

## ***Transcription of John Patterson - Our Voices Matter Interview***

Interviewer: Anna Quon

**AQ-** This is the our voices matter project, my name is Anna Quon and I am interviewing John Patterson, at the Grosebrook Institute on the Saint Mary`s University Campus, on October 19, 2010. Hi John!

**JP-** Hello!

**AQ-** Thank you for coming to be interviewed today, umm can you tell first umm where and when you were born?

**JP-** I was born in Charlottetown, in April of 1939.

**AQ-** Ok, and what day in April?

**JP-** 8<sup>th</sup> of April.

**AQ-** Umm and did you grow up there?

**JP-** Until I was fourteen, yes.

**AQ-** Ok, umm and what was it like growing up in your family?

**JP-** Well, I would say that we had a rather dysfunctional family and I remember somebody saying that ah, all functional families are the same, all dysfunctional families are unique. But umm anyway, umm my father was much older than, than my mother and umm he had somewhat of a hostility towards woman. And this used to show up when they would ah argue, he would sometimes blow up at her and say “Oh yes Madame Queen” and ah but umm, anyway umm my

mother I don't feel was all that stable umm, but umm I, she was never diagnosed as such. Now of course this is in, this is in the 1900's when ah they might be reluctant to diagnosed a person as such because it could lead to hospitalization. And hospitals then were not; not very ah good places to put a, ah person there and they didn't have any ah very, very good facilities.

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** But umm my father, as I said my father was much older than my mother, twenty years older, and sometimes he treated her as if, as if she were a child and ah. But ah he ah, there was no affection between them displayed or he never showed ah much physical ah affection. But I understand this was common at that time that people did not hug and kiss in front of their children. And they ah never did that, I think she would have had to have liked that but it didn't, it didn't take place.

**AQ-** I see

**JP-** Yeah

**AQ-** And were you close to your mother and father?

**JP-** Well I guess I would say yes, umm but things sort of changed, my father as he got older he got deaf, and he was under a lot of stress because his job was a teacher, and ah he started to get deaf and I remember him, none of my family remembers him as I do before he could ah, before he grew deaf. When he'd, before he was deaf he could hear a whisper, but at the last part of his life we had to shout at him to make him understand.

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** And ah he was worried that he might lose his job as a teacher, he taught at a community college there, that is, that's what it is now. And ah he taught mathematics.

**AQ-** Ok, and did you have siblings?

**JP-** Yes, I had two younger brothers and two younger sisters.

**AQ-** Oh ok and (excuse me) and what was your relationship like with you siblings?

**JP-** Umm, I guess good. I felt that my brother, who was next to me I feel in retro, in retrospect that he and I picked on the youngest brother quite a bit. And I think it showed in his ah, in his ah behaviour. That ah for example he a, he was prone to ah bed wetting, and umm soiling his pants, well after he should of gotten over it. And umm it caused a lot of grief for my mother and my father would blow up at him he thought he was too lazy to go to the bathroom. He thought he was too lazy to wake up at night. But eventually he got over it and he became a, a very successful person in life, and he was very good to me, he is very good to all of us. And ah he was my mothers; I think he was my mother's favourite.

**AQ-** Ok, and can you umm,

**JP-** But one thing my father was very umm angry about was any reference to sex. He thought sex in itself was a dirty word. And ah, he would sometimes use it in derisive manner to describe any kind of interesting sexual, ah, ah sexual matters at all. And ah, I learned about what you might call basic sexuality from a friend down the street who was older than me and he made it sound very, very dirty. And umm he, he had a dirty mind he did, he really did.

**AQ-** Umm I know that might umm, that's a thing we will explore umm because we talked about it a bit yesterday.

**JP-** A bit.

**AQ-** Yeah, umm but I'll, maybe I will ask you some questions about your school and what that was like for you umm first. Umm so can you tell me about what it was like for you going to school?

**JP-** Well I started at the usual age, six years old. And we taught at a small school, which was in this community college, this community college you see, trained teachers and they had a school where the teachers could ah be trained in.

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** And umm I went there and ah I was brilliant, ah I could do umm reading before I went to school. My father, my father would read to me ah, by side and he would trace the, the lines as he went on and before too long I could read along with him. And he was that, he taught me simple mathematics and I could catch on to that. So there was nothing they could teach me in grade one. So I was put into grade two and then I preceded there until I was put into grade ah six, and ah, ah I was, how old was I? I was ah ten years old entering grade six. I turned eleven in grade six in April. And umm your old provincial examinations after grade eight, for umm, ah entry to grade nine and ah my father had me write these ah exams meant for a grade eight graduate, he had me write these after grade six. And I passed them and I entered grade nine at the age of eleven. Now umm it was around this time that he told me that he had heart troubles and a doctor had told him he didn't have long to live. And he told me that umm that he, it was up to me to study hard and, and do well in school so that I can support the family. And as you may expect this was a crushing burden to place on an eleven year old boy. And I sort of push out of my mind in a lot of ways, and ah when I entered grade nine the teacher there who was a nice woman she said to me

“John you know what is, what’s behind this, she said ah what’s the rush for you to get through school?” And I, I was quite cocky, and I said “Well if I can do, why not try!” and she said “well, alright”. So we used to ah have a monthly, we would, we would get a graded as that one month she said “well third this month is John” and this is in a class of about thirty students and you had your name in the paper that you had come third. But ah I was not a bad student, I was much smarter in mathematics, which befalls my father that and I, I, but I guess I must of done alright in, in the other courses, in Geography, and French and History and English. I must of done alright, I don’t remember much about them. But sometimes my father would bring me down to the classes he was teaching in mathematics, and would have me do mathematics in front of the students, just to show how, how good I was. And ah I was sometimes brought in to read and I could read at any level and understand it. Yeah so that’s how things went up until grade ten.

