

Video Title: Ruth & Claudia Video 3

Interviewee: Ruth Sullivan

Interviewee: Claudia Brick

Interviewer: Marcia Schwemer

Transcriber: Unknown

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Schwemer: Here we go. Alright, we're rolling again!

Brick: The red light says we're recording.

Schwemer: Okay.

Sullivan: Okay.

Schwemer: I'm going to keep my hands off.

Sullivan: Okay.

Brick: So, we finished up with getting married and we've been married happily ever after for three years. Although we've been together for seventeen. Ruth always says she didn't know anybody that wanted to get married after being together for fourteen years. So that in itself was remarkable, nevermind that the state allowed us to do it.

Sullivan: I remember when we filed our income tax, of course, we had filed separately for federal, but we filed jointly for California state. And I remember getting that check, and it had my name and her name on the same check. Took a picture of it going, "This is totally awesome."

Brick: This is history.

Sullivan and Brick: Yeah. [laughs]

Brick: My precious.

Sullivan: Yes, precious.

Brick: I don't know, what other stories were we telling you yesterday?

Schwemer: You told me how you met. [laughs]

Brick: Oh, we met in a bar yeah.

Sullivan: Yeah, it was a good connection.

Brick: Yeah, I was sitting—

Brick: I was talking to someone at the bar who was kind of an annoying person from Chicago. She was on one side of me and Ruth came in and sat down on the other side of me. So, I'm sort of continuing this conversation with the annoying person and then doing a sides with Ruth. So Ruth and I started cracking up and pretty soon the annoying person left and me and Ruth stayed and got drunk and I picked her up and brought her home. [laughs]

Schwemer: Did you do it the first night?

Brick: Oh yeah! Absolutely!

Schwemer: Whoo hoo!

Sullivan: We didn't stop for like—

Brick: We didn't stop for a month! [laughs] Like bunny rabbits!

Sullivan: I'll tell you it was—I was forty? I was like in my sexual peak, and baby, I knew I was at my sexual peak. I had more fun in that first year we moved together. Everybody was so jealous, all the straight people. That I knew, they were so jealous. "She's coming in with a sparkle on her face every day."

Brick: "She must be getting it all the time!"

Sullivan: "She wakes up and fixes me breakfast at five o'clock in the morning!"

Brick: She did, she would get up and fix me breakfast when I had to be at work at six o'clock in the morning. I was like, "I know it's love."

Sullivan: We did okay.

Brick: We've been doing alright. We're still in pretty good shape with the shape we're in.

Sullivan: Yeah.

Schwemer: So, Claudia you used to work for the police department? In Santa Monica?

Brick: I did! I worked for the Santa Monica Police Department for almost twenty years and after twenty years an opportunity came up to become the investigator for the city attorney. So I jumped at that and then spent the last five years of my working life happily employed there. The difference is between working for people who—all the rules and regulations and policies and procedures are geared to the lowest common denominator at the police department—to at the city attorney's office where they assume you know what you're doing and they just throw files at my desk and say, "We need whatever," and assumed that I would do it and—

Sullivan: [laughs]

Brick: —and I'd do whatever they wanted and if there was any problem I'd get back to them. It was just a wonderful thing being treated like an adult.

Sullivan: Everybody's a critic—the dog moved the—

Schwemer: Yes, the dog is moving the tripod. I was trying to think of the name of it. Peabody, excuse me! Thank you!

Sullivan: Another day dog.

Schwemer: Well, I do remember Ruth coming to work and saying, "Hey do you want me to have Claudia come over in her uniform?"

[laughter]

Schwemer: Thrills! Cheap thrills!

Brick: Girls fall for uniforms!

Sullivan: She wasn't in a uniform when I met her.

Brick: That's true.

Schwemer: She put it on later that night?

[laughter]

Sullivan: We're not telling anything, but always find the key for any play that goes on.

Brick: With the handcuffs.

Sullivan: Yeah. Find the key first!

Brick: Don't use handcuffs until the key's been presented.

Sullivan: Can I have some water please?

Brick: Yeah you can have some water. Sure.

Sullivan: Yeah, we dated for a year and then we moved in together after that for five years or—

Brick: Yeah just a few years.

Sullivan: Yeah and then I bought Chloe's ex out of the homes that they shared and that was over ten years ago. So we've been—

Brick: It was well over ten years ago.

Sullivan: We've been having a love affair for seventeen years.

Brick: Yeah.

Schwemer: So after a year, basically you got out of bed and rented the U-haul?

[laughter]

Brick: We didn't like the first day or even the second day! It was like, it took a while! We were trying to be, you know, intelligent about it. In our lust. [laughs]

Sullivan: Because the relationship before that was like totally from—the woman from—another planet.

