

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

I'm so thankful that Dave knew that we were there before he died. I was so panic-stricken that he was going to die without knowing I was there, at first. But it made a big difference to me that we were able to communicate before my mom and Linda got there.

When I dialed Jane--who was working downstairs--about a half hour after Dave died, she took it *really* hard. I heard her lose it big time and I just hung the phone up; I couldn't listen. I mean, his death really tore a lot of those nurses up. They were walking down the halls on the seventh floor holding each other, crying. And they're working! That stuff just doesn't ordinarily happen; they don't typically let themselves get that close to these patients who are dying. But it was really incredible how everyone pulled together and how everyone loved Dave so much. Dr. B. came in about an hour after Dave died. I wanted to see him so bad after Dave died for some reason. He gave me a really long hug. I told him that what he had done for all the patients--including Dave--meant more than I could say. And he deals with people in *quantity* dealing with this disease, and the strength he must have to see all that just boggles my mind. AIDS is a losing battle right now--not to be pessimistic about it-but we all know the outcome of the disease. No one's overcome it so far, and in that respect it's got to feel more difficult to feel "rewarded" in that situation, when all your patients end up dying to the disease. I know that there are new drugs coming out and progress is being made in treating the symptoms, but there's still so far to go. And Dr. R. was really shook up. He could hardly talk. I wasn't there when he came in the room.

It had been really tough when Chris Bacas had come down not too long before Dave died. I think it was in July, when Dave was in the hospital. It was the day Chris was leaving, and he knew he'd never see Dave again and he was so shook up. I drove up there when they were leaving the hospital. Linda was taking him to the airport in her car, and I stopped as they were leaving and got out of my car to tell him goodbye. We were blocking the street right there at Twelve Oaks, and Chris gave me a big hug and said, "Just do it. Go ahead. Just keep doing what you're doing." He was really upset. We were blocking traffic, and no one honked or anything. I didn't even know it until I looked up that there were people waiting to get by. They were just sitting there, waiting.

After Dave died I got tired of calling people real quick. I really just wanted to hide but got through most of the calls anyway. I wouldn't let anybody go home with me. My mom wanted to go. Bob Baradel--bless his heart--he wanted to go. We loaded my car up. It was full of course. Every time we went to the hospital everything from home would come along; pillows, blankets, comforters and all kinds of food... So it filled the car up.

Of course it was different at home without Dave being there. I knew that people were worried or thinking about me. I had prepared myself as much as possible for Dave's death, and it had helped. Had it been a freak accident it would have been a lot harder. Certainly they're both difficult situations, and you can only prepare yourself so much. I stayed with my mom and dad that night; they lived in that house by Twelve Oaks at the time. It was a rough night. I was really uncomfortable. That house was uncomfortable. I didn't like sleeping there anyway for some reason. I didn't like the house. We ordered food out. I knew that when I woke up in the morning that I would start crying. I didn't wake up in my own bed, for one. My own bed with my own boyfriend next to me. I liked to wake up to both and wasn't with either, and woke up to the shock of "Oh God ... Oh yeah..." I pretty much lost it right away and had a really bad bloody nose. It was just running everywhere, and I wasn't caring about it. I was wanting Dave.

I think Linda had the harder time physically letting go, letting it out and crying, because she was so busy with things. She *really* immersed herself in work. She had to; there was a lot to do. But even after that she just kept herself very busy. I did too. I had work and school and an intent to move on, which has been very successful.

One part of Dave's making peace with things was when he first started getting sick was this paranoia about his physical appearance, about being out in public at Cezanne and so on, and how people would respond. At that time a lot of people didn't know he was sick, and that had to come out. And after all was said and done Dave realized that for the most part society still very much supported him, in that he had just proven himself such an asset to society that it really didn't matter what his condition was. He got over all of that, but it was a very long process. Over a couple of years, from the time he started getting sick to his body deteriorating, in going from being an incredibly good looking man to having a sickly look about him. And he fared better than a lot of people getting to that point. Even though he wasn't in control of that Dave always said that he never wanted to get to that point: "I don't want to look that bad before I die."

When he first started showing physical signs of being sick—he wasn't necessarily feeling bad—I think there was an ego thing involved with that, that he didn't feel that he was still attractive. That was a steppingstone that we got over. I just reassured him that there was more to the relationship than that and that I really didn't notice. If I looked at him I didn't see Kaposi's sarcoma or that he was losing weight; I just saw somebody whom I cared for a lot and whom I loved very much. And Dave grew to understand that. That was actually probably another big step that we took in the relationship.

