

The LGBT Oral History Project

The Reminiscence of

Emma Booton

Oral History Lecture

California State University at Monterey Bay

2020

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Emma Booton conducted by Michael McMurtry on April 10th, 2020. This interview is part of the LGBT Oral History Project.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that s/he is reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

VJD

Session One

Interviewee: Emma Booton

Location: Pebble Beach, CA

Interviewer: Michael McMurtry

Date: April 10, 2020

Q1

00:00:44.070 --> 00:00:53.040

Michael Mcmurtry: Hello, my name is Michael McMurtry and I'm interviewing Emma boot and today on April 10 at 2pm via zoom. Well hello and how are you doing

A1

00:00:53.220 --> 00:00:58.080

miss emma: Hello Michael I'm doing very well I'm thrilled to be part of your project.

Q2

00:00:58.290 --> 00:01:09.120

Michael Mcmurtry: [Nice to] meet you. I'm Very excited to interview. So I'll start with one that I always like to start with witches. Could you tell me the story behind your name. How did you get it, and does it have any special meaning.

A2

00:01:10.650 --> 00:02:15.300

miss emma: That's it. That does some amazingly good question, because I have been asked that before and like most trans women. I knew that I was female from my earliest real memories as a childhood and the name Emma has always been that I've always felt that it's my name.

Coincidentally, it served me quite well because my dead name began began with them. So a lot of people who know me who knew me before my transition afterwards simply call me em and I'm okay with that. It serves very well as a shortened version of Mr. But it means that they don't trip themselves up and call me by my dad name. So what it actually works very well. But he's always been as much for part of me as my knowledge that I'm really female

Q3

00:02:15.720 --> 00:02:25.350

Michael Mcmurtry: Well, that's amazing. So can you tell me about one of your earliest memories, does it. Like, could it could relate to your name. It could relate to anything.

A3

00:02:25.890 --> 00:03:46.950

miss emma: Well, I mean, one of my earliest memories. I grew up. I was born in 1962 and in this in the 60s, gender and gender roles were very much more defined than they are now. And to give you a tangible example. My dad always wore a suit to go to work. He smoked a pipe, he sold cars for a living. He was a typical 60s kind of guy. My mom always wore pearls always wore heels. She wouldn't leave the house, unless she was completely made up and basically stayed home and looked after me. And one of my earliest memories was really feeling that I didn't.

There was nothing about my father that really resonated with me and don't get me wrong, I love my dad. It was my dad. But, I felt far more aligned with mom than with my dad and I don't know where I came from. I mean, like I say it I'm 58 now so we're talking about 54 years ago. It's something that has always just always been a, your name is Emma.

Q4

00:03:47.850 --> 00:03:59.940

Michael Mcmurtry: That's very, very cool. So you mentioned your mother and father, can you tell me about, can you tell me a story about either your father or your mother, or both. If you have one that comes to mind.

A4

00:04:01.020 --> 00:05:37.710

miss emma: Well, um, my father died in 1967 when I was five years old. So I'm very, very little memories of him. One of the things I do. I always remember him as a as a giant guy and I remember talking to my mom recently about it and excuse me. That's my phone going off. Done. I'm sorry and I remember talking to my mom about it, saying, I remember my father being this big, big man, she said, no, he was quite short and stocky but of course I remember I was met remembering him as a tiny child, of course, any adult his, his giant. I don't remember much about him. My mom. I remember of course she's still alive right now and somebody who I really aspired to be like through my life. Yeah so fond memories of mom and farmers have dad. But, you know, Dad's to certain extent, are meant to be stern and certainly back then that were a little

bit more unapproachable. Yeah. Roles have changed a little now. But, you know, traditional 1960s dad was he went out to work, he was kind of a little bit rough and he was done, but you knew he loved you know you knew he loved you very much.

Q5

00:05:41.130 --> 00:05:55.890

Michael Mcmurtry: So could you. So how did it feel comfortable answering this. How was it for you like not having your father, most of your life like having him die when you were so young. Like, how was that for you.

A5

00:05:57.600 --> 00:07:44.730

miss emma: It was, um, it was an interesting journey. And when you're a child. Children are very, very adaptable and you don't think you're missing out. I don't think mom and dad's marriage was particularly happy so there wasn't an extended period of grieving from my mom. But of course, mom had to support us. So we basically meant as a child, there were a succession of babysitters some good, some bad who come around while mom is raising us for a while, Mom, mom had her own dressmaking shop and we lived above the shop there was a little apartment above the shop and we thought it was just great. Because a dress making shop is a playground for children. But, looking back, Mama, to actually work pretty hard to raise us. And if I have any regrets about my childhood. I think mom became a little bit more distant not through any lack of love. She just was basically. Yeah, and Job number one was earning a

sufficient living to raise me and my brother. So, um, yeah, so I don't really feel like I lost out that much. I actually had quite a good good childhood. Once I got beyond the fact that this knowledge this yearning really occupied me throughout my whole childhood and through my adolescence, but otherwise, had a good childhood.

Q6

00:07:45.150 --> 00:07:52.140

Michael Mcmurtry: Landscape and yes. I you mentioned that you lived about a dressmaking shop. Can you tell me more about that. That sounds very interesting.

A6

00:07:52.710 --> 00:09:15.900

miss emma: It is, um, it's quite traditional. In England, I'm a lot of the older fashion stores, you will have a storefront and then above it. There'll be a little apartment building and they're not quite so common in America and mom decided that a good way to make a living, would be to do Clothing Alterations and she was quite a, quite a good seamstress so she found a little shop for us to rent and there was an apartment above it and we lived above it. It was a little two bedroom apartment, which meant I had to share a bedroom with my brother. But again, that was quite common. Mom had the other bedroom and what it was good for us. She was kind of always around, even though sometimes she was a little bit distracted earning money she was always around, which is great. So, um, yeah. Gosh, I haven't even really thought about the sharp in a long, long time. To give you an idea of how long ago it was I think she bought the sharp in 96

theProbably 68 very soon after father died. And then she sold it in 1971. So you're talking a very, very long time ago.