**AQ-** Right and what was you’re umm behaviour like at school?

**JP-** Well, I didn’t make trouble, but ah I didn’t, I had difficulty, difficulty relating to my, my the other students liked me, they did, but at the same time I wasn’t comfortable cause you know they were dating and the, the boys would talk about their sexual experiences. And umm this wasn’t something I could share, and umm of course and ah, ah for my own age group I wasn’t very popular umm because some of them bullied me. Now I would say about bullying, it was a two way street because sometimes I would be the bully. Now this, this may be true of a lot of cases, ah I don’t know, there is quiet and emphasis today on bullying and I sometimes wonder if in certain circumstances if the child who is bullied may also be a bully. Have you ever ah run across that?

**AQ-** I think I have heard stuff about that. Yeah!

**JP-** Yeah

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** And umm I was in active in wolf clubs, that's the younger, younger classification for boy scouts.

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** Ah but ah I never went to camp, because I was afraid of the water, and ah I had heard that in camp they would throw you in the water to make you swim. And I didn't want to go because I didn't want to be thrown in the water and I never went to camp.

**AQ-** Ok and umm when you were a child, umm were you ever ill physically or emotionally or mentally?

**JP-** I would often get ill in the middle of winter, I apparently I got bronchial pneumonia sometimes, and I would be sent to my grandmothers, my grandparent's farm in New Brunswick. And I just loved it there, I just loved it there, they were good to me, the food was good. My mother could never cook very well

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** And we didn't have good food anyway in Charlottetown in the winter, it wasn't like today, when you could get fresh produce and fresh that. And, and also my father was trying to save money for ah, for if he should die he, he tried very hard to save money. And umm consequently we, we didn't have a lot and I remember, umm but I'll, I'll just stick to the subject, I would go into my grandparent's farm and I just loved it on the farm, the farm life, the boys I would meet in the neighbourhood, we would play hockey together, and umm, umm good food, and I would get

healthy in no time and then I would go back home, back home to Charlottetown. But umm ah oh yes, as I was saying my father was trying to save money and we lived in ah the poor area of town, although he didn't have, he didn't make much money as a teacher then at the community college he didn't make much money. And I know later on when I was in, was going to university, and I got a summer job out in Ontario I was going to be paid a \$1.95 an hour. And he had told me that he had never made that much money, now that was in 1957 and ah of course you know a \$1.95 then was very good pay, yup.

**AQ-** Yeah, umm when, when you were a child did anyone close to you die or umm or did you ever move when you were a child and how did that effect you?

**JP-** Umm we've moved, we were living in a ah a large house and we had an apartment in a large house in Charlottetown, and the house was sold and the new owner converted to apartments, ah small apartments, and we had to move so we moved to another part of town, which was a nicer home and we had oil heat instead of coal, we had oil heat. I think that the rent was thirty dollars a month, and umm that was a move. We moved to a new neighbourhood, but it wasn't a wealthy neighbourhood by any means you know it was rather a slummy area. But indeed a lot of Toronto, a lot of Charlottetown at that time was a poor area. You know.

**AQ-** Ok, yeah and did you ever umm experience surgery for physical problems as a child or later in your life?

**JP-** Surgery?

**AQ-** Yeah!

**JP-** Ah I had my tonsils out when I was quite young

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** But I came through that quiet well, I didn't, I wasn't traumatized about being in hospital. Umm although I had to go to the bathroom once and I was under orders to call a nurse if I needed to use the bed pan or you know to, to the urinal. And I tried to wake up the boy, there was only one bozzer, bu-bu-buzzer for four, four students, sorry, for four children there was only one buzzer. And I couldn't wake the boy up I whispered to him so I got out of bed and went to the bathroom, I didn't flush the toilet and when the nurse came in, in the morning and saw that there, that somebody had urinated in the toilet she was quite angry. And but ah I tried to explain to her that I couldn't, couldn't wake him up. We should of all had a buzzer of course but they, they were poor; it was a poor hospital you couldn't afford a buzzer for everybody.

**AQ-** Right, ok, did you experience mental health problems as a child?

**JP-** I can't say I did.

**AQ-** No.

**JP-** No I can't say I did. I wasn't happy all the time. I know my father once was talking about me to my mother and he had said "John's not happy" and ah my father believed a great deal in, in spanking, I used to get spanked a lot, and umm, and umm for every infra, for every infraction of the rules.

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** And umm my mother she wasn't, she wasn't perfect. I, I, I liked her better but my mother could not condone umm ah, ah disobedience. She would, she would give great punishment if you disobeyed her for any reason. And umm I know one time I went to a movie that she didn't want



me to go to, and I went, went with another boy. And she wouldn't let me go to a movie again for a whole year. Now that's a long time when you're a small boy. And ah other things but she'd also say she was going to take me or do something for me and then I would break a rule or do something wrong, and she would not live up to her word. So I soon then learned that I couldn't depend on her to keep her word. I mean after all its very hard for a small child to be good all the time, to not, not do right all the time. And ah, and she would break her word.

**AQ-** Right, ok where you ever institutionalized as a child or a young person?

**JP-** Institutionalized as, as, ah for punishment or, or treatment or?

**AQ-** More well, either one actually.

**JP-** No. No. No. No. Well they didn't institutionalize children then anyway, you're talking about the 1940's and, and 50's. Well they did have reform schools for, for, for disobedient children but I never went to one, no.

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** No, no

**AQ-** (Ok, so now umm, well before we move on would you like a class of water or?)

**JP-** (Umm, why not, I will have a class of water.)

**AQ-** (Ok, let me pour that for you, here you go. Thank you)

**JP-** (Thank you)

**AQ-** So now let's start with some questions about your mental health history and encounters with the mental health system. Can you remember the onset of your mental illness?

