

Queer Newark Oral History Project

Interviewee: Peggie Miller

Interviewed by: Kristyn Scorsone

Date: March 7, 2017

Location: Rutgers-Newark

Kristyn Scorsone: Today is March 7, 2017. My name is Kristyn Scorsone, and I'm here with Peggie Miller. I'm interviewing her for the Queer Newark History Project at Rutgers, Newark. Thank you for doing this.

Peggie Miller: No problem.

Kristyn Scorsone: Just to start off, when and where were you born?

Peggie Miller: I was born June 8, 1954 in a small town called Kershaw, South Carolina.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Peggie Miller: Yes. It's an hour from Charlotte, North Carolina, between Charlotte and Columbia, South Carolina, if you're familiar with those areas.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay.

Peggie Miller: Yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you live in Newark now?

Peggie Miller: Yes. I live in Newark now. I've been living in Newark for the last six years, seven years.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay.

Peggie Miller: Yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: What brought you here?

Peggie Miller: Well, I was living in Trenton and working in New York. First, I was working in New Jersey, and then my job got transferred to New York. When it did, it was too much of a travel, so I decided to move closer, so I came to Newark.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay.

Peggie Miller: Yes, so it was because of work. That's the reason that I ended back up in Newark, which I was very familiar with cuz I used to live in Newark back in the 80s and 90s. Yeah, so I always loved Newark.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Peggie Miller: Yeah, I love Newark.

Kristyn Scorsone: What do you love about it?

Peggie Miller: I love everything about it. I love the fact that the people in Newark, they're different. Even though Newark gets a bad thing on 'em about crime, but crime is everywhere. Newark, to me, offered something that a lot of places didn't have. It was like the little New York to me. If I wanted to go to a club and listen to music, which I'm totally into, I could always find that spot in Newark. If I wanted some night life, I could find it in Newark, and I just felt safe walking around in Newark, so, yeah, love everything about it, and I love what it's becoming today.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Peggie Miller: Yeah, it really is so cool to see the stores like Whole Foods coming, all they're doing on Broad Street, new business coming in. It's great. It's great. It's great for Newark.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Do you worry at all about it, like rents raising or the gentrification?

Peggie Miller: Well, no, because you have to have some change in order to see change. Right? Sometimes you may take a hit on certain things, but if it's gonna bring Newark back; I'm all on board for it. I really am because I think it's needed because Newark has had such a bad name for so long. To see people really come here and say that, "I came to Newark, and I had the best experience of my life," we take a little hit.

Kristyn Scorsone: Right.

Peggie Miller: Right? Yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: Who raised you growing up?

Peggie Miller: Oh, my mom. My mom raised me in South Carolina. I had three brothers. One of my brothers, unfortunately, passed.

Kristyn Scorsone: Sorry.

Peggie Miller: Yeah, so I was raised by my mom in a little, small shack, as they say. I was born in a house.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, yeah?

Peggie Miller: Yeah, born in a house in South Carolina, and so my mother and my stepfather raised me, but all the raising was done by my mother, and I would say her sisters, our aunts, cuz my mother left South Carolina and moved to New Jersey before I did, so she left me with a very special aunt who was like a mother to me. God rest her soul, she's gone, my Aunt Ethel. She helped raise me, as well, yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: What did your mom do for a living?

Peggie Miller: She cleaned houses.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Peggie Miller: Yeah. That was the thing down South. There wasn't too many jobs, so she cleaned houses or would iron for people. That was the thing, and babysit. Those were the things that she would do in order to keep food in our mouths. Yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: How about your Aunt Ethel? What did she do?

Peggie Miller: She was the same thing. My mother has three sisters. Three of 'em are gone. Wow. No, it's five of them, so three are gone. Two are left. Right? All of them did the same thing. They were the Miller girls down in South Carolina in Kershaw, and they all did cleaning of houses. That's what they did. That's all it was back then to survive. Yep, mm-hmm.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay. Do you recall any events in your life that were kind of like turning points for you growing up, or challenging or anything like that?

Peggie Miller: Well, I think a point in my life, I would say I, [00:05:00] being from the South, loving the South, but when I would see family members who didn't live in the South anymore come home, and see the life changes that they had made, it was a point for me that wanted me to get out of the South and move north to take advantage of some of the opportunities that I saw my cousins had. That would be a turning point, seeing loved ones leave the South, and seeing what they made of their life, which gave me that oomph to say, "Yeah, I wanna do that."

Kristyn Scorsone: It was more like economic opportunity up here?