Q7

00:09:19.710 --> 00:09:24.900

Michael Mcmurtry: Okay well so you on. Can you remind me of, do you have any siblings.

A7

00:09:25.710 --> 00:09:38.790

miss emma: Mm hmm. I have an older brother David and we share a birthday but he's one year older than me. He was born on the first of March 1961 I was born on the first of March 1962

Q8

00:09:40.860 --> 00:09:44.730

Michael Mcmurtry: So could you tell me about your relationship with your, your Oliver.

A9

00:09:46.320 --> 00:13:18.870

miss emma: It's changed over the years and as kids. We did not like each other, and were fiercely competitive. And Dave was very much the older brother, he got it to do everything a year ahead of me and always reminded me of it. And, to really distill it down. He used to beat me up a lot like big brothers do. As we got into adolescence, he decided, which gives me decided that

academia was the way forward for him and he went to university and I actually was the best thing that could have happened to us because for the first time in our lives. We were actually separated and we both figured out quite quickly that we missed one another. Quite, quite a lot, even though it seems like we were always fighting when we live together. So at first when he first went out there every other weekend. I used to jump in the car with mom and we'd go and visit with him. And that really was the highlight of my week and then as I got older and I got my own transportation in my case motorcycles. I used to go and visit him as often as I could and just it'd be a nice change of scene for me. And we'd go out, we'd hang out and go to the local bars and just have a really, really good time. That I would say was part of a highlight of our relationship.

And then, as he got more involved with academia and went through his doctor, Doctorate. He kind of felt that I was underachieving a little bit, and I've got some reasons for that but he always felt that I could have achieved a great deal more and I'm not saying it made us a little bit more distant, but he always kind of looked down on me a little bit and said, You know, I'm kind of a little disappointed that you didn't pursue academia yourself because, as he put it, he said, Ma, you are as smart as I am in a lot of ways, a lot smarter and I went through, I got my degree. I got my master's I'm now a doctor, you could have easily done the same. And he because he was always a little bit frustrated that I didn't do that. Now as we both approach retirement with the the the playing field has become a little more level again, we've actually kind of rekindled our relationship and he's massively supportive of my transition. He was the hardest person to tell but he's become my greatest allies. So I would say right now in April 2020 I have a wonderful relationship with my brother. My only complaint is I don't get to see him as much as I'd like.

Q10

00:13:19.680 --> 00:13:31.080

Michael Mcmurtry: That's too bad, that's, I mean, it's really nice that your relationship has been able to develop and change. Could you tell me a story about when you were younger, possibly when you are being more competitive with each other, man.

A10

00:13:31.770 --> 00:15:23.070

miss emma: Oh gosh, yes. I remember that probably at 11 when he was 11 and so I was 10 he wanted to get into a very prestigious grammar school called King Edward's and he took the test and passed with a very, very high grade, so he could be accepted into this I suppose what you Americans call the junior high and high school, but it was very prestigious and of course mom made a huge fuss of him for getting on for six months with graded on me a great deal, because he was getting all the attention and so the following year. I took a test to get into a different but equally prestigious school and got an even higher grade than than him so revenge was sweet. But that was a great example. It was a very, very competitive atmosphere. As I went through adolescence. Everything that physically happened to me. I didn't want to happen and it just became more and more disillusioned with life in general and the reason I kind of dropped out. I thought, well, I'm the wrong gender, so I can be the smartest person in the world, but it really doesn't matter because I'm so bloody miserable. So I kind of went away from that became a little

more pragmatic and a little more. I suppose one of a better term cynical and went down a different route with my career.

Q11

00:15:28.140 --> 00:15:39.390

Michael McMurtry: So, do you, do you think that if you had let's let's say you've been born and then you can event female, do you think you would have gotten into academia.

A11

00:15:39.690 --> 00:16:58.500

Miss emma: Yes. Oh good lord. Yeah, you know, which it's it's funny that I look back, if I consider my life and it. It's been a topic of my thoughts over and over again. Michael had I been born, Emma I think my life would have been very, very different. I could either have gone into academia and been a very, very eccentric female professor just as my brother isn't very. He's an extremely revered but considered quite strange university Professors only university professors can be and I could have seen myself doing that. But conversely, I may have got married young I may have gotten children got involved in the whole suburban lifestyle thing and lead a very ordinary and non eventful life. The may or may not have been happy. So there's no guarantee. I like to think that I would have led this very academia driven life, but it may not have turned out that way.

Q12

00:17:00.870 --> 00:17:04.800

Michael Mcmurtry: So can you, I would like to stay in your childhood for a little bit longer.

A12

00:17:04.920 --> 00:17:05.550

miss emma: So can you

Q13

00:17:05.670 --> 00:17:18.630

Michael Mcmurtry: Tell me what school was like, because I remember you mentioned that after a while you felt like you're like, Well, I'm I don't feel like myself like I maybe don't want to be in this round, but could you tell me, like how school was overall for you.

