

Queer Newark Oral History Project
Interviewee: Tiney Pringle
Interviewer: Kristyn Scorsone
Date: February 22, 2018
Location: Rutgers University-Newark

Kristyn Scorsone: Today is February 22nd, 2018. My name is Kristyn Scorsone, and I'm interviewing Tiney Pringle at Rutgers Newark for the Queer Newark Oral History Project. The first question I have to ask you is when and where were you born?

Tiney Pringle: Newark, New Jersey. March the 24th, 1953.

Kristyn Scorsone: Who raised you?

Tiney Pringle: My mother. Single mother.

Kristyn Scorsone: What did she do for a living?

Tiney Pringle: Housekeeping.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did she work in Newark?

Tiney Pringle: Yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you have any siblings?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, one sister and five brothers.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow. Did you grow up in one place, or did you move around a lot?

Tiney Pringle: Moved around. *[Laughs]* Everywhere.

Kristyn Scorsone: What parts of Newark have you lived in?

Tiney Pringle: The whole Newark. *[Laughter]* For real.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you like one area of Newark better than another?

Tiney Pringle: Not really. No.

Kristyn Scorsone: What were you like as a kid? As a child?

Tiney Pringle: What I thought I was like, I liked to draw a lot. I was into sports a lot. I had five brothers, and I've ran with them. We did the boy thing. We was out in the street.

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Kristyn Scorsone: Were you the youngest, oldest, middle?

Tiney Pringle: I'm third.

Kristyn Scorsone: Third, yeah. What's one of your earliest memories?

Tiney Pringle: My earliest memories? [Pauses] I don't know what you mean by that.

Kristyn Scorsone: I don't know. Something in childhood that stands out to you. Maybe a good memory. Or a holiday. Something like that.

Tiney Pringle: Nothing really specific.

Kristyn Scorsone: Where did you go to school?

Tiney Pringle: I went to 18th Avenue, Peshine Avenue, Clint Blake Junior High, Central High, Southside High. Lafayette Street. I told you I lived all over. *[Laughter]* All over Newark.

Kristyn Scorsone: What area of Newark did you live the longest, or were you very frequently moving?

Tiney Pringle: The longest. It mighta been in Hayes Homes projects. Mighta been that.

Kristyn Scorsone: How did you like it there?

Tiney Pringle: Well, I was little so I didn't really know a lot.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you know Sandra Toby Heath? I think she lived there, too. She's someone we interviewed.

Tiney Pringle: No, I was young.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. I think she lived there as a kid, maybe in the 50s.

Tiney Pringle: I was born in 53.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, she might be a little older.

Tiney Pringle: Might be a little older.

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- Kristyn Scorsone: Were you close with your mom?
- Tiney Pringle: Pretty close. I mean, she had seven kids and she had to do the best she could with seven kids.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, that's tough. Did you have an idea of what you wanted to be when you grew up?
- Tiney Pringle: Well, I wanted to be an artist, or a gym teacher. That was later on in life. When I was younger, I didn't really think too much about what I wanted to be. Like when we was growing up. All the boys were supposed to be firemen, and all the females were supposed to be a secretary. Bringing coffee to the boss. I wasn't trying to hear that. I wasn't gonna be nobody's secretary.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Why?
- Tiney Pringle: That wasn't me. I mean come on.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Did you think of yourself as a tomboy?
- Tiney Pringle: I was a tomboy.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Did you only hang out with your brothers? Did you hang out with girls, too, or only guys?
- Tiney Pringle: When I was real younger, I'll say about ten, eleven, but once the girls start thinking about boys, I wasn't into that. Thinking about boys and doing what—you know what I mean? I stopped hanging out with them and used to hang out with the boys more. Because by then I was getting into sports.
- Kristyn Scorsone: What sports did you play?
- Tiney Pringle: Softball, basketball, baseball, football.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Oh yeah? That's awesome.
- Tiney Pringle: Yeah.
- Kristyn Scorsone: How would you describe your sexual orientation? How you identify, or do you identify? As lesbian, gay, bi, trans.

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Tiney Pringle: Gay.

Kristyn Scorsone: Gay, okay.

Tiney Pringle: Cause nowadays you don't—I see lesbian as being a girl looking like a boy, or being a boy looking like a girl. Like that.

See, when I was growing up, we wasn't called lesbians and gay. I was younger, but it was still in my family. You was a bulldagger. That was a long time ago.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was that a positive or a negative?

Tiney Pringle: And a dyke. It was a woman that looked like a man. That was a bulldagger back when I was growing up.

Kristyn Scorsone: How do you see your gender identity? Do you see yourself as butch or femme or bulldagger? How do you identify?

Tiney Pringle: Butch. Never Femme.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you have anybody in your family that was gay or lesbian?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, my mother, for a minute. Now this what happened, how I knew about the lifestyle. My mother, she couldn't properly take care of us, so they took us from my mother. We was in a home. My mother had to find a place for us before they would release us. With seven kids, *[laughs]* I think that took months. It took months. Who my mother ended up finding to be with was another woman.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay. How old were you?

Tiney Pringle: I think I was nine maybe. I think I was eight or nine. Eight or nine.

Kristyn Scorsone: How long was she with her?

Tiney Pringle: We stayed with her about four years. We stayed with her about four years.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you like her?

Tiney Pringle: Loved her.

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Kristyn Scorsone: What was she like?

Tiney Pringle: She drank a lot. She was so cool. For real, she was so cool. She showed us attention, a lot of attention. My mother ain't have time for that, because she was busy taking care of us, see. She showed us, it's different kind of family life and different kinds of family and what family do, and how you don't know how poor you is until you see somebody with something. And she cared about us.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was she butch or femme?

Tiney Pringle: She was butch.

Kristyn Scorsone: How did the relationship end?

Tiney Pringle: I kind of really don't know. See, back then kids stayed in a kid's place. We didn't get in grown folks' business. I don't know, we just up.

Kristyn Scorsone: When did you become aware of your own sexuality? When did you recognize that you were gay?

Tiney Pringle: I really didn't know what gay was. But I knew how I felt. I was living or staying for a minute with my—this is another one of our separations, of having seven kids and can't take care of them. We separated, me and my sister stayed with my mother's mother, right? My grandmother had a babysitter. I had a babysitter back then. I used to be in love with her.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah? What was she like?

Tiney Pringle: She was just nice. I mean you a kid. Somebody hugging you, caressing you. I've never had that. I was in love with her.
[Laughter]

I was really too young to be in love with anybody, but it was just a feeling. It was a feeling. It wasn't like I wanna marry her, ba-ba-ba-ba, stuff like that. It was a warm feeling that I had with her, sitting on her lap, and she rubbing my hair.

Kristyn Scorsone: How old did you say you were at that time?

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Tiney Pringle: Mm. Around then I was—I mighta been eleven. I had a cousin that lived, too, a guy cousin. He liked her, she liked him. That's what I was thinking. I was mad. I was jealous. One day, we walking down the street. Her and her friend and me on her side. We were just walking. She told her friend, she said, "You know what I really like? You know what I really want?" And I'm looking at her like—? And she pointed across the street, and it was a dyke.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow.

Tiney Pringle: Wow is right. It was a fucking dyke. Oh, excuse me. *[Laughter]*

Kristyn Scorsone: It's okay. You can curse, it's fine.

Tiney Pringle: It was a dyke. I was like oh shit. Damn. Since then, I was—psh. I mean, I find out who I was—what I was feeling like I was. But when you young, you don't really know. It's not like today. Today, man, two, three years old, you can be transgender! But they wasn't trying to hear that back then.

Kristyn Scorsone: I should ask you, how would you define a dyke back in those days?

Tiney Pringle: A dyke was a female that dressed, looked, mannerism, all of that, like a man.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay. Then you could call her, if not a dyke, then a bulldagger, right?

Tiney Pringle: Yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay.

Tiney Pringle: We didn't use lesbian. We didn't use those soft names back then.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's cool. What did your grandmother do for a living?

Tiney Pringle: I think she cleaned people houses. She had these pictures of this white family, and their little white kids, that she took care of. I guess that's what she did.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, that's neat. Did you grow up religious at all?

Tiney Pringle: Well, we went to church a lot.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, what kind of a church?

Tiney Pringle: My mother dragged us to church a lot. *[Laughter]* Not that I liked it, but we was little. I mean I know I keep saying we was little, but we was. When you little, you don't have no say so in what you do or where you go. It was okay, though.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was it Catholic or—

Tiney Pringle: No. Baptist Holiness.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you ever hear any anti-gay rhetoric at church, or anything about homosexuals are going to hell?

Tiney Pringle: Not like I do now. No. Because me being yet so young, and going through what I was going through, I wasn't understanding anyway. You hear things, but it didn't faze me.

Kristyn Scorsone: I guess I should ask you, what were you like in high school?

Tiney Pringle: High school. What was I like?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, were you still into art and sports?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah. I actually got a fine art scholarship.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh yeah. Did you go to college?

Tiney Pringle: I only went for like a summer and a year.

Kristyn Scorsone: Where did you go?

Tiney Pringle: Newark State. It was Newark State College [00:14:15]. Back then. It's Kean College now.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, cool. What made you leave?

Tiney Pringle: My sister had a son. He used to always be with me, but I couldn't take him to school with me, because I had a room, board, everything, I had the whole setup at college. A four-year scholarship.

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Kristyn Scorsone: Wow.

Tiney Pringle: I used to come home on the weekend, and maybe sometimes during the weekday, traveling back and forth, back and forth. One day I went home. And my sister, who is a little mentally ill, locked him in the bathroom and pour ammonia under the door. I never went back after that. I really never told nobody that. Never even told him. Or Carol. Cause Carol's still in my life.

Kristyn Scorsone: Carol Glassman you mean?

Tiney Pringle: Mm-hmm.

Kristyn Scorsone: How did you become friends with her?

Tiney Pringle: I lived on Peshine, and on Clinton Avenue. She lived on the same block, but a block over. She used to walk by my house every day to get to that office. They had an NCUP office, or a new NCC office on Clinton Avenue. She used to walk by every day. Wasn't no white people in back then. So I befriended her. I used to speak to her every morning. Make sure I be out there when she walk by every morning. Then one time we start talking. Then I went to her office with her. That's how we became friends. She befriended my whole family.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh yeah? Did you know her girlfriend Judy Harris?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: What was she like?

Tiney Pringle: Fun. She was a fun person. People be all into who they are, you know what I'm saying? I wasn't young, young then. I was still young. I was just twelve. Twelve, going on thirteen or something like that when I first met them.

Kristyn Scorsone: Were they older than you, or younger?

Tiney Pringle: Older.

Kristyn Scorsone: Carol described Judy as having—her style was pointy shoes, that kind of look. Is that how you dressed, too?

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Tiney Pringle: No.

Kristyn Scorsone: What did you like to wear?