Peggie Miller: Yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: For your identity, how do you identify your sexuality or your gender?

Peggie Miller: Well, this is funny. A lot of my friends always said I'm always in the closet, and always been in the closet, but I'm as you see me. I'm an aggressive woman. To take it back, Southern Baptist people in the South frowned upon homosexuality. I'm from a family that believes a certain way, and it was all about church, all about that, so I think I knew when I was—not think, I knew when I was eight, nine years old who I was. I knew I was gay. I knew I was different. I knew that, so I would identify myself as a lesbian, only by terms. When I introduce myself, I identify myself as Peggie Miller, so when people asked me, "What's your name?" I never just say,

“Peggie.” Peggie Miller, my whole name, that’s who I am. I don’t wanna be defined by terms to say that, but if we have to go with society, I am a black lesbian woman.

Kristyn Scorsone: Mm-hmm. Did you know anyone growing up that was LGBT in your area?

Peggie Miller: I don’t think of knowing that they were. I’m always reminded of the story, like when I was a kid, and this woman used to babysit me. Then what she would do, like play around with me, lovin’ on me and stuff like that. Maybe that was her little thing, but then there was this one kid as I grew up, and it was a guy. He was gay, but they gave him hell in the South. Oh, it was so hard for him. They used to pick at him. Then, eventually, he had to leave the South, and he ended up, actually, in Newark. We ran into each other in Newark, New Jersey.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow.

Peggie Miller: Yeah. His name is Raymond **Weissert** [Spelling: 08:05].

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Peggie Miller: Yeah, exactly.

Kristyn Scorsone: When you came to Newark in the 80s, what was it like?

Peggie Miller: When I came up here, I didn’t come to Newark first. I ended up in Patterson, New Jersey cuz that’s where my mom and stepfather were, so I went school over there for a while, did middle school there. Then they moved to Bergen County, Hackensack, so I lived

in Hackensack and graduated from Hackensack High School. A lot of my time was spent in Hackensack. When I came up, I didn't like it, in all honesty. I didn't like the people. It was all that, and I cried and wanted to go back home, but, eventually, I settled in, met friends. Then I got comfortable and didn't wanna leave, and I never went back. My mother and my stepdad went back, but I never left.

Kristyn Scorsona: No?

Peggie Miller: No. I guess I just had to settle in cuz it was different. I talked different, sounded different. They used to laugh at me and everything. What I did with that was took it as a lesson, that, okay, because I didn't say words like them and speak like them, that I started mimicking them so I wouldn't be laughed at. You know what I mean? So I didn't have that Southern drawl. You know what I mean? Yep.

Kristyn Scorsona: Are you involved at all with the Unity Church in Newark?

Peggie Miller: Yeah. I go to Unity Fellowship Church of Newark. We're right down at Symphony Hall in Newark every Sunday. I'm a trustee there, I sing on the choir there, and I'm also a candidate for deaconship, becoming a deacon. Yeah, so I'm very active in church, and always have been, since I was a kid. I love church. I love the Lord, so it makes me happy. [00:10:00] Yeah, definitely, Pastor Kevin E. Taylor, he is the man. He is the one that slams it. Whenever he preaches, you're guaranteed to get the message, and so I just love that, and I love him. I always say I'm his mentor—or, no, he's my mentor, excuse me, and he's younger than I am, but I admire the blessing that God has

put through him, how anointed he is, that we always get a good word with him. I'm very familiar with that. I get involved when the other Unity Church come, when we have midyear—well, not midyear anymore—when we have convocation, I get involved, so actively involved in Unity, yep.

Kristyn Scorsone: What's the other church? Is that Los Angeles, that one?

Peggie Miller: Well, they're all over. They're in Los Angeles. They're in Charlotte. They're in North Carolina, South Carolina, D.C., Maryland, Virginia. They're all over. Convocation is when all of the churches come together under one roof, and we have worship service, which we'll be doing again in October of 2017 this year. We're gonna be doing it at the Robert Treat [*hotel in Newark*]. It's gonna be like a Wednesday through Sunday thing cuz it's our 35th year anniversary.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow. That's really cool.

Peggie Miller: Yeah, Carl Bean.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Peggie Miller: I don't know if you're familiar with the song, "Happy, carefree, I'm gay."

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Peggie Miller: He is our archbishop, and he started this. Yep.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's really cool.

Peggie Miller: It's really cool, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Thirty-five years in Newark?

Peggie Miller: Thirty-five years total for the movement, yes, on the whole, yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, okay. That's awesome.