**JP-** Yes. (Did you drop something?)

**AQ-** (I did that's ok)

**JP-** Umm alright well, to begin at the beginning umm I was, it was in 1965 when I was twenty-six years old, I was in university studying engineering now that seems quite late for me to be studying engineering but I had already started studying engineering and I dropped out due to ah lack of funds. And I, I didn't want to take anymore from my parents to go to, to college. So I had dropped out of University and worked for four years. And then I went ah back to study engineering and in 1965 I was umm in British Columbia and my employer gave us psychological, tested us in a lot of different ways, for umm intelligence, and also for word association, dealing with umm, to assess your, your reactions towards and we had an interview afterwards with a psychologist and he said that by the tests it indicated that I should be doing much better in university then I was, and he also suggested that I was troubled and might need to see a psychiatrist and umm so he sent me to, we can have you see one here if you like, in this small town in British Columbia and I said "well no I said ah, ah I will be going to Halifax I said, it's better to wait for that". Now I had already agreed that I was going to be the editor of the school paper in ah in Halifax at this university ah where I was studying engineering, it's now part of Dalhousie but at that time it was an independent university called Nova Scotia Technical College. And umm I was apprehensive about it because I didn't know how I was going to write, I wasn't much at writing and when I told my father that I was going to do it his first reaction was you can't do it, and ah when I came back it was very hard for me to do it and I neglected my

studies very much. And ah I would ah be nervous all the time about getting the paper ready, and I neglected, I had already said I don't want to repeat myself but I really let my studies go because once the paper came out I was so relieved that I'd, that I'd just relax. And finally, I am not sure what, what convinced me to go but I did go to, to get referred to a psychiatrist and ah he was quiet a distinguished psychiatrist he was a very good man, ah I think he is dead now, he probably oh he must be, I'm seventy-one, so he was at least ah fifteen years older than me, maybe twenty years older than me. And ah he was very, he did, he did his best, the man did his best but he treated me so seriously that I began to feel that something was indeed very wrong and he gave me the pills, now I didn't expect pills, I expected psycho therapy, but he gave me pills and I would take them and one day I got feeling shaky in class and I left the classroom and walked around town eating pills. And then I went into see him and his first reaction was shock, he said "how many of those pills have you taken?" and I said "I don't know" and said "well" he said "here, here's a, here's a prescription go down and get yourself some" because I was shaky and he, he handed me a prescription, did you ever hear of chlorpromazine?

**AQ-** I have, yes.

**JP-** That was the major tranquilizer of the day and I took, I took that and then I was, I had arranged that I was going to go home to visit my parents and I'd just got on the train and I collapsed and just dozed all the way, I was in an empty car and the conductor found me and said "what's the trouble?" I said "tired" and but I, straightened out by the time we got to Sackville where, where my parents were living then and ah I was ok but I, I, I am trying my best to ah tell you but anyway umm to carry on after my, my doctor persuaded me to stop being editor of the paper to give it up and ah so ah I did. But I had a sense of failure but the only thing was that I still kept my hand in because I was, my editorials were called the best in the maritime's by an

editor from the Globe n Mail and so the new editor said “why don’t you write the editorials and I will take care of the rest of it” so I did. But then umm I took a train ride home again to visit my parents this was in the spring of 1966 and I had some beer on the, on the trains and my father didn’t want me to drink and I got home and I felt afraid that he was going to know that I had drank and I felt very tense and I got into a, a ah, a ah condition known as panic. I don’t know if you have ever heard of that?

**AQ-** Yes

**JP-** You have, it was terrible, and it was just terrible. I couldn’t relax, I couldn’t sleep, and the same time I couldn’t stay awake. I was nodding and I’d, I’d, while in the waiting room but I could not relax and go to sleep, I could not get my mind at anything expect myself. And I would not, and it happened to me later on life too once. And I never want to experience that again, but I don’t think I ever will because a lot of sources of stress are gone out of my life. I no longer have a job, I have a pension and ah I have support in the ah, in the Connections. I love the staff there and everything is fine. So that was how I started in mental health.

**AQ-** Ok, umm what, maybe I can ask for clarification umm was it a panic attack? Is that what you were diagnosed with or would you, did you.

**JP-** I don’t know, I don’t know about a panic attack.

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** Umm I don’t know if you would recognize that as a panic attack.

**AQ-** Ok.

**JP-** Umm I don’t know how to answer that, it was a form of depression known as panic.

**AQ-** Oh, ok.

**JP-** Ah, It wasn't where you're running around trying to ah, umm get umm free of some situation, ah I was, it was just, not being able to relax or, or feel good about anything or, or

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** Not being able to get your mind of yourself.

**AQ-** Right, ok, umm and what was your diagnosis umm when your doctor

**JP-** Depression.

**AQ-** Gave you those pills?

**AQ-** Ok. Ok, umm do you feel

**JP-** Depression and anxiety.

**AQ-** Yeah and you were saying you didn't expect to be given pills.

**JP-** No.

**AQ-** But do you...

**JP-** I had never, I had never heard of them really. I, I, I was surprised, I was started off on something called Librium and ah and then I got a stronger form of, of a tranquilizer and then we came into chlorpromazine which is a very strong antipsychotic.

**AQ-** Yes and how long did you take ah chlorpromazine for?

**JP-** Oh years, umm I guess umm, until, well I started taking lithium because I became manic at a later time, I became manic, I was later diagnosed manic-depressives and after that I took lithium to combat that but I still think I also took chlorpromazine and ah I ah finally got off that, oh, I guess in my fifties when they got something called **dialalprodex**

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** Which is a mood stabilizer, and I haven't taken chlorpromazine since. Sometimes I have a yearning for it because if you don't take chlorpromazine for awhile and then take it, it just knocks you right out and you sleep, you know you really do get a good night sleep. But sometimes, sometimes I yearn for it

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** But I don't want it because it made me react to sunlight and I would get a very red face and terribly uncomfortable prickle, prickly and burning and you never get over it, you never, you never get used to it. You never get, you never get a tan or anything like that. Your face is very, very red, like a lobster.

