

Interview: Michael  
Interviewed by Michael Riordon

Key

[ ] one word (at most, two) inaudible  
[inaudible] several words inaudible; in some cases, two people are talking at the same time  
[redacted] word(s) redacted for privacy  
?duck? sounds like “duck” but it’s not clear

[0;00;00]

Interviewer: So can you introduce yourself, and tell me your age, and, where we are, and, how you make your living?

Interviewee: My name is Michael, I’m forty-six, and I teach at the college, at the university here.

Interviewer: what do you teach?

Michael: Classical Studies, Greek and Roman stuff, everything, everything.

Interviewer: What does that mean, Classical Studies?

Michael: Ah, Greek and Roman culture, history, art, architecture, philosophy, ... art, I said that already, sculpture, everything, everything connected with the two cultures, the language, Greek and Latin itself, over, it’s a cycle, maybe about a four-year cycle, since I’m the only one that teaches it here, so, I do everything, I’m it, the entire department.

Interviewer: And what’s the point of that? Why do we need Classical Studies?

Michael: Why? It’s the source of all knowledge and wisdom, what can I say? (laughs) they were the first, really, in, my theory anyway is the first really in western civilization to do all of the good things, to create the temple as we know it, and, what we would call western art, really, and, they created the first genres of literature I think really that we have any, any lasting remnants of, the epic, the love poem, the history, the tragedy of course, the comedy. So, and, the influence of those [ ] are still being felt today. So, it’s, it’s a good discipline, it’s tough ‘coz you have to know two cultures and, so many sub-sections of each of the cultures. But it’s it’s really interesting.

Interviewer: And who is it that chooses to study that? These aren’t people who want to get through easy.

Michael: Well, no, they choose them as electives, there are sort of core courses that one takes as whatever your discipline is going to be, whatever your degree is going to be in, and then you are required to take so many electives, usually one or two out of five. And I'm usually chosen last because they don't know quite what it is, and, Well, I guess there's nothing else but I'll take that. But, when they get into it, they find that they really enjoy it. And so I have a huge, fifty percent continuation rate, from one semester to the next, which is pretty high. And I've said, I've created many minors now, a lot of people are doing Classics as a minor, which they wouldn't even have considered, which means they have to take eight courses out of their twenty. and several majors, I've got a major now who's going to get a degree in this discipline. I've tried to dissuade him, from it, because they always say, Well what can you do with it? I'd say, Take my job, or something. But they what I found, and I know a lot of classicists out there who have gotten degrees in Classics but end up doing other things, a lot in music as I am in music, but, the way we phrase it, I don't know whether this is rationalization, but, but because there's so many sub-groups, sub-topics within two cultures, that it really forces you to think, and to get a basis in, in the great thought of the western world, I guess. And so if you do then go on to other fields, you, you are, you have a basis in original thought, and, able to think, you're not just an automaton in one little, small discipline. So, even if you study it and go on to another discipline, I [ ] to think you have a really, really broad general knowledge that can do, do you well in whatever you want to do.

Interviewer: So [ ] gradually is the trend in contemporary education, to make

Michael: I don't know. I don't know what the trend in contemporary education is. yes, it has to be practical, right. I think that *is* practical. Because that's what they tell us business wants now, they want, yes, the person who's mathematically apt, and all that sort of thing, but, if they just, if they don't think by theirself at their little desk, they're useless to them. And so, I don't know. We're trying to go into a liberal arts development now, which is a bit tough. [What does that mean?] Basically that you're going to get a degree that's useless to you. But that, it will allow you the sort of broad, broad-based knowledge that then you can apply to some other thing.

Interviewer: And what about the music, how, how far back in your life does that go?

Michael: Pretty far. At age ten, I guess, started with violin in Toronto, and eventually switched to viola, and that took me to Europe twice with the National Youth Orchestra. In grade eleven, in high school in Toronto, I had to decide, which, what I was going to do in university, because you had to know that. In the old days, if you, you know, you just didn't start university and, and do basic courses, you started right in the heart of it. So you had to prepare in high school. So I went to Riverdale Collegiate in

Toronto and, and so I *did* Latin, Greek, French, English, music, all of those subjects, so that when I had to decide in grade eleven, I decided Classics, quite lazily, because, it was between music and Classics, and, to do a degree in music I had to have had, before going into it, history and theory and harmony, and I didn't have them, whereas I *had* the basics to go into Classics. So, quite lazily I said, Oh, I'll go into Classics, but kept the music up, while I was in U of T, at Victoria College, across Queen's Park, at the Faculty of Music, where all of my friends who were doing music, in, and composition, and so they needed a violist, and so I became their violist. So I kept that up, and and then as I mentioned to you earlier we formed 'Array?', in 1970, contemporary music performance group, and performed in it, and then, within two years I was writing music for them, submitted my first work to them as a, an anonymous because I didn't think that they'd accept it, because, I had no training. And they did accept it and we performed it. And and it went on from there. And then, three or four years after that in 1976 I moved to St. John's and started my second career here. In Newfoundland.

[0:06;12]

Interviewer: Why, why did you move to here? What brought you

Michael: Ah, sordid story. Ah ... I had started a doctorate in Classics at U of T, and for political reasons it turns out now, I, I've been told quite legitimately, I was kicked out of U of T because I failed an exam. which, they said I failed it, I thought I got eighty percent on it but they said I failed it. And this is, from somebody who never paid a cent at U of T, got straight As all the way through, and got, won numerous awards all the way through his career there, and then, in my final year of the pre-doctoral thesis stage, they told me I didn't know any Latin, so they kicked me out.

Michael (continuing): So, that was in '73. So I was fed up with Toronto, I, you know, I was just fed up with it. And I was ... because I had no longer a career in Classics I thought, but I had my music, I ... got a job as the assistant to my violin teacher at the Conservatory. And, he had to come to St. John's in '75 to adjudicate at a festival. About two weeks before that, he was in an accident, not a serious one, but he couldn't go, so I had to go, being his assistant. I fell in love with the place, and so I, and they were opening a music school in St. John's around that time, and in my ignorance I thought, Oh, well, I'm just from Toronto and I have, I can play a violin, so they'll accept me as a professor there, and of course I had no degree, so, they didn't accept me. But I moved to St. John's anyway. I was fed up with Toronto and I thought the change would be nice, and it was a gamble but, that's sort of the story of my life, I just, sort of, if opportunities are thrown my way I usually take them and, Let's see where the consequences lead. And

Interviewer: It wasn't actually an opportunity.

Michael: No. There was no job, absolutely none, no. But I got jobs at the CBC, playing music there, I got a job in the symphony, so-called job, I mean I, I made my money by copying other people's music for the Canadian Music Centre, and, I just, because I happened to be there, the head of the Classics department at Memorial, at the time, played violin in the university orchestra, in which I was playing viola. And this, this job here in Grenfell opened up and, they tried to get a Classics and German person but they couldn't find one, and they wanted to start a music appreciation program out here, so I was it (laughs), Classics and music, so, they concocted the job, and I reluctantly took it, 'coz I had all my friends in St. John's and I didn't want to move to this place, and, but I did take it, I mean, a salary of, a horribly low salary, now that I look at it back then, but I took it, and, it changed my life, obviously. So. Being here meant I finally had a job with my actual degree, which was amazing, I hadn't planned that. And being at the end of the world, really, as I looked at it then and sometimes now, there's no music here, there's nothing to support me, in anything, really, except for my job, but in the music world there was nothing. So it really forced me to take the initiative in many ways, so, I, I asked the CBC one day to give me a commission to write a new work for them, which they did; they didn't know what the term meant, even. And the term "commission," they had no clue. So, it [The CBC ...] Here, in St. John's, yeah, no clue. And I asked to write the fanfares for the Canada Summer Games in '77 which are in St. John's and I did that. So it was sort of self-motivating, it was absolute, it sounds like a bit of arrogance, but it was self-preservation (laughs), that's what it was. And ... and it's worked out well, I think, over all. It's very frustrating, living here, especially after seventeen years and [Seventeen years, so when was it] '76 I moved to St. John's, and, '77 I moved here. So ... And, coming out so many years later than that, after that, that's the added other thing for the last three years, I only came out in '91, so that was a new *thing* too, which I've had to deal with, in a sense.

Interviewer: So what about that? Where does that, what was happening with you before '91 in terms of your sexuality?

Michael: Well, like everybody was saying tonight, and as you've heard, and we hear on the phone line, I knew I was different from age ... five is my memory, going back to five. Young boys that I was, you know, in school with would come down into the basement, just to play cards or some silly games and that sort of thing, and I was really interested in them, and that sort of thing. ... Like others I went through high school pretending to have girlfriends, and that never worked, always a disaster. in, when was it, grade twelve ... there was a guy showed up at Riverdale in Toronto who,

who transferred there from another school? What, you went to Riverdale?  
Go on. You're not serious.

Interviewer #2: I did.

Michael: What years?

Interviewer: Probably about the same time as you.

Interviewer #2: I'm the same age as you, so, I was there from 1960 to '67.

Michael: '63 to '67, for me. Go on. I don't even ... you didn't have a beard then.  
Gee whiz. Go on. You're probably in all my yearbooks, look at them,  
they're all down there. Beneath that pile, just on top of the records?

Interviewer: Old school ties!