Tiney Pringle: Back then females still wore dresses to school. Judy was out. She wasn't in school. She's older than me. So I had to dress accordingly. But after school, I had my pants on and stuff like that. I was still wearing dresses to school when I met them. I was in junior high school when I met Carol. Judy was cool. She was on the jazzy side.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, when we interviewed Carol, she told us a lot about their relationship. That was a really interesting story. Judy seemed really cool.

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, I admired that relationship.

Kristyn Scorsone: How old were you when you first got a partner, or a girlfriend?

Tiney Pringle: Wow. My first girlfriend—I was about seventeen, I think. I used to dib and dab. But I really never had a girlfriend, girlfriend. I mean you have a couple of girlfriend, a couple of girls that you fooled around with. I ain't know nothing about relationships. It was puppy love back then. Puppy love is some strong stuff. *[Laughter]* For real.

Kristyn Scorsone: How old were you when you first started fooling around with girls?

Tiney Pringle: *[Pauses]* Wow. Maybe eleven, twelve.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was it classmates?

Tiney Pringle: Touchy feely, classmates and neighbors.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you ever feel any shame, or you just were like—

Tiney Pringle: Oh no! *[Laughs]* Mm-mm. No way.

Kristyn Scorsone: Were you open about it, or just nobody really noticed?

Tiney Pringle: No, I was never in the closet. See, the thing about me is if a person knew me when I was young, and they see me today, they be like,

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“You still the same!” They know me right off the bat. I be like—I mean if I was that young, they knew. They knew me, they respected me because I was real. Well, some of them respected me. You know, everybody ain’t gonna respect that lifestyle.

Kristyn Scorsone: You said you went to Newark State for a little while, and then you left because you were taking care of your sister’s son?

Tiney Pringle: I was taking—yeah. Not full, full-time, but I cared about his well-being, and I know how I grew up. I tried to take care of him.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you have to get a job when you left school?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, I did.

Kristyn Scorsone: What did you do?

Tiney Pringle: I did. I worked in the factory.

Kristyn Scorsone: What factory?

Tiney Pringle: It was called, my brain. [Pauses] I’ll get back to it. It was factory in North Newark.

Kristyn Scorsone: North Newark, yeah. What kind of factory?

Tiney Pringle: We made irons and crockpots and hair dryers. Stuff like that. Pen Products, it was named. Pen Products in North Newark.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did they have a union or anything? Did you join a union?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, they had a union.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you join it?

Tiney Pringle: Well, it was automatic back then. It wasn’t like today. You got hired, you was automatically in the union. I mean it was just automatic.

Kristyn Scorsone: Around what year did you start working in the factory?

Tiney Pringle: I wanna say maybe 74.

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Kristyn Scorsone: What other kinds of jobs have you had?

Tiney Pringle: Well, when we used to work for the school, like you know how they have them Speedy Jobs?

Kristyn Scorsone: Mm-mm. What's that?

Tiney Pringle: That was jobs for the kids that went to school. In the summertime they give them jobs, like they can work on a playground, or the swimming pool.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay, is that like high school, you mean?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah. [Pauses] I worked for Speedy a couple of years. From junior high out.

We worked for this guy named Mr. Brooks. All we had to do was play basketball. He used to take us around. We'd play everywhere. He used to take us around in his truck. All we had to do was play basketball, so I loved that. Because it was me, Carol, Scudder and Myra. The four of us, and we used to always get—somebody, like I was short. Me, I was short. Carol was just a little taller than me. Scudder was short like me. Myra was a little taller than that. We always had to have somebody taller. Taller than us. For rebounds.

We used to go from playground to playground and just challenge people. See, back in the day—it probably happen today, but I haven't been in the playground scene for so long. I don't know what's going on, now. You go to the playground, you call, "Next." The team that loses, they outta here. The next team come in with the team. If you win, you can play all day. The loser gotta leave the court. We get our—it was four of us dykes. And we picked one other person.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome.

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, we went from playground to playground, and that's how we met Mr. Brooks. When we got in the Speedy program, he got us, and we had to play basketball.

Kristyn Scorsone: He paid you, too? You got paid?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, we got paid. We was working for Speedy.

- Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome. That's really cool. Were you guys friends for a long time, then? As a crew?
- Tiney Pringle: I met Carol in high school. I met Scudder in the playground and Myra in the playground.
- Kristyn Scorsone: How long did you stay friends for?
- Tiney Pringle: We still friends.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?
- Tiney Pringle: Yeah.
- Kristyn Scorsone: What's Scudder and Myra like?
- Tiney Pringle: Scudder and Myra, we was all like I didn't really get too much into their private, I just knew what we did, cause we was into the same thing when we was growing up.
- Kristyn Scorsone: I'm interested in the fashions of that time. How did you guys all dress at that time?
- Tiney Pringle: Well, we was all butches. We dressed like boys.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Like T-shirts and jeans kinda thing?
- Tiney Pringle: Mm-hmm. Back in the day, you rolled up one of your pants leg. You wore your hat on backwards. Stuff like that. T-shirts, roll the sleeve up. And we all had muscles. You know what I mean? We was really showing off back then.
- Kristyn Scorsone: That's cool. Let's see. How do you feel about labels that people put on butch identity as unemotional or being aggressive and things like that? Do you feel like that is true, or do you feel like there's different ways of being butch?
- Tiney Pringle: Yeah. I mean the older you get—you never get too old to learn something. The older you get, I'm still learning things about different kinds of people. Different kinds of butches, cuz you got the butch dressed like a man. Look like, I'm saying, dress

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aggressive. Cuz some men wear things I wouldn't wear, like the real tight-ass jeans and tight-ass shirt.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you guys ever go on dates and stuff when you were doing the basketball—S peedy?

Tiney Pringle: See, the thing is, by us being all butch, the whole team it was all butches [00:26:21]. Different places we would go. Either they reject us, or they liked us, or half and half. We used to go to places where they slept in. It was like a dorm. A dormitory. What would they call that?

Kristyn Scorsone: Like you were in college, you mean? Like a college dorm?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, it was something like that, but it was for younger people. I can't recall the name of it now. One time we went. It was in Pennsylvania. We didn't know how they was gonna accept us. Not that we cared. When we went in there, we heard somebody say, "Oh shit, butches!" Like a million dollars, man. [Laughs]

Kristyn Scorsone: They were excited?

Tiney Pringle: Yes, they was! And baby, we had some fun after that game!

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you hook up?

Tiney Pringle: Huh?

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you hook up then, after the game?

Tiney Pringle: I sure did. I hooked up.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. That's awesome. You played through all different places in Newark, or outside of Newark, too?

Tiney Pringle: We played in Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New York, upstate New York. We went to Massachusetts one time. We had to bail out of there because it started snowing when we was up there. Mr. Brooks used to ride us around all the time.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you ever get into trouble when you were traveling?

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Tiney Pringle: Yeah, sometimes. Everybody didn't like us. Once, this wasn't Mr. Brooks. This was when I was playing in Stella Wright projects. You heard of that?

Kristyn Scorsone: Mm-mm.

Tiney Pringle: No? Stella Wright projects. Prince Street.

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay.

Tiney Pringle: You heard of that?

Kristyn Scorsone: I think I've heard of it. I'm not sure.

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, used to be Stella Wright Projects. Used to be all them projects in a row. From Springfield Avenue on over. We used to play for this man named Deke. He was the head of the Dukas. The Dukas was the guys that box.

The females was named Dukettes. We was the Dukettes. When we went with him, he was shorter than me. Or just as short. He used to carry a bat, though, in his trunk. We went to Upstate New York somewhere. And we played basketball. They had to escort us out of there with the police.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow, why? What happened?

Tiney Pringle: Butches! [Laughing]

Kristyn Scorsone: Were they coming after you?

Tiney Pringle: Not everybody, now. It was certain troublemakers. They were troublemakers. You know everybody ain't gonna like no butch. And they don't never be the females. It always be the guys. We had to be escorted out that time I remember that time, never forget that.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did they meet you there? Were they ready for you? Were they going to fight you?

Tiney Pringle: We was all in the gym. See, we in the gym, so Deke, he always carried his weapon. He had that bat. He wasn't scared to swing it, either. It was like me and you gonna fight. I'm waiting for you to

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throw the first blow. You waiting for me to throw the first blow. You talking all the crap, but I'm sitting there. I'm not wanting to fight. I'm wanting to play. That's how that was.

Kristyn Scorsone: Who called the cops?

Tiney Pringle: The person that was running the gym. They had to call the cops. It would've been a riot up in there.

Kristyn Scorsone: Were the cops nice to you? Or were they annoyed?

Tiney Pringle: No, they just did they job. We got escorted out of there, to make sure that it wasn't no fight. It wasn't like we was gonna back down because our team, butches. [Laughs] We fought in softball, we fought in basketball!

Kristyn Scorsone: Are there places in Newark that specifically butches hung out in, over the years?

Tiney Pringle: Not no more.

Kristyn Scorsone: What about back in the day?

Tiney Pringle: Back in the day, Murphy's.

Kristyn Scorsone: Murphy's, yeah.

Tiney Pringle: It was other bars, because it was a softball league. The softball team that I played on, everybody wasn't butches. We had femmes on the team, butches, femmes.

Kristyn Scorsone: But it was all women?

Tiney Pringle: All women.

Kristyn Scorsone: When were you on the softball team?

Tiney Pringle: That softball team, well, I started being on the softball team in—I was playing basketball in Clinton Place Junior High School, and the lady that worked there, Debra Mitchell, she asked, did we play softball? It was like, "Yeah, we play softball!" She wanted us to come out for the team. We came out for the team and we was playing ever since.

- Kristyn Scorsone: That's cool. It was affiliated with Murphy's or no?
- Tiney Pringle: No, Murphy's was just a bar. Downtown, Mulberry Street. All the gays used to hang out there.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Do you have good memories there?
- Tiney Pringle: A lot of good memories. Yeah, it was just a fun place to be. A fun place where—it's like going there, it's like Halloween. [Laughs] Well, not for me, cause I never been in the closet. I don't know what it feel like to be in the closet. I feel sorry for people that have to be in the closet. Some of my friends, like my mother, she was open-minded to me, because I helped raise my siblings. My mother, I did what I wanted to do, as long as I was respectful. My friends, Scudder and Carol, they had to—like when we go out, dress at my house. Sometimes we would have things that we go to where we had to dress up in suits and—well, we ain't have to. We just wanted. [Laughs] We just wanted to do that. They used to get dressed at my house.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Like before you would go to Murphy's, they'd come over, get dressed?
- Tiney Pringle: Not Murphy's. You could dress any kinda way going to Murphy's.
- Kristyn Scorsone: What would you dress fancy for?
- Tiney Pringle: Like a softball banquet. You get your trophies that night and be at a ballroom. We dressed up.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, you'd all put suits for that?
- Tiney Pringle: Yep. Suits. One time we rented tux.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Oh yeah?
- Tiney Pringle: Yeah, we rented tux.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Where did you go to get tux?
- Tiney Pringle: It was this hall right off of Avon Avenue. It wasn't no place big. It was just that we was glad we took first place. And we butches!