Brick: Well, and then Ruth—

Sullivan: Does everybody have one of those where they date a crazy person?

Schwemer: It's a rule.

Brick: Everybody is required to have one nut case relationship. At least. Yeah.

Sullivan: Okay. I had mine. Done that.

Brick: And then, so one day when we're moving in together we're putting our CDs on a rack and Ruth is going, "I need to put labels on these. Which ones are mine and which ones are yours." And I said, "What?" She says, "Well, because if we break-up then I'll know which ones are mine." And I said, "You know if you're already planning on breaking up, do it now!" and she went "Oh."

Sullivan: And I was like, "Oh!" and I realized that was the commitment and I was right about it. You know, the possibilities of us breaking up. There was a good chance of us breaking up and the more I thought about it, it was like the more I realized that's the work that you have to do. That's the honesty that you have to feel and that - people ask us what's kept us together all these years and the main thing I can say is respect.

Brick: Plus, we still think we're funny.

[laughter]

Sullivan: Good funny person needs an audience.

Schwemer: Well, I have to say Ruth was my roommate when my now wife got together and she was my advisor.

[laughter]

Brick: That's scary.

Schwemer: I would come home and I would say, "Well I asked her what she liked about me - your honesty and integrity—and she said, 'Oh you're in big trouble she didn't say anything about your tits or ass?'"

[laughter]

Schwemer: She said, "Somebody's got to make a move here."

Brick: Yeah, you've got to get on.

Schwemer: She said, "Get yourself going' Marsha—Person Recording and kiss her."

Sullivan: That's right!

Schwemer: Very good advice.

Brick: Did it work? Apparently!

Sullivan: Plant a pair of lips on her and say, "Hello!"

Schwemer: Yeah!

Brick: Apparently.

Sullivan: I guess, since Marsha brought up our living experiences. Marsha's a witch, which I'm Southern Baptist, and I just freaked out over that the first time and I'm learning the Wickan ways and she's also an urbanist more naturalist - which count toward the Wickan ways. And she helped me stay in California by giving me a place that I could afford to stay. At the time I was working for Roger Corman, who is the king of B-movies. He did the original Little Shop of Horrors and into the sci-fi horror world. King of B-movies, not A, B. Anyway, she not only surprised me, she surprised a lot of people. I remember the cable guy came out to put in cable one year and went up the ladder and about two minutes later he was running down the ladder going [speaks gibberish] speaking Spanish and just putting his gear all in the back in his truck. I was going, "What the hell? Why the face?"

Brick: W-T-F!

Sullivan: Shut the front door. So I went out to the ladder, put the ladder comin down, and there's all these skulls and skeletons on the roof of the house "drying out." Bleaching in the sun.

Schwemer: Now, one of these skulls happened to be one that you brought back for me -

Brick: Was it a cat?

Schwemer: -from Louisiana I believe?

Brick: An alligator one?

Schwemer: How did you get that back? No it was a cow. It was a cow skull, beautiful, and Christie told me I should put it up there to bleach it out. I didn't know it was going to scare the bee jeebies out of the guy.

[laughter]

Brick: That's right, you're probably so sensitive!

Schwemer: I don't remember, but I'm thinking you must've driven because I don't think they would've let you bring it back on a plane!

Brick: "Hey lady whatta you doing with a cow's head in it?!"

Schwemer: She was like, "Look what I have for you!"

Sullivan: Well you were into them!

Schwemer: I was, I was very into bones at that time. Much into bones. I still have quite a few like I have them on the porch. I have some turtle shells, turtles that have passed—with the rocks and stuff.

Brick: Rocks. Important. What other stories did you want to tell her hunny?

Sullivan: I guess, when I first came out to - after I started living with Marsha—I was going out to the local hangouts and met this woman in Long Beach and—I won't say her last name, but I'll call her by her first name—it was Naomi. So there here you go having Ruth and Naomi, which is a book, Ruth is a book a chapter in the bible and she's known for saying one line that is used in most marriages that goes, "I will go and your people shall be my people." Well she doesn't say that to her husband, she says that to a woman. So it's two women talking. And that's how I found out about Claudia. I was going to share my life with her.

Brick: Yeah, that worked out for you.

Sullivan: Yeah.