Michael: (laughs) Oh yeah, so, another friend of mine who has, again, turned out to  
be gay, he was in music as well, lives in Ottawa now, I came out to him as  
he came out to me, previously, we had, he was in, now a composer as  
well,

[0;11;35]

Michael (continuing): we were sort of into music together playing Bach together, you  
know, I on violin, he on piano, and this guy showed up from Danforth  
Tech, a real jock, but gorgeous, gorgeous, and ... in high school I just  
didn't fit in, of course, I wasn't into sports, I wasn't dating, I, in fact I  
played violin and got good marks, of course, you know what that means,  
you're ostracized. So and yet this guy showed up, gorgeous, a hit with the  
girls, played football, but played clarinet and wrote poetry, and this was  
just an anomalous thing to me. And so because he played clarinet we, we  
got into this trio. And we became quite good friends, and it was clear,  
now, in retrospect, that I had fallen in love with him. And, he went off to  
his real, when I was going to university for the first time in '67 or 8, and,  
we wrote back, eighty letters back and forth to each other, and in one of  
them he confessed that he loved me, in the sense, and then he said, and I'm  
not embarrassed to say that because you know what it means, meaning,  
we're not gay of course. and that really was fabulous to me. I didn't put a  
name on it, I, I, still called it a friendship thing, this is all in retrospect.  
When he finally came back in '69, he and this other friend of mine, Cliff,  
formed a commune together, and went into a commune with a whole  
bunch of other people, and I didn't go in with them but I was friendly with  
them all. And, then, ... one, it was December the seventh, I know these  
dates, I'm big on dates 'cuz of my discipline, I suppose, he phones me up,  
his name was Bill, this, this other guy, and said that he just didn't want to

see me any more, he was, that was it, goodbye. And, I, the problem was twofold, I was a bit too overwhelming probably, and, I probably demanded too much from him that I, if he didn't say he loved me every day and I needed to know that, and he couldn't handle that, but I also, Did you know Bill? Usher. ... So (laughs) ... anyway, so that devastated me. Now, in retrospect, that was my first gay experience, clearly, you know, but I didn't put a name on it, I was *really* sheltered, I, as I said to you earlier, I think, I was totally isolated in Toronto, I didn't know what the word meant, I had no clue of it, you know, it was never discussed, I never saw it around me, I just knew that I was different and, had these feelings ever since five, you know. And, even with Bill. I'm just taping. Even with Bill I didn't really know except I know that when he wrote and said that he loved me, I got those feelings that were just fabulous, and then when he said goodbye, that devastated me, and I think if I was coming out of the closet, I went back into that one, for another twenty years. And ... that, it was not soon after that, not long after that, that I had left, and came here. and then

Interviewer: Didn't that have anything to do with you leaving Toronto?

Michael: Oh sure. Oh, yes, I think so. You know, everything about Toronto was just not pleasant for me, the school situation, Bill, ... my parents were alright, they had moved to Ste. Catherine's and from Toronto, and that was awkward, that was part of the reason why I didn't succeed at U of T, long distance education, but ... I was also still living at home at the age of twenty-three, and I thought, this is crazy, I mean I can't keep doing this. So, as I said, this opportunity simply, literally, flew in my lap, and, without thinking too much about it, I decided to, to take it, that's how I started violin too, and as I say, when I look back on my life, that seems to have been what has happened. I mean, if Bill hadn't come that day, if he hadn't chosen Riverdale to come to, maybe, I mean, my life would have been different, but, who knows what might have happened, you know. Hard as it was to go through, I can look back on it now as some sort of a learning experience.

Interviewer: So what do you described as twenty years in the closet, what was that, what did that mean, were you dating women, or

Michael: Well,

Interviewer: Were you keeping to yourself?

Michael: I was pretty much keeping to myself. I went out with women, and I enjoyed them as friends, but when it ever got down to a sexual nature and such, I froze, just froze, you know, it was, I didn't understand that, that baffled me. again, I didn't know what it was, I just knew that this was

really not pleasant, you know, so it must have been really instinctual, you know, it was just not pleasant at all. So, so going away, getting away from Toronto would stop that, too, I would ... start a new life I guess in St. John's. But ... I didn't date there at all, I was just ... No, didn't go out with anyone. You get lots of women friends, but no such thing as a dating. In fact I've never dated since then. Ah no, that's not true. That's another story, a little bit later maybe. But I, it was just, I think the Bill thing had done something to me. I think subconsciously I knew what had happened but there was no way I could admit it. And, I just didn't want to hurt like that any more, so, I just remained ... closed, celibate or whatever the word would be.

[0:17:00]

Interviewer: So then what happened in '91?

Michael: Ah, well, it started before that. In, when I moved here, again my job was so exciting, fulfilling, that that sort of kept me going. But I mean, around, around the beginning of the eighties I guess, I found myself going into bookstores in Toronto when I was back there, and picking up at that time ?Thade Girl? obviously, and, I don't know why I was doing that and how I would explain it to anybody but I was, reading the articles of course, and found remarkable satisfaction in that sort of thing. And, it just kept going on, you know, and then finally, '84, my first sabbatical from Memorial, I went to McMaster to start my doctorate again, I had a career suddenly in the discipline, I better get my doctorate again, so I started it again, and lived in Hamilton, and that was a freeing-up, totally freeing-up experience, 'coz I was locked into this environment here in Corner Brook for seven years, as I had been locked in Toronto, in, in a sense, I was now a respectable member of the academic community here if I was thinking at all of any sort of sexual ... awakening, that was impossible, now I felt, at the time. And I think I remember consciously saying, I can live with that, I don't really need to be ... out, or whatever the word would be at that time, again, I wasn't even thinking in concrete terms. So I went away to Hamilton. Before going, there was a woman here, a librarian, another one, and she seemed to take an interest in me, and, I started seeing her. And just before I went away. And so when I was gone for that year we again wrote letters back and forth, and, basically confessing our love for one another and that sort of thing, and it was easy, to do that. While I'm doing that I'm going into drug stores in Hamilton buying not Playgirl but Torso and all those other magazines. So, clearly there was ... Oh, yeah, yeah. So there was clearly some sort of dichotomy going on here, you know. and then when I got back in '85, just when I got back my father died. He committed suicide. So, I had to rush back to Ontario for that, and, so that when I got back here, the relationship that Eleanor and I had started, that was interrupted by the, the sabbatical, sort of had to start again, and, she was

getting *very* friendly, you know, and we, we'd sit here for, watching television, and she'd be all over me, and I just again found it just distasteful, I couldn't handle it. And I used the excuse that my father's death had left me a bit ... damaged or whatever the word would be, how sensitive I am, so I'll have to cool it. And she eventually dropped me (laughs), I'm not sure a little bit, or the man who's now her husband, who's a very, they're both very good friends. But that bothered me a bit. ... So that was '85, and so that relationship such as it was sort of bothered me a little bit too. But by then I was into this cycle of getting more and more clearly comfortable with what I was, but still could not admit it. And so, around this time my friend who I had in high school, this composer who's now in Ottawa, ... during my sabbatical in '84 and '85 he came out to me, in Toronto. And I was stunned because he looks as straight as, as anybody. And ... He was married at the time and had two children, and I, it just baffled me, I couldn't understand it. But I remembered getting very aroused sitting opposite him as he told me this because I figured now is, now I know where I can go when I come out myself, I was that far ahead in '84-5. It took seven years, after that moment, to, to finally come out. So the process was, was going on, and at every opportunity, I would go to Ottawa, to visit him, just to be close to the gay scene and go to a bar, even doing that, I mean the games we played, and he was aware of it as was I, that, you know, you pretend not to know anything at all about what he was doing and how he was living, and, all that sort of thing, and it was all a game and we both knew it. [You went to gay bars?] Yes, oh, I was just observing, you know, I was just observing. ... And, finally, in ninety- ... one, before I started my sabbatical, I happened to be commissioned to do two pieces for a competition in Ottawa. And so, they were, they were being performed two weekends apart. But I had something to do in the middle of that week so I flew there, flew back, back and forth, to do this, just to visit with Cliff, you know, to take that opportunity. And, the second visit I was there, I thought, This is crazy. I mean, what person would be better understanding of what I'm going through than him? He came out to me, you know. So the second weekend I was absolutely going to tell him, about my self. The situation was right, it was wonderful and very warm and all that. and I sat there and I hemmed and hawed, changed the subject twenty million times, and finally he said, Michael, I can't say it, you've got to say it. And, I didn't say it, I got on the plane the next morning not having said it. And

[0;22;15]

Michael (continuing): I got home, I immediately got in the door, phoned him, and told him, so it was over the phone. And it was so easy after the fact, as you must know. but boy, leading up to that, it was so tough. And so that was July the fifteenth of '91 and then I left about a week later to go to Toronto first and then on to Banff. So. So what led up to it in '91? I think Cliff's

coming out to me. And, and as you said, you know, and as we've heard so many times on the phone line, I knew I wasn't alone, there was another gay person that I knew, I put a face on it, and, I'd known him all my life. And even though it was difficult to tell *him* of all people, we've become very, very good friends, and even more-so [ ]. It's great.

Interviewer: I think there's also some kind of a ... seismic pressure that, just [inaudible]

Michael: Yeah, exactly. We frequently say to people on the phone line, When the moment comes, you'll know it; when it feels right to you, you'll know it, and it's all individual, you know, I can't tell you, my experience will not relate to yours at all. When the moment comes it'll, it'll come. Ah

Interviewer: And who knows what you'll do with that moment [inaudible].

Michael: Well, true. ... And yet even when I left here, two weeks or a week after coming out to nobody but Cliff really, ... I went to Banff for three months and remained relatively ... un-gay, whatever that means, (laughs), I wasn't going around ... doing anything, but I met a [ ], there, this clarinetist who showed up the last three weeks, and I hadn't planned on it but fell madly in love with him. And, didn't know what his sexuality was, but he was gorgeous, again, he played clarinet, maybe it's just the clarinet, I don't know. ... but ... I left and he stayed on for six months there, went to Toronto for two months, and, finally I was back in my home town, but, openly gay, and, where there was a gay community that I was aware of, now. When I was growing up in Toronto I didn't know about it, at all. And so I went, I phoned the 'Taiko' group, and, went to the men's coming out session, for about a month, and, I was the only consistent member within the month that kept going, everybody else kept changing, and within five minutes of being there I realized I didn't *need* them, in that sense, because I think I'd spent so long coming to this stage, that I knew exactly, where I was, the confidence I'd had I'd been building up to for forty-six years and I was not going to waste any more of my life. So I, I was very, very confident about that. And enjoyed Toronto, and then went to Europe for six months, spent three months in Greece and two months in Rome and then a month in France, [ ] Etienne, ah, which was interesting too, so. When I finally came back here in the '92, I thought, I really dreaded it, I thought, Oh my god, what's going to happen to me, am I going to go back into the old routine? and I almost did. I thought, there's no point in my standing on the soapbox and declaring this; I can survive, and I mean it was the old silly routine. And, I did that for three months, until I read the article about Glas in the local newspaper here, in December. Went to the meeting, hesitatingly (laughs), I must say

Interviewer: Had it just started?