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Hell yeah, we ain't wearing no gowns. We ain't doing that, none of that. We ain't wearing no suit. I said, "Come on, y'all. Let's rent some tux!" So that's what we did. We rented tux for it.

Kristyn Scorsone: Were you nervous to go in there, that they might be like, "What are you guys doing in here?"

Tiney Pringle: No way. No way!

Kristyn Scorsone: Did they treat you nicely?

Tiney Pringle: That place did, yeah. We went to a place, we saw the suit in the window. It was nice, too. A jacket with a hood and nice pants and stuff. So we was like, "Wow!" I mean we all worked, so we had money to do that. I mean not a lot of money, but back then stuff wasn't high like it is today.

It was heaven on earth. I remember that guy, we went in there, and we was asking him about suit. He ain't wanna sell it to us, cuz he said that our bodies is built different. He was real prejudiced against us. I say, "Even though we gonna pay for it?" He wasn't hearing it. He wasn't gonna let us look good that night! [Laughter]

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow. You had to leave empty-handed?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, so I got the tux.

Kristyn Scorsone: Around what year was that?

Tiney Pringle: Seventy-eight, Seventh-nine. Something like that.

Kristyn Scorsone: You were like twenty something?

Tiney Pringle: You know, nineteen, twenty, twenty-one. All during that time I was playing ball. If we wasn't going to some softball, we was going to something basketball.

Kristyn Scorsone: Have you ever hung out in First Choice?

Tiney Pringle: Mm-hmm.

Kristyn Scorsone: How was that place?

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Tiney Pringle: Ooh, it was nice.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's all women? But it's not always. It's not strictly a gay bar, right? It was on certain nights?

Tiney Pringle: No, but it was a place that we can go. Yeah, it was mostly a gay bar, yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was it mostly women, or men, too?

Tiney Pringle: Mostly women. That one was mostly women.

Kristyn Scorsone: Have you ever gone to a place called Sam's and Anne's?

Tiney Pringle: No.

Kristyn Scorsone: How about Bickford Cafeteria?

Tiney Pringle: Where is that, Newark?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, somewhere in Newark. There were more. I think both of those places were more men, though. How about Skippy's. Or Blue Note? Dollhouse?

Tiney Pringle: Definitely.

Kristyn Scorsone: How was Dollhouse?

Tiney Pringle: Dollhouse was the bomb. The bomb diggity!

Kristyn Scorsone: What did you like about it?

Tiney Pringle: I liked about it because it was us. It's like the joy you get when the gay parade come around. The one in New York, baby. It's like that. You be all happy. I paint a T-shirt every year. Well, not every year. When I started I got so many T-shirts that I painted that I'm like say, "Oh, I'm gonna take a T-shirt out of that. I'm gonna make a T-shirt out of that."

It's that joy you get. So many people could fit in there, because it was a factory. It was long. It was big. And it was nice! The people were nice. You had the drag queens. We called them drag queens back in the day. We didn't call them transgender. They wasn't

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getting that silicone. They was getting hormone shots. They had real Ts.

Kristyn Scorsone: How did they get hormone shots?

Tiney Pringle: Well, you had to travel to New York. They used to call it German 'mones.

Kristyn Scorsone: Say it again?

Tiney Pringle: German hormones.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh yeah?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, they called it German 'mones. I had went with them because I wanted to trans, too, but they wouldn't do it for me.

Kristyn Scorsone: No? Why.

Tiney Pringle: Because I was too young. They didn't want me to be making a mistake, and then later on say, "I regret it." Because you know how people is wishy-washy.

Kristyn Scorsone: How old were you?

Tiney Pringle: I was about nineteen, twenty, twenty-one. That's when my life was so exciting, when I was in that age bracket.

Kristyn Scorsone: Who was they? Was it like doctors?

Tiney Pringle: In New York. The same place I used to go with the drag queens back then whey then got they shots and stuff.

Kristyn Scorsone: Where in New York? Do you remember?

Tiney Pringle: No.

Kristyn Scorsone: If you could transition now, would you?

Tiney Pringle: Right now?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

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- Tiney Pringle: No.
- Kristyn Scorsone: How come? Just not interested anymore, or you feel like cause of your age?
- Tiney Pringle: I don't know. If I would wanna do anything, I would wanna get rid of this. [gestures towards chest]
- Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.
- Tiney Pringle: I'm satisfied with who I am. When you growing up, you gonna reflect, you wanna be rebellious, you wanna be a rebel. I used to be a rebel. I ain't lying.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?
- Tiney Pringle: Mm-hmm! Well back then we called them faggots. You know how the faggots used—you have the ones that don't want nobody to know. That look like a boy. But you have the ones that look like a boy but don't give a shit whether you know. And you got the real flaming—well, I was the butch flame. I wasn't acting no kinda way but how I act.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Back then faggot wasn't a bad word? It was what you guys all used?
- Tiney Pringle: Well, that's how we used to identify. I wouldn't come and say, "You faggot." No.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, it's just like amongst friends, I guess. Did you see, at the Dollhouse, the productions they put on?
- Tiney Pringle: Oh yeah. That was the best part of the Dollhouse. That's the shows they used to put on, and the balls! Back then was the greatest. The balls they have today, it ain't nothing like what they had back in the day.
- Kristyn Scorsone: What's changed. What was it like back then, compared to now?
- Tiney Pringle: To me, it's too long. It seem like they have too many categories for the same thing. It's friend-based, too, to me.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Did you ever participate? Did you ever walk or anything?

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- Tiney Pringle: One time, for realness.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah? How'd you do?
- Tiney Pringle: Mm-hmm. I didn't win, that's for sure. [Laughter]
- Kristyn Scorsone: Did you ever take part in any of the plays they put on? The productions?
- Tiney Pringle: No.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Were you around for Newark Rebellion, the Newark Riot in '67?
- Tiney Pringle: How old was I?
- Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, I guess you were pretty young, 1967, so—
- Tiney Pringle: I was about twelve, thirteen, wasn't I? Yeah, I wasn't. Mm-mm.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Were you aware of things like Stonewall happening?
- Tiney Pringle: No, not that young.
- Kristyn Scorsone: When you date, do you prefer to date femme women, or?
- Tiney Pringle: Femme.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?
- Tiney Pringle: But today you can't really—femme ain't femme no more.
- Kristyn Scorsone: How so?
- Tiney Pringle: Because it's just like a butch, they dress like a guy. Then you got a butch that dress like a girl. You also have the femme girls that dress like a girl, but she really a butch! [Laughing] I don't like them kind!
- Kristyn Scorsone: How do you mean, like aggressive? Or—?
- Tiney Pringle: Yeah! They wanna be aggressive in and out the bed! Uh-uh!

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Kristyn Scorsone: Right, yeah. Do you have a partner now?

Tiney Pringle: No, I been single for maybe five years.

Kristyn Scorsone: Have you ever been married or thought about getting married?

Tiney Pringle: No, I thought about getting married without a partner. Of course, you think about things like that, but I take life as it go, cuz I'm not about to get caught up in misery. [Laughing]

I already know what that feels like. I ain't trying to get caught up in that. If it come, it come. If it don't, it don't. That's how I feel about it.

Kristyn Scorsone: Have you ever been in love?

Tiney Pringle: Oh, starting from puppy love! Kidding me? I used to be in love with my teachers, my doctors. Females, period. I just love me [Laughing] When a girl walk by. [sniffs] I sniff and see if I—the scent of a woman. Yeah, I been in love. I been in love.

Kristyn Scorsone: What was your most serious relationship?

[Pause]

Or do you prefer to keep everything casual?

Tiney Pringle: No, if I'm in a relationship, I wanna be in it for love. I don't wanna be in it for nothing else. I know people now in relationships, and love ain't nowhere in it. They get what they can get, and they do what they do. It's just like you ain't even in a relationship. I'm old-fashioned.

Kristyn Scorsone: Since you've lived in Newark all your life, how do you feel like it's changed over time, since you were a kid to now? Do you think Newark's changed a lot? For the better, or for the worse?

Tiney Pringle: Well, the way they fixing it up. It's better living quarters and stuff like that.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you worry about gentrification, like people getting pushed out? Just like too many developments coming in, and rents? Do you worry about rising rents and things like that?

Tiney Pringle: Mm-hmm. Right now, I'm trying to get in low-income housing. I'm trying to retire. Unless I get low-income housing, I can't retire.

Kristyn Scorsone: Right. Is it hard to get?

Tiney Pringle: Well, I put in applications, and I just gotta wait. We'll see what happens.

Kristyn Scorsone: What do you do for a living now?

Tiney Pringle: I'm a housekeeper.

Kristyn Scorsone: In Newark?

Tiney Pringle: I work at the nursing home in East Orange.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you like it?

Tiney Pringle: Not really. [Laughs] It's the job. It's just a job. I'm sick of it, myself. Working in a nursing home is getting kind of depressing sometimes.

Kristyn Scorsone: Are the people nice?

Tiney Pringle: Some of them. You mean the patients?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, the patients. I guess and the workers. Yeah.

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, some of them. Both sides. Some, some.

Kristyn Scorsone: This person might be before your time, but have you ever seen Reese La Rue perform, or heard of him, or anything?

Tiney Pringle: Well, I seen people perform, but might not know they name.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, he was probably—he might've been big before—I think he was born in the 40s, and he was big in the 50s. He was an exotic dancer in Newark. Let's see, what else?

Oh, Whit wanted me to ask you, have you ever heard of the Majestic Beauty Bar?

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Tiney Pringle: Beauty Bar?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Tiney Pringle: I've heard of the Majestic.

Kristyn Scorsone: The Majestic, yeah.

Tiney Pringle: On Orange Street.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, cuz he found—I can probably show it to you.

Tiney Pringle: It's not Majestic no more, you know?

Kristyn Scorsone: Okay, what is it now?

Tiney Pringle: A church.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh.

Tiney Pringle: It might not even be a church.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was Majestic a bar or a dance club?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, a dance club.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, he found—there's Tiny Prince. He has a collection at Newark Public Library that they have on their website. He kept a scrapbook of things. I think this is from the 40s, maybe. It's talking about this guy, Eddie Burton who owned a club. They're basically saying he was gay in this article. There was a woman named Bessie Smith—or Bessie Mae. Sorry, not Bessie Smith. Bessie Mae from the Majestic Beauty Bar. He was talking to Aaron Frasier, and Aaron was saying he thinks it was just called the Majestic for a while, and that you might know more about it than he did.

Tiney Pringle: I guess Majestic was sold over and over.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah, probably.

Tiney Pringle: Because it wasn't called Majestic Beauty Bar, it was just called Majestics. It was a female club.

Kristyn Scorsone: All women?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, but if a man stroll in, the gay guys. They used to come in, too. Mostly it was for the females. Like when they say gay is male. The females don't have really that much, nowhere really to party.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. You hung out there before?