**AQ-** Right, right, umm in your early experience with ah the mental health system umm did you, did anything help you that was, any sort of treatment help you. I guess I am wondering whether the pills did what they were supposed to in your mind whether there were any other treatments that umm were helpful.

**JP-** No, it was just the pills umm for a long time. Umm I never got into group therapy.

**AQ-** No

**JP-** You might, you might, you see to umm, to go on a little bit further from 1966 when I collapsed and ah was hospitalized. I didn't tell you but I was hospitalized in the VG (Victoria General) after ah my manic attack. After my panic, after my panic disorder I was hospitalized at the VG for a few weeks.

**AQ-** Was that in 1966?

**JP-** Yes.

**AQ-** Ok.

**JP-** Yup

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** And then I dropped out of college and never went back. They, they wanted me to stay in Halifax and get treatment and go back and finish up in engineering but I didn't have any more money anyway. So I went up to Quebec and ah my doctors advised against it, but I went up and I had a very, very, hard time. I didn't have any therapy. You know I couldn't speak French well enough and they couldn't speak English well enough but I took the pills, chlorpromazine, that's all I took. And ah the French family I stayed with as a border, they were very kind to me. But then the summer came to an end and of course I wasn't a good worker, I wasn't a, they wanted me to do things, they must of wondered what was wrong with me with my red face and all that. Sometimes I would be very but ah I got through the summer and I came back and I got a job in ah Glace Bay in Cape Breton. I got a job there as a process operator. I don't know if you know what a process operator does, well you turn valves and you operate remote controls

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** To control the process, so I was there for ah two and half years, and ah I didn't tell them when I went there that I'd had a breakdown because they would not have given me the job. That's the only type of work that I had experience in, was a process operator. But its regards as a high stress job, and they would not have hired me and I wanted to work. I didn't want to, you know there was nothing else that can do or else go on welfare, and of course that would not have given me much money, and where would I stay, I didn't want to stay with my parents anymore.

**AQ-** No

**JP-** So anyways ah things went better for me until I changed my job and became an inspector for them, now an inspector is somebody, I won't go into it, inspector inspect maintenance work and inspect things in the plant to see if they were starting to corrode and we gotten a new boss and he was very hard to work for, and once again I went into a panic of depression of fearing him. I feared him, but I got over that, I got, I came out of that and then now that's a long time ago, that's where in 1969 now. And ah it looked as if the plant was going to shut down it was corroded out and it wasn't operating properly and there were an awful lot of things wrong with it, there were leaks in the pipes from ah the corrosion nature of seawater so I knew that it wasn't going to stay operating much longer

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** And I went to a similar plant in a place called Port Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia on the straight of Canso, and ah I went there as an operator once again and once again I lied to get my job. And that's when I had my first panic not panic, manic, manic attack. I had my manic attack there. There was a dangerous situation at the plant and I performed very well so I thought, and I



thought I was a hero, as a manic you know, I wasn't a hero at all. I thought I had done a lot more than I did. But anyway, I was in hospital for awhile and I was severely manic, and ah

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** They were nervous, the doctors were nervous about having me there. My psychiatrist put me in there because he didn't want to send me to the Nova Scotia Hospital but I got sent, so he went sent me there. After awhile I wouldn't take my pills, and that, that, that the other doctors didn't want me there at all because who knows what a manic patient will do, you might go pull needles out of people's arms you don't know what they may do. And so ah anyway I went home with my parents for this, for Christmas, this all happened before Christmas and then ah I was given a job writing standard procedures and ah but I was aware that umm the plant was a hazardous place to work because you could get a leak at anytime of, of a, of poisonous gas and I became manic I think two more times and then I went back to college. My, my mother died, first my father died, then my mother died and I got some, some ah money from her estate when I died, and I went back in 1977 to ah...

**JP-** University where I studied engineering and took engineering. Ah are we, we doing ok cause,

**AQ-** We are doing great. Yeah.

**JP-** Ok. Were getting along. 1977, in 1978 I finished my first year and done well and I looked for a summer job and there was a job opened up in an oil refinery across the ah, across the ah harbour here in, here in Halifax over in the Dartmouth side,

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** And I took it and it was very good pay. But once again I lied about my medical history because they never would of hired me if they`d known that I was mentally ah so-so, taking pills.

**AQ-** Yeah, yes

**JP-** And ah I finished the summer and I told my co-workers that I had ah, had been, I`d been mental and they, oh in, in the mean time, in the mean time, I must go back.

**AQ-** Sure

**JP-** I told you that I`d had manic attacks and they put me this time in the Nova Scotia Hospital for them.

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** Yeah, so anyways, I told them, my co-workers there on my last day that I had been in the Nova Scotia Hospital. Then I was very proud of the fact that I had done got through this, the job, the job. But, and I blew sky high, I was registered, I was doing ok, but I, I went manic attack severely manic.

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** And ah so that knocked me out of that year of college, but I stayed in Halifax and I found jobs

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** To put, put me through and ah I went the following year back to college, and umm that brings us to, I got my degree in 1980, I should of got in 79, but due to the fact that I missed a year I didn`t get it until 1980.

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** And I got a very good job out in Alberta at the oil, at the oil ah company there. And I was, I was open with them. Ah I had my psychiatrist do my medical and ah so ah, this is in 1980.

