

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH MORRIS KAFKA-HOLZSCHLAG

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kathryn Tracy Rizzi: This begins an interview with Morris Kafka-Holzschlag. Is that how you say it?

Morris Kafka-Holzschlag: That's right.

KR: The date is April 11, 2019, and we are in New Brunswick, New Jersey with Kate Rizzi. Also present is ...

Rue Watson: Rue Watson.

KR: Thank you so much for coming in to do this oral history interview.

MK: It's my pleasure. I'm honored that you found me and would like to hear my story.

KR: To begin, where and when were you born?

MK: I was born in Brooklyn, New York, on September 21, 1965. It was a Tuesday. It was 6:50 PM in Beth David Hospital, if I remember right--well, not from personal memory, but from the documents. [laughter]

KR: What do you know about your family history, starting on your mother's side?

MK: My mother's mother's mother was from Lodz, Poland. That's L-O-D-Z. [She] moved to Warsaw at some time in the very early twentieth century. My mother's grandfather knew that things were getting bad. There were pogroms against Jews, and he came to the U.S. first and got a job here. My great grandmother and her firstborn and second born, my mother's mother Gladys and her younger sister Tobias, came over in 1920 from Warsaw to New York City by boat. My grandmother was nearly ten at the time.

I did not meet my great grandmother. She died right before I was born. My older sister met her. She had a limited education, very industrious woman. She was a cleaning lady, but she managed to afford a stone townhouse in Warsaw that was multi-story and she had flower boxes in the windows there. She cried until the end of her life that she had to leave, walk away from her house just to save her family's life. She was very house proud. She loved her house. She loved to make it nice and clean and to have flowers, and she was very interested in the home environment. Even when she lived in modest apartments in New York, the photos show that she's made draperies for the windows and collected good furniture one piece at a time. She wanted to have a beautiful space, and she dressed so elegantly, people thought she was some kind of royalty, although she was of limited background. When she had been a cleaning lady for some wealthy cousins in Poland, she had been exposed to some sophisticated architecture and decor.

KR: Paul is here. Let us stop for a second.

MK: Okay.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

KR: Okay, we are back on recording. Joining us is history professor ...

Paul Clemens: Paul Clemens.

KR: Thank you, Professor Clemens, for coming in to interview with us today.

MK: I am going to tell a little bit more of that. As far back as I know, on my mother's mother's side--this is my great grandmother, who was Lena Bella Ezbitzsky. When she was a young woman, she was betrothed to a man, whom she did not like, by parental arrangement. She was supposed to be married to this fellow. She didn't like him at all. One of her friends said to her, "Come with me to my boyfriend's house. He's been ill. He's a soldier in the army and he's recuperating." Well, my great grandmother fell for this slightly younger guy, who was her girlfriend's boyfriend.

I can't imagine all the emotions that evolved, but my great grandmother wanted to marry this guy. She did not have a dowry, so his parents wouldn't allow it, although my great great grandparents said, "If you love this fellow, you can marry him." They were modern enough in the 1880s that they would allow it. So, she said to this fellow, "Take part of your stipend as a soldier and put it in a bank account in my name each month." At the end of the year, there was sufficient money in the account that he was able to say to his parents, "Look, here's the dowry." They get married, and at the wedding, the rabbi says, "If there's anyone here who has any reason to protest," and up stands this red-bearded man, who was her jilted arranged-marriage fiancé cursing my family in perpetuity, which led to a dislike of red-headed guys in the family. [laughter] So, that story has come down. My mother actually wrote it and published it as a story called the *The Bogus Bank Book*. She grew up hearing these stories, and she knew my great grandmother.

Lena Bella Ezbitzsky married a man named Jacob Rockfeld, who was my great [grandfather], my grandmother was born, Gladys Rockfeld, in 1910. Jacob came to the U.S via Paris circa 1914. Some money was eventually saved, and my great grandmother and my grandmother were able to migrate by boat. My grandmother would tell me the story in 1920 of her coming in a very inexpensive steerage in the boat, with very little food and the teeming masses coming to the shore. She saw the Statue of Liberty and she knew what it meant, that it's the big moment, this is the story that she told, and the opportunity in the U.S after leaving the pogroms, the fear of life in Poland in those days.

They settled in the Lower East Side. My great grandfather was, I believe, a tailor, a pretty typical portable career of that era. Eventually, there were five children. My grandmother was strolling in Coney Island when she would have been probably about seventeen or eighteen with a friend of hers, and my grandfather saw her and liked her and said to his friend, when he saw her walking away, he said, "That's the woman I'm going to marry." They had tried to arrange a date with her with his brother, but that didn't work out or something, so my grandfather courted my grandmother. The community was small enough that people knew each other. It wasn't like

there were people flowing in and out constantly. There was enough connections that the families were somehow familiar with each other.

They married in 1930 or '31 in New York. They settled in the Bronx. My mother was born in 1933. Her older brother was born November 12, 1931. My mother was born March 22, 1933 in the Bronx.

Now, I'll go back to my mother's father. His name was Maurice Krotenberg, and his family owned property in Harlem. He was born in Poland on February 5, 1900. He became a certified public accountant, which at that point was something to fuss over because that was a higher education of sorts and that was a career. He worked with people like [Fiorello H.] LaGuardia and Fred Trump. He was an active, I think, alderman in his neighborhood in New York. He was maybe his ward's representative; he had some political aspirations. There are still letters that exist from names that are recognizable to me as famous politicians of that era. My mother remembers that he would go to Harlem with her and collect rent from a tenant in a house; that may have been a house his family owned. The Krotenbergs; this I'll have to fill in. I did an oral history recorded with my mother in the 1980s and I have more background on that line of the family, but it's not as colorful as her mother's line.

Mom was educated in the Bronx. At school, her parents were told that she was gifted and talented quite constantly, and my grandmother, only having a sixth-grade education, didn't really know how to process that or what to do with it, but she didn't discourage my mother. My great grandmother used to insist that my grandmother had quit school of her own accord, but my grandmother said she did it to help her younger siblings. Education was always a matter of discussion; how much did you have and why didn't you go further seemed to be a recurring theme in the family.

My mother was invited to go to Hunter College High School at that point, which was for talented students. She had finished reading all of Shakespeare by age twelve. She was in the library all the time, and she just read. Throughout her life, this was constant, always propped up in bed reading a book. That was her great delight, to just read. She was at Hunter College High School, this would be 1949-1950, at this time my grandmother had a very bad arthritis; her hands were curling up and she was in pain. The doctor said to go somewhere dry and clear. She wrote to the government, and they said that one of the two best places was Tucson, Arizona. Tucson happened to have an established Jewish community with some Kosher butchers and so forth, and so she thought this would be a good place to settle. It was a very small town then. She moved out to Tucson. My grandfather, at this point, was living in Brooklyn, in a development built by Fred Trump called Beach Haven, which was a VA [Veterans Administration] project which had some scandal around it. It's a very colorful story about their time there. [Editor's Note: Real estate developer Fred Trump owned and operated Beach Haven, located in Gravesend, Brooklyn near Coney Island. In the mid-1970s, the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Justice Department filed suit against Trump for violating the Fair Housing Act of 1968 and practicing racial discrimination in rejecting minority applicants for apartment rentals. The case was settled.]

My grandfather was still working, so he would drive back and forth before they had major highways to Tucson. My mother ended up finishing high school in 1950 in Tucson, and I think

she was in class with one of the Ronstadts, who were famous out there. So, there were all these fun little tidbits. [Editor's Note: The Ronstadts are a prominent Arizona family. Singer Linda Ronstadt (born in 1946) grew up in Tucson.]

Then, she went back to New York to go to NYU [New York University], and she was living with my grandfather while she was at NYU. She wanted to study pre-law. Her name was Phyllis Joyce Krotenberg. She signed up for pre-law, and when she walked in, the professor pushed her out and locked the door, saying, "No women allowed." We think they misread Phyllis as Philip or something. They didn't know that it was a woman. Unless your last name was Vanderbilt or something like that and you had given the university a lot of money, they don't let you sit in some of these classes. So, she had to choose English as a backup.

She lived in the Judson Hall dormitory on Washington Square, a landmark building designed by Stanford White. She met my father when she was out with a group of women, and someone knew the group of men. My father just started talking to her and he knew Tucson and said there's great ice cream there and this conversation evolved. He was at the Fashion Institute of Technology.

PC: Can I drop in? To go back, it is your great grandmother who comes over as a steerage passenger?

MK: [Yes].

PC: Did she tell you anything specific about that trip?

MK: Yes. My grandmother told me--I didn't know my great grandmother--so my grandmother said that the first part of the trip, they had a decent stateroom and they stopped somewhere and my great grandmother ...

PC: Where did they start from? Where did they depart from?

MK: They started from Warsaw, Poland.

PC: Okay.

MK: They had lived in Lodz, which was the Pale of Settlement, a poor area. My great grandmother had purchased a home in Warsaw somehow, like she had gotten the resources, but they had to basically walk away from that because things were getting very bad. So, they departed from Warsaw. I don't know where the first stop was, but during that stop, my great grandmother said that the tickets were stolen or lost. She didn't have a lot of money, so she was moved into steerage. My mother, in reviewing the story, said, you know, my grandmother was a very, very wise woman and, "I think she traded those tickets in and probably stashed the cash so that she would have more money for when she arrived," because things were scary. She didn't need a luxurious room. She's like, "Let's take the cheapest spot in the boat and save some money." They had very limited food. I think my grandmother said they had salami and stale

bread to eat. My grandmother does remember, I guess they were rounding the cape--would it be the cape at the bottom of Africa? Is that the Cape of Good Hope or something?

PC: Good Hope.

MK: I can't remember what the name of this was. She said they took a stop, and they disembarked. She said there was a very tall and very dark man with gold earrings, and he gave her her first taste of chocolate. So, she has this little memory. I don't know exactly where that was, so somewhere that was on this journey. They did come in through Ellis Island.

PC: Were they sex segregated on the boat? Did she mention that?

MK: Well, my great grandfather had come in previously and established himself, and it was just my great grandmother and my grandmother. She was either ten or twelve at the time the journey was made, and she didn't describe what the culture was on the boat. She died in 1980, so unfortunately, I didn't get to ask a lot of details as I got old enough to be interested in more. She would tell the story regularly because she was very proud that she had become American. It's an important story for the kids to hear and understand about immigration. I remember the bicentennial. We were all watching the tall ships and so forth and she talked of her gratitude and her great pride in having been able to come, the gratitude for the opportunity. In 1924, of course, quotas went in on Jewish people coming in from Europe, so they got in just under the wire or my family might not have existed. [Editor's Note: Quotas refers to the national origins quota of the Immigration Act of 1924, which restricted immigration by granting visas to two percent of the total population of each nationality in the United States as of the 1890 census. The act also altogether prohibited immigration from Asia.]

PC: Do you know if the ship was all Jewish?

MK: I don't, but my brother, I think, did find the ship abstract, which might have more information. I might be able to find out more. That's a really interesting question that never occurred to me.

PC: Sometimes they were segregated. They weren't all Jewish, but the Jews would be segregated, usually from the Catholics or something.

MK: Yes.

PC: That's what I know about the steerage stuff out of people who left Russia and then had to find a way out of Germany or Poland to get over because the Russians would not let them leave.

MK: When they left in the early '20s, I don't remember my grandmother describing that there was any inability to travel in 1922. If that was an issue, she wasn't aware of any of it, at the age she was.

KR: Do you have [any more questions]?

PC: No, that is all right.

KR: You were talking about your mother's education and her time at NYU.

MK: Yes, so she studied at NYU, and it was English literature. Well, she went there also for her Ph.D., and William Dean Howe was someone that I think she did her thesis on. She got some scholarship money for being an outstanding student. This was when she was going in, there was scholarship money. Once she was there, the woman in charge of financial aid said, "Women are here to get their 'Mrs.' degree, so we're not helping you." So, she had to work. She worked at her lunch hour in a photocopy shop, and then she worked in the student bookstore at different times. She would describe to me that she would run from her classes to where she was working in this photocopy office, where it was much more an elaborate process then in those days, in the early '50s, to make photocopies. It took up an entire room. The woman who ran it would mock her for going to college, saying, "You're wasting your time. Just get married." She would run back, and all along the way, men would whistle and cat call. If she stopped at a corner, they'd pinch her. One of my relatives had a little furniture store along the way, and she'd sometimes run in there because the guys were horribly aggressive to women alone. She would come running, panting, into a class maybe a minute or two late, and she'd get scolded by professors for being a minute or two late into the classroom and disrupting the class as she entered.

She had challenges. In retrospect, it's all sexism. I don't know how she felt about it back then, but she would write about this and talk about this later. She managed to excel. She got her Ph.D. while she was married, and she was starting to raise children. She learned to cook, clean and sew too, which her mother told her to do. She was the homemaker and the scholar, and she started teaching in the late '60s at Rider College as an adjunct professor.

I have to back up a little bit now because she met my father in 1955 in the Village. She was going out with another fellow that she liked, and my father kept sort of pushing his way in, [laughter] charming her. They had a date one night. He was from Williamsburg, Brooklyn. He was commuting in to FIT. She lived in an all-women's dorm with a house matron. He so charmed the house matron that she would let him come in. He had special privilege to come in and visit in the parlors or whatever, social areas, when other guys had to leave. My father was definitely like a sweet talker, a charmer. She remembers this specific date, there was a blizzard, and she thought, "Oh, our date's off." My father had walked across one of the bridges from Brooklyn to get to her because whatever transit crossed the bridge couldn't operate during the snow. He had these frozen roses with him when he arrived, and she said, "Oh, this man really loves me." That was an important moment.

They were married on January 25, 1958 in a rented hall, which my mother couldn't remember the address of when I asked her, and none of the invitation information I found seems to have it. There's these little thank-you notes and things, but the actual invite that would have had that has gone missing.

They moved to Brooklyn. They rented an apartment together, 8855 Bay Parkway, which is still there. I can see it if I travel on the Bay Parkway, and I guess that's Bensonhurst. My sister's born exactly five years later on their anniversary, January 25, 1963, in that apartment. When I

was born, they were also living in the same building. My father said to my mother, "Let's get out of the city, go to the suburbs." My father, by the way, once he was done at FIT, went to work at his father's firm, which was basically a tailor shop that had become a woman's sportswear company. He was a fashion engineer. That was what he was trained as. He figured out how the designs would get mass produced, how the cutting dies would be made, how they'd be assembled, and the transition from something, that, let's say, is a runway design that his company might buy the rights to, to making it so that it ends up on the rack at Macy's or wherever they were selling to.

My mother was studying, not working. She was with young kids, so she was working from home, I should say. [On] September 21, 1966, which is exactly my first birthday, they moved to Somerset, to what was called the Strathmore neighborhood, 30 MacAfee Road. It's just off JFK Boulevard near Hamilton Street, not so far from here, and that was a nice big suburban house, a five-bed, three-bath model known as Framingham. They sort of made the American dream. In fact, my great aunt, my grandmother's younger sister, would rave to the end of her life about what a gorgeous house that was and how much she was impressed when she went there. She lived in a nice house in Massapequa herself.

Prior to their moving to New Jersey, a lot of relatives would either live in Brooklyn or the Bronx, so they were all relatively close together in New York City. They could babysit for each other. They could take the subway to see each other.

My father, I guess I should talk a little bit about his people. I did not know his parents. They both died before I was born. They lived in Williamsburg. His father Jacob (born March 28, 1886 in Galicia, Austria, arrived in New York in August 1920) had been a tailor. His mother was a homemaker. My mother thought that she looked Italian, even though she was born north of what was the border of Italy at the time.

They were Austro-Hungarian, and I believe it was Austrian ancestors. That Holzschlag name, you see, was, according to family tradition, it was Von-Holzschlager. My father's grandfather was said to be an attaché to Emperor Franz Joseph, who's in an allegedly famous painting of them both on horseback that I haven't been able to find anywhere yet. This is so often repeated by any of the relatives from that era that there must have been something they saw or knew of that seemed to have this level of elevation to it. The smoking gun hasn't been found. [Editor's Note: Franz Joseph I (1830-1916) served as the emperor of Austria from 1848 to 1916 and as the king of Hungary and monarch of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after 1867.]

That said, we know he was in the military. They had a stone tavern and inn, an apple orchard and a horse farm somewhere along the Moldau River. My father would cry whenever the classical piece *The Moldau* would play. It was very emotional. He had not lived in Europe but the story had come down to him. [Editor's Note: *The Moldau* is an 1874 symphonic poem by Bedrich Smetana.]

My aunt went back after World War II to try to reclaim the property, and nothing happened except that her life was threatened. I don't know where that was, but they had apparently lived

there a long time and the Von was added to the name as an aristocratic gesture by Franz Joseph, according to them. It's been hard to piece this together.

We've done some genealogical research, but the Holzschlag name is known. It's not that common. So, that might help us, but there's also a town of Holzschlag. I don't know when my people got that name, if they were given it because they worked for someone with that name, or they lived in that town. All Jews had to take on surnames. They didn't have European names, until they were forced to by the government. So, how it was adopted, I can't say. That's really all I know about my father's people.

He was first-generation born here, and he was born, I think it's, December 24, 1928. He was born in Williamsburg. He had both half and full siblings, because his father's first wife Eva had passed away and he remarried, so there's extended family. The generations didn't really line up well in terms of having cousins that were close in age to me. People were far away. I didn't know them very well, except his one sister, my Aunt Shirley, who just died in 2017, and I were somewhat close. She never married, and she was born here and didn't have too much family history. When I'd ask her, she didn't seem to know too much about that.

I do know that his father was studying to be a rabbi when he died. He was a very devout Orthodox Jew and a very traditional, formidable kind of person. He was said to be very spiritual and very thoughtful. They had two ancestors who were rabbis in Europe. They called my father "Professor" because he was supposed to be so smart, but my mother was really the professor. He was not. Let's see, what else? I think that covers as much as I know offhand.

My mother was very interested in family history, and she would sit with my father's mother in the kitchen while she was making Italian food, even though she wasn't likely Italian [laughter], and listen to her stories. I did record these in 1984, as part of a Rutgers "Your Family Genealogy" class. I have a tape, and I have a transcript. She got back into the early 1800s from oral tradition. Later research has found that her names and dates pretty much lined up with ship's abstracts we found and things like that. The family oral history was pretty good. Her memory was very good. That brings us back to the '60s in Brooklyn and just moving into Somerset in 1966. Do you have any questions up to that point?

KR: You said your father was first generation.

MK: Yes.

KR: Were there stories passed down about why his parents emigrated from Austria?

MK: Well, after the collapse of the Austrian Empire, I think things got bad there, and I do know that they wanted to conscript Jews into the Army to be on the frontline. Things seemed pretty dangerous, I guess. They sensed bad times coming. There was a lot of racism or anti-Semitic behavior occurring. They wanted to escape from that.

They did come before the famous purge that occurred. When the Nazis came in in the '30s and they purged all the Jewish faculty, staff, and students from the University at Vienna and so forth,

that happened, they were already here, but some of the relatives and peers did not make it. This entire branch of the family [is] just gone.

If the story is right, one of my ancestors--and I can't remember now if this my father's side or my mother's side--it's said that a friend of theirs in the streets, said to them, "Now is the time to leave. We all have to leave now. Things are getting very bad." This was someone who was a respected in the elder community, and they took it seriously because the evidence was building up around them that hostility was increasing and rights were being taken away.

The same reasons most people migrated; it's either oppression or lack of opportunity to sustain yourself [or the] need for economic stability. In their case, they had portable careers, people who were tailors and accountants. They could really work anywhere, which was fortunate. So, I don't know much more. My father did not talk much about that. It was pretty quiet when it came to family history. There was apparently a lot of pain in the loss of their family members and the place they had called home for a long time.

We moved to Somerset in September 1966. I'm one year old exactly, and my mother gets her position at Ryder at that point as an adjunct English professor. I can remember, as a little boy, my mother going over to Douglass College, to Hickman Hall, which was then pretty new, where she was offered a position as an English professor at Douglass. She was pregnant with my little brother. This would have been in the early spring of 1969. They told her, "Oh, but of course you'll have to take maternity leave right away." She was a little bit unhappy about that.

