

**Queer Newark Oral History Project**  
**Interviewee: James Credle**  
**Interviewer: Candace Bradsher**  
**Date: February 15, 2015**  
**Location: Conklin Hall, Rutgers-Newark**

### **Interview Questions**

1. What is your full name?

**My full name is James Warren Credle**

2. What is your date of birth?

**My date of birth is February 7, 1945**

3. In what city and state were you born?

**Born in a little, it wasn't a city, it was a little town called Mesic, M-E-S-I-C  
North Carolina**

4. What schools have you attended?

**The first school I attended was Mesic Elementary School and then I went to Pamlico  
County Training School where I finished high school in North Carolina and I  
always note that it was called a "Training" school, that was the black school. The  
white school was Pamlico County High School, but the black school was Pamlico  
County Training School.**

5. What was the difference between the training school and the high school?

**Well the idea was that there were separate schools and there was a separate  
society at that time. It was the Jim Crow era so it was a separate society. To  
me, I mention it because it is very clear that that was a degrading, another  
degrading of black people in terms of our humanity that we were not capable**

of being in a high school. We had to be in a training school, that would be a training place as opposed to a high school. But anyway, that was in 1962.

Then I went to Rutgers in 1968 after I came out of the military and I went to Rutgers Law School for a year and that's been my education except for some other courses now and then and diversity training and my role as a Dean of Students to upgrade my skills but nothing as far as getting another diploma or another degree.

6. What types of jobs have you had?

My first job was with John's Bargain Store in Newark besides being in North Carolina. When I was growing up I used to work in the fields. I've primed tobacco, I worked packing cabbage and digging potatoes, and worked in the crab business picking crabs. Those were just things to make money and help the family out and keep me surviving during those days in Carolina. And my first job in Newark when I moved here in 1962, was at John's Bargain Store where I was a stock boy for John's Bargain Store right on Broad Street in Newark. It is no longer there of course. Then my uncle helped me get a job at the Lyons Veterans Hospital and from there I was drafted and I went into the military and when I came out of the military I went back to that job for almost a year and then I came to Rutgers and at Rutgers I was a work study student in the veterans office and then I became the director of the Office of Veteran's Affairs before I got promoted to a deanship by John Faulstich, Dean Faulstich, back in 1972 and I held that job until 2005 when I

**retired and my total time at Rutgers had been 37 years. Well, Rutgers, well Rutgers related things.**

7. What was life like for your parents and family?

**We were poor, but there were always the people down the street who were poor or less off than we. So it was that idea of us being a little bit better off but we never called ourselves poor or thought ourselves as poor, but we were. The idea was to always have food on the table if nothing else and to appreciate that we did have each other and did have family and the support of the community when we needed it and although we were in a segregated environment you were to do what you could to uplift yourself through education which my family pushed a lot and, of course, the church was the center of our activities.**

8. What is or was your relationship with your parents?

**I had a very close relationship with my mother. Less close with my father because I always thought that he liked my or loved my other brothers and sisters better than he loved me. So that was one of those things. And I actually at some level I felt a dislike for my father so strong that I would describe it as hate sometimes because I always felt growing up that he was not the man. You know, you had this John Wayne image of a father back then that was promoted and my father was a very gentle man. And so before**

he passed I got to tell him that I loved him and I began to, I appreciated him more at the end of his life than I did while I was growing up. And he used to say to me when he would be chastising me for something he called me “turkey strut” because I would hold my head up and walk away and he would say, “there goes that turkey strutting again”, but he was a caring man. I come from a very large family. There were fourteen of us. So we had a father who did the best he could under those circumstances. I loved my mother because she was the kind of person that I felt was more fair in terms of how she treated us. With my father, there was always the idea when he chastised you he would be the first one to pull out the belt and maybe hit you if he felt you deserved it, but if you yelled or screamed loud, he stopped and you would do that very often. But my mother she wouldn’t hit you very often, but when she did you deserved it and you got it! She was not playing. But yeah my mother passed when she was 89, just two days short of her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and my father passed when he was two days short of his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. So that was very interesting to me, that parallel with their lives.

9. You said there were fourteen children? How many boys, how many girls?

**It was split even, seven seven.**

10. And where are you in that?

**I’m sort of in the middle.**

11. Is there one you are closest to? Why were you close to her?

**Yes, my sister Lorraine. She was the next oldest. She protected me growing up because I was one of these kids that everybody liked to pick on because I was thought of as the sissy and that I was not the man/boy that I was. But it's kind of interesting because I was dealing with my sexuality which I didn't understand at that time. Because I knew very early on that I was gay, but I didn't know what gay meant. I knew it was different and in the church it was called an abomination for man lying down with man and that's what I felt like doing although I never did it with anyone. But, yeah, growing up that was something that I always thought about in terms of what to do with this feeling that I had and my sister protected me from the bullies of the school who picked on me a lot. But then I became very athletic and I became the best basketball player in town and the best scholar among the boys. I was the top of my class. Actually, the top of my class until my graduating year and so that was how I dealt with it. Because you were also appreciated for being a good student, but I also got appreciation for being the best athlete so that's how I dealt with this feeling of wanting to love and be loved by men or boys.**

12. So you say this was up until your junior year?

**Yeah, my senior year. Actually what happened was that the teacher, I graduated with a class of forty-two people and its in this community where we were. Mesic had always had the valedictorian or the salutatorian of the classes until my year and there was competition between me and two girls from another town. But their aunt taught at the school and I was taking French under her and she told my**

**mother that with basketball and all of that he was not doing as well in French and she gave them higher grades than me. And it is very interesting that I went to my class reunion, oh, I don't know, thirty years later, a long time later, and the one who won that award she told me out of the blue that, "James, you know you were the smartest person in our school". It's very interesting after all these years because actually I almost decided not to walk because I was so angry about that but I did walk in my high school. I remember it as leaving but my sister told me, "no, you didn't leave you did walk", but I remember myself not wanting to walk. I had forgotten all about that part of it.**

13. How does your immediate family feel about your gay lifestyle?

**My family I have never had to sit down and talk with them about my being gay. But as I have gotten older I had my first relationship which actually was with a man that I played basketball with here at Rutgers. We were together for several years and my mother and father came to visit and we had two bedrooms. They slept in one bedroom and we slept in another. When I went home with anyone my mother always said that this bedroom is for James and his partner, not James and his friend, but we never talked about it. But my mother did tell me at one point that "I feel that God gave you to me as someone special" and I know the reason why she said that was because I was the one in the family who could help out. Because all my other brothers and sisters were getting married or were having kids and I was the one who when I was in Vietnam I bought a home for my family because I knew that was what they needed and so I made arrangements that my payment from the**

**military would include the payment for the house. I wrote a letter to them and asked them to do that. So they worked out all of the paperwork and everything and signed for it. And so I bought a home for them and they lived in that home until they passed. And I was the one who organized things for the family. We will be having our 39<sup>th</sup>, 38<sup>th</sup> family reunion in May. We used to have it in September over Labor Day because of my father's birthday is on September 5<sup>th</sup>, but then when my mother got ill her birthday is May 25<sup>th</sup> so we moved back to having it on Memorial Day Weekend. So now we have it on Memorial Day weekend. My father died in 1990 and my mother passed in 2007. So that was the time we made the changes so that now we have our family gatherings, I am the one who organizes it. That was the point I want to make. I have been organizing the family reunions ever since they started.**