Peggie Miller: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you feel like there's—I heard from other people that there's sort of a spirit of entrepreneurship there, like a can-do—

Peggie Miller: Yes. With Pastor Kevin, Kevin E. Taylor, he is an entrepreneur. He has written books, done TV things. He did BET, so he's a creator, and he creates. I find that the people that goes there, those are the same type people that are in the church. They are creators. It's like we're all there cuz if you need a singer, it's in the church. If you need someone to sew, they're in the church.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow.

Peggie Miller: If you need an accountant, it's in the church, so it's like everything we need is there, and I think it's from the fact of what it's drawn. I'm speaking because of Newark, and I would think and hope that the other churches have, but in Newark, yes, it's a lot of creative people in there, a lot of 'em, people who've written letters and stuff to presidents and all that, just create and making change, so yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Do people help each other a lot there?

Peggie Miller: People help each other a lot. It's a good spirit of fellowship there, yes, so if somebody's in need, there is no problem for no one going to the rescue. Yes, and it's loving. It's a loving place. You feel the love, and that's what most people, when they come there to visit our church, they always say that it's a loving spirit here, and they just love the church. Yeah, so yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you consider yourself to be an entrepreneur?

Peggie Miller: Yes, always have been. From teenager up, I was giving parties, gay parties. Later on in my life, I accomplished my 501(3)(c). I've done computer repairs. I'm always out trying to find something better to do, which led me into a business. Yeah, I definitely do consider myself that, and I think I always will be because no matter what I achieve, and I may try it and it works, if it don't work, I'm always looking for something else. Yeah, so, yes, I would consider myself an entrepreneur.

Kristyn Scorsone: What drives you to be like that?

Peggie Miller: What drives me to be like that, I just think it's from where I came from, not having, to want to have. You know what I mean? I tell this story a lot. I remember being a kid, and me and my brothers, we always used to like the breast part of the chicken, and, of course, you're only gonna get two, right? We would have to take turns doing. That bothered me. Why couldn't we all have? Just seeing my mother struggle, without showing us, to take care of us, that was the drive in me to do better, to have better, and to want

more, and, ultimately, achieve, so I can help my mother. Yes, that's the drive in me, just where I came from, my roots. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: You started the Diamondz N Da Ruff? [00:15:00]

Peggie Miller: I didn't start it. I'm one of the owners though.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Peggie Miller: It's myself and two other owners. Yeah, we started this over a couple of years ago. The way it work is I'm the music part, which I love the music, so I'd be responsible for the bands and getting entertainment in there. The other owner would take care of the kitchen, and then we had the other owner who would just manage the business, more like the manager of the business. Yeah, and it was a beautiful thing. Great people came. They felt like they were at home in their living room, and it's just so cool, like Friday night, the biggest night for karaoke.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Peggie Miller: Biggest night there, just a lot of love. People just come in. The food is great, so yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: How'd you come up with the name?

Peggie Miller: Diamondz N Da Ruff came up from, actually, one of the partners. One of the other partners came up with Diamondz N Da Ruff, and we just all agreed to it. At first, we was like, "Diamondz N Da Ruff, hmm...," and then when she explained where she was coming from, it's not only how a diamond is made and she felt

that it was rough, like how it's created from coal and everything came up because we don't spell it the regular way. We spell it D I A M O N D Z, and she feels that everyone is a diamond. I take it a little step further and I say, "That's cool, and everyone in Newark is a diamond, as well, and they deserve to have a place." Then we spelt rough, R U F F, and it's like, D I A M O N D Z, space, N, space, D A, space, R U F F. That's the way we spell it, so it became a catchy name after a while. Then we started just calling it Diamondz. The goal always has been you start low with your diamonds in the rough, and then let it graduate and become a true diamond.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Peggie Miller: We felt that everyone in Newark is a diamond. No matter how rough it is, there's diamonds, and they deserve to be treated with royalty because we got homeless people that came through. We would feed them.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Peggie Miller: Yeah, we would give them food, and we understood that the patrons, some of 'em didn't like it, but we tried to do it in a manner to make sure that we were giving back to the community cuz there were a bunch of people that just came there, and they just wanted to chill. They just, hard day, wanted to get a drink, so yeah, and it's a cool name.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Peggie Miller: Now it's Diamondz N Da Ruff, and everybody love it. One person created a little song. It goes like, "It's Friday night. I'm going to the Ruff. Diamonds in my cuff. D'Usse—no, diamonds in my cuff, D'Usse in my cup. Can't get enough. Diamondz N Da Ruff."

[Laughter]

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome.