Brick: I was going to—just a couple of short incidents about working at the police department and being a lesbian. First of all the reason I even applied for a job at the police department is because a friend of mine said I was looking for a job and a friend of mine said, "You know, you—should apply at the police department. They have a lot of cute dykes working down there." [laughs] Oh okay! I was all over that. Working in a primarily male environment, I would occasionally talk to the guys about what were their problems about gay people. One of the officers said, "I don't have any problem with lesbians. I don't mind being backed up by a dyke. I just don't want to be backed up by a fairy." You know, somebody who cares enough to want to be a policeman they're not—don't worry about who's backing you up. But it's much easier for women to be out in police department or law enforcement than it is for men. You know, and another of my supervisor at the time was like, "I don't what people have problems with lesbians we like the same thing!"

Sullivan: Well, a reason I'm going with my new do right here is that I'm recovering—I'm not recovering actually from ovarian cancer. I've been battling ovarian cancer for over three years. The day before Christmas '07 I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer and—Christmas Eve? Or Christmas Day?

Brick: Christmas Eve. Christmas Eve.

Sullivan: Christmas Eve, wait which one did I have surgery?

Brick: Christmas Eve.

Sullivan: Okay, I had a total hysterectomy on Christmas Eve. I joked about it because I thought it was funny. Only at Cedar Sinai would I want to do this the day before, you know, Christmas because nobody there cared.

Brick: Jewish. They don't care about Christmas.

Sullivan: They're Jewish, they don't. Anyway, did a round of chemo, it worked for a while. Did another round of chemo, it worked for a while. Did the last chemo and it stopped working. So, at this point I am in hospice. Don't really know if I'll get three months, or six months, or three weeks at this point. It's kind of scary. I've been going through those stages of denial and all this stuff. I guess the thing that's been bothering me the most is leaving a legacy—

Brick: Yeah, I know you've been worried about that.

Sullivan: I think a lot of lesbians, a lot of lesbians *do* get ovarian cancer because they don't have children. And if you don't have children you're at higher risk.

Brick: As a matter a fact, we went to—we stayed at a lesbian resort for a few days a couple years ago in Key West and among the women that were there it was like eight out of ten women either had ovarian cancer, had lost to someone to ovarian cancer, or were nursing someone with ovarian cancer. It was just—you know we'd sit down and start talking to people and we'd talk about being sick and this and that and they're like "oh yeah me too!" or "oh I just lost my wife"—

Schwemer: Whoops sorry.

Brick: It was phenomenal the percentage. Ernie take off, dude. It was really bizarre.

Sullivan: Yeah and I remember one line, one woman had a picked line which is used for giving medicine so it saved your veins and had worn those for a couple of times, but I could see I'm really—both me and Claudia have support the Mazer physically and financially over the past years because it is something that will live on out since most of us don't have children. This is a remembrance for us. got to work on the tombstone—

Brick: Well yeah it's a remembrance, it's an archive.

Schwemer: I thought of something that I thought was ironic. Do you remember once when we were working together in Concord and you had to take a script or something to somewhere where you couldn't park so I rode with you and it was—you were listening to Gilda Radner's story about her journey with ovarian cancer. And you were crying your eyes out. And I'm like, "I don't think you should be listening to this while you're driving! This might not be the best book on tape!" For this little journey here and we're riding through these canyons here!

[laughter]



Sullivan: There is a Gilda's Club now, an organization they have one house in Palm Springs and it's known as Gilda's Place and that's where women with ovarian cancer or families with women with ovarian cancer can go and get support. Gilda Rider was one of my heroes, because she's a great comic. I perceived myself to be Gertrude.

Brick: You are funny.

Sullivan: I perceive you to be funny too.

Brick: I am funny.

[laughter]

Brick: We are funny!

Sullivan: That's right, that's right.

Brick: Did we tell you any stories yesterday that we haven't gotten to?

Schwemer: Well let me think, but I have one more question.

Brick: Alright.

Sullivan: Did you put your wedding ring on?

Brick: I did put my wedding rings on.

Schwemer: Oh good.

Sullivan: I've got mine. They're much better on.

Schwemer: She was—She had been golfing yesterday and had her wedding ring off. This was a problem.

Brick: I got my rings back on.

Sullivan: So I think my line the worst thing about being a lesbian is you get one bling, you have to get two!

Schwemer: So now, how do hospice people come to the house?

Brick: Yes.

Schwemer: On a regular basis?

Sullivan: I have five people on my team. Two people are caregivers, they come and help me bathe and put lotion on my dry skin or what—excuse me—

Schwemer: She was blocking some light that now is—

Brick: Hospice people, there's an aide that comes in that assists with bathing and general care. Then there's a nurse, two nurse visits a week and there's a doctor that writes prescriptions but we never see him. I think is interesting—they just send medicine like morphine and things like that. Which again, I think is odd but that's how it works. They send a social worker to make sure we're not going to kill each other and that the household is in some reasonable condition and then they send us a spiritual advisor. Now, the hospice people we're with is called Trinity Care and they operate under the hospices of the Little Company of Mary. That's a Catholic organization. The spiritual advisor they sent is a lesbian rabbi.