She dressed in some kind of multi-layered dress that was around in the late '60s that disguised that she was pregnant, and she went to interview with Newark State College, which is now Kean University. She sat low at the table to hide her pregnancy, and they offered her a job. She knew my brother was going to be born in the spring, and so she started in September of '69 at Newark State, where she remained for thirty years [as an] English professor and eventually head of [the] Women's Studies Department. [She was the] only female professor in her department when she got there [and faced] a lot of resentment. They needed professors at that point in the '60s. I guess there was expansion. Her qualifications were great. One of the professors there had gone to graduate school with her, actually two, so Bernie Weinstein and Dr. James Sutor. James Sutor was a Victorian literature specialist, who sort of droned on in monotone about poetry, but he was a very nice fellow. [laughter] Bernie Weinstein started the Holocaust Institute at Kean. I'm not sure of the exact name of that, but some dynamic people were there. I spent some of my childhood on that Kean campus, especially in the summer when my mother was teaching summer courses. [Editor's Note: The Holocaust Resource Center at Kean University was founded in 1982.]

We lived very near to New Brunswick. My father commuted by train from New Brunswick to Manhattan, where his offices were, for a women's sportswear company. I was brought there on days off. They were sort of grooming me to learn that business, not knowing that all that would end up outsourced overseas, and mostly the clothing manufacturing business in New York City pretty much collapsed in the '70s. That just disappeared out from under us.

I attended Moriah Yeshiva Academy on Liberty Street in New Brunswick, starting in 1968-'69 in nursery school. Then, I went to a primary, they had kindergarten, they had primary--this was in a building where the Wolfson Parking Deck is now across from the Poile Zedek Synagogue that had a fire. It was a Greek and Jewish neighborhood down there. This was a modern Orthodox yeshiva. It's today the Rabbi Pesach Raymon Yeshiva on the Edison-Highland Park border.

The thinking was that the school system in Somerset wasn't so great, and my grandmother, my mother's mother, paid for myself and my sister to go to this private school. We were not Orthodox. We were very liberal, non-synagogue-going Jews at home that kept nominally kosher, so kosher relatives could eat in the house. The ideas of Jewish karma, like the theology ideas, the education, the service of justice, the helping others, that was very, very important. I'd say they were spiritually involved and they observed the holidays, but they were not very institutionally active. It's interesting we ended up at a yeshiva when we weren't going to synagogue at all. That yeshiva moved in about 1972.

I then began to go to MacAffee Elementary School in Somerset. I was there for first grade, and then I was back at yeshiva. There were some transitions going on. We remained in Somerset until February 1973. My parents separated, and my mother, even though she was a college professor with a pretty decent salary, was not allowed to rent in any nice apartments that we looked at in New Brunswick. They wouldn't rent to a separated woman, even one with a job and a paycheck from the State of New Jersey. I remember looking at the apartments with her. I can point out where they were. Some of them are still rather nice apartments in good areas, and I got very resentful. This will come back into the story when I become a member of the Rent Control Board in New Brunswick some years later. Finally, she goes to Kimwood Apartments on Lake Avenue in East Brunswick and says, "Well, my husband is at work, so I'm doing the looking," which was true. They didn't question it, and she signed the lease. We had an apartment there, and then she started saving some money to buy a house on her own.

We went from living in Somerset to living in East Brunswick for about a year, from February 1973 to January 1974, at which point my parents tried to get back together and rented a house together at 96 Fellswood Drive in Livingston, New Jersey, where the school district was very good and where it was convenient for my father to commute to work in New York and convenient for my mother to get to Kean. We left the New Brunswick area in the beginning of January 1974, although I continued coming into town to go to my dentist and my eye doctor and so forth and there was some connections here. We were in that house in Livingston eighteen months.

My mother had saved enough money to buy a house, but my parents were still not divorced, even though my mother wanted a divorce, because the man had to sign papers and so forth. When my mother was shopping for a house, my father had to co-sign. He wouldn't allow any of the houses she really liked. He wanted to find one, I guess, that needed to be fixed up so he could ingratiate himself for being the handyman around the house. He was very good with his hands. We found a house at 19 Elberta Road in Maplewood, which had excellent schools, a beautiful house, beautiful neighborhood, nice ethnically-mixed community with a Jewish presence. Shortly after that, my parents divorced.

My father was said to be shell shocked in those days, but now we understand that it's post-traumatic stress. He was in the Korean conflict and saw things that were ghastly. I heard a little bit of it. He did tell some. He would jump up if someone approached from behind. He would see war documentary footage and just snap. Things happened that weren't very good. He was not getting any help. My mother finally said, "This is done" and was able to get divorced in, I want to say, 1976. At this point, there's three of us because my brother was born on May 3rd of 1969.

My mom, no support financially, morally in any way from my father at that point, probably fifty-five percent of a man's salary, a woman's salary, no state help for getting daycare for the youngest child. It was all males running the English department, giving the guys a nice schedule, making her work weird hours, even though she had kids to raise, and somehow she coped and did it all. I think I became a feminist through observing the struggles she went through and the unfair way she was treated. There's many more incidents. I could just go on forever about that, but I felt there were injustices done. They made it hard for her to do anything she wanted to do, even though she had the resources and the intelligence and maturity to be good at whatever. It was hard for her, from renting an apartment to getting a full professorship to having a decent schedule and being able to raise children and not scorned by the community because, "Oh, my goodness," when I was twelve, I had a key to the house and let myself in after school. I had a big sister that was fifteen, but it was somehow horrifying to some people that mother was not home when we got in.

My mother managed to write several books. I think she published six books. She began doing curriculum of minority authors and mostly minority women around the world, Indian women, Cubanos, Jewish-American writers. Back as early as 1974, she started a course, at that point, it was called "Afro-American Writers." Kean was shocked when they had to move her to a bigger hall because so many people signed up for it. Apparently, it was the second course of its kind in the U.S. The next semester, Kean says to her, "Oh, there's nearly no one signing up for the class, so we're going to have to cancel it because you've only got eight students." She goes, "Oh, that's very strange because here's the yellow pad with the names of all the people that stopped by my office saying they were trying to sign up but there was some kind of glitch or they were told they need a prerequisite." She had a hundred people or more on this pad of paper. Of course, they hated her even more for that. She had seen that there was jealousy, and the other professors were trying to fool the students out of this phenomenal course. There may have been racism and sexism. This was going on constantly. She tried to get work at other universities instead, but there was really nothing that was available.

In fact, she remained an associate professor for a very long time. Kean students had a representative on the board at Kean, and this woman comes to her, as a student, and says, "Dr. Kafka, you've been here all these years and you have all this scholarship. You're the only one in the department that is publishing. Why are you an associate professor?" She goes, "The men promote all the men immediately and just leave me there." This young woman made a stink in the school papers, all over the place. Finally, she became full professor. When the state would come around to certify the school, they would say, "There's only one professor in the English department that's doing anything." It was always her. That made them even madder, I guess. I

watched all this going on through my childhood. Eventually, she rose up to the head of women's studies. This was very exciting. My mother loved to read, and she also loved to write.

Let's see, we'll go back to Maplewood. 1976, they're divorced. 1981, she meets the man that becomes my stepfather. He is a physics and geology teacher at J.P. Stevens High School in Edison. He is a Princeton graduate, a very intelligent fellow, a good cerebral fit for my mother and a really nice guy. He helps her edit her manuscripts and get them ready for publication, great encourager and supported her in a way that my father wasn't able to. [He was] great to us kids enough that my little brother, who didn't really remember my father that much, considers my stepdad to have raised him. I was already near college age and getting out of the house at that point.

All the while, this house my mother had purchased in 1975 was an older house that had been in a state of disrepair. My mother's hobby had been fixing up houses and gardens and collecting antiques. She was a fine arts minor in school. I loved it, too. Starting as a little boy, I would follow my father around with a little toolbox and fix things with him. My toolbox had a real metal saw in it in those days, things that are now considered liabilities. You wouldn't see that today as kids' toys, but I was holding a real hammer and pounding nails in and turning screws and so forth and interested in mechanical things. My mother would be on ladders painting or hanging draperies. My parents gardened together. That aspect of the relationship was very nice.

Once my mother was alone in this Maplewood house, I took on the [role of] maintenance man. There are stories of me being about ten and my mother's friend Dee Kenna is over having tea with her and she's like, "What is Morris doing standing in the kitchen sink?" She goes, "Oh, he's fixing the window." Then, they look a few minutes later, and the window is fixed. What became a preservation career is obviously already starting, enjoying the fixing up of this old house.

My mother also told me that she noticed from early childhood that whenever we went on a road trip and we stopped at a historic property that I got very excited. She took me to Rockingham, which has been moved, but it's still extant, if you go down 518, you'll find it, a Revolutionary-era house there. For my eleventh birthday, I asked to go to Colonial Williamsburg and Mount Vernon. That shows you there is clearly this thing developing pretty early on, and it was encouraged. Maplewood had a lot of great old houses. There was a preservation effort that was beginning at the Asher B. Durand House. He was a famous 19th century painter that lived in Maplewood. I was this little volunteer that would go over, and the adults would indulge me when they were discussing preserving this house. [Editor's Note: Rockingham is a historic home that served as one of the headquarters of George Washington during the American Revolution. Asher B. Durand was an American painter who lived from 1796 to 1886. He was born in Maplewood, and his family has ties to the historic Durand-Hedden House, which dates back to 1790. The preservation and restoration of the Durand-Hedden House began after Maplewood bought the property in 1977.]

We fixed up this old house in Maplewood. Then, my stepfather came along. His father had been a homebuilder and cabinetmaker, and he was great with woodworking tools. They decided to buy a cottage down in Belmar together that was condemned. As a teenager, my brother and I

were helping them rebuild this condemned beach cottage in the mornings and going out to the beach in the afternoon. It was a wonderful life.

I was beginning to think about college. Columbia High School was an excellent school, where I went. I was so fortunate they moved us to Maplewood. In that school, there were architectural drafting classes, art classes, lots of opportunity for electives. I worked my lunch hour, the last year of junior high school and three years of high school, in the school cafeteria because I was interested in how those things worked. I was interested by restaurant and hotel management. Note that my father's people were innkeepers, and my parents also were big on hospitality. When there would be a party, they would both fuss over the food, and everyone said, "Oh, they give great events." I was saving some money towards college while working in school.

I was also the founder of the Columbia High School Historic Preservation Society, which aimed to increase understanding of the Guilbert and Betelle high school, a world-class architect that built this high school. It was in *Encyclopedia Britannica* in 1930 as the model high school. They went bankrupt during the stock market crash because they had so many stone carvers and stained-glass windowmakers and mosaic tile details. This is a public high school. I mean, it looks like Oxford or something. If you have ever been to Maplewood, it's just breathtaking. [Editor's Note: James Oscar Betelle, the senior partner of the architecture firm Guilbert and Betelle, designed Columbia High School in Maplewood, which was constructed in 1926-1927.]

In the '80s, when I was there, the Board of Ed, to save money, [said], "These old velvet-covered seats in the auditorium are going to be taken out and we're going to put orange plastic in." So, I was rallying against that kind of thing and able to find out there was this company that could recover them for less than the cost of new plastic chairs. Suddenly, they began to listen to me. They were going to throw out the oak doors, and I convinced the shop teacher to do a teaching project to save these old oak doors and glue them back together and refinish them and we did that. The school paper was covering this, and there were a few students interested.

It was really clear that I was interested in architecture and historic architecture. This was encouraged at home, and I decided to go to NJIT [New Jersey Institute of Technology] to study architecture. I'd been accepted to Rutgers. That was my backup school. There weren't a lot of historic preservation programs around at that point. I knew of one in Savannah, but I didn't want to go to Savannah.

In 1983, I started at NJIT, and I was commuting by bus from the family house in Maplewood. There were great professors at NJIT. They were very, very much in the temple of Bauhaus and international style modernism and ahistoricism. Anything before modernism was just sort of a historical footnote at some level. Maybe I'm oversimplifying, but that's the way it felt at that age. This was the postmodern moment in time, and I can remember them raving over the AT&T Tower [at 550 Madison Avenue] by Philip Johnson, which was this pink building in New York City that has a broken pediment on top that sort of looks like a secretary bookcase. I remember asking, "Is there something innovative about the structure or layout or function of this building that we should know that makes it special?" There was nothing. They were just excited by this veneer of décor he had put on it that had made it look different than the styles that had come before it. I was like, "It looks like he stared at a piece of furniture in his office and just sort of

overlaid that." No offense to him. I can see it's creative and fun, but I was like, "What's the fuss?" I couldn't get what they were all excited about. It wasn't my thing. I was busy looking at things like the Woolworth Building [at 233 Broadway in Manhattan]. I was like, "They combined terra-cotta with a skyscraper and sculpture." I was very interested in things that I felt had a humane scale to them and had some artistic merit, weren't just geometric.

I was not super happy there. I just remember sitting in a lecture in Weston Hall, which was a converted factory building, behind a green ceramic tile-clad support pillar, where my assigned seat was right behind this pillar, leaning to one side to see and listening to the professor talking about form following function and realizing that the poor school didn't really have the funds to really practice what we were being taught. [laughter] We were also in some surplus buildings where there was institutional carpet and the floors were [a] liability. Poor NJIT. There was great faculty there and I remember some of them well, but I realized it was boot camp for architects. They said things like, "Well, if you can't finish your model making, work from eight PM to eleven PM, set your alarm for three AM, go to sleep and then wake up and work for another two hours and then come in." I'm like, "I'm not sure this is really where I need to be." Everything I was designing, they're like, "Why does that house have a porch on it?" I'm like, "So people don't get wet when they walk in the front door and so they have a shady place to sit." "Everyone comes in through the garage," they would say. I'd be thinking, "Maybe in your suburban reality." A few years later, new urbanism would come around. I would've been a much better fit in that because I was very much of a different mindset.

Meanwhile, across the street, across Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard in Newark, was Rutgers-Newark, and they sent us over there for free hand-drawing classes to encourage our creative ability. Professor Rose Mary Gonnella-Butler, my freehand drawing instructor at Rutgers, taught my favorite class when I was at NJIT, [laughter] which told me something. I was like, "I'm enjoying my Rutgers class much more and I'm much more interested in the art history aspect of this than I am at the idea of new design work." I came around to a realization. I decided I would write to Rutgers and ask if I could come to the New Brunswick campus in the Art History Department, where there was architectural history. [Editor's Note: Rose Mary Gonnella-Butler is an artist and professor.]

I had been accepted at Rutgers when I was starting college. The letter comes back and says, "We're sorry, but we're not accepting anyone for mid-year." This was for January of 1984. A few days later, another Rutgers letter comes back saying, "Welcome, your orientation is on such-and-such a date." [laughter] So, I tear up the first letter, and I bring the second. I learned about the proverbial "RU screw" and how big the bureaucracy was with those two letters that came through my mother's mail slot.

I came over to Rutgers. I was commuting by a bus from Maplewood to Newark and then a train from Newark to New Brunswick, which was two hours each way, and they didn't sync up very well. Newark Penn Station was a glorious mess. They were just beginning to restore it then. The trains were antiquated, but I came here and I immediately knew I made the right decision and of course I was back at home in my old neighborhood.

I minored in cultural anthropology, which is a very nice fit with architectural history because buildings are created by people in specific moments in culture. They worked together very well for me. Dr. Tod Marder was an incredible art history professor that began a preservation program a couple years later. As a sophomore, he allowed me to pursue an independent study project researching the history of the James Bishop House, which is the yellow and brown castle on College Avenue. I had a class in there, and it mesmerized me. It turns out to be a very important piece of New Brunswick history. The Bishop Family was important. The house is one of the last glorious 1850s residences left in the area that has some recognition of its original use. That got published in the university library journal before I turned twenty; my mother was very proud that I was publishing as a teenager. I was so passionate about it. It's before there was any real word processing available to me. It's all done with whiteout on that IBM Selectric II typewriter, edit after edit, so there was just stacks of pages and photocopies of photos. I learned a lot about research. I ended up in the New Jersey Room [of Special Collections and University Archives at Alexander Library] a lot during that project and lovely people in there, Ruth Simmons and some of the other people there to help me find all sorts of documents. [Editor's Note: Dr. Tod Marder is Professor Emeritus of Art History at Rutgers. Built in 1852 and acquired by Rutgers in 1925, the Bishop House is located on the College Avenue Campus. It was built by James Bishop, Jr., a businessman who served in the State Assembly and then Congress. Morris Kafka-Holzschlag wrote "The Creation of a Landmark: The Bishop House of College Avenue," which was published in *The Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries*.]

At the same time, the commute was getting unbearable. It was four hours a day. My mother said, "Why don't you take the money you've save for college and buy a house in New Brunswick? You can get housemates and cover your expenses." She had a lot of foresight. She said, "I know you can take care of a house." I'm nineteen at this point, so this wasn't something that was on my [radar]. I knew I'd want a house eventually. We started looking. It took me nine months to find one I could afford that I liked, and this was an 1860s Italianate house on Suydam Street near Livingston Avenue. It was on a block of Victorian homes. On that block, there was one beautifully restored or preserved house that had carved fretwork, gingerbread [fretwork], bay windows and was painted bright colors à la San Francisco. It turns out that was my soon to be dear friend Ruelle Watson's house.

I bought this house in October of 1984. When I was nineteen years and one month old, I moved into a house that I was responsible for. It was a five-bedroom house. It was in the need of serious work, but those four hours a day I used to spend commuting, I started spending cleaning, painting, finding furniture at yard sales and at some of the old salvage shops in town. My mother used to say that on November 1st, of that year, she called me and I said, "I've got this. I got housemates. The mortgage is covered." Thus began hands-on preservation work on a historic home in New Brunswick that was in the same style as the Bishop House I was researching. I began to walk all over town every day. I had a dog and I would just walk around and look at all the houses in a new way. I had known the landscape here since I was a very small child. We did our shopping in New Brunswick, picked up my dad at the train station. We went to eat in New Brunswick. There was only a ten-year gap that I wasn't from around here, from '74 to '84, [and there were] huge changes going on in that era.

At the same time, I'm in school doing the academic studying and making friends. My neighborhood is undergoing difficulties. It's a neighborhood that historically was a mix of black, Puerto Rican, Jewish and a few other things. It was heterogeneous. It's interesting how New Brunswick, while there may have been ghettos, there are also blocks that historically were not segregated.

I find dropped into my mailbox a flyer for the Second Ward Neighborhood Block Club, which was having a meeting at the Remsen Avenue Firehouse, and I had been active in my block clubs starting at thirteen on my home street. I said, "Oh, this is good. I'll go." So, I come in and I'm welcomed warmly by this group of middle-aged and elderly mostly African American church-going ladies who are either homeowners or long-time tenants in that neighborhood. Their concerns were exactly relatable to the concerns in my neighborhood, like, "We want the schools to be clean. We want the streets to be safe. We need the garbage picked up. We need safe crossings for our kids at the crosswalks," whatever it might be. [I] sat in these meetings, volunteered to help plant flowers, help clean up in the parks. The group had some political aspects. They didn't feel like there was adequate police protection in the neighborhood. They felt that not enough tax dollars were going into the neighborhood. Neighborhood preservation was actually a lot of what they were worried about. They weren't using the word preservation, but they wanted to be able to stay in their homes and not watch the town crumble around them while all the new things like Ferren Mall were being built downtown at that point.

Once, I came late to a meeting, and all the ladies applauded and said, "You are now our vice president." I protested. Oh, I did not want to do that at nineteen, because now [I was] a homeowner and to be vice president of a neighborhood group that was often at odds with the city administration was intimidating to me, while going to college full time. There were some credits that didn't transfer from NJIT. I was taking six classes a semester because I didn't want to be late in graduating. I wanted to just keep on par with my class.

[I had a] very interesting life at this time, and at about that time, I was also realizing that I was gay. I didn't really think about it much. I don't think people had as much information in those days, and maybe sometimes people went through their maturation around adulthood a little later. I didn't really like it. I don't want to be a part of an oppressed minority. It was just a hardship, so I just tried to ignore the whole thing. I was busy enough. I was applying myself to everything else already. I had a friend in the graduate student lounge named Karen Smith. She worked a desk there, and I would sit with her. I would go into the graduate student lounge, which I wasn't supposed to be in, but it was a nice space. This is before they built, I think it was, is it still Au Bon Pain in front of the Student Center? [Editor's Note: Au Bon Pain on College Avenue closed in 2016. In its place, Panera Bread opened.]

RW: Yes.

