

Queer Newark Oral History Project

Interviewee: Walter Newkirk

Interviewer: Whitney Strub

Date: February 26, 2018

Location: Chatham, NJ

*Whitney Strub:* All right. We are recording. This is Whitney Strub with the Queer Newark Oral History project. I'm here in Chatham, New Jersey. It's February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018. I'm with Walter Newkirk in his apartment, and I'm gonna set the recorder over by you, Walter. That should pick up fine, and thanks for doing this. I wanna begin just by saying this. Normally, we ask for a full life story, but because you've written your memoirs, *The Secret Life of Walter Newkirk*, your memoirs are available for anybody to read, and so my vision was a sort of targeted stroll through some of the highlights here that I wanna ask you about and then talk about Newark a bit, and then kind of—from there, whatever you want. Let me see. In the introduction—I kind of loved the way you begin. You describe the book as, "If you like movies, *The Secret Life of Walter Newkirk* is a little bit *Girl, Interrupted* with some *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Valley of the Dolls* thrown in."

*Walter Newkirk:* It is, though, isn't it?

*Whitney Strub:* That, I think, was the perfect description, and I think—I wanna come back to the topic of movies because they figure kind of prominently in your life, but to get started, just say a little bit about your family background. We like to collect a little demographic information and geographical—

*Walter Newkirk:* Where my family are from?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah.

*Walter Newkirk:* I recently found out that my ancestry is—my father's family is all from Wales. Newkirk is a Welsh name, sometimes mistaken for Jewish, but not. It means "new church." Kirk is—whatever. I just recently found out that I am half Italian, although it's been a debate for years. I wrote about it a little in the book, but then I found out recently that my great grandfather's name—I knew him as Joe Gosetti 00:01:46, and my mother would say—well., he would say he was Austrian. I actually did some research on that about Austria being taken over by Italy. Okay. His name was Giuseppe Antonio Gazzetti, and her name was Alvira Serafini. I don't care if they lived in Trento 0:01:59, Italy before it was Austria. Their names are Italian names.

I met my great grandmother's cousin. He was Nerino Serafini and his brother Aldo Serafini. He said to me, "Walter," *[inaudible 0:02:10]* "if we were Austrian, our name would be more like Schwarzenegger." I'm 25 percent Italian, and my grandfather was Scottish. My father had six sisters. Three of them married ministers. Three of them married ministers. One of them was going to, and he sold church furniture and became very successful. My father's father died when he was 13, so he was the only boy in the house. He never said anything bad about his sisters. We were not particularly close to all six of them, but we saw them—one of them had polio and taught me piano, so I grew up playing show tunes and singing things from Hello, Dolly and The Sound of Music and liking Rex Reed. To me, that was all kind of—should have been obvious to my parents, but it was not.

My mother's family was my grandmother, and she had a sister that was a model. My mother wanted to be—had a chance to be a model. She was very obese at one time and lost a lot of weight and very glamorous and whatever, and she didn't, but she wanted to get married and have a family, and so she had me and my sister. I thought me and my sister were okay, but we're not that close, and so I'm—my friends—as trite and cliché—has *[inaudible 0:03:18]* become my family. I have a lot of single friends. I'm a single man, and I kind of like being single now.

*Whitney Strub:*

Yeah. You're originally from Philadelphia but then mostly grew up in New Jersey?

*Walter Newkirk:*

That's right. My parents left—I was born in Temple University Hospital. You have a background in Temple, right, or whatever it is? Then they left Philadelphia and they moved to—we lived in Elkins Park 'til I was in the second grade and then moved to Mount Laurel, New Jersey, which I really hated. I started to like the movies after I saw The Sound of Music and wrote to the stars. My mother told me to do that, and then I decided I liked acting, and then I decided I wanted to be a movie critic, so I wrote movie reviews. I went to see—met Rex Reed, who was a big film critic who's still alive—and the Mike Douglas show—it's a big show.

Then I decided I wanted to go to school, and college—my parents wanted me to go to college 'cause they—my father went to Drexel a little bit. My mother didn't, and you went to college, and they were gonna fund it, so—I really wanted to go to Rutgers, and I was on the waiting list, and I was gonna go to Rider when Rutgers came through. That was my number-one choice, so that's where I wound up.

*Whitney Strub:* Okay. Let me just go back for a couple of quick things. You write about your childhood in the book a bit, but just say a few more words about your youth and growing up.

*Walter Newkirk:* Okay. Growing up, I was fun. I really—I guess, since this is a queer project, you want me to talk about my queer things, so that’s whatever—that’s fine.

*Whitney Strub:* That and more, but yeah.

*Walter Newkirk:* No, that’s fine. —I used to play with dolls. I didn’t think I was particularly feminine boy. I was very happy, and I had female friends. At first—I forget what I called the guy in the book, but I became fixated on big dicks, and I really think that big dicks have a lot to do in this culture, which I actually am gonna talk to you about because if you look at all the porn, this, that, and the—well, anyway, I liked the big dick, and this guy, Mack—he wouldn’t want me to say his real name. It was his nickname. I think I called him something else in the book. He had a great—he looked great in Levi’s, guys wore tight pants, and so even the woman that edited my memoir said, “You know what? I never edited a book where I saw the word ‘crotch cruising.’” I became obsessed with big cocks.

*Whitney Strub:* In elementary school or later? When would you—

*Walter Newkirk:* I’d say in the sixth or seventh grade. Then it continued during high school, and I didn’t actually act on anything until I got to Rutgers, until I had seen this TV series where a quote “American” family had never—they went in, and they filmed the family for—I think it was six months, a year, and the son was openly gay. That’s the reason I came out. Actually, I’m still friendly with Pat Loud, and I interviewed her for the Rutgers paper, and I—he’s the first—he’s recognized as the first openly gay person on TV. You grew up with seeing Paul Lynde and Charles Nelson Reilly and all these people who were not gay, but they were these flamboyant caricatures, and they were great. I like those people, and I was not at all like Lance, but I kind of tried to take on things that he did because I saw them. They were on The Dick Cavett Show. I’ll show you. There’s a book called *Ethereal Queer*, and I’m in the book. I couldn’t believe it. It’s came out by—I have it here to show you.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, Amy—

*Walter Newkirk:* Yeah, Amy Villarejo. She wrote a page about me—the connection between Grey Gardens and Pat Loud because Pat Loud—to be in

my age—is whatever because she—I’m gonna show you a little bit of that because I really think that your project should have that Lance Loud thing more than anything, and I’m gonna really—I really want people to see that. Oh, what I was gonna—I’ll tell you about that later. When they made *Cinema Verite*, which is the making of *An American Family* with Diane Lane as Pat Loud and James Gandolfini as the producer Craig Gilbert. The filmmakers were paid, but the Louds were not. Again, that’s something that’s not for this interview, but I’ll talk to you about that later.

*Whitney Strub:* Okay. Before we get to Rutgers, I just wanna go back to a couple of things from the book that I think are worth throwing in here. One was I liked the part about you deciding to become a movie critic and begin corresponding with Rex Reed—

*Walter Newkirk:* Who just had an article—a big article in the *New York Times*. Somebody brought it to me yesterday. I’ll show it to you. He’s 80-something years old.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, really? Cool. Wow.

*Walter Newkirk:* Yeah, or older than that.

*Whitney Strub:* You sent him copies of your papers, your teacher said you may become one of the Rex Reeds [*cross talk 0:07:40*].

*Walter Newkirk:* I have that paper here to show you.

*Whitney Strub:* Here’s the part I thought was interesting. When Rex Reed co-hosted *The Mike Douglas Show*, which was taped in Philly, you wanted to meet him, and you write, “My parents did not want me to go alone because they thought Rex might be gay. They never said this, but I knew it was the reason.” Can you elaborate on that a little?

*Walter Newkirk:* Yes. They never said anything, but my grandmother’s sister was named Marion Benasutti, and I wrote about her in the book, and she wrote a book—fictionalized, but you know her obituary—if you look her up—again, it’s a Philadelphia lady. She said that she was the daughter of Italian immigrants from the Tyrolean village of whatever it is. Well, Tyrol is Austria, so there’s certain people in my family that say still Tyrolean. She took me, because they didn’t want me—I used to go see movies on my own. They didn’t want me to go because they thought that he might be gay.

As a matter of fact, he was gay, and I didn't know I was gay yet, but as my cousin so aptly said—I have a cousin. We were closer to my mother's only sister, and she had three children, and her daughter actually has written books about bullying. Her name is Gail Pursell Elliott. She's written several books about bullying at schools and things like that. She said to me—when I came out, she said, “Well, for God's sake, Walter. You're writing term papers in high school about Tennessee Williams and Rex Reed. Of course we thought you were gay.”

But I didn't feel gay at the time. I mean, I fantasized about touching men and whatever it is, but I actually didn't have my first—I don't know what it's considered, a homosexual experience—having oral sex with another man or having anal sex, correct? Would that constitute that? But as I told you earlier, today, it doesn't really matter because certain people don't even wanna own any kind of label, not straight, gay, bisexual—they have said to me, from 25 to 60, “It's how I am.” That is a different thing from when I came out in the '70s.

*Whitney Strub:* Right. When you're corresponding with Rex Reed, though, you're not yet recognizing yourself as gay, so you're not really corresponding about sexuality—

*Walter Newkirk:* No. No, no, no.

*Whitney Strub:* - just about movies?

*Walter Newkirk:* Yeah, yeah, and I have—I still have the letters that he wrote me. Yeah.

*Whitney Strub:* Then another—one other quick story that I think stood out a little was you were—I can't remember how old you were, but you were young. You were a teenager, and you took the bus into Philly to see Boys in the Band by yourself. Tell that story.

*Walter Newkirk:* Oh, yeah. Yes. I put the review in the book. Yeah [*crosstalk 0:10:11*] the review?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, yeah, but can you tell the story for the interview here?

*Walter Newkirk:* Yeah. I didn't identify with the man at all. I really didn't. It's interesting 'cause only a couple years later, I saw An American Family, and when I saw whatever it is—and Boys in the Band is very critically acclaimed because a lot of—I actually wanna look at it again. I just couldn't relate to it, and I thought it—and a lot of

people still don't like The Boys in the Band. There's some people that like—have you ever seen it?

