

Tacoma Community History Project
FINAL TRANSCRIPT – SECOND INTERVIEW

Narrator: Brian Skiffington
Date: May 15, 2014
Interviewed by: Zack Pattin
Place: Tacoma, WA

Zack Pattin: OK it's May 15th, 2014 at 4:04 PM. Continuing the interview with Brian Skiffington from two days prior. Brian will you state your name again for the record?

Brian Skiffington: I am Brian David Skiffington.

ZP: Thank you. So we last left off talking about the Frameshop and its meteoric little rise and I fall, and I believe you were going to tell me about the Viaduct and how that came to be.

BS: OK. To start for the Viaduct, we have to start with a place called the Hall in University Place. At this point in time I was still booking a lot. I was not transitioning out of Tacoma but I was really starting to take booking serious and had been booking in Olympia, Seattle, kinda all over the place. I just kinda filled a role there. While I was going this route some young kids had picked up on what we were doing, booking their own shows and there was this VFW hall on 56th and Bridgeport, that sounds right, 56th kinda by the skate park out there. The VFW Hall and Josh Bromley and some of his friends were able to talk this veteran's hall into letting them do shows there. I booked a series of shows there for the summer. They were having shows a couple nights a week. They lasted for about six or seven months and they had a show that had a violent faction of people there and the rental security guard there that was part of the requirement for renting the space was – I don't know if he was beat up or intimidated or what happened but something happened where they basically lost the use of that space. Which was very unfortunate because it was the only things in Tacoma at the time. So the quest for a new place was pretty vital and important and they found this really awful place on South Tacoma way, close to the B&I, probably between S 60th and like 80th, somewhere in that area. It had no bathrooms, no heat. It was an old warehouse and they built a stage in the corner. And they had probably five shows and got shut down by the fire department. I only went to one show there and it was *packed*. Two or three-hundred people were in there. So it was very apparent that Tacoma needed a venue. Things had been building and that place got shut down and immediately we started looking. I didn't know all these kids that well but this is where we all put our minds together. The Frameshop had been shut down, the hall had been shut down, the "Junkyard" which was a warehouse – sorry on a junkyard, in a junkyard area – we all combined forces and we decided we were gonna start a venue. We found a place on a block off of South Tacoma... Center St. and Wilkeson in Nalley Valley. And it was a gutted out, old warehouse. It had no interior walls, just exposed beams, but it was perfect and raw for what we trying to do. It also didn't have bathrooms but it had plumbing for bathrooms so my dad and I framed walls for the bathrooms, we got plumbing for it. We had work crews clearing out a field next to it to build a parking lot. Did a whole bunch of work and since Tacoma needed a venue we basically preemptively put on shows before passing our fire code. And that got shut down after only four and a half, five – four and a

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half I'm gonna say because some kids snuck down into a neighboring business and were graffitiiing or setting off car alarms or doing something weird, breaking windows, and there you have it. So everybody was pretty bummed, we put a bunch of money into this place ,we had to break our lease. It got real interesting. I think there was legal action. After us to have to you know pay for breaking our lease but we were able to get out on a loophole for them giving us basically a shell of a business that didn't have bathrooms and things. So that was all squashed. And we had named the place the Viaduct, because it was right next to the Nalley Valley viaduct. The name really didn't have any meaning other than a landmark and we were all pretty defeated after that, kinda a defeating summer. and then Josh Bromley found this really random spot on 54th and S Tacoma Way. And some guys just went and signed the lease without really talking to everybody, they just did it. We had sound equipment. And the space had originally been a hip-hop night club and then turned into a gay bar, so when we inherited it the whole building was covered in rainbow beer signs and just really fun, silly paraphernalia. There was a fight bell, but the original owners ended up sneaking in a taking the fight bell back – which sucked. And the Viaduct was formed. We kept the name. We had already been building on this name so we just called it the Viaduct. The first show that ever happened there Whiskey Rebels came up from California, they might not have played the show though, something weird happened. Stop at Nothing played, vanguard played. It was a big, huge show, probably three hundred people. It opened in the middle of winter, it was really cold, we couldn't afford the heat right off the bat. For punk and hardcore bands we didn't need aesthetics we didn't need it to look pretty or feel right we just needed the space to have shows. For other kinds of music they were accustomed to nice, comfortable, environments with you know... heat? Monitors. Not all the grit and grime that comes with a punk venue. But we had a home and ground zero for pretty much the whole northwest at that time. Because I had already been booking up north in Seattle, a few of us had, and when Viaduct opened it was like, “Why would we send these tours, or anything anywhere else when we have this venue here?” so we put all our attention into Viaduct. First year was rough. There was six or seven owners on the lease and a few of them backed out, got off the lease. New owners came in. All of us were booking shows, volunteering to run sound, volunteering to run the door, everything. Hardcore punk was pretty successful, other kinds of music weren't. First two years were really challenging. But we survived. The second year – there was a drop ceiling in the space, we took the whole ceiling out and made the space look much larger. Our capacity was about four hundred and fifty – ...ish. and we I guess we can talk about Rain Fest later.

ZP: Yeah we'll come back to that.

BS: OK. A couple things. One, I was – from all my friends through music, I'm not just friends with hardcore punk people – I would hear all these complaints about the place seeming very unwelcoming to... everybody. Which was contrary to how people that go to hardcore punk shows would see it. So I really tried to bring shows into the space that were *not* hardcore punk shows. And made it a point to make the space viable for other kinds of music. I booked Mount Eerie there, Jaguar Love, all kinds of you know different kinds of indie things. The last year of Viaduct I think it was would have been the last show ever was July of 2009, or 2010. I think it

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was 2009. Actually its probably in there if you look through that zine. It says "Viaduct R.I.P," it's a retrospective of every show I ever booked.

ZP: Yeah I'll look it up.

BS: OK. That last six months of the venue, we were rockin' and rollin'. We finally had a model that worked. We were able to pay our rent. The business was successful. It had taken two and a half, almost 3 years to get there. So it was really a shame that we shut down. The real reason we shut down was just the exhaustion that everybody involved felt from it taking that long to be successful. And it's very unfortunate that we were finally successful and *then* shut down. People just couldn't do it anymore. And that's basically what happened. And when the viaduct shut down, maybe people will contest this maybe they won't but to me, but the biggest gaping hole was left in the all ages scene in Tacoma. The shows had no choice to go anywhere but up north or down south to Olympia. In that gap, Jeremy who had been involved with Viaduct, Jeremy Bushnell, and a lot of the younger volunteers people who had you know congregated around Viaduct, people who had nowhere to go, had bad home lives, had boredom, whatever it was. There was a real community around Viaduct. And a lot of them had nothing to do with hardcore punk music, but loved the internal family and just having a place to go and having meaning or a job or something to do there. And all those folks took all this energy and went to a space the Red Room on S 23rd and Tacoma. And the Red Room was open for about two years – two and a half years maybe. It was a much smaller, more manageable space. But you know when there aren't a lot of venues where there's big shows coming sometimes it was really difficult to put a big show in there. Because it was actually scary [laughs] having that many people in that small of a space. I booked a whole bunch of shows at the Red Room. Hundreds. Easy. Yeah.

ZP: What happened after the red room?

BS: The Red Room shut down – I didn't get to go to the last show. I think I worked that night. But the Red Room closed probably two years ago. And there – what's existed since we've gone full circle back to a point where the venues closed down, a lot of bands broke up, and the scene died back. It's a natural rhythm. So what's happening now is there's a couple houses doing shows again. A couple off the grid underground places. There's no real venues doing music, especially all ages DIY music. And it's just another transformative phase of the scene, you know people kinda – I always use an analogy of a forest burning down. You see a forest burn and everything goes down to the ground. But it makes space for new life and new growth. So sometimes everything has to fall apart for new people to kick into gear and get involved, and get interested and rebuild something.

ZP: Is there any talk in the scene right now about making that happen?

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BS: Nothing that's viable or realistic. But I don't think the scene in Tacoma is connected and big enough right now to sustain a proper venue. I think it's gotta build up from the ground up again.

ZP: What do you mean connected?