MK: The graduate lounge had a huge fireplace and plate-glass windows floor to ceiling that looked out on the street. Even though it was New Brutalism, which was a style that people hate, it had lots of potted plants in those days and lots of nice, warm organic furniture with oak, wood, fabric on it. It felt homey, and it didn't feel institutional and sterile and closed in. You could see what was going on on the street. You could sit there, and I would sit with her and visit. She

said, "You're coming to this meeting with me tonight." I'm like, "What meeting?" She goes, "Rutgers Gay Alliance." I said, "Well, I don't want to go." She says, "You're going."

She drags me into this meeting. I've always been historically-minded, fascinated by history, so it's cultural anthropology and architectural history. What are people doing? Where are they doing it? What's the context they're doing it in? What are the spaces that facilitate that? All those things were interesting to me. We're on the fourth floor of the Student Center in a conference room. I have to say, walking in, there was a tall, heavy-set fellow with bleached blonde long hair who reminded me a little of [the actor] Divine. He was formidable. He hands me a brochure and a packet, and he welcomes me. He's doing this to everyone coming in, and maybe there's forty people coming in. This fellow is named Wayne Clawans, and he did this constantly for years. What was he giving me? Information on safer sex and packets of condoms. This man probably helped so many people. There were no institutional programs yet available. This was just when people were beginning to figure out what was going on, and he was right there on the front line. [He was] another student, another undergraduate, [and he] also worked at the off-campus student housing office, which in those days, before the Internet, had a glass window where people put index cards and what their rentals were available. People would line up in front of the windows reading these cards, and I would go in there to post when I needed a roommate. So, he was very visible around campus, a very effective, constant warrior for information and justice. That's like the first person I encountered that I knew was a gay male on campus. [I thought], "Who is this guy? Whoa." But I sat in at the meeting, and I sort of recognized a couple people. They were talking about everything from planning a dance to this hotline they were running. I was like, "Okay. This is okay." I just listened, and I think Karen took me back to the next meeting.

Then, pretty soon, they're like, "Well, we need someone to staff the hotline one night of the week." They had this cubicle, and it's half the size of this room, maybe eight by ten feet, no window, inside the Student Center on the fourth floor. They had a desk, a Rolodex, a bunch of reference books and a couple of little chairs squeezed in. People could drop in, or they could call this hotline. I signed up and I'm like, "I really don't know anything." Wayne, again, showed me, "Here's the Rolodex. Someone calls and asks where the parties and events are, here's a bulletin board full of posters. If they ask for a reference to a doctor or any professional, here's the names we've compiled of people that are friendly to go to. If they just want to talk, your job is to just to listen and try to answer any questions the best you can. Let them know you're not a therapist, you're just a peer, and you're here to listen. If someone says they're going to commit suicide, you're supposed to signal WRSU across the hall. There's a complex system we have for letting them know that we need help and they'll call 9-1-1 and trace the call." I realized then that we might be getting some heavy stuff.

Often there was one person alone in that room from seven to eleven PM, when it was staffed. It was the only thing in the phonebook in the entire region that had the word gay in it. Anyone who had anything they needed to do with anything gay, any question, "My child is gay, what do I do?" would call. Harassing calls would come in too. Calls for "Where's the party?" would come in. Calls from a student, what resources are available, everything, and calls from people who were hysterical about AIDS would come in. It was overwhelming.

We had very little faculty-staff mentoring or supervision, and the organization refused to release to Rutgers its list of members, for good reason in those days. Every year, they tried to defund us and throw us out of the office because we didn't show that we had members to justify the space. We'd have to go before the school and petition. I began instituting a count of people served by phone or drop in in the logbook. We kept a logbook. We didn't put down people's names. We said, "Male called asking for information on campus." We'd count numbers. We got up to eleven hundred numbers, eleven hundred calls, in the first year. We were able to show from our logbook, "Look, we have this many students and faculty and staff calling us for information."

Being this historian and this record keeper, I started to [save everything]. Every flyer for every event we had, I put into this folder, and I started finding old stuff in there too. The office had been there for a few years, and they kept stuff from before. There were things from the '70s, and I was very intrigued. I started looking through old flyers. People would just drop in, just anyone, it was scary. Sometimes the person who came in might be homophobic. You just never knew what was going to happen. Even though you're in a campus building, they weren't secured in any serious way in those days. Some nights, I would go home crying because of the calls coming in; people were being thrown out of their house for being gay. Awful things were happening.

Cheryl Clarke came on as a liaison and started teaching us about debriefing and handling some of the [calls]. She was amazing. We finally got some guidance in that, but that group was an advanced group for a university to have in those days. [The hotline was] completely student run, really autonomous, other than some modest funding coming in and being given this space and this phone line. There was not a lot of, you know, the deans or other people that might be interested in making sure what was going on, they gave us the room to do what we needed to do. [Editor's Note: Cheryl Clarke became the official advisor to the Rutgers University Lesbian/Gay Alliance (RULGA) in 1983.]

Long before the Internet, people had to meet in person, so there were meetings. There were socials. There were lectures. There were dances, and there were a lot of students on campus that needed those services. There could be 250 people coming to a dance. It could fill up. There could be ninety people in the meeting; we kept moving to bigger meeting rooms. The phone lines kept being open longer hours. That starts in 1984-'85, around where I'm joining that. [There were] a lot of great people.

Wayne also led the *Gay Spirit Radio Hour* on WRSU, which created its own upset. They did a soap opera. They did gay news. The soap opera was called "Come with a Flourish." Everyone had to be trained for radio. There are certain things you have to do to get on the air, but the fact that in the mid '80s, there was a gay radio hour that any student could tune in and hear both informational programming and on-stage, on-air live drama there, the soap opera they were writing and students were participating in, was pretty happening for that moment. [There was] a lot of trouble with negative opinions in the *Targum*, a lot of homophobia on campus, no real clear policy yet from the University about non-discrimination and so forth.

I'm busy with my classes, with my research for architectural history, with this Gay Alliance, restoring this house and keeping tenants in it, and with this neighborhood club, all at age

nineteen or twenty. Looking back at it, it doesn't seem possible that I was doing all that, but there I was.

I didn't know what the word intersectionality meant. I don't know if we even used it in the culture yet, but I began to realize, as my mother used to say with her feminist things, that the personal is the political, and that even the research I was doing in my classrooms had a political aspect. It wasn't partisan, but there was political history. There was politics to what I chose to research and what I chose to make public. The student group had to get very political.

What happened in 1986 is a case called *Bowers v. Hardwick*. That was, if I remember right, that was in Georgia and [involved] two adult men in their own apartment with the door locked. They were lovers, and the tenant downstairs heard noise and they called the police. The police break in and arrest them. It goes all the way to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court upheld the Georgia anti-sodomy law. At that point, it became illegal to be gay basically. [Editor's Note: In 2003, the Supreme Court ruled in *Lawrence v. Texas* that the Texas statute deeming it illegal for two consenting adults of the same sex to engage in sexual intercourse violates the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, overturning *Bowers v. Hardwick*.]

Here I am, twenty-one, and now we're being told [that] anything that's not something that basically the Catholic Church endorses as interaction is now illegal. Well, it wasn't very fun being twenty-one and being told you're an outlaw. I don't think many of my peers felt good about this either, so there was a lot of activism rising up about that, at the same time that there was an AIDS hysteria coming up. It was a very difficult time. There were people assaulting gay students, writing nasty graffiti, writing horrible pieces in the *Targum*. There were incidents at the meetings and at the office, harassing phone calls, all sorts of ugly things going on, and it was just a microcosm of a bigger world. Of course, Rutgers was a relatively modern, liberal place to be, so it must've been much worse elsewhere.

PC: To jump in for one point, as somebody who is also an historian, when you keep talking about the *Targum*, do you remember whether what you're referencing are the letters to the editor or the *Targum's* actual policy, as you remember it?

MK: Mostly letters to the editor and sometimes editorials.

PC: Okay.

MK: I don't know that there was an official policy and I believe there were some queer folk working at the *Targum*, but it seemed to me that there were articles that had a negative slant on queer activism. I'm going to call it that now; back then, it was just "gay." Gay was considered the inclusive word at that point, although there was a huge debate. The Rutgers Gay Alliance became the Rutgers Lesbian/Gay Alliance, became the Rutgers Lesbian, Gay, and Bi, and the name changed so many times. It had been the Homophile League originally.

That's a good question that I don't remember exactly. I just remember being angry reading the *Targum*. [laughter] The sense was that even if these were letters to the editor, the countervailing

thoughts weren't always printed, or there wasn't a balance. There was hate mail basically, and it had a chilling effect in some ways. We would write letters.

PC: That's what I was wondering about. I got the impression, from being here, that it was a liberal campus, which is how you described it, with a real homophobic population that was a subculture here that did things like write hate letters to the *Targum* and they published them.

MK: Yes, it was letters to the editor. Students are about free speech. I think part of what bugged me is people in the Alliance would intentionally write letters to counterbalance them, and not many of those got published. I don't know how many of the hate ones got published. I don't know if they were sophisticated enough to be figuring out, "Well, what's representing what and how do we present this?"

KR: Let us pause.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

KR: We are back on, and we are recording. You were talking about the environment at Rutgers College.

MK: In general, there were a number of students that were very supportive. There were some that were vocally unpleasant, and we're talking about in terms of the gay population on campus. I think most of the faculty-staff didn't say anything either way. There was a welcome by virtue of there being no dis-welcome, which at that point was about the best you could expect. The fact that we did have an organization that was given space to have events in, we knew that was huge because many schools, even public schools, were denying that--whether they were doing it through bureaucratic means or outright. They were doing it at Rutgers. Even though each year we had to re-justify ourselves, we were able to hold regular meetings in meeting spaces, regular social mixers and dances at halls at the University, and maintain an office and a phone through the student funding that was provided for student organizations. That was really pretty good, I mean, in general. I think at some point, Bloustein did come out with some kind of statement. I can't remember when Rutgers first put in their non-discrimination language, that included sexual orientation, but that we could look up and I believe that that was happening concurrently to my being a student. [Editor's Note: Dr. Edward J. Bloustein served as the president of Rutgers University from 1971 to until his death in 1989. In 1981, Rutgers adopted policies prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation. In 1996, the Rutgers University Senate voted to include "gender identity and expression" in the University's non-discrimination policy.]

KR: It was in the 1990s.

MK: That was the first one. Probably the lobbying was going on all through my student years, so it was in process. Things got worse and better. It was just sort of like tidal waves of bad news and the optimism of being young. The Rutgers Gay Alliance became the Rutgers Lesbian/Gay Alliance and had co-presidents, one female and one male. There was a political arm, and I have photos from and remember going down to Trenton to lobby for the passage of equal rights bills. I don't remember the number of the bill. We had signs up with the numbers on them and stuff

and then going for a picnic in Washington Crossing Park with the same people afterwards and making it as fun a day as we could and feeling like we were doing the right thing in making our voices heard.

At the same time, there was an anti-apartheid movement here at Rutgers, and I was a part of that. There was some overlap. People of conscience wanted equality for non-heterosexual people and wanted justice done for the people who were suffering under apartheid. One could easily make the connections in some way. I remember we had a mock funeral that we marched down College Avenue with a casket. I don't know if it was death of freedom or death of justice, what the metaphor was, but there were a lot of students that would march. One of the big soda companies was distributing their soda for the Rutgers food service, for the cafeterias. We were boycotting them because they were profiting from apartheid. We had a whole list of all the organizations. I don't know remember which big-name soda company it was [Coca-Cola], but we were screaming and pressing the University not to do business with them because they supported apartheid. Shell Oil was another company, and none of us would buy at Shell gas stations.

There was a real clear sense of what we felt in these organizations was morally wrong and that was oppressing people by either their skin tone or their sexual orientation. We were furious about it, and we were loud. The University did seem to, in their slow way, acknowledge and make changes. I didn't understand how slow bureaucracy worked when I was nineteen or twenty, but we weren't being ignored. We were bringing up points that other people felt a calling to concern, an awareness being raised, consciousness-raising as a first step.

I did have an incident that led me to write to the dean and complain and maybe even to the president of the school. I don't remember now who I wrote--I'd have to go digging through my archives. I took a class that was in one of the amphitheaters in Scott Hall. I think it was something like "Human Sexuality," some basic cultural anthropology sexuality class, and the professor, whose name's escaping me at the moment, [had] several hundred students in the class. One of the exercises was, each of us was to write an essay on either a sexual fantasy or an actual sexual event that occurred. I don't think our names were on them. I don't know why this exercise was part of it, but maybe we were focusing in on the sexuality of students or young people and in the classroom. I knew and discussed with, let's say, fifteen or twenty people who were gay, lesbian or bi who had consciously chosen to write that kind of fantasy, so it would be part of the matrix that was being turned in this because the professor was going to do some kind of read-through of these and analysis and share some of them. In the end result, not a single non-heteronormative fantasy or scenario was analyzed or discussed. I raised my hand, and I said, "Are there any that are homosexual fantasies or bisexual fantasies or one of those?" He goes, "Well, I'm discounting those because they are statistically in the minority." He had some kind of brush off, which did not answer my question. He didn't say how many there were. He didn't say why they should be discounted. My understanding at that point already was that in a survey, people who have an opinion that might reflect poorly on--are you okay? [Editor's Note: Ms. Rizzi is coughing.]

KR: Let me pause for a second.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

KR: Okay, we are back on.

MK: My thought was that of all the people that might have had a non-heteronormative experience, only a few of them would admit it and write it down, so that even if, say, six percent of the class had written them down that might mean that more like twenty percent of the class would've considered it but didn't want to. I thought it was statistically important, and I thought it reflected reality. I disagreed with the professor. I didn't argue with him in front of the class. I wrote him a letter explaining why I disagreed and how I felt this was unfair bias and that I was aware that I was not the only one. I had spoken to some of my classmates. It was utterly unacknowledged, and I complained. I felt this was an anti-homosexual bias, and I think I wrote to the dean. I mean, it was pretty ballsy. I knew I might get a bad grade in the class. I ran into the professor at Kinkos, which was in Ferren Mall, and he's like, "I got your letter and I really do need to reconsider my perspective." This was after the semester had ended, but he acknowledged that times were changing, that his own bias from his age or whatever was impacting him. I credit him for that.

In my youthful fury and lack of diplomacy, compared to what I learned later, I probably could've approached him a different way. I think I did go to his office first, and I said, "Look, I'm in the Lesbian/Gay Alliance. We have hundreds of people coming to our events. I'm not going to name them, but I know that at least fifteen percent of your class are people I can identify as people that are not having heterosexual fantasies and I don't know why it's not being discussed. This didn't say it was a heteronormative class; it said it was a sexual study class, which should include the whole variety. Even if it's an aberration, if it gets noted or recorded, it's part of the study, right?"

I'm not sure how this connects into what comes next, but it took a little bit of courage to sign up for the "Homosexuality and Society" class. In those days, you waited in "the Barn," the Rutgers College gym, to choose your classes, and you had to go up there and say you wanted to be in "Homosexuality and Society" in front of everyone else in the room. Then, you had to go into a classroom where everyone on campus knew where that class was being taught and they could look in and see who was in there. It could make you uncomfortable, but Dr. Cavin was a known scholar. She had written a book *Lesbian Origins*. I was already doing cultural anthropology. I was interested in my own sexuality, and in general, it's a topic that most people would acknowledge is an interesting topic, worth studying. [Editor's Note: Susan Cavin earned her M.A. and Ph.D. in sociology at Rutgers University. Her dissertation was published in 1985 under the title *Lesbian Origins*. She served as a faculty member at Rutgers from 1984 to 1991.]

We're in the class, and she's wonderful. She is very welcoming, supportive, not making assumptions about anyone who's in there, what reason they're in there, allowing us to express ourselves, wanting us to talk to her after class, office hours, whatever, because she realizes that a number of the students are going to be people who are just learning their identities or maybe struggling with them and that she will become a role model as an out-lesbian professor. There's very few out faculty. I really can't think of any out-faculty in those days. Maybe there were others.

KR: Cheryl Clarke.

MK: Yes, Cheryl Clarke, yes, thank you, a very limited number. I had already mentioned Cheryl. I didn't have her as a professor. It was risky for those people in their career lines to do that at that date.

I don't know where the idea for the student Sexual Orientation Survey came from, but it clearly plugged right into my issue with that other class and with my feeling that we were being made invisible in the documents. If anyone were to ever read what that professor had compiled, nowadays, you'd go, "Wait a minute, something's obviously missing," but in those days, people didn't want to. They wanted to see this nice, neat, little heteronormative monogamy thing, like it's to perpetuate what the fantasies some people have of whatever it should be. It was more propaganda than study. So, I said, "Oh, this is the way to counteract it. We're going to do a student Sexual Orientation Survey all over campus, and, sure, I'll be a part of this. I'll type this up. I'll do whatever." I don't remember how much I did. I remember there was a lot of paperwork. In those days, everything was on paper, and we had some basic computer stuff. It was limited. No one had one in their home, or few people did. So, we were [holding] clipboards and photocopies and mounds of papers and renumbering pages and shuffling them around. I don't know how the world worked that way forever because now it seems so impossible to do that, but that's all we knew. [Editor's Note: The results of the Rutgers Sexual Orientation Survey were released in the spring of 1987.]

There was some pretty interesting results out of that survey--and I would have to go reread it to get the specifics--but it seemed like that was a wonderful step forward into acknowledging what was really going on on campus, rather than having someone artificially controlling it. The person who was in charge was not going to edit that information with an anti-gay agenda or a homophobic agenda, even if it was somewhat unconscious.

At the same time, this class had us each do our own research project. She said to each of us, "Choose a topic in the world of human sexuality to research and do a presentation and make a paper on." I said, "Well, I'm going to start right here." I had already been on this hotline in the student center, and there's these interesting old papers here, "How did Rutgers get this gay group? What happened in the past here?" I was intrigued because I heard some stories from some people. I mean, Stonewall was only like fifteen years or sixteen years before, so there were plenty of people around in the town who remembered Stonewall and who had been at Rutgers in early years. Rue was one of the people around Rutgers in the early '70s, so she knew there were things going on. She actually was an officer incognito in the group ... [Editor's Note: On June 28, 1969, New York City Police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village that was owned by the Genovese crime family. As the police arrested over a dozen people and beat one patron, the crowd outside of the Stonewall grew, until patrons and locals began rioting in protest of ongoing police harassment. The unrest continued for the next five days. The Stonewall Uprising galvanized support for the gay rights movement, launching the modern LGBTQ+ movement.]

RW: In the Homophile League. [Editor's Note: The first meeting of the Rutgers Student Homophile League convened on December 2, 1969. Known as the League or SHL, the group

was founded by Rutgers sophomore Lionel Cuffie with the help of members of the Student Homophile League of Columbia University.]

MK: In the Homophile League.

RW: Yes.

MK: First, I went into those archives in the office. I mean, I was working on that hotline; I just opened those files and looked at them. Somehow, I found Dave Nichols, who was the roommate of Lionel Cuffie, who was the official founder of the Homophile League. I don't even know how I found him. He was in Somerville. I may have just gone to the phonebook looking for everyone's name--I can't remember--or someone I knew knew someone who knew [him]. In those days, there was no Facebook. We just did leg work. When I told him about the project, he became very excited. He wanted to meet with me, and I interviewed everyone I could find who remembered things in the community and the one gay night club was the central meeting place. There was too much time devoted to it in that little paper on Rutgers gay history that was printed in the Rutgers Library Journal because the editing was clunky. It does indicate just how important that was. [Editor's Note: Dave Nichols graduated from Rutgers College in 1975.]

That club [Manny's Den] had opened in 1944, which is astounding, because it was illegal until 1966 or '67 in New Jersey for more than three gay people to congregate in one place, and in the 1960s the Alcoholic Beverage Commission closed them down. They took it to court and they won, before Stonewall. So, three years before Stonewall, which was fought over the illegality of gay congregation in New York, gays could congregate in New Jersey because a New Brunswick club and two other clubs had this lawsuit. That club was often patronized by Rutgers men. It was an all-boy's school. This club was right under the railroad underpass from Rutgers. So, their history was intertwined.

I was mesmerized by all the stuff I was finding out. The DJ [disc jockey] at the club had been at the Stonewall. I was getting all these stories, and I wrote the paper with Dave Nichols. It was well received. People were fascinated by it. People in the Rutgers Gay Alliance didn't even know when it was founded because, you know, you're only there four years. It was just like it was sort of passed down. We began to get some sense of pride.