14. Do you go back home for those reunions?

**Most of the time. We used to go back to North Carolina, but now we are going to Virginia because my sister Lorraine lives in Virginia. She's been ill and having some problems with her weight and getting around and all of that. So last year we had it in Virginia and this year we will have it in Virginia again, but most of the time we would go to North Carolina.**

15. What can you tell me about your childhood, teen, and adult years?

They were growing in lots of ways. As I said early on it was being challenged by this idea of this feeling that I had with no one that I could talk to about it or what to do about it. It's wasn't as if I planned to be the best basketball player or the best student that just seemed to me to be the thing to do. I think it had more to do with the fact that I was instinctual about knowing that if I did these things then people would appreciate my skills, would appreciate me as an athlete and would appreciate me as a scholar rather than dealing with this side of me, that would enhance their feelings about me in such a way that all that other stuff wouldn't matter. And of course it also covered up the fact that I could be around the guys and be around folks and be this person that they saw in one light. It is kind of interesting though because growing up I used to hang out with my sisters and we talked about how cute the captain of the basketball team was and they never said "What? Why are you around here talking about that for?" We never had that kind of conversation. It was sort of natural for them that I would talk or feel that. That is why I say it is kind of interesting when we talk about acceptance they accepted that conversation from me and they never criticized or never called me on it and it was as if it was natural that I would be that way. You know what I am saying? But obviously in the church it was wrong or in other kinds of environments there was something about it that was bad or wrong, but they may have had their own issues about it, but they never confronted me because they appreciated the other things about me. That I was a decent person, they know they loved me and cared for me so being gay was something that was a natural part of me and why they couldn't condemn that, if you



see what I mean. When I look back on it that was a major part of the growing up process. That's why I say growing because it was growing to my understanding of life for me and growing for them to understand who I was in the context of this person that they knew as a scholar, or as an athlete, and this other side of me that they may have some religious or some spiritual or some problem with, but they were never confronting me about it in that way because obviously I would always have something smart to say to them about it. They wouldn't challenge me in that way, you dare not. They just accepted it and never condemned it.

16. What was your favorite childhood game to play? Why?

It was football, of course, because then I could throw the guys down and jump on top of them and they could jump on top of me. That was always the thing to play, football. Chile, let's play some football.

17. So you said that you were struggling with what it was you were feeling. What did you use as an outlet for those feelings or did you have anything or was it just the sports?

It was the sports and obviously doing well in school because it was challenging. It was also challenging to go to school and be on the bus and wondering why it is that we would be put on a bus and drive past the white school into the black school. Or we go to the city, which I didn't do very often, and there was 'whites only' at the water fountain or 'whites only' at the counter for eating and the issue was why? For me it was what's wrong with me? Why is my color so inhibiting that I can't be a true human being in terms of I can't even drink water from a fountain? They are marked 'whites' and 'blacks'. Or go to the white home of the people who lived

actually practically next door to us, but always around the back. But when I saw they had white visitors they would go in the front door. But we always followed the lead of my family and we would go in the back door. So those kinds of issues and then go to church and see this picture of this white God and then in some ways be told, that was what I was hearing, obviously, it wasn't necessarily what was being said all the time, but what I was hearing is, "Well, you have to suffer this part of your life while you are here and you will get your reward in heaven". And I was saying well, if I got to wait until then, why do the white folks have there's now and will get it later to? What's wrong with this? What's wrong with this picture? So all of that stuff was very challenging growing up. To try to find a place to feel comfortable about and to not stop you from doing the right thing or trying to be a good person. So that was the challenge, but I tried to meet that challenge although there were a lot of conflicts about that and particularly around this notion of white supremacy. Driving the buses, as I said, ride past the white high school and to the black training school and the counter where you pay the same price you got jeans or whatever or pants and you go pay and the whites go buy the same jeans and they can go eat at the counter. But if you want, you got to go in the back if you want a sandwich or something. They give you a paper bag. You have to go out or find some place down the street to eat and you can't to a place to eat and you can't sit at the counter. At the same time, there was no sense that we should challenge those things and I guess that was what is problematic. There was no sense of challenge at that time and, if you did, something would happen to you and your family.

18. Did you have role models – queer or not—that you modeled yourself on?

**Growing up I think it probably was my mother because she was such a strong personality for me. And then later on the first role model that I really had that I would call a role model was actually James Baldwin. Like when I read “Giovanni’s Room” and then I read “The Source” and actually The Source wasn’t by Baldwin, I forget who that author was. But Baldwin, when I began reading Baldwin, that’s when he became a very strong role model for me. But prior to then I suppose my role model was my mother growing up. It was her strength and her sense of fairness to her children. She was always the person the children in the neighborhood would go to if they had any problems or issues and they could talk to her about anything. And my grandmother was a very caring voice of reason. I guess that would be the two people I would think as role models growing up. And then when I read Baldwin, and that was by the time I got to Vietnam and all of that. So that was very much late in life that he became a role model.**

19. What was a typical outfit for you as a teen?

**A typical outfit was tight pants and tee shirts. Yeah, tight to show my body. But, yeah, that was it. Not, what should I say, nothing that would uncover my body, you know like to be shirtless or skimpy bathing suit or something like that. But tight pants and maybe tights shorts, but that was it.**

20. Growing up was there an outfit that enabled you to tell you who was queer and who wasn't do you think?

**Well I think that there is always the queer meter. I think one gets that instinct very early on. There were several guys who I felt were gay even in Vietnam and going to Vietnam and knowing that. But I never actually confirmed that, but there was a sense that there were others. Although I did have my first sexual experiences in Vietnam and on R&R from Vietnam. Well not in Vietnam, but on my way to Vietnam. So, yeah, there was some sense of that, but never to the point of always being careful of showing that to others because you could be, you know, ostracized and actually be given a bad discharge in the military. So I was always conscious of that. So I really never allowed myself to get too involved in that sense. Although as I said there were very intimate things that happened between the quietness of the late hours of the night on the boat to Vietnam. And then a friend of mine who became very close we went on R&R together to Tokyo and we had a sexual experience there and he wanted to have sexual experiences back on the base in Vietnam, but I wouldn't. So he decided he should go to another unit to get away from what was going on so that's what we did.**

21. You were drafted into the military. How long did you serve?

**Yes. Two years**

22. What was that time of your life like being in the military?

Well in the military, it was first the training and first being very leery of the idea of someone finding out that my feelings toward some of the men that I met there, but on the other hand having a very intimate and close relationship with one person in particular who was my buddy. And he was the one, as I said, we were very close from almost the first time we met at Fort Dix and went to Vietnam by boat and ended up, as I said, going to Tokyo. I think of him as my first lover actually.