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, yeah, yeah. It's very controversial.

*Walter Newkirk:* Yeah, but it's still—it's being redone on Broadway as we speak.

*Whitney Strub:* I know. I saw that.

*Walter Newkirk:* It's only—I've watched the documentaries about it, and whatever it is, but how old was I when that came out? It was 1970, right? I was 16 years old, so I didn't—aside from fantasizing about—I still remember the guys with the biggest dicks from high school. I feel like—you know what? I actually feel like a saying from Boys in the Band because one of the guys I was in touch with—and I felt like saying, “You know what? I still remember the time you pulled off your pants.” I was told recently to let you know how things have changed in high school and it freaked me out that they have gay-straight alliances in the high schools nationwide.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, yeah, GSAs.

*Walter Newkirk:* All right. Here's a movie that everybody needs to see, and you have to see it. It's not a gay movie. It's called *Unhung Hero*. It's about a guy who—it's a documentary, and it's not a parody. It's about a guy who proposes to a woman, and it's captured at a baseball game, and she turns him down because she thinks his penis is too small. He goes on a search, nationwide—it's an excellent documentary. He goes on a search nationwide. You can watch previews of the thing—to find out, “Does size matter?” He goes to see Dan Savage—you know the sex therapist?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, yeah, of course.

*Walter Newkirk:* Dan Savage tells the story about this guy who was so worried about the size of his cock when all he wanted him to do is roll over. Then he goes to a condom factory, and they show him the Asian condoms, the Black con—and whatever. He sees mistresses, and he goes to see Jonah Falcon. Do you know who Jonah is?

*Whitney Strub:* No.

*Walter Newkirk:* Jonah has a 13-inch penis, and he's interviewed—

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, I remember. He was Mr. Big in the Rolling Stone article.

*Walter Newkirk:* That's right.

*Whitney Strub:* Yes. I remember.

*Walter Newkirk:* He was also interviewed in Newark—

*Whitney Strub:* Really?

*Walter Newkirk:* - for being—for getting on and they thought he had a weapon in his pants. Well, I met Jonah years ago. Jonah's interviewed by the guy in the movie. You have to see that. It's good.

*Whitney Strub:* Okay, I will.

*Walter Newkirk:* Because it's really—it's not a gay thing. What you find out about yourself and the culture in general is that penis size—because the so—I can't find it here, but look it up—the guy's—it's about—

*Whitney Strub:* I will look it up, but let me pull you back before we lose track of this [*cross talk 0:12:54*] here.

*Walter Newkirk:* All right. Okay. That's fine. That's fine.

*Whitney Strub:* I just wanna know what it was like—so you're a 16-year-old who doesn't recognize yourself as gay yet. You're seeing *Boys in the Band* in a theater in Philly, but I assume the audience is mostly—probably—I mean, I don't know. Tell me, what was that like? I'm just curious.

*Walter Newkirk:* It was in a regular theater. It wasn't at a whatever, but you know what? I was such a loner growing up, and I didn't realize that because—and I went to see Myra Breckinridge.

*Whitney Strub:* [*Laughter*] Oh, wow.

*Walter Newkirk:* I didn't get that—I have the review here. I didn't put that in the book. I didn't even know what a dildo was when I saw that, and here was Rex Reed. Did you ever see it where he plays—the commentary is worth it to hear.

*Whitney Strub:* I have it on DVD. Yeah.

*Walter Newkirk:* I actually like it 'cause I find it so kind of out there. I didn't understand any of that, and I even said that that was gross, so—

*Whitney Strub:* Right, right. Well, yeah, that's funny. That's why I was interested. The review you wrote of [*cross talk 0:13:42*] at the time.

*Walter Newkirk:* But you know what? Oh, it was—here's something that I didn't mention, too, with my upbringing—I really was raised in the church. I was raised in the Presbyterian church. There's pictures in my book holding a Bible, and I still have the Bible. I know the books of the Bible. My parents insisted on Christian education, choir and whatever it is. When I went to Rutgers, I left. I never—and they say most people did—guess what. I now remember—since my mother passed away, I went back to the church, and you wanna know something? I didn't realize—my mother used to say, “Well, you don't believe anymore,” and I'm—it's like Madonna talking about not being a Catholic. If you are—I hate to tell you—brainwashed—but I have a little—I have the little booklet. I should show it to you. It's a, “Thank you for your—thank you for allowing us to educate your child.” It looks like a propaganda thing. That's exactly what it is. It's like a—are you Catholic? Were you raised in a religious thing?

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, I was raised Catholic. Yeah. [*Cross talk 0:14:37*] I'm not—

*Walter Newkirk:* Okay, but it's like that. I was raised—so your catechism. At the Bible Presbyterian Churches, and you wanna know something, two of my—all the cousins that are gay are on my father's side of the family—the religious side. Two of them—their father was a minister—two of the brothers are gay, and the other brothers—daughter married, has a child with a black man. I thought, wow, if his mother was alive, she would be—these were bible quoters, do you know what I mean?

*Whitney Strub:* Right, right. Yeah, no, I mean, that's interesting. Okay. Let me pull it back, too. I'm trying to go chronologically [*cross talk 0:15:12*] as much as possible.

*Walter Newkirk:* Okay, go ahead. I have a way of going on tangents.

*Whitney Strub:* In 1972, you go to Rutgers University in New Brunswick.

*Walter Newkirk:* That's right.

*Whitney Strub:* That's a pretty transformative experience for you in a lot of ways, and you detail that in the book. I guess one of the things that stood out was there's this section where you—you begin to recognize yourself as gay, largely through watching *An American Family* and identifying with Lance Loud, and then you have a sort of—I



guess it's an ambivalent relationship with the Rutgers Homophile League, which was a pioneering [*cross talk 0:15:46*] student activist group, and so—

*Walter Newkirk:* I agree that—

*Whitney Strub:* - talk a little bit about that, about the complexities [*cross talk 0:15:52*].

*Walter Newkirk:* Well, I will, because I don't think I had come out to my parents yet. The way I came out—and I talked about that in the book—is I started writing to the Homophile League after I saw *American Family*, saying, “I think I'm gay.” I met someone that was an officer there, and he called me in my dorm, and I really didn't like that he violated my anonymity instead of writing—but we kept missing each other, so I met him at the student center, and he actually was from South Jersey. I think I put that in the book, and then he—I didn't name him. I don't even know if he's still alive, so he says to me, “What do you wanna do about it?” I went back, and I had sex with him, and it was awful. It was really terrible. I went back to my dorm, and I told everybody that I had sex with a girl.

Then I forget what happened, but—I can't remember. I can't remember at the moment why or how I came out to everyone. I think it was when I went to the homophile meeting. There was a guy in my dorm, and our eyes met as we walked up the stairs, and one night, I just decided to go to the Homophile League meeting, and I went, and I don't know. I didn't—I identified with a different group of gay people that were not part of that group, as I think I wrote about it in the book. I wrote my first thing which was review of *American Family*—it wasn't on the thing, and writing the movie reviews in high school—that became my club. That was the paper chase for me, and it was me and Richard Berkowitz, who actually was a writer and has had a film made about him called *Sex Positive* at Rutgers and Bob Sennett who became —Harvard librarian. His father wrote books.

We were the arts staff, [writers and editors of the *CRITIQUES* section] so that was my gay group, and I lived—it wasn't that I hated or disliked the Homophile League. It just didn't—it didn't work for me, but I was never a person that joined groups. Even in my entire life, the only group I really—I lived at the Rutgers Targum office. I ran—I was elected the art senator—the first openly gay art senator. I won unanimously, and to me, that was a milestone for me because I also thought I had low self-esteem. I

thought I wasn't good-looking enough. I felt my dick wasn't big enough. I felt that I was ugly, and to that—that helped me a lot. It helped me a lot. I think that people have a lot of different issues that they deal with when they come out, you know what I mean?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, no, absolutely. There are a couple of different questions I wanna ask following up on that, but one thing—just to get—to gauge the kind of climate of Rutgers and New Brunswick in the '70s, you do have this kind of horrifying story about the DKE fraternity, so the Homophile League had—

*Walter Newkirk:* Well, Richard Berkowitz is the one that—that's in his documentary. He's the one that had the first protest on that, and Arthur Bell came and whatever it is and—that's featured in his documentary, *Sex Positive*. He'd be glad to tell you about it.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, okay. I will check that out.

*Walter Newkirk:* He was the one that organized that—Richard was very political. He was the political one. I was running around interviewing Divine and Pat Loud and whatever it is and—

*Whitney Strub:* So, wait, wait—that I wanna come back to, so hold that thought for one second. I just wanna read this out of your book for the interview.

*Walter Newkirk:* Yeah, go ahead.

*Whitney Strub:* “The Homophile League has a Gay Day where everyone who is gay was asked to wear blue jeans for the day, and there was a full-page ad in the *Targum* to advertise it. The DKE fraternity didn't think so. They hung an effigy on a tree in their front yard with a pool stick impaling the body. The effigy was holding a sign, ‘The only good gay is a dead gay,’ and on the flip side, it said, ‘Back to your closets, homos.’” One thing that you don't mention in the book is was there any consequence for that?

*Walter Newkirk:* Terrible. It's in the thing. If you look in the Rutgers *Targum* archives, I think they were reprimanded in a way, and Richard took footage of it. You can see it in the *Sex*—it's in the documentary.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, interesting. Okay.

*Walter Newkirk:* Yeah, it's quite horrifying, because everybody wore blue jeans. It was kind of like a thing, and they were really quite—I can't remember, again, but it—I have the *Targums* bound here, of all

mine, just to show you whatever it is and how gay they were. I don't know if his articles are in 'cause Richard really took that over. He was really—he'll be the one to tell you I'm the one that brought him out because he came into the Targum thing. I went in to write an interview with Katherine Hepburn who's a big icon, and I was, "Oh, Mary," see, I adopted all these things that were not me. I didn't even talk to you about Manny's Den. Has anybody told you about Manny's, the bar?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

*Walter Newkirk:* I did not go there a lot. Everybody went there a lot. I really focused—people were drinking a lot. It was that, and the place called the M&K in Asbury Park. Did anybody talk to you about that?

*Whitney Strub:* That one I don't know.