Tiney Pringle: Majestic?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Tiney Pringle: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you like it?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah. Good music. Good drinks. Nice environment. Everybody friendly. Back then, the gays was different than the gays today. See, the younger, if you go to a high school, you will see a whole gang of them bad boys! A whole gang of butches. You can't tell the girls from the boys today. Back then, if I see you on the street, you gay, I'm gay. "What's up?" You know, "What's up?" Today, they be like, they turn they head. It's like you dress like a dude. It's like I'm gonna blow they cover.

That's what they look like. Like they might turn they head or something like that. Or when I wear my shades, I see you, but you don't know I'm looking at you. They look you up and down. I don't understand. I'm serious. [Laughs] I don't understand them today. When I say what's up, they be like [inaudible 00:50:34]. That's the look that they give you. They not friendly like they used to be. What's going on? Man, you see another gay person, shit. Male or female.

Kristyn Scorsone: You feel like it's because maybe cuz it was harder to find other gay people, that it's like oh my god yay, you, when you see somebody.

Tiney Pringle: When?

Kristyn Scorsone: Like back in the day.

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Tiney Pringle: Well, let me say that they was out there. Gays was out there, back in the day, too. But in the closet. You had some that didn't want nobody to know. Then you got the ones that don't give a shit. You are who you are.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, I should ask you, when you—for a second, back to The Majestic, what year was it that you hung out there?

Tiney Pringle: That was in the 80s.

Kristyn Scorsone: When did it close up, do you know?

Tiney Pringle: In the late 80s. This lady named Irma used to run it.

Kristyn Scorsone: What was she like?

Tiney Pringle: She was a whipper-snapper. [Laughter] Little short lady. Gay lady that took care of her business and ran it right. It was a nice place.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow. Is she still alive.

Tiney Pringle: No. I heard she passed.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you have any hobbies now?

Tiney Pringle: Mm-hmm.

Kristyn Scorsone: What do you like to do?

Tiney Pringle: I still paint T-shirts. I paint boots. I do ceramics. I paint for other people. I draw stuff. What got me started was I seen this western shirt in the book. I was like, I like butchy looking stuff. And they had the boots. The guitar and stuff on the shirt. I liked it. That [00:52:58] shirt was \$85.00. It was \$85.00! So I took my shirt, my plain shirt and painted my own stuff on. It looked just as good.

Kristyn Scorsone: What kind of paints do you use?

Tiney Pringle: Fabric paint.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's cool. Do you sell them?

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Tiney Pringle: Yeah, sometimes I sell them. Somebody will see something that I paint—well, I mostly paint for me. Even though I paint for other people if they want something. I'll sell it, but they gotta order it, and I make sure they gonna pay me for it.

Kristyn Scorsone: What do you do when you're painting? How do you get into the zone? Do you listen to music?

Tiney Pringle: I listen to music, and I can only paint when I feel like it.

Kristyn Scorsone: What kind of music you like?

Tiney Pringle: I like soft music. I like meditation music. Some gospel music, like the Barrett Sisters. I like them. I love the way they sing. Old school. I like old music. I don't listen to hip hop. Even though I like some of it now. I don't listen to that type, I still listen to our old good music. They don't know nothing about that music today.

Kristyn Scorsone: Where do you find inspiration? Are you into celebrities, or are you big into reading or other people's art?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, other people art. I might see something. I might see something, and I might see it a different way. Like listen, in ceramics class, they always have figures, male and female. Now me, I used to make two women or two men. I never made a male and a female.

Kristyn Scorsone: Where did you go for the ceramics class?

Tiney Pringle: In East Orange.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was that recently.

Tiney Pringle: I ain't been—class is closed now because the teacher moved.

Kristyn Scorsone: It's like a couple years ago?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's really cool. I would like to learn that. I've never gotten the chance to do a class like that.

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Tiney Pringle: Ceramics class, I'm trying to find another one. Cause I kinda wanted to go into business making angels. I used to sell a lot of them. A lot of statues. I make them male, female in a minute.

Kristyn Scorsone: Are you involved in any organizations or activism or anything like that?

Tiney Pringle: No.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you ever worry about gay rights and stuff? Or politicians and politics and all that?

Tiney Pringle: I'm really not into politics. I'm just trying to live my life. I worry about people disrespecting me, you know, cause of who I am. Because you always going to run into that. Always.

I mean, some people, they try to act like they don't know. How can you look at me and tell I ain't gay? You understand what I'm saying? Then they try to talk about gay people when not in they presence. [Laughs] Hey, wait a minute. You can't do that. You can't do that. I'll set somebody straight in a minute. Because you ain't gotta like me, for real. I don't really care whether you do or not, but you have to respect me. You can't talk about who I am in front of me.

Kristyn Scorsone: Right.

Tiney Pringle: It happens.

Kristyn Scorsone: What was I going to ask you. Are you still friends with Scudder and Myra?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah. And Carol.

Kristyn Scorsone: I guess do you have any favorite funny memories of you guys hanging out?

Tiney Pringle: [Laughs] A lot of stuff. One time, when we travelled when we all had bikes.

Kristyn Scorsone: Like bicycles, or like motorcycles?

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Tiney Pringle: No, no, no, bicycles. Ten-speeds. One time, we was riding, riding down Clinton Place. And this girl was driving the car—I guess she was a lady. She was real pretty. So in the front—like I was in the front and I was looking at her. I stopped. Everybody was looking, and we all crashed into each other. [Laughter] That as funny! That was funny. That's one of the memory I have.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you all go to the Dollhouse and Murphy's together?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's really cool. Let's see, what else? Did you ever especially workplace discrimination based on your race or your gender or your sexuality?

Tiney Pringle: See you can't really hate a person that ain't never did nothing to you. You hating a person for a reason. But a lot of times they just hate you—they don't really hate you. They don't understand. See a lot of people don't understand. They look at me, and they think I really think I'm a man. Back when I was growing up, I ain't have all of this, you know what I'm saying? I got a vagina. I got breasteses. Do you really think I think I'm a man? I might act like it. My mannerism and stuff, that's right. But they actually think I think that! So that's where I get in a lot of trouble.

Kristyn Scorsone: Does that bother you?

Tiney Pringle: If I could teach them, or school them, or educate them that it's not really like that. And then, a person will judge you. See, you get judged a lot when you a dyke, cause they think you think you something that you really don't think, you're just being you.

Sometimes I could talk to somebody. I talk to a lot of people. A lot of people—some people that don't understand. Some people that wanna know, they're curious about the lifestyle.

Kristyn Scorsone: Have you ever had anybody physically come at you, like a man or anything?

Tiney Pringle: Well, I had quite a few times. [Pause] Quite a few times. More growing up than—but I ain't fighting. [Laughs] I ain't fighting no man! I got five brothers. If I wanna fight a man, I'll fight one of them. [Laughs]

When we used to play softball, this guy, he used to follow me all the time. Say little smart things about your girlfriend and what you look like and who you is. Stuff like that. One time, I said, “Why you always bothering me?” I say, “Where your girlfriend at?” You know what he said? “I ain’t got one.” That was the problem! That was the problem. He said he ain’t got one.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yep. He’s just jealous.

Tiney Pringle: Yeah! That’s it. He didn’t bother me no more after that. We talked. You know what I’m saying? Golly, man. That’s the problem! He used to bother me all the time. For real. I didn’t understand why, because everybody love me over there. Used to playing in Jersey City in softball league. Bar to bar to bar. All the bars had a team, the males and the females. We used to play.

Kristyn Scorsone: It’s all different gay teams?

Tiney Pringle: No, no, no, it’s not gay. It’s not gay. It wasn’t a gay thing and it wasn’t a straight thing. When we came in, Me, Carol, Scudder, Myra, we wasn’t undercover. We was butches. By then we was butches. When we came in, we was pretty good, but we weren’t the greatest. We was pretty good. We used to win a lot. You couldn’t tell—see, with our team, you couldn’t tell whether we won or whether we lost. Cause at the end of the game, we still happy. We went to the bar, we drank. We had fun, we danced. We talked to people. It was nice. People going to try to treat you how they wanna treat you, until they can understand.

Today, people still don’t understand. They still think you—I have a problem with that. I have a problem with people thinking I think. How could you think that I think? You know what I’m saying?

Kristyn Scorsone: Like think that you think that you’re actually a man? Like that kind of thing?

Tiney Pringle: Actually!

Kristyn Scorsone: Right.

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Tiney Pringle: Actually. I had an incident on my block. On my block. I lived there for 21 years. Now when I first got there, it's this certain guy. I used to be cool. If you say, "Hi, hey, what's up." Bam, bam, "What's up. Whatever." All that. When I get dressed, I had my stuff on, my tie. I'm really looking good. You understand what I'm saying? It took him twenty years, this happened last year. It took him twenty years. I always kept one eye open. I mean I keep that in the street. I don't allow no men in my house, none of that. Because they get up in there and they—cuz I learned that from my brothers. You know?

Him and his boys, like I said, when I wear my glasses, they don't know I'm looking at them. But I'm looking at them. I thought, "Hey, what's up, what's up?" I'm cool with a lot of them, but I don't associate with them. I just show them respect, they show me respect.

But this one guy, I was going out one night. He [whispering] I don't know what they saying, but I can see them. Then they all turn around and look at me. It was about five of them together.

I walks in the store. Then, they come in the store. We shake each other hand, and then he pulled me to him, like he trying to hug me and shit. I was like, "Come on, man. You know I ain't about that life. Give me some respect." He said, "You know T, I do respect you, T." I said, "Next time you wanna respect me, shake my mother fucking hand. Don't be trying to body rock me. Cuz you know I don't roll like that." And I don't speak to him no more. That's it. That's it. I don't speak to him no more.

When I see him, he say little smart things. But I don't care [01:05:46] so long as you don't put your hands on me, cuz I carry my knife in my pocket. I will cut you.

Kristyn Scorsone: How long ago was this, that happened?

Tiney Pringle: About two years.

Kristyn Scorsone: Where do you live now? Where was this?

Tiney Pringle: Same place.

Kristyn Scorsone: Where in Newark?

Tiney Pringle: It's in East Orange.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you ever have any trouble going to public bathrooms? Do people give you a hard time at all?

Tiney Pringle: Not really, really. Mm-mm. I had more problems back when I was younger. But see right now, my body is definition. You know what I'm saying? You can see that I'm a female. You know what I'm saying? I don't really have—they will stare at me now. You can see them looking. Like they can't see me looking at them.

Kristyn Scorsone: Does that make you anxious, or you're just like, whatever. They have to get over it.

Tiney Pringle: I really don't pay them no mind. Because the one reason why I was never undercover or never in the closet, was because I didn't give a shit about what people thought about me. I had to be—my sister, she was the oldest. My sister was the oldest, and I have another brother, and then come me. I had to be for the boys and for the girl. I wasn't really into girl things, so me and her really never clashed, as far as wearing my clothes or something like that.