[laughter]

Brick: Alright! That works for us! And she's actually been very helpful for Ruth I think in trying to come to terms with the end of her life. Been very helpful. I think, right?

Schwemer: Does she help you as well?

Brick: Yeah. I sit in on some of her sessions and she's offered to have separate sessions with me. My primary source of solace is I go over to my friend's house and drink wine and she advises me.

Sullivan: Claudia has the hard work of taking care of me.

Schwemer: Trying to make sure the picture's still good, because we had a friend on the couch and she moved!

Sullivan: Okay, you move.

Schwemer: This is better, oh! Okay, I'm getting better here. Okay, I just turned the camera a little and we got more light!

Sullivan: The two switches by the door.

Schwemer: Uh huh, okay.

Sullivan: Flip those up.

Schwemer: Ruth is the advisor—

Sullivan: I'm the technical director.

Schwemer: Yes she is. She's the director of photography and the director for the whole thing. Big advice is, "Keep your fingers off of it Marsha!"

Brick: Yeah she, tried to—told us off yesterday doing that.

Schwemer: Don't turn off the camera again!

Sullivan: Yes! You may have some action shots from yesterday.

Brick: No we don't have anything.

Schwemer: No we didn't have, we just heard the—

Brick: Kathunk.

Schwemer: The kind of a "oh no, yeah!"

Brick: That would be me screaming. I'm the one who screams when she starts falling, because I want to stop time.

Sullivan: I think I—when we were doing this the first time yesterday, I was trying to help—be the "helper"—and I could barely walk down so weak. Anyways, when I started going there's no stopping. I was just aiming for the grass. Thank god I hit mainly the gravel and the grass and my head didn't hit the bricks.

Brick: Hallelujah.

Schwemer: Thank you goddess.

Sullivan: Last time I was dizzy, it was a couple years earlier, I was dizzy on my front porch.

Sullivan: And there was no one to stop my fall.

Brick: I was taking her actually in for a treatment, up to Cedars, and I walked her to the front porch and i'd turned around to get my bag or keys or whatever, and I went back to the front door and in the meantime she had fallen down the front steps and landed on her head. Knocked her head open.

Sullivan: It was a six foot fall to concrete.

Brick: And I—and her eyes are rolling back and I'm just standing on the front yard screaming!

Sullivan: Like a girl!

Brick: Like a girl! And it's Sunday morning and we live in a primarily black neighborhood and everybody was going to church and everybody came out to see what the girls were up to now. [laughs] So when the paramedics rolled up, everybody's out. So funny.

Sullivan: Yeah.

Schwemer: I just want to know if they have on their hats.

Brick: No.

Schwemer: No?

Brick: No hats.

Schwemer: No hats.

Brick: No they didn't have any hats, but they sent two units—

Schwemer: No not the paramedics—

Brick: Oh the people.

Schwemer: —the people going to church!

Brick: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah can't go out without a church. Can't go to church without a hat.

Schwemer: There you go.

Brick: Yeah, they were ready.

Schwemer: Dressed to the nines.

Brick: Pretty much.

Schwemer: I'm going to tilt this just a little. There! Oh good. That's good. That's better. Ha! Ruth has a neck.

[laughter]

Brick: Yes she does, and it's quite lovely. How you holding up?

Sullivan: Okay. Doing fine.

Brick: Okay.

Schwemer: Let's see—what else did we talk about yesterday?

Brick: Well we started talking about sports and Title Nine, but I think some of that might be best saved for when we bring Maryetta in.

Schwemer: Oh yeah, I remember! Yesterday I was telling them, as Ruth said I'm Wickan and we were going to celebrate belting at the house and Ruth was going to go elsewhere, but before she left I think it may have been you and Naomi—that and Peabody in the background—

Brick: He's in the toybox looking for something.

Schwemer: He's looking for a very special toy [laughs]. We had a hot tub in my—Kev and I—we were going to soak in the tub and chat but we couldn't get the heat to work on it. So they boiled water, big pots of water, carried them out, and poured them in until the hot temp was hot enough to get in. [laughs] Oh and I know what else we talked about the Northridge Quake.

Brick: The Northridge Quake.

Schwemer: Yes, Ruth—

Sullivan: I was staying in Marsha's that night and like it was my room, anyway I lived there. I was with the crazy girl—

Schwemer: Bridget?

Sullivan: Yes, well—

Brick: The crazy girl.