He was real conscious of the way he looked, and I can imagine that that could undermine your confidence; your body deteriorating. He had the catheter in his chest, but that never got in the way of our relationship. There were times that I got in bed with him at the hospital. The nurses didn't care. I was more conscious of it than anybody else, but he'd go, "C'mon Who cares?" So we'd both just be like, "Fuck it. Who cares who sees us? Let 'em come in." We had the curtains open anyway. I mean we were just laying there; no big deal. Dave enjoyed cuddling. He was a big time cuddler.

About two weeks after Dave died Linda and I drove his ashes to the Gulf. It was such an incredible night We got to the beach about sunset, and the sunset was beautiful; so many colors in it. We were wanting to get to the beach a little bit sooner than we did, but it worked out real well because once we got there the sun had just gone down, and the moon was rising as we finished. The moon had actually been full two days beforehand, on the twenty-first. But after we finished distributing his ashes in the water we both looked up and out onto the horizon across the water, and there were so many stars out, which is not common for Houston because there's so much pollution here. You can't really always see that many stars, but the sky was full. You could see the Milky Way, and all the stars were blinking and twinkling. It may have been from heat rising from the ground but it really had a nice effect.

Then we went to Guido's, one of Dave's favorite restaurants in Galveston. We walked into Guido's and looked at each other and we both had ashes all over us! I had a white shirt and white shorts on and they were just covered. I looked down and went, "Yuk!" They all came off, but the ashes had been very fine and apparently the wind had taken them at the beach. This was on the twenty third of August, four years to the day since I had met Dave. We met on the twenty third of August, 1990. Isn't it weird how it worked out? And I wasn't planning that, to go down to the beach that day. I hadn't even thought of it. I was going out to see Barry. But the day was nice, and Linda and I were just waiting for a nice day to go do that. At the time I had a phone in my car that Dave had gotten me and I called her and said, "Let's go tonight," and we went. And a couple of days later I realized... after all I've seen with this I'm a lot more at peace about it now.

I'm not so afraid to die anymore. When the time comes and it happens, I'll be a lot better off for my experience of having been with Dave through his death. I have a lot more faith now. I've always believed in God, in a supreme being, and I prayed a lot when Dave was living. He got to a point where he believed too, and I'm kind of glad that happened. I don't believe in hell and I don't believe that anyone--be they friend or foe--goes to hell. I believe that you evolve to another level, but nobody knows for sure.

I became a part of Dave, and he became a part of me, and I'll have the memory forever. It's been an *incredible* learning experience. I learned about caring for someone through a difficult experience and went through such a development on the soul level in the process. I've learned from Dave to be more spontaneous. I'm a lot happier with myself now. Dave was such a believer in supporting what he felt, and being honest with yourself plays a big role in understanding yourself and how you come across to other people. I only wish that I could have taught him as many things as he taught me. I learned a lot from Linda too. I learned a lot from both of them. There were a lot of ways that Dave and Linda could really connect on higher levels than he and I could.

In my family, saying "I love you" is something that we told each other all the time. Dave was uncomfortable with it at first. We had a long talk about it. Basically it was something that I was very comfortable with; I didn't think twice about it. It's something you say to friends as well as to someone you care for on a romantic level. And I told Dave too, "It's kind of strange. I admit that I kind of wondered if that could ever happen for me with another guy!" So from that point of view it is kind of strange, but when you love someone you let them know. Dave became very receptive to it after a while--especially after he started getting sick--with everybody.

Dave didn't want to have AIDS. He had too much going for him and he didn't want to give it all up. He'd get frustrated when something was getting the best of him--like when the CMV got out of control--and there would be lots of apprehension. But he'd pull himself out of it all the time. Dave didn't get depressed a lot. I know that he was very thankful for the fact that he had somebody to love and that he had somebody who loved him. He felt that he'd accomplished something in Cezanne. Dave put that place on the map in Houston; took what he had there and built a very reputable club out of it. He was very proud of that.

Barry and I were a good support system after Dave died and while he was alive and we were watching Dave deteriorate and be sick and having to deal with all of that. Linda too. It was like we all had our purpose, our specific tasks that we were doing for Dave; the business end of it, and the very close, friendly relations with Dave. It all worked out very synergistically.

