

RL10066_Williams_access_master.mp3 / Williams, Rainbow - interviewed by Rose Norman / Duke Digital Repository

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- And broken up with. This is Rose Norman. And I'm here with Rainbow Williams in her home in Saint Augustine, Florida on November 9th, 2013. This is the sit down interview, separate from the tour of the house interview.

- Okay, we supposed to start with how I got to Pagoda, right. I was 50 years old. I was living in Orlando. And I had just gotten broken up with. I was very unhappy about it. And, decided that being broken hearted and menopausal and all that stuff was not a healthy thing for me. And I had been going up to Pagoda as a weekend backpack girl for several years. I purchased one of the cottages as soon as I could. In '78, I think, I put my \$600 down. And, then anytime I came up I had a place to stay. I was sharing with Nancy Breeze. She would be there on weekends. I'd come up during the week. We could share one space. That was in the downstairs of the duplex. Pause.

- Okay, pause.

- Okay, pull identify.

- Okay, so this is the do you consider yourself Southern question, okay? And talk about being Southern.

- The answer to that is totally, my God, yes. (Rose and Rainbow laugh) Totally.

- And tell why.

- Born and raised in Shreveport, Louisiana by a very racist family, homophobic family, sexist, a very, I mean, their prejudiced.

- Just a normal Southern family.

- Just a normal Southern people which I know that I began to be looking at that, I'd say five, six, seven riding in the car, and I would hear them making racist statements. I compared it with my experience, and it didn't match up. So that was a little bit of evaluation that I was doing.

- Is this as a child? Is this as a child?

- Yeah. Sittin' in the car riding, going around to grandma's house. And it was our monthly trip to get lots of provisions, 'cause my grandma had a farm. And several of us were living in the city. So, we'd go down there.

- Living in Shreveport. She was in on a farm in Louisiana.

- She was in Castor, Louisiana. I would say about a 50 minute, I mean a 50 mile, about a 50 mile trek.

- So, you grew up in Shreveport. And what, when did your awareness, I mean you say your awareness of racist remarks not matching up with your experience is as a child. When did you, when does your activism kick in?

- I'm not sure. I have to think about that.

- I think of your art as activist. I mean.

- Okay, my, okay, all right acting out.

- I guess, it's probably, though in the cultural issue when you were doing (Rose drowned out by Rainbow). The cultural one is when art is activism. And all that stuff about your art that stuff could go in that.

- Well I, my art started very early. (phone rings)

- Forgot to turn off the phone. Okay.

- As an only child I had to entertain myself a lot. What I consider myself one of my truths is that loneliness or boredom has been the pathway to creativity. So, in order not to be bored I would sit on the back porch with the tiniest little desk. And there was a beaut, some beautiful white bond paper that had somebody's business letter head on one side. And so it was my first found object materials, but the, that was given to us. And I flipped it over and drew on first on the blank side and then on the other side as I ran out of paper. I began to draw. And I have almost none of those. I have one some place I couldn't dig out. But it began to be very sophisticated drawings, more and more detail. I listened to, I loved to listen to the radio on that little back screen porch and do drawings. And that was how I entertained and behaved myself in my youth. Later on it became an easy discipline to draw for an hour a day. And I've got my sketchbook collection is in the other room. I had, I haven't even counted 'em in a long time. But it's now, it's this size sketchbook. It's a manageable.

- What is that about six by eight?

- Yeah. And, so anyway, the daily drawing thing, the way, the reason I can draw and be accurate with portraiture and stuff. It's not quite a gift. And I really, I wanna emphasize that, it was training, training, training. I drew, drew, drew. So, I do have an eye and a hearing. But I gotta say if you don't do it, you don't have it. And if you do do it, you do. So, let's see, that was... And then I was also my mom... And you saw the photograph. My sweet, sweet momma. For her, if she could give me something, something was within her power to give me she really wanted me to have it. And I was extremely conscientious about that, because we really had to mind our money all the time. So I was very aware when she would have an expensive gift for me, like the time she bought a clarinet for me. And I felt terrible about the fact that I soon was no longer in