Sullivan: Yeah we won't say her last name either, but that's okay. I felt the ceiling was coming down. Being from the south, that's the only thing I knew about—I'm going to come to California, the big one's going to hit—we're all going to die.

Brick: [laughs] We're all going to die!

Schwemer: She crossed the border saying this!

Brick: She packed her bag saying this.

Sullivan: And so the earthquake started and the first thing I did was roll off the bed and run to the side of the—and lay beside the bed so if the roof comes down the bed will shield me.

Schwemer: And then she proceeded to yell, “Get down on the floor!” [laughs] “Get down on the—Marsha!” And I yell, “I’m not getting out of bed!”

Brick: “Get down!”

Schwemer: Covered my head with the blanket that was my protection.

Sullivan: But every chimney on the street we lived on died that morning and—

Schwemer: The freeway fell down just a few blocks away at La Cienega.

Sullivan: It was just before dawn when it happened.

Brick: Yeah and since I had to be at work at six o’clock I had my coffee pot set to go off at four-thirty. So the coffee was made just before the earthquake happened so that I had hot coffee—one of the few people on the block with my coffee cup going down the street going, “Is everyone okay?”

Schwemer: There was no electricity after that.

Brick: Uh-uh.

Schwemer: I have to say Ruth and her lover went door-to-door in our neighborhood and made sure everyone was alright. Me, I stayed under the covers. [laughs]

Brick: Denial is a good place.

Schwemer: It took me a few months to get afraid.

Sullivan: Only a few months later there was a pretty good—

Schwemer: Aftershock?

Sullivan: —aftershock the day Gay Pride was supposed to be that morning. It was like a six point aftershock and it was like we didn’t know if we were going to do the Gay Parade or not because a big earthquake, this other new earthquake. And uh, six point three I think and people have

within minutes people had t-shirts, "I survived a six point three earthquake." You know, that's great.

Schwemer: Oh that's what else you were talking about, the Dykes on Bikes.

Sullivan: Oh yeah.

Brick: One of our great experiences.

Sullivan: I started to do a bucket list a couple months ago before I knew that my treatment was no longer working. I started putting down the ten most-ten things I wanted to see before I die, what I wanted to do. One of the things I had put on there that I could cross off was Dykes on Bikes. One year me and Claudia both had motorcycles and we opened up the gay parade and it was totally-

Brick: It was a blast. It was just a blast.

Sullivan: It was right timing because we wouldn't have done it the year before or couldn't do the year after. Now that's we did the Dykes on Bikes and it was very much fun.

Brick: Is there something' else you want to do?

Sullivan: I want to see the Northern Lights, but that's I don't think that'll happen.

Brick: Yeah, I don't think you can fly.

Sullivan: Well, you know. I'm comfortable so I'm not really in want of anything, because I don't know I keep thinking about how lucky I've been.

Brick: You had a good run baby and we ain't quite done.

Sullivan: Right.

Brick: So bring Maryetta over here? Pull up a chair?

Schwemer: Yeah.

Brick: want to just do that?

Sullivan: Yeah, let me get out of the-

Brick: Oh you just want to get up?

Russell: We'll make Maryetta cry first before you get up.

Brick: Oh sorry, don't cry Maryetta.

Sullivan: Good [laughs].

Russell: Thanks.

Schwemer: You don't want to stay in Ruth?

Sullivan: No, I'll move.

Brick: You should probably—too much talking.

Russell: I can sit—

Brick: You can sit here and I'll just move over into the queen chair.

Schwemer: Alright.

Brick: Princess camera.

Russell: Princess, you are the queen.

Brick: No Ruth is the queen, don't be silly. Let me help you.

Schwemer: Okay careful, careful. We don't want any repeats.

Brick: There you go, baby.

Russell: Been there, done that.

Schwemer: No wait, wait for the bag. Wait for the bag.

Brick: We don't want to pull that out either and even though I can do it, it's not good. Here you go honey buns. Want me to put those behind you?

Schwemer: You want that other band for the bag?

Brick: No it's more cosmetic than action. Sorry, I didn't mean to make you cry.

Schwemer: You know they say crying and laughing are similar -



Brick: Cathartic effect.

Schwemer: –similar healthy things happening in your body.

Russell: I'm sick of catharsis.

Brick: Yeah, the heck with it.

Schwemer: Alright, now let me get you both in. You're going to have to cuddle up there a little more. Get a little, yeah get your chair right there. Okay going to turn this a little bit.

Russell: I'm much taller than Claudia.

Brick: [laughs]

Schwemer: So you're going to have to slump huh.

Brick: I was taller when I was sittin in that chair too.

