

INTERVIEW WITH SCOTT GREATHOUSE -- FEBRUARY, 1995 (PART 1 OF 4)

Scott Greathouse was born in Houston, Texas in March, 1968. A series of work promotions for his father prompted family moves to Dallas, Louisville and then to Kansas City, which is where Scott graduated from high school. He moved back to Houston in August of 1990 and met Dave soon after. Their friendship became love, and the strength of their bond certainly helped make possible the very high creative and personal levels that Dave maintained throughout the extraordinary challenges of the next four years.

My parents moved back to Houston in 1987. I stayed in Kansas City until August of '90 when I moved back here. It was nice to move back. I gave a two week notice at my job and packed everything I could in my car and moved to Houston. I was very happy to move back here. Four years later, on the very same date I arrived here--August 11th--Dave died.

Right when I first moved here, we went to Cancun, mom and dad and I. And then when I got back I met Dave. He was one of the very first people I met. Dave and I met at a bar called JR's. It was the second time I had been out; I had gone out on that Tuesday also and was learning about the city and what was where, trying to find out information about what's going on and what to do and all that. So I was sitting around drinking a beer. I had seen Dave because he wasn't standing that far away; he was leaning up against the rail. I didn't really pay too much attention to him because I was talking to these guys. They decided they were going to go another place and asked me if I wanted to go along. They were like, "C'mon let's go..." I still had some beer and I went to the front door to leave. Of course you can't officially leave a bar with an open beer, so I stepped outside and told them to go ahead and I went back to the bar and was watching videos on the TV or whatever, MTV videos.

Dave was gone, and as it turns out he had followed me when I left. So he comes back in and sits down next to me and starts talking to me. I'm just listening. I caught on pretty quick; Dave was such a charmer. He was a pro at it. He didn't even have to try.

It's not like when I first looked I him I thought, "Oh my God, this guy's gorgeous..." And Dave was very handsome. He really was, but I was kind of irritated at him at first because he was a little bit cocky, and I thought, "Go on. Leave me alone. I'm not interested." But we started talking and actually had a nice conversation, and I quickly found out that he was very intelligent and worth listening to. He had a great smile. The first time he smiled I was just like, "Whoa! That's intense!" He told me that he played the piano, which I thought was interesting. I had played for a while myself--not jazz--but I thought that was really cool and I really admired that he did that for a profession. I know that that takes a lot of guts in that it's not the most stable livelihood. It's not like going to work eight to five. I could tell that he was creative. He said he had just made an album. It was like "Wow, you're not just some piano player!" Everybody was talking to him, and a lot of people seemed to know him. That was wild.

I told him that I had just moved to Houston and I was just kind of cruising around Montrose that night, checking out the places around there. I was looking for the gay scene. Montrose is cool. I mean compared to Kansas City, the city here's a lot bigger. I was really excited to be in a new place and as mentioned I'd just gotten back from Cancun. Dave seemed very

happy and he smiled easily. I pretty quickly caught on that Dave was pretty different from a lot of people in that he did what he wanted to do. He followed his dream. He was inspirational from the first conversation we had, just listening to him talk. He was just like that almost all the time, with everybody.

So we hung out for a while and talked for quite a long time. He had just recorded *First Flight* and had just gotten back from New York. That's how we met.

I listened to his album that night and stayed up and talked to him until like 5:00 in the morning. I remember coming home and walking in the kitchen, and my dad was just getting ready to leave for work. He said, "Rough night?" I said, "Pretty interesting..."

Dave and I talked about the studio and the making of the album, what it was like. Dave could just talk about anything--blah, blah, blah, blah--and go from one thing to another. He'd see a tack sitting on the floor and start talking about how they manufacture tacks or something, and wander off. I remember him getting out his yearbook and telling me something--I can't recall what it was now--I think we were talking about high school band. We had both been in high school band. I was a drummer. He'd had experiences in high school far past mine. Dave played tuba, he played a little bit of everything. I was so impressed and I really liked his music although I wasn't really that much of a jazz fan then.

When I came to Houston I kind of had the attitude that I didn't want to have any relationships because I just wasn't into it. It wasn't something I was looking for. I don't really believe in *looking* for a relationship, because I think in that situation people pre-fabricate something. If you do that, then you're going to be let down in some way because that's--to me--not really what a relationship is. A relationship is a collective give-and-take on both sides; that's what makes it work. So if you have some idea in your head of what you want and you go out and try to look for it; it's too fairy tale-ish. And when people think they have to be in a relationship to be happy, that's not good either: "I've got to be in a relationship or I'm not complete..." For my part, I was just really excited to be here in Houston, alone.