Although he was married and had a wife back in Buffalo. And he wanted me to move to Buffalo when we got back so that I kind of could be his on the side and no way I would do that. I was too proud of myself to be in that kind of or allow myself to get in that situation. Being leery of that, but also more than anything it was like a lot of that stuff went out the window when you are being shot at, you know, in Vietnam and I was a combat medic. We went on S&D, search and destroy missions and a lot of the times being a medic it was taking care of people when they were hit and that was my deal with my unit. I didn't worry about killing people or shooting at people. I said well, I am going to be here for you. You guys do your job and I will do mine and my job is to take care of you if something should happen and so that became what I did. I took care of my guys.

23. Describe the experience of coming home after Vietnam?

Coming home from Vietnam it was like I was on an S&D mission in Chu Lai Province of Vietnam and we had what we called a newbie, a new fresh lieutenant and I was a medic and we were with a radioman and with him. And we had already

been told that the thing that the enemy would try to do would be to knock out either the medic, the radioman or the head of your unit which was the lieutenant in order to disable a unit. And I found myself separated from the unit and the three of us ended up going into a base camp that luckily had been evacuated a long time before we got there. And I always remember that because the next day or so from there I went back to the base camp, I got on the plane being shipped out, I got rid of everything that I had in terms of getting new stuff rather than the old stuff that I was using when I was out in combat, for the trip home on a plane. We went over by boat, but I flew back into the San Francisco Bay area. And as the plane was landing, I will never forget looking over that area, it looked like rice fields back in Vietnam. I said are they playing a game with me? We went all this way and look like we are flying over, landing in what looked like rice fields with the shape of the land, the landscaping and all of that. I got into the area there and the next day I was meeting my sister at the airport in Newark. So all of that happened within a 48-hour period. Being on the frontline in Vietnam and then being taken out of the military and on the streets of Newark in 48 hours. So that was my, if there was a welcome home, that was it. [Credle sobbing]

24. So did you get counseling? Just from Vietnam straight to the streets of Newark?

No

25. So is that what fuels you to work with Veterans today?

That's what fuels me to do the work that I do. [Credle sobbing]

26. Do you feel that black officers got treatment the way they should have or was it a long time coming for black officers to get treatment or do you know if white officers got treatment whenever they came back from Vietnam?

**No, no none of us got treatment. The whole movement for post Vietnam syndrome actually came about as a result of Vietnam veterans. We ourselves working with guys that I know from across the nation. We came together to talk about, with Dr. Robert Lipton out of New York, who was meeting with veterans and finding out this thing that was going on and if you look back in history you can read stories of armies of people coming back either in war or even during war or after war certain forms of behavior that was happening. In the French army or whatever army you want to talk about in World War II, go back to Napoleon when you read stories about the army in terms of the things guys were doing it is all post traumatic stress related. It was a new phenomena in the sense of naming it, but they used to call it a lot of other things like shell shock and all of that. What happened in World War II, there was less of it because you have to remember that these guys were in Germany, Italy and in the European theater and it was not this flight back, there was the boat back and it took months on the boat so they could talk with each other, play cards and really decompress from the war. But as I described to you, what happened to me, too many of us were on the front line one day and 48 hours, 24 hours later we were on the streets of our cities that we lived in or in the country towns that we came from and we didn't have any time to talk that out or to work through some of**

that stuff or just decompressing from this. I don't know if you have ever seen "Platoon", but one very important thing that he captured in that film was the idea that the soldier is out there and you see him stepping on a piece of wood and it cracks and that's the only sound you hear. And it sounds like a bullet thing and then that happened, but then he keeps on and it went on for several minutes that way but just think of that in several days that you are out doing that and you are waiting for the next step might be the step that you are in a fire fight or someone is shooting at you. So all that tension and stuff is something that that movie captured a lot. But that is the kind of tension that veterans deal with and are still dealing with in war time. That's what causes a lot of stress that they need to come down from and how you come down from it is through talking with other people who has been through those similar things that you have been through. That's the best way to get it done or with someone who is knowledgeable of it and will help you work your way through it. Also the guilt of killing or the idea that someone is shooting at you or you are shooting at them or a friend that you are standing next to you and his blood. For instance, when I was in my office one day, my office was in Blumenthal Hall as the Director of the Office of Veteran's Affairs and actually I had gotten my Deanship position by then. It was on Halloween or near Halloween I had left my office and when I came back, my secretary told me there was some guy in my office who needed to talk with me. And the door was open, but the lights were out and I looked around and I was wondering who was in my office, because I didn't notice that there would be anyone in there and she said there was someone in there.



But when I turned the light on, there was a student in there curled up in the corner in the fetal position and weeping. And So I went over and talked with him. And it turned out that he was a veteran in combat but he was in a class and a student walked in dressed up like someone had been shot with stuff coming out of his system like in a war situation. And what had happened was that he was standing next to his buddy who had been blown away and what he was doing was trying to push and wash the blood and guts and everything else, brains, everything that was on his body he was trying to wash it away from him. Because that moment he saw that it brought it right back to that point, but luckily he was able to collect himself enough to get to my office so that we could talk. And I was able to get him to what they had the Vet Center Program. At that time we went around creating a vet center in most of the major cities and a lot of major areas where veterans could go where they would have someone, counselors and others in that center who could help them with post traumatic stress and other issues related to being a veteran. And so that was the program that grew out of our post traumatic stress work over the years. But most of that work was done by veterans to actually make it happen and a lot of veterans that I met particularly in San Francisco were working very hard with trying to create a public forum where we could demand for such things to help us deal with post traumatic stress. We were able to get a lot of that work done through the vet centers and they are still around today. Some of them are still around, but there are not as many, a large number of them, some of them have closed, but there

**is still one in this area but I am not sure where it is, but there is still one for the greater Newark area but I am not sure where it is at right now.**

27. What do you think about gays and lesbians serving openly in the military?

**About time! They have been there all the while. So you know it is kind of stupid and even you know the idea of women in combat was stupid. When you have what is essentially a civil war, there is no front line and back line, there is no being in the front or being in the back line. There is a line there that all the enemies are on the other side. So once you get to that line you know you are going to the other side. That don't happen in civil war. Civil war means it's internal. It's all around you and women were serving in areas where civil war was happening so it is stupid to not think of them as combat, they were in combat all the time. So we have a lot of growing up to do in terms of dealing with those issues. But luckily we have been moving forward and it is about time. All of it is much later than it should have been, but we are hopefully getting it together.**

28. What do you think about the "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy?

**Stupid! I mean it was, all of it takes growth I think. The irony of it, when you really think about it, is all of the allies that we have Israel, the European countries all of them already have it. I mean if we have joint operations with any of our major European allies it would not have been unusual that a woman would be there or a gay person would be there. That was just some stupidity on the part of our military.**

**Particularly with Israel, their whole society has to be ready for war given the nature of where they are at and what they have to do. So it's kind of stupid to take so long to have to move to this.**

29. We talked about your arrival in Newark and working in the store. What else is an early memory of your time in Newark?