**AQ-** Yup

**JP-** So anyway they were reluctant to take me on, they offered me the job first when they got my medical they were reluctant to take me on. And ah I went out there and I stopped taking chlorpromazine and ah I couldn't sleep, and I couldn't sleep. But I would be awake all night sometimes I would go into work and work at night. Sometimes I would go to the emergency department at hospitals and just sit there put in the night. And ah, but I would take the chlorpromazine on the weekends and it would knock me out and I would get my sleep. And umm some doctors thought it was alright and some doctors didn't know. But anyway they sent me up to the ah, ah a place up north in a camp, oil camp, to get practical experience, you see my immediate boss's did not know about this, only the, only the, only the company doctor knew about my condition, the company doctor and probably the personal manager

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** But on my way up to the camp I called, I went in to see the company doctor, and ah told him I was apprehensive about going up north because I said ah of this, and he said "you're supposed to be cured" and I saw right away, I said I was afraid somebody might tease me about being from the Maritimes and backward and he said, I saw he wasn't my friend the doctor wasn't my friend, so I said "Oh I will be alright, oh I will be alright" And ah I wasn't alright, I found that ah the living, your living with your job, your living like camp you're going to an office at a camp. And ah, I, I, I told them, I told the boss I had, I couldn't come back. Anyway we won't go into details

**AQ-** Ok, ok

**JP-** The, the, the end result was that they told me to go on part- time for the time being and they kept me on half pay and ah I got another job they were a consulting firm with the same pay, very good pay. They gave me very good pay.

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** And I got another job there, and I did well with them for awhile, but then my brother came out to Alberta to visit me. And ah we spent the weekend together and ah we went, lived there, we went around ah to visit other places and ah we had a snow storm and ah he missed his flight back and he was sort of sour with me he thought it was my fault

**AQ-** Oh

**JP-** And that, and that hurt me and I thought I was depressed and I told, and I told him that I was in a state of depression. And ah, Anna, I refused to get well, I could've, should've, not of given in but I did and they let me go, and that's in 1982

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** And that brings us, do you have any questions now?

**AQ-** Sure, yeah, I

**JP-** Lets, lets, let's stop my story for awhile.

**AQ-** Ok, anyways well you're doing really well ah I guess one thing I thought, we might want to go backwards a bit.

**JP-** Surly.

**AQ-** Cause last night when we talked umm you mentioned sort of issues with sexuality.

**JP-** Yes

**AQ-** And that was a major problem for you when you first got ill, or when you first got treated by the mental health system.

**JP-** Yes

**AQ-** Is that correct?

**JP-** Well you see umm, umm when I was promoted into grade nine, well course, ah the boys and girls were dating then, and ah I felt out of place in that regard and I was afraid to ask a girl for a date and umm when I went to college I was still very young. I only was going through puberty when I entered college at the age of sixteen and I was very undersized and umm so I, I didn't ask a girl for a dates even thou I, I shot up in my second year I, I became tall and I would've liked to taken out a girl but I was afraid, I was afraid of girls very much. And ah my father took a very dim view of anything to do with that. You know he, he came into my room one time in residence and we had a ah, a flyer there about the engineer's princess for campus queen

**AQ-** Oh

**JP-**And he looked at that and he said "is that your girlfriend". I had never taken a girl out, I had no money to take a girl out, he wouldn't give me any spending money he wouldn't. He thought I should do without spending money. And my mother would give me money to, to spend at the coffee house that we had on campus. And. and that was the only source of spending money I had, umm I didn't have any money to spend on things like a stapler or, or a paper clips, or, or a

file folders or anything like that to organize my work. Everything was in a shambles on my desk and umm that's how hard up I was for money. And ah, but ah, umm so I had my first date at the age of twenty when I went up to work in the mines. I finished Mount Allison with my engineering diploma at the age of twenty and I went up to work in the mines in Ontario in (1920) for the summer and ah there were a bunch of us who took out some nurses and we just went to umm, a, a lounge for that and ah I didn't kiss her. I, I, I'm not sure how it went, but she said right to me, you know she liked me, but umm anyway umm I, when I got to Halifax at the age of twenty, the first, remember how I, I, I took two, two attempts at engineering

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-**The first one at the age of twenty the second one at the age of ah, of ah, the age of twenty-five and in the mean time I've been out working but I did meet girls then, when I was in Saint John working and I did meet girls and ah I did take them out but I would find something wrong with them, there was nothing, they're good girls they liked me and, and I'd, I'd, I'd but I would reject them, you know for some reason. But there was one girl that I met when I'd, I'd left Saint John and went to Port Hawkesbury, not the second time that I'm talking about when I became manic, but in the mean time I'd, I'd went to, to another place in Port Hawkesbury and ah I'd met a girl there and ah I was very fond of her but Anna, I was screwed up I, I, I ah rejected her too but at the same time I was very attracted to her and she, and she was good to me. She couldn't understand what was wrong with me and ah I just ah, I don't know, I, I just talking about it confuses me.

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** I just wonder if someday we will meet again, she`s been married since and had children, I don`t know if her husband is still living or not but at the same time if she ever becomes free again, now she`ll be in her sixties at this time, but ah if her husband ever dies I want to see her again and, and take her out.

**AQ-** Ok, yeah

**JP-** Who knows.

**AQ-** Yeah, so

**JP-** Is that good enough?

**AQ-** Sure, but I guess I just I need to know when, when the psychologist said you should see a psychiatrist, was it to do with your issues around sexuality or?

**JP-** Well yes, I, I, I think so I, I, I because that`s when I thought my major, my major problem was sexuality, but we never dealt with that he, he was too busy getting me to umm resign as, as editor of the school paper to deal with the sexuality problems.

**AQ-** Ok, yeah so,

**JP-** But I did meet a girl at that time who was nice to me she was a Mount Allison graduate too, and I did date her while I was sick

**AQ-** Oh

**JP-** And she was good to me.

**AQ-** Ok, right now you mentioned being in the Nova Scotia Hospital, do you remember how many times you were in the Nova Scotia Hospital? Or other like psychiatric facility.

**JP-** I think it was three times all together.

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** There was twice while I was manic, and while I was at ah Port Hawkesbury in this plant that was dangerous to work in

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** And I became manic.

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** There was twice at that time and then a third time when I was in this oil refinery and I was supposed to register for my final year of engineering,

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** And I went sky-high then and they took me in that time too. And that's when I really started to calm down and ah not get, not get manic anymore and not get severely injured.

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** Yeah I was also in the Abby Lane shortly after that last trip to the ah, umm, ah Nova Scotia Hospital

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** The same time I was in but it was for a short time and I wasn't severely sick.