I thought that Dave was special. It didn't take me long to become attracted to him. I believe it was on a Thursday when we met, and actually I called him back. He gave me his number, and I called him back Sunday. We talked pretty much every day--if we didn't see each other--from then on. We went to the Menil Collection and went to the Rothko Chapel and ate at Ruggles and just kind of hung out. Dave and I hung around Montrose and he showed me around. I never really went out much after that, and he and I never went out together after that.

The bar scene gets old; it's just a big pickup scene. I'm surprised that we met there too. Chances are stuff like that doesn't happen very much. I wasn't there to meet somebody, and that's not the place to meet somebody. That's for sure. It's just not very romantic I guess, from an outsider's viewpoint. But it was with Dave, it really was, outside of there.

The first time I saw his housekeeping I was like, "My God..." I could never have dreamed it up myself. There was shit everywhere! Ironing board in the middle of the floor....Clothes everywhere.... Coffee cups all over the place with mold and coffee in them... It was just a big disaster. But he had some quality about him that was so appealing that to listen to him talk

you just forgot about all that. It didn't matter. It was OK. There was something about Dave that you could always say to yourself, "It's OK. He's cool."

Things progressed. Dave told me he was HIV+. I was wondering if that's what he was going to tell me not very long before he told me. We went to the Alehouse on Alabama. It's kind of a loud place. We got a beer and we sat down, and he had this real serious look on his face. He said, "I want to talk to you..." It was only three weeks since we had met and I thought, "Well, we're not even going out, so it's not like anything's going to be funky. I don't give a shit what he thinks about me right now." Because I really liked him a lot, but it's not like we were going out or we were an item or we were going to break up or anything like that. It was a friendship thing we were building at that point. So it crossed my mind, because the look on his face was pretty serious. I had never known anybody with AIDS or who was HIV+. I didn't really know much about it. I haven't been a very promiscuous person throughout my life although I've had my times. So anyway he told me, and I just remember thinking to myself, "Don't say anything. Just shut up and listen..." I didn't change my facial expression at all when he told me. I was trying to not put any pressure on him because I knew he was upset about telling me; it took him forever to say it. He told me the only reason he was wanting to tell me was because he hadn't seen anybody since he found out, and he didn't feel that he would have ever had a relationship with another guy.

Dave was really never the relationship type person. That's what he said. "I don't normally find myself attracted to someone in that way, to want to spend a lot of time with them. But there's something very different going on here, and before it goes any further I want you to know." That was basically why he told me.

I just told him, "Well I can't get it from sitting here looking at you, if that's what you're worried about. I'm really sorry that you have to deal with this, however I don't know anything about it. If you think I'm going to get up and walk away from the table, I'm not going to. Neither one of us knows what's going on here anyway between the two of us; all we know is that we've had a great time since we've met. As far as I'm concerned, why stop now? At least we can be friends." And he felt the same way.

Then when I left, on the way home I was crying, because I was scared for him. And I had no idea what the hell I was getting into. I didn't know anything about it. The next day I went to the library and I was there probably half the day reading books about it and trying to get an idea of what it was all about and how it worked physiologically and all that. I didn't know if it was something that I could handle. I didn't feel like running away from it necessarily but my options did cross my mind. I really liked Dave as a person at the time. I can only imagine what it would feel like if you sat there and told someone that you have a terminal illness, and they got up and walked away. Nobody deserves that. But I know that it's happened and I've heard of it happening before.

I really did like Dave, and he just took me around everywhere and reintroduced me to Houston. We went to Kim Son and Ruggles and the Menil Collection... He just took me all around town. We took off and went to Austin one time. That was the first time he met my mom. He had come over to the house when we were getting ready to go to Austin, probably a month and a half, two months after we met. So not too long after I found out he was HIV+, we went to Austin and we had a good time. Dave and I hung out every day. We just got along really well.

I was more concerned at that time about the relationship between my parents and I. I had not lived with them for about four years and would just see them at holidays--a couple times a year--and I had changed a lot. And I was gay, which had never been discussed.

As a kid you don't know what it is, but I've had an interest in boys--whether sexual or not--since probably sixth or seventh grade, and I was starting to get an idea. By the time I was in high school I was trying to work on the premise that it was a phase. I didn't want to deal with it at all and as far as I know, nobody in high school knew. I was real paranoid about people finding out.