**Well, I can tell you it certainly was not about being gay. What I remember most about Newark growing up, at that point, was actually that I found it to be up south. It is amazing even now when you look at Newark and you look at the major cities in America or major urban areas of America it is all up south. Meaning that it is separated as its ever been. Our society is still a separated society and most of it is based on race and then, obviously, the other major thing is economic conditions, but first we begin with race and for a lot of people it ends there. That's as far as it goes because even people, well off black people, don't live in well off white neighborhoods they are in well off areas by themselves. I don't know. As a society I don't think we talk about that enough to work through some of the stuff that we need to work through in order to make this more of a society that is accepting of difference. It seems that even though the election of the president one would think that it would make a big difference, but I think what it has shown is the entrenched desire for separation that still exists in our society. It still dominates everything. I think what's going on with people who are willing for our economy and everything else to go to pot because they hate the fact that we have a black president. I mean that's**

amazing! That's amazing when our society was built on the nature of capitalism. That's amazing if you really think about it, that we have that much entrenched hatred. But the other side of it is ultimately what gets me to understand it is when you really look at the essence of it, it is not the hatred of blacks necessarily, it is really the love of white supremacy. That's what the struggle is about. How can we ensure that we as white men, and I say that specifically, white men stay in power. That's what it's ultimately about for them because if you look at the policies and all of that, they are stepping, shit, over the women while they are on their way. When you look at stuff, it's amazing.

30. How has Rutgers-Newark interacted with its gay community when you worked here?

Well, I tried my best. It was hard, but I did have a lot of support among people who knew me that included faculty, staff and students who knew me and knew of the work we were trying to get done. We tried to make it a safe space and at some level it was a safe space, but I think it is very difficult to make it a safe space when you have an environment of first and second generation people who are not out in their high schools, but come here and they find their family, cousin, friends, schoolmates in the same school and they are still not out to their family or out in high school and coming here and we say you can be out here. I find that to be a contradictory situation for them. How do you negotiate that and so at one point for instance we had a GALA group, Gay and Lesbian Alliance group, and its not called GALA now, back then it was, I forget what we called it, but anyway the gay group we had about

forty members and I would say that maybe fifteen of them were straight Latino women who were friends of their gay buddies, but they were in the group to help them. Because, you know, it was that kind of situation where they could come to the meetings but their gay buddies couldn't or wouldn't come to the meetings. So they were there to be there for them. So it was very interesting, but we tried. We did some things to try to open up the campus and I think at some level we were successful, but I think its getting better. All of that stuff takes time. The more people are out or the more gay people themselves are out the better it is on campus and in the communities.

31. Do you think there is anything different that Rutgers can do to make it more comfortable for people to be out?

I think they did that when they opened the office across the street. I think that was the thing to do. We had always wanted that kind of resource to be available. For most of the time that I was here I was very conscious of walking into a classroom and making sure that I would tell the students that when I walk into this classroom I don't come in here and say to you, hey, I'm your gay dean. That's not what it's about. What it's really about is your looking around you and not making assumptions about people and when you do find out that they are gay, appreciate them as individuals and as another human being. That's what it's really about. It's not about me coming in, because there are so many out there among you, and then they each other, who are gay or lesbian and are not open about it so you don't know

who you are dealing with in that sense so don't make the assumptions that we often make.

32. Was there particular music that spoke to you as a young queer person?

Oh, I love music. In my other life if you had asked me I would have been a dancer. I love dancing. Yeah, music I love. I love all kinds of music. Right now I can't get enough of Adele, "Adele 21". Ah, let me tell you. I played it this morning before I came here. That was my exercise, "Rolling in the Deep". But back in those days it was Elvis, I mean the twisting and turning, I mean, we loved that back in those days. It was also the bee bop, and we had the typical shack you may call it. You know, the corner place where people go in and play their music. And it was the sound of Motown and Memphis and all of those sounds that came out of music. So, yes, it was always a part of my growing up experiences. And then when I got of age it was nothing like going to the Garage. You know about the Garage? Girlfriend, can we talk? Larry Levan? Oh, you came to the right place! So yes, those were after I got older, but growing up I loved all kinds of music and dancing was the thing to do. In fact, I take claim and rightfully so that I taught my community how to Cha Cha Cha when it first came out.

33. What is your favorite song? Why?

Right now my favorite song is "Rolling in the Deep", but prior to that, what was my favorite song? What was my favorite song? HmMMM, that's, oh. What is my favorite song, hmmm, that's hard. It's so many. Nothing is more like Adele right now so I leave it at that.

34. Describe your most memorable date?

**Oh, my most memorable date. My most memorable date was with my husband that I married in Amsterdam and we were going to an ILBA an International Lesbian and Gay Conference in Paris, from Amsterdam to Paris, and by train and that was when we made a commitment to each other in 1990. JanHerman and I, we got married in 2003, two years before he passed. But, yeah, that was my most memorable date, on the train from Amsterdam to Paris at our commitment ceremony. And then it was having a couple of friends in my apartment at the Colonnades and the commitment ceremony was jumping the broom, so we had some friends around and we jumped the broom and had some toasts and all of that. So that was my memorable date.**

35. When did you come out? Why?

**I don't know if I ever had what you may say 'come out' as far as it goes as saying I'm coming out. I've always, I shouldn't say always but, I've never, let me put this another way, I feel as though I am always coming out because I am always meeting new people who don't know all of who I am. So I think coming out is a lifelong process, let me begin there. As far as coming out, I think I have always tried to live my life in such a way that people know all of who I am. And I am very open about my relationships, in particular, my relations with a significant other and I talk about it and I live my life in such a way that people quickly begin to understand that I am gay or I am a gay man. And so, in that way, I am always trying let people know all of who I am. Although I don't necessarily walk in and say, as I said, I am**

**your gay dean, or I am your gay neighbor, or I am your gay James Credle, no. You know, there are so many aspects to who I am that I feel can be appreciated that being gay is another part.**

36. What was your sense of Newark, were there places you could go, socially, as a gay person? Where were they? Can you describe them?

**Well, that was very limited. There used to be some bars around, particularly “Murphy’s”. You know about “Murphy’s”, did anyone tell you about “Murphy’s”? Yes, ok, “First Choice” used to be down in the neck, that was another place and then there used to be a place over in the north ward near Belleville that people used to go to and I used to go to. But for me, my first partner and I, Nick and I, we lived at the Colonnades and we had very close friends there, but New York was the place to go. And so I came out in a relationship. I was in a relationship when I was out in the gay community and when I learned about the gay community and I think that makes a big difference in terms of being out in a relationship. When you have in your private life friends who are gay and you have places to go with your friends in that gay kind of environment then you don’t go to bars or go to places necessarily looking for dates because dating is a very complicated and in some ways compromising kind of place to be. And I have never been in that place for long. Most of my relationships have been long-term. I was with Nick for eleven years, I was with JanHerman for fifteen years and now I have been with Pierre for six years. So most of my dating life as far as being in a relationship with someone and having a**



special other so I haven't had the need to go out looking. I found MACT New York when Nick and I broke up in 1979, no, in 1980 I found MACT New York and I used to go there every Friday night until 1990 and so having friends, and having people that I could be with in that kind of environment is what kept me going. But as far as having a special place in Newark it was "Murphy's" from time to time other gay spots, but never as far as going out to try to meet people for dating.