the band class, because I interrupted to go into the art class instead. So it was kinda like an early, if you had to choose one or the other, what do you choose? Later, getting back to music through dulcimers. It's kinda the backdoor. That's a backdoor into music of a very different tradition is what I wanna say. It's not built on the same musical system. And it's very user friendly. And so, I've come back. Later years, I've come back through my crafting to making handmade dulcimers and playing them and assembling a band of rowdy people who'll do rowdy songs. We, one of my band members recently hurt my feelings telling me that she had, that she is embarrassed by the some of the things that we had done. And I know exactly the ones she was talking about, because we had some really outrageous separatism songs going on and got a, I've got a tape that I can some time play you.

- This is the amazing.

- I'm a style through streaming.

- Well, we can pull that tape out and play it for this recorder some time.

- Okay, all right, all right. Now you, now the question was early activism, early.

- At what point did your, let's just say at what point did your lesbian feminism hit the or your feminism? Most people's feminist consciousness raised before their lesbian feminist consciousness raised or. Talk about that.

- Okay.

- Feminism or lesbianism or one or the other or both.

- I had, my family gave, except my mom was a very loving person. She was also infected by racism. And later on my daughters and I were able to confront her and just say (mumbles) hurts our feelings when you say such and such. And my mom because she didn't change her mind, but she changed her action. And she would do it in order to please us. So we got her to change her behavior. So, I had a family that gave me something to differentiate myself from, and so I could become other which is sort of uncomfortable. But it, I think it's, I think the artist has to do that. I think that is part of the very necessary, you can make bolder decisions about anything if you figure that you're out of it, out of the loop or out of the appreciation circle.

- But you followed a fairly conventional.

- Yeah very, very conventional. I was in the very conventional path. I was just crazy about girls. And there was a girls club. We were kind of a Saturday group that met. And I, that was my, the important thing of the week for me was to get to that Saturday meeting with the girls, wherever they were. We had so much fun together. And we would jitterbug together and have summer parties and giggle and just have the best damn time. It was--

- This is in high school right or?

- Yeah, yeah. And.

- But, is it, does it start being crazy about girls in high school or sooner?

- That was one I sort of was able to appreciate. But I, but, wait a minute, back up, because we kind of had, my mom and me, that's the start of me and another woman in close appreciation, Karen, real Karen. So I, to that my mom and me. Then my aunt who would take care of me, she used to stay at home and my mom was at work. She was bringing up two daughters. So those were my cousins. We were brought up, we three girls were brought up almost like sisters with two mamas and a papa who came home. He was a sweetie pie. And he would try to surprise us all bringing home the hit record of the week that we'd listen to on the hit parade. And we would be thrilled, and we would listen to... One of them was in my head this morning. It's gone again. Anyway, the hit parade songs that we'd listen to.

- On the radio.

- On the radio. And he would love to bring home like a new radio and a Magnavox situation. And those were family times with, he was a very hen pecked guy, so. So there weren't a lot of men in my life. So I can't tell you if it was... When were there men in my life that I began to notice almost never. I didn't have a lot of boy cousins or I was the oldest. So, I kinda led the game.

- Of those three you were the oldest.

- Yeah, and I was, no I was the oldest of about eight cousins.

- Okay.

- And being older in a group where there boys, they don't dominate. They don't even get to be very assertive. It's like you get to do what the girls say to do.

- I'm gonna move this a little closer to you. Okay.

- So I wasn't identifying crushes. I wasn't really identifying my feelings as crushes. Then I went to a wonderful art school in Texas that was then called CSCW, Texas State College for Women.

- Yeah, in Denton, right.

- Yeah.

- Yeah.