We all knew we had to write down our history to preserve it. Dave and I said, "Look at the stuff we've collected for this paper we're writing. We need an archive." There were boxes, document boxes, in my study, and at that point, I had, I don't know, a 276 computer, some big CRT monitor thing, and I was beginning to put data into it, including the manuscript for that. That was probably the first thing I wrote that had some computer assistance. We started this Rutgers Gay Archives in my study, in my house in New Brunswick. By this point, I was onto the fifth house I was restoring, which had some elbow room in it. We quickly realized we needed more than this. My friends at the New Jersey Room, I think Dave approached them, and it was becoming a kind of trendy, cache thing in the late '80s to have a gay archive for the schools. Universities were wanting this kind of diversity, and they agreed to house it in the New Jersey Room. I think Dean James Anderson was a big help at that point. [Editor's Note: Dr. James D. Anderson worked at Rutgers from 1977 to 2003 as a professor of library science and

administrator. He resigned in protest over Rutgers University not extending equal benefits to same-gender partners of University employees.]

Dave Nichols actually got a program together where library science students could volunteer to help intake donations that we were getting and make sure they were properly filed, stored and the retrieval system was available for them. It can take years [for] archive donations to get processed, so these students were doing it for credit and he was going in and working with them in the library. He had graduated [from] Rutgers some years before. I mean, what a dynamo. So, there's all this fuss going on. We're actually making trips out to Rutgers-Newark and meeting with people there. The thing took off.

So, Dr. Cavin wanted me to do my graduate work in queer studies, and I really wanted to work on my preservation. I was interested in that, but it took a lot of time. That's how that article got published. It was really a school assignment that they thought was good enough to work into something that got published and I already had a relationship with the university library journal because my piece on Bishop House had gotten published. Then, I think it was prior to this, a piece on the train station and transportation in New Brunswick got published that I did with Suzanne Gehlert.

RW: Oh, gosh.

MK: So, they liked me over there I guess or they liked what I was coming up with. It was all related to Rutgers and New Brunswick history. I can't remember the date this was published. Do you?

KR: Oh, sure, I have it. Mo is talking about his article *The Rutgers University Lesbian-Gay Alliance 1969-1989: The First Twenty Years* by Dave Nichols and Morris Kafka-Holzschlag, and it is published December 1989.

MK: I graduated in May of '87, and so clearly I'm still working on this stuff after I've finished my undergraduate work and I'm no longer a student. I think because we realized it was the twentieth anniversary that it was a good way to do this.

We were fascinated to find that the first rumblings of the Homophile League started before Stonewall. We didn't have documents, but the people we found, the members said to us, "We didn't keep documents. We were afraid people would find them and use them to get us in trouble." It's really sad to think that's the way they had to do it, but in the '80s we still weren't signing membership lists. We weren't telling anyone who our members were. Only the officers would come up and argue--I remember going to the Rutgers meetings with the facilities [department], whatever the board was that granted space, and how tense they were. So, there was real concern, and as a result, we don't know as much as we might know.

What scared Dave and I was, at the time we were doing this work, starting [in] about 1986, people were dying. We were losing people and their family didn't know their papers or photos were worth anything or they meant anything and they were throwing out the documents. We were in this sort of race to find the founding members, and Lionel Cuffie died before we could

get to him, you know, and [was] sort of unsung. I think this article and the fact that there's a few people like Dave and Cheryl that knew who he was were the reasons his name was resurrected and is now a part of the matrix of Rutgers history because no one in the Gay Alliance, when I was a student, knew who he was. I didn't know who he was. I mean, we didn't know who our founder was. That we were able to dig back and reclaim that meant something. That kind of thing was what moved me and motivated me to do more of this work, to put the names and faces to who gave us the foundation to be who we are today. [Editor's Note: Lionel Cuffie graduated from Rutgers in 1972. In 1985, he died from AIDS-related complications.]

In terms of that archives project, in the early days, I was pretty active in going into the School of Library Science, meeting with the deans, talking about how they archived and bringing in whatever papers I could find. After Dave Nichols died, it became emotionally much more difficult for me to carry on. I guess, last I knew, at some kind of token level, I was still called the founding archivist or something, and I still send things in whenever I come across them, including when I moved from my house in New Brunswick, a lot of personal papers that were, at this point, old enough that I didn't feel they needed to be confidential. I'm still trying to, when I come across someone that was active or who was a friend or who had old magazines or photos or memoirs, I try to get them into there. It's the same reason I'm speaking here today. It's so fascinating, informative, and crucial to record and preserve our history and understand where we came from and what makes this institution and the pieces of it work and who was there before that I feel compelled to take my time to share whatever I've learned, although it is hard to understand myself as being part of history now, because in your own adult lifetime and looking back, "Oh, that's 1989. That's thirty years ago I published that. I was twenty-four years old, and what would've happened if I had had more maturity or skill? How would we have maybe written that or presented that?" I don't know what's become of Dr. Cavin. I don't know if you're conscious of if she's still teaching or what she's up to. [Editor's Note: Susan Cavin passed away in 2010.]

KR: I do not know.

MK: I wasn't able to find her when I did a quick search, but I last ran into her in New York City at a pride parade when she was publishing a women's newspaper and she gave me a copy that was delightful. This would be in the '90s sometime. We just recognized each other in the million people literally, I think, that [were] at that event, but suddenly there she was. [laughter] She was a real mentor. I think in everyone's educational life, there are certain scholars, professors or educators that stand out and you remember forever and she was one of them. She made her classroom a learning laboratory. People were excited to learn and motivated to do things. It's not every classroom I went into that resulted in a published article by someone in his twenties with his friend who's a few years older and an archives being founded. That's directly due to her offering that class and encouraging our work. The seeds were being planted with me going through these file cabinets in the hotline office. Someone said, "Oh, we need to clean this out." I'm like, "No, don't clean it out! There's important stuff here." [laughter] I already knew there was something there, but I didn't know what to do with it really. There are those people, like Wayne, who was constantly dedicated to information and health and welfare, and Susan, who was committed to finding out the real facts about what was going on campus and making sure people knew how to do research and think for themselves and also find the facts, just great.

KR: I do not know if you want to call the student organization the Rutgers Gay Alliance just to be consistent. I learned from your article that it was the Rutgers University Lesbian/Gay Alliance when you were a student. How much of the work was focused on activism and how much of it was focused on social life and bringing people together?

MK: It's hard to say exactly and I think different individuals did different things, but I think it was a pretty well-rounded group. It seemed pretty balanced. I remember some people complaining [that] the meetings were tedious because there was a lot of politics in the meetings. So, the weekly meetings, which I think were [on] Tuesday night from seven to nine, did tend to be about process, "What is our new name going to be? Who are we get to volunteer for this or that? We're going to have a protest. Who's going to make the signs?" It was very logistical stuff. Then, out of those meetings, also come, "There's going to be a dance, and here's who's going to run it. Here's how we're going to get money for it." The officers, which changed every semester usually--some stayed longer--were very clear that they wanted a social function for people to meet in a safe space and have fun and mingle. Well, of course, we're all in our teens or early twenties; we wanted to meet spouses and friends and be with people where you could feel fully self-expressed and safe. So, that was very important to us, but we also felt that we needed to do work to raise awareness about AIDS and HIV, to reduce fear in the community, to demand equal treatment as citizens, and to tell our stories. I think it was, when I was there, it seemed like it was a pretty good balance. There was a lot of compassion. There were certainly the typical issues that occur in any institution between people with different opinions who don't get along and between people who are beginning to get romantically involved or people don't like some of the other people. All those things were going on. You're young, and they seem bigger than life sometimes. When you're older, you learn how to navigate around them. One event I recall, Linda Lavin was a pianist and comedian. We got the Owl's Roost, which was--what was that old student center between the high-rise dorms? I don't know what it's called.

KR: The Ledge.

MK: The Ledge. There was a grand piano, and we had an event there where she sang her funny gay and lesbian songs and told jokes. It was well attended, and money was raised. She was a bit of a celebrity in the gay community, and it was a really warm, wonderful event. Everyone left singing her music. Then, we had these meetings where we're all in tears about, "What are we going to do to try to get money so we can distribute condoms everywhere?" Everything was going on at once, and it seemed like a pretty good balance to me, or at least I partook of it in equal measure.

I remember the fun of the dances and dinners. After every meeting, we went out. We went out to eat. Students stayed up late in those days. I don't know, I guess they still do. We would often go to a place called Shelly's, which was a little burger-and-ice-cream joint on Easton Avenue that had been redecorated by Gary Squire, who is now gone, who was an amazing interior designer. He had taken a vacant 1950s-'60s ice cream parlor that was up on French Street, bought the interiors, and built this place. Shelly also owned something else. I can't remember what she owned, but it was a fun place. It looked like Cyndi Lauper was about to dance out into the room in one of her videos, with the black-and-white checkered floors and the bright colors, and they

had good food. We all went there; it was very wholesome. This gaggle of gay and lesbian people would go, and then some of the people would go on to the club to dance. So, there was a social matrix. People invited me to participate, and I was sort of bookish, so you got pulled out and encouraged to do things and to meet people.

Because we consciously socialized in a group for safety but also in public places where we knew we might be welcomed, we met other people who were not part of the Rutgers community, were not out at Rutgers but might be around. There was sort of a--maybe it was an unconscious--but a strategy of being visible, "We're here, we're queer, get used to it," kind of thing. Sometimes, it was conscious, I think. They used to do these shopping mall visits. Was it the Lesbian Avengers that would on shopping mall trips? There was the Lesbian-Feminist Sewing Circle and terrorist group [College Avenue Feminist Terrorists (CAFT) and Women's Sewing Circle]. There were these things going on that were very in-your-face at that time. We have some posters I've put into the archives of some of these groups, because, even at the time, whoa, the word "terrorists" didn't quite have the intensity it does now.

We had a great social life, and I think that was the high point that let us depressurize. We needed it so badly. There was so much going on. Of course, as a student, if you're a serious student, there's a lot going on to begin with and then grappling with being someone that doesn't have as many rights as other people and might be beat up and the police wouldn't do anything, wouldn't treat you fairly, wouldn't even give you a police report. It was rough. People had extra layers of challenges. Knowing that there could be a Halloween dance and you could put on your best costume and come out and your favorite music would be playing and it'd be a safe space with all queer people and all their trusted friends and there'd be food there. We made an oasis.

New Brunswick wasn't a bad place. The town in general had a long gay history and had gay-owned businesses and gay establishments. They may have been under the radar for a lot of people, but they were there. We knew where we were welcomed, where we were tolerated, and where we were made uncomfortable. You'd figure that out as you'd go, but it was a lot better place to be than a lot of other places. Rutgers, I think the general liberal environment of a university campus, of a state university in a cosmopolitan area, was good overall, but there were problems.

In retrospect, I probably spent more time on work and scholarship than I did on the social aspect because of what I needed to do in life then, but it was there. There was a very rich and balanced offering of things. It was also *à la carte*. People would say, "I'm a member of the group. I don't go to the meetings. I only go to the socials," so people could choose. It did vary from year to year depending on what the consensus was or what the people in charge were interested in.

We elected our leaders. Not too many people wanted to run to be the leaders because your name ended up in the paper and in the correspondence. You had to be willing to be out. Your parents might see you on TV even. Being a major state school, there was a good chance that people who were president of the Lesbian/Gay Alliance might end up needing to talk to the media going larger than the *Targum*. So, that was always a concern in those days. I think it became less so year after year. Those people that were running it had their own interests and passions, and that would change the flavor from season to season.

Yes, it was the [Rutgers] Gay Alliance when I got there. It became the [Rutgers University] Lesbian/Gay Alliance [RULGA], and there was a lot of processing over the name change. Then, there became a lesbian group that split off. I don't remember their name, but it was an all-women's group. They felt they needed their own women's space, and while that was respected, there was also a lot of sadness that many good people were now doing something else and weren't all in one big group together getting things done. We felt that somehow dividing might weaken us, and people tried to keep a strong liaison between the two groups. They'd say, "Let's do dances together." There was always some controversy brewing that might be trumped up, and people bought into it passionately. I guess that's probably true of many, many student organizations.

At the same time, people who had graduated from Rutgers but still lived in the area had a group called Lesbian and Gay Men of New Brunswick, which included Rutgers alumni and some undergraduates who lived in the neighborhoods. They mostly hosted potlucks and did social things, but in those days, with limited gay media, these groups would announce anything going on. Even the bars, literally, there were cork bulletin boards in all the gay bars and restaurants, and it was chaos on those boards, unless someone was very organized in the bar and put categories like, "In need of roommate," "Political event," "Party," and then it still would get messed up. You would just have to stand in front of these boards and look, "Oh, there's a rally. We're going to Trenton on this date," or, "There's a fundraiser for this person who's sick," whatever it might be. People would go around with clipboards. You'd get permission from the bar owner, "Can I have people sign my petition? Can I come in here and ask for that?" I don't know how much different things would have been if we had the tools we have now for social media, but we did it. We did the legwork, and we got a lot of people to those events.

Even the most social groups were busy doing logistical and political things. We had to, and we networked throughout the state, from north to south New Jersey. The different gay groups knew people in the other groups and got word to them. We did phone trees. I think it was probably the last gasp of the civil rights movement, because the feminists and the queer people were on the back of the civil rights train in terms of coming to the public light. They're still working on it. I mean, the whole train is still running, although they keep breaking up the tracks on us. But it still felt like the stuff I was doing with my mother in the early '70s, stuffing envelopes for the National Organization for Women and going to Washington, D.C. for Equal Rights Amendment rallies, was going on in the gay community in the '80s in the same exact manner, stuffing the envelopes, going on the marches, filling the buses with people. It was very familiar with the methodologies and the kinds of meetings through my mother's activism in NOW, which she was active in for many years, which at various points was or was not dealing well with lesbians. But the queer issues were coming up in that. My mother, not coincidentally, became the sponsor of the Kean queer student group, was their mentor for a while.

KR: Let us pause.

MK: Yes.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

KR: Okay, we are back on and recording, and you were telling the story of the oral history interview with Nate Cotler.

MK: Sometime during my student tenure as an undergraduate, I took a class called "Your Family in History," which inspired me to do a genealogical interview on cassette tape in those days of my mother, which I did at least a partial transcription of, to produce the end report for the class, and then a "Your Community History" course. I don't remember how this is connected, but somehow I met a man named Nate Cotler, who, if my memory's right, was in his sixties at the time, and he was a longtime New Jersey resident, possibly a Rutgers graduate. He sat for an interview, which I think was two hours long--I have two cassettes--and discussed gay life in the past, which I believe was going back to at least the 1940s, because I think he referenced some things that were happening [in] World War II and going to Asbury Park.

I just recovered the tapes, which had been stored, and I don't remember if I ever listened to the tapes after they were completed. I don't remember if I used them, if the project just got shelved, but Rue is digitizing the tapes. I heard a little bit of them last night, and I'm going to be donating them to, I'm going to call it, the "Rutgers Queer Archives," because I think it's the LGBTQ Archives. They keep adding more letters, and I'm not sure of the current official name of the archives. Hopefully, that will have some source material that is heretofore unrecalled or unrecorded on it.

RW: They're ninety minutes each.

MK: Oh, so it's a three-hour interview, if they're full.

RW: Yes, they're full.

MK: Anyhow, I was very young and inexperienced. I don't know if I asked the right questions, but I let him talk. He just shares his memories with what sounds like glee on the part that I was listening to, and I lost track of him. He sent me a couple letters. I found two envelopes and one letter so far. The other letter may be lost to history, but hopefully it'll surface. They're typed on small pieces of paper. I do remember I really wanted to find the oldest and longest-out queer folk that I could who had been at Rutgers and lived in New Jersey and ask them to share whatever they were willing to share in terms of their memorabilia and their own memories. I was conscious that memory fades and people pass on, and those stories in earlier days were not safe to write down or photograph. People did that in a clandestine way, and times were better enough in the '80s that many people were more comfortable post-Stonewall talking about those things. It did intrigue me, and probably Dr. Cavin's course inspired me. I don't recall that I used the interview in the classwork. I think it may have been too racy for me to know how to process at that time. He talks--I don't know how graphic he gets--but the part that I heard, he's talking about the sexual-activity side of things. I probably just didn't know how to handle that material, and now I realize it's an important part of history because maybe very few people wanted to talk about it or record that, that I might have something there that might be of use.

KR: What really strikes me about your work in recording the history of the LGBT movement is that you were seeking to link your generation with the generations who came before you. I was wondering if you could discuss how that manifested in speakers and programming on campus.

MK: Sadly, at the time I was an undergraduate, I don't think what I had done had evolved enough for me to find anyone who would've been seen as an entertainer, charismatic or inspiring that I could actually get up to the podium. I was conscious of wanting to save it and make it available. I don't think I was ready or evolved enough in what I was doing to market it or to arrange for events or panels. This written piece here is probably at the time where we're realizing this is something for bigger public consumption. The preservationist sometimes piles up the archives without necessarily making them accessible but just wants to ensure, "Oh, my God, quick, gather in the material before it disappears." I think that was the mode I was in, "Oh, my gosh, all this stuff's getting thrown out. All these memories are going to be forgotten. Help." I didn't have the vision or I don't recall having the vision to say, "Hey, let's find the oldest-standing member of the community and convince them to talk in front of us." I'm not even sure how many of my peers were receptive to that yet.

I do know that Dave Nichols, at least informally, did come and talk and, with the library science students, did discuss these things. He was more of the public face of that. I certainly stood up in my class and gave my report or summarized it. I spoke within my immediate classroom about it. At the Lesbian/Gay Alliance, I don't remember giving any formal presentation on the history, but I do remember announcing big finds, like, "Oh, we've found the family of the founding guy. Here was his name. Here's what he did," because I thought people needed to know that basic information. I'd like to say I had done more, but I didn't evolve it into, I guess, [an] accessible, teachable moment, for the students. I hope that later people have done that. Well, certainly the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Homophile League event that Cheryl Clarke did and the thing we had last year with the office--what is the current name?--of student diversity did an award ceremony and an exhibit in the Student Center with profiles of different people who were important in the queer community of Rutgers over the last however-many years, last twenty-five years. One of my college classmates and myself were both selected for that era and asked to write a little piece, and they had photos of us and a piece on what we were active in. There was a sort of presentation and a luncheon or something. Was it a luncheon or brunch? [Editor's Note: In 1992, the Office of Diverse Community Affairs and Gay and Lesbian Concerns formed under direction of Cheryl Clarke. In 1994, the Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian Alliance of Rutgers University (BiGLARU) celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Student Homophile League. In 2005, the Office of Diverse Community Affairs and Gay and Lesbian Concerns changed its name to the Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities. The Center for Social Justice Education features on its website *25 for 25: Voices of Rutgers LGBTQA Alumni*, which celebrates twenty-five years of the office and includes a piece written by Morris Kafka-Holzschlag.]

RW: Oh, yes. It was Sunday brunch.

MK: Yes, so there's those kinds of events. I don't know how wonderfully publicized it was, but there were some people there. It's nice to see those things and people were sharing. People who were current students to people going back to the '70s were profiled in that.

RW: Yes, also Douglass did an adjunct interview with, I would say, I think it was seven or eight of us from the '70s and I think they called it ...

MK: The Dink Dykes?

RW: The Dink Dykes, and it was recorded. We had a panel, and we all spoke and gave our story of being at Douglass. I haven't seen it since it was done, but I think it was really good. It was done at the women's center, and it was videotaped. [Editor's Note: In October 2018, the Department of Women's and Gender Studies sponsored a roundtable discussion called "Dink Dykes: Lesbian Culture at Douglass College, 1967-1977," moderated by Kay Turner, DC '71. The event took place at the Ruth Johnson Dill Crockett Building on Douglass Campus. Dinks refers to the green dinks worn by freshmen at Douglass.]

KR: I will look into it.

RW: Yes.

KR: I will see what I can dig up about that.

RW: The hundredth anniversary, I guess, in correlation with the hundredth anniversary. Then, the book, they did not adequately document the lesbian experience, so this was sort of the next thing that we put together to kind of remedy that. [Editor's Note: In 2018, Douglass Residential College celebrated the hundredth anniversary of its founding as the New Jersey College for Women (NJC) in 1918. To document the college's centenary, Fernanda Perrone, Mary Hawkesworth and Kayo Denda co-wrote *The Douglass Century: Transformation of the Women's College at Rutgers University*.]