Schwemer: Cutting your head off.

Brick: I was taller in that chair.

Schwemer: Alright. I adjusted it a little bit now we should be good. Can you introduce yourselves again?

Brick: I'm Claudia Brick.

Russell: And I'm Maryetta Russell.

Brick: And Maryetta and I have been friends since we met in Portland, Oregon in 1972 playing softball on a team called the Lavender Menace and then from there it just explodes.

Russell: I was like–thirty-nine years ago.

Brick: Yeah well, it was a long time ago.

Russell: We old.

[laughter]

Brick: Well no, we don't have to say we're old now. We can say we were baby dykes then.

Russell: We were baby dykes and we were very cute.

Brick: We were so cute and we had so much fun.

Russell: Yeah.

Schwemer: Now what kind of expertise did you have to have to be on your softball team.

Brick: Oh well, you had to be a lesbian.

Russell: That was it. That was it.

Brick: Which is how we ended up with a pitcher that wore hiking boots, or what other kind of odd duck—

Russell: We had Tia.

Brick: Well I barely even remember Tia. Tia had kaleidoscopic hair that's what I remember about Tia.

Russell: Yeah we had some pretty fun people on our team. We were the most conservative.

Brick: Yeah we were actually—

Russell: Yeah we were the most conservative.

Brick: We were just there to play ball, you know.

Russell: Yeah we came to play ball. We were actually athletes.

Schwemer: You actually knew how to play ball.

Brick and Russell: Yeah.

Schwemer: As opposed to many members of the team?

Brick: Some members of the team were not quite up on the ball playing thing, but it was a lot of fun to be a part of the lesbian club.

Russell: I actually started my softball career at ten. My first team I played on was organized—it was in Santa Anna, California and it was the Pixies.

Schwemer: [laughs]

Russell: I was the catcher because I was the only one that could throw the ball all the way to second base.

Brick: I was the catcher in high school because I was the only one brave enough to stand back there and take the shots from the pitcher.

Russell: Right.

Schwemer: That's a scary position.

Brick: Yeah, I know the organized ball I played was in high school I mean I played in grade school. It was actually of funny because the principal of our grade school always made jokes about my dad being "Dr.Brick" because even though he only had a B.A. it took him eight years to get it. We always talk about my father being "Dr.Brick" and he also said - he would also say this stuff at PTA meetings—he'd say, "Claudia over there, she can kick a football farther than any of the boys in the sixth grade." Yeah! That didn't help however, you know, provide any athletic guidance who are all who are pre-Title Nine.

Russell: Right.

Brick: Bane of our existence.

Russell: Right, yeah.

Brick: Yeah, I really do—I really think that there had been athletic opportunities for us competitive athletic opportunities even into college it would probably change the course of some of our lives.

Russell: That's for sure yeah.

Brick: It would've made—

Russell: I would've had my college paid for.

Brick: Well yeah! You would've had your college paid for. It wouldn't have taken me twenty years to get my B.A.

Russell: Right.

Brick: So, I'm really—I'm delighted that there's so many women now able to participate in so many sports and at the same time it pisses me off.

Sullivan: Same way they don't pay homage to the women who made it happen.

Brick: Yeah and the lesbians, the young lesbians, take for granted a lot of things that we really had to be battle for.

Schwemer: I would venture that young lesbians that may see this would not know what Title Nine is, perhaps.

Brick: I would, you're probably right. They don't appreciate what they have. To me. That's a whole—

Sullivan: Just tell them then, Claudia.

Brick: Title Nine is part of the United States government code that required that colleges and universities spend as much money or proportionally more amount of money on women's athletics as they did on men's athletics. And it was brought up as a sexual discrimination suit that made it's way into the US government code.

Russell: And the public schools. Yeah, so they eventually had a bus that took the girls to the tennis matches. If we need to go to any certain sports, if you didn't have a parent to drive you then you didn't have a team.

Brick: I mean, in junior high I remember [laughs] being in the car I was raised in San Jose and there was a car load of us on the Junior High basketball team and we were in the car of Cathy's mother and Cathy's sitting in the front seat because it was her mother's car, a bunch of us in the back and they were playing a Beatles song. It was 1964. And Cathy turned it up and the whole car is going' like this because we're all singing and dancing to this stuff, to this wild Beatles stuff.

Schwemer: Ed Sullivan, huh?

Brick: Pretty much. Yeah.

Schwemer: He had The Beatles on.

Russell: He did.