*Walter Newkirk:* It was a big—it's a big disco. It was called the M&K if you research it. Everybody would go to the M&K, and then people were getting—you got dressed. You wore the high-waisted pants with the little thing. That wasn't me. You know what? When the '80s came around and it was [*clicks tongue*] put on a leather coat and the tight things and show up with my dick—that's what I was doing. That was more my scene, but you see, went through these different phases in gay culture that was [*cross talk 0:21:05*] Studio 54 and the disco and all that other crap, you know what I mean?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, yeah. Okay, I've got a couple more questions about Rutgers. When you were writing for the Targum, you covered all kinds of fascinating stuff in the '70s, and I don't think we have time to go through all of it, but the thing that stood out to me was Divine because that story was pretty memorable.

*Walter Newkirk:* Oh, my God. Well, the thing is, too—and I know that you've written books also on—I really wanna read your book, especially my—well, I—also, when I saw Peter Berlin on the cover, and you're, "Oh, look at that cover." You really had quite a [*inaudible 0:21:35*] have you seen that documentary about him? He's quite—

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, he's fascinating.

*Walter Newkirk:* - he's a very fascinating character. Well, he's been around in this not—I really like—that whole thing was just over the top. It was like a Tom of Finland cartoon come to life. What happened was

the movie—you wrote a book. What was it called? What's the book with Peter Berlin on the cover? What's that called?

*Whitney Strub:* Porno Chic and the Sex Wars.

*Walter Newkirk:* I saw Deep Throat at Rutgers. Here I was—I wasn't even out of the closet then, I'm watching this woman sucking dick on the big screen, it was incredible oral sex.

*Whitney Strub:* Who showed it? Was it a student group?

*Walter Newkirk:* Yes. It was at the records hall. That's where I saw it.

*Whitney Strub:* What group? Do you remember? That's just—

*Walter Newkirk:* I can't remember. You can look it up in the Targum.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, you're right. You're right.

*Walter Newkirk:* It's there. It's when I was there my freshman year—'72 was my freshman year. Okay. They also showed Pink Flamingos at the student center. A year later—you saw the letter. I put it on the Div—and how 'bout the letter from the girl from Cherry Hill, "Your article made me sick." Did you see that? I saved that letter. That was so humiliating for me. I was actually—

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, really?

*Walter Newkirk:* Yeah, it was a different time. John Waters—that was his—he even said to me—listen to his commentaries—that he can't top that. He's always compared to that movie. A thing came into the Targum office that Divine was gonna be—at the Passaic Theater with a screening of Pink Flamingos, so I went, and you know what? I went to interview, as you did, and I had a very good memory. Pat Loud said I have a photographic memory—the tape hadn't started, so I did the—and you know something? He was an incredible [*cross talk 0:23:14*—yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, we're good [*laughter*].

*Walter Newkirk:* He was an incredible guy. He really was. He was not what I was expecting, and if you—have you ever seen the documentary, "I am Divine"?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, yeah, yeah.

*Walter Newkirk:* Well, very, very nice, and if you read my interview with him, that's pretty much what I said. I saw him coming down the street with the high heels and the crazy hair, and listen, I was 20 years old. I was not exposed to the things that were still coming along. I don't even think I had run into Peter Berlin yet. As I said, in the '70s, when the Louds came out—and I'm gonna show you a little bit of that before you go—but you said you have 'til 5:00, right, or something like that?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, as long as we—

*Walter Newkirk:* All right. Okay. All right, listen. You need to see Lance Loud in *Death in American Family* because it's important for any kind of queer to see that. Okay [*cross talk 0:24:03*].

*Whitney Strub:* Sure, Sure. Anyway, I'm just gonna read into the record your—the title of your interview with Divine.

*Walter Newkirk:* Okay. I did not title that. I was not the arts editor. Howard Wuelfing was the arts editor gave that, that title, which is a great title.

*Whitney Strub:* No, I do love the title. “Divine in All Her Delectable Sumptuousness,” and you write about [*cross talk 0:24:22*].

*Walter Newkirk:* Oh, that was *Female Trouble*. That's a masterpiece. Don't you love that?

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, yeah. No, *Female Trouble*'s amazing. Then also you had another piece, *Divinely Decadent*, where you covered—what was that thing—

*Walter Newkirk:* Oh, that was the—I think that was just the press release about the interview with her, wasn't it? Okay.

*Whitney Strub:* Okay. Well, yeah, but it—the name of her group at that point—

*Walter Newkirk:* That wasn't her group. That was somebody that—The Cockettes of 42<sup>nd</sup> Street?

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, the Harlots 0:24:44—

*Walter Newkirk:* They appeared with her—

*Whitney Strub:* - of 42<sup>nd</sup> Street.

*Walter Newkirk:* - the Harlots. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, okay. I misunderstood and thought they were together. Okay.

*Walter Newkirk:* She came out on stage, and people were throwing thing—it was really awful. It was really awful. I thought it was—I felt sorry for her. I think I wrote it in the review. I really felt sorry for her, but you wanna know something? He was a really interesting person.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, no, he really was.

*Walter Newkirk:* Really, the Hairspray and the Lust in the Dust and all these other things—he had quite a career. It’s too bad that he kicked the bucket when he did.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah. Then your autographed poster from Divine which said—

*Walter Newkirk:* “Eat shit. Love, Divine,” which is currently being auctioned on eBay, and hopefully, it’s gonna go.

*Whitney Strub:* That is a good collector item. Then, okay, instead of getting carried away on that, I also wanna pull back to something a little less pleasant which was the way that your family came to sort of—sort of recognize your identity. It’s a complicated story. Yeah, tell the story.

*Walter Newkirk:* I told them. I told—it wasn’t complicated. I told them.

*Whitney Strub:* Well, the reaction, I guess.

*Walter Newkirk:* Their reaction was not good. I kind of felt that my mother probably would’ve known from the Rex Reed and all that other kind of stuff, and also, I told them on Thanksgiving, and my mother had a very bad reaction. I asked her not to tell my father. She told my father. He came upstairs and said—he wanted to know exactly what I had done with these guys, and I said, “Well, do I ask you what you do in your bedroom?” He said, “Well, let me remind you I fund your college education, and I don’t have to,” and I said, “Well, if you do that to me, I’ll move to New York and you’ll never hear from me again.”

I think that that was—actually, because that’s what Lance Loud did, although his family did not treat him that way. Pat Loud says in the documentary that she knew—they thought that he was probably gay. Well, they’re very—not that my parents are uneducated, they just—my mother, when—whatever it is—went

crazy. She said it was against God's thing, and dogs don't even do this, and—she wanted me out of the house. My father took me back, and his reaction was surprising to me 'cause I was not close to him. I was not a baseball player. I was not a tennis player. I was not a basketball player. My father was an athlete. He said, "You know what? It's okay with me, but you really disappointed your mother."

I went to see a psychiatrist at Rutgers in New Brunswick, where I was, and I told him, "I'm fine." My father called to talk to the psychiatrist, and he said, "Mr. Newkirk, I can't talk to you about what your son said to me." I came out by Christmas, and I went to a Christmas party and invited all my friends—I hate to say it, but they were called fag hags with the big outfits and whatever, all dancy, and my father said to me, "You're lying," whatever it is, 'cause I told him, "Oh, I just like Judy Garland," and all this other stuff. My mother said it was okay. They kind of came around.

There were some other instances that were not so pleasant after that where I would go to gay bars in Philadelphia. We lived in South Jersey. I went to a place called Oz and The Steps. If you look at these, they're not there anymore, and I would go over, and my father one night would wait up for me and tear my bed apart and say, "We're in my house," and I was, "I'm getting the fuck out of here." It just didn't work. Then when they moved to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, I found a gay bar there, Tally Ho Tavern, and I came back—my father said, "What were you doing? Out getting blown in the backseat of a car?" I was, "As a matter of fact, I was."

It was okay, as time went on. I had a partner for many years, and like that, but they really—when I was moving into an apartment—you read that in my book—they found my things. I was, "Oh, my God." There was some gay porn—and the porn magazines, but they didn't wanna get—my father said to me, "So you're still into this?" I'm, "Yep." What are you gonna do? It's fine. They really—I really—my parents are both deceased now, but they were okay with it. They were really okay with it.

It's still a struggle for some people. I met some young guys today, and they haven't told their parents. It is what it is, and there's some people that don't tell their wives that they're out with other men and stuff like that, but—my mother did say to me one time, "I'm glad that you didn't get married and do what a lot of men are doing, going out and bisexual, or whatever they—you wanna call it."

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah. Okay. No, that explains that. Let me jump ahead slightly. You graduate from college. You go into PR, public relations, as a field, and that's what winds up taking you to Newark. I wanna spend a minute talking about that. You wind up getting a job kind of randomly at the Newark Museum. The way you tell the story is you just thumbed it in the New York Times classifieds [*cross talk 0:29:24*].

*Walter Newkirk:* [*Cross talk 0:29:24*] that's how I got the job where I worked for Olympia Dukakis, who was in Montclair and had a theater there for 20 years. Again, I answered an ad in the paper. That's how you—I guess people still do that, and I was not making enough money working at regional theater, and I applied for this job in Newark. I never even went to Newark before. I never went.

*Whitney Strub:* Okay, that's what I was gonna ask.

*Walter Newkirk:* I never went to Newark.

*Whitney Strub:* You didn't have any relationship with the city?

*Walter Newkirk:* No. I lived in Bloomfield. I lived in Bloomfield. After I graduated from school, I lived in—I lived in a fraternity at Rutgers in New Brunswick that was filthy, and—you could live there for \$30.00 a month and I waited tables at the VIP club. Then I got a job at Rutgers, and I did—first thing with Vito Russo. I worked for the Department of Concerts and Lectures, and the guy who headed it, Clinton Crocker, said, "The New Jersey Committee for [*inaudible 0:30:13*] is here. Why don't you look through a thing and apply for a grant?" Again, I was not openly gay. I went back in the closet after I was completely out at Rutgers, and so I saw this program by Vito Russo, and I built around it, the changing stereotypes of women, blacks, and gays in the cinema, and Vito Russo came and did this slide-film presentation in *The Celluloid Closet* before it was a book and an HBO movie. He's deceased now, and he went to school in New Jersey at Fairleigh Dickinson. I did not know that.