**AQ-** Right

**JP-** Yeah

**AQ-** K

**JP-** So I think it was three times in the Nova Scotia Hospital.

**AQ-** Ok, and when you were in that Nova Scotia Hospital that last time and you said you were calming down, not getting manic anymore was it due to the treatment you were receiving or

**JP-** I think so they gave me shock treatments.

**AQ-** K, yeah

**JP-** Yeah

**AQ-** How did you feel about that?

**JP-** Well I kind of dreaded that because ah like they would put you under without anaesthetic and you would feel a rush coming up so I'd sort of dreaded that. Umm they gave the chlorpromazine.

**AQ-** So

**JP-** Umm

**AQ-** So were, do you feel these, these were the things that helped your mania or was it that they talked to you or was it.

**JP-** I think the shock treatments did help me.

**AQ-** The shock treatments helped.

**JP-** But umm, and ah

**AQ-** Did you, sorry.

**JP-** Go ahead

**AQ-** Well did you have shock treatments at any other time besides that time?

**JP-** No

**AQ-** No

**JP-** No

**AQ-** K

**JP-** The three times I was there I took shock treatment but in the last, in the last time I tried to commit suicide in hospital I was trusted patient and I could keep my razor blades in the, in the nursing station so one time I went in there to get them, they said what do you want Mr. Patterson, I said "I was going to commit suicide" and I went in and got a razor blade and went in the bathroom and started slash my wrists and then the orderly came and to me and took the blade away from me and stood with me while they. I had, had a vacation away and I guess that must of upset me for some reason umm and I hit the orderly and I hit him hard and then he put me on the floor but he didn't beat me up.

**AQ-** No

**JP-** But anyways, I got more shock treatments after that. That's the only time I've ever, I've considered umm suicide since then sometimes and when I, in 1984 when I first went to Toronto I decided I was going to do it, and I wrote my notes to people explaining that I was going to leave this world, but I found when it came time to do it that I couldn't do it and Anna I've, I've rejected that since then, I know ah I know I can't do it. I want to see what's going to happen tomorrow. And right now I'm, I'm pretty happy I'm so I, I, I don't think I'm a strong rage for suicide. Even thou I think about it sometimes I can't do it.

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** Do you want anymore?

**AQ-** (Umm well, maybe would you like to take a break for a minute or?)

**JP-** (No were on a role. Unless, unless my voice is, is starting to dry out)

**AQ-** (No its fine. Yeah it's fine. )

**JP-** (What would we do if we took a break anyway what would we do?)

**AQ-** (Well you could drink some more, then we could talk about what you might want to talk about next, umm it's up to you.)

**JP-** (No there's no sense in taking a break.)

**AQ-** (There's no sense taking a break.)

**JP-** (We'll, we'll, we'll do, we'll do what you want to do and.)

**AQ-** (Ok well we might be another twenty minutes or a half hour)

**JP-** (Alright.)

**AQ-** (Is that ok?)

**JP-** (Yup)

**AQ-** Umm, well, umm when you look back on your, the years with a mental illness can you tell me what, what do you think was the most helpful for you in your recovery?

**JP-** Well

**AQ-** Or would even use that word “recovery”?

**JP-** I don't think I ever really recovered, fully recovered. Umm, oh gee Anna that's a, that's a good one. Umm well alright let's, let's go to 1984. In 1982 umm I was in Calgary and do you remember I said that I was working for a consulting firm.

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** And had been fired by them after awhile because I wasn't doing any work and my brother in Tru, in Halifax who is now dead, he invited me to come live with them, ok, so I did and took care of his children he gave me a few dollars and free room and board and then finally I found that I was fighting with them so I went out to various places and took room and board and I wasn't very stable but I got low in money and I went to Toronto not knowing what lay ahead of me. But umm just going there on the chance that I might get a job, so I went there.

**AQ-** What year was that?

**JP-** Mmm,

**AQ-** What year was that?

**JP-** 1984

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** 1984 went to Toronto

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** And yeah this is my recovery. Umm I didn't have a job, I was on welfare but I was working at ah, at a work that you'd call working, getting paid under the table, have you ever heard of that?

**AQ-** Yup

**JP-** Yeah well I got paid under the table, yup. And I started to relax and get better. I was sleeping and sleeping well, I started to get physically fit

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** And it was, it was just wonderful. And I was at that for four years. And ah I lived in a apartment in the poor section of town full of cock roaches and it ah it was ah pedst, it was prost, prostitutes in the neighbourhood and I became friendly with them, one in particular that ah became my friend and I was friend of hers. She got married and had two daughters by her husband and ah I was friendly with them. Then another ah, I had, I had a hernia open up because of the hard work I was doing so they operated on that and I couldn't do hard work anymore, so I went to the City of Toronto and umm asked them, looked for a job and they needed somebody

with chemical knowledge to work a project they were doing called “Household Hazardous Waste”

**AQ-** Oh ok

**JP-** So, I was working at that and it was not stressful. There’s no stress. Actually if you look back on my working history it was my job which caused me the most stress because it was, I was lying about my medical history to get the job but that makes it worse

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** But the thing is that I felt that I had no choice because all my job experience was at work that is inherently umm ah umm stressful, and if I tried to look for a job like that I wouldn’t get anything I would have to be on welfare, I, I, I didn’t know what else to do but this job that I had with the City of Toronto, I worked on it for nine years, I only had very brief, I think I had one or maybe two attacks of depression but I just took time off for a day or two and got over it. One time the drug store gave me the wrong pills I went for the chlorpromazine and they gave me something else

**AQ-** Oh

**JP-** And just after one day I knew they were the wrong pills and I went back to them took two days off and maybe another day of some other time but I’d, I did, I did have an attack of mania cause my family doctor who had given me my pills said I could go off Lithium and I went off Lithium for several years but one day I was coming home on the bus from my job with the city and just like (the snap of fingers) that I was manic, I could tell. And I called my psychiatrist and ah, and he said get back on your, your Lithium don’t go into work and see me. So I was off work

for about ah two weeks, sick leave. And ah everything calmed down and ah so I guess the biggest factor in my recovery was getting out of high stress jobs and getting into lower stress.