My brothers, I did all boy things, and I taught my brothers. I might not have teach them how to pee, but I taught them. [Laughs]

Kristyn Scorsone: Are you still close with them?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, well I got—one of my brothers passed, and my sister passed.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, I'm sorry.

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, my sister passed. I'm as close—my brother Bully, I'm closer to him than I am with the other two, but when we see each other, we family. We was never like a reunion type, or you come to my house, I go to your house. We was never that type of family. It was sorta dysfunctional. We still the same way.

Kristyn Scorsone: They live nearby, or they moved away?

Tiney Pringle: Well, now one of my brothers live closer to me. But the other two, they don't.

Kristyn Scorsone: What places in Newark do you associate with gay people nowadays?

Tiney Pringle: I don't really have no place that I associate. Because I don't hang in bars. I don't hang on the corners. I'm too old for that. I mean you gotta worry about a bullet nowadays. It ain't no hanging out like that for me, like we used to do.

Back in the day. There used to be a bank on Clinton Avenue. Clinton and Bourbon Street. It had a little spot. We used to climb up there at night, sit outside, play cards. Play dominoes or just listen to music. Hanging out. You can't do that no more. You really can't do that no more, as far as gay people is concerned.

When I went to high school, I know it was more gay people than me and Carol, cause me and Carol went to Southside. Scudder went to Weequahic and Myra went to Barringer. Me and Carol, and I think it was two other guys that was gay. It was a girl that was gay, another girl that was gay, too, but you couldn't really tell they was gay.

Baby, after we didn't have to wear dresses no more, [Laughs] never seen me in a dress again! Even in my high school, the archives in the back where they leave certain things, they left for me a dress and a pair of stockings.

Kristyn Scorsone: [Laughter] Was that just fooling with you?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah. Well, they never seen me in it. They never seen me in it.

Kristyn Scorsone: When you hung out outside and played dominoes at the bank, that was with Myra, Scudder and Carol, too?

Tiney Pringle: Scudder lived Clinton Place, Myra lived cross Westside Park. Carol lived this way. And we all come together. We used to all come together, the ones that wanted to hang out that night. We used to get out there and play—cuz it was a nice, hot summer day. We sit on top of that bank and just chill. We listen to music, whatever.

Kristyn Scorsone: What would you guys talk about?

Tiney Pringle: Everything. Sometimes it's not about a lot of talk. We sit up there and we smoke weed. We talk. We see something, we talk. Whatever. If somebody having a problem, we talk. I try to be the

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psychiatrist all the time. Yeah, I do. [Laughs] Talk a lot, because I really never had prejudice in my house about who I am. Cuz I was never in the closet. They was always waiting for me to—in that tomboy stage. This ain't no tomboy. This is me. I'm for real. This how I'm gonna be.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did your friends have more trouble with their families than you did, in that sense? Like being gay?'

Tiney Pringle: No. When I first met Scudder, Scudder used to wear blouses. I don't know whether—cuz I didn't hang in her household, but she was still her. I think she had a boyfriend at one time, but she let him go. She start hanging with us. I don't think Myra had no prejudice, but I think Carol had a little prejudice. I ain't had none.

Kristyn Scorsone: Scudder and Myra, are they black or white?

Tiney Pringle: Black.

Kristyn Scorsone: What did you think when you first met them?

Tiney Pringle: See, me and Carol went to school together. Clinton Place Junior High School is where we used to always go and play ball. They used to have open gym after school until ten o'clock at night. They started booting us out at 9:30. We used to play basketball. We clicked like that.

Kristyn Scorsone: You just liked them immediately. Just fast friends kind of thing.

Tiney Pringle: Yeah. Because we did the same thing. We did the same thing. We liked sports, period. We liked competing against the guys. Back then, yeah. I mean I meet guys today that be like, "Remember that time when you all beat us?" I don't remember, but I remember doing it. But I don't remember them. We had so many victims! [Laughing] We had a lot of victims, mm-hmm!

Kristyn Scorsone: I guess do you, looking back on your life, is there anything that you would've done differently if you could go back and change anything?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, I woulda stayed in school, got me a career.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

- Tiney Pringle: That's my only thing. I had it in the palm of my hand. My art teacher and my gym teacher. They walked me through the application stage. The stages that you gotta go through to get in college. Yup, and I got a scholarship. But I messed that up. I woulda stayed in school.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Do you have a personal motto, or a quote that inspires you, or something that, when you are—like you think of when you need to be inspired. Or just in general, that you like.
- Tiney Pringle: It all depends on what I'm going through. I like, "I got two tears in the bucket, mother fuck it!"
- Kristyn Scorsone: That's perfect! [Laughter]
- Tiney Pringle: Yeah?
- Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.
- Tiney Pringle: It's like trying to change some shit you can't change. You just gotta go with the flow sometimes. You gonna live life, but don't let life live you.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. That's very true. Let's see if there's anything else I wanna ask you.
- Tiney Pringle: One thing about me, Carol, Scudder, Myra, none of us had children. None of us had kids. [01:17:00] I'm not against having kids, but when some people try to be funny and ask me if I have any kids I say, "No, my sperm count was too low." [Laughing] That's what I tell them. My sperm count was too low.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Do you wish you could've had kids?
- Tiney Pringle: Have them, have them?
- Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.
- Tiney Pringle: Coming out of me?
- Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

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Tiney Pringle: Oh hell no!

Kristyn Scorsone: What about if you had a partner that carried? Like if somebody else gave birth to, and then you adopted?

Tiney Pringle: Well, I had a girlfriend, right? Named Bunky. She passed away. Now listen, we was together about seventeen, eighteen years. I had my sister kids, she had her sister's kids. We always had kids! Ain't no way in hell I wanted no kids! We always—we raised—they can tell you now, if you all got any kid, Bunky and Tiney—We used to take them to Central Park, Washington Square Park. I used to like to come over here. Go to New York to the parks. Central Park, because they had a real big playground for the kids. They had the skating rink. I used to take them boating.

We used to have fun. I've raised—my siblings helped—but I'm not saying I—cuz I was young. With my siblings. But my sister's kids, I helped raise them. And Bunky's sister's child, we had him all the time! We had him all the time. So I'm not lacking nothing in that department, really, raising kids. Because we raised kids. They spent the night with us, they spent weekends. They spent summers at our house.

My nephew, James, oh man. James called Carol his grandmother. James's son called Carol his grandmother. James—that's his mother.

Now, James, me and him was so tight, till—peep this. This boy, he was arguing with me so much. He said he knew me when I gave birth to my nephew. [Laughs] That's how much they think I think I'm really a man. He just swear to god, he knew me. I used to always have James. Even when I worked at summer camp and we went away, away camp for a week. James was with me. I had James. He the one that I quit school for because I couldn't see to his well-being.

He knew me when I was pregnant with my nephew. That's how I knew people out here is crazy. Let it be. Let it be. [Laughs] Cuz if you knew me when I was pregnant with my nephew, it's something going on and I don't know what it is!

Kristyn Scorsone: Where is he now?

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Tiney Pringle: James? He's in California.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you miss him?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, I do.

Kristyn Scorsone: How did you meet Bunky?

Tiney Pringle: At a job we used to work at. We worked at the same job.

Kristyn Scorsone: What were you doing together? The job?

Tiney Pringle: She worked in a different department than me. We was working in the factory, making different things.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you ask her out right away? Did you become friends first?

Tiney Pringle: The thing is, I was [inaudible 01:21:16]. Rejection ain't my friend. I wasn't trying to get—she was so pretty. She was Halle Berry pretty! Honest to goodness. But she just took the wrong road in life.

Kristyn Scorsone: Like addiction?

Tiney Pringle: Yes. Addiction.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was that tough to deal with?

Tiney Pringle: Oh yeah. Cause I didn't just leave her, I stayed with her.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's hard to deal with.

Tiney Pringle: That was real hard. It's still hard sometimes, to me.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did she pass away from it?

Tiney Pringle: Yes.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was it drugs or alcohol?

Tiney Pringle: Drugs.

Kristyn Scorsone: With Judy, too, Judy had a drinking problem?

- Tiney Pringle: She had a drinking problem.
- Kristyn Scorsone: She fell and hurt—she broke her neck, right?
- Tiney Pringle: She broke her neck. That’s what I heard, somebody told me. I told Carol.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Did you go to her funeral or anything?
- Tiney Pringle: No. I was young. When I knew Judy, I was young like that. Once she broke up with Carol, once they separated, I didn’t see her anymore.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Was Bunky your longest relationship?
- Tiney Pringle: Yup.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Were you with anybody for a long time after that?
- Tiney Pringle: I was with my last relationship for seven or eight years. One of them.
- Kristyn Scorsone: How did you meet that person?
- Tiney Pringle: Aaron [Frazier] introduced us. We called him Una. Una introduced us.
- Kristyn Scorsone: What was her name?
- Tiney Pringle: Sandy.
- Kristyn Scorsone: What was she like?
- Tiney Pringle: In the beginning, she was the bomb. But once you start knowing people, you live with them, you know them more, and what you do when you’re out there partying. Life is a struggle. Life was a struggle for both of us. To make it easy, we did things to make it easy on us. But then, after a while, she felt like hey, I ain’t gotta make things easy no more. I’m just going to let you do everything. I couldn’t really do that. She wanted to do what she wanted to do. I was me all the time. Once you start finding out a person, either you gonna stay in it and be miserable, or get out of it.

Kristyn Scorsone: You broke up with her?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, we broke up.

Kristyn Scorsone: Were you with anybody else after her?

Tiney Pringle: No. I don't really trust girls no more. I mean, if a person like me, if I like you too, then it's all gravy. See, I get a lot of people I don't really wanna have no relationship with. I don't really wanna start anything with anybody that I don't wanna have a relationship with. Cuz I know I don't like rejection, myself. If I feel you feeling me, I'm not gonna play with your emotions, or play with—I'm looking for love. This other stuff out here, I ain't trying to hear that. I might as well be by myself.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you like being by yourself?

Tiney Pringle: It all depends. [Laughs] When that nice music playing, you know what I'm saying? On the woman, I like the hair, I like the lips, I just like looking at her. I like the way women smell, you know what I mean? I wear cologne, she wear perfume. That's just the way it go. It goes just like that.

Kristyn Scorsone: Any other memories that stand out to you, or good times that you had, or bad times that you had, that you wanna talk about?

Tiney Pringle: Okay, growing up, I really never believed in Santa Clause and all of that, because the projects ain't no chimney. We didn't have the money anyway for birthday parties and stuff like that. It was seven of us. It was a little better when my father was with us, but we just didn't have the money.

Kristyn Scorsone: When did your dad leave?