BS: People are splintered. A venue's the nucleus of the whole community. It's like the central location, a meeting space. So... without that its hard to get everybody out and everybody on the same page.

ZP: You mean everybody as far as punks, or...

BS: Not just punks but music in general. A venue's a hub of a section, I guess the art community. So whether you're playing – doesn't matter what kind of music you're playing – or whether you are just a participant, or somebody that wants to see music, it's a cultural hub of that part of our community. So without that everybody goes their own way and it becomes idle.

ZP: Why do you think, I know this isn't unique to Tacoma, every city in the world has probably dealt with this, but why does Tacoma in particular have such a hard time keeping a longstanding all ages venue open?

BS: I can't speak to the history of art in Tacoma but what I can say is Tacoma in a nutshell is a hard drinkin', hard workin', blue collar town. It's a what we're inheriting now is the fruits or the detriment of our parents' generation of just middle class America, industrial worker whatever. And I don't think this city has a – especially on a from a government standpoint, a city government – I don't think there's a enough of a culture of art here to really catch their ear or seem relevant to them. Where you look at Seattle where there's sponsored art things like – I mean we have art museums and stuff, but I don't think it's relevant to a city to help create a space for young people to exist or to express themselves. And I know this through having been involved in several venues now, where every rule in the book is thrown you. Like, "Oh you want to start a venue? It's all ages? OK, it's actually more difficult and more *expensive* for you to run this than if you were just a bar. Why can't you guys just be normal and be a bar?" To me all the normalcy of music venue is weighted towards adults and people that drink. And to me those two things have nothing to do with the need for places for young people to express themselves and it has nothing to do with art or music in the first place. So whether its the fire department or building codes or just the way that small businesses are treated here its been very difficult to keep spaces going and the few spaces that have existed have completely come into being based the community and the people involved not any of the officials or city gov't or anything like that. So the odds are definitely stacked against anybody that would try and create a space like that.

ZP: Let's shift gears. Let's go back a little bit to the Viaduct days. If you could tell me how Rain Fest came into being, what it was about and where it went, that would be really cool.

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BS: In 2005, October of 2005, an old Seattle band called Trial did a reunion show. And it was at Neumo's in Seattle and it brought hundreds of people from all over the world to come see this show. In 2006, a long running band called Champion had their last show. And similar vibe, except they took it a step further. Their last show was on a Saturday, but they booked a show on the Friday and the Sunday, and invited bands from all over the place that they had met on tour, who they toured with, old friends of theirs' and all these bands came in for the weekend and it turned into a three day kind of like impromptu festival of sorts. And in 2007, Matt Weltner, Zack Ellis, and what the heck is Steve's last name? Steve Jackson. The three of them wanted to recreate the magic of that weekend, because people came in from all over the world to see Champion's last show. Bands came in from all over the place. I have no idea how the money and the finances or any of that worked for it, but none of that was apparent. It wasn't like, "Hey come to this big festival spend money go be at some sweaty festival all day long," it was a this was like a real magical experience. And in 2007, these three guys they had all been booking shows independently of each other but they put their minds together and said, "Hey let's do this again." so in 2007 they did a Northwest festival and they called it Rain Fest and it was half Seattle, half Tacoma. It took place in a Legion Hall in West Seattle and the other half took place in a Veteran's Hall in Parkland. And they had bands from every corner of this country. They had bands from – actually I should probably look at the line up before I say where all these bands are from. But people came in from everywhere. It was a really big success. And at that point I had individually been friends with the three organizers of the festival. I was a promoter. And my only involvement was that I was like, "Hey guys, you know I got this band coming through on tour. Is there a slot? Could I hook them up with Rain Fest?" I was able to you know get some bands coordinated to be on this festival. That was it. The next year, or after the festival, I was just pretty up front, "Hey I want to be involved with this. I wanna help steer the direction of this thing. We're all friends, we've all known each other for awhile. Like, what do you think?" At this point Steve Jackson was no longer involved, and it became Matt Weltner, Zack Ellis, and me. And the following year, 2008, is when Viaduct opened. So it just made sense right off the bat, this festival is gonna happen all three days at Viaduct, and we know that this festival is successful, we know that it can make money, and we basically were able to kick start and help out Viaduct. We were able to pay an entire month's rent for this massive space in Tacoma just off one weekend. Actually maybe it was two months rent. But it was great! And everybody supported it because they could read between the lines and see what we were doing. Independent venue, independent festival. It's 2014 and we have now done Rain Fest for eight years. We have moved up to Neumo's in Seattle and that was based a situation that arose, the last year we did it at Viaduct. The community in South Tacoma, surrounding the venue loved us. The three years that we were in South Tacoma, every bar, restaurant, corner store, got a much-needed push from all the business that we put there. There was a Subway a block from our venue and during Rain Fest weekend, they made enough money selling sandwiches that they paid their rent three months in advance. The bar, the Airport Tavern next door to us, had such a rise in business from us they were able to expand their back room and turn it into a restaurant. Just all kinds of things. So the last year that we did Rain Fest, for some reason the police really wanted to fuck with us. And there were more cops than I have seen anywhere in Tacoma – including 6th Ave on Friday night – at our fest in broad daylight handing out jaywalking tickets, loitering tickets, parking

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tickets, urinating in public tickets. They were carding people if they were smoking cigarettes out front. Anything they could do to harass our patrons of our festival they were doing. There were cops four at a time walking through crowds of kids out front. Just being *asses*. And it was the worst vibe. They enforced the Tacoma curfew! So we actually had to make announcements at our festival that any minors caught out on the streets of South Tacoma after midnight was a punishable offense that could have legal repercussions! It was completely ridiculous! I have never seen anything like it since. I don't know what we did to deserve it. Zack Ellis, who I guess we can put this on the record – his father is a police officer and couldn't believe what he was hearing. And as the smoke cleared after the festival – I was not there – Matt, our friend Greg Bennick, and some other folks were able to meet with the mayor of Tacoma, explained to them how many people come into Tacoma for our event and why it was completely ridiculous that Tacoma police officers were doing this. And the mayor was pretty much begging us to stay, but at that time everybody had made the decision that Viaduct was just gonna close down and we had no choice but to move to Seattle. And we've done Rain Fest the last four years at Neumo's on Capitol Hill. And it's been great. Maybe it's been five.

ZP: How has RF changed since being in Seattle?

BS: Rain Fest has changed since being in Seattle in many ways. We are much more confident of what we're capable of. When we were at Viaduct we had a 400 capacity and we were able to sell to that just fine. But moving into Neumo's – which was a larger space, they have a 716 person capacity. And we're able to sell to about 650 of that. And it gave us a bigger room and the drive and push to have to fill that room. So in one regard we had to have higher expectations and I think work harder and set goals for ourselves. One of the best parts about moving to Neumo's, was Viaduct was an all volunteer staff – which was great. But it put a lot more of the burden on me and the other organizers of the festival. We were so hands on in everything whether it was personally having to load bands on the stage, coordinate all that kind of stuff. I just felt like we were running around all the time. Busy and it was very draining. When we went to Neumo's, they have one of the most professional, best attitude staffs of any venue in Seattle I've ever dealt with. And they were able to take so much of that burden off of us. They have amazing staff, security, box office people, their production people downstairs, everything that they have done basically has made the weekend way less of a burden for Matt, Zack and I and we're actually able to participate in the show aspect of the festival, instead of just doing bureaucratic nonsense behind the scenes the whole weekend.

ZP: Do you think it's changed for the better?

BS: Yes. 100%.

ZP: Do you miss it being in Tacoma though?

BS: Only in the sense – I only miss Rain Fest in Tacoma in the sense that I'm a diehard advocate of Tacoma and I would like to see things like this exist in Tacoma. But physically as to

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what space we could put it in I don't think that space exists in Tacoma. I also will never forget the way Tacoma police treated us. And because of that I don't even care if its down here again. Even though it could have been a fluke a weird accident, that was enough of me to look at it like "Tacoma does not even deserve what is happening here."

ZP: Is this how Bleak Outlook came to be?

BS: Bleak Outlook was an accident that just exists now.

ZP: Well what is Bleak Outlook?