Peggie Miller: Yeah, one of my friends, Kenya, Kenya Grayson, she did that. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's really cool.

Peggie Miller: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you have a ribbon cutting or a big opening?

Peggie Miller: We had a ribbon cutting. We did, and Dana Rone, at the time, she did our cutting, two years ago, yep.

Kristyn Scorsone: Who is she?

Peggie Miller: Dana Rone, she works for the prosecutor—no, I'm sorry. She is a councilwoman. Yeah, Dana Rone. I think she works in the— which area she works in now, I'm not sure which area it is, but I know her simply cuz she's a friend, and she's part of the City Council and stuff. We asked her to come in because the mayor was not available at the time. Yep.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you have any challenge to getting it started, getting it off the—

Peggie Miller: I think our only—no, the challenge was because, in the beginning, it was just so smooth. Everything was right on point cuz we just took a room and created what we wanted it to look like. That was so cool. We got it, and we opened, it was great. I think the challenges come after you open it, like dealing with the issues that we had. We have certain issues over there now because of parking. We are at 71 Clay Street in Newark, New Jersey, so there's always parking issues over there. You can't park on the side, and we used to park at this location. Now they're saying you can't park there cuz someone parked there at their own risk and now have to sue them. Yeah, but anyway, it's a nice spot.

Kristyn Scorsone: How do you negotiate who works when and what you do?

Peggie Miller: Well, we have a manager [00:20:00] by the name of Deborah Glenn, and so she pretty much handles the schedule and bringing in the workers and setting them up. What we do, if we have a group to come in, let's say, wanna have a birthday party, she'll take all the information, handle that, see how many people she need to work the party, and then she sets them up for it, so the manager handles that.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Peggie Miller: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: What's your favorite thing about working there?

Peggie Miller: The music.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Peggie Miller: The music. The music because I love to hear people sing, so that karaoke is always good. Get karaoke music going, and people just get up there and sing, and the laughter and the love, that's my favorite part of it.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Peggie Miller: I love the food. Don't get me wrong. They go well together, but my favorite would be the music.

Kristyn Scorsone: You can sing?

Peggie Miller: Yeah, I sing.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Peggie Miller: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, that's right, cuz you're in the choir, and then you had a singing group, DeBonaire? Is that right?

Peggie Miller: [Laughter] Oh, yeah, you did some work. Yeah, DeBonaire. I had a group. I started them way back, and it started because I wanted an aggressive singing group. I always wanted an aggressive—I always wanted an all-woman's band, right?

Kristyn Scorsone: Right.

Peggie Miller: Right, it was always about that, and then this group, these friends of mines, they were aggressive, and they could sing, so started that.

We did a lot of affairs here in Newark. Yeah, could sing up something. We were really good. We were patterned like the Temptations.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay.

Peggie Miller: Yeah, so it was really good. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: It was the same kind of music style, too?

Peggie Miller: Same type of music style. We did like “My Girl,” with the steps and stuff like that, yeah. Well, did different music, but that’s the way that we were laid-out, kind of like the Temptations.

Kristyn Scorsone: That’s really cool.

Peggie Miller: Yeah, it was very cool. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: You did *New Millennium Butch*?

Peggie Miller: Yeah, that’s my baby, too. *New Millennium Butch*, I started in 2000.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay.

Peggie Miller: Yeah, and the reason I did that because my thing of it is that I thought aggressive women looked so nice in suits, and always would notice with their partner, quote/unquote, the “fem” would always get all the attention, and the aggressive never would. I’m like, “This is crazy here cuz some women just look naturally

beautiful in suits.” That’s how I started, and I gave my first show at the Cathedral House back in 2000. Packed the house, sold out.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow.

Peggie Miller: It was sold out. I couldn’t even let any other people in. That’s how it was. I found all these women that was aggressive, and, yeah, they were down, wore their suits, and it came out well. In fact, I still have the troupe. I did a photo book on ‘em. We have a photo book out. We did calendars, and the 19th, next weekend, in Charlotte, they gonna honor me for the *New Millennium Butch* work.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, yeah?

Peggie Miller: There’ll be fashion show down in Charlotte, so a few of my models are gonna go down, and I’m gonna receive an award for the work. I think that’s awesome. That was all because of Jacquelyn Holland. I don’t know if you’re familiar. She’s part of Unity, but Bishop Jacquelyn Holland. She’s an elder now, excuse me. She made this happen. She modeled for me for a minute, and then she moved down to Charlotte, so now they’re doing a show, and they’re gonna give me an award for the work, and I think that’s awesome.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, congratulations.

Peggie Miller: Thank you.