Tiney Pringle: He died. He died when I was eleven. We went to the shelter when I was about nine. I mighta been eight. My mother, she couldn't take care of us properly. Really, we raised ourselves. Nowadays, these kids need a babysitter. But I was the babysitter. I was more in charge than my older brother and my older sister. I was more in charge. And we raised ourselves. We didn't have no babysitter. It was just us and sometimes my mother worked the night shift. You

know we did the bad things. [Laughs] Like being outside. We weren't supposed to be.

Kristyn Scorsone: Your dad was living in a shelter, did you say, at the end?

Tiney Pringle: No, we was in the shelter. We went to the shelter when—my father was abusive. My father, he abused my mother one night, and we was like, “Run, run.” Telling my mother to run. She ran. I think we was in the house about two, three days by ourselves. I don't know where my mother was. She might've been in the hospital because she been beat up bad that day.

They came and got us and took us to the shelter. That's where we was until mom found a place for us to go.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you mind being at the shelter? Or were you scared?

Tiney Pringle: Oh, I loved it!

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah. Nice and clean. Three meals a day with snacks. Like a bath and a nice warm bath. I mean know nothing about no showers back then. Nice, clean clothes every day. It was good. Life was good then. But I still wanted to be with my mother, even though it wasn't going to be the same. Everything was going to change. It all depends on who my mother was with, how we got through.

Kristyn Scorsone: Right. Did she have a lot of different boyfriends?

Tiney Pringle: Mm-mm. I wasn't staying in the house with a man. I wasn't, even when I was younger. I told my mother I would run away if she got a boyfriend, brought him in the house. My sister was older than me. She got molested a lot. I wasn't really trusting that.

Kristyn Scorsone: By people that your mom brought home, or just at school or things like that?

Tiney Pringle: They was mostly friends. Friends of my mother's. Friends of my mother's friends' friends. You know how you lead. But that's just how it go.

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Interviewer: Kristyn Scorsone

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Location: Rutgers University-Newark

Kristyn Scorsone: You've been like, almost like you've been a parent all your life, in a way.

Tiney Pringle: All my life, trying to look out for everybody. It wasn't really the boys that much, but it was my sister. She never got a break. And I wasn't having it. I would sleep under the bed.

I always had pets. I had a dog, but I used to watch when the dog left, but when she came back she didn't touch not one of her puppies, but they knew when she came. They knew it. And I used to always watch that. And I never understood. "How they know she back?" But it was her scent. And that's how I can't stand the scent of a man. That's how them puppies knew. And that's how I knew when they used to sneak and mess with my sister. Because you could smell them. And I wasn't having that. I used to try to protect her sometimes but—that's what happens when you gotta leave your kids and work and take care of the house. Some men don't understand that you shouldn't leave kids alone like that. I refuse to have any kids where they might feel like I felt.

Growing up we just didn't know the difference. I used to get depressed in the winter. Mind you, I got warm shoes, warm clothes, warm coat, hat. When I was growing up—gloves. When I was growing up, we had none of that. We didn't have hats. We didn't have warm shoes. We had holes in our shoes with newspaper in the snow. What good is that? No good. We wore socks on our hands for gloves.

When we used to live in the projects, all the poor kids, we didn't know we was poor at the time. All the kids that was in the same predicament, we used to hang together. We'd go out and play and come in the hallway, cuz they had the radiators in the hallway. We take our shoes and socks off, put them on the radiator, let them dry, and then as soon as they dry, we back out in the street.

It wasn't no allowance. None of that. We used to go to the store and steal. Steal candy, potato chips, anything we could get our hands on. When we lived in the projects, the Tasty Bakery was about three blocks from our house. Now, when I walked by, I was like they—at the delivery door, it was a whole—the factory was a whole block. The delivery door was when the truck come up and they pile things in there.

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I was looking, and I was like, but ain't nobody watching that stuff. I got my crew together. We went in there, and we robbed them dog gone donuts and oh my god! Devil dogs and Lord have mercy!

Kristyn Scorsone: That's a yummy robbery.

Tiney Pringle: Yes! We used to do it all the time. We never went hungry!

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you ever sneak into the movie theaters? [94:18]

Tiney Pringle: All the time. But back then movies was only a dollar. If you had two dollars, you could—and then, back then, you pay one fare, three movies, and you could stay in there all day. You make a day out of it.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you like any movies in particular? Did you have any faves?

Tiney Pringle: Back then, not really. You didn't know you had to—the black movies from the 60s and the 70s. Back then.

Kristyn Scorsone: When did you stop living at home?

Tiney Pringle: I was about twenty-seven, twenty-eight.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you worry, when you moved out, about leaving your siblings? Or were they gone already?

Tiney Pringle: No. My nephew, he went to—everybody separated though. In that dysfunctional house, it was dysfunction 24/7 where one of my brothers—mostly all the boys was gone, my brother. They got married. They went their way, so it was me, my sister and her two kids. She had two at the time.

With my sister's mental illness, that was more of a problem than anything. Trying to deal with that.

Kristyn Scorsone: Is she the same sister that was being molested?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you think that's how she got her mental illness, was stemming from that? Or just—?

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Tiney Pringle: I used to say it runs in my family.

Kristyn Scorsone: Ah.

Tiney Pringle: I still say it. I say asthma and mental illness run in my family. She wanted to be a wild child. That coulda been a lot to do with how she is. Really, really. [Pause] I miss her. Yeah, she was crazy. My sister.

Kristyn Scorsone: When did she pass away?

Tiney Pringle: In 99, 2001.

My mother pass in 99. She pass like a year-and-a-half later, and then my brother pass the other year, the next year.

Kristyn Scorsone: What did he pass away from?

Tiney Pringle: My brother? He got the virus.

Kristyn Scorsone: AIDS? Yeah? Was he gay or no?

Tiney Pringle: Drugs.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, drugs.

Tiney Pringle: Drugs and messing with them hoes out there that pass it on to him. Cuz he didn't do—he wasn't like no IV user. He used to mess with prostitutes. That was his sex life. That's how he got it.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you lose a lot of people from AIDS?

Tiney Pringle: Quite a few friends.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was it scary?

Tiney Pringle: Sometimes it be. It was scary, yeah. Sometimes it be like the AZT was killing people. To me. Back then, they didn't have nothing in the 80s. If you got all right, you gotta keep doing what you doing. But then you relapse, and sometimes you don't make it back.

Sometimes you make it back, sometimes you don't.

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Interviewer: Kristyn Scorsone

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Kristyn Scorsone: When your friends were dying of AIDS, did you know it was AIDS, or were you like, “What’s happening? Why are people passing away?”

Tiney Pringle: No, I was old enough to know. Yeah, I did. A lot of research—well, I worked in the—even though I was a housekeeper, I was still on the inside. Then, I still hung out with a lot of drag queens. That was my hanging out with. When we hung out and we partied together. We used to travel from Newark to New York. It was this club called the Footsteps.

Kristyn Scorsone: In New York City?

Tiney Pringle: That was a nice club. The music makes anything. That music, ooh-wooh!

Kristyn Scorsone: What kind of music?

Tiney Pringle: That club music. Old club. Club music. It was nice. We used to go over there and party till the break of dawn. All night. I think it closed like six o’clock in the morning. They used to always, when they closing, cuz the dance floor stayed crowded all night. We went there to dance. Even if it was the wintertime, you had to bring some dry clothes, because you be dripping wet. And you have to go out in the cold, you know what I mean?

They used to play this song, “It’s Time to Go Now.” Take us as saying get out, get out, get out. They play that record, you know it was time to go. You have to go. [Laughter] Because we wanted to stay there all night, till the next day at club. That was a nice club. I really missed it.

It was another club, Staircase, it was like two blocks from the Apollo and around the corner. Apollo. The reason I stopped going there, because the music was good, everything, atmosphere, drinks, everything was good. It was the projects right across from the Apollo. Apollo was here, the projects was here. The club was right here.

These guys, when they wanted to beat up gay people, they would come when the club was closing. I ain’t have no time for that. Yeah, they was beating people up and stuff.

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Kristyn Scorsone: Like around you, and you were able to get away? Or you would leave before?

Tiney Pringle: Well, see, when I went, when I used to go, it used to be me, two of my brothers. And them drag queens back in the day, they would fight. I wasn't really worried about my circle, cuz we fighting. That particular day, it was only two guys with no weapons. Instead of everybody standing up to these two guys with no weapons, they ran!

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow.

Tiney Pringle: Oh man. I didn't like that.

Kristyn Scorsone: Around what year was that?

Tiney Pringle: About 85. Cuz I used to really club it in the 80.

Kristyn Scorsone: When you were clubbing it in the 80s, it was always with that group of drag queens?

Tiney Pringle: No.

Kristyn Scorsone: Was it with Scudder and Myra and Carol, too? Did they go to those clubs, also?

Tiney Pringle: When I used to travel to New York, they didn't go. They just went to the clubs in Newark like the Dollhouse and Majestics and the Staircase.

Kristyn Scorsone: The Staircase was in Newark, too?

Tiney Pringle: It was one in Newark.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow, so there was two of them?

Tiney Pringle: Right, there was one in New York, and then one in Newark.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, where about?

Tiney Pringle: On Bradford Place.

Kristyn Scorsone: Cool. That was strictly a gay club?

Tiney Pringle: It's no clubs no more. It's no clubs. Gay club? Is it a gay club in Newark? It's no gay clubs.

Kristyn Scorsone: No, was Staircase a gay club?

Tiney Pringle: No.

Kristyn Scorsone: It was like mixed, I guess.

Tiney Pringle: It was mixed. A lot of gay people went there. We went where the music was. I did, anyway. If the atmosphere was nice, I go. If I go to a club where they think your woman is fair game on the dance floor, I wasn't trying to hear that. Uh-uh.

Kristyn Scorsone: Like other women would try to—

Tiney Pringle: And if you go to a mixed club. Cuz the club at the Lincoln Motel, that was the mix club. It was a nice little—everybody went there.

Kristyn Scorsone: Zanzibar?

Tiney Pringle: The Zanzibar. I didn't really like that. I never really liked mixed clubs. I just liked gay clubs. Give me all women. Sometimes some of them try to get disrespectful, too. Back, when I was younger, I was a fighter.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah! I was a fighter. Sometimes didn't have to fight. My mouth, what I say sometimes be enough. And my mean-ass face.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you win your fights?

Tiney Pringle: I didn't fight a lot. Some I won, some I didn't. I remember when I was in—it was Peshine [01:44:25] and we had to run around. Gym teacher used to make us run around the gym. I was very athletic. Very. This girl tried to pass me, so when she—I was here. She tried to pass me here. But when she got here, her foot hit my foot, and she fell.

Now, she went and got her sister. [Laughs] She went and got her sister, but the thing is, they wanted to jump me. It wasn't no one-

on-one. They wanted to jump me. Back then fighting was different. I'm like, "Listen, I can't fight both of you at the same time." I say, "I fight you all one by one."

"Okay, let me go first."