37. You mentioned it was complicated to be single, in what way was it complicated?

I think its complicated when there is not so many obvious places that one could go like in Newark, but also complicated because of the HIV situation that I became aware of and I think that so many other people may or may not be aware of it, but even when they are tend not to take it as seriously as they should. Even now I mean the rates among people of color is just outrageous, particularly blacks right now, and men and women. It's outrageous when you think about all of the information that's out there. And that was the reason why in 1990, as I said, I was going to New York but in 1990 I came to Newark to work in Newark because of that. Did I? I didn't tell that story did I? That we got a call from Pattie PenDavis? I just told it to someone else the other day that's why I was thinking I told it to you. But anyway, I was going to New York to be a part of Men of All Colors Together. Men of All Colors Together was created as black and white men together in 1980. It is now Men of All Colors Together, but there is national association called the National Association of Black and White Men Together. I said 1980, 1979 was when I first

went to MACT NY, but it was 1980 when we all got together from various parts of the nation and we all went to San Francisco and created the National Association of Black and White Men Together. It was started out as the international association, but once we applied for 501c3 designation it was determined that that was too complicated that indeed we would have to be a national association not an international association. And that group was committed to the concept of supporting men in cross cultural or diverse relationships and the issue of fighting against racism, sexism, and homophobia in our community and in our lives. So that's part of our preamble, part of our constitution. And I began that work through BWMT NY. We used to have, and it still does, its still around, this year marks the 33<sup>rd</sup> year. I am one of two people who have attended all of those conventions. This year's convention will be in Columbus, Ohio and let me tell you that I have decided that I want to have the 2015 convention in Newark, which will be the 35<sup>th</sup> year of the association. So I am working on that now. I just got support from the Commission, the LGBT Commission. Anyway, let me get back to telling this story. The group, we did our work through CR sessions, CR sessions is consciousness raising. Where we talk about a topic. It could be on the issue of race and racism, or it could be on the issue of sex and sexuality, or could be on the issue of gender and working with women and all that kind of stuff or it could be on a multitude of issues, but the idea was to have intimate discussions over these issues and we would have people, very good writers who would come together and write about what those discussions contained and then we would meet at the end of the

month on Monday and Tuesday in New York and we would do our newsletter . We would share that newsletter with people like James Baldwin, Bayard Rustin, Audre Lorde, Cherrie Moriaga, Adrian Rich, Cheryl Clark, Judge Bruce Wright, Essex Hemphill was one of our members at one time. Joseph Bean was a member. He was a San Francisco member. Joseph Bean was a Philadelphia member, Phil Wilson is an LA member, Marlon Riggs is a San Francisco member. All of those people have at one point been a part of or talked to our group in one way or the other. In fact, James Baldwin made his first presentation to a gay group and that was us in New York, MACT NY. Our strategy was to share those intimate discussions with those people and with the community at large and with each other and the idea was that when we reached out to them they would come, Barbara Smith, and speak without charging us anything because they knew we were the group that was about doing some work on these issues. So that was in 1980 when I became a part of Black and White Men Together and then in 1990 we got a call from Pattie PenDavis here in Newark calling MACT NY because she knew of the work that we were doing around HIV and she said there were too many people in the community of Newark who were dying and they were not getting the information around HIV and the group decided that Eric Perez and I. Eric is a Hispanic brother and I, who were members of the group at the time, that we would come and do a workshop at a local bar that Pattie organized. And so, at that point, in 1990 I decided I needed to move back to Newark that I didn't need to be going over on that subway, that there were too many people in Newark getting sick and dying. So I worked with Barbara

Ford to write a grant to the state that was monies coming from Washington, the CDC, where we did what we called home health parties with people teaching them about how to be safe and doing safe sex practices. And that project was called Project Fire and it started around 1992 and it went for ten years until the federal bureaucracy told us that our way of doing the work in terms of our home health parties was not getting enough feedback that we actually couldn't show that we were having people change their behavior. So they were doing more quantitatively looking at how people were changing their behavior. So the funding ceased to be available to us for our work. But we were written up in the *Trenton Times* because they claimed that we were buying wigs and stiletto heels for our group and actually what we were doing we had started balls. We used to have a thousand people who came to our balls. At our balls we would ask people, the houses, do you know houses? Do you know the house community? Well, the houses would be in competition around a safer sex message and we would provide money for them in terms of who did the best safer sex message in terms of a presentation by a house at a ball. But the point was the money came from ticket sales and came from money that we had raised and we never used a dime of any monies that we got from the federal bureaucracy to do that work. But, of course, it gets all, the health department and the state didn't want to have anything to do with us after that in terms of HIV. And so it was very successful and if you ever want to see, I still have tapes from the balls, a whole list of tapes. But, yeah, we had some great things done

during those times. So that's how I came back to Newark and started my work in the gay community.

38. Were you impacted by the AIDS crisis? How? Who?

Luckily I have never tested positive and for ten years I was part of a study group back in 1982 while I was a member of, while I was actively involved with MACT NY. Dr. Goudart who was the husband, of the friend, of the girlfriend, of a buddy that I knew from the veterans movement who knew I was with this group in NY of gay men and so his girlfriend who was the girlfriend of the Dr. Goudart got in touch with me to see if I could set up, if I would work with them because they wanted to do a cohort study of gay men in New York. Around this, at that point it wasn't HIV, we didn't know it was. All we knew was that gay men were dying. So in 1982 I worked with that and we had sixteen guys and it was still Black and White Men Together at that time and I was one of the sixteen who consented to coming in, meeting with Dr Goudart, going through our tests and then reporting back to him. Any questions that he had around our sexual behavior we had to answer. So, to tell you the truth, I think that that's what helped me stay negative because that was about the same time that I was sort of free in a way. Because Nick and I had broken up, I was with this new group, I was meeting new people, I wasn't necessarily dating one man at that time. But knowing I had to report my sexual behavior, of course, honey, I was not going to be a whore. So I was going to report and I was going to tell him the truth and actually I think that may have helped me stay. Because at that point, we didn't know that, "on me, not in me unless you are in me with a

condom". We didn't know all of that. All we knew was that this disease, it was coming, probably from sexual behavior, but we weren't sure, maybe even just kissing would give it to you. We didn't know at that time. That's how I got involved with HIV. And then, as I told you later, I worked with the, I came to Newark and started the Project Fire. Again it was working with HIV, but why the tears I shed is so deep is that the memories is not only of so many young men in particular that was lost in Vietnam, but also the young men and women and all of that were lost from HIV over the years. That's why it is so deep. I feel that I am the survivor of a generation, two generations, three generations of people who died needless deaths to stupid shit that was going on in our society. Sending us to a war that we didn't need to fight, being part of a people who had a disease and because of who we were we could not get help from our government because supposedly the disease was coming from us and was limited to us. So, on the one hand I feel elated that I have survived, but on the other hand I feel so pained by the losses. We can't bring those people back! They had so much to contribute to our world. But we can't bring them back! [Credle sobbing, we took a break.]