Kristyn Scorsone: That’s really cool.

Peggie Miller: Thank you. *[Laughter]* Thank you. Yeah, it is cool.

Kristyn Scorsone: When did you say it's happening again?

Peggie Miller: This happens the 18th—wait, what's this weekend? I'm going the 17th, March 18th.

Kristyn Scorsone: Eighteenth?

Peggie Miller: March 18th, yes, 2017, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: What was it like to put that book together?

Peggie Miller: Well, it was a lot of photo shoots because you can see, and you look good, and everything looks right, but then somebody make a move. Then when you're doing group shots, and then somebody's looking, and then you think you've got the best frame. Then you look at that person. It was like, "Ahhh!"

Kristyn Scorsone: *[Laughter]*

Peggie Miller: Cuz it was like about 15 of my troupe.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay.

Peggie Miller: Yeah, so trying to get all that together was rough. You know Hanif?

Kristyn Scorsone: Who?

Peggie Miller: Hanif, he's a photographer. Anyway, he did the work for me. He's out of Newark, too, but we went to a public service building. We did shoots over there, and we went to parks. We went everywhere.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Was it all in Newark?

Peggie Miller: A lot of the work was in Newark, and then some of it I did in West Orange, when you go up by the mountain up there, the little part, [00:25:00] Eagle Rock or something like that. Yeah, so we did some shoots there, and we did over by the library, in the museum over by there, so a lot was in Newark and right in the park.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Peggie Miller: We did that, yeah, as well. The hardest part was just trying to get the right photos, and it was a lot of photo shoots.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Peggie Miller: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: How do you get published?

Peggie Miller: Well, what I did is, actually, because I had to copyright this stuff myself, so it was more so for me independently, I just sold it to family and friends. I did not put it in a bookstore or anything like that. We just sold it to family and friends.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Peggie Miller: Yeah, so it's was pretty cool when you go visit family or friends and you see that book up there. It's really hot. It makes you feel good, so I didn't push it any further. I just kept it local.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Is that your website then, PMP Enterprise?

Peggie Miller: PMP Enterprise, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Is that your company name?

Peggie Miller: The entrepreneur stuff is, yeah, it's one that I started. I haven't done work on it in a while, but, yes, PMP Enterprise, it was about the fashion. It was about *NMB*. It was about doing shows, so that's what that show was about, putting on music shows, invited guests, so yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: What does the "P" stand for? It's Peggie Miller, right? I guess for—

Peggie Miller: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: What is the other "P" for?

Peggie Miller: Yeah, Peggie Miller.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, it's just PM Enterprise?

Peggie Miller: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay.

Peggie Miller: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Then the women in the photoshoot, they were friends of yours, or how did you find them?

Peggie Miller: Yeah, friends from either hanging out and being in my life or church, or if I saw someone and if they were interested, I would let 'em know. Then I'm part of a fraternity, an all-aggressive fraternity called PLP, so I would get, some of the models came from there. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: What's the fraternity? Is that like a space, or is it like a club, or what is it?

Peggie Miller: No, actually, it's a fraternity. We do work for—let's say for Thanksgiving, we feed the homeless. We do marching for cancer, for breast cancer. We're out in Newark. It's Pi Lambda Pi. That's what the PLP is for, and it's all aggressive women, all aggressive women in that troupe, as well.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow.

Peggie Miller: My focus has always been on the aggressive women because I've never felt the aggressive woman got all the attention that's needed. Not only that, since we are always hid because of who we are. You know what I mean? You're aggressive, so sometimes it's not good remarks. I wanted to make sure we were shown in our best light. You know what I mean? That's why I love showing them or showing myself. I don't model, but I just put it together, showing how beautiful, that we are beautiful, regardless, and that we should be seen.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Peggie Miller: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: How long has that existed, the fraternity?

Peggie Miller: The fraternity existed—I've been in there for five years, so I'm gonna say probably like seven years total. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Who started it?

Peggie Miller: Three people, one named Killer, the other one named Chucky, and then the other one name is Kingdom, those three people that started the fraternity. I heard about it because I was going to church with one of them and they mentioned it to me. I was like, "Okay." You actually have do things like going through a fraternity. You have to wear certain things. You got certain colors. You would have to meet. You have to do all the things a fraternity does, and I found it to be a very good thing for me. I think it made me stronger. It helped me, and also let me know that I had another group of women that I could lean on if needed. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Is it kept secretive, or do a lot of people know about it?

Peggie Miller: No, it's out. I mean it's actually out there, and there are people that are—I mean, excuse me, there's a website. You can go to the website and take a look, so, yeah, it's not secretive at all.