BS: Bleak Outlook is a flimsy, manufactured weekend that I put together I don't wanna call it a festival. Having booked a very organized, coordinated festival like Rain Fest, Bleak Outlook is just kind of like something I could do while sitting on the toilet. It is like a easy, very nonchalant, half-assed version of booking that festival. It started two years ago, I had three separate touring bands needing the same weekend of shows. So it turned into kind of an impromptu three-day event in Tacoma. This last year I decided to take it a step further and see how interesting I could go. There's a festival in Bellingham, WA called Yellingham Fest, it's happened every year for probably the last five or six years – maybe longer I'm not sure. But they basically utilize all the DIY, underground show spaces in the whole city. So every basement becomes a show space, every coffee shop, every art gallery whatever it may be, and then they make a map and you start at show number one, at 1 pm in the afternoon and you just walk down the street to the next show and that happens for two or three days. I was able to play this last year or the year before and it just sparked my interest of how could I do that in Tacoma? So this last year in April, or this year in April I did the 2nd "Volume" of Bleak Outlook and it was an eight show, three-day festival with about thirty bands. Many bands who traveled across state lines to get here. And shows started during the day, and I encouraged people to skateboard and ride bikes or walk from show to show. And I orchestrated the weekend in such a way that it would only take an hour if you were walking, or an hour would be plenty of time to walk to each show. And it was really easy to organize, because its not nearly as intense as Rain Fest is. Rain Fest is budgets, and dealing with booking agents, and bureaucrats, and middle people and the city and all this other stuff. Bleak Outlook was all DIY, off the grid, underground, all the bands had great attitudes, all the shows were great. The response to it was amazing. And people I think genuinely couldn't believe that something like that was happening in Tacoma. So to me that was the biggest reward was, you know I've been doing this for this many years and if I could just do something this simple to me, but people respond to it that well like, OK. How do we get everybody else involved and what else could we do in Tacoma if we all put our minds together?

ZP: I'm going to pause this tape for the sake of having convenient, short recordings.

BS: Smoke break...

[BREAK]

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ZP: OK it is May 17th, 2014, at 4:53 pm. This is the next session of interviews with Brian Skiffington on Tacoma hardcore, Brian will you state your name for the record?

BS: My name is Brian David Skiffington and I am drinking a beer.

ZP: Alright! So where we left off last time was talking about the history of venues and other spaces where hardcore happened. Now I would like to hear a little bit about the actual bands and the history of who made this scene, and what that's about.

BS: So I'm gonna speak to that, I'm gonna speak to the history of the bands and who made this scene based on my experience and who was playing when I started coming around. There was a band from Gig Harbor called Point No Point and a band called Hybrid, and I think I talked about these last time. But those are the guys that I would go to shows with they would take me to a show at the LCCC, and that was kinda my first introduction to some of these things. So the band Divinity of Truth was a band that left a huge impact on me, it's one of the bands I got to see and I don't remember how much we talked about this last time.

ZP: I don't think we did?

BS: We didn't?

ZP: You mentioned these bands but...

BS: OK. Divinity of Truth I saw play around 2000, at the Lake City Community Center and that was a band that I had not heard anything like this before. It was the – not even just the music, but the attitude and the way they presented themselves it was so in your face, it was the most punishing, heavy slow “metally” hardcore music I had ever witnessed. And their – I swear we talked about this.

ZP: Tell me again! It doesn't matter...

BS: Their bass player, Adam Barnes, I did not know who we was at the time, he in the middle of a song, just chose me out of everybody in this crowd and just ran at me and grabbed me and drug me to the floor and was screaming in my face along to the music. He just stopped playing bass and he was screaming at me. And that was just him expressing himself in that moment and years have gone by and we've become good friends, band mates, but that was my introduction to Tacoma hardcore music.

BS: What happened after that is I saw a band called Left With Nothing. And to this day I have to maintain they left the biggest impact on me of any hardcore band I have ever seen, heard, experienced. Musically they are a band that is timeless to me. I am instantly transported to who I was when I first saw them and heard them. And a lot of bands, especially hardcore, punk bands

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sound very unrehearsed and sound like they're just very kinda off the cuff, we're crazy, we're not really in time, our songs speed up and slow down, it sounds like we were too drunk to play or whatever's going on. Left With Nothing was the most professional, just flawless sounding band I had ever heard. And I said they influenced me: Tory's style of lyric writing is very dark, there's a lot of allegory. It's influenced the way that I write lyrics, just the punishing nature of their music, it's so relentless it is completely how I go at writing music now for hardcore bands. And even the height, when I play drums, even the height of the cymbals that I use, a lot of people have always said, "You play with your cymbal stands really high, that's weird." I totally bit that and ripped that off from Nick Platter who drummed for Left With Nothing. And I will admit that forever.

ZP: Who else was in the band, what were the members?

BS: Well...

ZP: I know they probably changed throughout the years but who was the [cut off, muttering]

BS: I didn't get to see them in the original line up. I got – they broke up, probably around 99, 2000.

ZP: When did they start?

B: I'm gonna say '97. And I kinda made mention that when I first starting coming around, a scene had faded away and a new one was forming. Well that scene that faded away, Trial broke up, Left With Nothing broke up, Botch was on their way out. I got to see Botch play plenty of times, they were a Tacoma band but at that point they were considered to be more of a Seattle band. But all these bands were coming to a close. So 2000, 2001, 2002 is where I feel like me and my peers and a whole bunch of bands from the area started up and started a new thing. Left With Nothing at that time, was Tory O'Donnell, he's the vocalist, Paul Bettinson, who we call Paul D.C. he played guitar, Nick Platter played drums, Timm Trust played guitar, and Brian Redman played bass. And R.I.P. Brian Redman. He was a really great dude and he passed away a couple years ago, he was in a moped accident. Brian and Nick both played in the band Trial. Brian was also in 3 Inches of Blood. So I mean he definitely went on from LWN and did some big stuff.

ZP: Would you wanna talk a little more about Brian? I never met him, but as soon as I started hanging around here a lot, and still to this day, I see his name on things and it seems like he left a really huge impact on this scene and especially people in it.

BS: Yes. So everybody you talk to from around here's gonna have a different – not a different version, but a different way which Brian you know was important to them, or influenced them. For me, you know as a young kid, I totally looked up to the guys in Left With Nothing. At the time I was a young straight edge kid, I thought Brian had started drinking and was just like, "Who are these old guys? They're all drunks. They're crazy," [laughs] but outside of that, as I got older, the last couple years of Brian's life he was a bartender at a place called Doyle's. It was a

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little Irish soccer pub deal, and my friend Danny was a bartender there so I would always go to hang out with Danny, and that's how Brian and I reconnected later in life. I would just go in there for a beer after work or go to hang out, and for me he was almost like a wiser, older, you know confidant, where I would bounce something, some stupid idea, or tell him what's going on and he'd just be like, "Are you dumb, kid? Do you hear what you're saying?" He was like a guy that would frame things in a better context for me. And this isn't at all some sort of weird, trying to make this a bigger deal than it was, but the night that he died he was playing a show at a bar in Tacoma and my friend Justin and I had driven down to Olympia to see the last show of a band called Sex Vid. And we had all made plans to hang out later that night, and the show in Olympia just went too long so we didn't even get back to Tacoma 'til about three in the morning. And then by that time, the news had already happened. So I'm not saying that could have gone any other way than that but that's – that was what we came home to. And I always felt like I wish I could have seen him that night or said what's up? So... I don't know.

ZP: What happened in the scene after he passed away? And also what year was that, when did that happen?

BS: I'd have to look it up. I'm gonna say it was 2009... 2009, 2010. A couple things happened to the scene. One, he left a huge hole in it. He was close to so many people. And so many different kinds of people. He was really ingrained, not just the music scene, but in Tacoma in general. And a lot of people knew him through different kinds of ways. His bands that he was playing with were obviously never the same. Everybody that was close to him through music wasn't the same. His mother, I had never gotten to meet his mom before, but through him passing I was able to meet his mother and she's a sweetheart. And she – I keep running into her and it's great! And she, I think through meeting all of his friends, you know it's really helped her get through the whole thing. But it was great to meet his family that I had never met before. His brother every year does a memorial poker tournament for him. And they raise money to a fund that is really awesome, it basically takes young kids who can't afford to pursue music, get gear, and they find kids that are aspiring to play an instrument and they go get the kids instruments. People can apply for a grant to get a – you know like have a guitar amp bought for them or whatever. I think that's great.