MK: I think that sort of was my experience. I understood as an undergraduate that unless the queer community itself created documents and circulated them to tell our story, we were leaving it up to other people to tell our story, and for the most part, they were intentionally ignoring or eradicating, erasing our stories or marginalizing them. Douglass College was doing "Take Back the Night," and I was like, "Take Back Your History." [Editor's Note: "Take Back the Night" is an annual march to protest violence against women and sexual assault.] I was consciously trying to do that, and I don't think I was really sophisticated enough to understand that I wanted to link the entire current student population of people who were queer folk or interested in that to the past. I was doing it in an organic way and I was interested in it and passionate about it and talking about it with people whenever they would listen, but I don't think I saw things that broadly. I didn't realize that what I was doing, which seemed quite modest and personal, might have broad appeal. I knew it was important to record the history, and I remember actually telling the Gay Alliance, "We need an archivist every year. We should be saving copies of the minutes from our meetings, of the flyers to every event. We need to be able to prove all the things we've done so that we can justify funding every year, but we also need to keep a clear history of where we've been, what we've been fighting for, and what we're up to because this is important for posterity. We don't want history to repeat itself again."

That's also something that goes back to being Jewish, and "never again" was this thing about the Holocaust. There's many people who were minorities who had been oppressed who want to make sure that the public gets conscious about the dangers of oppressing certain groups and denying them their freedoms or their rights or scapegoating them and how it really destroys society overall. It was a self-preservation thing at some level, and I think it tied into both the civil rights activism of my mother and the collective memory of the Jewish world of how our history was intentionally eradicated. My family burial grounds were bulldozed over. The papers were burned, like they didn't want us to exist. They wanted to wipe us off the map. That kind of thing is a great motivator for someone who's interested in history.

At a purely intellectual level, the stories were fascinating. They were mesmerizing stories, how people found themselves at Rutgers, how they came of age and realized that they weren't able to live in a heteronormative world, that they had to somehow come out of a closet, as they said, or identify something other than what the culture was trying to mold them into.

For many people, that was a struggle. It wasn't organic. There was no blueprint for them to follow. They didn't know or see anyone else like that. They had to discover it themselves. They went sneaking around in the library book stacks to look up words like homosexual. They would whisper among their closest friends and try to find allies. For people who have access to the Internet these days or who are aware of what's going on in the world media, it's much easier to find role models. Even on television then, there was almost nothing that was not a caricature that was gay. There was very little positive role model. There was no one that--I can't remember very many out-people that were functional normal people. They were used for comedic foil or for tragic tales, and any gay movie had a horrible ending. There was just very little to find out there.

There were whispers. Some people, like my mother, who were advanced feminists, would tell you about Gertrude Stein and Alice B. Toklas. There were things you could find that were more inspiring, but you had to really look. I wanted the history to be preserved, and I wanted people to be able to access it. When we got to the Internet era, I was like, "Everything's changed now because they're really going to have to try hard to make it not accessible." But it also means the hatred spreads too. Do you want to talk about my mother's activism?

KR: Actually, I do, but I want to ask you about the campus climate survey, also known as the Sexual Orientation Survey. I understand that this generated national press.

MK: It was a big fuss, and I don't recall all the details of that. I was caught up in it at the moment, but it was eye-opening at the time. I think Rutgers was really like an incubator of a new level of awareness. I mean, it was going on in other universities too, but, gosh, I wonder if I have clippings from that era. There was so much occurring both in my personal life and at school at that moment and so much of it was unsettling and I wanted to stay out of the limelight that I think I sort tried to retreat from that survey so much so that when I found the markups that said from Dr. Cavin, "Morris, type this," I was like, "Oh, I really forgot about this whole chapter." That was a survival mechanism for me for the '80s. Things that were too hot to handle or too upsetting, I somehow pushed them completely out of my mind. I wrote them into my diary, and I put that in the cabinet. I think that was one of those things because there was some

resentment, regret, anger, controversy, finger-pointing, accusations of agenda or inappropriateness. My fingerprints were all over that document. Even if it's not authored by me, I was working on it. I didn't want to be scapegoated for anything that made anybody angry, I think. It ended up being political, even though it was supposed to be a fact-finding mission, at least that's the way I saw it. I guess I knew it, but I didn't realize it would get that big and I don't know how it factored into my professor's professional relationship for the university. I was scared about that too, because she was very important to me and I didn't want her to be seen as an agitator that might put her job at risk. I just didn't want to go any further. Having watched my own mother get in heat at her school for anything she did that made a wave, I was sort of, "Uh oh." It was scary times. [Editor's Note: In the spring of 1987, the Sexual Orientation Survey revealed that a majority of gay and lesbian students had experienced harassment or violence from students, as well as from faculty and staff. The campus climate survey faced scrutiny from the Institutional Review Board. In February 1988, President Edward Bloustein convened the Committee to Advance Our Common Purposes and the Select Committee for Lesbian and Gay Concerns. Chaired by James Anderson, the Select Committee for Lesbian and Gay Concerns consisted of various task forces and released its report *In Every Classroom* (1989), which made recommendations for institutional changes.]

There was also pride, I think, in that, "Hey, we did something that is important that might help make change." Like I said, I was much better at processing history that was already old than realizing I was part of making history. I still hadn't come to terms with, you know, that I was adding in my share of effort into the community that was working to make progress and to make facts known and to dispel old ways that were unhealthy. I guess I was sort of a reluctant warrior in that sense.

KR: When Bloustein convened the Select Committee on Lesbian and Gay Concerns, which came out of the campus climate survey, was that seen as a victory?

MK: It was seen as a step forward, that we were having a voice at the table. That was really important. Concurrently, I was a housing activist in New Brunswick. I was writing letters to the editor and complaining at town hall about the displacement of people who were of modest means, the unsafe and unsanitary conditions of some absentee landlord housing, the lack of attention being played to master planning and urban planning to ensure that the town would grow in a healthy manner and the ignoring of our historic resources in this Revolutionary-era town that were the only thing that gave it a real soul and distinction from any other town on the map, and butting heads with the town over that and being thrown into multiple committee meetings.

The way that any bureaucracy seemed to be dealing with any controversy was, "We'll set up a committee. People will talk at a table." I didn't want to say I was cynical, but I had already been sitting at a lot of tables trying to get work done for a long time. I was like, "Okay, now there is a table." Does that mean, "Okay, go talk amongst yourselves, and now we can say, 'Look, we convene this committee and now we're doing the good thing and nothing comes of it.'" A lot of times, that's just the way bureaucracy works, go in a room and talk, talk amongst yourselves. Then, will anything develop out of this? Ultimately, some things did come out of it, but I was like, "Oh, do they actually use having us meet to stifle us from stirring up any more controversy in the public limelight?" I had to sort of wonder about that.

I think when they threw me on the Rent Control Board as a student because I was complaining, they thought, "Oh, he'll graduate. He'll be gone." Well, twenty-seven years later, I was still on the Rent Control Board and had become chairman of it. They were still ignoring us. We were having these meetings here and these horrible landlord-tenant stories, some with students, and progress was moving very slowly, if at all.

At Rutgers, it actually did seem to move faster. I mean, they did make progress, and the fact that we have this Office of Diversity [Office of Diverse Community Affairs and Gay and Lesbian Concerns] is, I think, in some ways, can be connected directly back to that period of, "Look, we're here. We're staying here. We're part of the population. We're part of the students. We're part of the faculty. We're part of the staff. We're in every part of life related to this State University. We deserve equal treatment, and we deserve to be acknowledged and heard." There's a decent amount of resources from Rutgers. I don't know if it's enough, but there's clearly a presence now. People who are queer can find resources at the University. [Editor's Note: In 1992, the establishment of the Office of Diverse Community Affairs and Lesbian and Gay Concerns at Rutgers-New Brunswick, now the Office of Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities, came as a result of recommendations made by the Select Committee for Lesbian and Gay Concerns and demands made by students for the implementation of those recommendations.]

That notwithstanding, we had that really, really tragic incident with Tyler Clementi a few years ago, and that really hurt a lot because he was living just yards from where that hotline office had been. I had spent basically my whole life trying to make sure that people felt like it was okay and that there was a place for them to go when they needed support. That this should happen here at a place that I thought was so progressive and in so many ways is, I think it made a lot of us think long and hard after that, like, "What can we do? What's the next step?" But, clearly, there's a long way to go as a culture and as a huge state institution with so many moving components. [Editor's Note: In September 2010, Rutgers freshman Tyler Clementi committed suicide after facing anti-gay harassment and bullying by his roommate.]

Yes, that survey did have an impact. I think Dr. Cavin didn't anticipate what was going to happen. I think none of us did. I mean, for me, it was all [an] intellectual exercise that might just show some facts that could validate what we were feeling with empirical evidence. That was my best hope. I didn't project what might come from there. You know, we're just undergraduates. I don't think we've really been able to figure out long-term goals yet. I can't speak for everyone else. But, when you're that age, life seems to unfold all ahead of you, and something you're doing now because it seems to call for justice, you don't realize it might have an aftermath or that long after you've graduated, these things still might need to be pressed forward. You get that perspective maybe towards mid-life more. At least for me, that's when it came.

I can't speak for the others, but I have the distinct sense that Dr. Cavin knew she had some energetic people who really were wanting to do something important. Sometimes, you just get a synergy, and that happened there. I have never even thought about having had a hand in something that might have--I don't even know how much what I did might have helped. I have

no concept of that; I can't tell you. I knew I wanted to; I just knew I wanted to serve justice. So, I was in the basement of Voorhees Chapel. There was a little office down there. I think it was something in the Women's Studies Department, in those days ...

RW: Yes.

MK: ... On another old IBM Selectric II (with the ball) typewriter, for hours on end just typing up this data. It was all tabulations and columns, and it was very hard to do in those days for this survey.

KR: Yes, it was the offices of the Institute for Research on Women and the Women's Studies Department.

MK: Okay, see, I don't even remember the name, but I was down there. It was a little unusual, but that's where they had the facilities. I was so caught up in just the numbers and the grammar and getting these things to be accurate and look right that somehow I lost sight of the big picture I think, and then I just was like, "Oh, my God, what did we stir up? What's happening here?" I don't really remember much more than that now. In fact, like I said, when I found that marked-up manuscript, I had forgotten how much effort went into it. I was like, "Oh, my God, how did I do this when I was taking six classes and working and active on these other boards?" Obviously, I was very passionate about it, and I also was very, I think, inspired by Dr. Cavin. I wanted to help her in her scholarship. I thought that she had vision, and her inspiration's remained with me. I hope we have made a positive difference there. You do what you can, where you're at, with what you have, someone once said, and you don't really think about, even Dr. King said, "You don't focus on the outcome. You just move in the right direction." That was the best I knew how to do at that moment.

KR: I was wondering if you could talk more about Cheryl Clarke and the role that she played on campus.

MK: Well, to me, she was formidable. She was, I think, extremely intelligent, very straightforward, seemed incredible self-assured, and did not mince words or suffer fools gladly. I was like, "Whoa, who is this powerful goddess woman?" I was a little bit afraid of her, I think. I think she was a dean at one point that had to do with like student diversity; I can't remember the title. I was aware that she was a published writer. I read some of her poetry. Her name was like a household word in the lesbian-gay community at New Brunswick. She had been around for a few years at least at that point. [Editor's Note: In 1980, Cheryl Clarke, GSNB '74, SSW '80, GSNB '00, began working in Student Affairs at Rutgers. In 1992, she served as the founding director of the Office of Diverse Community Affairs and Lesbian and Gay Concerns, which is now the Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities. From 2009 to 2013, Clarke served as the Dean of Students for Livingston Campus. ]

I think I first encountered her when she stepped forward to volunteer as the faculty liaison to the Rutgers Lesbian/Gay Alliance, and I think we appealed to her because the hotline had gone from a "Where's the party?" to "Help, I'm dying from AIDS" hotline. That just sort of happened overnight. You're nineteen or twenty, and how do you deal with suddenly this epidemic and this

pandemonium? I felt like she was always judging whether I was good enough or not because you're a kid and you're insecure, and I wanted to rise up to her expectations or whatever I thought they were. Then, when we got some training on dealing with the hotline and how to address questions and how to debrief ourselves at the end of night, so we didn't go home in trauma. She was showing so much compassion and commitment to making sure we were cared for, I really grew to feel very warmly about her and thankful that she was giving her time to help us. I was conscious that she was the prior generation, that there definitely was a mentor there. I saw her at so many events around the campus. The last time we ate at the old Rutgers Club before they closed that, she was at an adjacent table. So, we continued to encounter her.

I wasn't especially in constant contact with her in terms of my activism. I didn't turn to her to ask her to help me specifically as an individual or ask for her attention outside of when she was there for us as a group. I didn't have a close personal relationship with her, but I felt an affinity for her and a great sense of gratitude that we had someone who seemed to be placed in a position where she understood things and had connections and could help students who were seeking to find their place and find some kind of justice and parity and also who were trying to just help people out who were in all sorts of dire straits at that time. She also was a little younger than my mother, but my mother had been a poet, writer and a professor and a women's rights activist. I felt like an affinity, like she was a peer to my mom in some ways, so that's probably where some of the formidability comes in. It's like a stand-in for my mom in some sense, in terms of being a woman of high achievement and high respect in the community that you didn't want to cross.

KR: What is your take on the success of the anti-apartheid movement?

MK: Boy, well, as we know in the bigger arc of history, apartheid was dismantled, and in retrospect, we know that's only a first step towards healing and reconciliation. But, at that point, that was a mountain of horror that we were mortified by. I grew up as a child not really being aware of it.

A little bit of my own backstory, when I was in the Art History Department, I would go down into the Art Library, which was underneath--it used to be the original Alexander Library--which is now in the Art History building. They built a wing on it that extends to the west now. That wasn't there yet, but underneath the classrooms was a lovely but smaller Art History Library. At the desk sat a man a few years older than myself, Ashley Rodney Martin Ward. He called himself colored, and he came from Durban, South Africa. He was gay. He took shine to me, and he would always help me get obscure books or things that undergraduates didn't necessarily have the easiest access to. He would help me figure out how to do it. He ended up living near me, and we became friends, not romantically involved, but I think he wanted to be my partner. He told me a good deal about life in South Africa. He had been at an educator in Johannesburg before he went to graduate school. He had been at school in Bloomington, Indiana as well, a brilliant artist himself. I got some source-material stories about how awful life was there, and of course it was in the context of this anti-apartheid movement, which was going on all over the place at that point. There was music, art being made about it.

For me, I think that there was an idealistic, optimistic aspect of being a student, combined with a sense of horror about atrocities and compassion towards the victims that made me feel like there

was no choice but to join that movement. Once I learned Rutgers was invested in companies that were profiting from apartheid, I was repulsed that my tuition was going towards something that I felt was unethical and wrong. I can't remember now whether it was Pepsi or Coca-Cola, but it was one of the two and I stopped drinking the soda. I just refused at that point, and they made other products and I had to find out the old fashioned way what products they made because there was no Internet and stop buying and using those products. That student movement made me conscious of that. I understood what a boycott was because my mother had been involved in them during my childhood, and we also knew what protest was in my family.

There were meetings in front of the student center, gatherings outside, rallies, letters to the editor. There were interruptions of bureaucratic meetings at the school. What do they call that now when you go into a meeting and you disrupt? Now, they usually drag you out with the security. Every tactic was at our disposal. If my memory is right, one day in the *Targum*, the University announced, "We have ceased doing business with this soda company." That felt like it was a milestone. That was an initial triumph. I don't think we knew the extent to which things like retirement portfolios and investments that the school had made for other purposes might be tied in, and we began to figure some of that out. I can't say how fully the university divested. I don't know how deeply tangled the roots were. Again, information was much harder to find. Things were sort of private about, "Where's your retirement account investment in?" "Why's a student asking this?" "How will we find this out?" These things were not easy to come by. [Editor's Note: In the divestment movement of the 1970s and 1980s, corporations, universities and institutions sought to cut economic ties and investments with South Africa in order to influence the end of the apartheid regime. Many students groups, including the Rutgers Coalition for Total Divestment, became involved in the anti-apartheid cause and protested for the University to divest in companies doing business in South Africa. In 1985, the New Jersey State Legislature approved a divestment bill that was signed into law by Governor Thomas Kean. Following this, Rutgers University announced its total divestment from more than ten companies, including Coca-Cola. (Swarthmore University, Global Nonviolent Action Database, "Rutgers University students win divestment from apartheid South Africa, 1985")]

Ultimately, when apartheid ended in South Africa, I think the sentiment was that we were part of a much larger wave of consciousness-raising and press for justice for these people, that we each had a hand in creating a tide of public opinion and pressure that moved the meter of morality in the right direction. Was it a success? It successfully raised awareness among many, many students and other people involved in the Rutgers community with the fact that, perhaps completely unconscious, our school had a contract with a purveyor that was profiting off this and moved them to, I believe, sever ties with that corporation.

It made us aware of human suffering elsewhere, of racial bias, of colonial rule, so many things that brought our education and history and politics and culture into real life and affected people that were on our campus that we knew. Part of the value is in realizing, "Oh, we live in a democratic culture with this free speech and where we have processes of civil disobedience and so forth that we can use." We learned the tools at Rutgers. We learned to expand our minds. The education wasn't only in the classroom. I think the most valuable education sometimes is from learning how to communicate in the bigger community to serve the good of society. In those matters, it was a success, because all of us as undergraduates were learning how to operate

in a democracy. You need to understand your First Amendment rights and you need to understand where your money's going and you need to be able to make decisions about it and to be able to speak to the people who were making the decisions for you. This is the foundational American world that we live in, that we have a part in democracy. I think Rutgers taught us that, and hopefully we can say, "We may have been a drop in a very big bucket, but everyone was putting a drop in that bucket and a change was made for the better and apartheid does not exist in South Africa anymore." There's still things to be done there. There's a great deal that's still wrong, but that huge, ugly, colonial, racist thing is gone. Now, any two people in South Africa fall in love, regardless of their racial background, can be married. The fact that they were arrested, if they had a romantic relationship before, it was mortifying. I mean, we saw TV shows and movies about those kinds of things.

I hope that answers your questions. I don't think we felt smug or we had accomplished the endgame, but we helped or we thought, "We worked together and we did our best and we think it moved the needle." That was a success, at least in my eyes. I can't speak for everyone else in those groups. But it was certainly educational, and it helped me to learn how to deal with huge moral issues that seemed beyond my ability to do anything about.

KR: I want to ask you more about the HIV/AIDS crisis. Can you describe for us what it was like to be a young person and then to have this epidemic strike suddenly?

MK: It was sheer hell. It was terrifying to come of age and have all the normal urges of a young person so forcefully upon you in a perfectly ordinary way, to want to do what people normally do and to touch and be with someone that you found appealing, and to know that that could be a death sentence, as the hormones are coursing through your body and biology's designed you to do that and you have to not do it, was something that was difficult at a personal level and difficult to get the message through to everyone in a way that they would be able to discipline themselves. I was telling Rue that people would say to me, "You're uptight." I'd say, "I have very good reason to be uptight. I want to live." I mean, you're not paranoid when there's a deadly disease around you and you're on guard.

There wasn't a tremendous amount of great information. The ways to spread information weren't advanced. The media and the Reagan Administration were both very circumspect about talking about it. Reagan didn't even mention AIDS until his second term in office. People say, "Well, he didn't know." I'm like, "He knew. I was one of the people writing letters to the editor and screaming about it." It was known.

There is sort of a dividing line historically of people who came of age or came to sexual activity before they understood what HIV was and how to prevent it and people who came of age after. My coming of age happened right after, right alongside the people who were my age who came of age even a year or six months earlier. I had, from that first meeting at the Alliance, this brochure that Wayne gave me that came from some health agency, maybe the county health agency, I don't remember what, and these condoms that we had raised funds and gotten. Coming out of a heteronormative world, where I knew that I should use protection, it was almost natural for me, "Oh, I know what these are. I know what they're for." People a little older didn't have that warning. They didn't know. So, you're nineteen, twenty going through your mid-twenties,

and your friends are dying. It was like a battlefield, where the bullets were hitting, people were just dropping around you that were young people that were energetic, at the beginning of their life.

I can't talk about it without getting emotional. I was saying to Rue earlier that you get through it somehow. You think you've dealt with it, and now thirty-five years later, something happens, and you realize, "Oh, my gosh, not only myself but probably everyone who was in a similar position has been carrying around this trauma, this tragedy, this sense of loss, this absolute terror without knowing how to move forward without dragging it behind you." It affected--I'm going to assert--it affected the personality, the mood, the sexual attitudes, the perspective on life, the *joie de vivre* [joy of living] of the entire generation of people that came of age.