That was one of the first things he did, and I really was looking for it to be a book because he—you've seen it, right? He looks at the movies that you were either a clown or you were killed. That [*inaudible 0:30:59*]. You were either laughing at the gay people or seeing them get murdered. It was quite eye-opening at that time.

Then I had a forum—at the end of it, I had the poster. I can show you. It's in the book. You see the poster in the book. Warren



Susman was a moderator, and Richard Wesley, and Richard Berkowitz was on the panel. Richard's book is called *Staying Alive*, if you wanna get his book.

*Whitney Strub:* Yes, yes, I do know it, actually, now that you mention that.

*Walter Newkirk:* Okay.

*Whitney Strub:* Tell me your first impression of Newark, then, since you didn't have—

*Walter Newkirk:* Well, I was—first off, working at The Whole Theater in Montclair, I used to wear coveralls and ride my bike to work, and I actually got the job 'cause I was unemployed, and Carter had something called the CETA program, the Comprehensive Employment Training Act, so they were thrilled to know that I was unemployed because I—so they didn't have to pay my salary. I was paid by a grant, but I wasn't making any money. I was living with a guy who I met up at the South Mount Reservation which is where you—when I moved—when I left Rutgers, I used to go to Manny's Den—this bar that—the only game in town, or the M&K on the weekends.

I didn't know where to go. There were other—there was, I think, Feathers and—I can't remember all the bars. If you ever looked at all the bars in New Jersey, there were quite a few bars. There aren't anymore. You have the bar in Asbury Park—what's it called? Paradise. You ever been there? You should go there. On a Sunday, it's run by Madonna's producer [*cross talk 0:32:18*].

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, I know what you're talking about. Yeah.

*Walter Newkirk:* It's in the Empress Hotel. That's it, and Feather's, that's been around for 20 years. Okay. When I moved from Edison, I guess I was still going to Manny's Den. When I got the job working in the city, I actually moved in with another guy that had just [*inaudible 0:32:35*] a lot of people—that's why I'm doing this, too, but a bunch of people—about five different people that I've known—I have friends like Pat Loud's still 90, and other friends that are 90—about five friends in their 60s that died in the last year, two from heart attacks and two from cancer, and I thought, you know what? I'm happy to get my story out there because what somebody said to me is there aren't that many men writing memoirs like you. There's Kevin Sessums and whatever it is you get in—so if you don't start talking about the history, it's not gonna be recorded anywhere, you know what I mean?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, absolutely. That's what we—

*Walter Newkirk:* Okay. Let me take—get—'cause I'm thinking out loud. I moved to Edison and worked at Department of—okay. Then I got the job in New York, and I lived in Bloomfield. When I was at Bloomfield, you went to a bar called Penelope's that was in East Orange. Everybody went to Penelope's. I can't remember when I went—when the Newark club started—I was not somebody that went to Murphy's, but when I got the job in Newark, they called me in for the interview, and the director interviewed me and said, "And you've studied art history?" I'm, "No, I haven't studied art history," which I have in the book. He was, "Well, you'll just be—you'll be the coordinator of the media," and so they hired me, and unbeknownst to me his wife Rosetta was Pat Loud's friend—it was kind of a shock because I had to wear—you had to wear suits there.

I don't think you do anymore. Maybe they do—certain people do, but I don't know whether Ulysses does. Ulysses Grant Dietz is also curator of decorative arts. It's been there for 37 years, and he came in after I did. He was openly gay. I was not. I went back in the closet after I came out in Rutgers. I just—I worked in New York. James Ivory, who's now nominated for an Oscar in a movie called *Roseland*—I don't know if I have this in the book. They started saying, "Oh, I wonder if he slept with Rex Reed?" I was—I took women to events, and I just wasn't comfortable, in 1977, being out. I wasn't comfortable being out of the closet like Ulysses was, who had a partner—and I lived with a guy named Fred. I just didn't wanna do it.

*Whitney Strub:* Mm-hmm. Is there anything about the Newark museum that felt hostile, or you were just kind of being [*cross talk 0:34:41*].

*Walter Newkirk:* No, it was just the time. I felt that gays still were—it was a secret. That's why I called it a secret. It was like a deep, dark, dirty secret. I just didn't tell people. I don't know what it—that being said, I went into the South Mountain—I dated some young guys recently that we went to go—we went to go to meet people or hook up—you went and had drinks, and you stared at people across the bar, whatever it is, or—and then you went back to their place and hooked up, and now—whatever it is, or you went to the South Mountain Reservation up in whatever, that was—in fact, I was watching *The Sopranos*. You ever watch *The Sopranos*?

*Whitney Strub:* Only a little bit.

*Walter Newkirk:* All right. Okay. Well, you know, David Chase has to have lived in this community 'cause a lot of it's said that Montclair and Newark or whatever—so Tony Soprano, James Gandolfini, Rutgers alumni, plays Tony Soprano. He says to once character on an episode - "You're an up-the-reservation cocksucker." Exactly. You went to the South Mountain Reservation and rode around and walked into the woods just like in San Francisco in the TV show Looking. That's where you went. I used to spend hours there. People—whatever it is—walking—yeah, that place was packed. You go up there, it was like a full—nobody's mentioned that to you, right?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, yeah. No, I'm aware of it.

*Walter Newkirk:* It was unbelievable. It went on—and that's where you went.

*Whitney Strub:* This is the late '70s or so?

*Walter Newkirk:* Up to the '90s.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, okay. Yeah, I got you.

*Walter Newkirk:* Through the '80s, whatever it is. Then the only other bar when I went to—after I—so I went to Newark. I pretty much—I can't—whatever it is, I—I went to McDonald's. I lived in Montclair. There's a parking lot, and whatever it is, people would go in there in cars and line up and you'd say, "Hey, what are you looking for," or, "I wanna get sucked," or whatever it is, and then I'd drag them back to my house. I went there for years. I'd go there—our former governor—what was his name?

*Whitney Strub:* McGreevy.

*Walter Newkirk:* McGreevy? He used to go to the rest stops or—somebody—my friend Diane was here yesterday, and she's—she worked in New York, all her friends went to the Port Authority bathroom— is not into that. I do not like to smell shit when I'm getting—you know what I mean? I don't quite get that, but that's what people did. Even the young guys that I've dated and they like older men—they've said to me, "I don't know—I think I would've survived." The Internet didn't exist. You went to a bar, or you were parked—somebody said social clubs, but—I went to a couple of those. I really didn't like those. I kind of like the anonymity of the—

*Whitney Strub:* Wait. Why didn't you go to Murphy's in Newark?

*Walter Newkirk:* I don't know why. I felt that Newark was—okay. In going to Newark, I had to buy suits. The guy I was living with—I didn't have money to buy suits. I was wearing second-hand suits which looked brand-new. I took the train into Newark [from Montclair]. I was the only one on the train. It was kind of like you didn't stay in Newark, plus when the museum closed at 4:30, it still—and I don't want to say anything, whatever, but I just went there again for the first time, and I have to tell you, Newark at night is still a little scary. You don't have to comment. You work there, but I'm just telling you my experience. I got off the train, and I was discombobulated. I was trying to get to the library to see that wonderful exhibit that you did that somebody told me about and—were you involved with that?

*Whitney Strub:* No, not directly. No.

*Walter Newkirk:* It's very good. What I didn't like about it—and this is a prime example, and I was gonna write them since we're talking about that—it was the Our Voices, Too, about the pioneer—about people that came—you know what it was called, right?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah.

*Walter Newkirk:* Okay. It's still up, I think. It was followed by something called The Naughty but Nice Wall. I thought, again, for—I mean, I met some nice people. They were having a costume thing. I put on my studded pants, whatever it is, which I didn't have the chance to put on for you, but—because I've been cleaning up and redecorating. I went there. Number one, I—it's—you don't work for the library. They said it was \$15.00 to get in. They didn't take debit cards. Let me tell you something. Nobody knew how to get to the library. I was walking down. I was directed to the NJIT library. There's still a lot of—

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, wow.

*Walter Newkirk:* There's not that many cops around, and I feel like I had to keep my head over my shoulder, which was—I thought it was a strange city. I didn't know that because when you went to things at the museum, it closed at 4:30. You took the train home, unless it was an event at night, or I'd drive down. I did go to bars in Newark when the Cactus Club opened. It was a bar called The Cactus Club, but that was in the mid-'80s.

*Whitney Strub:* Okay, and that was in the Ironbound right?

*Walter Newkirk:* You'd have to look it up, because, again, I always felt that going into Newark—it doesn't quite have the Camden reputation. I've been there—Cherry Hill—that people are very spotty about going to Newark. They just are. I think if you talk to most people, they don't—whatever it is, part of the reason—when I worked there, the Dalai Lama came. You see the poster right behind, the Tibetan Lost World poster? You know who had that in her apartment? Edie Beale. She came out for that exhibit. She thought it was thrilling that the Dalai Lama came to the museum when I did that. The events at night and everything—and the night in Old Lhasa and all these other things, but it was not a place—the director of the museum lived on Prospect Avenue. Have you ever been in those apartments?

*Whitney Strub:* No, no.

*Walter Newkirk:* Oh, my God.

*Whitney Strub:* I know what you're talking about.

*Walter Newkirk:* They're like the apartments from Rosemary's Baby. If you wanna move into a nice apartment there—

*Whitney Strub:* No, that's right along Branch Brook Park.

*Walter Newkirk:* Prospect Avenue. I had a—Sam and Rosetta Miller 0:40:05 lived there. You can see where they lived. See, now they had to have an apartment in Newark 'cause he worked there, but they—I think they also had—she had been married and had family money and so on and so forth. I really did—I loved my time at the museum because I thought Sam Miller was a great director. I felt weird 'cause I was still living a lie. I hate to say it.

I really—I don't know why I did, but it—like some people never come out and even say they're gay today. They just say, "That's how I am," and I—and I was living with a man that I met in 1978, and I didn't—and I had low self-esteem. It just—yeah. A lot of it has to do with self-esteem issues, too. As you know, I quit and tried to start my own business, and that guy's wife invented that Airborne stuff. He's still—his name is Tom McDowell 0:40:57, and what I do—I became a clerk for a couple years, and then I got back—right back into the PR game again.