ZP: What's the name of the group?

BS: I would have to look it up. I think it's just the Brian Redman Memorial Fund. But there's a Brian Redman Memorial Poker Tournament that happens every year in Tacoma that's organized by his brother Jim Redman.

ZP: That's really cool.

BS: Yeah. He has a tattoo on his arm that I will never forget. This doesn't even need to go on the record, but I just wanna share this cause it's hilarious.

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ZP: Jim or Brian?

BS: Brian. He *had* a tattoo on his arm. [laughing] He had a tattoo on his arm of Hitler's severed head wearing Kiss make-up. [laughing] And to me that will always explain him better than I ever could to anybody else. There's nothing I could say that would make more sense than just sharing that with you to know what kind of person Brian Redman was.

ZP: I won't even ask you to explain to me what that means [mumbling]

BS: Very serious fellow. Very serious.

ZP: Well anyway, go on back I guess you know before... before all that stuff about Brian Redman. You were talking about some of the other important bands for you in that 2000-era.

BS: Yeah. There's a band called Harkonen that was a long running band from Tacoma. And I didn't see them tons back in the day but when we were doing the 1227 House they played there and I had seen them play before that around town. The first time I saw Harkonen was at a show with Botch at the old Paradox in Seattle. First time, second time? But what I distinctly remember is they were all wearing t-shirts with their own faces on the t-shirts. And I just thought that was really silly.

ZP: Like silkscreened?

BS: Yeah! Like they went through the – I think they just made unique t-shirts for themselves with their own faces on them.

ZP: Harkonen and Botch to my knowledge seem like the big Tacoma bands of the era that are remembered. What else was happening around that time?

BS: Ohhhh...

ZP: I guess given that they got a lot of attention that the time and they're still remembered where a lot of other bands from that time are you know lost to popular history, I suppose. What sort of impact did Harkonen and Botch have on Tacoma?

BS: You know Tacoma's always been laughed at and kind of like the smelly weird kid down the street. That's how this town's always been represented. Even though its an old music town, it's not thought of as a cultural town or a prestigious music town. It's definitely got blue collar roots, and that goes all the way up through Botch is considered a Seattle band. They're always gonna be thought of as that. So I don't know what kind of attention they brought to Tacoma, they definitely changed the face of aggressive music. There's been an enormous influence on underground heavy music based on Botch's recorded output. They have to be probably the most influential – maybe not the *most* influential – *one* of the most influential bands to play hard

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music that has ever come out of the Northwest in general. Harkonen was known as a Tacoma band, or maybe a Lakewood band... but they're a very respected band, they still are. And they might carry a bit more weight in the noise rock scene than say the hardcore scene, but they're definitely well known and still a relevant, talked-about band.

ZP: Aside from what attention Botch did or did not bring to Tacoma, I guess I was more interested in – the hell with everyone else paying attention to Tacoma, what did Botch do *for* Tacoma? Like you said they had this huge impact on really intense, extreme music, especially in the metalcore, mathcore thing, did they leave an impact in Tacoma's scene where people followed in that...

BS: I would say Divinity of Truth was definitely completely inspired and influenced by Botch and going in a similar realm. I played drums in a band called American Prose, we only played one show, but you know we that would have been 2001 or 2002, and we took a whole lot of cues from Botch's music. I don't know. So in that regard I guess they influenced me.

ZP: Um...

BS: I don't want to talk about Botch.

ZP: OK then let's not talk about Botch! [laughs] Well who *do* you want to talk about? Like what, you know what comes next? What else matters?

BS: Well I don't know what matters.

ZP: Well what matters to you? [long pause] How about when you and that whole circle of friends you were talking about came up in 2000, 2001, 2002 in this void after these other bands withered away and broke up? And then there's this – like how you were talking the other day about like, the hardcore scene is like a forest burning down and comes back up, and we talked about some of the houses and other venues that happened, but what were some of the bands that came out of that?

BS: Let me go on a tangent here.

ZP: Sure

BS: I don't wanna answer your question I'm gonna just start my own tangent.

ZP: That works for me.

BS: Around 2000, 2001, just through going to shows, meeting people, necessity, Timm Trust, Jay Tichy, myself, and our friend Floppy Matt from Olympia – basically no shows were coming through Tacoma or Olympia at this time. And that's kind of an exaggerated statement but touring

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bands were going to Seattle. That's where the established scene was, it wasn't coming to Tacoma. And out of necessity, the four of us would pile into Timm Trust's old pick-up truck. Sometimes Adam Barnes who was in Divinity of Truth would go too and we would all carpool to Seattle shows together. It was pretty much – we were the ones driving up to Seattle all the time it felt like. So there were more people into music at the time but it felt like we had formed a little clique or likeminded people, helping each other out, giving each other rides. It really kind of was the precursor to realizing we needed to create things in Tacoma. It just happened. But our bands – I guess at that time I didn't realize or understand that we could create something ourselves. And what happened for me was I went on tour in 2002 – I went on tour twice in 2002 with two different bands. I dropped out of college to fill in on drums for a band called No Return. We did a West Coast tour. And I didn't really know what I was getting myself into. My parents were not thrilled at all. I had just dropped out of a running start program to go play drums in California. We ended up going down to California and we played church basements, art galleries, houses, record stores, we played a back warehouse in an athletic equipment distributing center. I mean we played the weirdest places you could play shows but there were kids there and bands played and it just felt like any where you could put a show, you could make it happen. And going down there we ended up meeting people in all these kind of – all different bands, people who book shows, people that do flier art, take photos, all this stuff! All these people that are involved in this music scene we – I got to meet these people, exchange contacts, and it started turning into a thing where it's like, “Hey, remember me? You know we booked your show in Oxnard, CA. Well it just so happens my band's coming to Tacoma. Could you guys take care of it?” So it just started out as a few of us in Tacoma just booking random shows for bands we'd met on the road, and from there somebody – it turned into: “Well so and so said you book shows in Tacoma.” And it's like, “Well OK fine, we'll book your band too.” And then this very pro-Tacoma, screw Seattle mentality came out of this, cause we'd spent years driving up to Seattle for shows and it turned into: “Why does Seattle need this? Why can't we do this here?” And this is all leading up to the years we started doing shows at 1227 and all that. That's where we started being able to host bands and I don't know. That's how it started.

ZP: Was there a – did that prompt a number of other people in Tacoma to then start their own bands? From seeing all these new things coming here?

BS: Well for the first couple years of the Bunny Ranch and the 1227 House, it really just felt like it was the same twenty of us but we were all flippin' instruments and then you know somebody would trade a guitar out and jump on a drum kit and we'd have a new band. And we just – it started real small, it wasn't a lot of us. But we would host out of town bands and then all of our bands would play the shows. And you know a couple kids at a time – some new kid would show up to a show and start hanging out with us and you know pretty soon they were part of our little circle and would come out all the time like it just started off kinda unknown territory, just a few people. And then over the years there's people who I've met that have now been going to shows for ten plus years who say “Yeah yeah in 2003 I came to this really random show in a basement and there were only twelve people and I've been doing this for ten years now.” So you

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know. You never really know how much it impacts somebody until years later when you can trace it all back to some funny little basement show.

ZP: As far as bands that you are in, or have been in, Sidetracked is your longest running project right?

BS: Yeah Sidetracked's been a band for fourteen years.

ZP: You wanna give a little bit of a history about that band?