Michael: no, it had started that summer. But they only were meeting in parks, and, and they weren't really public at all. But they finally put the article in the paper, and so everybody knew about it, and I came out and a lot of other people did too. And the guy who started it eventually left, and so it sort of devolved down on us, the rest of us who hung around. And then letters were written to the paper, and I've answered them, and then we started the phone line, as you know, so, as I said to you earlier, I just have no choice now, I'm not going to do that anymore. Part of it relates to ... I think an experience I had with my mother dying. My mother and father died within three years of each other, and, my grandmother in the middle of all that too. from '85 to '88 I lost my two parents and my grandmother, and my cat. So. And, with my mother dying -- I may get a bit emotional here, but that's okay -- ... she was lying in her bed, and she ... sort of semi in and out of consciousness, she, it was lung cancer, and I showed up in mid-term break, and, the doctor said she was not going to last, but she did last, and when I showed up she sort of rallied. And at one point she looked at me in the bed, and we never really talked much, and she said, Are you happy? Now, she was clearly not referring to anything that was immediately happening, but, I think she meant, I know you're gay, are you happy? She had made one comment earlier on, something about, You've never found anyone you really like? you know, sort of. I said, No, mom. So, about two days later she said, Are you happy? and without hesitating, I said, Yes. And that was before I came out ... yes, it was '88. So. And, then she sort of lapsed into a coma again, and, all through that time I simply wanted to tell her that I loved her, and, all that, and I couldn't do it, because, within our family we were not overly open in terms of, of affection, and showing affection,

Michael (continuing): I think we were a very loving family, but, we just didn't do that. So my whole life of growing up was, keeping your emotions in check. And I couldn't do it at that moment. And not that it would have mattered to her, she couldn't have heard me anyway, I'm sure. But, and she died without my saying it. And I was determined from that moment on, and I think that's part of the decision to come out a few years later, that I will not, I've wasted too many of these opportunities, from now on, I'm not going to do it anymore. It's tough, because I've had forty-three years of, of, that training, you know; to break that, that thing, and I simply won't do it. I try not to do it, you know, but, it's still tough. It's getting easier as I realize that, this is better than then, you know, and. Nothing really can hurt me anymore, nobody else can hurt me because if I'm solid within myself [inaudible]

[0:28;08]

Interviewer: So, when you came out ... [ ] said, the term intrigues me because it means so many different things, when you came out, you made a decision that

you were no longer going to hide from other people the fact that you were gay. [Michael: Um-hmm] Had you already had [ ]?

Michael: No, no. I was just going to interrupt you in the sense that, the coming out to me was to me. it was saying the word, out loud to somebody else, but it was really to me. [Yes] and then from then on as my friend Cliff said, 'coz I, I suddenly was going around telling everybody, you know, I have to tell you and I have to tell this person, and, as you must know, and finally Cliff said, There'll come a time, Michael, when you'll stop telling everybody and just start living it. And, that did come, within about a year. But I really wanted to tell people, and some of it was difficult, telling Etienne, whom I fell in love with, was difficult, it took a year and a half to do that, and I told him in a letter, and, his response was Fine, I mean he had no trouble with it, but I've yet to tell my brother, who has a young son, and, he's very redneck, he works at the airport in Toronto, and, he's a fireman, he acts redneck, I can't believe he really is. And he's been making a couple of comments over the last couple of years, trying to bait me I think into a discussion of this topic or to get me to say something, and I haven't followed his bait, but I think, again, when the moment is right, I'll, I'll tell him. I don't think he'll be negative, he may be a bit upset or shocked [ ]

Interviewer: So, large aspects of your life you're [inaudible].

Michael: Yes, I guess so, yeah, true.

Interviewer: When you say you, within a year you started to live it, what did you mean?

Michael: ... I don't know just ... not think about it so much. Although I'm constantly thinking about it. I don't know. It, it's ... I don't know. The only thing I can say is that when I came back from my sabbatical, that sabbatical, after coming out, ... every single person I met at the college who hadn't seem me in the year, said, What's different about you? There's something different about you, I can't put my finger on it but you're different. You're glowing, or something, you know? And I, I was dressing a little bit differently I suppose, but ... I think it was just this internal confidence that was just simply there, and it was growing. I, I tell people on the line, that the coming out process, at least for me and I think it's probably common for a lot of people, is not a one shot thing, it's a constant growth pattern. Because in my view, I haven't had that, I haven't had a logical adolescence, I haven't, it's been denied me. So I've had to do it in forty, at age forty-three. And, and Cliff also said the same thing, you know, when you come out, you revert back to thirteen. So I'm really about sixteen or seventeen right now, having had my first love affair go bad (laughs), sort of thing. So I've had to learn that again. And so it's a growth process again, I have to learn again how to be me, 'coz I haven't really

been me yet. And, and that's ... But, but it's, it's a confidence boosting thing, every day, you know. Forming the group has helped me, because, as the other ones in the group have said, you know, it's a chance to meet with other gay people *in* this environment. It's easy to go to Toronto and go to a bar and meet other gay people, and I love doing that, and I get away from here as much as I can, but, I have to come back here and live here day to day, and ... and so that's 'wonderful?', you know, that's really helpful. So I think that's what I mean by living it, I'm just, I'm just ... there, I'm just being me, I guess.

Interviewer: What is it that keeps you here, is it the job?

Michael: Yes, yeah (laughs). It's very frustrating living here. ... I would like to be in a bigger city, where there is a gayer community, ... but, I can't deny that living here for the last seventeen years or so has, made me what I am. I can't say I'd change it. I'd be a different person if it was all different, but it's all worked out for the better I think, you know, hard as it may be, to have done that. But, I'm, I'm happy, the happiest I've ever been now, in spite of the frustration, you know, because, I think, it's an internal thing, I mean ... you know I can be, since I'm me (laughs), whether I'm in Toronto, here or, or Timbuktu, if I'm still me, what's the problem? you know, it's. Because it, growing up for forty-three years, I based my existence on what other people said I was. So, because I ... didn't do sports and all that sort of thing I, I, I tried to fit in in whatever way I could. It didn't work, of course, and, because I wanted friends, desperately, I wanted to be welcomed and liked and loved and all that sort of thing, I would not do anything that would jeopardize that. So I, I agreed with whatever they said, I, you know, that sort of thing, and so, I was defining myself through what they said of me. And, and that was deadly ... because I didn't exist, I was *their* view of me. And, and you keep, and you keep adjusting your so-called life, to coincide with what they think you should be. And so you don't exist, you just, and so now I do. And so, I am who I am, and so whether I am anywhere else, I'll still be me, now, and that won't define me. So it's hard being here but it's, that's where I am, so, let's get on with it (laughs).

[0;33;30]

Interviewer: So, tell me a little about, you say it's frustrating to live here. Why? How?

Michael: There's nothing to support what I think is important in life. There's no culture, really. ... It's a sports mill town, and, anything that's not sports or mill, doesn't exist, really, it has no support in the community, really. There's a, a theatre company and I'm on the board of that (laughs), which is in its fifteenth year, and so, it's struggling, but, you know, and there's a small

Interviewer: Is that at the university?

Michael: No, it's completely independent, professional. [Professional. Really] Yes, um-hmm, a budget of a hundred thousand dollars or something like that, and we're still here after fifteen years. ... and there's a small group of artist, artists type or cultural types if I can put it that way, who, who do exist, but I've noticed since ... I don't know whether it's since coming out, but, recently that I, in the old days I'd be invited to other people's houses and that sort of thing, and, I don't think it has anything to do with my coming out, but, I'm not invited anymore. I think 'coz I'm a single person, and, we have a joke up the college, those of us who are single, that they don't know what to do with us, you know, how do you put that extra seat down ... So, so, that's part of it as well. I have friends, most of them aren't associated with the university, now, many of them are with the gay group, otherwise it would be with my motorcycle friends, or, or, or whatever. Whether they know I'm gay I don't know, but, I don't think it would matter to them. ... So, there's really nothing to support, as I frequently say in either one of my bitter or ironic moods, I, I follow a discipline that's been dead two thousand five hundred years, I write music that nobody wants to hear, and I belong to a sexuality if that's the right term that, really, people don't want to hear about either. So, I, I've got really nothing going for me here. so (laughs), so, and that's Corner Brook, in a sense, so ... But, by the same token, if I could go on, I'm resigned to that. There was a time I fought it, constantly, and I'd get frustrated and I'd vent it by speaking to other drivers, as I'm driving, as you know, and other people who've come here more recently and find the same frustration, I get, I get annoyed with them, because all they do is, is vent their frustration, and I guess I've been through that already. I'm resigned to the fact. So either, so do something about it. Either leave, or, resign yourself, or get on with life. So I've gotten on with life. So I'm a member of the AIDS committee, I'm a member of the theatre company, [ ] member of the gay group [ ], I'm *doing* something. So. To, to, to what, ... to reflect who I am, you know, and to ... make this place more bearable to live in I suppose, yeah.

Interviewer: You said that the Glas already existed, and, sort of devolved to you and others. ... Did you inherent something that was in some disarray? Or

Michael: A bit. ...

Interviewer: You and others presumably. How did that work?

Michael: Well, when I joined it, we were meeting at the women's centre, and there were maybe ten of us who showed up. And the guy who, who started it was there, as well as Carl, but he was away that year. We haven't met. ... and it was going along quite well, but, there was no focus to it, I don't

think. The guy who was I suppose the head of it if you can put it that way, 'coz there's usually one person who directs meetings, that sort of thing, didn't seem to be able to do that very well. He, you know, if there was a lull in the conversation, when that was a support group, there was nobody there to really sort of, direct it, into a direction, maybe, or, or to be sensitive to some, a comment that somebody made, and maybe let's, let's pursue this a little bit, I have a feeling they want to talk about this, but they need a bit of encouragement. Maybe its 'coz of my teaching, ability, I don't know, or whatever, that, I mean, that's what I'm facing daily, so ... so when the summer came that year, that would have been '93 ... yes, '93, I went away as usual in the summer, and, when I came back, [ ], when I came back, the guy who had started it and organized it had left town. And he had dropped almost everything that, that he was involved with. He was the chair of the AIDS committee and dropped it and left, simply left, and Glas was left with no, nothing, really. So when I came back, in, in August, the rest of us who were left behind got together and said, Well, do we still want to do this? And I said, Sure, why not? So we started organizing again, and we put our meetings' announcements in the papers, which never happened before, and, around October of '93 I guess, we realized that ... things had to change, the way the meetings were being held, and so we made those changes, and, and then we really thought, a phone line is really what we need here. So we started *that*, and so there was a focus, I guess, more-so that before.

[0;38;40]

Interviewer: Why, the phone line, [inaudible].