A13

00:17:19.290 --> 00:19:27.420

Miss emma: Um, I figured out very, very early on that I was extremely ashamed of being approached by one of two ways you can become this very masculine caricature and hide it hide it under so many layers of masculinity that nobody could ever know. And that came later but in school. I decided the best way was just to be the most vanilla student ever and as boring as it sounds. I never excelled of anything. I never got into trouble. I generally shied away from sports. I found myself. Really deliberately in the middle percentile of the class. And that was really quite deliberate because I didn't want any attention drawn to me at all. I saw school as a trial to get

through and the sooner I was out of it, the better. Towards the end when I got my first motorcycle I saw a means of making it even harder to see who I truly was. So then I started burying it under layers of masculinity, which served me very, very well but in school. It was really I cruise through school. If you were to ask 100 people who I was at school with a good majority of them simply oh yeah I remember, but I don't remember anything about them. You know that very few people would probably remember I was in the class, but they wouldn't be able to pin down anything about me because I was just that student that I was just there.

Q14

00:19:29.700 --> 00:19:39.270

Michael Mcmurtry: Can you tell me a memory about a time you were in school. It doesn't have to be happy or sad or I mean it just a memory that sticks out to you.

A14

00:19:40.650 --> 00:21:29.070

miss emma: I had I had an art teacher who I was very, very fond of a Mr Durant, and he was very, very creative with art and this was in junior high school or middle school really I'm trying to Americanize it for you. I would probably have been 12 years old and he introduced us to a lot of classic English literature including Shakespeare and I've I've really adored Shakespeare all my life because of him and he asked us to illustrate a Shakespeare play and I found it was a great Illustrator and I drew some cartoons based on 12th night. And if you were to pinpoint what I thought was the highlight of my younger school years was actually illustrating part of the play

12th night and everyone thinking that they were the greatest things that ever seen and I really put my heart into it and I found myself to be very, very creative with these and I could just close my eyes and see the characters and then draw them as I saw them and he really opened me up to Shakespeare and opened me up to an artistic streak, which I've still got. I rarely, sit down and do do pencil sketches, like I used to but I explore artistry in different ways. So that's, that's a nice memory.

Q15

00:21:31.500 --> 00:21:41.430

Michael Mcmurtry: Can you tell me about your experience in college because I remember you saying that the younger the younger years of schooling. We're not as worried it was like a trial so

A15

00:21:41.490 --> 00:21:42.330

miss emma: Right now.

Q16

00:21:42.810 --> 00:21:44.610

Michael Mcmurtry: Your upper level education.

A17

00:21:44.820 --> 00:23:59.940

miss emma: College actually college was better for me because I'd come up with an image. I'm in England, you have to be England very tribal place, particularly amongst the youth and you have to find a tribe that you resonate with and you can be with the gay. So the nerds, or the hippies, or the skinheads it really doesn't matter if you need a tribe and I was in with the bikers. I'd and I can't even remember where it even goes back to a might have been something as simple as being a motorcycle ride down the street thinking Valley School. I'm going to get one and so by the time I got to college, I was firmly embroiled in in riding motorcycles. And the image that went with it. So in college, I was one of those guys that, you know, tough unapproachable. Man means business got a motorcycle parked outside. You don't mess with them. And so that's kind of the image of cultivated in college. And it got me through you know, when I look back on so much of my my childhood. My adolescence. It's almost like I see it as a trial that had to be gotten through and I think if I look at it as a whole, this whole thing about lifetime as a whole, it's too much to comprehend. And so I broke it down into chunks. If I can get through my childhood let's see what happens then. So now I'm in adolescence. Well, if I can just get through adolescence let's see what happens then and now you're in the young adulthood. So yeah, let's kick the can down the road for another few minutes and see what happens then. And so this is how I've led my life to really up to today. I still do that now.

Q18

00:24:04.590 --> 00:24:13.320

Michael Mcmurtry: So I just like to end on your childhood. Can you tell me about some of your if you had any any childhood heroes and if you did, who they were.

A18

00:24:14.040 --> 00:24:22.620

miss emma: Childhood heroes. Oh my gosh. Now when you say childhood as a young child or adolescent

Q19

00:24:22.950 --> 00:24:29.250

Michael Mcmurtry: Adolescent so any worse, like if you had any yet throughout your yeah right your adolescence.

A20

00:24:29.670 --> 00:25:51.030

Hmm. You know, are you always admired? I always admire people who weren't afraid to be themselves because I was very afraid to be myself and I think I mentioned to the you to this before. The closest I ever came to transitioning was in 1978 when I was 16 and I was very, very fond of a punk band called Wayne County and the electric chairs and over the summer of 1978 Wayne County very publicly became Jane County and still fronted the electric chairs and they were still a kick ass public band a Kick Ass punk band and I thought that was just the greatest thing in the world and I so admire Jane for becoming herself and was secretly quite jealous that I didn't have the fortitude to do that. So yeah, I'll, I'll, I'll put giant county down as a child, and here I think, in this context, she's perfect

Q21

00:25:53.160 --> 00:25:58.980

Michael Mcmurtry: Okay, so I'd like to move. Oh, actually, this is still part of your youth, but it's

A21

00:25:59.220 --> 00:25:59.820

miss emma: A little, not too much

Q22

00:26:02.280 --> 00:26:10.680

Michael Mcmurtry: So, um, do you remember any fads from your youth like popular things like popular with dressing or hairstyles.