BS: I met Jay at youth group. I grew up as a – in a Christian home and kinda fought against that mindset as a teenager and was out drinkin' with my friends, doin' that kind of thing and around 8th grade I'd been playing drums in band class, I'd been gettin' into some serious hardcore punk music. And at the time I was just drinkin' and doing some pretty stupid shit with my friends. And my parents were always trying to push church on me, but not in a aggressive way, just like, "Hey you could always go to church with us," or you know that kind of thing. And for some reason blah blah blah, fast forward they basically said, "Hey we talked to a pastor, they need a drummer, would you consider going to play drums for them?" For whatever reason, went and played drums and ended up meeting Jay. We both were into – well at the time I had bright orange hair, and I remember walking in a Jay comes up to me. He's got, you know, some hardcore t-shirt on and baggy pants – we used to call him "Baggy Pants." He was definitely wearing Silver Tab baggy jeans, but the point is [laughing] we hit it off right off the bat. I was into – I told him I was into death metal, which was pretty funny. I mean I was but it's just a funny introductory conversation, where he's like, "Oh you like punk? You got orange hair." And I say, "No, I like Cannibal Corpse and Napalm Death," and it was just how we hit it off. But really it just turned into an entire summer of Jay and I listening to tapes that friends had traded with him, sent him tapes from around the world of crazy old '80s hardcore punk and thrash on it and we'd hang out every single day at his parents' house in his bedroom just listening to hardcore, or we'd like drive around in his car, listen to all kinds of stuff. So Jay was instrumental in me not just listening to token hardcore music, but really identifying with what hardcore *was*; where I fit into that. And that was you know around 2000. So at the time he had started this band called Sidetracked. I did not give a crap about it. He kept inviting me to check their band out. Didn't know, didn't really care. I went to a show to see them one time and a fight broke out so I was outside dealing with some fight scenario that my friends were in so I totally missed their set. And he's like, "What'd you think?" and I was like, "Well I was outside. This fight thing was goin' on." But their drummer flaked out and yeah I just ended up joining the band on a "we'll see what happens" basis. And I had been like a punk kid up to this point. My early bands from the Harbor were you know just pretty raucous. "We're *punk!*" Like you know we would play shows and purposely try to alienate the crowd and do things to get ourselves in trouble and so I knew how to play "punk drums." I knew how to play fast and Sidetracked was a fast band so I think even though I was a weird punk that Jay didn't totally understand I think he's like, "Well at least you can play fast drums so..." That's basically how it started. We went on a tour. We put out a demo CD, put out another CD, I started a record label, I put out a split 7 inch for us. And so that was

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like the first wave of Sidetracked. But around 2004 I think Jay just got really *pissed!* Up to that point, we'd loosely maintained kinda a Christian persona, I guess as a band. Around that point though it got really upsetting to him that people treated him differently because of what he believed, or what he was into. And we turned into a really angry, prolific band. It made him write more music, write faster, harder, more extreme, aggressive music, and we have just been crazy ever since. Sidetracked is a band that has a catalogue of like 20 records already. We have hundreds of songs written that we're still recording. And my real involvement other than playing shows from time to time is Jay showing up and saying, "Hey everyone, remember when we recorded sixty records – or sixty songs? Well all five of those records just came in the mail so here's your copies." And that's kinda the history of Sidetracked. Over the years I think Sidetracked's been – as funny as it sounds, we basically have like a couple fans in every country in the world at this point. We are well known in underground, weird, like weird experimental music circles. I don't know if that means anything. But its always funny when Jay's like, "Hey somebody from Ukraine or the Czech Republic or you know, somewhere weird sent us this letter about our music." And its like, "Whoa, how the hell did we get there? Why does somebody know who we are there?" So I don't know. That's just the internet and the world that we live in now.

ZP: Sidetracked has changed a lot stylistically over the years, can you run that down?

BS: So Jay writes all the music, he always has. That's the agreement. I play drums cause I'm good at it, he writes music cause he's good at it. And that's always been the band. We've had a revolving cast of members. I think there's probably twelve former Sidetracked members if not more. For the last couple years there's just been three of us. But still it's just Jay writes the music, we learn the songs, we'll go play shows or go into the studio. And we used to be lumped in with a crop of bands, there was a small crew, not crew but a small group of bands in the country that kind of formed a hybrid sound between the '88 style of youth crew hardcore like the New York scene, Side By Side, and Youth of Today, and all those bands and paired it with the West Coast power violence sound, like No Comment, Capitalist Casualties, and we put the two together and made it our own thing. There was a band called Scare Tactic that did similar stuff. We kinda – that was our sound, or our vibe but over the years as Jay gets more and more into extreme music and different kinds of music he tries to represent all of his influences on records. And he has very intentional themes for records where he will be completely engulfed in one style of music or a certain crop of bands and he will thematically create a record, or a grouping of songs that specifically speak to those influences. I can't really tell you what we sound like right now, because Jay's always ten steps ahead with what's inspiring him and influencing the way he writes music. So we do very thematic records it feels like, where we really speak to what's been speaking to him I guess.

ZP: Who got started first, was that Barricade or Owen Hart?

BS: Owen Hart started way before Barricade.

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ZP: Do you wanna talk about Owen Hart?

BS: Sure. In 2002, through just music in Tacoma we met these young kids from Curtis High School that were in a just ridiculous kind of silly, metal band, called the Great Disappointment. They were real young kids, they were good at their instruments, and they had a very beatdown, tough, hardcore metal sound. Especially for some kids from Curtis High. So they started hanging out, we were all playing shows together, and we all became really good friends. So Rusty Graeff, Tony Wolfe, this kid Sam played drums – he was not good at drums, *that* can go on the record – and this guy Zach Tibbits played bass. And our friend Randy Wheeler, who originally played guitar in Sidetracked, sang for the band. The band had a following and had the potential to do things, but the people in the band were just practical jokers and didn't take anything seriously. Basically there became a point where Rusty and Tony did not want to be in a band with Randy, or Sam and we started a fake band. The idea was, “Hey Brian, you can play drums better than Sam. Let's you know start this secret band and then be like suddenly, ‘Hey, Great Disappointment, we're breaking up but now there's this other band that's secretly been practicing for like 6 months.’” So Owen Hart originally started, we're all like corny, professional wrestling fans – at least we were as children, which is a common bond that we share – so we had this fake code name for this band and it was called Owen Hart vs. Bret Hart Equals the Power of Misogyny and that's what we would say when people were like, “What are you doing today?” and they'd be like “I don't know what you just said to me. That doesn't make any sense.” And what ended up happening was Great Disappointment broke up, Zach Tibbits tried to play bass for us but couldn't keep up. So we were a three-piece band with drums and two guitars and we just wrote really crazy music. So for all of 2003 and into 2004 we were an instrumental band, pushing ourselves writing intense metal music. And Timm Trust was just a friend of ours. He lived at the 1227 House he was hanging out with the guys that are in Greyskull. And at the time I was in a band called Six Demon Bag and that band was a metal band from Seattle, I guess I could talk about that later, I could talk about it now. But basically Greyskull and Six Demon Bag played a lot of shows together and Timm would roadie and come along in the van and hang out with all of us. So it just made sense that we needed a vocalist, he wanted to sing in a band. So it ended up being drums, two guitars, and Timm singing. And we shortened our name to Own Hart and we recorded a four song demo and went on a whole bunch of tours and that's how Owen Hart started.

ZP: How'd you guys end up having to change your name?

BS: So after the demo, Owen Hart put out a 5 inch record that was eventually repressed as a 7 inch record, for both of those we went on tours to support the record. And we finally recorded an LP, I believe we recorded the LP in 2009 or 2008 maybe? And just sat on the record waiting for it to come out. It didn't come out until about 2010. And in 2010 we had previously booked all of our own tours. And that had was just part of the DIY nature of how we did things. We wanted to be hands on involved in all of our tours. At this point you know we'd been getting a lot of attention, our record came out, we had a lot of things looking up for us. Our label hired a PR person. We ended up being in big magazines we were in like the Toronto Sun, weird

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newspapers, like around Canada, North America. And we really started getting a lot of hype behind us. We were on blogs, we were being interviewed for like pretty well known metal publications and we were offered a booking agent asked if we would consider joining the roster and going on a tour booked by a booking agent. We had never done that before. And we just agreed to try it. We went on a three and a half week tour down the West Coast and through the Southwest and we got to play South By Southwest (which was terrible), kinda got to do some interesting stuff, played places I had never been before. And while we were on tour, we had our LP, we were doing great, everything was a really good tour. And then two days before we came home we started getting word that there was all this commotion on the internet about our band from wrestling fans like the wrestling community caught onto the fact that there was a metal band called Owen Hart, named after the dead wrestler, Owen Hart. And there was a humongous backlash from the wrestling community! There was WCW and WWF and WWE message boards, and fan pages condemning us, talking about how crappy our music was, and saying things like Martha Hart would roll over in here grave – even though she's not dead, so that doesn't make any sense – but they were saying that! We were just laughing and we're like, "This is really funny," and people were sending us links to websites complaining about us and then our record label got a cease and desist from the estate of Owen Hart in the mail, and it listed every single one of our names on it, it had immediate cease and desist language in it. It said if we did not cease with the name they would go after us for every dollar we've ever made from the name and likeness of Owen Hart, including merch sales, record sales – I don't know how they could prove any of this – but yadda yadda yadda yadda. So we get home and I know Wade, who plays guitar in the band Seaweed, went to school to be an entertainment lawyer – and I believe that's the reason Seaweed actually split up. But I had met him through friends and we obviously needed an entertainment lawyer and we hired him to deal with this rival firm and the only way we could go about it was to change our name. So our LP was called *Earth Control* and we just adopted that name for our band and we've been Earth Control ever since.