Michael: Because, it's such a close community and it's such a closeted community. Getting people to come out to a public meeting, really, the only people who would come out are the more positive ones, the ones who are relatively out and confident. There are hundreds out there who haven't got that confidence yet. And so, what do we do, do we abandon them? or, do we find some method by which they can make some beginning to the coming out process, or just, the exploration process, if they're not gay or whatever. And, and, my, my thought was that if you do it anonymously, that's easier. If you can pick up the phone, and, you don't know who I am and I don't know who you are, you can hang up at any point, and, you could do it in the 'secrets' of your own home, or, in a phone booth, whatever you want, maybe it'll help. And so, as I mentioned to you, we, we thought about it, we made up a plan, we got some advising, by a counselor, we went and did some training, we did some, some calls, we got some funding from the AIDS committee, and we just did it. And, we started in February.

Interviewer: [ ] is what, [ ] people?

Michael: Well, every single member of Glas, when we brought it up, said, Oh, yes, I want to be a volunteer. And gradually they whittled themselves away when they realized, they really didn't want to be a volunteer. And so there was about six of us at the time who ended up being volunteers. And it worked really, really well from the very moment we started, and ... we're fluctuating in terms of volunteers 'coz a lot of people come and go in this place, who are gay. And. But it's still going, and we're not yet a year old, but it's going really, really well. And, as I said before, I think we've helped untold numbers of people out there begin the process; I can't, there's a few success stories, but

Interviewer: Eight hundred [ ] in the

Michael: We've had eight hundred calls, mostly to the machine, but eighty or so live calls. And we're only open one night a week, so that's not a lot of hours to be open, to get eighty phone calls.

Interviewer: The machine's on all the

Michael: All the time, yeah, except for two months in the summer. We had to, nobody was here for two months in the summer. The machine was still on, and we got a hundred and twenty calls (laughs), just for two months, and that's the limit that the machine could take, so

Interviewer: Where do they come from? [inaudible]

Michael: Mostly, we think, ... well, we can tell by the exchange, of course, but, but, we get a lot of 'out of' areas, or, anonymous calls and, and so we don't know where they come from. But, many do come from the central Newfoundland, a lot from St. John's, because we, there is no phone line out there yet, and, we certainly have advertised wide, province-wide, so we get the calls from there. And from the mainland, Nova Scotia, a lot. ... A few from farther away. ... But it's, it's mostly local, we think.

Interviewer: And, ... trying to remember things [ ] in the conversation, before taping it ...

Interviewer #2: You've covered so much territory, it [ ]

Interviewer: [inaudible]

Michael: (laughs) I was afraid of that, too.

Interviewer: How would you describe the ... sort of the general ... types of calls, the nature of the calls; what do people want?

Michael: The live calls, they want ... encouragement, they want support. That's why we called it gay support. You know, How do you know you're gay? I've been having these fantasies, does that mean I'm gay? I'm married, and I ... but I have these other feelings, so I go to washrooms in malls. I'm in high school and I don't know what to do, because my parents will disown me and I can't come out at school. ... And the one I mentioned to you, I have a lover who's performed oral sex on me, a woman, and, and, I think that makes me a lesbian because that's not what, what the church said I should be doing with my sex life. You know, we get everything. And it's, ... nothing has shocked us, it's surprised us, ... there have been calls that have distressed us, because we, we would love to have them, we would love to give them an answer, we would love to say, Here's what you need to solve your problem. And of course that's not the nature of the line and we can't do that and we don't do that. we, we try to give the least amount of advice as we can, but we try to encourage them to, to, find the solution themselves, because we really think that they know what the solution is to their problem if they have one.

Michael (continuing): So, we will try to, ... you know, if they say, What does it mean to be gay? we would say nothing, we wouldn't say, Well, it means that, blah, blah, blah, we would say, Well, what do you think it means to be gay? and then we would go from what their assumptions are, and maybe ... talk about that, you know, 'coz it may reflect an internal homophobia, or, some other problem that we really have to deal with, not, not what they're saying is the problem. So we always, within the first few minutes, praise them for calling, praising their courage, and we always say, We've all been there; you are not, we've all done that, we've all phoned the line, or we've all thought we were the only ones like this, and, so we've, we've been there, we know exactly what you're going through. And, those few words I think have been so reassuring to them. They may not say anything more, really, about that, but ... that's been really rewarding, because, clearly there's been a need. If we hadn't been here eight hundred people (laughs), less than that because many of them phone back more than once, would not be better ... educated isn't the right word, I hate that word, but ... they wouldn't have thought about it as much, or something, I don't know what the terms are. But, we've made a difference, clearly, I think, in this region. And the fact that, even there, even though we've made our, our line known to the public, we're on the cable every day, ... simply getting the word "gay" on the cable, every day, if you flip through the cable, community channel, there it is, with our number. Our Glas meetings are advertised there and in the paper. The fact that, the word "gay" shows up, every day, in the newspaper and on the TV in Corner Brook, is doing a massive amount, I think, of, of good work [Yes]. It's saying we're here, we're queer and we're not going away (laughs). So. And as I said to you the other day, there was an article in the paper that

just came out this week, a full page, a thing about the gay group and the line, and, a woman who is a feminist here in town the other day said to me, Ten years ago that would be impossible. It simply wouldn't have been printed. [Five years ago] Five years ago, probably; two years ago, I don't know. And we've received very little flack, really, from it, from our existence for two years.

[0;46;07]

Interviewer: Tell me about that you can identify [ ] as being from a small town north of here, the seventeen year old?

Michael: Um-hmm? Sorry? What do you want me to do?

Interviewer: Just tell me about that

Michael: ... I'm sorry, I've lost the connection.

Interviewer: This story of the young man who phoned a lot?

Michael: Oh. Yes. Oh, sorry. I thought you were talking about ?Allie? Yeah. [Sorry] Yeah, he phoned, he's just from, thirty miles up the road here, fifteen miles up the road. But ... I don't know if I should say too much details 'coz I don't know if you'll use all of that, and I, there's a bit of confidentiality here, so, so, but, generally, he was quite confident in his own sexuality, and, hadn't told anyone at all about himself at the beginning of our time, since he's been phoning, but now he's quite out to his sister and other people in his family and he's going through his first love and all that sort of thing, but, he's really a wonderful ... what, success story, I don't like that term either, 'coz we're not here to make success stories and build up, build up points, but ... he, he's ... he's become a good friend, and the funny, I know you're not supposed to get involved on these things, but, and he only talks to me, but ...

Interviewer: He will only talk to you?

Michael: He only will talk to me. Yeah. Because as he said, to go over the whole story for the last three months would be too long, and that sort of thing, but, and we have a rapport, and it, I think in many ways our lives are parallel. He's just come out a short time ago I guess, I don't know when he said, whether the phone call to us the first time was his coming out, I don't know. But, and, and I'm only recent as well, and, we've both gone been through our first loves, and so we're both on sort of the same wavelength, and so I know exactly what he's going through, exactly. And, and, his high school experience was mine. And, so I know exactly about that. And so, there's a linkage there that, I, you know, I haven't got an answer for him,

at the moment, he's in, in, in distress but, and I have not an answer for him, but ... I just told him to be himself, because he's so confident himself that, things will work out, and they always tend to. At least that's what I believe, anyway. He's going to phone back, next week, and, see how, he's doing.

Interviewer: ... Tell me a little about the AIDS work. How does it [ ].

Michael: Again, the guy who had started this group was the chair of the AIDS committee and so I got involved in, in that, because ... well my own feeling about that is that ... I, I'm so upset about the ... harm that's been done by society, with this disease. by classifying it as a gay disease at the beginning, at least, affecting gays the most, and it did, clearly, I'm not denying that, but, ... the fact that they called it that. And, recently there's been a, a thing on the Internet that I subscribe to, somebody pointed out quite rightly that there are no such thing as gay sexual acts, there are sexual acts, that anybody can do. There are holes in the body and things can be put into those holes, and, and it just depends upon what the other partner is, whether it's a gay act or a straight act. And, if, if the AIDS epidemic had been discussed that way, that there is a disease that you can get if you perform certain high-risk activities, period, ... then it wouldn't be the fifteen years, fourteen years of horrible, horrible, hatred and misalignment, and, suffering that was needless, would've maybe, been avoided. So when I came out as a, in '91, and seeing this around me, I was so incensed, that I a) determined that I would have to get involved with this cause, and, and I went to so far as to say, rather arrogantly, as a gay man it's my duty, to get involved, and to stand up and say, No more, I will not allow this thing to go on any further. And, so I got involved with the AIDS committee and, we put on a benefit this year for the first time and, it went off very, very well and so, we have probably educated more people about AIDS that one night on October the first, here in Corner Brook, because I, I was the producer for the show, and, I chose young people to be the performing acts. So we had young public school kids from Deer Lake, and, a young, high school choir, and, young university students, and, and, junior high kids came out when the AIDS quilt was unveiled and read the names off, it was very emotional, and ... their parents would come, and we filled the place with their parents and their friends, and I thought, This is fabulous, because they came because their brothers and their sisters and their friends were there, but they saw that it was a beautiful thing, and it was not a deathly thing, and that people are living with this disease, not dying of it. And, and it's not something to be afraid of. And we had displays in the lobby, and, it was just a wonderful evening. And, we have done more I think in that one day, to awaken this community about AIDS, than we have in the past century. So, that was incredibly rewarding, yeah,

incredibly rewarding. ... So, it's my duty, it's my duty. I have to do that. I can't not do it.

Interviewer: Are there people around who, that you know of, who are HIV-positive?

Michael: No. I don't know anyone.

[0;51;16]

Interviewer: So people leave?

Michael: No, ... I don't know, they may. It's very secretive. Newfoundland as you may know has the highest per capita incidence of HIV-positive people among women in the country. And, there are pockets of it in this province that are inexplicable, that it's so high, and you know where they are. All of which are heterosexual. Here I am, falling into the old trap again. But the, the one closest to this, to Corner Brook, is in Port Au Port, I mean, it's largely hemophilic problem, but, they still will get the stigma of gayness attached to them. And ... but it, it's largely I think, ... a secretive disease still here. They don't talk, there was a thing on the radio this morning, I don't know if you heard it, as you were coming up in the car, because of the other community on the east coast of the island, if, being the AIDS capitol of Newfoundland, and, if, if people, ... the community's quite concerned because this Chamber of Commerce are quite concerned about this, it's going to cut down on tourism, so they're having to deal with that kind of thing, you know, and ... I, I think, I think it's still a problem that has to be addressed, and the more we can be more aware of it, and, the other problem about it is of course that the churches are still fairly strong, as an institution, in this, in this community, and, in this island, in the province, and, they control, the schools are denominational as you know, so there are Pentecostal schools and Salvation Army schools and Catholic schools and so on, and we've had some instances within our AIDS committee where our, our field workers have not been allowed in the Catholic schools, to show how to put a condom on, just in case one of them happens to be having sex, to protect them. But we were not permitted to do that. Instead they brought in one of their own people who'd said that virginity was the thing to go, and of course, anything other than the straight, heterosexual marriage was something unacceptable. ... So what do you do about a gay person? in that kind of an environment. And what do you do about the apparently non-Catholics who aren't having sex, who are having sex? You know. It's nice to hope that they will be ... sexually responsible, and that they'll, they'll save themselves for that one right heterosexual person, but, if they're not, you'd better give them the, the requirements to protect themselves. And they're not allowing that. So, it's a real, real difficult problem.