Again, and then I started—and then I had the relationship with the priest I met at the gay bar. You read about that, right? He's still out there. You can look him up yourself, but that was very interesting

because I met him at a gay bar, at Feathers. I won't say his name or this and that, but he—I thought he was a teacher, and I had my hands down his pants and everything, and he said to me, "Well, I'm actually a priest." I had a couple drinks under my belt, and it was—I'll show you some pictures of him. He was drop-dead gorgeous. He took me back to the rectory. It wasn't any of my Roman Catholic friends—like you wouldn't go to hell and this and that and whatever it is—and I had a relationship with him for two years .

Okay. I go to a mall with him one day, and we run into some guy who is the priest at his mother's church. You ready? I go up to the South Mountain Reservation a week later, and there he is. I start—I don't know if I had that in the book or not because—

*Whitney Strub:* I don't remember that.

*Walter Newkirk:* - there was too many things that went on, and people said to me, "Your life," and I was, "What am I gonna do?" I was kinda curious, and then he confirmed some things about—I don't wanna say it, but there's a lot of gay priests. You know what I mean?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, yeah [*cross talk 0:42:13*].

*Walter Newkirk:* It's something separate than the pedophiles, and I actually—and your coming here, I looked him up to see where he is 'cause sometimes, people don't like back pages, but they're both still priests. He didn't stop what—and my parents—my parents knew I was seeing him, and my mother said to me at the time, "Well, he's not gonna leave the church because of you." I did. I broke it off after two years, but I met him at the bar—the big bar, Feathers, one of the few gay bars that's still around. During that time, I started going to the Cactus Club in Newark because it was a new place to go.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, so tell me about the Cactus Club, 'cause I don't—I know it existed [*cross talk 0:42:48*].

*Walter Newkirk:* They were kind of go-go boy—they were kind of go-go boys there. You'd walk in, and there were go-go boys. I don't know how long it was opened, but I'm sure if you research through enough people, I forget the guy that ran it—I kind of knew him—Dan somebody?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, he wrote a memoir, actually. Dan Russo.

*Walter Newkirk:* Oh, what? Okay.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, he wrote a memoir, *Downtown*.

*Walter Newkirk:* [*Cross talk 0:43:05*]. About the Cactus Club?

*Whitney Strub:* About his whole life, really. Yeah.

*Walter Newkirk:* Well, there was somebody else my friend Diane was telling me about, Don Dust, who was murdered.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, did you know him?

*Walter Newkirk:* Peripherally. He worked in Newark. Diane was saying to me—you'll love this.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, I've heard about it.

*Walter Newkirk:* I don't care 'cause you're straight, but he goes—she said—I said, “Well, this guy's coming over here,” and I said—you know, I kinda have a little Lolita quality in me still at this old age. I said whatever, and she said, “Well, don't whatever it is, put up there.” I said, “Oh, I have sex with people in the living room. I don't need to go into the bedroom, Diane.” She said, “Well, you better be careful,” whatever it is. I said, “The guy's from Rutgers.” I said, “Diane, I hate to burst your bubble, but if you know anything about the people I dragged home since I'm 20 years old and whatever it is,” I had a close call once or twice, somebody tried to beat me up, and somebody took money from me, but—and she said, “Well, a very good friend of mine was murdered.” I said, “Who?” and she said—this is just yesterday— “Don Dust.” I said, “I knew him. He had a beard and he was involved in Newark preservation,” and whatever it is. He was murdered. He picked somebody up at Murphy's, I think, and they murdered—yeah, you'll have to look that—

*Whitney Strub:* Really? When was that, do you remember?

*Walter Newkirk:* I wanna say it was in the '70s or '80s. Don Dust, if you whatever it is.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, that was a bit ago. Okay. Yeah, I've heard of him from another person who told me the same story. Could you describe him a little? I'm just curious about it.

*Walter Newkirk:* He was very insular. Again, because I was closeted—even with Ulysses, I didn't wanna get that—I talked to Ulysses a lot, and I

said this to him the other night. I said, “Listen, I’m really sorry.” I just—he’s okay. I like him. We’re not great friends, but I’d really like to see him again. I just thought of how our lives are different. He’s legally married to the only man he’s been with. I don’t know whether they play around. Oh, and then there was a guy in the museum. The guy I lived with, Fred—his nemesis—okay.

*Whitney Strub:* Wait, wait. Can I pause you for one second? I wanna come back here [*cross talk 0:44:50*].

*Walter Newkirk:* All right. All right.

*Whitney Strub:* Just to streamline, let me—‘cause there’s a few threads here that I want to hear, so can you go back to the Cactus Club first and finish describing that? You said [*cross talk 0:44:59*]?

*Walter Newkirk:* I didn’t go there that much, but it was kind of like—there was—in fact, there was a bar that just recently opened and closed, and I can’t remember—I forget what it was called. It was here in Jersey—Cole’s or something like that—it was named after somebody. It was like Linden or down that way. It only stayed open—‘cause people just stopped going to bars anymore. It didn’t last that long. The Cactus Club was not—is Murphy’s still open?

*Whitney Strub:* No, no. The whole block that it was on is leveled now.

*Walter Newkirk:* There’s no gay bars left. I’m telling you what’s left. The best place to go is that place—I really wanna—I wanna have my birthday party there, I think. What’s it called? Paradise, at the Empress Hotel. Plus, it has great parking. It’s great. You know there’s still some run-down parts in it. I don’t—necessarily wouldn’t need to live there, and the other one is Feathers, but people don’t wanna go to bars anymore because, number one, listen. You know what I said to people the other day? You people—meet people on the Internet, you know why? Because guess what? You don’t have to put your hands down their pants [*inaudible 0:45:58*] you have a big dick. We start with, “Oh, you have a dick pic? Do you have a body pic?” You know what I’m talking about, right? I’m not saying you, personally, but I wanna tell you something. Now that I start writing this Grey Gardens stuff, I went into Manhunt years ago, and I had a picture of myself, and I was very specific about what I wanted sexually. Do you know that somebody took my picture and had a pair—and lifted it and put it on a Grey Gardens fan site. I was mortified.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, that’s—



*Walter Newkirk:* Yeah, but you wanna know something, Whitney, Whit—whatever you're calling yourself—

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, Whit's fine.

*Walter Newkirk:* - I thought, listen, Paris Hilton is out sucking dick and so's Kim Kardashian, and Monica Lewinsky had the dress and whatever. What the—why do I care? Why should I care? It's part of our pop culture now to—I wasn't even doing it. All I did was I said what I liked. But, still, to me—see, you wanna know something? If people wanna see a dick pic or a body pic, I never ask or request pics. I don't need somebody to send a picture. Look at what's-his-name. He loved it. What was his name? Mr. Weiner, no pun intended.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, Anthony Weiner?

*Walter Newkirk:* Did you ever see that documentary about him? That guy's really crazy. I actually wanna—might wanna own that. Look at it. It was horrifying. How embarrassing. That guy has a—that—you know what? That's problematic, but that's what our—that's our culture, and you know what's gonna happen? I got news for you. It's gonna happen again to somebody.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, yeah. Oh, of course. From this point on, it'll happen.

*Walter Newkirk:* I can't imagine being in the public eye to a degree and sending out pictures of your genitals or your—but that's what people want. Do you have a dick pic? Do you have a body pic? I'm—you know what I say? Never ask or request pictures, and unless somebody's really—yes, I'm still out there dating. I'm single—dating, whatever you call it, hooking up. I don't wanna—I don't care what you look like. It doesn't matter. Just talk about the nitty-gritty because that's what you talk about. What do you do? Because I don't know whether people [*inaudible 0:47:47*]—people think, what is gay?

Does it mean—I will tell you this story. My doctor gave me a anal whatever it is. I don't like anal sex. I said, "Fuck," and he said to me, "Walter, you're gay." I say, "Oh, why, do you think that all gay men get anal? Do you know the difference between a top and a bottom? Do you think that all women—all men like to perform oral sex on women? It's not quite that point, it's not that point." Some men I met recently—from 25 to 50—I'll say, "Do you find a man handsome? Do you find—do you like a man to hold you? Do

you like to kiss?” It’s only about the sex. I hate to say it, but as I get—as I’m older now, I get it. I get it, now, totally.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah.

*Walter Newkirk:* I had two long-term relationships. I lived with somebody for 12 years and somebody for 10 years. My last partner walked out on me at the age of 49. I did nothing wrong. He moved into and became part of a triad which I wrote about in my book, which I was horrifying to me because I thought it was always safe that he saw these guys. I didn’t say what kind of sex he was involved in with them, did I? That’s what he liked. I don’t wanna say it ‘cause you—

*Whitney Strub:* Sure.

*Walter Newkirk:* All right. You ready? Both of them died, and he’s now married to an Episcopal minister who has children and grandchildren. You tell me. He was also married to a woman. I don’t—

*Whitney Strub:* Right. Yeah.

*Walter Newkirk:* Anything’s possible. When people said to me, “Oh, he’s married,” I’m, “Okay. Right. Great.” Because, to me, all the men I’ve met since whatever are married to women. In northern New Jersey where I’m living, on the Internet, I don’t even ask anymore because they’re all married, and the young guys also have girlfriends that don’t know that—and they don’t even claim a title. I ask the older men—I kinda like I’m a new Masters and Johnson. I say, “Well, when did you start? How long have you been doing this?” or whatever. A lot of these people—their entire life.

I met three people recently—and I wanna tell you about this only because I think it’s interesting to talk about the sexuality. One guy was 57. His wife—married and adopted her three children, very successful and works in Newark right across from the museum, so whatever. His wife killed herself, and he still takes care of the autistic daughter. He wanted to have sex. I never hear from them again, either. I don’t consider it personally. People don’t want any—they want NSA, no strings attached. They don’t want any whatever. I used to think, well, ugly—it’s not that. I get it now.

Then there was another guy I met who was 44 years old, very good-looking, beautiful eyes, very well-endowed. I enjoyed the experience. I knew when he walked out of here, I’d never see him again. What he told me during the interview, he was married for

four years. He liked to have intercourse with his wife or with women and liked to have men perform oral sex on him. That's how he's led his life.