ZP: What's the name of the subsequent release that's being put out by Earth Control?

BS: We currently have a record named *Dead Wrestler* that is at the pressing plant, coming up.

ZP: Which I think is wonderful, by the way. You mentioned Six Demon Bag earlier.

BS: Yes. In 2003 – 2004, 2005 somewhere in that area – I was on a message board and saw a post on a message board looking for a drummer and it had the worst possible description for the band that they were in. A whole bunch of bands that don't fit together, have nothing in common, and couldn't possibly be a worse combination of influences was listed for this band. *And* it was called Six Demon Bag, which is a reference to a movie called *Big Trouble in Little China*. But at the time I just looked at this and was like, "This has to be the worst possible band that could exist!" And I answered the ad, and said I wanted to drum for them and I went to the band practice. I didn't know a single – I knew *one* person in the band, or knew of them – but I went to a band practice and was blown away by the music that they were playing. It sounded nothing like the influences they listed. It sounded more like Deadguy and Turmoil, some really aggressive

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stuff. And I got along with them great, I stuck with it. I recruited my friend, Trent, to play bass – and Trent has passed away. Trenton Graham. But he was a good friend of ours, he lived at the 1227 House. And that was really the only band that he was ever in. But he played bass, he was a really crazy, experimental bass player. And Trent and I spent hours driving back and forth from Tacoma to Seattle to band practices for Six Demon Bag. The founding tour that cemented this new Tacoma thing was Greyskull, Six Demon Bag went on tour, and Timm Trust was our roadie. Well that was enough for Owen Hart to sneak on some shows and play as a drum, one guitar, vocal combo, ‘cause Rusty wasn’t on the tour. So Greyskull, Six Demon Bag did about two and a half weeks and ended up meeting all the right people on this tour. People who run record labels, people who are in well known metal bands at the time, everything, we got to go to all these places. And Owen Hart got to hop on some of these shows and had bigger reactions than Greyskull or Six Demon Bag did and it just – everything snowballed from that moment. But Six Demon Bag only did a three song cassette tape and we also did four or five song EP that was never properly released, it just came out as a CD-R at some shows.

ZP: What happened with the band?

BS: The band was a conflict of personalities from the get-go. Eric, you know who plays in Black Breath, who was in Go It Alone, before those bands was in – played guitar in SDB. Roy was the vocalist and Chris Jacobson played guitar. Basically a bunch of us just lost interest. The band – you know what? I don’t even know what fizzled out. They threatened to kick me out a whole bunch of times ‘cause I wasn’t that interested anymore and it just didn’t – nothing really happened. Chris and Roy wanted to keep it going but I think everybody else was just over it. So... We played a lot of good shows though. It just felt like a – I felt like that band was the end of my metalcore era. I feel like I progressed once that band broke up.

ZP: What came along next, was it Stop at Nothing or Barricade?

BS: I was in Stop at Nothing at the same time as Six Demon Bag. I was also in Barricade at the same time.

ZP: Ok. Which one of those do you want to talk about?

BS: Stop at Nothing is a band that – I was not the original drummer. We were all friends, my buddy Floppy Matt sang and all the other members of Stop at Nothing were real young kids from Olympia. But they had a following, they were a really energetic band that was like *the* band from Olympia. And their drummer just didn’t work out and they were looking for a drummer and I heard that they were gonna get this guy Jay to play drums, and I just told them straight up, “You are *not* having that crappy drummer play in your band. I don’t even wanna drum in your band but I’m going to, to make sure you guys sound good cause that’s stupid.” And I was in the band from then on out and we toured couple of times up and down the coast. We had a label from Spain put out a record for us. And we ended up putting out an album called *Legends Never Die* that I think is great. I don’t listen to it too often, but it’s always fun to go back and hear it. And that’s Stop at

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Nothing. Barricade was a band where Roy, from Six Demon Bag, was friends with a guy named Ben. Ben Wilson, he's from Louisville. And he just moved to Seattle. And Jay and I had met Ben and we were into really similar kinds of hardcore at the time and would ride to shows together and hang out and that sort of thing. So I had been writing these songs for a summer, I had to move back to my parents' house for a summer, and live in my old bedroom and it was terrible, I had this acoustic guitar and I would just sit and write music. And Ben was just the natural choice of who should sing for the band. We did a demo, and it was really well received. I think the demo was probably '04 or '05, probably '05. I actually – no, '04. And then Panic Records, which is Tim from Trial's label, he asked us if we'd do a record with him. And Ben and Tim had been friends. And we put out an EP called *The Weathered*. And we had really great momentum going for us and Ben and our bass player Brett just lost interest after basically the biggest show I've played to this day. We had a great show and the guys just lost interest after that.

ZP: What show was that?

BS: We were asked to play a pre-show when Trial did their reunion show in 2005. Barricade was asked to play the pre-show to their reunion, the night before. we played a packed - packed, packed, packed - show at the Paradox and it was one of the best shows I've played to this day. And then probably a month later, we had just had a record come out and we split up. So the label was stuck with a whole bunch of copies of the CD that they couldn't get rid of.

ZP: Did they ever get rid of them?

BS: There can't be that many left. Barricade played a reunion show last year and I think we got the last copies, or something, from the label. I don't remember.

ZP: I still listen to it every once in a while.

BS: It's good.

ZP: It is! Correct me if I'm wrong, but I think I remember you telling me a long time ago that Sojourner was an outgrowth of where barricade left off. Do you wanna talk about that development and where Sojourner went?

BS: Yeah. As I got better at playing guitar, Barricade songs started getting more and more complex. A lot more change-ups, a lot choppier, lot less repetitive. They got very progressive in their song structures, not - things, parts wouldn't repeat themselves. Tempos would change like on the drop of a dime. That had always been my thing, I'd always gone that way I feel like Jay had always done that in Sidetracked through his own filer, and Barricade was my way of being progressive, but just in a different route. And I had written like eleven songs for Barricade for an LP, and I recorded demo versions of them, I went into a studio with a drum set and just recorded quick guitar tracks over them so I could pass them out to the band and everybody could hear them. And Brett and Ben just had these attitudes like, "This is *not* what we wanted at all. This is

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not the route we thought we were going in. This changed. I don't like this.” And I couldn't believe it because to me I'm writing the best music at that point that I'd ever written in my life. And yeah, Ben and Brett just quit. That was basically that. It was the weirdest reason I'd ever heard of people quitting cause it doesn't feel honest to me. Like, you don't like it, let's change it. Basically Jay put his foot down and was like, “No. This music is great. This is what we're gonna play.” And the two guys couldn't hack it and quit. And Sojourner in 2007 basically formed out of that. We took all this unused material from Barricade, and I went from drums to vocals. And I'm not really a vocalist, I sang in a fake band called Gag Reflex for fun. But Sojourner was my first attempt at being serious. And a lot of people were put off by it cause they knew we were supposed to be Barricade with me on vocals. But that's how Sojourner happened.

ZP: Where'd Sojourner go?