I remember Dave got on some protocol one time. I can't recall which one now, but it was an injection he was taking, and it was a study. But he had to give it to himself in the leg, and oh man, he hated it. He would sit there for fifteen, twenty minutes every morning psyching himself up to stick a needle in his leg for the shot. It didn't really hurt. He'd go, "You know, it's not that bad. No big deal really..." But every day he'd sit there and pat his leg and tap the skin and pull up a piece and "Oh, " and rub it with alcohol.... He was just funny to watch, his stalling kind of technique.

I've dreamed about Dave a lot since he died. I had a dream about him a couple weeks after he died. At the time I felt that if I had a dream of Dave it would be a confirmation, knowing that he was OK where he was. And in the first dream I had of him, it was weird because I was with my friend Tash and she was here in Houston, and we were just hanging out together.

I had walked into the bedroom to get something to show her and when I walked in the bedroom I saw Dave out of the corner of my eye, standing there. And as I turned around to my desk to get something I just kind of froze and was thinking to myself, "God, what is he doing here?" I couldn't say anything and I grabbed what I was going in there to get and I left. That was it. There wasn't anything said in the dream.

And then a couple of nights later I had a dream where all of a sudden he was just there. It was just he and I, and there was nothing around us or anything. He hugged me a really long time and said that he loved me, and I was just crying in my dream and asking him why he had to go. I don't recall anything else about the dream. I got up the next morning and I felt like I had spent some time with Dave. I felt really good. I felt really at peace with things, as far as him not being there. I felt really good about where he was and that he was OK. I was happy that he wasn't in pain anymore. He looked good in the dream. He looked very good.

It was very real to me. I mean nobody really knows if people can visit you in a dream state or not. It's all debatable, but I really felt like I had spent some time with Dave that next morning after the dream. I haven't had any dreams since that were as strong as that one. But I've had some significant dreams and Linda has too.

Soon after Dave and I had first met we had gone to a movie theater out in south Houston. It was one of those spontaneous things. After the movie we were talking and Dave said, "You know, when I was a kid I lived over here on Sanford." I said, "You lived on Sanford, here in south Houston?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "You're not going to believe this but that's where we lived when I was born. We lived there while I lived in Houston, until I was five, when we moved." So we started talking about whereabouts and we were just on opposite sides of Post Oak. That area around in there is Westbury and that's where my dad grew up. He went to high school at Westbury, and Dave went to Westbury. So that's when all of that started coming out, and it was like "Whoa!" We were on the same *street* as kids; when I lived there, Dave was there, on Sanford. We were probably at the Piggly Wiggly together sometime down the street. So that was funny, and he showed me his old house.

And the whole thing about me arriving in Houston on the eleventh of August of '90 and Dave dying on the eleventh of August of '94 and the twenty-third being the day that we met and the day that we departed, so to speak--when Linda and I let Dave go--it's just I mean none of this was planned. You just wonder about things like "divine guidance" or whatever. There was something very incredible about how when Dave and I met we just bonded so quickly and got along so well and had such a good time together, and how his illness changed us both so much, individually and as partners.

Dave bought me a cellular phone for my birthday, so he could stay in touch with me. If I wasn't nearby, he wanted to know where I was. Which was good; I liked that. But normally he always did know where I was, really. We were hardly apart for long periods of time unless I was traveling or something. He and I and Bob Baradel went to dinner at a nice place called Charlie's 517 downtown. During dinner Dave got up with the excuse that he was going to the restroom. The maitre d' comes to the table and says, "Mr. Greathouse, you have a phone call," and handed me a phone. I'm thinking, "Who the hell is calling me?"

I figured it was probably Dave because that was something cheesy like he'd do. "Alright... Hello." It was him. "Scott..." I was like, "What are you doing? You're nuts..." because I turned around and he was there on the house phone at the bar. He

said, "You're holding your birthday present...." It hadn't dawned on me. He really did surprise me with that. And that's just what got Dave off the most, to surprise people like that. He'd work on it forever.

And what was funny is that he bought this package with the phone where you get one hundred twenty free minutes. He'd gotten the phone the day before my birthday. And then once the bill came it turned out he had used like eighty minutes on that phone before he gave it to me for my birthday! He had had it with him in his car driving around, calling everybody up.

I don't think I've ever met as many wonderful people as I did in the time that Dave and I were together, all the people that we met and all the people who came around when he was sick. Big hearted people. I hadn't met that many great people before in all my life.

We did a lot in four years. Dave and I really took that time and ran with it and did everything we could in the time we had together. Sometimes it makes me mad that we didn't have more time. I mean I know that time with anyone is limited, but we were very good together and I think that we would have been together for the rest of our lives.