The last guy—this was—I don't care whether people think I'm bad. This is in the process of a week, and I knew I wanted to tell you this. Last guy was black. I didn't have Internet. I met him at the library. He—25. He wanted to have sex. I met him. He said, "We've met before." I said, "We have?" I said, "I really don't remember." He said, "You're a writer, right?" [*Inaudible 0:51:18*] whatever it is. I came here, and his girlfriend knows as well. You're exceptional, 'cause most of the people I've met—they don't know. The wives don't know or the girlfriends don't know. But again, they don't want a—they don't want a regular thing. He had a relationship. Even the guys that are married, they're happy with they're married—but they want some kind of male sex. That is what's going on.

It's not me. I had a lot of romance with the—I don't wanna say his name, the priest that I was with for two years, from 1983 to 1985, my last partner. I did love him. I thought we had a commitment. When he walked out on me, but guess what? I love my dog now.

*Whitney Strub:* [*Laughter*]

*Walter Newkirk:* No, I highly recommend getting—I tell people—I really—it took me 10 years after he left me to get—I thought I was nothing because I—whatever it is. I wrote three books and produced a CD. My partner who lived with those two men—he got a lot of money and he's married to a priest. God bless. Pat Loud said he did a big favor to you. He held you back, and you know what he did. I didn't realize that, and it took me a while to figure that out because I think this culture tells you, you have to have a partner.

My friend Mary—my friend Mary is 77 years old, never married, not a lesbian. She's great. I like her. She's single. My friend Diane, an actress, PR lady—77 years old. They're in great shape, single. My friends that are married—I have to tell you—terrible. My one friend's son is a lunatic. I'm worried about his life, and his wife has a tumor, and she's going through dementia, and he's working like—and my other friend doesn't have any children. His wife is going crazy. She'll ask if—she'll go to hand you something and then won't let you take it, and walks around. He said to me—he doesn't know [*inaudible 0:53:09*] and they can't afford to get divorced.

I'm saying, with the other people I'm meeting, they're out sucking dick or whatever it is on the side, well, I'll have to go home and be whatever it is. It's kind of comedic to me now. For a while—no, I'm not kidding. I don't know [*cross talk 0:53:24*] any other people to tell you. I'm being honest with you because the amount of single gay people that are around—and I hate to say it. I have no desire—people wanna get married, too—I think the guys that are married are very judgmental from what I met. “Oh, I'm married.” Good for you. You're married, this and that. I'm happy I'm not married. I don't wanna be married to anybody. I'm married to my dog. That's it, you know what I mean?

*Whitney Strub:* Right. But wait, let me pull you back because I didn't fully get this story of Donald Dust. You knew him through the museum?

*Walter Newkirk:* I knew of him in the museum. If you Google him and this and that, I think he did something for the landmarks or something like that, but I also knew this Liz Del Tufo who's still a big force.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, I know the name.

*Walter Newkirk:* She was there when I was there. And then the library, there was another—a couple gay guys in the library.

*Whitney Strub:* I think my question is, so did you know that Donald Dust was gay at the time?

*Walter Newkirk:* I believe I did, but he wasn't someone that I—I kinda like—when I worked at the museum, I was—I was in an open relationship, and I usually got a reservation and the bookstore—the bookstores that—there's bookstores up here, but those places were really quite wild. You go in there, and you'd go behind—and people are still doing that, right? There's one in [*cross talk 0:54:40*] the union called the Moviethon or something. Have you ever seen that? You'd go in, and it's like somebody's badly furnished living room. There's people there. It's really—it's not like—I mean, they didn't really have back-room bars in New Jersey like they did in New York, and you heard about those, right? The [*inaudible 0:54:55*]?

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, sure.

*Walter Newkirk:* I really didn't like those. To think about it—you would go into an area that was probably smaller than this and wall-to-wall people. You don't know if somebody was—if someone's performing oral sex on you, they're—I personally didn't like it. I went there a couple times and—with Richard. I'm allowed to say it 'cause it's

in his documentary, the Sex Positive documentary, and I spent a lot of time with Richard, and we're just not friends anymore. I hate to say it, but it's—I feel like he was gonna be my partner for everything, and guess what? In life, things change.

Pat Loud went back with her husband who she divorced on television after Lance Loud died. Nothing's—I hate to say it because of my affiliation with Grey Gardens, and nothing's black and white anymore. It's a lot of gray. There's a lot of gray areas.

*Whitney Strub:* Right. One other place in Newark I think you mentioned was Branch Brook Park.

*Walter Newkirk:* Branch Brook Park was another place you went to cruise aside from when—

*Whitney Strub:* Can you tell me when—this is—

*Walter Newkirk:* In the afternoons.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, I meant like the—when, the '70s, '80s, '90s?

*Walter Newkirk:* Seventies, '80s, and '90s. Still might be going, and there's still some *[inaudible 0:56:00]* of it. I don't have a car anymore when I go through there. It's so white bread at the South Mountain Reservation, I will be that there are still people that go there. It's certainly not like it was before the Internet. I mean, the Internet—and the Internet shut down bars. There's no bars anymore. There's—Manny's Den doesn't even exist.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, no. I know.

*Walter Newkirk:* Oh, you know where I used to go? My Aunt Marian—I had this in the book—lived in the Northgate Apartments right by the George Washington Bridge. I think they're like slums now. Do you know that the gay bar was the Lamplighter room in the lobby of that high-rise, and I used to go there, and I was almost—well, Camden is seen as one of the most dangerous city—I just watched American Hustle the other night. That's a great movie.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, yeah. Yeah.

*Walter Newkirk:* I just love that movie. I could watch that 100 times. It's just incredible, but Camden—I was going in there, and I thought, "Wow. This is my grandmother's sister that sent my mother a sympathy card after I came out." My mother wrote—listen. My

mother—may she rest in peace—she did a good job. My father was a philanderer. I had that in my book. She had an alcoholic father, and her son was gay. To me, that's a lot. She always had a smile on her face and—and I miss her. She died three years ago on March 4<sup>th</sup>, and I was not told, and my sister and brother-in-law took all the money, and I didn't do anything wrong, and people said to me, "What happened to you happens to a lot of people." I didn't know that because it never happened to me.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah. Sure, sure. Wait. Branch Brook Park—do you have any specific memories or stories about it?

*Walter Newkirk:* No, people would get out and walk, or you'd go around in your car.

*Whitney Strub:* Where in the park? 'Cause it's a big—

*Walter Newkirk:* The whole—the whole—you circle around. You circle around. It's not that big. It's like the South Mountain Reservation. You circle around the whole—it's like a circle. You make a circle around it.

*Whitney Strub:* Was it more—was there more foliage back in the day? Because it's [*cross talk 0:57:47*].

*Walter Newkirk:* There was more foliage. You walk, but I'm telling you, the most popular place was the—everywhere we—people from Newark, too, would go to the South Mountain Reservation. That was the—that's why I asked if other people think—'cause that was it. That was it. Then Penelope's closed. I didn't know where we went. There's a place called Dupes that was—oh, and then there was Charlie's West in South Orange—Charlie's West. That was a bit—that was a gorgeous bar. I can't really—did you meet a lot of people? I guess I should've gone to Murphy's, but I just—

*Whitney Strub:* Murphy's seems really central to Newark. I don't know—

*Walter Newkirk:* Was that more black guys or white guys?

*Whitney Strub:* I think it changed over time because it was open as early as the late '40s, I think.

*Walter Newkirk:* Well, and that's what I said. It was in the Little Theater. Now, that had to be a—

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, so wait, wait, have you been into the Little Theater?

*Walter Newkirk:* No, but there were other places in Passaic that were like that. They were kind of like the Adonis Theater in New York. You heard of that, right?

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, yeah, yeah, of course.

*Walter Newkirk:* I kinda liked—I did those scenes ‘cause they’re whatever, and I just—at this age, I wouldn’t do it again, and I [*inaudible 0:58:45*] the bookstore scene—it’s not the whatever, because I still—I used to go to the McDonald’s—I used to go to the McDonald’s parking lot on Broad Street. In fact, that’s where I got a DWI with a drink in the car, smoking my cigarettes, and I’d pick people up, and I’d—when I worked at the John Harms Center, now Bergen PAC, I didn’t go into Feathers anymore and sit out in the parking lot, I would drive them back to the theater. I wanna tell the guys that were bringing girls back there—again, I was not openly gay. I just didn’t wanna do it. I didn’t do the coming-out thing until 1993, on the job.

*Whitney Strub:* Wait. Let me ask you, though, this, because this relates to what you just said. When you go to Newark, you’re pretty unimpressed with the city, originally. [*Laughter*] You had the phrase—I liked your phrasing here. You catch the dilapidated, Erie Lackawanna train to Newark.

*Walter Newkirk:* Terrible. You’d see these high-rise apartments with horrible—have you ever ridden it? I don’t know if it’s changed. It’s like the urban wasteland, at least in 1980 to ’82 it was.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah. Yeah, I mean, you’re—this is you. This is a quote. “I felt dirty and felt like I was on a death train as we passed [*cross talk 0:59:53*].

*Walter Newkirk:* That’s right, I did.

*Whitney Strub:* “That looks like a nuclear fallout had occurred on the way to Newark.” You’re working at the museum from 1980 to ’82, and you’re in the closet there, but you do write this in your book. “I had sexual liaisons at the Newark museum with a young maintenance man named Louie who was a smoking-hot Italian with a big bulge in his pants. Louie and I got on the freight elevator one day and reenacted the sex scene from the film *Fatal Attraction*. This happened a few times during the two years I was at the museum.” Say a little more about that because, other than that, Newark doesn’t figure very prominently in the kind of sexual history of [*cross talk 1:00:33*].

*Walter Newkirk:* He was pretty hot. The guy I lived with, Fred, was someone that I wrote about that did not appeal to me. I smoked grass. He loved to smoke grass. He liked me. He was about six years older than I was, and we moved in together and had an apartment—he lived with his parents, and the first night we were in there, I look over, Fred’s not there. He had gone out to pick somebody up, and he said, “This doesn’t mean anything.” That was kind of my indoctrination into gay life, I guess. It’s not for everybody or a bit [*inaudible 1:01:05*] not for people who are married. He told me he had met a guy that worked at the museum named Louie, and I thought—I saw Louie, and I said, “You remember my roommate, Fred?” “Oh, he had a pretty big dick. He was pretty hot.” Even I mentioned it to Ulysses, and I said, “I got together with Louie a couple times.”