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** I guess that even thou, maybe I became ill, a doctor suggested that my illness may have started when I was promoted way above my years in school but umm anyway that happened

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** But I think, I don't want to repeat myself but I, I, I

**AQ-** That's ok

**JP-** That's, that's the best. And also having these friends in the, in the, in Toronto, these girls, prostitutes they liked me, they told me I had a good name there and ah I didn't take advantage of them, they'd invite me to play pin-pall with them, I would chat with them and ah especially this one girl in particular I've, I've, she's got a boyfriend now I try not to give her money but she often comes at me for money and I'd give her money but I've got a good salary and I've, I've, I'm doing ok.

**AQ-** And you said you have godchildren?

**JP-** Well that's her children. Yeah her son that she had by a boyfriend and her two daughters that she had by umm, by umm, by her husband. Her husband got ah deported.

**AQ-** I see, ok

**JP-** (Anna, I've been drinking water and I was drinking coffee before I came here can you turn that off and, and I can ah run to the bathroom?)

**AQ-** This is the second part of my interview with John Patterson, my name is Anna Quon this is the Our Voices Matter project were filming here on the, at Grosebrook Institute on October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Umm John you just said something interesting, you said it wasn't your medical treatment that made you better.

**JP-** No

**AQ-** Can you tell what, a little bit more about what it was that made you better.

**JP-** A little bit more, well a little bit more I guess it was ah getting away from the Maritimes, moving to a big city, moving to a large city, umm ah having a four year vacation from steady work, four years actually it was five years but the last year wasn't the best because I had a hernia

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** I couldn't do hard work but those four years of just getting welfare, umm getting paid under the table so to speak, and being physically fit, sleeping well, that's very important. Right now I don't sleep well; all things aside I have a bladder condition that gets me up several times a night. But anyway that's, that's neither here nor there, but then getting a job which was low stress and high paying at the same time that, it was, I made good money, I saved a lot of money and this money is going to go to these children in Toronto that I befriended I am going to see that there well looked after.

**JP-** And I'm going to ah, I got make up my will to decide ah who else is going to get it. But umm in a nut shell, oh yes, there was a self-help group in Toronto called the ah Mood Disorder Association that I became involved in. And I did volunteer work with them answering the phones, and ah that was good.



**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** That was, that was good, people helping each other.

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** And ah, ah that but they don't, they don't, there not umm, they don't try to ah umm get into conflict with the medical establishment, this umm self help group is, they don't try to say they weren't sick, that the doctors are, are bad. They don't do it that way.

**AQ-** No

**JP-** They help, they work with the system.

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** Yeah

**AQ-** Is that, is that what you appreciate about them?

**JP-** Yes, I liked, I like that about them. They, they, you, you don't, there's no good in denying that you're sick. You, you can't deny it. Ah well, maybe, maybe some people, well a lot, a lot of people do, a lot of people do they blame everybody but ah to my case, in, in my case I don't try to blame anybody, it happened and that's just, just the way it happened.

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** And ah maybe I made some bad choices in my life, maybe I did that but umm

**AQ-** Well what about your life today can you describe it for me?

**JP-** Its quite dull it, it, it revolves around the ah, the Connections where I do ah, I go there every day very seldom miss a day, umm

**AQ-** Connections Clubhouse?

**JP-** Yes

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** It's no longer called a clubhouse though they

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** They decided they didn't want to call it a clubhouse anymore. I have my own ideas why they didn't because if the word got out on the street that it was a good place to join because they had food at low prices and a good place to drop in. So I guess for that they wanted to make sure that it stayed as a place for people who had ah issues

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** And umm when I get home from that I ah, umm well I eat as many meals there as I can, when I get home I watch TV. Umm my family doesn't, isn't very close to me anymore, well there not very close but umm I on the other hand I, I, I feel that I've lost confidence in myself now. I mean I, I, I feel like I can't, there's a lot of things can't, I can't do anymore. I got arthritis in my legs so I've, I can't ah and I've lost my strength. I used to be fairly strong, I'm not strong anymore and ah I've just get through I go down to YMCA I exercise there, ah I don't read anymore ah my eyesight is too poor to read and ah so my, and ah so my everyday life isn't that great I live for the week, through the clubhouse.

**AQ-** Ok, ok

**JP-** Yeah

**AQ-** Can I ask why you came back to Nova Scotia when you felt Toronto was a, was a healthy place for you?

**JP-** Well I came back because I was persuaded by a psychiatrist who was not good a good influence to take medical, medical termination.

**AQ-** Oh

**JP-** And ah so of course he, he made out the reports and umm but he was trying to get me into a nursing home that he had in Branford and ah of course when I saw that I knew I had made a mistake. But anyway the, the, the work was done now. They put me in for Canada Pension and put me in for ah disability pension with the City of Toronto

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** And I came back here because once I left my job I didn't have much to live for there anymore. Ah I had a restaurant there that was my favourite restaurant I used to eat there a lot, it closed up.

**AQ-** Oh

**JP-** And umm I ah, I just felt that, my brother in Toronto here in Halifax he is now dead but he suggested I come back here where I can live cheaper

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** And I did. But ah

**AQ-** Do, what kind of social supports do you make use of here, umm Connections Clubhouse is one or Connections is one, umm are there other community organizations or people who are in your life that help you make like help your, ah help you to keep your well being.

**JP-** No that's about it.

**AQ-** No

**JP-** No just connections

**AQ-** Connections, do you have

**JP-** Umm I see a therapist out at Bayer's Road,

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** Once every five or six weeks

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** Umm I don't see my psychiatrist at all hardly now, I only see him about once a year.