A22

00:26:10.860 --> 00:29:08.640

miss emma: Yeah. Um, so when I was. It was a very, very interesting time to grow up, Michael, because things change so quickly. In the 1960s, certainly in England. Everybody looks back on the 1960s as everyone having long hair and the hippie thing well that came along later. In the early 1960s, right up until 6768 the fad certainly amongst men were very tailored very, very short hair very preppy looking and as a kid. You know, that's how I was expected to look particularly in Sunday best, you know, you do have a little shirt and a little tie in your hair would

be postcard. But then, from the very, very end of the 60s through really throughout the whole of the 70s. The fashion became to wear have very, very long [hair] for both men and women. And I will my have very, very long [hair] and I had a whole lot of it. I've got a lot of hair now, but it was nothing compared to what I had back then. And in fact, I kept my hair very, very long right up and all through the 80s, as well, long after it was fashionable, but it kind of went to the whole sort of biker lifestyle thing, which i'd really kind of embraced by then but then in the, in the late 70s, although I never got into it. The punk movement came along and the punk movement was great because it was like this breath of fresh air. And the thing that was good about punk. You could wear pretty much what ever you wanted, and it was considered call there was actually a lot of people would wear black trash bags and that's what you all you were a black trash bag and you'd have a safety pin through you know it's or type a pen or a safety pin three nose or through urea, because it was very much anti culture, but it was kind of generalists as well because a lot of the guys that were stiletto heel boots, just because they were kick ass boots. A lot of the girls were like combat boots, because it's just because they're cool boots. So there was a lot of crossover with gender. By then, of course, I was so deeply involved in biker culture. I didn't really get to to jump on board, but it was, it was fun as heck to see a lot of really bright neon colors as well so wonderful time. So I went through a lot. I went through a lot of changes.

Q23

00:29:10.470 --> 00:29:25.470

Michael Mcmurtry: So I know because we've spoken before and it's a very important part of your life and you still do it today with on the building about motorcycles. Can you tell me how you got into it and just the whole story of like how it started?

A23

00:29:25.500 --> 00:24:14.280

miss emma: Well, they fit the this the saddest thing about it. Or suppose the irony about it. It started off as an affectation because I was so keen to be who I really was. And this is quite common amongst trans women, there's this shame that goes with it, and with the shame you so well. I couldn't possibly let anybody know about this so you become this almost this caricature this masculine caricature. And, being involved with motorcycles is a very, very easy lifestyle because it's complete lifestyle. You don't have to worry about what to wear. Because everybody wears the same thing. You don't have to worry about how to act because everybody acts the same way and you don't have to worry about really friends because friends come easy because you share this common love. So something that started off as a means to hide my identity really become this came this visceral love of motorcycles, because they that the more than just a method of transportation. And yes, there's a lifestyle involved but just as a means of getting around that absolutely wonderful and the experience you get on one is quite unlike anything that you can really experience, it's, it's a completely unique experience and it still thrills me to this day after messing about with these things for 41 years. I can look outside and see the sun shining. And believe me, I am so tempted to stop this interview and garden ride my bike right now, but I'm not going to but on a beautiful day to jump on your bike and just lose yourself in the country

roads. It's wonderful. It's escapism it's thrilling. It's It's so many things. And so there was a shift. I started off and it was the perfect image. Nobody suspected a thing. Because I had the I have the body spikes. I have the longest hair. I had the most tattoos I took the most drugs I behave. The worst so nobody could possibly suspect anything and I really didn't have to put a great deal of effort into it. That's just how I was and it enabled me to bury my true feelings, but then after a few years, like I say this, this realization that really this is there's a lot more to this than just riding around on a noisy motorbike and upsetting people. So I'm as you say, I'm still part of it now. It's really lasted me a lifetime and it served me very well through my transition because as I transitioned everything changed everything changed my friends changed how I dress changed our talk changed how I live my life changed. And it was a wonderful thrilling time but it was a very unnerving time because everything, you know, up to a certain point, you realize you can't go back. You're given this destination and you have to go towards it. When you, when you start on this journey. There is no getting off the train. You know where you're going to end up and my destination was Emma and it was scary as heck, but there was this commonality there was this anchor between your life and the new life. And it was I could get on a motorcycle and I could still feel the same way and now I transition for many, many years, I realized that a lot of things that are the same. I'm still the same person. I still dislike spiders. I still laugh at the same jokes I still eat the same food. There's a lot about my life now. There was the same as before. But when you first transition. It's so frightening because you think that everything that is familiar to you is going to be going away. So you look for these anchors that kind of tie you down and biking was one of them. So really saved my life.

Q24

00:34:16.560 --> 00:34:42.990

Michael Mcmurtry: Can you so I definitely want to talk about your transition because I mean of course it was a big part of your life, but I like to ask one more thing about the motorcycle. Could you just tell me a story like your most memorable story about motorcycles? It could be either the first one you build or any memory that has always stuck with you about motorcycles.

A24

00:34:44.520 --> 00:37:11.190

miss emma: I have a wonderful memory from 1988 good LOL, a long time ago 30 [or]32 years ago and I lived in a town called Birmingham in the middle, in the middle of England and so let me think [19]88, 26 years old and As a lot of young motorcyclist did at that time in history. And in that neck of the woods. You'd go down to the local bar and tell tall tales about how fast your bike was or and we decided amongst ourselves amongst a great deal of hubris and bravado that we could make it to southern Germany and back in a weekend and of course the whole bar erupted in laughter and said, it can't be done. And so we said, yeah, it can be done and we did it. And so we did it at night because writing during the daytime would have been far too dangerous. And basically we got on the freeway and wound the bikes up to 120 miles an hour, and just held it all the way to the south of England, we got on a ferry. We went across the France got off the ferry won the bikes up even faster road, all the way to southern Germany, a distance of 1000 miles. Went partying all weekend got in a shocking state on Saturday night woke up with a terrible hangover and rode back on Monday and nobody believed that we're done it. But we had

pictures to prove it. And it was absolutely. It was an amazing journey is frightening attack. I don't think I do it right now. But it's, it was a moment in time. It was a moment in time for me. I don't think you could do it now anyway because traffic is so much different now. So even if a 26 year old full of bravado had a bike. It was probably far more powerful than mine. They couldn't do that trip. Now, because the traffic wouldn't let them. Besides, none of us are going anywhere right now.