39. How do you feel about politicians?

Ha, ha, ha politicians. Oh, how do I feel about them. Basically, I mean the reality is we have to deal with them and some of them you accept as far as their being on the right track and as far as really caring about other human beings and obviously others who just care about winning the next election. And I think that too often what it ends up being for too many that its about winning the next election rather

than doing the right thing to benefit the society or benefit those who most need it and I think that too many of us because we can throw that term politician out there and sort of give them an excuse, we allow that to happen rather than call them to task. Because ultimately its all about them doing the right thing to benefit the society, that's what we got them there for and they can get away with it because we don't hold them to task. We don't push them to do the right thing. I guess my problem with a certain level of politician is that some don't seem to know what is the right thing. Seems to me that I guess that's part of what it is. Because you also have to look at the way they are looking at it. When they look at it, it is so different from you that they come out the other side and that to me is what's so troubling. Too many instances it seems too clear cut to me that there is no way. For instance, this notion of automatic rifles in the hands of people who supposed to be about guns to protect themselves and who needs an automatic rifle to protect themselves, you know, unless they are in another world, and I guess that's what it is, in another world about needing that kind of protection. I guess that's what it is because I don't see it. They have this notion that somehow someone is going to come to their neighborhood with their automatic rifle and do something to them. Where by the most part anyone who does that is from their own neighborhood. It is not me or you. It seems that when they talk about it, they talk about it as if you or me or someone like us is going to go to their neighborhood, as if they wouldn't spot us coming before we get there to stop us. You know what I am saying? And you know this whole illusion is sort of crazy, it becomes crazy. So politicians I am trying to

**learn to like some of them much better than I do. Let me put it that way. Because It just seems to me that too many of them decide that they want to win the next election rather than do the right thing to help them win the election that people will favor me if I do the right thing.**

40. Since President Obama's first election do you think anything has changed for the gay community? Has it done any good for the gay community since his first election?

**Things have changed a lot for the gay community since his first election and I think a lot of it had to do not necessarily with him, but the evolution of the American society. I think that so many people have begun to recognize their own families, their own relatives who are gay or lesbian or out there who are in this world and they don't see them as a threat to who they are anymore. So therefore they can be more accepting of them, but on the other hand I really question the gay community's commitment, at least the, let me put it plain here, the white gay community's commitment, to human rights. Because I think that was a mistake that was made years ago that is still yet to be corrected. I think the larger gay community, meaning the white gay community, is still about gay rights rather than about human rights and I don't know if they will ever make that shift. And that was one of the things that we struggled, we meaning others of us who have tried to be a part of. If you notice most of those gay groups whenever you see even people who call any of the people who are involved with the struggle here in New Jersey, they seldom call any people of color who are head of groups like people here in Newark, they always call the Garden State Equality, but most of us who are**



involved with the struggle in terms of LGBT its not about marriage equality. That's way down our agenda, our agenda is about survival of our youth, for one thing, what about HIV still is a major issue in our community, and so again until we get that shift as far as the gay community being committed to human rights, which is untrue for Europe. That was one of the reasons why I worked with the ILGA they have always been in the forefront of dealing with not only lesbian and gay rights but human rights. They have been out there making sure that people in their community was familiar with the struggle and the death and dying of people in other parts of the world who was struggling for lesbian and gay rights and being supportive of them in that struggle. But we haven't been that here in America. We've been very closed and focused on LGBT rights strictly here in the US and not necessarily in terms of the broader implications in connecting with the larger struggle in the world for human rights. And, one example of that, certainly would be the apartheid struggle. A lot of us got involved with Simon Nkoli you know Simon? You never heard of him? Simon was a gay activist in youth and was in jail with the ANC members during the apartheid struggle in South Africa and some of us wrote to Simon when he was in jail and he shared his letters and our communications in support of him and the struggle against apartheid with the ANC members while they were in prison. So what happened was that once they were out and once the apartheid was no longer the rule of law in South Africa their constitution now has a provision for accepting of lesbian and gay rights as part of their constitution. And we see that as a direct consequence of Simon sharing letters

**with the ANC members and them seeing him and other of us as not just strictly for lesbian and gay rights, but for human rights because we were fighting against apartheid in South Africa. And that's a crucial connection as far as I am concerned as to why it is that South Africa is one of the few nations in the world that has in its constitution protection for LGBT people. And I was able to help arrange for Simon to do a speaking tour of the US after he got out of prison so I have tapes of him being here at Rutgers.**

41. Generations see gay identity differently. Do you see a generational difference between youth today and youth when you were growing up? What do you see?

**Basically I see the technological age, basically. That's the major difference and what a difference. I think the good parts of it is obviously we can communicate and they can communicate with each other quickly and they can share the good and the bad, but too often to me the bad has been about them becoming less involved with communicating to each other on a human level and understanding life and understanding and sharing life in such a way that they become more involved with the humanity of each other. I think that technologically there is a distance that you can get yourself involved with that will place you in a situation where you can be and act less human or less with a sense of humanity toward others in this technological age and I think that that's going to be detrimental in the long run. That's what I sense about not just the LGBT community but everybody in general because I think people get caught up in this and the technology becomes the human**

**life that they lead rather than a part of helping them understand human life better so they can react and deal with things in a more human way and I think there is a big difference between reacting and acting in a human way than there is from being human.**

42. Do you practice a religion? Why or Why not?

**I don't practice a religion. But I am still tied to my Baptist roots and ultimately I still have a belief that there is a higher being although I have learned not to describe it as a god. I sometimes describe it as a goddess. Because I think that it is too structured on the continuation on this patriarchy and this white supremacy that I can't support anymore. And as far as me personally, I say my prayers sometimes and I go to church, but when I go to church it is in my home. And I think that one can have a place of spirituality wherever they are at and not necessarily in a place of worship per say. You can make your home or your space a place of honoring something higher than you are or higher than a human being. And I stopped going to church when I went to funerals of people who had died of HIV and their partners were sitting in the front seat of the church and no one mentioned their relationship or mentioned the fact that that person was gay and they talked about their lives as if that part of their lives was never there and never a part of who they were with their partners being right there. So I stopped going to church and I stopped going to services. If I went to anything it was a commemoration after the person had passed that the community itself organized and I still maintain that except a courtesy from time to time of a friend that I have known for a long time that has passed. I may go**

**if I don't know of other commemorations. I may go to that service. I try to leave or not be involved with much of it if I feel that they are not being honored for the true nature of who they are and not this image that people still want them to have even in their grave. So the answer is no and no. No, I don't go anymore and no I don't have any religious affiliation per say although I am still very deeply Baptist oriented, Southern Baptist oriented I should say.**

43. Do you feel that there has been any progress on gay rights in this country?

**Oh yeah, lots of progress on gay rights. Yeah. I think this military response to the issue of the military became a crucial part of that. The fact that we have more and more gays and lesbians being elected in crucial positions of our government all levels, local, state and national as far as congress goes. Still there is a lot more work that needs to be done. Yes. I will leave it there.**

44. What issues do you think are important to the gay community now?

**I think there certainly is a difference between what is important to the white gay community and what is important to the people of color community. It would be great if it was more cohesive but it has never been cohesive so I don't see that happening anywhere in the near future. To the white gay community I still think that their primary stuff is the notion of marriage equality and equality perhaps in other arenas. But for the people of color community it is issues like poverty, jobs, although jobs perhaps also here as well, jobs more crucially for people of color, HIV**

health issues, immigrant gay community, immigrants and what's going to happen with that. I am going to also push hard for us and the people of color community who are in our gay organizations to begin to acknowledge in more concrete form the fact that the Congressional Black Caucus has consistently supported issues around LGBT concerns over time and have never been given credit for that. Although we tend to now look to Obama, but if you look to the history of the Congressional Black Caucus you will find that it has consistently supported the issue of human rights versus gay rights for gay people and gay people have never acknowledged that on the other hand. I think that's why I am separating this and as people of color we have to acknowledge that for those who have done that work even if the larger gay community never does.