**AQ-** Ok and umm, do you have many friends or umm?

**JP-** No I don't

**AQ-** No

**JP-** Not even through Connections

**AQ-** No, no, ok, umm so when you, so after the nine years in Toronto you took medical termination from your job and then you came here

**JP-** Yeah, yup

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** I worked nine years there with the, the city but before that I think it was five years ah without a job

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** Without a steady job.

**AQ-** Right, right, ok. Umm so what if, what, what, what could make life better for you here as a person living with a mental illness?

**JP-** I, I would say having a drop in center that was open all week long and ah, and where I could ah do umm, do the job that I now do with Connections, you know I always find something to do there umm to help out and try to. Or else just sit around, relax. And umm

**AQ-** What about umm your spiritual life? Do you have umm a, a sort of a faith or a some,

**JP-** Well yes I do. I go to the Unitarian Church on Ingles Street.

**AQ-** Oh ok

**JP-** And umm I sometimes, I haven't gone to the United Church for a long time. But I go there and umm I just enjoy being with people there, I don't really find that I get a lot out of there

sermons sometimes there, they ask, there sort of, oh I can't interpret their religion to them perhaps you should go yourself and find out what there about, maybe you do know anyway.

**AQ-** Well I've been there once,

**JP-** Once, yeah

**AQ-** Once or twice to the Unitarian Church, I've heard of it, about it, umm yeah but I, I know that there's quite a community of people there, friendly people.

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** Yeah

**AQ-** Umm so, ok, so, umm if you were, if your to look back on your life with a mental illness can you tell me what's changed in your, in your treatment and, and like regard to discrimination or stigma anything that you could reflect back on you know that's changed.

**JP-** Umm,

**AQ-** For the better or for the worst I guess

**JP-** Well I'm not one of these people that dwells on stigma, umm maybe I have suffered from it in a case of, of employment but damn it, it's true I, I ah, I got myself into a umm line of work which was stressful and which I wasn't fit for because I couldn't get anything else. I guess the only thing that could help me was umm sympathetic people that would guide me, give me work where I could support myself even with the, I don't whether to call it stigma or what, perhaps it is stigma, I know that at this oil company I dealt with, where I was up in the oil camp up, up north. When I got back to the office they were furious with me, the, my, my boss said "I don't

want somebody here who has a mental illness, I want out of here” and the ah personal manager wasn’t very happy with me either he was shouting at me, and ah

**AQ-** Wow

**JP-** So that, that was my, I don’t know if you would call it stigma or, or what you would call it but ah that hurt

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** And umm they didn’t, they weren’t helpful for me at all but then the umm, I didn’t hide anything from them. And ah but I realized I had no future with them anymore.

**AQ-** Right,

**JP-** Ah does that answer your question?

**AQ-** Yeah, cause I think umm, I think that’s one thing that maybe has changed a bit is, employers responsibilities towards umm you know there, there employees that have mental health issues

**JP-** Yeah

**AQ-** No more under law, we are supposed to be not, not to be discriminated against

**JP-** Mm hmm

**AQ-** Yeah so yeah that’s a good point, umm is there anything that you’d like to add about your story umm or about ah living with a mental illness

**JP-** No I can't think of anything that we've, I've certainly talked a lot about my life to you, of course I've left out some things. I mean I'd, I would bore you, not bore you just confuse you if I told you about all the things I'd done in my life. After all I am seventy-one and ah in seventy-one years to bring it all down to an hour and a half is pretty difficult but I feel I've, that I'd done, I'd touch up, if there's anything you'd review on that you'd like to have clarified

**AQ-** Sure

**JP-** You can get in touch with me anytime

**AQ-** Ok

**JP-** Umm, there's nothing I want to add just to umm, I wish that I had taken a wife and ah had a little girl that would sit on me knee and call me daddy

**AQ-** Oh

**JP-** This is something that I haven't got but I got those children in Toronto that I am going to try and take care of.

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** There not young kids anymore, there, one girl is almost nineteen and the other girl is oh I don't know how old she is, about twenty-five, the boy is eighteen

**AQ-** Right

**JP-** Ah so I got them. But it's too late to, to, to cry about that. I mean I am seventy-one years old I do have a ninety-one year old friend but umm I just can't bring myself to date her. I mean she's a nice woman but there's too much of an age gap there. But umm on the other hand I'd like



to find a fifty-one year old girl to take out, a woman to take out. Or someone my own age to take out

**AQ-** Right, Ok one more thing that I want ask you

**JP-** Sure

**AQ-** You'd, you'd mentioned last night was that one reason you wanted to tell your story is that you think it might help others and I guess I want to know what would your advice be to people who, who look at, or hear your story and cope with a mental illness themselves

**JP-** Well I'd say try not to see stigma. You know, I, I feel that don't stigmatize yourself you know maybe you know that the, try to cooperate with people trying to help you, don't argue as much as you feel you should because you know they're trying to help you and if you umm, I'd, I'd known people that ah, that were at war with the psychiatrists

**AQ-** Yeah

**JP-** And ah, they were hurting themselves. There's a lot of people trying to help you and don't be too stubborn by insisting that your ok that the system is all wrong

**AQ-** Right, Ok

**JP-** I know a, I know one woman who ah well she has Parkinson's disease now but I her through commun, comm, connections and she had taken a masters degree in counselling from some phony college, a college three month course or something like that, a master of counselling of something like that and she said she was getting the wrong treatment what she needed was another kind of treatment and ah you know you try not to question to much about what you're

getting. I know in my own case I'd but you know I'm, I'm gosh I think I have said as much as I can

**AQ-** Ok, yeah, I appreciate it, thank you very much for sharing your story

**JP-** Well thank you

**AQ-** Yeah, ok

**JP-** As I say if there's anything that's confusing or feel that should be dealt with further just give me a call

**AQ-** Will do

**JP-** Ok

**AQ-** Thank you very much

**JP-** Alright then