Q25

00:37:11.340 --> 00:37:12.420

Michael Mcmurtry: That's exactly

A25

00:37:12.510 --> 00:38:32.610

miss emma: Yeah, that is true, but it's it's a great memory. And I suppose in a lot of ways it does exhibit the back then. I did actually regard life has been quite cheap. And, on reflection, a lot of people will say, Well all all motorcyclists think life is cheap. And that is true, to a certain extent, but I think mine was was tied in a little bit with with the fact that I was trans and it just seems so hopeless. So you do these just ridiculous things because you've got no value on your life. So, you just think oh, I'll do these stupid things. And if it works out. That's great. And it'll just it'll just add to my image or if the worst happens, I'll get put out of my misery. Interestingly enough, I actually called somebody in England. A couple of weeks ago and they and apparently they still talk about that trip for me and me and my friend did not bad. After 32 years

Q26

00:38:35.760 --> 00:38:37.380

Michael Mcmurtry: So how many people did you do that were there? [on the trip]

A26

00:38:38.010 --> 00:38:50.280

miss emma: Just there were four of us. There were two only two motorcycles two people on each bike and yeah, it was a wild ride. It was an absolutely wild ride.

Q27

00:38:51.330 --> 00:38:56.880

Michael Mcmurtry: Did you said you didn't like you didn't stop until you got to the ferry and then once you guys. And then once you got off.

A27

00:38:57.000 --> 00:39:53.100

miss emma: We have to stop for fuel but that was it. And of course you know most of the traffic is is doing half your speed. Much of the cars are doing 55 [miles per hour] or 60 miles [miles per hour]. Now you're doing well over 120 [miles per hour] and it's, it, it was quite a wild ride, especially at night and we'd equip the bikes with extra light so we could really just light up. Get as much lighting in front of us as we could, because we know we'd be going so quick. But

looking back on it an animal could have run out in front of us a car could have pulled out in front of us police could have chased after as a man, it was an absolutely. It was an epic trip, but it was a trip of epic, epic stupidity as well. But we did it.

27

00:39:54.660 --> 00:39:56.400

Michael Mcmurtry: It will always be with. Yes.

27

00:39:56.880 --> 00:40:57.840

miss emma: And it will always be whether she is like they did for a long, long time. There was a newspaper clipping actually on the notice board of the local bar up until about three or four years ago, just to remind people that to the locals did this a long time ago. So yeah, it was, it was quite an epic trip but there's been so many like that. That's a particular one that stood out. But, I've built I've over the years I've built so many nice bikes and I've had so many wonderful trips. Something as simple as just writing down to pinnacles and I'm probably going down there tomorrow and just riding riding through the California backwards and just sitting on top of the bike and listening. So the engine and just forgetting about what's going on around us for a little while and that's going to be a memorable trip in its own way, a little more sedate yeah

Q28

00:40:58.530 --> 00:41:04.830

Michael Mcmurtry: Can you tell me one of the one of your most favorite bikes that you ever bill like a story about?

A28

00:41:06.600 --> 00:43:45.990

miss emma: I've had bikes from Japanese manufacturers from American manufacturers from really from German manufacturers, but my heart has always been with bikes that were made by British manufacturers because the town that I grew up in Birmingham was where everything was made. And if you grow up in Birmingham. In the 1960s, as I did you knew somebody who was involved in either making cars or making motorcycles, or making things for them. So there's this huge amount of national pride involved with it. And of course, all these things have gone now. You mean you really have to work very, very hard to find an English bike. But, I have built one of the most memorable bikes. And the reason I want to talk to about it with you is, it's one is the first real proper bike I built after my transition. And, it's sitting in a museum in Pacific Grove right now and it's an English bike. It's a Norton commando and I built it from scratch for the client and it's considered the best of its type in America. It was that good. And, when I used to build bikes before my transition, I build a bike paint it black and call it good. Now I've discovered color and having access to a large amount of estrogen I've, I really feel that my creativity, even with BUILDING MOTORCYCLES has really gotten so much more than it has been so instead of just painting this bike black. The client wanted it in a dark color. So we did it in a midnight green, but we did it in a midnight green with Pearl and we did gold accents on it. But it's real gold leafing like they used to do in Victorian times. So it's really the pain work on it

is quite spectacular and it was just a product of my imagination, but my new improved estrogen field imagination. So that's a very, very memorable bike. And we can actually visit it because it's in Pacific Grove.

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00:43:47.790 --> 00:43:49.770

Michael Mcmurtry: Well, after this is over. Maybe we'll go!

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00:43:51.030 --> 00:44:06.270

miss emma: You don't have to be into bikes. Because I guarantee you, even if you don't know anything about bikes, you'll see this thing and you'll go, oh, that's quite special. Mm hmm. So it's, it's that kind of motorcycle and it's terribly British looking

Q29

00:44:08.250 --> 00:44:09.240

Michael Mcmurtry: What do you mean by that?

A29

00:44:09.750 --> 00:45:20.020

miss emma: I don't know, there's a certain I like to think the British style is restrained. British people are very concerned with style but it's a restraint style, it's, there's nothing ostentatious

about it, it's theirs. It's very tailored. It's a very, it's almost like how we speak British people speak in very, very structured sentences. We like to enunciate every syllable. So very, very clipped and very tailored we talk and I think British style really is the same, whether it's a motorcycle or whether it's a car or whether it's close this, it, it's, it's a restrained elegance. There's some amount of flair involved, but it's very restrained. So kind of off of that. And so of course you lived in England for a very long time, then you move everyone says it on the cup, darling chairs

Q30

00:45:22.710 --> 00:45:32.310

Michael McMurtry: So can you tell me about your moves from there kind of how that happened and what got you. What got you to do that. And what like