BS: Well, Sojourner's been on tour through Canada, we've toured around the United States, we've put two records, a 12 inch LP and a cassette tape, and we've been on a couple compilations. I feel very accomplished with that. We've kinda been on a hiatus for about a year now, we haven't been too active, but I think we're a great band. And the music that I've written for it, I mean, I'm already two records out on what I've written for the band. It's easily hands down the best music I've ever written. So if we can get it together, you know, we're still plugging along. Just kinda at our own weird pace.

ZP: I can't think of another question I wanna ask about Sojourner. You said the other day you wanna talk about Fever a little bit.

BS: Sure. I had this idea for a while, probably around '05, '04 or '05 was about when this started, but I kept thinking of everything that we were doing, and all the energy we were putting into booking shows and *all* the stuff we were doing: making zines, all this energy was coming out of Tacoma. It was all new and exciting. And this phrase “South End Style” just kept repeating in my head, and what I took that to mean was just like, “Y'all have your thing, and we have *ours*. And this is the name for it.” Because we have our own brand, that we're putting on punk and hardcore and all the ideas and energy that come out of that. And I kinda went ahead in this vision for what that word meant, and I had this manufactured idea of: What if some day there was an empire under this banner of South End Style? What if there was a record store, and a record label, and a clothing business, and a venue?” All these things that we're all doing and moving towards. What if all of that could be traced back to something really funny and obscure, some really crappy demo tape, something completely irrelevant that has nothing to do with South End Style, but what if we could manufacture this backwards concept the most humble, ridiculous beginnings for an empire to start? At the time, I was dating an adorable young lady from Canada. And she did not look like she'd be into extreme, aggressive music but she certainly was. But she carried herself in a very classy, nice manner. And I'm a drummer and she was really sick for like a week. And I went up [to Canada] to take care of her and she had a really high fever. And I was thinking up this really funny idea cause she had an old drum kit in a closet at her house and I was thinking like, “How could I teach you how to play drums and then play guitar and start a band

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with you. You're sick, let's start a really funny, aggressive band called Fever with this cute little girl playing drums and me just *screaming* my head off playing really aggressive guitar parts!" So the whole concept was let's start a grindcore, power violence band but at a tempo you could actually learn to play drums at. So the idea was how do we take all these slow parts from grindcore, power violence, death metal, all this extreme music, but something where she can just play very dainty, simple drumming over the top of it. So I went ahead and wrote music for a slow, manageable, concept of that kind of music. And then things went south with me and her, it never happened, I had these songs sitting around. And it clicked in my head, "*This is dumb! This is South End Style!*" And I was like, "I'm gonna record this and we're gonna call it South End Style!" This is the humble beginnings of an empire: my sick lady friend, who's gonna play drums in an imaginary band. So I went into a studio by myself, and I recorded all the drums, all the guitar, all the vocals. And a record label called 16OH! – I thought it was just gonna be a demo or a joke and the label *loved* it and put out a record for us, I think they put out 300 copies of the 7 inch. And then we turned into a band that played shows live and we had a record. So it became a not-joke that was still a joke and basically all my bad ideas, my weird scenarios like fake things that I want to have exist in some other realm I put under the banner of "Fever". At the first Fever show in Olympia, I made programs as if we at some large play theatre that introduced every member of our band...

ZP: [laughs] I forgot about this.

BS: And it had all the "scenes" and the "acts" of our performance, like listed in the program. [laughs] And we were just kind of like a goofy, not-real band but there's a strange cult following people out there that obsess over this really stupid record and it's long out of print. So basically I got what I wanted. I've now been booking shows with fliers that say "S.E.S. Presents" on them or "South End Style Presents" or "Another South End Style Joint" or whatever I wanna put on a flier I've been doing that since 2005 now and the legacy of that is that's – I guess if I ever started an empire, that's what it was. I don't know. All that creativity, all the people that I was around that were inspiring me at the time like, that's what I take with me when I still book shows, when I put out a record, when I make a zine, anything that I do can directly be traced back to all those people and all the energy that was coming out of Tacoma around 2004 and 2005. That's all on the books. *Off* the books it all came from the Fever record.

ZP: I just want to put this on the permanent record, full disclosure: I'm the one who ended up playing drums in this band.

BS: Yes.

ZP: And I think there was one show that I didn't [play] cause I was out of town or something like that. But, I love this story because I remember my understanding of the origins of this band was just a post that you made on NWHardcore[.com] about a list of eleven different bands that you wanted to start in the summer of 2006. And there was this one, "Fever," where you explained what you said that was like power violence, but no fast parts. And I loved that idea

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because I've been a drummer for a long time and I love power violence and grindcore, but I can't play fast worth a damn. And I also thought the idea was just funny and absurd and I jumped on it real quick. And I remember we jammed at the Black House down in Olympia, and I've been part of it since. But I had no idea about that whole history of like the name, or this girlfriend, or the origins of South End Style, which is also a song on that record.

BS: Yes.

ZP: Which I love.

BS: [laughs]

ZP: It's really stupid but so much fun to play! Yeah I'm just – that's just my little history for the record. Also Fever should plays shows again cause that band's fun.

BS: OK.

ZP: OK. [laughs]

BS: Jay's not gonna be in the band though. Me and you are just doing it.

ZP: OK I'm fine with that.

BS: Do you want a beer?

ZP: [laughs] Sure. Thanks. Let's see Sidetracked, Owen Hart, Six Demon Bag, Stop At Nothing, Barricade, Sojourner, Fever... Talk about Gag Reflex.

BS: [laughs] During the summer of 2004, when we were living at the Bunny Ranch, I had really been spending a lot of time listening to raw, early 80s New York kinda hardcore punk. Bands like Agnostic Front, Cause for Alarm, Antidote, Urban Waste, the Neos, like just raw – Neos were Vancouver but - I was getting into really raw, like early 80s, like Poison Idea, this and that, and I really wanted to emulate just a dumbed down, just meathead band but through the filter of 1981, 16-year-olds who can't play instruments, they're totally drunk, you know they'd never play the song the same way twice. [beer cracking] And I just kinda ripped off this whole vibe. Particularly from this band Antidote. I'm not ashamed to admit I bit everything that band ever put out there for me. And we put together, I wrote a demo of songs, and once again I went into the studio, recorded everything myself, and we did a four song demo tape called "Warhorse." And the premise of the band was to unite all the different punk houses at the time.

ZP: What houses were those?

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BS: Basically the 1227 House and the Bunny Ranch. So Adam Barnes from Greyskull played bass in Gag Reflex, Tony Wolfe who lived at the 1227 House at the time played drums – and Tony Wolfe is not a drummer. So I really wanted to get that authentic, crappy New York Hardcore punk sound, so we got a non-drummer to play drums and it was perfect. And then Jay who lived at the Bunny Ranch with me played guitar and we did this demo and all of our songs were purposely put through this really stupid, ignorant 1980s filter. So my lyrics were about ludes, which is a drug that doesn't even *exist* on the streets anymore, it hasn't existed for 25 years, but that was like a slang term for drugs on the street. I was singing about some violent stuff – like things that were actually happening in the scene I was singing about them, but trying to put them through this filter of this stupid, character that I was assuming for this band. And mostly what we were known for was being diehard, pro-Tacoma, fuck-Seattle, super Tacoma diehard advocate weirdos. And we were known for that. we were the flagship band of Tacoma where it was just expected to go bananas when we played. 'Cause all we did was yell about Tacoma. And the funniest people in the world are playing the instruments in this band, like the most unlikely people including Tony who's *the* worst drummer I think I've ever seen play drums in this band. And he was *perfect* for it. When I recorded the demo for Gag Reflex, I did all the music in one sitting. And then I had made time to go into the studio to do the vocals another day but the engineer in the studio double booked. And this like alt-country, pop band was in the studio recording. I go in and the engineers like, "Oh my gosh, I forgot you were coming today! These guys are in here they're all set up." And I'm like, "Guys... I need like twenty minutes, could you just hang out? I just have to do some quick vocal tracks." So I put on headphones and these guys are just sitting there staring at me, and I just start screaming my head off into a microphone – they can't hear the music! They don't know what's happening! And then I'm like, "Alright, thanks dude!" and then I just walked out. I think those guys were probably really confused and kind of unsure of what they just witnessed. But what they really witnessed was just magic being made.