[00:30:00]

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Peggie Miller: No, not at all.

Kristyn Scorsone: I didn't know. Sometimes you have to worry about people knowing things. Sometimes some groups are more—

Peggie Miller: No, cuz whatever is said in the group, it stays in the group, but still, we're are out there, and you know who we are. You know what I mean? Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's really cool.

Peggie Miller: Yeah, it is. It's super-cool. [*Laughter*] Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. What places in Newark do you associate with LGBT people?

Peggie Miller: The center?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Peggie Miller: Church. My own, there's a lot of people that are around me, of course, that are LGBT, so I'm always in the midst of it, any things that's happening in Newark, so just socializing. I was involved with the Queer Project in the beginning, some part of it, so my one part probably would be more the center. I do have a friend that takes the LGBT youth, I should say teenagers, anywhere from 18—or they might've dropped the age now. They're called Rainbow Productions. Yeah, so that's a home in East Orange, and what they do is, if they're looking for shelter, nowhere to go, kicked out their house—

Kristyn Scorsone: Elaine Helms?

Peggie Miller: Elaine Helms, yeah, very good friend of mine. Yeah, so that I'm part of, as well. I'm a part of a lot things related because it's who I am. Yeah, and a lot of stuff comes up cuz church is just church, but there are a lot of, of course, gay and lesbian, trans, it's all of us there. You know what I mean? Yeah, so we always have things that's going on.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Do you see Newark as having a lot of LGBT businesses?

Peggie Miller: You know what? That's a good question because it makes me think, and I'm sitting here to think to try to say how many do I know, right? There's not that many, and that I find sad because I feel that there should be more. I would love for that barrier to be broken more so there could be more businesses for us here. I can't think of how many is here, and I do a lot of things here in Newark, and it's not that many. There are, for the LGBT, there are ones who rent spaces to give parties, like Ms. Theresa. I know about her renting thing, but she don't have her own business. To actually have our own business, it may be a couple, maybe.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Peggie Miller: It's not that much.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you remember a magazine from the 90s called *New Jersey's Gay Black Woman*?

Peggie Miller: No.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, one of my professors has just photocopies of it, but it's just one issue, and Ms. Theresa's on the cover.

Peggie Miller: Oh, okay. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. That's what made me think of it.

Peggie Miller: Yeah. Ms. Theresa's been around a long time. In fact, when I used to give parties at a place in Newark, she used to come there. She'll give me my credit to say that I helped her get started, and she just took off, and she hasn't stopped.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Peggie Miller: I'm so proud of her because she's a hustler. She gets it done. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. What kind of parties did you throw? Was it like at bars or in your own home?

Peggie Miller: At bars. I would rent places. You rent places, and then you would charge to come in at the door. I was doing that. Hire a DJ so people can come out and just dance and socialize and catch up with friends they haven't seen in a while.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Was it for queer people or anybody?

Peggie Miller: No, actually, it was more for queer people. It was more for that. I did not close the door to anyone, but it was more for lesbians, actually, even though guys would come, but the majority of the

people would be lesbian. There would be a few men because, in Newark, men had their own place to go back cuz it was Murphy's.

Kristyn Scorsone: Right.

Peggie Miller: Even though some womens go there, but it was mostly men. That's why I wanted to do something for the women, so I started renting the spaces cuz we didn't really have a place, really, that we can go. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Mm-hmm. Did you ever go to Murphy's?

Peggie Miller: Yeah, I did. I stopped through there. Made some great drinks. I would stop through there, [00:35:00] like on a Wednesday night, or sometimes—I've been there quite a few times, and that's why I know it was mostly about the guys there.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you go to any other queer clubs in Newark?

Peggie Miller: There was Murphy's in Newark. There was one called—yeah, I did. The answer's, yes, I did, and I can't think of the other ones. Back in the day, it was down going towards Ferry Street, a little, small place, so, yeah, I've been there. Then there was a few that got started here on Broad Street in Newark. I went there, so, yes, I have. Yes, definitely.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was Zanzibar one of them?

Peggie Miller: Zanzibar was actually probably more for straight. There was a lot of straight clubs, but what people would do, like I did, they would rent them on a night, and then you could go in and bring in the

LGBT, so it would be your night. There, that's pretty much the way it was done. You may have a party, let's say on Broad Street, and then somebody else may give a party next week somewhere else, so there was never a single establishment where you can go every week and expect to have a party in the same group, no.

Kristyn Scorsone: Mm-hmm.