Well, he unfortunately is no longer alive. I think he committed suicide. I don’t know whether I should give his last name or not because that’s [*cross talk 1:01:28*] whatever it is, but it kinda—when you look at people back—I tell you, some other guy—another guy that I shared an apartment with in Bloomfield—again from Rutgers—his name was Larry Sutton. You can look him up. He died of a heart attack and whatever it is. You know what, Whit? I’m 63 years old. I’m really happy that you’re talking to me ‘cause I do wanna tell my story.

The reason that the book started was I was—I said—identify with Grey Gardens, also [*inaudible 1:01:53*] for the Rutgers paper. I almost wound up in Greystone, and when I came out, I said, “I wanna write a book about what it’s like to be in a—you don’t know what it’s like to be in a,”—have you ever been in a psychiatric intensive care unit?

*Whitney Strub:* I have not.

*Walter Newkirk:* It’s like being in a prison. It’s like the—did you ever see the TV series Oz? Did you watch parts of that?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, yeah. I saw parts of that.

*Walter Newkirk:* Let me tell you something. It’s pretty whatever. You get thrown in rooms with people, and people are screaming in the middle of the night, and I really—I felt that I had another chance when I got out there, and the book started to be about hospitals and the people—the different people that are thrown together like a prison, and you have to eat with them and watch TV with them. I was in there for a



few weeks, and a friend of mine from Rutgers really helped me. She said, “You don’t belong here.”

What had happened was my sister beat me down so far that I really felt that I had no hope left or whatever, but when I came out, I had gotten that all back. That’s really what I looked at—my book made into a movie because I was also on antidepressants, as you know, for many years, and I quit them on my own. I feel that a lot of people don’t need them and they’re prescribed ineffectively and too often for too many people.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, this really Big Pharma.

*Walter Newkirk:* Yeah, it is. It’s too—I had—I went off of them—it’ll be three years and whatever, and I’m fine. Am I emotional? Yes. Am I a creative person? Yes. People use me—do you think that one psychiatrist can really take care of 20 people in a hospital and know what’s wrong with all of them without blanketly giving them the same thing? I wrote about this in my book, and that’s why I said it’s—I did the book for a lot of different reasons. I think that people love Grey Gardens. There’s five films done about it. My book sold well, but I figured, too, that I wanted them to know more about me, and that’s why I tried to be as honest as I could because I just wanted to say, “Well, this is who I am, and this is what I’ve been through, and I made it to here,” and if that helps you, I think that everybody’s interested in stories about survival today.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, yeah. No, absolutely.

*Walter Newkirk:* This is in American Hustle—what were they all doing? It’s what they were doing to survive, right?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, no. Absolutely. I just wanna go back quick to Louie, though. This is a guy who identified as straight publicly or [*cross talk 1:04:01*] was he gay and out?

*Walter Newkirk:* I’m not really sure. Nobody was out. The only one that was out at the museum was Ulysses—was Ulysses. He swept the floors, and this and that. He was pretty hot. He was pretty hot.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, and so was he—was he the only man that you hooked up with while on the job there?

*Walter Newkirk:* Yeah. I’m trying to—yeah, yeah, yeah. Oh, it was very scandalous to do. I had this suit on [*cross talk 1:04:20*] so to stop the elevator—stopped the freight elevator. I didn’t tell that to the book,

but I did tell Ulysses, and he remembered him because he was pretty hot. You know what? I was just with kind of guys like people—like why did you do this? I kinda went for it. If you're the best-looking guy in the room and you have the biggest dick or whatever it is, I'm gonna go over and try and get you because that's how I do it.

People said to me, "How did you ever—" Pat Loud—she had a movie made about her, and Grey Gardens and—well, because it intrigued me. Because I wanted to meet those people. I think that we're here, and if you don't take advantage of opportunities or whatever, then what are you doing? You know what I mean?

*Whitney Strub:*

Yeah, no, absolutely. You write about this in the book, but just for the interview, why did you leave the museum?

*Walter Newkirk:*

I left the museum because Pat Loud said to me, "I really think you should be in your—I think you should do your own business, and I know a guy that's a class act." I met him, and we—he wasn't really working. He was actually from New Jersey, and his name was Tom McDowell, and so we went into it, and about three or four months later, I didn't like it and got paranoid and stopped. We had thrown a party for the cast of film *Diner*, at the diner in Wales. We represented somebody. I was so down and out and felt like I was so ashamed—I actually worked in Newark at NCR, National Cash Register, as a clerk.

Then his—Tom—I don't know what he did all the years. He married a woman that was a schoolteacher, and they invented Airborne, that stuff that you take and the multi—they're multi-millionaires now. Yeah.

Yeah, and I was not to return to Newark 'til very recently. I went to parties there. The *Star-Ledger* was in Newark. I tell what—people that lived in Newark and—then there [*inaudible 1:06:17*] in Englewood and whatever it is, and then I worked in New Brunswick, and that was short-lived. You don't have sex with people you work with, unlike Louie Lamberti, you don't—whatever, you don't shit where you eat, as the expression goes.

That kinda just happened. I wrote about that, whatever—he's no longer there, but—and then again, I felt like—I always felt that whether you have jobs going on that—so I would go down there, and I'd do something else. When my business didn't [*inaudible 1:06:42*] with customer service representative. Again, people said to me, "Do you have a girlfriend? Well, we were starting to

wonder about you.” That’s what I was saying the priest—it was not okay to be gay, whereas in high school or—it’s just so somebody [*inaudible 1:06:56*] they’d say, “Cupcake, you’re a fag.” You can’t do that in high school, and in that movie, *Unhung Hero*, I told you about? I didn’t understand you’re not allowed to really shower at some high schools anymore after gym, or you have to wear underwear. I’m, “Oh, my God.” The world has changed, and I didn’t know it, do you know what I mean?

This whole thing with the gay-straight alliance really amazing me. In other words, if we were in high school and I said, “You’re such a fag,” you can report that. Well, you knew all this.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, yeah. No, I mean, it’s—yeah, I mean, it’s—

*Walter Newkirk:* It’s a different world.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, it’s a new regime, right?

*Walter Newkirk:* You’re 20 years younger than I am, but it’s still—you have to remember in a different time, whatever it is.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, yeah. No, absolutely.

*Walter Newkirk:* I mean, in 19—well, you were still a young child. When did you start to see a change? In the ‘90s? You know what changed? [*Cross talk 1:07:42*] You know what it changed? Will and Grace. I hate to say it. That’s what changed it, and you know it changed it. I went to work in New York for a PR firm. First off, I was doing PR for *The Advocate*, and a woman that had a—whatever it is, and I went in, and the first project they gave me was a book called *A Special Agent: Gay and Inside the FBI*.

There was no way. The other woman that I was working with was a lesbian. We were not out, and we looked at each other, and I said, “I cannot work with this man and act like I’m straight when he’s a gay FBI agent,” so I would—came out like baptism by fire or whatever you wanna say. Then—and people on the staff were calling him Butt-tino, and they sent him my thing, well—then they never—maybe they had a gay and lesbian media relation which I really didn’t wanna do, but guess what? I met a lot of people, and it’s—you know what I did.

*Whitney Strub:* Let me see. I think—I may have covered the specific questions I had. Just give me one second to review here.

*Walter Newkirk:* No, yeah, that's fine.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, I mean, those were the specific things I was going to ask you about.

*Walter Newkirk:* Okay. Did you want me to tell—I'll tell you who my heroes are. As I said in the beginning of the book, Paul Cadmus. That painting that he did—The Fleet's In! —I freaking—can you imagine he was hired to do that for the WPA, and he has one guy picking up another guy and this and that? Again, very closeted. I met him, as you know. I put in my book he did an exhibit. Boy, I'll tell you something—and then George Platt Lynes, and Michelangelo Signorile who wrote *Queer in America*. I have to take a leak. I'll be right back. I wanna show you a couple things. Are we almost done?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, basically. I'll pause the recording for a second. Hang on.

*Walter Newkirk:* Here, you wanna see this? I think this is on the back of my book. Could my pants get any—

*Whitney Strub:* All right. I'm recording again and sort of walking around.

*Walter Newkirk:* Look at this.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, whoa.

*Walter Newkirk:* That's archival.

*Whitney Strub:* No, that's great.

*Walter Newkirk:* That's actually at the Rutgers [*cross talk 1:09:31*] 'cause see, this is my series, and this is before the book came in.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, that's great. You know what? I'm gonna take a picture. I'll narrate this for—okay. This is a poster for the Changing Stereotypes of Women, Blacks, and Gays in the Cinema—

*Walter Newkirk:* I did that when I was not openly gay.

*Whitney Strub:* - which you did through the New Jersey Committee for the Humanities—

*Walter Newkirk:* Well, no, it was actually—

*Whitney Strub:* - and Rutgers.

*Walter Newkirk:* Yeah, I worked for Rutgers—

*Whitney Strub:* And this was 1977?

*Walter Newkirk:* Yeah, 1977.

*Whitney Strub:* Hang on. I'm gonna—

*Walter Newkirk:* And you know I was still in touch with a woman there? I wasn't openly gay doing this. Can you imagine? I went around just not saying [*cross talk 1:10:00*].

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, that's—it had to be pretty rare for anybody to be doing this at the time. I guess I—

*Walter Newkirk:* But [*inaudible 1:10:06*] one of my little pictures. I think I have one leftover from Boys in the Band.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, of course.

*Walter Newkirk:* Actually, wait. Can you stand—

*Whitney Strub:* No, no, whatever. You do what [*cross talk 1:10:14*].

*Walter Newkirk:* Block the sun, actually. This is perfect. [*Cross talk 1:10:17*].

*Whitney Strub:* This isn't really gonna be a usable image—

*Walter Newkirk:* Well, there's a picture in the book of it.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, you're right, so yeah [*cross talk 1:10:22*]. Look, it's—while I'm still recording, anything you wanna say while I'm recording, or I can—

*Walter Newkirk:* [*Cross talk 1:10:26*] the books, 'cause I really pulled all these just for you. I'm gonna—'cause I have different things to—here, sit down. You can sit down.

*Whitney Strub:* All right. I'll leave this on and you—

*Walter Newkirk:* Yeah, yeah, all right. Now, you've seen my other books, right? This is my first book. Have you seen this?