A30

00:45:32.400 --> 00:48:31.380

miss emma: You know, which funny, um, a lot of people have said you were very brave to come to America and I suppose I was, but it was almost a move out of cowardice, because I was scared to come to America, but I was more scared of staying in England and just resigning myself to this appallingly mediocre life. I was 32 years old and I've just been through a divorce and I was bitterly unhappy. I'd married this girl and I thought that if I married somebody, ll this feeling about wanting to be the opposite gender all this uncertainty, all of it would go away and it did for a little while but it came back and it really it dominated that so much that we really couldn't get

beyond it now marriage ended, and I felt very guilty and I was very, very upset. So I said to be. You can have the house, you can have everything I want just I'm not interested. I just need to get away and so she did so at 32 years old. I had no job because the economy in England was pretty tough in the 90s. So a lot of people were out of work. So I had no job, no prospect of getting a job nowhere to live. Nobody loves me. So I thought really, I've got nothing to lose and I got this notion of America. That in America, you can be whoever you want to be and be whatever you want to be and everything's bigger in America and everything's better in America and that's the place for me. So if I came and it worked out very, very well. I actually, I landed the plane landed in Miami and I traveled across America with the traveling partner Denise and we we took about three months to travel across America and I ended up in California. And I've really had a 20. Oh yeah, I've had a 2627 year old love affair with California I think it's the most wonderful place. I'll never leave

Q31

00:48:33.570 --> 00:48:36.300

Michael Mcmurtry: So you mentioned that you ended up in California.

A31

00:48:36.540 --> 00:48:37.170

miss emma: Well, yes.

00:48:37.350 --> 00:48:38.520

Michael Mcmurtry: Now what did you do, and

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00:48:39.690 --> 00:50:64.530

miss emma: Well, I had an old childhood friend in San Luis Obispo so that I mean as the only person I knew previous to my trip that was as good a destination as me and I actually stayed in San Luis Obispo for a couple of years, I got a job at a local motorcycle place working on bikes and it was just a really easy lifestyle and I stayed there for for a couple of years. But then I got kind of a little bit of Wanderlust again. I wanted to get moving. So I decided to become a Greyhound bus driver so I went into my second career. And I learned. I learned how to drive a Greyhound bus and then I drove a Greyhound bus all over the western United States got to see a great deal more of the country and got paid doing it and now, since that I went through the gray hand training program in 98 or 99 and I find since that time, I've kind of alternated between being in the motorcycle industry or driving. I like tour buses and the reason I like tour bus is if you're on a tour bus you you're having a good time. You going on holiday going on a school field trip. You're going somewhere nice So, people tend to be a little bit nicer and the buses themselves and ice. You got TVs and air conditioning, all that good stuff in a toilet in the back. So I tend to alternate between being in the motorbike industry and driving tour buses. I'm enjoying working on bikes physically. It's quite demanding. So if I if I find my body starts breaking down a little bit. I'll probably go back into driving tour buses for a little while. Yeah.

Q32

00:50:47.790 --> 00:50:50.310

Michael Mcmurtry: So now I'd love to talk about your transition

A32

00:50:50.550 --> 00:50:51.210

miss emma: Could yes

32

00:50:51.270 --> 00:50:56.460

Michael Mcmurtry: Show me what was the moment it could. Could you just tell me all about that?

32

00:50:58.080 --> 00:59:30.390

miss emma: I will take you back in 2008 I had a very, very bad motorcycle. Motorcycle I had a very bad car wreck. And nobody was hurt but I was involved in a car wreck my car was totaled the other car was totaled. It was completely my fault and I realized how fragile life was because over and over again, the paramedic said an inch to the left and inch to the right, whatever. You would be dead and I pretty much walked away without a scratch and I was a little bruised and beaten up but it kind of resonated with me as well because the car I was involved in a collision

with our children in it as well, nobody was injured but it was, I realized the fragility of life and I'm not saying it started the ball rolling.

But I found myself in 2008 I was involved with a career that I wasn't particularly happy with I'd gone up. I've got involved with transit with City Transit in Santa Cruz and I'd been made a supervisor and I wasn't thrilled with that because it had gotten away from my original concept of driving and I wasn't a great supervisor and I knew I wasn't a great supervisor. And my work wasn't fantastic. My home life wasn't great. and I'd been involved in this accident. And I thought, God, is this is also fragile.

Fast forward two years I made a trip to Europe. In fact, my last trip to Europe and that was in 2010 and I vividly remember walking down low Ramblas in Barcelona with Cafe and just being overcome with just grief that here I am at 48 years old. that my life has really been a complete sham that I will never be who I want to be that I can achieve whatever I want, I can earn whatever I want. But I will never be who I truly want to be and I got back from the trip. Whenever you whenever you go on a on a vacation. There's always a period of reflection afterwards and I really sat down and looked very, very hard at myself after that and realized that I had to do something about this. And I'm not saying that either the accidental the trip was an epiphany but it was perhaps the final straw that broke the camel's back. It was the it's just the years of being ground down by this and being a constant in my life. So I sat down at the computer and I researched it and I found out that Brighton moderator was a specialist and this is all he did, he all he was involved with and I thought we, you know, I need to see this person because I need to find out number 1am I sign number 2am I really transgender, or my something different and so I went to see him. And that was really the hardest part of the whole transition. I

remember sitting in the in the in the car in the parking lot for an hour before I went in just considering what to say and making sure do. Am I gonna say the right thing. Am I gonna say the wrong thing there was this feeling of great anticipation. Because finally, it was going to get to the bottom of these this source of unhappiness throughout my life but it was it was scary as heck as well. I mean, I was absolutely terrified by it. But we went through it and it took a few because that's suppressed it so much, for so long it took a few sessions to kind of draw it out. But he said, yeah, you are pretty much a classic case and if you're trans there's no real that a lot of people have several, you know, can't they fix how you think and that's harder than you think for a lot excuse the pun. That's harder than people consider for a lot of reasons, not just being transgender. I mean, behavioral health issues. Sometimes can be impossible to hear. There's no magic bullet and so the only real way to really help how you fail and help with the dysphoria. And I mean, all through my life. I was just crippled with dysphoria. It's just have sufficient surgery.