"You go first, or you go first. Whichever one you wanna do." So the girl that I went to school with, she went first. I kicked her butt, but I was tired, [Laughter] by the time—for real! I was tired by the time I had to fight her sister. But I fought her! I fought her. She got me, I got her, she got me, I was tired when I got rid of her. I had a good night's sleep. [Laughter] Honest to goodness. I ain't never had no more problems with her.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome.

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, we did fair and square. [01:45:54]. Two against one, no more. That wasn't fair, but it was better than getting jumped, even though I woulda fought them both.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome. Do you have any favorite memories of dating?

Tiney Pringle: Mm. Wow. I got a lot of good memories. You know what, in the beginning, I did a lot, a lot of dating. Like in the late 70s and the 80s. Because when you play ball, and you kinda good? I wasn't really nothing outstanding, but I was kinda good. I was something to look at. Me and my other three brothers. People used to come to playground just to see us play.

Those was good memories. Going other places where people accepted us. Those were good memories, too. It was just good.

I used to take karate. I used to take karate. I was hanging with a friend and I went to the recreation center with her. During that time, the teacher was named Kareem Allah back then. He done changed his name. He was Kareem Allah. He wanted to take some of us to his school, but he wanted to teach us a little something to see who would make a good student. You know how they try you out?

So I made it. I made it, and then I started going to his school. I think I stayed in that school about three, almost four years. I stayed in that school. We used to win trophies like [fading voice

01:48:04]. I never knew until somebody showed me, they had karate books back then. I used to be in the karate book, but I didn't know it. They have a tournament, and then first place, second place, you know what I'm saying? People that won karate tournaments. I used to win a lot of karate tournaments. For real. I used to win a lot. I had so many. I had trophies taller than me.

They had one tournament where you win a big trophy. That trophy was big! A big trophy and a bike. We went down the line. I beat, and this other girl beat, but she was a little prissy thing. So we made a deal that I'm not fight her, just give her the bike and I get the trophy. They knew I was gonna massacre that girl for that trophy. [Laughter] That bike, I was gonna get that bike. They say, "Oh no!"

Kristyn Scorsone: Let her live.

Tiney Pringle: Let her live. [Laughter] Yeah, cuz we was at Rutgers in Brunswick. It was a karate tournament in there. I knocked this girl out, and they had to close the place down.

Kristyn Scorsone: Wow. Why did they close it down?

Tiney Pringle: Cuz I knocked her out. [Laughter]

Kristyn Scorsone: Like she needed medical attention?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah. [Laughs]
I wasn't tough or nothing like that. It was just the skills that the teacher taught me, and I did.

I can't remember what year it was, but I was grand champion, and I didn't even know until somebody sent me *The New York Times* had a picture of me and had a little write-up of me in *The New York Times*. I didn't know. I was like seventeen years old. I didn't know. My mother still got that. My mother—I got it. My brother got it now, cuz she kept it in the photo book.

Kristyn Scorsone: If I looked up your name, do you think I'd be able to find it?

Tiney Pringle: You might be, because I'm in there.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's really cool. What position did you play in softball?

- Tiney Pringle: Shortstop.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Shortstop, yeah, that's good. You musta been really good.
- Tiney Pringle: In the beginning, yeah. As time went on, they switch me around. Because you be good this year, but next year and next year and next year. After a while somebody else gonna come in and move you out. Just like I moved somebody out.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. I used to play softball, and I got moved out.
- Tiney Pringle: Yeah. Move me out. Somebody move me out, just like I moved somebody out. You ain't there forever. I mean you can't play ball forever. Cuz growing up, I used to play kickball. We used to travel, again, because back then they had things for the kids to do. They had things. We had kickball tournament every summer. Kickball tournament with other things that they had for the kids to do. We used to travel. We used to travel and play kickball. [111:36]
- Back then, projects was everywhere. You know, right? Projects was everywhere, and all the projects had a kickball team. We used to travel and play kickball. I liked the kickball. It was okay.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Did you know people like—hanging around with Carol, did you know people like Tom Hayden?
- Tiney Pringle: Of course, I knew Tom Hayden. Tom Hayden and Carol, I met them at the same time. Tom Hayden, cuz he used to live on—I think Ridgewood Avenue. He used to live right around the corner. I used to go to his house all the time. Tom Hayden. “What's up?!” He was really—I used to make fun of him all the time. He had some big feet! They used to tease him.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Did you know Steve Block?
- Tiney Pringle: Yeah. I knew Steve Block. Connie. I don't remember Connie's name. Corrina.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Oh yeah. I've heard of her.
- Tiney Pringle: Corrina and Carol used to live together, and Betty. You know her?

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Interviewer: Kristyn Scorsone

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Kristyn Scorsone: I think I remember from Carol's interview, her mentioning somebody named Betty. I definitely remember [cross talk 01:52:53].

Tiney Pringle: Cuz they all three used to live in the same apartment.

Kristyn Scorsone: Right, okay, yeah.

Tiney Pringle: All three of them. Tom Hayden, Steven Block, and who else? Some of them I can't remember they name. It was so long ago. I was like twelve, thirteen years old.

Yeah, I used to travel with Carol. Carol was a traveler! She still travel.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah? Where'd you go?

Tiney Pringle: She'd go all over the world. She went to some all-girls school, Smith College or something. Something. It was all girl school. And sometimes in the summer, she used to go back there. I used to travel with her. Her mother lived in Long Island or Brooklyn or somewhere. Had a house right there on the beach. Yeah, the water. I was kinda scared, but Carol used to swim out so far, I couldn't even see her.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh my god.

Tiney Pringle: Yeah. I couldn't even see her. She went out so far.

I used to have fun. Used to travel. She had a little Volkswagen. She drove a Volkswagen back then. We used to travel in that little car.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you drive around in it, too?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah. I stayed with Carol as much as I can. As much as I can. I was up her house. [Laughs] Carol the reason why I graduated junior high school, because she had to pass my house to get to her job. One time, I ain't feel like going to school. I didn't. Because when I was on that block [01:54:42] that was when I started my period, and I used to be sick. Ugh. My period. I ain't wanna go to school. Shit. Carol was like, "Get up. Get dressed. You going to school!" She make sure I went to school! Sure did. She got me out that house!

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome. Is there anything else that I didn't ask you that you wish I had asked you, or that you didn't get a chance to talk about?

Tiney Pringle: We talked about so much. No, but I like the questions you asked.
[Laughs]

Kristyn Scorsone: Nowadays, what does your favorite kind of day look like? What's your favorite things to do in a day?

Tiney Pringle: Well, I work. See, now I got bad knees. I got arthritis in my feet, and I got heel spurs on my heel. I'm kinda all messed up, and an overactive thyroid. What happened to me was, when I was younger, I was about eight. I was about eight. My mother wasn't home. We used to watch ourselves. I ate a chocolate fudge ice cream. Back then, that stuff was good.

After I ate it, my stomach started hurting. I didn't know what was going on. But my mother wasn't home. I threw up all night. I was just throwing up. Couldn't sleep. Couldn't do nothing. My stomach. My mother, she didn't come home until the next day, and a little part of the next day. When she came home, I guess she was tired or whatever, from being out all night. It used to be a hospital, but it's not there anymore, it was a Children's Hospital on Clinton Avenue. Almost by Lincoln Park. It was a hospital there, a long time, like St. Mary's or something like that. It was all like the nuns.

My mother was mad with me cuz I was sick. I couldn't help it. So we walked from my house to the hospital. When we got there, the doctor put his hands on my stomach, here. I guess it was hot, or whatever. I was throwing up and stuff like that. They rushed me into surgery. My appendix had erupted before they could really get me all prepared.

When I flat lined, they was worried about getting me back to life. They didn't clean me properly, so little particles grew with me. So I had problems. I had problems with tumors, and they were just saying it was fatty tumors. And I never knew, because I always had—when I got my period, I was sick the whole time. And I was a heavy bleeder, but it was because of that. But I didn't know it,

until I had a hysterectomy. The doctor told me, asked me, who did my appendix.

By the time I had my hysterectomy, I was about forty, forty-four, forty-five, something like that. I told him, he said, "Well, they did a shitty job cleaning all the debris," because when it erupted, I guess, stuff just flew everywhere, and they was worrying about getting my heart started again. I didn't know none of that until later on in life.

I had tumors here, tumors here, tumors here, tumors here. [gestures to different areas on her body] I had like five surgeries to remove tumors that had grew onto certain parts of my organs, my other organs that was messing up my life.

I stayed in that hospital a month. I think I woke up a couple of days, maybe three or four days later. When I woke up, I couldn't move. I went like this, I tried to get up, cuz they had me all bandaged up. Then the nuns, when I woke up, they came around my bed and said, "Oh thank god, we thought we lost you." But me, being young and didn't know what she was saying, why she was saying that, I thought I was sleep walking. That's why they thought that they lost me.

I didn't really find out what that meant until I seen the same thing on TV one time. When they told somebody that almost died, they said they thought they lost them. So I knew then, cuz everybody was so nice to me and stuff like that, when I came out the coma or whatever I was in.

My mother, she was mad because I was sick, and I never forgave her for that. I never forgave her for that. I had to walk all the way to the hospital. As soon as I got there [exploding noise].

Kristyn Scorsone: When did you get the tumors from it?

Tiney Pringle: It seemed like maybe every three or four years. My first one was when I was in high school, though. After my first one, I was high school, and I had three up here. They had to cut them out. I had one on my booty. They had to cut that out. I had another one on my intestines, which had grew and was blocking everything. They had to [cutting noise] they had to cut that out.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did you have health insurance?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's good.

Tiney Pringle: Back in the day, everything was together. Now, everything is separate. You gotta pay for this, you gotta pay for that separate. This and this. Back then, everything came together.

Kristyn Scorsone: Did it affect you, to play your sports? To have these health issues?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, because my senior year, I had had the surgery that summer. My senior year, when I went back, she wouldn't let me play. I didn't play my senior year of basketball. That's the only thing. I still played outside of school. Well, after I got well. But she wouldn't let me play my senior year.

Kristyn Scorsone: Since you got the hysterectomy and everything, is everything okay now, or do you still suffer from it? [02:03:15]

Tiney Pringle: So far. I might be suffering, I don't know. As long as it don't—it's not affecting me. Cuz I'm the type that I have to be half dead in order to go to the doctor. By the time I get to the doctor, it's not the original thing that was wrong with me. It's three more other things that's wrong with me. I hate going to the doctors, for real.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do they treat you nicely, or do they—or is it just like being anxious about having to go through an ordeal?

Tiney Pringle: Well, they treat me all right, but to me, half of these doctors don't even know what they're talking about. They don't really know. I don't wanna go to the doctor and you give me a needle to see if it's gonna work. Uh-uh. You gotta know it's gonna work. I don't want that. I don't want you to prescribe me something. Because right now, my knees. I need a knee replacement. That was my second opinion.

Because I think he wanted the money that he was gonna get if he gave me a knee replacement. My first doctor, my rheumatologist told me I wouldn't need surgery until years down the line. This doctor tell me I need a knee replacement right then.