Coming out is not a one-moment thing. I can describe a moment when I went to that meeting, but coming of age is a better term because it's over a period of time. There are many people my age who came of age much later. They didn't go through that. Some people my age came of age earlier and survived through when they didn't have any protection, because they didn't know that the things they were naturally doing were putting them at risk. There are people who are my age, who through accident or through incident or misstep, who knew better, had something happen. It's almost impossible to tell a nineteen or twenty-year-old person that you can't have sex or if you're going to have sex, you have to have two condoms on at once and assume that that person's always going to be able to make that happen. Good luck.

Yet the community did an amazing job. Wayne got me inspired. I began working with him. We wrote to all the condom companies and begged for donations or discounted rates, and we had this huge box of condoms shipped to us. We'd go to all the clubs and say, "Can we put out a bowl on the counter and fill it with condoms?" We would go weekly with the bowl of condoms and the brochures. We'd go to every party and every event, until we were blue in the face, and people were receptive. We said, "Look, this could save your life." People were scared to death, and so they listened. That was going on in every community wherever there was gay activism occurring, and even some non-gay people, other groups, Planned Parenthood, you name it, did what they could to the point where condoms became ubiquitous. They were everywhere like candy bowls, and that was our goal and we continued that long after I was a student.

We were so focused on trying to save lives and trying to console and support each other and the people who were getting sick that we didn't think about the emotional or psychological cost to ourselves. We didn't have that luxury, nor did we necessarily want to. I mean, frankly, we were all a mess because you're not prepared. You come from American middle-class culture, like most of the Rutgers students I knew did, where there's an expectation that you're going to go to college. You're going to get a stable job. You're going to retire and you're going to live to a ripe old age. There wasn't a World War II going on. What do you do when you're twenty-one and all your twenty-one-year-old friends are getting sick and shriveling up in beds and dying? It was awful. There was nowhere to turn, and, yes, there were people like Cheryl Clarke that were wonderful help. We went to every kind of symposium. Remember we went to New York City? I don't remember who that was.

RW: We went to a Gary Null alternative health symposium. I made six tapes. From that, I had a tape recorder, and I recorded it.

MK: She held it up. We're in this church where they were talking.

RW: Then, I would make copies of it and just give to anybody who would listen, what you could do, how to take care of yourself.

MK: It was just terrifying. You'd go to get tested. Robert Wood had anonymous testing in a room that was all glass walls with no curtains, in the middle of the corridors of the hospitals. They'd stick a needle in you and take blood, and people were afraid the needles were infected. There was all this fear. I remember they had a gay security guard. I'll just call him "nosy." I'd go every six months, and I was on the hotline, I'd say to people, "If you're afraid of going, come with me. I'll sit there with you. Put on a baseball cap and sunglasses." They didn't want to go because they were afraid they'd end up in a registry or something. This guy would, he was a security guard, so he's walking by, but he would look in. I'd be like, "Well, I'm going to stick up my middle finger at him." It's supposed to be anonymous, but they put you in a fishbowl. That was better than many other places. So, there were obstacles.

There was a stigma. Of course, the bigger culture was making a stigma out of it. They don't want to be around gay people because they thought seriously [that] they're going to get AIDS if they drink out of your water glass. It was all this craziness, and then people would say, "We hope you go die of AIDS." I graduated before ACT UP started, but that kind of activity was going on with Rutgers students already, the in-your-face activity. There were people who were screaming mad, and there were people trying everything from writing letters and legislative things to people trying to shock to get attention. [Editor's Note: Founded in 1987 in New York City, AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) is a direct action advocacy group.]

It affected us. We lost students. I was saying to Rue, one of my friends, Robin, from that era, she and I were reminiscing recently. So many lovely friends of ours that we could name either during their student years died or almost immediately after. By about 1995, the cocktail things that they came out with were helping change that. Friends were still dying but less, and hope began to appear on the horizon. But I graduated eight years before they even had any kind of promising medicine that was really working. It was the worst of times to grow up in, and you didn't have to be gay. I mean, people are fluid sexually, always were, regardless of whatever label you assign, any young person had to worry about being sexually active or about sharing needles. Until a certain point, they didn't even know that blood transfusions would give it to you, and people were getting sick from blood transfusions. There was all this horror. [Editor's Note: The cocktail refers to HIV treatment that includes a regimen of three or more antiretroviral (ARV) drugs from at least two different HIV drug classes. The purpose of antiretroviral therapy (ART) is to reduce a person's viral load to an undetectable level.]

We did create a fantasy world. This is a coping strategy that actually probably has worked for me and some of my friends. We would get off our hotline duty or whatever meeting we're at or whatever studying we would do, and we would know that there was great music playing at some club. We would go home, and we would style our hair using tons of hairspray, put it up in the

air. You know, it was dramatic, '80s, glamorous hair. We would find suspenders and shiny shirts and whatever the fashion was, and we'd just dress up as creatively as we could and be really colorful and cheerful. One of my friends Lisa Stolzer, she had a purple Karmann Ghia convertible. She had hair that went straight up like the Bride of Frankenstein. She dressed like Cyndi Lauper with all the bangles and the frills. It just said, "Wee, we're here to dance." We would dance to that music until we were pooped, which was our way of getting our sexuality expressed.

Those clubs provided an escape. They were air conditioned. There were lights. There was glamour. There was music. Your peers were there. People told jokes. We did our stuff at the bulletin board. We signed the petitions, and then we left, for the most part, the politics and the worries in the lobby and just got on that floor and tried to release. It was really a system that, for me, worked. I mean, it really helped because you go home physically exhausted and having enjoyed time with other people, and you sleep and your mind somehow clears. I think they've now proven in the most recent research that dancing is a mood elevator, and it's good for health. It extends your life. It reduces stress. So, it actually was dancing therapy, and there was a song called "Dancing Therapy" at the time.

We needed the glamorous nightlife, but we also knew that exact glamorous nightlife was exactly where someone might drink too much and make a mistake. So, it was like walking on a sword. If you wanted to be with gay people and you didn't want to go into a party or a nightclub, all you had was gay meetings and potlucks. You had a very limited life, because there was only so many options that we could create. There were a few bookstores and coffee shops here or there, but everything was happening at the dances and the parties and the nightclubs. But also, those clubs were the evolution of that '70s disco scene, which came out of that free love and playboy era. Whether they were straight or gay, that was that culture that came from post-Woodstock and survived into and through the Reagan years. There were a lot of unhealthy messages there [that] we had to navigate around. I remember someone saying, "Oh, do you want to go to Studio 54? They're open this Friday." I'm like, "No, people do coke there. That's scary." I think back, "I should've seen it once before it was disassembled," but I was like, "Stay away from the drugs."

It was never off our minds really. You couldn't escape it, and we talked about it all the time in meetings and private life. I subscribed to *The Advocate* magazine, which was like the big gay news magazine. It came in a manila envelope completely anonymous, and they came out, I think, every two weeks. I read it cover to cover, and they always had not only something such as an interview with Donna Summer but then also the latest advances in HIV medicine. Everything was in there. We also got the *Philadelphia Gay News*. Was it the *Village Voice* that did most of the gay coverage in those days?

RW: Yes.

MK: We didn't have a New Jersey paper, if I'm correct. Later, we had the *Network* magazine. But there were some newsletters. People photocopied things and circulated them. There were these underground sort of things. We, at the Alliance and in the hotline, would cull together all these newspapers, magazines, and read everything, so when people called us on the phone, we

would at least say, "Oh, we read this article in this magazine. Here's the name of this doctor," whatever it was. We did what we could then that way.

RW: The Philly paper, I forget the name of it.

MK: Oh, yes, the *Philadelphia Gay News*. I think they might still be around.

RW: Yes.

MK: The *Boston Bay Windows* even got to us. Whenever everyone went to another region to travel or see family, they brought back regional media--there were just reams of magazines and newspapers in that office we would go through. That was our equivalent of the Internet, and we had to hope we were getting good information. But there were doctors at the forefront. There were clinics that people would call or other students would need to know, and we'd try to share this information. It was difficult.

It remains difficult. I can't watch any documentaries on that era without getting reactivated. It just makes you cry because it sucks you right back into [that era]. You don't know how boiling the water that you're swimming in is until you get out of it, and that entire era, we were basically boiling in stress and fear and mystery, not having information, not knowing what to do and not having any government funding for research when we were begging for it, and having obstacles put in our way or difficulties in trying to assist people. The Catholic Church was famously very negative about the whole thing. There was so much going on that made a bad thing worse. We had each other, and that helped us. I hope this helps you.

I don't even know how to put my emotions into words. I'm trying to convey a whole context for life, that everything else operated inside of this giant cloud of a shadow and we somehow had to make a semblance of normality and functionality and energy to live our young lives and to feel some hope for the future, inside of feeling like we're stuck in a funeral home almost. It was just very, very difficult. I can't help but draw parallels to warfare. People think of war-torn countries. That's sort of the best comparison I can imagine to it is that there was a battleground and you never knew when some destruction was going to land at your feet or hit you personally.

RW: Then, we were blamed for it, the preachers saying that this is God's wrath upon you, and all that too. That didn't help.

MK: Yes, that was pretty crappy. It's suitably intense for what it was. That's why those diaries are hard to look at because whether or not they spell it all out, when I've opened them, all the triggers of those emotions come back. My mother said, "Perhaps that's a story's that needs to be told," because while there are dramatizations about that era with tragic endings, but she was aware of someone who was there firsthand, who was sober through the whole thing, who saw everything, and who was actively involved and wrote it down and took pictures. Maybe there are other people who've done that and they'll be able to better tell their story, but I suspect that's where I'm supposed to go with these diaries sometime. Maybe that's only part of what the diaries are about, but that's my urge. The history has to be told. The names and the faces need to be seen. It's not just statistical numbers. These were my best friends. These were the people that I

grew up with, that you're studying with, you're sharing lunch with, you're bicycle-riding with, and then one day they're in a hospital bed and they're never going to get out of it. It's a tragedy when it happens to one of your friends, but when it happens to half of them, I don't know how I survived or have any kind of equilibrium.

I don't have survivor's guilt. I have gratitude that I survived. I knew I did the best I could at the time. I mean, hindsight, it's fake twenty/twenty; you just do your best to help as you can. Oh, sure, I wish I had been able to miraculously pull the vaccines and things that we hoped for out of the sky, but I'm just really thankful for people like Wayne who were there at the forefront. I hope that the Office of Diverse Community Affairs learns about him and honors him while he's among the living, because I've certainly told him over and over again that he's my patron saint for my walking into that room and Karen Smith for dragging me up there.

At Rutgers, one could argue that that Rutgers Alliance meeting in that room, in being given that blessing by the University, to continuing meeting there and the people bringing people in, all are lifesavers, that that's where we got to where we needed to know to navigate around the epidemic. It wasn't just social and political; it was incredibly important to literally give us the medical information, the best information we could find, and the protection. I'm sure it saved lives. It's never articulated to me in just that way, but I'm clear. When you're seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, and this guy says, "Read this brochure. Always use this when you have sex," if you're listening and you follow his information, you made it through. Some of those people didn't have other access. They didn't have a channel to get that information to them in time. You're seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, you're coming from the backwater; you're not necessarily reading the newspaper. Your hormones are raging. Once; that's all it took. One mistake. You know, this is scary. These people were putting the brakes on that epidemic every day.

We had fights. The Catholic Church was furious about condom distribution. Some of the clubs and bars didn't want them in there, but Rutgers never stopped that. I don't know if they endorsed it, but they allowed those people to rise to the occasion and I'm thankful for that. I think there's something to be said there that Rutgers created a physical space that was safe for these conversations to take place, where people could learn what they needed to learn and use a university phone to tell other people what they needed to know and have a venue for distributing survival information at a very, very literal, important level. I mean, it's like I haven't even really thought about it to be able to say it that way, but that's what Rutgers allowed or facilitated. It was ever-present.

I hope that answered your question. It's exhausting to do some of these topics. It's just because they just bring up so much, so many wonderful people who were gifted and talented Rutgers students that would have gone on to the most amazing careers. They were people in science and the arts, in every subject matter, bright young people that were just glowing with energy and beauty and ideas. A whole generation was swept away. How many sculptures, paintings, artworks, new medicines would we have had from these people that aren't here? What would they have given us in the world? What did they want to share that they never got the chance to? It's sad because we were all at Rutgers to do that, to find our path forward, to learn and grow and to be able to contribute to our world and create, and they got nipped in the bud. Maybe that's part of the reason I wanted to tell these stories because I saw that happening before my eyes and

I don't think their death should be in vain, if it's a tiny, little consolation that their activities and their passions are remembered by someone, that they existed, that they had a life. Basically, it's thirty-five years in the past right now. My mind just went into those rooms with those people, and I wish you could see them and all their beauty and all their '80s hair and their crazy colors. It's just the exuberance of youth.

RW: Yes.

KR: Should we pause?

MK: I guess so.

KR: Yes.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

KR: We are back on.

MK: We were reminiscing about our friend Albee, who is, at this point, I think is somewhere in his mid to late sixties.

RW: He was a DJ.

MK: He was a disc jockey at Manny's Den, which was the original incarnation of the major gay-friendly bar in New Brunswick. So, Manny Mack and his wife, whose name I can't recall right now, opened a lunch counter and a sort of packaged goods store in 1944 at 111 Albany Street. I may be off by a year or so, but this was in a three-story building, if I remember right, and the upper floors had a hairdressing school in it. At lunchtime and after school classes were over, the people from the hairdressing school would go down for a drink or something to eat. The Macks were Jewish. It was a very Jewish-Greek neighborhood down there, not so far from where I went to my yeshiva. Their attitude was live and let live. They were cognizant that there were gay people from the hair school coming down, and they served them. They didn't chase them out, which in the '40s would not have been uncommon to say, "You're not welcome here. Pansy, get out of here," whatever. The people were nice. They were well behaved. Dick Mack, who was Manny's son, who I knew when he was a senior citizen, said to me, "They were nice people. They were good customers. They never made a problem." They had a jukebox, and the people would play music and start dancing.

At a certain point, they made it into a nightclub and hired a disc jockey and made a dance floor there. The people who were gay from the salon said, "Hey, there's a place where we can go in New Brunswick right near the train station. There's parking there. We can hang out. We can drink. We can dance. The owners don't bother you. It's a safe space for gay people." These were straight Jewish people who just happened to have their business at this location but accepted this.

As I think I mentioned before, in 1966, the New Jersey Alcoholic Beverage Commission raided the club, and you can review some excerpts from the court documents. They said, "When we came in, men were sitting on their stools with their pinkies sticking out while they drank their drinks and they were greeting each other by kissing each other on the cheek and maybe had their legs crossed and men were on the dance floor dancing with each other." So, they closed it down. Two other clubs got closed and penalized. All three of the clubs got together, went to the court and said, "You have no right to close us. These are twenty-one-year-olds or eighteen-year-olds," whatever the adults were. The judge said, "I fail to see why any of this testimony is relevant." They threw out the case, and the clubs were liberated. The case is '66. The decision is in '67. [Editor's Note: The Division Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) suspended the license of One-Eleven Wines & Liquors, also known as Manny's Den, based on rules formulated during the 1930s that were expanded over time to target the congregation of gay men at licensed bars. The second-generation owner of Manny's Den, Richard Mack, who had attended Seton Hall Law School for a period of time, challenged the suspension, but Manny's Den lost in the ABC hearing. The lawyers representing Manny's Den were Theodore Sager Meth, who had been Mack's professor at Seton Hall Law, and David Morris. Two other establishments, Murphy's Bar in Newark and Val's Bar in Atlantic City, joined in the challenge. The case went to the Appellate Division in New Jersey, where the three establishments lost, and then to the Supreme Court of New Jersey. In *One Eleven Wines & Liquors, Inc. v. Div. Alcoholic Bev. Cont.* 50 N.J. 329 (1967), the New Jersey Supreme Court struck down the ABC's anti-congregation rules, in effect legalizing gay bars in New Jersey.]

It made newspapers. It was in a framed hanging display in Manny's Den. The Stonewall Riots were fought over the same issue two years later, and someone died because he jumped out a window in panic of being discovered and got impaled on an iron fence, really tragic. A lot of people were beat up and arrested. Meanwhile, in New Jersey, three bar owners, not necessarily even gay, had made it legal several years before. It didn't hit the big history books, but I have to say New Brunswick was in the vanguard in terms of the rules that said gay people cannot congregate publicly and that businesses that catered them will be closed down were stricken, before Stonewall.

Of course, things were going on elsewhere. There [was the] Compton's Cafeteria sit-in in San Francisco before Stonewall. There's the Mattachine Society in New York. This was not all spontaneous. [Editor's Note: Compton's Cafeteria Riot occurred in August 1966 when transgender women and drag queens resisted police harassment at Compton's Cafeteria, a restaurant in the Tenderloin District of San Francisco. Founded in 1950 in Los Angeles, the Mattachine Society was a gay rights organization with regional branches.]

I don't know how much the Macks knew about what was going on elsewhere. They just felt, "It's not fair to close down our place because we're serving adults here that are law-abiding, well-behaved citizens." This Jewish ethical thing was the backbone of how dare you because these men are on the dance floor together. Who cares? By the way, Jews same-sex dance. So, I think the Macks had a worldview where there was absolutely no issue with it. In fact, Jews cannot dance with the opposite sex unless they're married to them as an adult. Little kids can get together, but it would be taboo for random men and women to go dance together in a club, whereas men dancing together would absolutely be part of the culture. I think that's part of their

viewfinder. It wasn't a part of their legal argument, but it would be an interesting one. The Den was removed in 1980 for the J&J Tower development and moved to Hiram Street ...

RW: Hiram Street.

MK: ... Where they bought a larger building and developed a piano bar, a dance floor with a real DJ booth, and a little patio out back. I think it's described in there. The next generation took over, and they explicitly advertised in the gay directories and the gay periodicals that were available then. They held events, where, for example, Dixie La Rue, who was a drag queen that played the piano and sang, would come and entertain. They catered to the gay people. It wasn't just that they were allowed. They were hiring gay entertainers.

They hire Albee Thompson at the first location, the second location and the third location to be their DJ, who was a gay man of color who had been a fashion student that went to Traphagen but came from Somerset and who knew music, very passionate about dance music. [He] would go into the city and buy the latest records, and you would hear the newest music at The Den that no one else in town had. The gay clubs were famous for being the vanguard of dance music and fashion, and people would come in just for that. They still sort of have that reputation into the 21st century. This family, for three generations, ran this bar. They were relocated again. They bought a building on George Street that had been a formal attire shop. [Editor's Note: The Traphagen School was a fashion institute founded by Ethel Traphagen in 1923 in New York City. It closed in 1991.]

RW: Yes.

MK: They wanted to relocate the bar to George Street, but the city knocked them down again and gave them a huge bunch of red tape to open their bar on George Street in the late '80s, which we felt was homophobic. They didn't want the gay people on the main shopping street. The gay people had been off to the side. The city administration had some issues. The police used to break up the gay men who would gather on College Avenue at night. The students would have places they hung out. You could hear women screaming for help in the fraternities, and the police would be beating up gay men. It was horrible. It was just bad news. The city did not have the greatest relationships, at least from the bureaucratic structural standpoint. Maybe at an intellectual level, there was more tolerance as long as it wasn't visible, because there were a lot of gay institutions throughout the town. The Den moved to Somerset into an old bowling alley, which is a huge property. They made this very high scale. For around here, it was the best place. They brought in nationally-known gay entertainers. This is a heterosexual grandson of the original owner doing this through his gay employees. He still runs a restaurant. In 2016, they closed the club.

RW: Sophie's [Bistro].

MK: Finally, there was just not a customer base anymore, because times had changed. The Rutgers people no longer needed to go to a gay club because the ghettoization of gay people for safety wasn't necessary anymore, and due to new ways of socializing and new attitudes among young people, I think, nightclubs didn't have the central place they had anymore. The young

people I talk to say, "Oh, we can go to whatever club we want to for the music. We don't think about whether its gay owned or gay friendly." It doesn't really enter into it. In those days, even when there were gay-friendly places that were mixed, people wanted to go to a gay-only place if they wanted to meet someone because you didn't want to accidentally meet someone who was straight and offend them if you wanted to buy them a drink or ask them on a date. It was much easier if you were in a club that said, "This is a gay club." If someone straight was there randomly and got offended, tough luck; they're on the wrong turf. [laughter] For safety, as long as courtship had to happen at parties and clubs, you had to really watch it. Once people had other things, they have Internet sites available, where hopefully you're not encountering that kind of thing, you're just going to a club just to hang out. You're not worried. The whole world has really changed, and yet it's not changed either in some ways.