Brick: He did. We had just gone skiing that weekend and we rushed home so we could be home Sunday night to see it. So, when we talked about stories that would be good to tell one of my favorite stories is since we were an all-lesbian team and originally it was more about lesbian camaraderie than it was about softball, but it eventually into quite a competitive softball team. We were still, for the most part, all lesbians as were all members were for the most part most of the members of all the other softball teams in the northwest, but they were teachers and professors, and professional people, social workers and law enforcement people—

Russell: People that would get fired.

Brick: –and they truly were afraid for their jobs should they be identified as lesbians. And it was funny and not funny at the same time. So we would go to tournaments in the summer, weekend long tournaments, and one tournament we went to in Mount Vernon, Washington was when we were just starting to become competitive and we were at, which means we were still in the tournament Saturday night at the end of play on Saturday. We hadn't gotten, been bumped out of the double elimination.

Russell: Instead of losing our first two and then going to a bar.

Brick: Right [laughs] it was two and out. So, we had a big team meeting at the motel after–between the tournament and going out to dinner. At the tournament they'd given us a bunch of coupons for pizzas and beer at Pizza Pete, who was one of the big sponsors, and so since we had coupons of course we were going to go there for dinner. We had this big team meeting and it was like, "Okay, we're still in the tournament, we're not going to get drunk, we're not going to queer off, we're going to behave ourselves and be ready to play ball Sunday Morning." So we got to the pizza place and I guess we're the only ones who didn't get the memo that not everybody was going to get there until two hours later. So by the time everybody got there we were drunker than cooter brown!

[laughter]

Russell: It's true. I stayed pretty sober because I think I ended up driving.

Brick: We were only a couple of blocks from the hotel.

Russell: Oh other times I was the driver.

Brick: I'm sure.

Russell: Yeah, I was a good girl.

Brick: So, by the time everybody got there we're drunk and so where everybody's buying pizzas and beers and carrying on and then they bring a band in!

Russell: What could we do?

Brick: But dance! And so we danced with each other because we were the only people we knew there and as the women on the other teams imbibed more and more beer, they too became less attached to their inhibitions and they also started dancing.

Russell: The whole place was rocking and dancing. It was great!

Brick: Clara says her aunt dancin' with her girlfriend.

Russell: That's right and we brought out the whole softball league came out!

Brick: Pretty much!

Russell: Only for the night, though!

Brick: Only for the night they went right back into the closets immediately thereafter.

Russell: They acted like nothing happened after the next day.

Brick: Yeah, because even the next day they, "Oh we don't dance with each other!" Well you did too! Big fat liars! And that was the first time that anybody on our team had gotten the All-Star wasn't it?

Russell: Yeah.

Brick: Or was it an award. And Clara's got Miss Qui-Miss Congeniality. He got the sportsmanship award.

Russell: Right. By 1980 we went to Nationals.

Brick: Yeah.

Russell: In Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Schwemer: Wow.

Brick: It was a big deal.

Russell: Yeah. That was pretty fun.

Schwemer: It was way cool. And Claudia, can you please tell us about your stardom? [laughs]

Brick: My stardom.

Russell: Claudia was a super triple hitter she played left-field most of the time. Sometimes she played center, actually she could play about anything in the outfield. Line-drive hitters she could rip that ball a mile and she used to be kind of quick.

Brick: I used to—I'm kind of fat and slow now. My knees don't work so good, but there was one particular—well two tournaments—there was one again when we were very young team that was

our own Fourth of July Portland Invitational Tournament that I hit really well at and that was my first All-Star and I just about went through—I just about jumped over the fence.

Russell: I know.

Brick: I was so exciting. It was just so exciting and one play that had the - the play was Joy was in that tournament.

Russell: Yeah it was.

Brick: Beause I was playing center field, right center, and a woman named Joy was playing right field. And there was a fly ball hit -

Russell: Deep, deep.

Brick: —deep right field, and Joy and I are both running back, running back, running back, and Joy's like, "I got it, I got it," and I'm right behind her and she goes off the tip of her glove and I go on the ground behind her and caught it. [laughs] And everybody was like, "Oh!"

Russell: We went crazy. That was way before videotaping, too bad!

Brick: Yeah that was hot, that was hot beans and then another tournament a few years later I got in literally what they call the zone. I know what they're talking about. I had a whole—entire tournament I was playing left field and I knew when they, that they, everybody was going to hit to me and I could catch anything. And I did. I was like out there and I was out there hollering, "Come on, you know you're getting it out here yeah!" and everybody hit to left field I caught everything that came. It was just the most amazing, surreal experience. Never been there before, never been there since.

Russell: Also hit like six-something.

Brick: It was, it was a phenomenal—

Schwemer: All in the same?

Russell: Yeah, oh yeah.

