, that's what I look for, a relationship, and I'm not talking about sex. Somebody you can be with, somebody you don't have to explain yourself to. And the more we get our word out, the more that people who are in that boat can come forward and be themselves and seek out relationships that aren't dictated or guided by some group or some philosophy. Like I said, I have hopes for the future. I really do. We're gonna have bad times, but it's so much better than it was. I'm 72 years old. I have seen a lot. I was always good at watching other people because I didn't want to make the mistakes that they made, so I learned a lot by watching. Now, I am perfectly happy to talk about it with others who might want to know, what was it like? And, the fact that I have these opportunities now to do this is wonderful. I gave a lecture at Osaka University in Japan, and I ask, How many people know what intersexed is? And about three people to raise their hand and we ask them, Okay, what is it that you know? "Oh yeah, we saw it in Manga, we saw it in comic books.

JONES MASTER small

And it's about someone who's a gender bender... " And I'm going yeah, no. So, to be able to explain to somebody who doesn't hurt, who doesn't know about it is-- It's very rewarding, and I've had lots of opportunities to do that now.

1:40:01.1 [MW]: Thank you so much.

1:40:05.5 [PJ]: Thank you for putting up with me.