I was worried about my parents finding out. They knew Dave was calling a lot. My mom used to talk to him on the phone before she met him. She really liked Dave. Dave was easy to talk to, and my mom's quite a talker too, so it was a fight to see who would talk. You should have seen him and my mom try to talk! It was really quite funny.

I didn't know how my parents would take the news. I feel like I gave them credit for being open-minded and for being great parents and all that, but you never know how somebody's going to react. I think I was more upset about letting them down--and letting myself down--at the time. I didn't want to hide it; it's just a topic that a majority of society isn't totally comfortable with yet. I was spending more and more time at Dave's. They didn't say anything, but they knew what was going on. My mom gave me shit. At one point she said, "So like, are you....moved out now?" There was never like one certain date that I moved in. Dave and I never really discussed it; it just kind of happened. I think he was afraid that if he said, "Why don't you move in?" that it would be bad karma or something, that something bad would happen and then I'd have to move out. So nothing was ever said about it really until one day Dave was like, "You know, it's kind of like you're moved in. It's OK? You like it? That's good. That's real good..." And that was it.

So I really couldn't come out and say, "Hey mom, I'm moving out."

Three quarters of my stuff was already gone--over to Dave's--over a period of probably six weeks or two months. It got to be a drag to go back home if I didn't have something there, and Dave started getting irritated with that. "Why don't you just bring it over here?" When I first started really spending time at Dave's I'd be hanging out there and fall asleep there and get up at six in the morning or so and drive home and then the next day it would be the same thing... How obvious can you be? It was obvious to them already; I just didn't know how they'd react. I hadn't really talked to my parents all that much since I'd moved back and I didn't want them to freak out on me. After a while of that Dave was like, "I want you to *STAY* all night one of these nights soon. I like it when I wake up in the morning and you're here..." I was like, "Do we have to? Can't I just go home?"

Of course everything worked out fine, and I never had any resistance from my parents or any questions. They knew.

When I first moved back to Houston I got a job waiting tables. And then right around November I went to work for Devoe. So I worked for them until '92 and then I started school in the fall at Houston Community College.

Living with Dave was pretty different. I'd never lived with someone that I was romantically involved with before and I'd never had any desire to before. Of course things were very interesting because of Dave's musical career. He was playing all over town. His first album was out on the shelves, and he was very popular. I had a good time and I met Linda shortly after that.

Dave would play the piano as a spontaneous thing. He didn't like to do anything he had to do. So he could just be walking by the piano and knock something off of it and pick it off and then sit down and start playing, just because he's right there. That would be typical. A lot of times before gigs he would put those albums or CD's on where you can play along with those chord changes, play solos over them. He'd do that before gigs to warm up. He was writing tunes at the time. He'd just be practicing and he'd always have a piece of manuscript paper up there and if he played something he liked he'd just write it down. Just kind of taking notes, and then he'd go back later and do something with it; put it together with something. That was one way. A lot of times he would sit down and figure out the whole melody of something. He'd hear it in his head and then write it down.

At Dave's I went from being a guest to frequenting the place to living there. Shortly after I started hanging out there we probably cleaned the place well for the first time. I said, "If you don't mind, I don't mind helping you clean the place up." I was trying to be real upbeat about it. We just took stuff--started in the kitchen--and I put every dirty dish I could find in the bathtub, just because there was no working space anywhere. There was tons and tons of trash and things we couldn't even get to. In this tiny little space we worked practically all day, and there were still things we couldn't even get to! It was really incredible. Dave had probably been there about a year at that point, and he just had other things on his mind besides cleaning.

Dave bought me a bread baker. He bought a lot of kitchen stuff for me. Dave liked to make people happy, to see people smile. He would always buy things that he knew that you would enjoy. Another thing about that is that he would get obsessed with things, so if he went out to buy something he would see all these other things and think "Wow! Wow! Wow!", and come home with five hundred dollars worth of stuff. That's just how he was.

It was always hard to make specific plans, which drove me crazy.

Everything with Dave was spur of the moment, like "Let's go see a movie! It starts in five minutes. C'mon..." And that's OK, but he liked to be that way with everything. A lot of times he was just like pulling me behind him, and I had no idea where I was going. It was fun for a while. It was fun sometimes and other times it wasn't. But that's how Dave was. He had no concept of time whatsoever. Sometimes I'd remind him of whatever time it was so he wouldn't be late for something, but I tried not to irritate him. "You'd better get ready..." But he would get frustrated with himself about that too.