At one time in New Brunswick, there was Todd's, which was a lesbian club. There was The Den. There was a Bowl-A-Drome, which had gay nights. The Melody had unofficial gay nights. The Roxy had gay things going on. There were Wednesday nights at The Roxy, which Wayne Clawans, the same Wayne, hosted a gay party. He also had a gay gift shop called Quantum X in the mall where Rafferty's is for a while. This guy is just--he needs to be interviewed if you can find him and he's willing to talk because, whoa, I'm like the little acolyte of someone like that.

Albee was a big part of this club. Albee was quite a celebrity, and when you went to the parking lot for this club in its last location, which opened in '89, there were Pennsylvania and New York license plates in that parking lot. People were coming that far to go to a nice dance club that was well air conditioned and had good entertainment at it. It was known in the tristate area. I can't say that that was true of anything else but The Melody.

RW: The biggest dance floor of any club I'd been to, outside of New York City.

MK: Oh, and the Pussycat Lounge maybe. The Owl and the Pussycat Lounge was in Asbury Park.

RW: Oh, well, yes.

MK: Yes, but Asbury Park is a whole other chapter. Albee's a survivor, and he can tell that story. He lived in Somerset. He did not go to Rutgers. He worked--was it the Pegasus--the jean store where he designed his own clothing and sold it there.

RW: Yes.

MK: They catered to Rutgers students. Traphagen's gone too, which was his school. It folded, sadly. It was a well-known design school. Albee works at Robert Wood Johnson now. He's still working. He lives in Woodbridge. He was one of those hubs, an icon, and if I still run into someone who's a certain age that lived anywhere in New Jersey, I can ask if they knew him and there's a chance that they did, if they were of age at that point.

The Mack family, from 1947 to 2016, people who did not seem to be at all gay, hosted a club that became completely gay and kept that open and provided that space. That's almost seventy

years. I mean, it's hard to grasp why or how someone would keep any family business of that nature open that long. It was a lot of work. Finally, the grandson, who's a few years older than me, said, "I always loved the restaurant business. The club business was hard. It was no longer something I wanted to do as I became more mature and the clientele just disappeared." They were doing Latin dancing nights that were mostly or ostensibly were completely heterosexual at the end. They were just opening their club to have a venue, and aside from parties like Halloween and New Year's, people didn't go to clubs anymore. The patterns changed.

RW: Yes, I remember like maybe six years ago, Sharon White and I--Sharon came to visit and I wanted to show her a club.

MK: Another legendary DJ.

RW: I said, "Sharon, let's go. I'll show you." We walked in, and it was she and I and the bartender on a Saturday night at eleven o'clock.

MK: It used to be you'd wait on a line outside the door dressed up.

RW: Oh, yes.

MK: [laughter] Not only that hairdressing school, but, imagine, 111 Albany Street, which is just a half a block down from the railroad underpass by J&J, where those steps come down from the train station, so people could come on the train, go down those steps, go to the club. There was a huge parking lot behind the club before J&J was there, and it's across the street from an all-boys school until 1974 [1972]. Rutgers was all boys. You just know with an all-boys school, which has a Homophile League, that a gay bar around the corner is going to be patronized. [laughter] It's a great business plan. I mean, every man who was consciously homosexual who went to Rutgers probably was in The Den at some point and definitely knew of it. As soon as you become out enough to talk to another gay person, they're like, "Oh, there's this Homophile League and there's this gay bar." Those were your two central pivots. Yes, that's them. We were very fortunate because you could walk. I didn't have a car until I was just about twenty-two, and I went there.

The Melody, which was alternative, they had two--what did they call Wednesdays and Sundays? They were sort of their artsy nights, and that was a rare mixed base, where you had new wavers and punk rockers and gay people. It was sexually amorphous. You didn't know who was what gender necessarily. Matt Pinfield was DJ, who became famous on MTV later. That drew people from several states. The vibe was very colorful, and everyone was packed on the tiny dance floor. Rue actually DJ'd upstairs for a woman's night there, Thursday nights, in the late '80s, when they allowed there to be actually a lesbian night in the club. The owner, another heterosexual Jew--I think I'm onto a theme here--Cal Levine. I don't remember what his partner's name was.

RW: Cal and Steve.

MK: I don't think there's any talking about student activism and gay culture at Rutgers without the nightclub scene being involved in that era. I distinctly remember Peter Mack saying to me, "Oh, not another clipboard." I said, "Please, I need to get signatures." I would be dressed really cute, and I'd go around, "Will you sign on this petition?" I think I was doing the survey probably. I was asking people if I could call them for the survey, at the clubs.

RW: Sure.

MK: I would do that early in the evening, stick that in the coat room or whatever, and then just mingle, but actually it was a great way to meet people too and I was very conscious that if you were a little shy or afraid to say hi to new people and you were doing something for the community that people were usually willing to chat with you. I love to find the oldest people I could see in the bar and ask them their stories. I guess I was supposed to be an oral historian in some way. [laughter] I mean, it just fascinated me. I was glad, in a way, that Stonewall was only fifteen years prior, so everyone I found who was in their mid-thirties could've been at Stonewall. Albee was at Stonewall.

RW: This is the fiftieth year of Stonewall.

MK: Yes. Now, they're in their late sixties or older. Anything else that you wanted to talk about today?

KR: Let me pause for a second.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

KR: Okay, we are back on and recording. You talked before about your mother's activism in terms of feminism. I was wondering if you could talk about the work that she did.

MK: Okay, I think my mother came to feminism through her having to push through a lot of roadblocks with her own mother saying, "Why are you always sitting reading? You should learn to cook, clean and sew. Get married." When she was at college, the woman who ran the photocopy center my mom worked at mocking her, and the people in control of the finances at college telling her women are going to get their "Mrs." degree and her being pushed out of classrooms, she felt that she was treated lesser because she was a woman. But she knew her mind was the equivalent to any of the male scholars at the time, and she resented that. Getting a Ph.D. was one way of her signaling to the world that she was not to be treated as an inferior.

I grew up hearing the complaints of what the men in her department said to her and some of the inappropriate things they did to her. They would be MeToo moments now. I can recall being at a party with one of her colleagues at this beautiful house with a pool, a catered event, and their kids are like, "Why don't you have a pool?" I said, "Well, when your father stops keeping my mother from getting full salary, maybe we will." All the noise of the party stopped. [laughter] I sort of understood what she was doing.

I would say my mother, sometime in the late '60s or very early '70s, the National Organization for Women was coalescing in Middlesex County right across the river here in what used to be the Jewish Community Center on the corner of Adelaide and Raritan. There was an old house there, and they had built a Y on the end of it. Middlesex County NOW would meet there. My mother was a founding member. I don't know if it was called Highland Park NOW or if it was Middlesex County NOW yet. I don't know what the name was.

I can remember, in my childhood home, which we moved out of in February of 1973, my father turning on the radio and my mother giving an interview about women's rights. My mother always had the women's sign with the equality necklace. We were always stuffing envelopes. She was always mad at Phyllis Schlafly. [laughter] [Editor's Note: Phyllis Schlafly (1924-2016) was a right-wing lawyer, author and commentator who mobilized a backlash against women's rights and led the campaign against the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).]

We went on buses to Washington, D.C. I remember being at a rally in RFK Stadium that was completely full with mostly women, some men, some children, and Gloria Steinem was speaking. There was a streaker. A male streaker ran across the field at that meeting, which sort of contextualizes the date. That's obviously sometime in the '70s when that was happening, probably the early '70s.

She was always going to these meetings and always bringing home materials. She worked on the newsletter. She was a good writer, good editor, a very good editor. In fact, she was editing for *Fem Spec* magazine into her eighties as a volunteer, when she finally said, "I can't do this anymore. I need a break." She called herself "the first Jewish mom in cyberspace" because she took to email and doing online activism pretty early on. She was in NOW sometime in the early '70s. I know she told me she wanted to go on civil rights marches down South when she was young and married, and my father forbid it.

She had a calling to serve justice. She had a big fight with her parents when she found out that Fred Trump wouldn't rent to black people when they were living in Beach Haven, which was built by Fred Trump as a Veterans Administration complex. She clearly, even as a seventeen-year-old, was against this institutionalized racism and was speaking out, confronting her parents, and mad about it. This is part of the narrative through her life. She would say these things, "I wasn't treated right as a woman. Black people aren't treated fairly." My brother did some standup comedy, and he used to joke, "When I was a boy, I would get up in the morning to go to school and make my lunch, and I don't know where my mother was. There was this woman lecturing on the plight of the Native American female in the kitchen." [laughter] This was her passion, and she was volunteering endlessly.

Her courses, she was teaching women writers. They would give the woman, the only woman in the department, the classes they didn't want to teach, the 101 basic literature survey classes, the things that were at a bad time of day. She said, "I realized this was a way to get through at a foundational level for students." She said, "I started pulling in female authors and authors from around the world instead of teaching the same dead white males." So, she was doing activism on the job covertly through respected scholarly texts. The oldest novel in the world is by a Chinese woman. I believe that it's four thousand years old or something, and my mother would teach an

English translation of that, saying, "Oh, this is the beginning of a form of a novel." Perfectly innocent, but you're actually teaching a woman writer. She was bringing this stuff in.

Rue actually came to one of her classes. My mother was very interactive. Starting early on, she had her students not use their name on their compositions and tests but numbers. They would pick their own random nine-digit number, and then she would grade them and post the numbers with the grade. No one could accuse her of favoritism or sexism or anything. She didn't know who was writing these exams. That actually proved to help her later when there were some students that got angry at her. So, this was all about equality and also about figuring out ways to buffer yourself from false accusations, which is necessary if you're going to do some sort of edgy stuff. She would use sitting in a circle. She started teaching in the '60s, and they were doing a lot of experimental things in the classroom, audience participation. Rue saw--and there is video somewhere--my mother dressed up in a costume of a WASP [White Anglo-Saxon Protestant] with wings and the stripes and the stinger. She would drone on through the facemask in a monotone, and the point was that the rest of the universities are often teaching dead white Anglo-Saxon male writers. There's a whole additional world out there. These are great classics, and it's only a fraction. So, she'd have this costume on, and she'd make fun of the WASPs. So, this is one of the kind of things that she did.

She was unforgettable. I have been occasionally places where people just started talking about her who were her students, saying, "Oh, she's tough but she's good." So, her activism was everywhere. Her activism was in the supermarket. She would go, "Oh, this company doesn't employ any women. We're not buying this kind of canned beans," or whatever it was. "Westinghouse, they're racist. I read a report on them. We're not buying that brand appliance." Everywhere we went was a little lecture in ethics. Who made this? How were they paid? What are these groups supporting? She was an early member of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Morris Dees' group, that does a lot of civil rights, a card-carrying ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] member.

Anything for women and children that was a charity she gave to. When she died, there was a list on her desk with checkmarks of all the charities she was supporting. She didn't have a lot of money. A woman professor didn't make a great amount, but there must have been a hundred organizations that she was sending money to each month, unbelievable. She never mentioned this to me. She talked about some of the big organizations and got me to join them, but endless. She called it armchair activism because she was older and she couldn't go to the rallies anymore.

That's the way we grew up, chants, marching, buses to D.C. She would write letters to the president. We knew where 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue was as kids because my mother was always sending letters there. She worked with all the big feminists. Whenever clips would come on of a '70s women's protest march, she'd go, "Oh, that's So-and-So and that's So-and-So, and I was right behind her there." She knew who all these people were. [She was] very passionate and tireless for a long time. The Equal Rights Amendment was a big one that I remember us always working on.

She also did direct activism. There was a tavern in Metuchen. It's still there. I can't remember the name of it offhand. It only served men, might serve couples in the dining room, but the bar

was only for men. She and a bunch of other women went into the bar and sat down and demanded service. It made the news. I don't know if they called the police or whatever, but it was a huge thing. They eventually liberated that bar because they're like, "It's the '70s now. Get with the program. We're grownups. We want to be served." It was inspired by those lunch counter sit-in things, but she would go and do that and take risks. It was inspiring. I think a lot of that is what created me in the mold that had me go into this student group and see the political side of it and want to take action. That's not a short answer, but there you have some of the basics on Mom. [Editor's Note: On February 1, 1960, four students staged a sit-in to protest the whites-only lunch counter of the Woolworth store in Greensboro, North Carolina. Over the next six months, students across the South embraced the sit-in tactic of nonviolent resistance to protest Jim Crow segregation policies and try to force integration.]

RW: To a personal level, after meeting Morris, and myself owning a Victorian house and knowing how to do a few things, I would go to this young man Morris and I'd say, "Oh, Morris, this window isn't working," and I'm like edging him to fix it because I don't really want to do it. I don't want to say that, and I was hoping to get him to [do it]. He'd go, "Well, come here. Here's a hammer. Here's a screwdriver. Here's this and that." He fully expected without any compulsion that I would just be able to do it, which was amazing. I just cracked up. I'd go, "His mother got to him." It was really wonderful. In fact, I learned a lot, and I did do a lot of my own work because Morris wasn't going to come in and be the man and do the thing. I was like, "Oh, shit, I've got to do it myself, okay."

MK: You learned skills. We learned skills from each other.

RW: I'm just saying it was funny. It was like you were not typical. You were like, "Oh, I'll just show her how to do it and she'll be perfectly fine," and it was. I'm just saying it was like, "Oh, I've got to do this," and it was funny too.

MK: I had a single mother, who if it needed fixing ...

RW: Of course, yes.

MK: ... She had to figure out how to fix it.

RW: Yes. He was not a sexist person at all, and it was funny.

MK: "Anyone can do anything they set their mind to" is the way I was raised.

RW: Exactly, right.

MK: My mother, she laid the foundation for me being able to be non-heteronormative in the generalizing of respect for the dignity of every person and for them to have their own path. I think that was the big message of her activism was that everyone deserves equal opportunity, equal treatment, equal pay, equal access, regardless of their background or past. She had to struggle through inequalities and roadblocks to make a career and to provide for her family, and she did it. She was a super mom, and it's surprising she didn't burn out. I mean, she certainly

had her moments, but she did it and all her kids ended up going to college and having good lives. It was always, "Oh, broken home, single parent, your kids are going to be homeless addicts." Of course, in that arena, "Oh, your son's gay. See, you failed as a mom." That was another level of having to come out was knowing that that was the community scorn that would happen, even though some of her fellow professors were closeted homosexuals. Shock! [laughter]

KR: Take us through your career and point out some of the milestones.

MK: I started fixing up things on people's houses for Youth Employment Service in Maplewood-South Orange. When I was growing up, I would go to neighbors' houses and repair holes in their plaster ceilings or fix their storm windows or paint their shutters, for a teeny bit amount of money, and sometimes help elderly homeowners or people who just didn't know what to do. The awareness that I had skills, even as a teenager, that people were appreciative of, that could help them to stay in their homes and remove anxiety they had or things that were safety issues made me feel like, "This is important work. This is for quality of housing. Not everyone can do this." What seems so simple and obvious to me was a completely different language that many people knew nothing about. I realized somehow this was part of my future. I was always fascinated by historic preservation. Hands-on preservation, not just architectural design of how you're going to plan to rebuild something old, but having my hands in it was important. That was a big realization.

The next milestone is that a house that we bought had to be gutted, where my stepdad, who came into the picture when I was about sixteen, started giving me some wonderful woodworking tools and showing me the old world craftsmanship skills that his father had brought back from Finland when he migrated here, and how things were done and explaining to me the inner workings of a house. I never ripped apart a house. I had dealt with things that were more on the surface. The family rebuilt that house without any outside contracting help, and that was a real teaching project, whether or not it was intended as that.

The next milestone is buying that first house of my own in New Brunswick at nineteen and being in this amazing piece of architecture from the nineteenth century and just pulling back synthetic paneling and drop ceiling tiles and asphalt siding and finding the original stuff underneath there and watching the reactions. Rue has a story about shock that I was ripping off this front porch on this house.

RW: Oh, yes.

MK: That's sort of the milestone of the neighbors beginning to understand who I was.

RW: Okay. After I had seen this nice young man with a dog and a hat and a jacket and a briefcase, one of my friends came down the street and said, "You've got to meet Morris." I go, "Who's Morris?" So, he says, "Well, come down." I went down. There was this guy, and he's the guy that I had seen walking past my house. I said, "Oh, so, this is the guy." So, he's taking off [the porch]. I mean, it was an ugly porch. It was ugly.

MK: It truly was. I have pictures.

RW: Porches give a sense of neighborhood. I just didn't understand what was happening here, and I had restored my porch. He says, "Well, I'm taking it off." I'm like, "That house is going to be freaking ugly when he takes this porch off of it. It's ugly now, but it's going to be worse." I went back to my house. I had had enough of him. [laughter]

About two or three weeks later, I happened to be going down the street again, and literally, my jaw dropped. He had taken all this gray asbestos siding off, painted the clapboard, which I didn't know what clapboards were then. He had taken the porch off. It was an Italianate. I did not know what an Italianate was, but it was tall windows with shutters and you could see them. He had exposed the front door, which was beautiful, and he had put [up] a long staircase. The staircase was now long, and you could sit on those stairs. I was like, "Holy mackerel, this guy knew what he was doing." It was like a transformation. I was like, "I'll never ever doubt this kid."

MK: Yes, so, the community saw that happen.

RW: I was stunned. I was like, "Oh, my God, he transformed this into the most beautiful [house]." He uncovered this beautiful house that had been covered in shit.

MK: The house was a sort of textbook-perfect 1850s house under all these later additions.

RW: Oh, it was so gorgeous.

MK: There's a canon of proportion only in historic architecture, where you know if the door's this wide, the stairs will generally be this wide, and, "Oh, look, here's a little notch where the original handrail was under the new siding." So, I was extrapolating and interpolating and using all the studies I had at school to replace what was missing. The composition came back to life, and it was visible to the street. The people in the neighborhood said, "This kid took the ugliest house on the street and made it one of the most beautiful houses on the street."

RW: Yes, indeed.

MK: So, there was public acknowledgement. I sort of got my sea legs on that house. I also was able to get four housemates and, at the forty or fifty dollars a week, whatever it was back then, pay the mortgage, pay the light bill, and discover that I could go to school and actually sustain this work. You couldn't do that today at this budget. That was a milestone. I'm like, "This model of repairing old houses works, and the people in the neighborhood appreciate what I'm doing." So, we had a fantasy group called the Architectural Defense League, and in our minds, it would come in the middle of the night and rip off cheap vinyl siding and aluminum siding, expose the beautiful houses underneath.

RW: We would put on our leather jackets, get out our crowbars and our [fantasy] sledgehammers, and we would go into the neighborhood. There would be houses that were condemned. We would go in and get the radiators. We did a couple of times, we did this salvaging.

MK: We did some salvage. We wanted to imagine a fantasy where someone would wake up, and their damaged front porch would be restored. Their house would be restored. This was sort of our fantasy. That's how we coped with the uglification going on. People didn't know the language of architecture, and whatever their contractor said went. The contractor would say, "Oh, you have these old doors and they're not airtight and they're not secure. I'm going to give you a new steel door." They'd throw out two doors that had colored glass panels running all around them and etched glass in the middle and big, old, bronze Victorian locks on them that were just gorgeous high quality and put in a door that they picked up at Home Depot on sale with no windows in it. The hallway would now be dark. You'd come up to the front door, and you'd feel like you were going into a prison. It was just depressing. The owners, they couldn't find someone to fix the old stuff, and no one had taught them.

RW: Or take the aluminum siding off of houses, that would change everything.

MK: So, that was a milestone, and, I mean, there were many. The next milestone with preservation was beginning to get active, and there had long been a New Brunswick Historical Society. It had ebbed and flowed over the years. A fellow named Andy Farkas, who had preserved a house on George Street very well, which he still owns, last time I checked ...

RW: He's still there.