45. If you had your life to do all over again, would you change anything?

Oh, there is so much I would change. If I had, see, that's complicated because you know changed life for me would be eliminating the reasons for the pain that I feel so that's kind of a very tall order. Because it means not having the wars we had, not having people treat HIV as a disease of a particular group of people, rather than a healthcare concern for all Americans that kind of thing. So, yeah, those things to me is what I would change mainly because they have left so many dead and dying. If we could change that, child, we are talking about a whole new life for all of us because those people would be here now contributing. Can you imagine if we still had Essex Hemphill and Marlon Riggs and James, well James Baldwin, didn't pass from HIV, but all those people who passed? You know, all those brothers and

sisters who died in Vietnam? Oh, boy, life would be so different if they were here. So, yeah, that would be kind of a very tall order for me. As far as my personal life, I wouldn't change it because I appreciate what it has done to help me understand the world in the way that I understand it and to be able to share that in ways with others who I felt along the way who have appreciated it in terms of feeling that they have learned something from my experiences that they could share with others and help them personally, as well as helping others. So in that sense, I wouldn't change it because I think I have learned so much. I think pain helps you learn a lot. What can I say, elements of pain help you learn a lot and that's not even counting the personal pain of the loss of people like JanHerman Veenker my husband I mean he was a great man, he really was, who did a lot. He was the person who was the voice of the International Lesbian & Gay Association for such a long time. He was such a gentle, caring man. I mean I didn't even know he was a doctor until after we were preparing the obituary because he never expressed that. He had gotten his doctorate degree and he was well known in the Netherlands for his work. The Queen had given him this, in fact I got it. I don't know, I should pull that out. The Queen had given him what is equal to a knightship for England, and they gave it to me, but in case I pass I got to make sure it gets back to the Queen. That's how they handle stuff like that. So, it's been interesting, an interesting world. You know I should say something about that too. For a long time gay people had decided that there was no reason to be tested because it didn't help to know. The only thing basically you could do was they would give you this medication that would kill you

so why even do that. But one of the reasons why JanHerman and I also felt that we didn't want to marry was because, and that's is one reason why I won't marry in the US, is that I don't feel that marrying in the US, and it may be part of the question that you asked me before, is that I will never marry in the US because why marry in one state when you go across you know 200 miles, 300 miles in another state and that's not recognized. So if I marry again, I would marry my partner Pierre who is Canadian. And when I married JanHerman, we married specifically he felt that that would clear up any issues around what he wanted to happen to his, anything that he wanted to leave in life he wanted to make sure that there wouldn't be any problem. So we got married. Part of the reason we got married the other thing was we thought it was time because we had been together like seven years? 1990? No more than that, we had been together 1990 to 2003, thirteen years. And so we had decided that it was time. But my point though is that I am now receiving his pension, but I pay American taxes on his pension, although my marriage to him is not legally recognized in the US. So take a deep breath.

46. What do you do for fun?

Right now I don't know if you know about me, but I love cooking. So I cook for fun. I used to cater from time to time. I still do from time to time. In fact, I am waiting now for a high school that I've done catering for them for about five years now on Black History Month. I do soul food catering for them for Black History Month for 100 people. But the largest catering I did was the thousand people that we used to have at the Robert Treat for the balls. We used to have food available so we felt

that was also part of it so people could have dinner and enjoy the balls. That was the other reason why people came to our balls so they could eat, enjoy the music and the dancing and do what people do at balls and see the competition. What else were you asking me now? What I do for fun? I am an avid sports fan. So I love all kinds of sports. Last night I watched the two basketball games. I am an avid a television fan so there are several shows I watch, like Scandal. Child, child, child, child, child!! They better stop those sex scenes between Mr. President and Miss Girl. He done pulled those draws off too many times!! Ah, Mr. President, ooo, honey, honey, honey, oh, on the president's desk, in the corner, and last time was in the storage room. I said child they need to quit! They need to quit! True Blood is my other favorite. I love True Blood. Suits is now pretty nice, I like that to Suits, True Blood, Scandal, and my basketball, football, I'm a Giants fan, basketball I am a Celtics fan. And people want to knock me out of the park with that one. How can you as a black man enjoy the Celtics. and all I say to them is Bill Russell, Sam Jones, KC Jones, Sash Sanders, OK? Eight titles in ten years ok? Don't go there, leave me alone and then they shut up. Until I meet my friend Gavin who is a Laker fan. They are trying to get to seventeen because they are at sixteen now if they get one more they will tie the Celtics for the most ever, but I don't think Kobe is going to get it this year. I hope not anyway, I'm praying. I love football. The Giants are still my favorite team. I like soccer. I watch that once in a while. I watch the Rangers last night. Oh, they were terrible. Had two goals to nothing and end up losing 4-3 in a shoot out. I said, child! And what's crazy about this is we got the Devils right down



the street but I was a Ranger fan before the devils even thought about being born. So how can I going to switch allegiance? Sorry, sorry, I was for the Devils on the sideline, but when it comes to the rangers vs. the devils? Sorry Devils. I am still a rangers fan. you are here in Newark, but I'm sorry. Baseball, I like the Dodgers although they moved from Brooklyn. My father loved the Yankees and I am so thankful that when he and his mother came up a friend of mine and I took him to Yankee stadium and I will always appreciate myself for doing that for him although he was huffing and puffing in his old age to climb up those steps because he didn't know it wasn't like sitting in your front seat in front of the TV. You could hardly see because I didn't get great seats, but I thought they would be good enough. After huffing and puffing up there he said, Oh well I've seen Yankee stadium that's enough for me. But he did get a chance to do that. Yeah, I'm just a sport nut. What can I say. I grew up and that became my outlet being an athlete and I still am. My mother used to tell me that when I could hardly walk and really would crawl up to the table and grab her by her apron and then grab the table and she used to shew me away cause I was always was wondering trying to see what she did in the kitchen. So I guess my interest started very early in cooking and then I learned some things from her. one day I decided would make supper. And my favorite was great northern beans and I made some biscuits, but I forgot to put baking powder in. So my mother had to make the biscuits again when we got home, but she appreciated that. The beans were good, but the bread was like bricks, honey! OK? Sorry mom I forgot to put the baking powder in the biscuits, but I was