Michael (continuing): But, I think we're making progress. The premier's trying to change the educational system to take the church's influences away. He's going to have to change the constitution to do that [I was going to ask about it, it's actually] It's in the constitution, it's in the BNA, well, whatever it was, the terms of union is what they call it, that the, the denominational school system will stay, and Clyde Wells has said, If they will not agree to the changes he wants, he will change the constitution. And that's of course raising huge flack among the churches (laughs). So, we'll see how that's going to go. It's long overdue.

Interviewer: So are there any schools which are not connected [ ] what you call public schools?

Michael: Yes, in, they're called interdenominational. And, if there are

Interviewer: Interdenominational. So that's, [ ] that's the best you can get

Michael: Yes, interdenominational. Yep. Or, integrated (laughs), as they're called. And if they're, in Corner Brook there's an integrate high school and a Catholic school, and, but in the smaller communities where they haven't got the luxury of a separate school for each denomination, there isn't any interdenominational school, and so we can get into those schools sometimes, and give the, and it all really depends upon the principal. If you've got an enlightened principal, but we don't have in the certain community around here, so we weren't allowed in. So that was it. So, the information is getting out. And, we can, we can get the information out through the benefit, say, or, other areas, but it, it's sometimes tough and it's very frustrating and *really* annoying to me (laughs) that, this, this silly ignorant concept that, if you give them the information about safer sex, that that's going to automatically mean they're promiscuous. If they've grown up in the good Catholic tradition, and good Catholic education, and they know that they should be saving themselves for that one special person, no amount of information like that is going to force them into that sort of thing. You know. This is silly. So.

Interviewer: When you talked about ... actively working to create a world for yourself which you [ ] comfortable here, does that include ... does it go along with that which you've created, a social world for yourself that nourishes you?

Michael: Up to a point. I want a partner (laughs), I want somebody to love me, and I want somebody to love, too. We all want that, I guess, and that's frustrating. I'm old-er, than most (laughs) in this community, and, it's still a youth-orientated culture, I think. And, my theory about that is that, I should've, I should've had these early experiences when I was sixteen or seventeen. And so, now that I'm forty-six, I'm still looking at the younger ones, 'coz that's where my mental age is at, or, sexual age is, I don't

know. ... And I seem to be falling in love with twenty-eight year old people these days so that's the way it goes, I guess, but ... but, there are, and, this is such a small town that you know everybody in it who's been here for most, as long as I have, and, so, either the potential ones are, have been crossed off the list, or, they're taken or something along those lines, and, so, you sort of look for the new people to come into town, and so, socially it, it's not all that great, I mean I go to the meetings and so on, but, and it's great to be around the guys and, but I don't go to the bars, that's not sort of my scene, and, it's a bit awkward for me to do that, 'coz it's so young, the crowd that goes there. And I have to be careful a little bit. I'm, I'm ... I'm in an educational institution where I'm dealing with seventeen, eighteen and nineteen year old students [Yes]. Given the Mount Cashel thing, you have to be careful, in a sense, you know. ... but it doesn't stop me from looking (laughs), you know. But my own personal view about that is that I, I simply can't possibly have any relationship with a, a young student of mine, or even if it's not a student of mine but a student at the college, my own view is that that is not wise. Once the student graduates or, or there's another ... connection there that's broken, then maybe possibly. But it hasn't happened, I haven't felt that way about any of them, you know. So. They're a bit too young (laughs). Gorgeous, but, too young (laughs).

Interviewer: Yeah we were talking today, both of us, it's a sign of our age [inaudible].

[0;58;22]

Michael: They're getting better and better every year. Oh, geez, and taller. I think they're getting more gorgeous.

Interviewer: They're gorgeous but [inaudible]

Michael: Young, they're very young. Yeah. Well there's no grade thirteen here, it's grade twelve officially really. But mentally they're young, or, what's the word? That's not the right word. ... Yeah, worldliness, they're young, you know? refreshingly so in many ways I find. I find they're really great kids, they're fabulous kids, fabulous kids. And I'm convinced now that they know I'm gay. I haven't broadcast it and so on but I put the Glas meetings on my door, if they phone the line my voice is there, I mean, you know, I do the message and, I wear pins and buttons and things, so I mean it's not, you're not ?stunned? to figure it out. I've had no adverse reaction. ... none, so, you know, either they don't care, or, they're fine, Oh well, maybe it's not so bad after all, he's okay. But it, it's, it's ... yeah, it's interesting (laughs).

Interviewer: So what is your social world, is it, partly gay, partly straight, is it away from here, partly, is it [ ]?

Michael: Ah, I don't know how you define social world.

Interviewer: The circle of people that are important to you.

Michael: It fluctuates according to the event, really. I rarely have people over for dinner or parties. If there's a concert on, I go to that social group, if there's a Glas meeting on, I go to that social group, if we have a, a gay dance I'll be there for a little while, I'm not, I don't dance, so don't ask me, if, when I go away, I enjoy going away, I'll be in New York for Christmas, I just was in San Francisco this week, I, I love Toronto, I've got lots of friends there, and I feel very comfortable now there. When I went into my first gay bar in Toronto I was terribly uncomfortable, but that was me, it was a growing process and I'm fine now. The trip to San Francisco was a real confidence booster. I felt, this must be what straight people feel like when they walk down Market Street, because everybody is gay around you, it seems, and, nobody cares, you know, this must be the normalcy of what straight people must feel like. ... But, when I go away I know I'm only there for a week or two, and I'm, I'm not the type, at the moment anyway, to pick up somebody in a bar and, have a fling for a week or, or, a night. I'm, I, I don't want that. I don't know, it's my friends are telling me, For god's sake, Michael, go for it, but, at the moment that's not where my mind is at, and sometimes I'm tempted I guess, and again, when the moment's right maybe it'll happen, but, it's a funny, if it happens and I really like this guy, what's going to happen next? That's another three thousand mile distance thing, and, that was the problem with Etienne. If there was anything potential between us, he lives three thousand miles away, he can't give up his burgeoning career, and I'm not going to give up my ... my mature career to, to go where he is. So, so, I'm stuck with trying to find somebody here in a sense. And in a sense I'm, much as I like that, it used to be a sort of a big concern to me, I was *really* searching, you know, and, I've had other friends who *really* searched and it never worked. So I'm just going to lay back, and if it happens then it happens. It's not, ... it's important but not the end, end-all.

Interviewer: It sounds like you have a very rich life.

Michael: It sounds like that, doesn't it? (laughs) yeah, right. It's better, it's better. I'm so busy with everything that I'm, I'm certainly kept busy and I enjoy everything I do. I enjoy the teaching immensely, and, the composing when I can get to it, is rewarding, and, the gay group has been fabulous, the phone line's wonderful, the AIDS committee is, is rewarding at times [interviewer inaudible] Yeah. I've also been asked to be the Newfoundland representative for the AIDS Quilt, and I suppose I'll, I'll [ ] that too. Just being, being sort of a resource person if anyone wants to make a panel, and having maybe monthly panel, a quilting panel sessions, or something

like that. The AIDS Quilt as you may know is being re-formed after a sort of a hiatus. Yeah. It had come to Canada in 1988 and then it stopped, for about a year I think, I'm not sure how long, and it's being revived in Ottawa again, but the president of it or, whatever the term is, is in Halifax in fact, so it's close by, and it's housed in [interviewer inaudible], the Canadian AIDS, but the NAMES Project. So when we brought it in for the AIDS benefit I had to talk to these people, and, they're re-forming as I say so they're trying to get representatives in each province to be a resource person, to keep the Quilt before the public, and, help sponsor panels [ ] the panels being done. And that I think will be good too because it'll help not just the, the cause, but, the grieving process of the families who have lost people, apparently that's a huge benefit in creating a panel. And, and if a lot of these people who have died of AIDS, are still in silence about it, because they have nowhere else to go, this might help. So, it intrigues me, I'd like to get involved in it [ ], I have time.

[1;03;53]

Interviewer: Do you think that, coming to terms with your sexuality has affected your work, particularly your composing?

Michael: I don't know. ... I tried to think about that, 'coz, when I came out I went to Banff immediately and wrote ... started to write some pieces there obviously and, each of the pieces I've written since then has not met with great success in the public. it's like the old Woody Allen movie, Why aren't you writing those funny movies any more? you know. The old pieces were, were, were nice and I enjoy them and all that, these are deeper. These are ... deeper is the only word I can think of, because ... I don't know why. ... I don't know why. I'm the worst person to ask the question, because, I'm too involved with them, but, everyone who's listened to them has said, They're good, I think, but, whereas before it was always, Wow, that was good. So there's not the immediate response to them. And the performances have been pretty good for them. But so I don't know, whether, you know, it's different. I know when I moved here and started writing, that my music changed, 'coz I am certainly a product of my environment, and, and the music reflects that in some way. A friend of mine said that, my music had to have been written in Newfoundland, it couldn't have been written anywhere else, and of course, almost every piece I've written since coming out has been not written here. It's been written in Banff, I was there for three years, three summers I've been there. And almost everything I've written since coming out has not been written here. And, so maybe that's had an effect, both the coming out and not being here. I know, they burst off a page, with a mass of notes, and, and, there's a difficulty in appreciating them on a first listening maybe, maybe 'coz it's been pent up so long, I don't know, this aspect of me, I don't know. You'd have to ask other people about that, who know my

work, the great audience out there, and see. I think there's been a difference, but I can't pin-point it. I find it harder to write music, funnily enough, ... There's been a whole year between pieces, at one point. And, when I was in Banff this past summer, with a couple of other artists whom I've known already who were at Banff before, very, very good friends, I mean, there's a woman there who's just, my closest friend really, straight woman, and ... We were having a big discussion about our work 'coz her work has been changing as well as mine has, as we've both, we're both on the same level, her in her straight world and me in my new gay world. And, out of the blue I found myself saying, 'coz, she was having difficulty creating as, as was I, and I said, It's funny, it doesn't make, it doesn't mean as much to me anymore. And I, I, I couldn't believe my, myself saying that, my music didn't *mean* as much to me anymore, as if it was an outlet for my expression before, because that's all I had. Now I'm living (laughs), and so I don't need to create, anymore, to have an outlet. I don't know. It's different, and it's more difficult to write it. I have a terrible difficulty writing it. I don't know why, I have to analyze that, but it's much more difficult to write it now than it was before.