ZP: [laughs] Man...

BS: I was in a band the same summer, 2004, we put together another band called Crooked Cops Hardcore, "hardcore's" in the name of the band, so Crooked Cops *Hardcore*. And similar thing, for that summer I was listening to a lot of this band called Sheer Terror. And I really wanted to put some of that influence into a band. And to do so I was trying to construct the sketchiest looking band possible. So Jay played guitar. I wrote all the songs, but he liked all the riffs, so he was down to play guitar. And Jay and I, maybe I did the whole demo, I don't even remember, but we recorded a six song demo and it never really came out, but it's around, you know like the *real* people in Tacoma have a copy of it. And the live band at the time was gonna be me and Jay, and then there's this really sketchy guy named Joe, and he had a Warlock BC Rich guitar, and I was like, "That will look *cool* in this band." And this guy, our first practice he didn't show up cause he went to jail. And then the guy that I had playing bass for us was in AA for serious alcohol treatment, and then he ended up – he couldn't commit to the band [laughs] cause he had to go rehab. And then Jay was in the band... So we only played one show ever at the Bunny Ranch. And Taiga Dinger played bass. Rusty Graeff played drums. And Jay played

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guitar. And that's just another – that's a very important band in the history of hardcore in Tacoma. If maybe the preeminent Tacoma hardcore band: Crooked Cops Hardcore. The same year, Tony and I started a band called Rich Crazy Assholes, which we call RCA for short. And Rich Crazy Assholes was a nod to early Napalm Death, Brutal Truth, kinda the Earache grindcore scene. And we, during the Earth Control LP session, we did all the recording tracks in 2008 for the Rich Crazy Assholes demo. Which came out you know four years after we started playing these songs. It's called *No Tolerance for the Human Race*. It's kinda tongue in cheek, but it's basically a “classic” grindcore record that came out, you know, “a long lost grindcore record”... from 2008.

ZP: What are some other silly bands you've been in? Or serious bands?

BS: I'm currently in a band called Dead Weight and Tory who sang for Left With Nothing plays bass, Chris Williams from Champion sings, Paul Bettinson who played guitar for Left With Nothing plays guitar, and then our friend Jake, who sings in a band called Ill Intent plays guitar, and I play drums. And we are on – we have a record out on a label called REACT! Records. We also have a demo out that came out on cassette tape before that. And that band is just more about being friends. We're definitely going for a late 80's New York hardcore, crossover thrash kinda thing. And that band is just a fun band to be in. And yeah.

ZP: You were talking earlier about how Left With Nothing was a huge, huge influence on you. What's it like being able to play actually in band with those guys now?

BS: It's a blast! I feel like I'm old enough now where I'm not just the kid anymore. Even though I'm a “kid” in that band, I mean those guys are one or two years away from being 40 at this point. Chris and Tory are getting some grey beards going. But It's just fun to realize like, man, we're all still here! We're all still plugging along. We all still care about hardcore. We're still making music. We're still playing shows. It's just fun to realize that if there's no set age limit or expectation of when you're supposed to “get over” this thing or when its supposed to cease being important to you, ‘cause here we all are and it feels like years have gone by cause they have, and we're still involved, still doing something in some capacity. It's been great. I really look up to pretty much all those guys. But Being in a band with Chris, Tory, and Paul is like you know, getting to play music with my elders or whatever. So it's fun.

ZP: What are some bands in Tacoma that you're not a part of that you'd like to talk about? Whether they're active now or were a couple years ago at the peak of what was going on in 2004, 05, 06, 07... I don't know. To me that's when it seems like Tacoma hardcore was the biggest.

BS: Yeah I wanna talk about a band called Greyskull.

ZP: Yeah.

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BS: Greyskull was basically all the members of – just all the people that lived at the 1227 House forming a band. Tony Wolfe, who writes all the music for Earth Control was in Greyskull the whole time. And he wrote not all, but most of it. He had a direction for it. And they were going for a – I don't know what they were going for. Definitely a dark, melodic sound for hardcore music. And they were the center of Tacoma as far as that era and the bands that really – they went on huge tours, they met everybody, they you know, their house, the 1227 House where Greyskull was from is the house that hosted all these shows and they really blazed a trail for Tacoma. They're the band that was playing basements all across the country, you know going to North Carolina and all these places playing to punks in basements, saying, “Hey you gotta come check out what's going on in Tacoma.” And we got to meet so many bands and people who came through because of that. Greyskull put out a number of records, they put out a split record with a band that they met from Reno and really that tour, that first Greyskull/Six Demon Bag/Owen Hart tour is where we met all these Reno kids. And there was, there's still to this day a direct bridge from Reno to Tacoma where all of our bands are always taken care of their, and all of their bands are always taken care of here. Basically our best friends in the world pretty much are from Reno. There's a couple other cities that are like that, one of them would be the Salt Lake-Provo scene and Greyskull really established a strong connection with that scene there. And the other place would be the Oakland area. Those are our homes away from homes where all the bands from those scenes have always been welcome in Tacoma. We still see the fruit of all those early tours and things. But Greyskull, as far as I'm concerned, put Tacoma on the map. They had this ridiculous work ethic: they screen printed all their own t-shirts, made all their own merch, screen printed the covers for their own records, corresponded with everybody, kept in touch with everybody, booked their own tours, brought bands to the Northwest. So I think everybody now that is involved in hardcore music in Tacoma, in my opinion, owes a piece of that to Greyskull. Especially everybody that got involved in music after 2006, 2007. I think there's a direct line back to Greyskull.

ZP: What happened to Greyskull?

BS: I don't know if I wanna have this conversation recorded. There was internal – there was irreconcilable tension between key members of that band in a way that friendships were unsalvageable and will probably remain that way, not just due to stubbornness, but due to deep, personal conflicts between some of the members of that band. out of the ashes of Greyskull, Tony was you know writing songs, couldn't stop writing music, was upset that the band had fallen apart, and the vocalist Adam and Tony after a break from Greyskull formed a band called Marrow. And Marrow went at everything with the same energy, went on huge tours, recording amazing music and just continued this legacy as far as Tacoma reaching out to other places in the world. I really wish they were still a band. I think they could have gone *anywhere* if they had just pursued it and kept going. I think at that point they were just pretty burned out and couldn't do it anymore. But that's another band that to me, left a huge mark on Tacoma. And really trail-blazed and put Tacoma on the map in a lot – introduced Tacoma to a lot of strange places in the country. When Greyskull broke up Stephen Cahill joined a band called Graf Orlock from Los Angeles area, and that was just a furthering of the connections that Tacoma had established through the

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tours that our bands had gone on, because Graf Orlock is a band we met in 2005. And that was just you know, the next evolution of that connection, was Stephen moving down and joining that band we had met on tour. Yeah I don't know.

ZP: How'd Stephen wind up in the Bay Area after moving down there to the Los Angeles area?

BS: Stephen went to school for – he's a paraeducator for kids with autism. And I think he probably was offered or maybe his school was based there or something, but that's always what he's wanted to do and now that's what he's been doing.

ZP: Does he still play with Graf Orlock?

BS: Yes. But I think they're a touring only sort of band.

ZP: Oh ok. Well do you wanna say anything else about Tacoma hardcore music that we haven't covered over the last... week?

BS: Even though we don't have a lot of official venues here now, I think I'm seeing a cycle start up again, where all the venues shut down, where everything was wiped out and it's forcing a lot of different sorts of people to get active and involved and interested in things. And I'm seeing a lot of really young people pick up the torch, book shows, create strange spaces for shows to exist in, and its fun being a little bit older and wiser, having seen all this happen before and being able to know how to support it, and know how to help steer it with the long run in mind. So I don't know. I'm still involved in many different aspects of things but its really exciting to see kids that are at least 10 years younger than I am, if not younger, starting to build something.

ZP: Are there people from our generation taking notice, and other than you, helping to support and foster them? Or are people just stepping back and letting them do things on their own?

BS: I don't wanna answer that question.

ZP: OK.

BS: Uh I don't like the question.

ZP: [laughs] Alright sure. Well anyway, that is the end. Signing off!

[END]