MK: ... Had a version of a historical society. That was the old one that petered out. Then, a bunch of guys interested in old houses and antiques and history trivia started one. I was a member of that, and I was trying to push them towards preservation activism. I was getting, I guess, known in town, because I would go to meetings. They were going to build the Church Street Parking Deck, and they brought this expert in, who supposedly had a degree from Columbia, about preservation. I was saying [that] this wasn't good preservation. It was up against a historic church, and I'm fighting it. Later, they found out he didn't have a degree after he testified, and they built it. I'm thinking, "No one listened to me. I went to Rutgers and we know about our own history here." My name [meant], "Oh, here comes that guy again to give us a lecture." But, at least eventually, the old boy network changes into the young boy network, and I'm already there at every meeting. Eventually, they began to ask me stuff. Then, when the mayor was challenged in 2000 or 2001 about why the town ordinance said there should be a Historical Board but there wasn't one, he said, "Oh, I'm nominating people to it." Well, the Historical Society had sent him suggestions over the years, "We suggest you nominate these people to the board." So, what did he do? He just pulled the last letter and nominated everyone, "See, we have the board." So, that's how we got our foot in the door. We still had no power, but that was important because now we're official city board members talking about preservation. It made an iota of difference.

In my career, a certain point came where I bought the big house in 1988 on Livingston Avenue, which was in what was to become a landmark historic district, and I knew that was an important house. I bought it from a ninety-three-year-old lady who was the child of the second owner. It was one of the more--it was decaying--but it was one of the more architecturally intact houses in

the neighborhood, and I loved it. I would walk by, and I'd go, "Oh." Rue had been a real estate agent for a hot minute.

RW: Five minutes.

MK: She and her friend were the listing agent, concocted this sort of scheme so I'd get to see the house and could find a way to buy it. That house is on the corner of Livingston and Suydam. It's very prominent. It's probably one of the most recognizable privately-owned historic houses in that part of town, if not the whole town. It's a very busy intersection, and it was an eyesore. In transforming that, it became really apparent that, "Wow, someone is making this house really nice." My taxes went way up, so it's contributing much more to the town coffers, to my chagrin. It was a four-family, so I was providing rent-controlled housing for people living in the community in units that were formerly lacking good heat and leaking and so forth that became nice units again. That's when my clout went up, "Oh, he owns a bunch of houses now and he's fixed up this amazing house." Being the block club vice president, we began to have our annual yard sale there, annual National Night Out barbecue there, annual holiday party there. Police and city officials would flow through at these events to say, "Hi, here's my face. You know my name. Remember me at election time," what they do, as well as hopefully get interacted with by their neighbors, telling them about issues in the immediate neighborhood. That was a milestone.

At a certain point, you've been around long enough, you've been working hard long enough, paying your bills long enough, and being as diplomatic as you know how long enough in city hall that you become an established person, who, even if he doesn't agree with city hall, is known to them as someone who is doing something good, whether or not they want to acknowledge that. At some point, I become cognizant of that. As I mentioned, one milestone was when I was a student complaining about housing issues, writing letters to the editor, they put me on the Rent Board. That was 1987. The board was founded in '69. Original members were still on the board, I learned from them, and they were good old-time civil rights activists. They're all gone now, but I survived on that board until 2015, so I carried the goals of the people that lobbied for and founded rent control in New Brunswick. There, what they shared with me over--it was from 1969 to 2015--so that whole forty-five-year period, I was the only person around that remembered those people by name and what they had said. There was lot of continuity on that board. It's hard to know how much good we were able to do because [there was] a lot of bureaucratic red tape, but we were committed to doing our best to assure that there was fairly-priced rental housing in New Brunswick, which is more an issue than ever perhaps in these days. That's what got me into what was clearly something political. It was like this is, "Boom, you're appointed by the mayor and you're dealing with the interests of corporate redevelopment, of property owners and of tenants, and you're not an elected official, but you're feeling the heat because that board is all about having disputes about housing." You're right in the hot seat there.

At that point, I'm on the Rent Control Board. I got appointed to the Historical Board. I'm still in the Historical Society. I'm an active member of my synagogue, and when they were trying to do some gay and lesbian stuff, I was on their little board. I'm talking about these tables where we were always talking, in the food co-op, in the umbrella group that leads all the block clubs, becoming the block club president. [There was] just so much going on, I didn't know what meeting I was going to sometimes. All of it coalesced around wanting people to live a healthy,

happy life of freedom in New Brunswick, where they could have a decent place to live, the resources they needed, and live as their true selves. This is what I wanted for others, and this is what I tried to be for myself.

RW: I wanted to say, in doing that, I was tagging along with Morris because it was fun and we were cohorts. He would take an old house--we called it a shitbox and it was--and Morris rehabbed that house. He put in washers and dryers and dishwashers, and if somebody came for Section 8 housing, he said, "Of course, everything that we have, they should have." [Editor's Note: Section 8 of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 provides housing assistance for eligible low and moderate-income families.]

MK: I wouldn't fix up a unit and rent it out if I wasn't willing to live in it myself.

RW: Exactly.

MK: I want people to have clean clothes and clean dishes. They deserve that convenience. Everyone's like, "Why are you doing that?"

RW: He did not skim. I learned from him. It was instilled in him that everyone deserved everything that we deserved.

MK: Today, they'd call me a socialist, I guess. It was the Great Society.

RW: It was beautiful. You never gave anybody substandard housing. He would work with them. If they didn't pay him, he would go to the ends to negotiate an agreement that they could define, as long as they paid him something. I think one lady, she would've been on the street, but he prevented that. He just said, "Well, she's having a hard time." For years, she would give him driblets and drabs of what she owed him, and he would negotiate with her and still give her all the services that anyone else had.

MK: Yes, I should've gone into not-for-profit housing, maybe in hindsight, because I wasn't about, "What's the maximum rent?" Here, in town, it's like, "What's the best use of property? Make more money." It's not about what's best for the community. I didn't have a concept that this was a for-profit business. I wanted to make my neighborhood better and have good people living there.

Ultimately, I guess one milestone in New Brunswick came when, after a very, very long time, I realized that I was in the crucible, the stress level, personally, of always having to be on the defensive. On the Preservation Board, every time I wanted to preserve something, they were like, "Why did you pick this building? Why not do something else?" I'm like, "Because you threatened this and this is important." The block that's across from Old Queens, which has that huge tower on it, was actually a very, very colonial historical block, and we wanted it landmarked. They didn't give us any power to landmark anything. They're like, "Go protect something else." I'm like, "Every block you knock down, you tell us to go protect something else and we never get to protect anything." I'm like, "You haven't even done a study. There's no inventory of what these buildings are. The founding professors of this school lived in these

houses." Then, DEVCO [New Brunswick Development Corporation] announces, "We're going to save the main façade of the corner building because it's important." It's in *The New York Times*. Turn around, they knock it down. So, we were always having to justify and explain and be pooh-poohed. Even on the Historical Board, we'd go to the Planning Board and they'd say, "Oh, you can't testify." I'm like, "We're your sister board. We're appointed by the mayor." [They would say], "You have to wait until after the rest of the public is done speaking at the end of the meeting." That was the world I lived in, and eventually I realized [that] this is not healthy anymore.

I've spent over thirty years trying to push back as a minority or a minority opinion against the people who were in positions of authority, trying to make them look at another point of view. There's a level of hostility and personal invalidation that goes on even as they have to tacitly acknowledge, "Yes, he pays his taxes. He's a good citizen. He volunteers on all these boards. His house looks great. He does all this community stuff." They didn't want that. They wanted to do whatever they want without anybody saying, "Hey, wait, stop. A taxpaying, educated citizen who actually lives in the town and participates disagrees with you." In a town that's filled with transients, it's easy to do whatever you want, and I felt like there was a giant steamroller of demolition going on to not only the physical buildings but the culture.

It was just toxic after a certain point for me because there was open hostility. When the big businesses in charge tried to be nice to us, it was only to try to pump us for information, so they could get to the press before we did and invalidate and insult us. There were personal aspersions cast that were inappropriate against everyone who didn't agree with the people in charge. Our mayor is a full-time real estate developer and a part-time mayor and has been for a generation. We've lost our historic fabric.

I was working in Provincetown, where the red carpet was rolled out for preservation, where there is a great respect for it and understanding of what I was doing. I said, "You know, I have to do my craft and I can't spend every waking hour trying to work for justice against a tide of hostility. It's just going to kill me eventually." No matter how much you debrief, be it a call about someone with HIV or coming out of a meeting where you just explained that General Washington met in this specific building and they're like, "La, la, la, we're bulldozing it," or you just explained that stained glass window is signed by Tiffany Studios and they smash it. It was horrifying. They knew they weren't objective and they knew we had a point, but most of the public is not paying attention and doesn't have historical context. So, they get to just paint us as silly elitists that want to stop progress when it's anything but that. Real progress requires understanding what's there now. It was another kind of milestone to have that epiphany and realize, "I have to go where my heart is and where my soul is and not be where my history is just because I'm established here."

Most people are on the Rent Board two years. I was on it twenty-seven years. I think my commitment to the city was self-evident; no one's going to volunteer to listen four or five hours a night twice a month to tenants and landlords showing me the pictures of their properties and arguing over all the problems in them because of the joy of it. You're doing it because you're committed to trying to make a solution. So, all they did was sort of say they were disappointed when I stepped down because they needed me. I'm like, "Okay." It was a kind of epiphany

when I got out of this pressure cooker. I felt younger. I slept better. I missed the glorious people I worked with, and I still try to stay in touch with them.

Rue's talking about other properties I had preserved, which are in the northern Catskills and in Albany. In Albany specifically, we took on a world-class mansion by a famous architect that had been published in 1879 in a national periodical and was a landmark district house that was abandoned and going to go down and yet was iconic to that town. My partner and I took it on, it was un-mortgageable, and spent seven years putting it back together. My career continues. We received a plaque and a preservation merit award at a ceremony for that work that was a huge public acknowledgement. In New Brunswick, seven of my own houses, thirty-one years of work, including a house that when they made the landmark district on Livingston Avenue, the state said this is the most intact, best-preserved resource in the district. It had been virtually condemned when I started. Never even a letter of thanks. The house had a thirteen-hundred-dollar tax bill when I bought it and fifteen thousand when I sold it.

My contribution [made me] *persona non grata* because it didn't follow the model. It wasn't knocking it down and building a new high rise. They just hoped I would go away. I'm sure there were people having a toast when they had heard I had moved. I know other people who were upset. The work goes on, and it is environmental too. It's about the environment people live in. It's about the well-being of the environment. I mean, how much concrete and glass and destruction of embodied resources can we take in New Brunswick, where everything is new and made for a specific corporate purpose, before the city loses its soul?

It's a problem even within the campus at Rutgers. We are all losing some of our oldest and best buildings. Even with a really good architect in the Rutgers faculty, there's not enough resources or attention paid. Our cache, in terms of the beauty of our campus, is at stake. That's part of the reason I came here, too. Rutgers-Newark was abysmal in those days. It's a little bit better now. The campus here was beautiful. It really was. It still has its beauty. To walk a campus that was laid out in 1809 and still had the original sensations that had been at scale at that point was really nice, the continuity. It was a much smaller school when I was here too and there is no Rutgers College anymore, so that was sort of sad, but I'll always have New Brunswick in my mind. When I dream at night, the dreams are set in New Brunswick. [laughter]

So, those are some milestones of my career. I've really loved working on old houses and empowering people to stay in houses that might otherwise have just fallen apart or become too expensive to stay in and to share that knowledge whenever I can, how to make sure people who are tenants can find a way to get what they need done to live there safely and people who are owners can find a way to fix what they have without going broke. Anything else there?

KR: Well, I have reached the end of my questions.

MK: Yay.

KR: At this point, do you want to add anything else to the record? You are welcome to add stories that we skipped over.

MK: Boy, I'm sure there will be a bunch of things that will come up later. I do want to say that I have no regrets. Moving to New Brunswick took me from a boy to a man and fine-tuned my career and put me in a physical place, where I learned how different kinds of people lived and what their struggles and their difficulties were, from unemployed people and Section 8 people to people who are teetering on the verge of homelessness to some very wealthy people, to every kind of person. The city had such an amazing diversity of people. There are many languages spoken in town, people from many cultures and many really wonderful, dynamic people in the Rutgers and New Brunswick community that all are passionate about what they're doing and about ideas and hopes and aspirations they have. This city provided a context, and a university's a huge part of this city, a place where people could grow and thrive like that.

I think Rutgers not having enough on-campus housing was a good thing and not forcing students to live on campus the first year or two like some schools do, because going out and living out in the community could be an opportunity, not a liability, and for me, it was. It changed my whole life coming to Rutgers, being welcomed at Rutgers academically and being welcomed into living in the New Brunswick community. It was completely unpredictable what would be the outcome of this. It made for a career that sustained me, and it's continuing to be an education all the time. I'm still involved as a kind of go-to guy for different organizations I was in because I'm the archival memory for some of these groups. They're still close to my heart, and I'm still coming back here. It's always going to be home for me, and I'm grateful. I'm grateful to Rutgers for providing that place.

I did have a group of excellent professors. That Art History Department was world class. They were inspiring people. They were fun people. They went above and beyond. I mentioned Dr. Tod Marder, but there was also Harvey Shaw, who taught African art. There were so many professors that I can't even list them all by name right now, but many of them did great scholarship and continue to. They gave us their time and energy and were accessible to us. They put together symposiums for us. They brought people like Philip Johnson to Rutgers to speak, who was an iconic architect who lived to be nearly to be a hundred who was a queer person also. They made a place that provided a great education that was affordable to an average kid who didn't necessarily have that opportunity elsewhere.

I just hope that future generations can have as good an experience and say the same kind of things, that the forces of good at Rutgers way outnumber the forces of banality, as it were, and they caused me to look at the world around me differently and think about it differently and draw my own conclusions, expanded my mind. There's factual knowledge that you can get that's part of your education, but there's the broadening of your horizon and it's in the opening of the bigger perspective on the world and the learning how to interact with people that the community that Rutgers created and allowed that was so priceless. The extracurricular activities are not extra; they were essential to the college experience. Through those activities, perhaps my peers and I were able to make a positive difference in the bigger world, and we were given that opportunity. We weren't tightly scheduled and constricted to campus and controlled. We were given free access to resources, and it's really priceless. I have no regrets. I'm proud of having been a Rutgers College student. I'm very thankful that the City of New Brunswick did not eject me forcibly. [laughter]

KR: Well, thank you so much. Thank you so much for doing this oral history interview. You have been very generous with your time, and thank you for travelling all this way and including spending this entire day here doing this.

MK: Oh, it's been intense, but it's been good. It's helpful for me. I think everyone should try to look back at where they've been in life. I don't think that many of us come from a point of thinking about milestones or contributions we might have made, in the soup of our daily lives, and modesty also makes it hard to talk about certain things without sounding like you're boastful, which is a pride cometh before a fall kind of thing. I don't usually have the reason or justification or context to even think about this stuff. It's useful for the interviewee too because we get to take stock of where we've been and think about where we want to go and what we might be able to do with the gifts and resources we've accumulated. It's great for the giving of something of a big picture to think about. I'm sure there's going to be a massive transcript. [laughter] I hope it's been good for you too. You must have met so many interesting people. I'm sure the stories overlap and dovetail in the most intriguing ways. I'll look forward to spending some time on the site and seeing what there's out there for me to read. I'm sure some of my contemporaries are in there, so I'll look for them. But if you could find Wayne Clawans, really I hope he'd be willing to talk.

RW: What's his last name?

MK: C-L-A-W-A-N-S. He was a member of my synagogue, as well as another Rutgers student. He would be around Class of '87. He might have been '86, '88.

RW: Maybe he could be found through the synagogue.

MK: Yes, I don't know.

KR: What is the name of the synagogue?

MK: Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple at 222 Livingston Avenue. I don't know that he's been there in many years. It was his family's synagogue. His mother was a secretary in the History Department. I think she's gone now, and my brother was friendly with her. My brother was in the History Department. I didn't talk about that. Wayne was living in, I think, North Brunswick, Kendall Park area the last time I spoke with him. E-mails to him don't bounce back, but they don't get a response.

KR: I will try to find him.

RW: Yes.

MK: I guess Ed Scheer finally retired. What office was Ed in? They were good friends.

RW: Was he a finance guy?

MK: There was someone on the staff at Rutgers, Ed Scheer, S-C-H-E-E-R, who was part of the Gay Alliance, who worked in an office behind the Student Center in one of those houses that I think might have been finance. You might be right. I'm blanking now. [Editor's Note: Edmund Scheer is the Director of Budget Policy & Analysis in the Rutgers University Budget Office.]

RW: I'm blanking too.

MK: I think he's just about to or just retired. I have tentative contact with him occasionally. It's like a Christmas card kind of thing.

RW: He's got a house on Suydam Street.

MK: Yes, where it became Louis.

RW: Louis.

MK: Before that, he lived in New Brunswick Arms and before that he lived on Redmond.

RW: Where did he move after he sold his house?

MK: He bought a house over the river, and through the woods, no. I know where it is.

RW: In Piscataway?

MK: There used to be a--we would go looking around Piscataway and there was a big farm ...

RW: Yes.

MK: ... That was involved in some scandal.

RW: Oh, yes, I know exactly where it is.

MK: Let's see if his address is in this [address book].

RW: By Middlesex.

MK: There used to be a steakhouse right through there.

RW: Yes, and now it's some kind of Chinese-Asian restaurant.

MK: Well, he was right on that block. I can point out his house. He may still be there. He wanted to retire in Hawaii last time I saw him. He's at, yes, 149 Metlars Lane in Piscataway.

RW: Metlars Lane.

MK: That's where he was.

RW: That's Ed Scheer.

MK: Yes, yes, he's a contemporary mind. He was active socially, politically too. He was actually on one of the trips we went to Trenton, where we were protesting, and I have a photo with him in it, from that trip. He was good friends with Wayne, and they used to do a Thanksgiving dinner for people who couldn't go back to see their family or didn't have family. You know those things are community kind of activism, making family. A good guy. So, yes, he might know where Wayne is, and he probably, and if he's up to speaking, would be a subject that would have a lot of other memories. Geoffrey Maugham was one of the co-presidents of the Alliance, Geoffrey Maugham. You know who's the most famous is the one who did the Boy Scout lawsuit.

KR: Yes, Dale.

MK: James Dale, yes, who was a little later than me, but I used to drive him when he didn't have a car and I used to have to let him off someplace where no one would recognize him. I don't know if you've interviewed him yet, but he's a historic guy. [Editor's Note: After the Boy Scouts of America expelled Scoutmaster James Dale, RC '93, he brought suit against the Boy Scouts, claiming that the organization violated New Jersey's prohibition of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in places of public accommodation. Initially, the New Jersey Superior Court ruled in favor of the Boy Scouts, but the Appellate Court and New Jersey Supreme Court found that the Boy Scouts had violated Dale's rights, as protected under New Jersey's public accommodations law. On April 26, 2000, in *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that New Jersey's public accommodation laws violated the Boy Scouts' First Amendment right of expressive association. The ruling allowed the Boy Scouts to bar homosexuals from being leaders.]

KR: We are trying to, yes.

MK: Yes, his story got quite a lot of press.

KR: Right.

MK: So, Geoffrey Maugham was one of the co-presidents when I was a student. Dan Kaufman, who is still around--he was at the awards dinner last year--he was a co-president.

RW: Yes.

MK: He's very articulate.

KR: Okay.

MK: Gosh, if you want to get into the Alliance history, we can probably find the lists when they were printed, the officers' names. Susan Billmaier was one of them.

KR: Yes, you have a lot of names in your article.

MK: Oh, yes. So, I list the officers in there.

KR: Yes, you listed the officers.

MK: A lot of those people are still around, even in the immediate area, I think. Boy, they would really flesh out other angles of my story because I was not, I guess I ran the hotline one year, so that was a title, but I was never as far as an officer. Maybe I was recording secretary and second in command. I might have done some of that stuff but always in the background. They were really in it, and they would remember all sorts of details that weren't even on my radar. But the person that strikes me as being this larger-than-life personality that was always doing work was Wayne. I have some great photos of Wayne. Yes, he definitely deserves his [recognition], the Office of Diversity award or whatever they're giving out. So, if they're going to do that again, I'd better nominate him.

KR: Well, thank you so much.

MK: You're welcome.

KR: And, Rue, thank you so much, and happy birthday to you.

RW: Oh, thank you. Thank you. This was a really good birthday.

MK: A trip down memory lane for the birthday.

RW: Really, I couldn't think of anything better. I want to do more than this. He needs to tell his story, and I'm glad that we got to do it.

KR: Okay. Great, thank you so much.

-----END OF TRANSCRIPT-----

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