Interviewer: I was going to ask about, whether ... the energy that, you know goes into making your world, was going into making music.

Michael: Maybe. It must be, I think it must. I have less time when I'm here now to, whereas before, I would just have my work and then I'd come home at night and, nothing to do but write. Now I have all these committees to, to deal with, so that may be part of it. But I, I don't think it's just the lack of time, I mean, if I really, if it was really that important I'd find the time, as I find the time for other things. It's just not as important to me anymore. And that *bothers* me in a sense, but other composers have simply stopped writing, in the middle of their careers, and, for whatever reason. I'm not going to not stop, I've just got another commission (laughs), from CBC. So, but I've got two that haven't finished yet, and, and they go back a year. [You don't have time limits?] Not on, well, the concert was cancelled so I guess there's no time limit. This one they've given me a time limit of September '95. But a piece I started in Banff which really was different for me, which is on the piano now, was a completely different thing, and, it's funny, I'd wanted to write that piece for seven or eight years, since I met an actor who came here, in '83, so it's I guess now eleven years, yeah, it's eleven years, and, I never had the time to sit down and write it because, he's an actor, and I didn't know how to write it for an acting voice, a speaking voice.

[1;08;23]

Michael (continuing): But I knew the poem that I wanted to set, one is by Catullus, an author I wrote on on my thesis, doctoral thesis, and another is by a local Corner Brook poet from, what, he's from Ontario but, very, very good. And they're both apparently very strange and different, but to me they represent my coming out. They both deal with situations which the protagonist in each of the poems has no, no control over, and yet has to deal with it. One of which is the castration of, of a mythical character, self-castration. And, the other one is a long story about something else, about a deformed young man which, which, the poet, a Sister, a nun, sees on a plane ride back home to Newfoundland. And, to me they represented my coming out process. Because it was around that time, '83-4, that Cliff came out to me, and so I was beginning the process I think, and I arrogantly said at the time, that, it will win me the governor-general's award for chamber music, and it may yet (laughs), I don't know, if I can ever get it finished, 'coz it's, I think it'll be so good. And we, I wrote the first movement in Banff and we had a performance of it, and it was very good, I, I'm really excited about that, it's the first piece I've written since coming out that I really feel excited about. And so because I think it, it's combining a specifically gay thing, and my musical expression. Whereas, the others are abstract pieces that happen to be written after I came out. So, I don't know, we'll see.

Interviewer: That's recording.

Michael: Alright. He, there was another guy, in fact he roomed with him last year, 'coz, who was here, was a member of the group on the phone line, really, really good on the phone line, another visual artist, a year ahead of Jason I think, who's now gone on to Halifax, they always leave, and, I'm sorry to hear tonight that Richard is thinking of leaving next year, that distresses me greatly, but ... Jason was around and wanted to be part of the phone line, and, he's sort of laid back, he's a bit, to me, Jason is a laid-back person, and you don't quite know how to read him sometimes. And ... we started talking about the phone line in October, and we would go to the training sessions, and Jason would be there, and then, come January, just as we were about to start, with Christmas intervening and all that, again the rumour mill starts in this town and, and, Jamie was the other guy's name, said, when we had a meeting, Jason didn't show up, and I said, Oh, is Jason not coming? No, he, he's not going to have anything more to do with the group, and anything else. And I was really upset, because I thought Jason would have been really good with the phone line. Two days later we, we all ended up at a concert at the theatre here, and Jamie showed up with Jason. And I was, a bit awkward, I didn't know what to do about this, 'coz, I felt, and I, this is a part of my character trait going back to my old days, but, I frequently take that kind of response as a personal thing against me. he, he really had something, there was a problem with me, and so he didn't want to associate with the group because I was involved with

it [ ]. I mean there was absolutely no evidence of that. But it's my good old, you know, inferiority complex rising its ugly head. So I felt awkward when he showed up at the thing. And, when he showed up with Jamie I said hello to Jamie, Jason didn't look at me, and he immediately went away and hung up his coat, which, of course, people do (laughs), so, but I thought it was a confirmation. And, we went into the concert, separately, we weren't sitting together certainly, and at intermission, I was just sort of sitting down, in the lobby, and Jason came over to me, apart from Jamie, and said, Jamie says that you found, you thought that I was not going to be involved with the, the group anymore. That somebody said, he said, that he was not going to be involved. That I, you know, he Jason was not going to be involved with the group anymore. And I said, Yeah, somebody mentioned that to me. And I'm thinking, What's going on here? It was Jamie who said it. It's not true. I'm really involved and I really want to come to it, the group, you know, that's what I hate about this town, with all these, these vicious rumours going around. So, Great, that's wonderful, I was really distressed when I heard of this rumour that you weren't going to be involved, I'm really, really, really happy, so, can you come to the next meeting? Yes, no problem. And he's been fine. and ... He's been really supportive of the line, he's brilliant on the line, and the most brilliant on the line I think is Carl whom you haven't met yet, but, he's a bit laid-back, but when he does have something to say, he'll say it, and I think, what he says is true as far as he's concerned, you know, he, I think because he ... he, as you said, he doesn't look gay, whatever that means, that he doesn't have, he may not have the same problems that others might have. ... But that, that he sort of barges through life isn't the right word, but he just, he knows his direction, he's going to go and get it, go in the direction he wants to go, and, doesn't care about what's going on around him, in a sense. And ... that's just the way he is. But he's been a really great supporter and ... So. I don't know if that's filling in the story about Jason, but, yeah.

Interviewer: This rumour thing is interesting. ... There's something that you were asking for about Sydney, and, I know very little about, the descriptions, the bits of information suggests that, it was kind of infighting [Michael: Yeah, it's true], and rumours, and all this kind of stuff.

Michael: And I have a theory about that, of course (laughs). My theory is that, it goes back again to my other theory that we haven't been able to get out of this, this thing early in our lives, we've had to do it now. And, and, I think a lot of gay men, let's put it that way, are so desperate to find that lost sexual youth, that we may have been denied, that they, they, they jump at any opportunity maybe to, to grasp at it. And so, if person A is seeing person B, but person B is really stunning, and they are attracted to them, under normal circumstances, well, you know, gee, he's nice and all that, but he is involved with A and so I, I [ ]. But that doesn't stop them now,

and they'll jump in, and make overtures and perhaps break it up, and so therefore, you know, you get all this infighting, and, and then other people, or he'll talk about that couple and perhaps breaking them up, and that sort of thing, and, and I think when, in such a small community as this is, where there's only so many out people, and that can happen so readily, I think that's what's happening but I don't know, I'm not part of it, and I, since I'm not involved in it, kind of thing. But, not that it doesn't happen in Toronto, but it's more visible here (laughs), I think [Yeah], and [Happens all the time in Toronto [ ] except to the people who are involved [inaudible]] Nobody knows [[inaudible] things go on] Yeah. And, it, it's happened here a lot, and. There are people who simply won't come back to the group, because, they think somebody will show up, and they don't want to talk to them. And instead of using the group to maybe, talk that through, which I would like to see, it, if they came it would just be ... screaming at each other, so. It is, I think, because you know it splits the community a little bit, and, but, I mean, that's an individual thing, I mean, it's really not a gay thing, in a sense, after what I've said, it's a human personal thing, and, that's that person's upbringing or feelings at that moment, and it happens to be that it's a small community, and, it's kind of vicious and all that, but

Interviewer: Well, the one thing that's gay about it [inaudible] we're in kind of a pressure-cooker.

Michael: Yeah, that's what I think I mean by, we're sort of desperate to make up for lost time, or something like that, yeah, there is a pressure-cooker bit about it, um.

Interviewer: And there's so little else, so little outlets to talk about things, too.

Michael: Yeah. It almost happened to me, and maybe I should talk about that a little bit. There was a person within the group, who, had, was born here but went away to Alberta. It's a long story, I don't know whether you have time for this, and he came back to Corner Brook after the meetings had begun. And showed up at the meetings, and, he's not my type, I mean you know, I'm sure we all have types, but he certainly was not my type, and he's twenty-eight, and, ... he was, he was interesting, you know, and he was, supposed to be a volunteer, and did come to the line for a while, ... and then, sometime in the middle of April or March last year, this year, I guess, we're still in this year, he said to me, well, he had preceded this by all sorts of horrible experiences that were happening to him. He was being harassed, anonymously by letters and, you know, letters where words had been cut out of magazines and, put together and, left in his mailbox, and harassing phone calls, that sort of thing, I know where you live and I'm watching you, and I'm going to kill you, and all that sort of thing, ... and, this was distressing us tremendously, you know, so we were trying to

support him and all that, and, ... He had said that his life in Alberta was rather difficult, and, he'd gotten into a situation with a guy, and, it was not pleasant, and so on. So he was having a rough life, it seemed. And anyway, in the middle of March he, phoned up and said, I can't come to the phone line tonight, something's happened, and I just, can't come. So I said, Oh, are you okay? Well, sort of; we'll talk Monday. So, we did the phone line, and I phoned him the next day, and -- they love these things -- and I, anyway, without too much prompting, he said, he has just found out he was HIV-positive. And I said, Oh, geez. And, so, I met with him on the weekend, 'coz I'm on the AIDS committee after all, and, I didn't know whether he knew what he could do about this.