So when you look in the mirror, you actually see who you are looking back and that's the only. That's the only cure for one of a better term for it and I'm living proof of that. So I was told, oh was transgender and from the process of being told that to actually living as full time as a woman was quite short. But I felt at age against me because I was nudging 50 and I thought I need to get cracking with this. So I did and I had no clear goals at the time. I remember being asked quite early on. Well, are you going to have surgery and I'm you know, I'm really not sure really not sure it's, it's important to me, just to live as a woman. And that changed actually during the transition, it became quite important for me to have surgery, not from a sexual perspective, just from a perspective of feeling complete but that came later. So I transitioned in January 2012

and it was hard at first because, as I'm happy as I was going back to my male. Incarnation was a very comfortable place to be being so scary. And so it's very comfortable to keep going back to who I was and I thought, you know, I, I need to. I need to do something about this because I'm going to just kick the can down the road for years until I got my nails done. I went to a salon and I got the biggest, baddest brightest Hooker red nails. I could so right. You can't go back now and that really was the as as tinier movers. That was, that was the best thing for me because that made me stay is Emma and I did and I really didn't look back and I lived, as Mr from January 2012 on and in 2014 I got top and bottom surgery at the same time. And it was quite a marathon surgery. It was on the table unconscious for nine hours. Which apparently is quite a while and here I am and I'm living my true self.

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00:59:32.700 --> 00:59:34.590

Michael Mcmurtry: And that's really awesome. I'm really happy for you.

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00:59:35.160 --> 00:59:35.880

miss emma: I'm thrilled.

Q33

00:59:38.670 --> 00:59:49.920

Michael Mcmurtry: You tell me. Because I remember we talked about that you are involved in the LGBT community in Monterrey. Can you tell us more about your involvement in this in the queue?

A33

00:59:49.950 --> 01:06:15.690

miss emma: Well, um, I found that particularly amongst the trans community there's a huge amount of misunderstanding. If we look back over the last 20 years the gay community and the lesbian community and make great inroads into public thinking. And that's been a very proactive movement and it's become a lot more acceptable to be gay. Whether you're a man or a woman and they did the public remains the same. Gay people remain the same. So what become different is the outreach, the outreach and saying, look, we're not three headed monster is we're not going to eat your children. And we're not going to come and murder you in your beds at night. We're just normal people living our lives and there's there's been this huge outreach and I saw that was kind of lacking in the trans community and we've had some good role role models. Over the years, but we've had some appalling ones as well and I really saw an opportunity as a fairly level headed person to actually just tell my story and get my story out there and really make people realize that just like gay people trans people. We're just trying to live our lives we we Were not trying to seduce little boys or girls in public restrooms. We have no agenda other than we need to get up brush our teeth have our breakfast. Go out and Anna living and come home and leaders normal life as possible in the agenda that we should have been from birth, but by a crawl twist of fate, we want. So my involvement. I got involved with a group called rainbow

speakers and rainbow speakers we form a panel usually have about four or five people and in an ideal panel, you would have a trans woman like me, you'd have a trans man, you would have a gay woman and a gay man, and then we go into a school or a college or even a progressive thinking business and we said we each tell our story. And then we would invite people from the audience to ask any kind of question and my promise has always been aligned to your questions brutally honestly and very candidly and of course, if you talk in high schools they're always very, very interested in genitalia. So I always say, if you want to trial by fire. If you sit in an inner city classroom in downtown Salinas, and tell a class of 17 and 18 year olds about your genitalia. It doesn't get more scary than them but it's an opportunity for us in the trans community to have our voices heard and to present something other than the idea of a very masculine guy running around in a cocktail dress, which a lot of people, even now, I still think that's what it means they they they mistake trans and drag and understandably so, why on earth. It's so removed from your life. Why on earth would you we think any differently. So it'd be an opportunity for me to come in and say, This is how I live. This is how I earn my living and guess what it's remarkably similar to yours as well. No cocktail dresses. No. No running around like rupal so that's been my contribution and I still enjoy doing it now and interesting enough as scary as it was at first it's really been a very affirming part of my transition because, particularly if transitional later in life, you tend to be crippled by fear and you think, Oh my God, I'm going to get beaten up in the street. I'm going to get verbally harassed in the street, this is going to happen, this is going to happen, this is going to happen. And of course, none of it happens and you go into a school full of teenagers who are notoriously tough and hostile and YouTube and they attentively.

Listen, and they ask intelligent questions and you have an adult dialogue with them and when classes over for the brave ones come up and talk to you and say, you know, that was the greatest thing I ever heard and you're really, really cool and the captain of the football team comes up and says, Emma You're okay and each hugely affirming for that just from a selfish point of view and hopefully I'm doing a little bit for the trans community as well. I don't like naming people who were bad examples of the trans community but what I find resonates the most is if your lifestyle and your demographic is similar to the people that you're talking about. If you want to be a voice for the trans community if you're looking at living in a giant mansion in Hollywood and a making buco bucks. You probably not the best person to talk about it because your lifestyle so different to the average person. I still got to go. I've still got to get up dragged my butt out of bed and go and earn a living just as everybody else does the differences. I'm trans. So that's what I, that's what I like to think resonates the most when I do the talks just time normal we are. So there you go.