learning how to cook and I still enjoy that. Travel, I love traveling although I am not a plane person. Flying is out of the limelight. I've had to travel a lot because both my partners, well except for Nick who lives right in the house that I live in now or in the apartment with me now. I used to travel to Amsterdam at least three, four times a year to spend some time with JanHerman and then Pierre was in Salt Lake City, Utah where he worked as a, he does special effects for games and so he was doing that until last year they laid him off so he came back home and now he is a caretaker for his 92 year old father. So he is in upstate NY which is Now is a six hour drive rather than a five hour flight. So that's good. I still like to travel and we do travel. I was up to Montreal for my birthday on the seventh of this month and I also sort of kind of celebrated Valentine's Day because I had to get back for a commission meeting. His sister lives in Montreal, an hour out of Montreal. O I did do that travel up to Montreal to spend some time with him. and his sister took his dad for a couple of days so we could hang out in Montreal. Although it was freezing up there like eleven below or eleven above? Whatever, it was cold! But they have underground shopping so we didn't have to go outside, so that was nice. Plus I had my bad boy coat. I have a mud cloth coat with a lining and you put it here and it goes all the way. I have to play queen cupid because I have to hold my coat up to step. So I have to play queen cupid sometimes. Sort of like this. I got this from South Africa in 1996. Gavin told me we went there. And I kept it until, over the years I had a friend of make different pieces and these are the last of my pieces. I bought them and I just put them aside and then every couple of years I come out

with a new one. A friend of mine, who is one of the members of the houses he does excellent work. Like this is both sides I can wear it on either side. So anyway, that's something, I love clothing, African centric clothing. I started doing that when I came back from South Africa in 1996. Because I had bought a lot of things there on that was on the cheap. I was wearing the kufi, then I started Afro-centric because I don't like ties, honey, honey, honey. I haven't worn a tie since 1996. So, that was the reason for that. I didn't like this thing choking me. I prefer to be loose and allow this stuff that's spreading that I should stop.

47. Where is your favorite place to go? And how often do you get there?

Ooo, my favorite place to go? Hmm. My favorite place to go? I guess it is, it must be one of my favorite places because I still go there every year. I go to Amsterdam every year. Yeah, yeah, I love Amsterdam still. My family is there now so that gives me an excuse. I go there late November through early December and I take lots of Christmas holiday gifts for them so that's been fun and I still do that.

48. What do you think about this Queer Newark Oral History Project?

Oh, I think it's wonderful. I just wish there was other ways that I could support it. I keep dreaming that one day I will win the lottery then I can spread some money around here and there, and all of that, but that's just a dream. I still try though. They say you if you're not in it you can't win it. And I believe that. But one of these days I am hoping I will win a little bit and that I can spread the wealth. But, yeah, I

**think its' great thing and I just hope that we can find a way to keep it going because there is more history to be made and its great that we are getting a chance to share it because a lot of our history is lost and never to be able to be found again because the people who experienced that history are not here to share it with us so where we can it is great that we are doing it and not allowing that loss to continue.**

49. Was there a person who you would want to say "thank you" to for helping you along your life's journey?

**Well there are several persons I would say thank you. First would be my mother and I also would thank my father and my grandmother. And for those most recently besides John Faulstich Who I think, there are so, so many people child I just can't say one. Because first there is John Faulstich who saw something in me that he, I was a work study student as I said I had decided that I didn't want to be a lawyer. Once I found out that being a lawyer was not about who was right or wrong, it was who argued the best.. So I said oh, child, honey, I would be putting a lot of my folks in jail if they were wrong. Because I couldn't go for that one because I couldn't argue them out of jail because, oh, no, no, no. I decided I couldn't be a lawyer because it does not fit my sense of right or wrong. He actually chose me to be the director of the Office of Veteran's Affairs which was a critical point in my life if that didn't happen a lot of the other things that subsequently happened like meeting Janet Foster who worked at the Urban League at the time who talked with her boss who she later confided to me that he said well, what do that fag want when**

I and several other veterans were sitting outside of his office asking him to sign on to continue the grant that was being sent by the us conference of mayors to Rutgers to do our work with veterans. But he did sign on, she got him to sign on so without her we would not have been able to continue the program until the university until John Faulstich appointed me one of the deans in his office. And then along the way JanHerman Veenker who I met at a conference in 1982 in Washington at the National Association of Black & White Men Together, and we formed a relationship where I got to know and travel with International Lesbian and Gay Association around key parts in Europe learning more about issues of LGBT concerns from a worldwide perspective as opposed to just here in the US where we were struggling. I had several gay groups who asked me to get involved with them, but every time I went there it was about an agenda I considered to be mostly just about white and not necessarily inclusive of people of color and I didn't see a need to support that by my presence and my work because I was much more about a larger agenda which they didn't seem to be concerned about. And I tell you, a couple of times during our discussions particularly in Los Angeles, in Orange County, when we were meeting on the Gays for Jackson campaign and we were told by the folks there that we didn't have any input as far as the planning for the march that we were going to have that we didn't have any input on the planning because they had the money and they were the ones providing the money so we had to come together and set up a separate kind of speaker thing that included people of color that we felt had something to say about what was going on. Actually literally a couple of friends of

mine went outside and we cried. Because it was such a heavy duty thing to hear them say to us we don't need your input we got the money you don't have nothing to say. Oh, child, child, child, child, child. Uh!! Anyway, what am I talking about? I am talking about folks who helped me along the way Janet, and then JanHerman, ILGA. Yeah, I will leave it at that. But there has been lots of other people, yeah, lots of other people. Without Mitchell Karp. He's my friend since I met him during my first year at MACT, he's a long time buddy of mine and my roommate now Rev. Don Ransom who I met as part of MACT. A lot of it now has been people I've met that way and of course lots of buddies from the veterans movement. James Deal, Jim Pechin, Cecil Byrd, oh, so many people. I just can't name one. How many did I name, twenty? I think that without people's help along the way I never would have survived. Lots of people in NJ who helped us with the agent orange commission. It was just fascinating. I mean I cried when I heard Obama talking about things he had been doing and he mentioned the fact that the VA was now providing support for veterans who were affected by agent orange and I didn't know because we had struggled with that for years and years and years. Because I was vice chair of the group here in NJ Governor Florio appointed me to be Vice Chair of that because we were doing the work of trying to push for veterans who were having all these problems or issues.

50. Do you have any words of wisdom for the next generation?

**Six words, don't ever forget the struggle continues. I think if people keep that in mind. What it infers is that people should have a sense of their roots, have a sense of their history and they should have a sense that no matter how many battles you fight, you may have to fight that same battle again because the war isn't over. And one great example of that is voting. Who ever thought that this time in our history that we would have to a 102 year old woman having to stand in line for eight hours to vote? The struggle continues.**

51. What would your dream or aspiration be for the LGBT community in the future?

**My dream and aspiration would be that we would have a greater understanding of its never been about lesbian and gay rights, its been about human rights. Once we have achieved and gotten a level of commitment and involvement for being better at human rights then the natural flow would be lesbian and gay issues would be a part of that struggle as well rather than the other way around. Because it never could be the other way around. Because when you talk about lesbian and gay rights you are only talking about a specific segment of the population and when we have so much of our population who don't really know in any particular time that they are gay or lesbian then you are always going to leave them outside of that struggle. And we need everybody in the struggle so if you struggling for human rights then all of the other can be under that.**

52. Any last comment you would like to make that we haven't covered?

**Nothing comes to mind. I think we hit the major highlights that's for sure. We hit a lot of stuff that brought back lots of memories are still embedded there and didn't realize that I was going to be so emotional today, but it flows and I allow it to flow and that's how I survive. That's been my savior, my joy is to be able to let it flow.  
Life's too short**

Thank you.