Michael (continuing): So we met, and, he, he sort of told me his whole life story, that, when was in Alberta he was in fact into prostitution, and, he may have gotten it there, perhaps, and, ... and, his doctor phoned him on Sunday and said that he had tested positive and, and so I said, Well you know, this is not a death sentence, I mean there are things that can happen, and, I think you should I phoned the AIDS committee in fact in St. John's to find out what you should do, and they suggested you get your T-cell count done so that they can monitor it, and so on, and, you should go for counseling, really, if you want to, you can do all this anonymously, and. His mother knows that he's gay, and so on. Oh, maybe, he said, I don't know, I'll think about that. And, ... And so we sort of had a couple of weeks of, of, you know, supporting him in that way, and around that time, Philadelphia came to town, so we all went to see it with him, and, he found that quite emotional, and all that sort of thing, as did [ ] so we were supporting him over that. Then a couple of weeks after that, he phoned up and said, I've got a big announcement I want to make to you and Carl, the guy who [ ] haven't met. I said, Okay. I can't tell you over the phone, I have to see you. So, I said okay. So we eventually decided to meet at one of the bars, the gay bar in town, and Carl couldn't come that night so I said to, to this guy, Do you still want me to come or do you want both of us there? No, it's alright if you come. So, we came down, we went down. And, he proceeded to tell me that *every* single thing he had told me over the last year was a lie. He wasn't into prostitution, he's not HIV-positive, he was sent

voice: Okay?

Michael: So she had advised him to say something to the people that he had been telling lies to. So I sat opposite him in the bar, and was feeling great sympathy for him because, and I said to him, as I had said to him about his prostitution, so-called, at the time, I'm not going to judge you, I'm not going to sit here and judge you, I mean, you are an individual, whatever got you into prostitution at the time, as I thought, was your, your business, I'm not going to sit here and judge you. 'Coz he wanted to be judged, I

think, you know, he wanted me to judge him, he wanted me to be angry with him, he wanted me to tell him, I don't want to see you anymore. And ... I, that's not me, you know. And now that he was now telling me that everything that he had said two weeks earlier was a lie, I said, 'coz he wanted me again to condemn him, you know, a rationale which baffled me, but anyways, I said, I, I can't do that, I mean, I said, As gay men, I think we are taught to lie from the beginning of our birth, we are taught to lie, we are taught to pretend we're straight, we're taught, you know, all these things. And I said, You've just taken it to an extreme, which I, I wouldn't do, but I could certainly understand why you might have done that, it seems to me you're craving attention, and, the method of doing that is to create the worst possible scenarios for yourself so that, that I and others would feel sympathy for you and be supportive of you. And I said, But, but, we *are* sympathetic toward you, we are support you, we do love you, not because you're, you're supposedly a prostitute, you're [inaudible], because of who you *are*. You don't need to go through this façade, this charade to do that, you know, we like you not for who you think you are, but who you are. And, in all of this, you know, we were getting into really, really heavy conversation. And he had made comments to me earlier about how attractive he found me and all that sort of thing, and I was finding this flattering and all that, but, at the time when I thought he was into prostitution I thought, gee, I don't know, I'm a bit, you know, leery about this, although I should know better, and so on, but, 'coz, it shouldn't affect you, I mean, you know, but ... some old things I still have to deal with, I guess. But when he was telling me all this about his lying, and, he was baring his soul, and I assumed he was telling me the truth at this moment, I felt really sympathetic toward him, and, really protective, or, whatever the word is, I don't know, and, he proceeded to change the topic somehow, to, relationships, maybe because of what I was saying, you know, You don't need to make these, these fables up, to get a relationship with somebody. And, I found myself becoming attracted to him in a funny way. And, I was getting a hard-on in fact as we were talking, and, this amazed me, 'coz he's not my type, and, and all that sort of thing, and I thought, What's going on here? What's, just didn't know what was going on. And, he kept going to the bathroom (laughs), all the time during this conversation, and, ... just before he went to the bathroom this last time, I was about to say, Let's go back to my place, and see what happens. And he got up and went to the bathroom, and while he was gone, I thought, these are not the motives that I feel right about. My motive seems to be, he's vulnerable, I want some sex finally in my life, I do feel sympathy for him, I'm slightly attracted to him, he's experienced, certainly more than I am, I can learn from this. And he also said that he was leaving for Toronto in a month, and I thought, well, there can be no lasting relationship here, we'll have a quick experience in the sack and, and he'll be on his way and I won't have to deal with this anymore.

[1;23;47]

Michael (continuing): And as he was gone I thought, My god! Those are my motives! (laughs) And I thought, This is not the reason for, to get into a relationship with someone. And when he came back I didn't discuss it because we hadn't discussed it previously. And as we were leaving, I said, Can I drive you home? And he said, Well, there was a problem back home where you couldn't go home before eleven and it was only ten-thirty, so he said, Can I go back to your place for a while? And I, Oh, ?Jesus? So we came back, and he sat there and I sat here and we chatted for a while and nothing happened, and it then turned out that ... well, he was the person who, who found the phone number and phoned this other guy, and, and when I found that out, 'coz his whole object in relating to people seemed to be he wanted us to hate him. Well, he'd finally achieved it, not hate, but, I, like Richard (exhales). I felt he was using me and others, now, to, for reasons which I don't, couldn't quite understand. But I, I try to be honest and up-front with people and he wasn't doing that. And, so, we weren't on a level anymore. I thought he was abusing our friendship and, and the trust that I had, opened up myself to, I mean, I was being very honest, and, he eventu-, I never saw him again, actually, we did, briefly, but, nothing really was discussed. And, he then eventually did leave and go to Toronto. But when I, when I told other friends of mine, like this woman from Banff, about this, she was horrified, absolutely horrified. If he's that unstable, she said, I mean what could he have done to you if he got you here, I don't think he would have done anything but, she was horrified that you would have, that I would have wasted myself on somebody like that, thinking only of me of course. And I did remind her that I was the one that, that had control of the situation and did not do that. But, it, it's that, that ... pressure-cooker situation that you were talking about a little bit earlier, you know, I've wasted half of my life now, and, and ... I, I want some sort of relationship with somebody, but is that the way to go? But that circumstance was such that it was leading me on, the pressure-cooker of [ ], the vulnerability thing, and, I just sat back and said, That's not the right motive to do this, so I stopped. But ... They were, my very good friends were very concerned about that. And so was I, I guess. It was a good lesson to me, a good lesson to me. So.

Interviewer: Well, presumably part of a good lesson is knowing that you have enough respect for yourself, to have been able to, to go home and think, you know.

Michael: Yeah. When I was in San Francisco with somebody else, he, we both did things that we hadn't done before, and he did more things that I did, didn't do, but, ... And he wasn't pressuring me to do the same things, he went to some clubs and things, some jerk-off parties. I just wasn't ready for that, and didn't go, and that was fine, I mean, he wasn't really pressuring me, but, .... That's the same sort of pressure-cook situation that sometimes you

can get into. And when I go to these places I, it's just not me, you know. When I go to New York at New Year's, I'll have a good time, going to bars and things, 'coz I'll enjoy that, but that's probably about it, I don't know. The pressure-cooker thing is a, is partly internal I guess and partly external, but, it's the internal part for me that's more valid at the moment, it's my own pressure (laughs), to do what I want to do, and, when I want to do it.

Interviewer: What is it that you enjoy about the bars?

Michael: A lot I don't enjoy about the bars. I don't like, in Toronto anyway, the, the cruising, the so blatant cruising, especially when you're not that young (laughs). I have this thing about age, 'coz I have to get over that a little bit. [Well, it's a reality] It's a reality, I'm not young any more, but, but I don't feel forty-six, I feel twenty, or, I've always felt twenty (laughs), 'coz I'm certainly young at heart, but, and I think I could ... stand up to the best of them, but ... But it, it's, I see my hands wrinkling and my back's giving out, and, I, you know, all that sort of thing, and, I've got a grey hair now I see, that bothers me, really a lot (laughs), it really does. ... I've got to get over that bit of vanity, too. But, what I, so I don't enjoy that bit of the bars, but I, I, and they're too loud and they're too smoky, and, and so on, but, I, I just enjoy being ... around gay men who are alive. They're just alive, you know, and they don't, they don't, they're there to do whatever they want to do, as, as am I. And when I go to the bars now after San Francisco certainly, I'm in control of how I feel in those bars, whereas, before, I didn't feel under control, I still felt I was being looked at, and criticized, and judged, ... I don't feel that anymore, I don't feel that anymore.

Michael (continuing): And after San Francisco I came back to Toronto for a night and went to the bars that night and, it was wonderful, I felt really free, and, and all that. I enjoy being in a gay community very, very much, just because as I say it's sort of what straight people must feel like [inaudible], I'm just free to be me, more so than here.

[1;28;56]

Interviewer: [ ] freedom to [ ] certainly my experience of bars [ ] very much, the former of those two situations

Michael: Yeah. Well, it goes back to sort of what Richard said and, what I sort of said about my mother, Oh, I can't be bothered with that silliness anymore, you know, it, it's tough 'coz I have to get over a lot of those inferiority complex stuff, but ... I, I'm in control now, trying to be, as much as I can. As I said, it goes back to that other thing, that other people defined me, in my own mind, and that, and even, until San Francisco, that's what would happen when I'd go into the bars in Toronto, they were defining me, they

were telling me I was too old or, I wasn't dressed properly, or, or, I wasn't drinking the right thing, you know, I don't drink beer, so, He's not got a beer in his hand, what's wrong with him? ... And they were defining me still, and I was still having to get over that [ ].