Dave ran out of gas a few times. Usually he wouldn't call me; he'd call Barry. He called me once. I couldn't believe it. "How do you run out of gas? Does your gas meter work?" "Yeah it does... Will you just come get me?" I said, "Yeah I'll come get you." But I'd always give him shit about it. "How do you run out of gas? How does that happen? There's no excuse for that." He did it a few times after that, and I'm sure he called me again for it. He called Linda a couple of times when it

happened too and he told Linda not to tell me.

He really changed a lot. He tried to be more organized and he did succeed at that. He wanted to keep the place cleaner and things. But the way Dave thought worked as far as his talent being a musician. Of course he had quirks or whatever, but the way he thought about life, he really had it down; how he felt in doing what he wanted. So keeping his house clean or his car in gasoline wasn't as important because he had the big stuff down. He was always honest about being himself.

Dave was very spontaneous. As far as structure, he tried to avoid that in his day to day life. It's funny that he was able to improvise life as well as he improvised sitting at the piano, and he was damn good at it. That's how Dave was and he was very successful that way. That's what made it work for him. He could modulate in a solo and he could modulate and adapt in any other situation and make it work for him. That shows in how he constantly changed directions or ways that he was approaching the fact that he was sick, how he was treating it and things he would try. New things would crop up. They talked about bitter melon one time, and Dave really researched stuff like that; he kept his ears open for new types of treatments and drugs and medications, herbal or synthetic or whatever. He had an open mind about all that. There were experimental medications that were being tried out, like on that protocol once he started getting the KS; Dr. R. got him on that chemotherapy protocol that only five people in Texas were able to use. That was great that he was able to do that.

Dave got his first symptom in November of '91 when he went to St. Louis for a gig. He'd been taking AZT, and it was so debatable whether it was worth anything or whether it really did a lot. It was funny because he used to complain about taking AZT a lot, saying that it made him feel funny, and it was nothing compared to some of the drugs he later had to take, as far as the side effects. At the time he was paying for the AZT and he was making pretty good money so he was doing OK. But things got progressively worse every year and there was a lot more to deal with, and Dave really had to be creative, and that's where his influence on people really just shined through, because people were just really jumping through their ass to make things work for him. The ladies at Kroger Pharmacy were always on the phone calling the state getting stuff for him. Dr. R. made sure that he got set up on that chemotherapy treatment... Dave got *really* good treatment. It wasn't the same kind of treatment that everybody got; that wasn't an everyday thing. Twelve Oaks Hospital wrote off all of his hospital bills for the last four years, which I'm sure were up there. *Way* up there.

Dave at one point was going to try and get health insurance but it was so hard to get, because they were all asking him if he'd been tested for HIV, and if he was HIV+, and you couldn't lie about it. So we decided to use the state programs that were available, and use Thomas Street--the free clinic--as a last resort. Dave did get Cytovene and some other very expensive drugs there. The Cytovene alone was a thousand dollars a month! But everybody was just enamored with Dave. He had this uncanny ability. He was funny and charming and he made you feel good when you talked to him. You know how that affects people; if people like you they're going to do things for you. And Dave wasn't trying to manipulate anybody. This was just a side effect of the way he was with people. People liked him and they wanted to help him. Things worked out for Dave in that respect.

Dave had this gig at the Hotel Majestic in St. Louis, playing with Madeline Eastman. We were there over Thanksgiving. We in fact sat in our hotel room on Thanksgiving, and the three of us had Thanksgiving dinner. They brought it up on this cart.

And these two idiots--this is hysterical--there was a side of gravy on our plates, and it was kind of a funky color. It wasn't brown gravy and it wasn't really cream gravy; it was like Thousand Island gravy. It was real weird looking, but it was gravy nonetheless. So you know musicians; Dave and Madeline are yak, yak, yak, yak, yak, and we had been there a few nights by then and they had played some, and we're having a good time just eating dinner. Well Dave picks up his gravy while he's talking to Madeline and he starts pouring it on his salad like it's dressing! I was looking at him and I just thought, "Oh God, what's gotten into him?" But I didn't want to say anything; I was kind of enjoying it. So they're just sitting there talking, and he takes a bite and he's eating it, and Madeline picks up her gravy and puts it on her salad!

(CONTINUED, PART 2)