Kristyn Scorsone: Right.

- Tiney Pringle: I wasn't falling for that. Wasn't falling for it. Only recently, like the last year, I have problems with my feet and ankles. I'm trying to get it. I'm trying to work with it. I'm trying to work with it. I was in so much pain with my knee. I let the rheumatologist give me some pain—shoot me in my knee. And she hit something in there and messed my knee up. Yeah! She messed my knee up.
- Now I'm scared for them to give me a needle anywhere. I go back to the foot doctor next week. I go back to the foot—he wants to give me a needle. He say, eventually, you gonna have to have a needle in you. Shoot me in there for the pain.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Right, yeah. That's a lot.
- Tiney Pringle: Yeah. I don't know. It's been so painful. I say eh, I have to be like [inaudible 02:06:02] I'm like a big baby when it comes out. I be like, "Oh, oh." Acting like a stupid fool. [Laughing]
- Kristyn Scorsone: Do you ever go to Newark Pride?
- Tiney Pringle: Every year.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Do you like it? Do you have fun?
- Tiney Pringle: Yeah.
- Kristyn Scorsone: Do you do the march, or do you walk it?
- Tiney Pringle: Sometimes I gotta work, and sometimes I get down there late. I've marched before, but I don't march every year. It depends on what time I get there.
- Kristyn Scorsone: I like Newark Pride. It's a lot of fun. Are you glad you grew up in Newark?
- Tiney Pringle: Yeah, I didn't know no other place. I wouldn't know whether that woulda been better, because I was still poor. Wherever I was, I was still gonna be poor. But I didn't know it, as a kid. You just have fun. [Laughs] Get up in the morning. In the summertime, you get up in the morning, you eat your breakfast, you take a bath and everything, get dressed, eat your breakfast and you out the door. Until lunch time. Eat your lunch, you're out the door.

We was on our own. We used to go to Penn Station, slide down the rails. They had them little round things now on the—well you can't slide down no more. We used to jump over the fence. We used to hop the train, go to New York. Cuz I used to love Washington Square Park.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah? I like it there.

Tiney Pringle: I used to, when Blimp'y's first came out, my mother used to take us to New York, just to eat Blimp'y's. The camp I used to go to this Camp Abelard, was Upstate New York in the Catskills. I used to be there for two months. When we came back to Newark, they used to meet at Washington Square Park. It was so much going on back then in that park. A lot of entertainment. I used to love it over there.

Kristyn Scorsone: When you got older, did you ever hang out on Christopher Street or the Pier?

Tiney Pringle: Yeah. Mm-hmm. That's where Washington Square Park is. Right there. The Pier was good back then. Now they got too many rules. I mean especially during the parade. They used to have stuff all in the street, back in the 90s, right?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah.

Tiney Pringle: In the 90s. Now they blocking off everything. If you here and you wanna get here, you gotta walk three blocks down and come around and go down. My feet and knees ain't for that no more.

Kristyn Scorsone: Were you affected at all by 9/11?

Tiney Pringle: Mentally. Mentally, because I used to go—they used to have concerts right there. Right there in the middle of the World Trade Center, that open space that they had. They had a stage there and everything. I used to go to concerts. You could just go over there and just sit and shop in the area.

Kristyn Scorsone: How about when the death of Sakia Gunn, did that affect you at all?

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Tiney Pringle: Yeah it affect me. It affect me because that's how they was back then. See, if it weren't for me being so active, and I knew how to run, cuz I would rather run than let somebody beat me up.

I walked my girlfriend home one night. I walked my girlfriend home, and when I was walking back, and I was walking down the one-way street. The guy came buy in his car. I hear this like, "Come here, get in the car." Like that. I said, "No, I don't need no ride." He said, "Get in the car." He gonna make me get in the car. Now, I was about twenty-two, twenty-three. He said, "I get out and catch you." [Laughing] Man, I was an athlete back then! He got out of his car, he tried to chase me, too. Couldn't catch me. I was going round and round that car, round that car. He couldn't catch me. Know what he said? "You ugly anyway." [Laughing]

Kristyn Scorsone: Of course. Of course.

Tiney Pringle: That's what he said to me. He said, "You ugly anyway." I was like oh my god. I wonder what that man woulda did to me. If he woulda caught me. He woulda had a fight on his hands. Females, they gotta watch out. They gotta watch. You really can't go up to people's cars and stuff. I already knew that from young. It ain't just started. It's been like that for a real long time.

Kristyn Scorsone: You can almost see, I guess, a younger version of yourself in Sakia Gunn in a way?

Tiney Pringle: But see, even though I knew her aunt, I didn't really know her. Sakia was like a butch, but a modern-day butch. Sometimes when you see a group of girls, and the guy might think he got a chance. But see, they gay. You don't wanna say nothing to offend anybody. Or cause no trouble. You be like, "We not interested." And that's what happened.

I had a guy follow me all the way to Penn Station because he wanted to have sex with me.

Kristyn Scorsone: How old were you?

Tiney Pringle: We was on our way to New York, too. I was about twenty-six or something like that. I was walking down Central Avenue, on my way to Penn Station, because we all used to meet up at Penn Station. He followed me all the way. Followed me. He just

followed me. I said, "Listen, I don't like boys." He say, "Well, if you eat pussy, then you can suck my dick."

I was gonna fight him. Sometimes you can say things that make a motherfucker know you ain't playing with him. That was my biggest defense back in the—it's still my biggest defense, because I ain't no fighter. I could tell you, I ain't no fighter. I never liked to fight. I had a fight with a girl that used to chase me home every day. I used to go to my mother, back then when the grownups play cards and stuff. I used to go home and go up where my mother was at and tell my story about how the girl chased me home every day.

So one of my mother friends said, "Don't come back here, not another day crying about somebody beating you up. You stand right there and fight them!" Like that.

The next day, she thought she was gonna chase me home that day, too. But I had some older girls from where I lived it at, that liked me. They was by my side to see that I didn't get jumped. I beat that girl so bad, I started crying. [Laughs] [02:14:36] I ain't no fighter. Then I became friends with her after that.

I never liked to fight. When I fight, I used to cry after that. I guess it was cuz of the abuse that my father used to give my mother. I never liked fighting. Never. I can't remember the last time I had a fight. Somebody was always trying to fight me.

Kristyn Scorsone: Do you think butch girls have it easier nowadays, or harder?

Tiney Pringle: See, it all depends on if they really a butch. Some girls just like to dress butchy, but they ain't really, you know what I'm saying? They ain't really butchy. They may have it easier today than what we had it, because these girls, today is so wishy-washy. They be butch today, something else tomorrow. Or butch by day or something else by night.

Kristyn Scorsone: All right. The ease of changing it up all the time.

Tiney Pringle: Yeah. Like I said, I used to just get in trouble because of what people thought I thought I was.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. I guess is there anything else? Anything else I didn't think of?

Tiney Pringle: Hmm. What could I think of?

Kristyn Scorsone: I don't know. I guess where do you see yourself in the next couple of years?

Tiney Pringle: Starting to tackle this health problem I got right now, till I can get a life. I really don't have an active life. I do a lot of painting and stuff like that, but listen, I'll be sixty-five in March. And I ain't getting no younger. With me playing—they don't tell you, if you play a lot of sports, you gonna pay for it later on in life. They don't tell you that. [Laughs] They shoulda told me. One summer I was on three softball teams. I played a lot of ball when I was young, but I'm paying for it right now. I see some of the people that I have played with, like on other teams in other schools, walking with canes.

We paying for it now. They shoulda told us that part. I never understood why pros call they self old in they 30s. Because you can't go on like that, cuz your body ain't—man, I beat my body up!

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. I guess one last question I'd like to ask you, if you have any words of wisdom or advice or anything for younger butches coming up now.

Tiney Pringle: All I can say is you gotta be yourself all the time, because if you don't, nobody's gonna take you serious. Because, this is a lifestyle. I don't call my lifestyle no joke. I don't joke with people that try to make fun or think it's just a phase or wanna talk about you, or whatever. I don't play like that. You gotta be serious about who you are, if that's who you are.

I can't tell a—I can only say about being a butch. Being a dyke. Bulldagger. I can't say about bisexuals. The way I see it, bisexuality rules. It's more bisexuals out there than it is gays. Straight up gay. I was born to be. I was born to be. I do believe that. You got so many bisexuals out here. I'm like dog. The pretty girls get more girls than me! [Laughs]

You see two pretty girls together, both of them fine as hell. Shit. I ain't got a chance! [Laughter] You gotta really like a butch today. You gotta really like one. Because you'll start to resent them being

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a butch. This is my experience. You'll start to resent, because you ain't no man, you wanna act like a man, you know what I'm saying? If you use dildos, oh, I'm sick of that cuz it's cool. I used to put my shit in the microwave, then. Heat it up! [Laughs]

While they all in love with you, and it's all gravy, it's nothing to say. You just live your life, you know what I'm saying. Maybe they wanna separate from you. Maybe sometimes they'll start an argument or something, so they can be absent and do what they wanna do.

But all of that's unnecessary. I'm too old for that. I'm too old for games. That's why I'm by myself. [Laughs] I don't play no games no more. Really, I never did. That's why I used to stay in long relationships. Hey, you get tired of me, or you get tired of the way we living, it ain't no thing. Just don't make me be miserable for a long time, because if you were in a bad relationship, the longer you wait to pull out, that's the more pain you gonna go through.

You could start getting your feelings back together. Cuz there's a lot of feelings in it. You start getting everything back together here, mentally and physically.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, did you ever—have you ever gone to or been in or just watched, or whatever, any of the butch fashion shows in Newark or around?

Tiney Pringle: Butch fashion show?

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah. I think like Peggie Miller would put on.

Tiney Pringle: What year was that?

Kristyn Scorsone: I think she started in the mid-2000s.

Tiney Pringle: Oh, see, that's why. I'm older now. I don't really hang out with the gay crowd. Just people that I know. Yeah, I used to give basement parties. Definitely have a party every year on my birthday. That was back in the days. I have basement parties, I charge them \$1.00. Dollar to get in, bring your own brown bag. We used to go out and—remember those yellow blinking lights they have on the street?

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Kristyn Scorsone: Uh-huh.

Tiney Pringle: We used to go out and steal them off the street and put them in our basement, so we have them.

Kristyn Scorsone: Like club lights.

Tiney Pringle: Yeah, we have our little club light there. I used to DJ.

Kristyn Scorsone: Yeah?

Tiney Pringle: Mm-hmm.

Kristyn Scorsone: Oh, that's cool.

Tiney Pringle: It's a lot of things. Life is what you make it. If you can't find it nowhere, you can make your own! We used to party. We used to party in the basement. I used to have parties in my house. For real. We used to have a nice time. Good time.

Kristyn Scorsone: That's awesome. Well, thank you so much. This has been really great. Thank you.

[End of Audio]