Q34

01:06:16.110 --> 01:06:24.030

Michael Mcmurtry: Well, thank you. So that was really excellent. I really love that. And it's really cool that you have gotten involved because you see that there needs to be

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01:06:24.330 --> 01:06:39.690

Michael Mcmurtry: That change is gay people like myself like I felt comfortable because I saw that my community was in the world is becoming more accepting of people like me. So it's really an that was what my research paper was about was that

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01:06:40.770 --> 01:06:47.010

Michael Mcmurtry: The world has come to be slightly more okay with people who are traditionally gay or like oh man gay and

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01:06:48.120 --> 01:06:53.910

Michael Mcmurtry: lesbian woman, but they're not. They don't get the transgender community and

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01:06:53.970 --> 01:07:46.230

miss emma: We'll get there, but the gay community didn't happen by accident. Michael i mean it's it's people who came before you the generation before you really got the bull by the horns and it all goes back to the AIDS epidemic. Post aids late 80s, early 90s. There was so much repair work to be done and some far reaching people from the gay community stepped up and made the change and actually reached out and said this is what's got to happen and it's really

changed everything now. And, you know, we're still looking for a hero for the trans community. I'm not that person, but I can do my own little bit. Yeah.

Q35

01:07:47.490 --> 01:08:01.080

Michael Mcmurtry: So can you want my final question for you is, do you have any advice or anything to say to someone who's transitioning like today in this age in time. Do you have any words for them.

A35

01:08:03.930 --> 01:12:05.670

miss emma: You have to be yourself. You absolutely have to be yourself. Because if you're not yourself. You can be the best sports person, you can have the best job you can have the most beautiful partner, the biggest house, you will have a life of misery ahead of you and If you are transitioning right now and you are frightened. You have a world of richness beyond your wildest imagination waiting for you on the other side. It is gonna be okay. It will be okay. Right, even if it right now. It probably seems it's an insurmountable task. But there is life beyond this, and you finally get to live life on your own terms. My experience has been really wonderful. I can't think in an I've been transition now for 12 years and I honestly cannot think of a single time when somebody was just arbitrarily crawl to me. In 12 years and people say, Yeah, but that's that's because of who you are and that's because of how you conduct yourself and I don't actually buy that maybe I'm being overly naive. But I think people are fundamentally kind. And I think

people have fundamentally decent and everyone wants everybody else just to get on and get down the road and go about your business and that's the biggest cruel thing about the whole transgender experience we don't want extraordinary lives. We don't want to stand out in a crowd. We don't want any of that. We just want the most ordinary humdrum vanilla lives possible just as the agenda that we see ourselves as and sometimes you don't always get that but my experience has been very, very good and after this, this lifetime of uncertainty and unhappiness. There is absolutely no where I'd rather be and a lot of people have said, Well, don't you regret not doing it earlier because I transition basically at 48 years old and I transitioned just at the right time. I'm not going to get into that. What if because that's the same what if, what happens if I'd been born a woman. I transitioned at just the right time for me. I'm living my best life right now. When I look in the mirror. I see. Exactly who I am looking back at me and I'm very, very happy about that finally took 48 years to get there. So I'm in. I'm in a very, very good place right now and if any if anybody in the future is going to listen to this and thinking that they shouldn't they should you have to transition. If you're thinking about it and you don't, you will never forgive yourself.

01:12:09.630 --> 01:12:11.310

Michael Mcmurtry: Well, thank you so much for this interview with

01:12:11.340 --> 01:12:17.070

miss emma: Michael. You're very welcome. I hope that I didn't come across as a raving lunatic.

01:12:17.190 --> 01:12:19.860

Michael Mcmurtry: No, you are wonderful and I really do appreciate it.

01:12:19.980 --> 01:12:22.350

miss emma: Michael. Have you ever been on a motorcycle.

01:12:22.710 --> 01:12:34.950

Michael Mcmurtry: I am so I saw my boss at my job at the farmers market. He does have a motorcycle nine sat on it, but I've never driven or like that, having sat on an road one at all.

01:12:35.070 --> 01:13:03.090

miss emma: Okay, I'm going to take you out on a motorbike. And we're going to write very sedately because the last thing I would ever want to do is is frighten you off you you'll never set foot on a motorcycle. Again, I don't want that responsibility. So I'd rather we have a nice run it and you think, hey, there's something about this. So stay in touch, Michael. It really has been a wonderful interview and thank you for approaching it in such an open and respectful way well

01:13:03.120 --> 01:13:16.740

Michael Mcmurtry: I was very I really wanted to have this kind of interview because I don't understand this part of my community like the transgender community and I really wanted to have an interview where I can learn about that. And here.

01:13:16.770 --> 01:14:31.890

miss emma: Well, you know, I've often wondered. I've often said, well, why we thrown in, you know, why is it the LGBT community, what do I have in common with a young gay man. But then when you dig a little deeper, you understand the commonality. The shame the hiding your true identity being ostracized by your family being marginalized by society being thought of less than aou know, these are the commonalities that bind us together. And so we have got far more in common than we have not in common. And now I get it. Yeah. You know, those are the things and it unfortunately it's all the bad things that bind us together, but it makes us stronger and I, as a group, and hopefully you've got a little more understanding of the trans community now. Good, yeah.Good. Well, it's been wonderful. Michael and, you know, just because this side of the interview is over, I sincerely hope we can we can maintain a friendship. I did like a very much

01:14:32.160 --> 01:14:40.320

Michael Mcmurtry: I would love you stay safe during this time because I know it's a weird time but I will keep in touch and I'll let you know how this is going in, just check in.

01:14:40.890 --> 01:14:48.750

miss emma: Exactly. And when we are alive. To do so, I'll come up on campus and we can have coffee at Starbucks or something. Anytime.

01:14:49.020 --> 01:14:49.740

Michael Mcmurtry: Sounds good.

01:14:49.830 --> 01:14:53.100

miss emma: I'm really alright thanks Michael. Hi, buddy. Bye.