Interviewer: What [ ] happened in San Francisco that was so

Michael: I just ... felt totally relaxed. I went into, they have so, have you been there? To San Francisco? [Well, three days] Oh, okay. Yeah, alright. ... It amazed me that, there were *so* many bars, and so many establishments and restaurants and bookstores and everything in such a relatively large area, but, that there would be the big bars, like Woody's, there, and, and yet there'd be the tiny little bars next door with maybe ten people available to get into the thing, with just a little stretch of a bar itself. and, we went into almost all of them, and, everybody was incredibly friendly, and, even though there was a lot of cruising going on, I didn't feel it was pressured cruising, you know. They were just looking up and down and saying, Hmm, not too bad. And I got cruised a lot; that was really nice, too, and I'm getting cruised a lot more, actually, which amazes me, and I think it, it's nothing to do with what I'm wearing or anything but maybe that's part of it, I don't know, but, it, I think it's this internal confidence that's just oozing, out, maybe. I don't know. As I say, when I came back to Corner Brook after that year away, having come out, everybody said, What's different about you? I can't put my finger on it but there's something different. And I think that's part of it. ... I remember the first time I was in gay bars in Toronto, I was with, again, my friend that I stayed with there, and we'd be sitting together, and, somewhere off in the distance there'd be a guy staring. And I'd always say to David, Well that guy's staring at you. It was always, that the guy was staring at him. And finally David said, No, Michael, he's staring at you. And I said, That can't be possible, and then finally I realized it was. It, that, that was a real, interesting experience. And it's happening more frequently now, and that's that surprises me a little bit. 'Coz I have, that part is still having to get used to, that I could be attractive to somebody else, it's still my old life, you know. ... And that was, that's interesting. And I, and then in, in San Francisco it happened a lot. And, and relaxed, happening a lot. And, somebody in fact put the make on me in one of the bars and wanted to get naked together with me and I just, didn't want to do that, and so we didn't, and that was fine. Whereas in Toronto I would have been put down, somehow, I thought. And that was, that was refreshing, that that I could be relaxed, in a gay bar, totally. And when I came back to Toronto I put it to the test, and, it worked (laughs), really, it worked. I was in control of the situation, which is of course the, the solution to the whole thing. Yeah, it was good. And, I go into Glad Day now and I used to remember going in before coming out, and, How would I explain this? you know, if anybody showed up in Glad Day when I was just there, How would I explain my presence there? You

know. What I was buying, and all that, I had no, response. And, and then, How do I get out of this store now, get out onto the street, you know, with everybody staring at me? Of course, none of that happens (laughs), you know, so, it was all this internalized bit [interviewer inaudible] Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Interviewer #2: I can remember [ ] really coming out and going to bars on Yonge street and it's like, it was, just checking up the street, down the street, you know, be very conscious who was there, and then [ ] in, go in, relax somewhat, I mean, there wasn't enough, you know, it was an uncomfortable experience but I wanted [ ].

[1;33;33]

Interviewer: Do you think you'll be [inaudible]

Michael: Yes I will (laughs).

Interviewer: A few years from now .....?

Michael: Forever. Yes.

Interviewer: Really? Why?

Michael: Because I'm, I am close to retirement, I can retire at fifty-five, that's nine years away, at probably not a good monetary package but I can do that. The way the university situation is going, with budget cuts and everything, I'm too expensive to hire at a new university. They aren't hiring seasoned professors with tenure, they're hiring new people fresh out of school, who are cheap, and that they can get rid of maybe in two years and hire again. So, they're always building, there's, although they label them as tenure-track they rarely keep them, at least, that's been our experience. So they won't do that. And, the field is hardly, you know, thermodynamic, so, we're not a dime a dozen, so, ... and, I thought when I came back from sabbatical, my job is in jeopardy a little bit because we had a new principal who is a bit scatter-brained, she still is, -- don't put that in the book -- and she but things have settled down, a little bit. ... besides which, if it happens, if I'm fired or I'm redundant or whatever the term is, I'll deal with that too. But, I look for jobs periodically, I, it, [ ] just stop, not going to happen. So, let's accept that and deal with what happens. But as I said, my life has been built upon coincidences being thrown in my way, ... and, if one is thrown in my way, I will hopefully have the wisdom to deal with it and accept it, if it's a good one, and, and, and go with it. But ... I suspect I'll be here, for, until retirement and then I'll, probably leave, I don't know, maybe I'll find a partner and be settled down by then, who knows.

But, I don't predict things. I try to predict my life for most of it, and 'coz you asked a question of the group, Where do you see yourself, oh, you just asked me that (laughs), so, there we go. I don't look that far ahead other than the fact that it's not that bad, and I can certainly, I enjoy what I'm doing, every aspect of what I'm doing, really. It has its frustrations and its, annoyances every so often, but, when I get in front of those kids, and, when I'm at the group meetings or when I'm on the line, or, at the AIDS benefits and, and meetings, I'm alive, and, the other stuff melts away, and doesn't matter, it's petty.

Interviewer: You said, this long story you told, about this twenty-eight year old, you said he wasn't your type, just so that what is your type?

Michael: (laughs) I just have this fetish for straight hair. I have this fetish for straight hair. Every one of the, the guys I fall in love with really, how many has that been? Hunh. [Straight hair?] Straight hair. It drives me crazy, absolutely bonkers. [Like, that sticks straight up?] No, no, that falls down, actually, over, that flows, that moves. Curly hair drives me crazy, I don't like it. It has to be absolutely straight hair. Etienne has it, and when I, when I saw him across a crowded room in Banff, ... I noticed it but that wasn't what really attracted me to him, in a sense, I have this, the other element of my relationship with friends or hopefully lovers at some point, is that those who have become my really, really, really good friends have been immediate. At first sight, I've known that they would be life-long friends. And, they've known that about me, and it's rarely not happened. There's just this internal, I call it the soul, for want of a better word, that simply speaks and just shines forth. And, it has to be kindred, and, we have these kindred souls, I think, and, and when I saw Etienne across that crowded room in Banff in '91, he just spoke to me as being a really, really good and interesting person that I would like to get to know. And within two weeks my letters back home were, I met this guy, he's really cute, straight hair of course, and, he's interesting, plays really good clarinet, but, probably nothing serious. To, I'm really kind of more interested than I thought. To, I'm falling madly in love with him, within about two weeks. And, he happened to have straight hair. And ... When I meet him again for his wedding, since I'm, I've gotten over him, I went to counseling about it, 'coz it was clearly going nowhere. And, I didn't know about his sexuality as I said, and he was ruining my life, or, he wasn't ruining my life, I was letting him ruin my life, because he, he wasn't giving me what I wanted, and, I was giving him everything, and, either it was going nowhere or, something was going on. So after the tour when he was here last year, and it was quite disastrous from an emotional point of view, I didn't know what was going on. He was so cold, and I didn't know what was going on. So, I finally saw a counselor. And, it was the same counselor who coached us on the phone line. And she, I saw her for five visits. And she made a, a connection between my mother and Etienne, which I hadn't seen. I had

said earlier on in my sessions with her that, I'm a product of my parents in the sense that I hope I'm the opposite of what they were.

Michael (continuing): In many ways, so, we were not an overly affectionate family, we didn't love to kiss and hug each other although, until I left home, I still kissed my mother goodnight, and she came in and kissed me goodnight, but my father never. And, my brother and I are never, that close, in that way. So I vowed to be the opposite of that. And so when I have a good friend, I will hug, hug them and touch them, I'm sort of a touchy person now, a bit, again it's one of those opportunities I'm not going to waste. And, both my parents were alcoholics, eventually. And, so I don't drink that much, I know it's a possibility for me so I, I try to avoid that. And ... how is this relating to, oh yeah. When my father died in '85, because he had been ill for a long time, and then committed suicide, I thought, finally my mother, who had to take care of, for all those years, would get out from under that. And, she moved up to where my brother lived in Milton, and, ... But she sat on the couch, for those three years until she died, smoking her life away, and then eventually drinking it away. And, I was *so* annoyed with her, I was *so* angry with her, because I said, What's the matter with you, mother? I mean, you've finally gotten out from under the burden that you've been carrying for forty-some-odd years and, fifty-some-odd years, and, why don't you start living your life? you know, Damn you. And her life *was* taking care of my father, I found out. And when he died, that was it. She had nothing to live for. And I was so angry with her for that. And I told Marie, the counselor, about this, and, I just mentioned it in passing, and then, when I was talking about Etienne, I was still hooked, I was still trying to live a relationship that really couldn't work. I was still living in that past, I was still living that life, when I should've gotten on to other things. I couldn't see it. Although I said those words, to myself, twenty million times, but, but the spark was still there, that affection for Etienne was so strong, and I was desperate to have a relationship with him. 'Coz I really did love him, everybody called it an infatuation but I am sure it was love. As they all say at that time. And I was talking for five sessions, she finally said, You know, Michael, I see a correlation between your anger at your mother, for not giving up the past life, and, your anger at yourself for not being able to deal with Etienne's non-response. And it was like a slap in the face. Because she was absolutely right. And I suddenly realized I'd gone back to the old pattern, I was living my life ... by him, he was defining who I was. And so I would not tell him I was gay for a year and a half, because I didn't know how he would react. I was going into the old pattern, and I thought I'd learned my lesson and had gone on from that, and, suddenly, and, it amazed me, it still amazes me to this day, I was out of love with him in a minute. Because I was in love with me more. And that was much more important than that. And, I had to test it over the next few months and, he, he rarely phones me, but, he had written a couple of letters, and that was interesting, finally

wrote him back and, and the last letter was an announcement of his wedding, which was certainly good and bad news, I was, finally, he had finally made a choice. If he was, sexually ambiguous, whether it was French or not, he had made a choice. He is now apparently straight. And, and so I have to accept that, and, and deal with it, and, I will go to his wedding, [ ] I have to go, and see it, see him married to another woman, and whom I like very much, and so that was over, but I, I think I had to have that, that slap in the face with this counseling to, to get over that. So. But I think, we're still very, very good soul-mates, I think we do have the same ... soul. And, all the time that he, we talk, we do get together and talk, the last time here, he always is asking me about gay issues. Why do you feel you have to form communities? Why do you feel you have to have gay bars? Why can't you just be out in the world and live it? you know. So I try to explain that, and. Why do you feel it has to find a biological reason for why people may be gay? you know. Because he was reading some Xtras that were here, and there was an article on that. So I tried to explain it. But everything that he asks me was about being gay, you know, so of course that's another clue that maybe he's ... doing what I did with my friend in Ottawa, pretending not to know, but, but really knowing, and just wanting that encouragement and support. So, so now I think we'll be much better friends, because I'm me, I'm not his vision of me, I'm me again finally. And it'll be tough, seeing him again, because his physical presence is just overpowering to me. As soon as I see that hair I'll go crazy. But ... but I'll deal with that (laughs). So that's my type.

Interviewer: So the soul has to speak to you and the hair has to be straight.

Michael: But, but in that order (laughs), in that order. But, I mean I, that's being silly, I mean, if you think that way you will be blind to the opportunities that ... stand in front of you, that may not have straight hair, so. And that's why the, the thing with the other guy was interesting, 'coz I really was attracted to him, you know, because of what he was saying to me as a person, you know. I felt that there was a soul there that I was quite attracted to. Yeah, amidst all that. And I think I'm still right about that, I think he has a lot of problems to deal with. But I'm not the person to help him with that at the moment, I think. I think he has to get away, and do something [ ]. I'm surprised I didn't see him in Toronto when I was there, but, maybe we'll meet again. But it, it has to be the soul, that's what I'm in love with, it's not, it's not the genitals or the hair, it, it's the soul, there's nothing without that. You can have sex but that's [ ] love, to me. It's cliché, I suppose. So that's my type.

[end of interview]