Peggie Miller: That was the thing, and it even was a thing in New York when I used to go to New York. It was group called Cinema Productions, which used to give parties in New York. They would rent different locations, so they would send you in the mail and let you know where the next party was gonna be, never for women that you can find just one location and give your fare.

Kristyn Scorsone: As an entrepreneur and in all the different things that you do, do you ever face challenges from other people, I guess, but based upon your race or your gender identity or your sexuality? Do you ever face, I guess, discrimination trying to do things?

Peggie Miller: Based on entrepreneurship?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Peggie Miller: Actually, I'm gonna say, "no," with that. I think I face that more with work, as opposed to actual business and everything because I'm a technician by trade, so I'm usually the only woman. Men look at me and try to figure out who I am, and it's not like I—I don't feel it's necessary for me to wear a sign and tell you who I am, so I always get that either from because I'm gay, and sometimes, in actuality, because I'm black, but never in doing

business. I would say I can't remember a time that happened.
Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Wow, that's really interesting. If you can stop doing your—
is it like a 9:00 to 5:00, I guess?

Peggie Miller: Yeah, I'm doing a 9:00 to 5:00. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. If you could stop doing that and just do like the restaurant
or do creating more fashion shows or books, would you do that
instead, or is it more, I guess, stressful doing those things, and it's
nice to have the security of a 9:00 to 5:00?

Peggie Miller: Well, for me, I'm a workaholic. I love to work. I think I just like
to have balance to do both. In all honesty, I would like to be able
to say, "Okay, I wanna work." That's why I'm doing contract
work, and I like that. Okay, I'm gonna do contract work for three
months. Then I could stop work. Then I can focus on doing some
of my passions, right? That's the ideal way for me to do it, and
that way, it gives me balance. I don't get bored, so I have the
best of both worlds, work a little bit, play a little bit.

Kristyn Scorsone: Mm-hmm.

Peggie Miller: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: A nice variety.

Peggie Miller: Yes, exactly. *[Laughter]*

Kristyn Scorsonone: Do you have anything like a mantra or a favorite quote or a motto that kind of gets you through when you're feeling super-stressed or you can't deal with what's going on? Do you have something that you tell yourself or you go by or do, I guess?

Peggie Miller: Everything with me is not quotes, it's songs. I would think of a song. It's like a gospel song I would sing. There's this gospel song that I love to sing called, "You Thought I Was Worth Saving," type of thing. There's another one called, "It's My Season and I'm Due." It's my time. It's my turn. Those things come to me more than quotes, but if there's any word, [00:40:00] and this is still a song, it's called determination. I'm determined to hang on, see where the end gonna be. I'm determined to keep reaching for my goals. Determination would be the word that I think fits me. I will never give up. You know what I mean? Another song comes up, and the thing is they come up. I'm so glad I made it. I've been through some things, and I made it through, so that what comes to me is more songs, as opposed to actual quotes. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsonone: Yeah. What's your favorite kind of music?

Peggie Miller: Actually, my favorite's gospel.

Kristyn Scorsonone: Yeah?

Peggie Miller: I love gospel. It talks to my soul. It soothes me. If I'm going through anything, I'm stressed, or whatever, I could play a gospel song, and it brings me back. It gives me that hope. It gives me that "Hang on, don't let go." Yeah, so gospel, number one, and then I love to dance, so I'll get my little dancing in, but gospel's number one.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Peggie Miller: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you have favorite artists?

Peggie Miller: A favorite artist for which?

Kristyn Scorsone: For gospel.

Peggie Miller: It varies cuz there's so many great artists that's out there, the Winans Brothers. There's Aretha Franklin. She even did gospel, which was good. Then I have—what's my guy's name? It's just so many, I can't even—Donnie McKirkland. I like some of his stuff. You know who he is? I like some of his music, as well, so there's a lot of artists. I can't even begin to even pick one. Marvin Sapp. He's big on my list though, Marvin Sapp. That's the name I was trying to get because he did a couple of songs that I really love and speaks to me.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Peggie Miller: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: What do you think—or do you feel successful now?

Peggie Miller: That's a good question. To be honest, no. I feel that there's still things that I haven't tapped into that would help me be successful. I feel I'm on the path to it, and the reason that I say that is because I have not honed-in on exactly what that success piece is. I feel

I'm getting there, so, no, I don't feel successful, and I don't want anybody to take me wrong. I'm truly grateful for all that I've accomplished and everything that I am achieving, but it's still not that successful thing for me where I know it's gonna be, *[deep sigh]*. I feel like I've still gotta be determined. I've still gotta keep moving if I want to be successful. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. Where do you see yourself in like five years from now?