*Whitney Strub:* Okay, right. I haven't seen a physical copy. Memorabilia.

*Walter Newkirk:* Okay. Well, I'm gonna take—this is the stuff I've collected on the inside. I sent you this. They did—here's the actual invitation. This was pretty funny, right?

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, wow.

*Walter Newkirk:* This is my fancy invitation.

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, that's [laughter]—

*Walter Newkirk:* See [cross talk 1:10:56] RSVP to the Newark Museum 'cause that's where I—and then we show the whatever it is. The Rutgers Alumni magazine [inaudible 1:11:06] when I did this—when I did the CD and I had the book forthcoming.

*Whitney Strub:* This was when? What's the date?

*Walter Newkirk:* This is 2000—I'm actually across from Kristin Davis who wrote—who was in Sex and the City—2008.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, okay. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. You sent this.

*Walter Newkirk:* I sent that to you.

*Whitney Strub:* Garden of Edie, a former Targum reporter relives his endearing interview with Edith and Edie Bouvier Beale, subjects of the cult classic Grey Gardens, spring 2008, Rutgers Magazine for anybody who wants to look it up. We can include a link, actually, on the interview page.

*Walter Newkirk:* Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's the thing I wanted you to see. That's my first book. What I hope to do—it's 10 years since I did this—is do these two books together, the second [cross talk 1:11:48] book of letters and then do an addendum.

*Whitney Strub:* This is Memorabealea as in B E A L E, a private scrapbook about Edie Beale of Grey Gardens, first cousin to First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, published by Walter Newkirk in 2008.

*Walter Newkirk:* See, and that's what I said. It's the tenth anniversary, and then this—because the Grey Gardens was five movies made—I wanna do—

*Whitney Strub:* Here, let me see.

Walter Newkirk: - I think people—hopefully, Rutgers University Press will wanna do this.

Whitney Strub: This is Letters of Little Edie Beale, Grey Gardens and Beyond, edited by Walter Newkirk, also in 2009. Oh, yeah. No, this is great. *[Cross talk 1:12:24]* Yeah, transcribed letters. Yeah, this is a great archive.

Walter Newkirk: That's what I said to do this, I wanna do them back to back and then do what's happened since then. *[Cross talk 1:12:35]* drag race—here's Evie Beale's book. This is pictures of her when she was a model. Yeah, just *[inaudible 1:12:40]* interest you. Look what's on the inside. I'll show you. I put stuff in here. I went to do a book signing in Madison, and I met Penny Sullivan 1:12:49 who's—this is how she's related to him. Her grandmother was sisters with Edie Beale, and then she's *[cross talk 1:12:56]* Chatham *[inaudible 1:12:58]*.

Whitney Strub: Yeah, there's no way to convey this for the audio record, but it's on—it's a family tree.

Walter Newkirk: Here's the—I'm just showing you this. This was a program for the movie. It's *[inaudible 1:13:07]* bought one for me for \$500.00.

Whitney Strub: Oh. Well, this is original from 1976?

Walter Newkirk: Yeah.

Whitney Strub: Oh, wow.

Walter Newkirk: They give it out when you went to see the movie.

Whitney Strub: Yeah, yeah. No, that's great.

Walter Newkirk: That is an article, but there's something else that she signed, and this is the story about the house getting cleaned up, but these pictures in the book are all pictures of Edie Beale—they're family pictures when she was a young girl.

Whitney Strub: Huh. No, this is great.

Walter Newkirk: Well, the Grey Gardens thing has really become like a—she's almost like a pop culture hero. People dress up as her *[cross talk 1:13:35]*—let me show you this—did you ever see this?

Whitney Strub: *[Laughter]* I think we're shifting gears here.

*Walter Newkirk:* Well, I know, I'm shifting [*inaudible 1:13:43*] this is a gay interview. I wanted to show you a lot of [*inaudible 1:13:45*].

*Whitney Strub:* Sure, sure. This is Harry Bush Hard Boys—I think I know what—

*Walter Newkirk:* Wait 'til you see these graphics.

*Whitney Strub:* Oh, whoa. Okay, so it's anime and sketches—

*Walter Newkirk:* They're old. They're from the '40s.

*Whitney Strub:* Huh. No, this is fascinating.

*Walter Newkirk:* Here's your friend. He was from New Jersey, Bill Cadmus. In fact, are you familiar with his work?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, no. I know it.

*Walter Newkirk:* Well, he lived in Bloomfield [*cross talk 1:14:08*] Jersey.

*Whitney Strub:* That I hadn't realized.

*Walter Newkirk:* Yeah, you have to re-look at this.

*Whitney Strub:* George Chauncey writes about him in [*cross talk 1:14:12*].

*Walter Newkirk:* I have two copies of this. Would you like one?

*Whitney Strub:* I mean, I don't wanna take it from you, but if it's not—

*Walter Newkirk:* I have two. I don't need two.

*Whitney Strub:* Sure.

*Walter Newkirk:* All right. Let me get one for you [*cross talk 1:14:18*].

*Whitney Strub:* I mean, I'll actually put it in the Queer Newark library.

*Walter Newkirk:* That's fine. I want some of the—you to do some of these things. This is a great thing, just to show you this.

*Whitney Strub:* Okay. So wait, wait, wait. TV Guide, 50 Years of Television.

*Walter Newkirk:* Let's see if I can find it. You know what I'm looking for. Look at this and this. We went from this to this.



Whitney Strub: *[Laughter]*

Walter Newkirk: The Louds to the Osbornes.

Whitney Strub: The Loud family and the Osbornes. Yeah, that is—

Walter Newkirk: This has never been done before.

Whitney Strub: Yeah, that really is *[cross talk 1:14:43]*.

Walter Newkirk: And she came to *[cross talk 1:14:43]* Rutgers. When she came to Rutgers, it was like Sharon Osborne coming to Rutgers, do you know what I mean?

Whitney Strub: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Walter Newkirk: ‘Cause people were like, “Isn’t that Pat Loud? What is she doing here?”

Whitney Strub: *[Laughter]*

Walter Newkirk: She came to see a *[inaudible 1:14:53]*. Here. We’ve got *[inaudible 1:14:55]* other things.

Whitney Strub: Oh, all right. *[Inaudible 1:14:56]* sit down.

Walter Newkirk: Here’s some of his stuff. I have all of his books. That’s what I said. These have to go somewhere, whether it’s the Rutgers library, ‘cause if not, they’re gonna go in the garbage, and I wanna talk to you about that. It’s not—doesn’t have to be you. Nobody wants to be my executor. I need somebody to be my executor. Look around here. This stuff has to go somewhere. Do you want it to go in the garbage? It shouldn’t be in the garbage.

Whitney Strub: No, I think—I feel like the Rutgers Archive people—they’re the ones—

Walter Newkirk: Look at these. These are all the—here, you can sit down. Have you ever seen his stuff?

Whitney Strub: Yeah, yeah. No, I know *[cross talk 1:15:24]*.

Walter Newkirk: All right. Okay. These are all his stuff.

Whitney Strub: LGBT *[cross talk 1:15:27]*.

Walter Newkirk: That is quite a provocative cover, right?

Whitney Strub: *[Laughter]* Yes. We see a man's face buried in a man's crotch.

Walter Newkirk: Have you ever seen these?

Whitney Strub: I don't know.

Walter Newkirk: Take a look at those. Just take a look at them.

Whitney Strub: Giovanni Members Only, supersized—

Walter Newkirk: What did I tell you? What did I tell you? Dude. Dude. In this culture, they're not showing ass more. It's about the big dick.

Whitney Strub: Oh, that is certainly what supersized is *[laughter]*. Yeah.

Walter Newkirk: Am I right or wrong? Based on what I'm showing you—I'm telling you—I'm trying to share with you my knowledge because—

Whitney Strub: Right. No, that is clearly the—where the culture has gone.

Walter Newkirk: Have you ever seen this?

Whitney Strub: Forbidden Erotica. Sounds familiar.

Walter Newkirk: Take a look at this. Sit down. Sit down. Sit down. Sit down. *[Cross talk 1:16:03]* collection.

Whitney Strub: You have to go through that one. That's old pictures. This is a great book. Have you ever seen this?

Walter Newkirk: I know *[cross talk 1:16:09]*.

Whitney Strub: His partner's in it and *[cross talk 1:16:10]*.

Walter Newkirk: This is all old pictures.

Whitney Strub: Hang on. I feel like—for the interview, this is not necessarily serving a whole lot of good, so I'm gonna stop recording right now and let—

Walter Newkirk: That's fine.

*Whitney Strub:* - is there anything else you wanted to add?

*Walter Newkirk:* I thought that you might have knowledgeable stuff. I'll think about it when I—whenever it is, but I thought that some of this might key in for you or—

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, no, it's really interesting. But as I stop recording, I just wanna thank you for doing this interview, and we will transcribe it and send it to you—

*Walter Newkirk:* Well, after I listen to you on enough interviews, I thought it'd be nice to meet someone who finally has a brain.

*Whitney Strub:* *[Laughter]* Well, thanks.

*Walter Newkirk:* 'Cause I have to tell you something. Even though we're talking about the thing which I'm gonna show you, that the thing that's a—most important inconcluding to this Unhung Hero is the size of a man's cock. No, no, no. I'm not kidding. That's why I'm showing you all this stuff because I would have it—with all the stuff I collected—if the ass—just like Taschen did The Big Penis Book. Have you seen that?

*Whitney Strub:* Yeah, yeah.

*Walter Newkirk:* Okay. Well, and they had the Big Boobs Book and the big thing, but the Big Penis kind of over—that's what I said in my book, big dicks are a dime a dozen. People normally—except for Howard Stern, nobody's going around saying, "Well, I have a small dick," right?

*Whitney Strub:* *[Laughter]* This is true.

*Walter Newkirk:* I wanted to talk about that—I wanted to talk about that only because I talked about it in my book.

*Whitney Strub:* Right, right.

*Walter Newkirk:* Because it was a big thing, and like I said at the end, guess what? If you think you have a big dick, somebody else has a bigger dick, or whatever it is, so big dicks are a dime a dozen.

*Whitney Strub:* That is the perfect closing line, so with that, I hit stop.

*Walter Newkirk:* I thought you would like that.

*[End of Audio]*