Brick: And so they gave me an award for defensive player of the tournament and the little award was a bronzed shoe, a bronzed baseball shoe, and it was the same kind of shoe as I wore. I had a ritual every night before games, I would shine my shoes. It was part of my setting the moto shining the shoes. I also have a gift for the major foundation behind me that I just found. His friend of mine was a fast pitcher, Chris Loonies Mazooka the Bazooka. She was, she struck out—they played major league ball clubs.

Russell: Oh yeah.

Brick: And she'd strike out the the side on these men's major league teams. She'd--this plate is a plate that was an all-star plate tournament that she played in that I'll send onto you.

Schwemer: Thank you so much!

Brick: I don't know if I've already given you the softballs that I've had, the Joan Joyce and the.. There's another one.

Schwemer: I know Ruth mentioned that, but I don't think--

Brick: If I can find them, I was send them over to you.

Schwemer: And if anyone has a Lavender Menace t-shirt left--

Russell: I have a Lavender Menace t-shirt.

Schwemer: That will be sweet.

Russell: I have it in, it's in Minneapolis right now.

Brick: I thought I might have a jacket, but it's a Fury's jacket.

Russell: I have a Fury's jacket.

Brick: It's the old, those ugly--

Russell: Windbreakers.

Brick: --ugly windbreakers with all the little patches and everything.

Russell: I have that too.

Brick: Purple windbreaker. You can have that too.

Schwemer: Great!

Brick: So that's--

Schwemer: That's--



Brick: That's kind of how we got from there to here!

Schwemer: I feel like—

Russell: And I've stayed in contacts with friends ever since.

Schwemer: And you're in Minnesota now?

Russell: I am, sort of. Also Tucson, since I retired. Yeah.

Schwemer: So you're just out here for a little visit.

Russell: I came out to visit. I wanted to see Ruth and Claudia.

Brick: And we've been playing golf all week.

Russell: And we've been playing' a little golf. Always said when I retired from softball, I didn't retire from softball until I was fifty-four.

Brick: You're lucky.

Russell: I know, I know. My knees are still good. Well I lost this step, but I had one to lose.

Brick: You had a lot, you were very fast!

Russell: I had one to lose.

Brick: Yeah.

Russell: And then I didn't really have too many sports. I just watched sports. And then when I retired I took my very first social security check and bought new golf clubs and I took lessons and now I love golfing. I'm a golfer. I love it.

Brick: Golfing is so much fun. If you don't keep score, it's fun. If you keep score it does make you nuts.

Schwemer: How do you know when to move to the next hole? I guess, when the ball goes in?

Russell: Well.

Brick: When you put the ball in the!

Russell: Or—

Schwemer: Okay! Okay! [laughs] Let's change sub-

Brick: Or when you get fru- you go like, "I've already hit the ball enough on this hole, lets move on!"

Russell: I think I'm done now. Yeah.

Schwemer: Okay, I get it. Silly me.

Brick: You're not a golfer are you?

Schwemer: Not very much. Kind of like sports and cameras. [laughs] You tell I'm not that great? I could not throw it to second base, I couldn't throw it to first base.

Brick: Oh that was one-[laughs] Lake ball?

Russell: Oh that! ONE of my favorite, Claudia had a pretty good arm and we're like playing in this tournament in like Washington somewhere. I think it was like -

Schwemer: Billingham?

Russell: -yeah there was a lake behind this Lake Sammamish or something like that and it was over the backstop. The backstops were pretty high there. Well we were all, it was really intense, we were playing really hard and it was kind of hot out there. And Claudia comes running in for a ball, she scoops it up on the bounce, and decides to fire it home. And that ball just rose straight up in the air. It came up off of her hand, and went up in the air all the way over the backstop and into the lake.

Brick: And everyone just howled!!

Russell: I know it really broke the tension we're like, WOW!

Brick: Well because we'd been you know they'd even call a meeting on the pitchers mound because we had runners on bases this big ag play -

Russell: It was serious.

Brick: And so any new outfielders, throw it home.

Russell: Claudia-She-

Brick: Okay!

Russell: —she ripped that thing. It was like her arm came unhinged. Like she had -

Brick: I was so embarrassed.

Russell: I just watched it, I can't do a thing with it. Sort of experience. And we were all just stunned. The only thing we could do was laugh.

Brick: It was funny.

Russell: So, for many years after that anything that was too high for somebody to catch we'd all go, "Lake Ball!". I still do "Lake Ball" actually.

Brick: It was just so funny. Like, "How'd that happen?!"

Russell: It was just remarkable. The ball went forty feet straight up in the air and all the way to the backstop into the water.

Brick: And it went into the lake.

Russell: And it went quite a ways!