Peggie Miller: Hopefully, laying on a beach somewhere saying, "I've made it," drinking some Coronas with my wife. She's finished school, and they're letting her do her thing. Hopefully, that's where it's gonna be, that we are just someplace comfortable and enjoying the rest of our lives.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you guys get legally married?

Peggie Miller: We got legally married. We got married December 31st, yeah, December. I just don't wanna quote it wrong cuz she gonna kill me.

Kristyn Scorsone: *[Laughter]*

Peggie Miller: The 24th. Sorry, babe. December 24th, we got married.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's cool.

Peggie Miller: Yeah, we got married, and it was really cool. We're still honeymooning, even though she killed me cuz I'm working in Connecticut, but, yeah, we got legally married.

Kristyn Scorsone: Just recently?

Peggie Miller: Yeah, like 2016.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, wow.

Peggie Miller: We got married by Pastor Kevin E. Taylor from Unity. Yep.

Kristyn Scorsone: In the church, were you?

Peggie Miller: No. We got married up in West Orange. There's this little restaurant up there called—I'm bad. I can't think of the name of it, but anyway, it's—do you know anything? It's the Boathouse, McLoone's.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay.

Peggie Miller: You know where that is, McLoone's Boathouse, in West Orange? That's where we got married at.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay.

Peggie Miller: Yeah, and she did such a beautiful job cuz our whole theme was based on a theory—not a theory. It was based on, “Not today” **[00:45:00]** because when we got together, you know how you go through things and everything, and I would always say to her, “Not today,” like we're not breaking up today, so the day's not today, right? When we got ready to get married and everything, she woke up, and she was like, “I know what it is, knot today, with K N O T,” so we built everything around “knot,” and it came out so beautiful.

She had on this beautiful gown, and in the back, she had the rope, so the thing with the knot. Oh, my god, it was just beautiful. Everything was just beautiful. We had a great time. We had good people there. My son was there, my daughter-in-law. A lot of nieces was there. It was really good. It was good. We had some good friends there. It was a total of maybe 80 people, so it was really cool. She loves to dance, so it wasn't like no seating, sitting down and eating dinner. Everybody pretty much just had the high tables, so you could just lean around the tables and have your appetizers. We based everything on appetizers, as opposed to actually having a meal. It was really cool.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. How did you guys meet?

Peggie Miller: At Diamondz.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, yeah?

Peggie Miller: At Diamondz, yeah, Diamondz N Da Ruff, yes. She happened to come through there with her sister one day, and I looked and saw this beautiful woman. I'm like, "Oh, my god!" She's very Afrocentric. She's got these locks, and they were high up, and she's slim and everything, and I just like, "Oh, my god, she's so beautiful." We just ended up really talking, being friends, and the next thing you know, we hit it off. I was determined, see? That determination got me because, at first, she was like, "No, no," but, yeah, and then we ended up getting married.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Peggie Miller: Yeah, really, cool.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you have your son with her or earlier?

Peggie Miller: No, my son is actually early. He was born in '72. Yeah, he's an old man, and I have two grands. One of my grands just turned ten yesterday, my granddaughter. Then I have a grandson who's 15. Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. That's cool. Let's see how we're doing on time. Do you feel any pressure to live up to normative ideas of success, like buying a house or getting married or things like that?

Peggie Miller: Well, no, because I did that when I was younger. I bought my first house when I was very young. I think I was in my 20s. I bought a house in Willingboro, New Jersey, and I currently have houses now. It's just something I want. I don't feel pressured by what other people have because that gets you in trouble. I just want to give me what I want, or what God allows me to have with that, so never been pressured, never.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. What does your favorite day look like?

Peggie Miller: Sunday.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Peggie Miller: Sunday because it's no work. I get up, I go to church. I get to spend time with my wife and with friends. We always do it after church, we get together. We'll go out to dinner, and then we talk, relax a bit, so Sunday is my favorite day.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Peggie Miller: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Is there anything that I didn't ask you that you wish I had asked you?

Peggie Miller: No.

Kristyn Scorsone: No?

Peggie Miller: No, I think you asked me a lot of good questions there.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Peggie Miller: Yeah, you're good. *[Laughter]* You're good.

Kristyn Scorsone: Awesome. All right, well, thank you so much. Thank you for doing this.

Peggie Miller: No problem. Thank you for thinking of me, and I wish you the best.

Kristyn Scorsone: Thank you.

Peggie Miller: All right.

[End of Audio, 00:49:25]