- And it's changed names. It's now Texas Woman's University. But it's co-ed. And it was a wonderful art school. And, I went there for two years and then I figured that I better go try a co-ed situation, 'cause, I mean, I was being so spoiled in an all girl situation that it must not be real. If that makes any sense, raise your hand. I thought no I'm supposed to go into the big girl now. So I went to the University of Arkansas which had just built a very spectacular art center designed by Ed Stone who I would play to read. It had a wonderf, it had an architecture department. It had painting, sculption, ture. It had a wonderful music organs, a good buddy of mine was an organ student. We used to go in and she would play these magnificent things, so powerful. And I was very aware of the architecture department there. I'd go hang out and see what the boys were doing. I got a job. My first job was for the art department as slide historian, taking care of the art history slides, putting them in the, what's it called, no, the--

- Carousel.

- Carousel. For classes and then I'd maybe sit back there while the professor was giving the lecture. And then afterwards, I'd take 'em and put 'em back all away. So I kinda got a lot of exposure to architectural and art history that I loved. And I also met a young man who was an architecture student. How ideal was that? And, my sorority mates and I had him identified. He was the guy that wore all the beautiful cashmere sweaters. And he had a beautiful haircut, a DA. (Rose laughs) And he was just cute, so. I would later figure out that he and I agreed on the same ideas. Neither one of us really wanted to get married, but we wanted a family. We had wonderful agreements like that. Both of us wanted to kind of like devote as much of our lives as possible to art, architecture, travel. Seeing the places that were in the art history slides was a major goal. And we got to do that in '56 after he graduated. We sold all our wedding presents and put together a trip for the summer. And we'll never regret that. And he's a gay man. I'm a lesbian. He's grapachaz. We did the thing. We adopted two kids when we couldn't conceive. We adopted two kids and each of those kids has two, so. We've replicated, we've doubled.

- Did?

- Yeah go head.

- Okay, you mentioned in the car that you would travel in, with nine boxes. He was in the Air Force.

- Yes, his education at the University of Arkansas was paid for by ROTC which meant that he was committed. Even though he was an architecture student, he was committed to going into the R, the Air Force right away after graduation. I said that's fine with me. It's part of being able to travel. I don't wanna go to Saint Louis or to some damn place and settle down and, you know. I want as expansive a life as I could have. And, let's do it. And, we'll just be a happy couple and enjoy ourselves. We just had to have a.

- And you did for a while.

- Yeah we did. And then, as a matter of fact, I, we didn't get unhitched for nine years. It wasn't necessary.

- And by then how were the kids?

- Okay, the kids were now two and four. And I had had a, my first lesbian experience which we'll go head and say it was orgasmic, all right.

- Which was also your first orgasmic experience.

- Yes, right. So, I... I wanted to live happily ever after with her. But she needed to stay where she was in her marriage. But what we did together, we supplemented beautifully. We created an alternative school together called Sensu.

- An alternative school.

- An alternative school. That was my phone.

- Yeah.

- Did you say sun?

- Stone Suit School.

- Okay.

- Stone Suit School. This is a charming story, but we won't get into that right now, but.

- You can tell a little about that. Is it written out anywhere?

- Yeah, it's, yeah. The Stone Suit story is kind of a familiar one.

- Where is that story told then?

- It's about sharing what you have. Soldiers come back from a war all they've got is their helmets and their guns. They come back through villages and everybody's hungry and nobody has anything. So, somebody gets the idea of take your helmet, fill it with water at the village well. Let's put a fire under it. And here comes somebody, and all they've got is one bone and one somebody's got an onion and somebody's got a carrot. And so, stones can make a soup.

- Yeah, I've read that.

- Okay good, good, good.

- I meant the school itself. Has that story been told? The story about making that school.

- Yeah, I mean, by me yeah, sure.

- I mean, is there a place I could footnote?

- I'm not sure that it still exists. We had a website and... But anyway, Stone Suit School. It was in Crescent City, Florida. After we started it and it did the, it did a little. First it was just me and Sula and Annette and our kids and husbands hardly ever participated in anything like that. But everybody wanted it. And nobody wanted to pay the dues. But, eventually, they were able to buy property in Crescent City that is beautiful. And it is very raw, wooded acreage rough a, one of these little crystal lakes that happen in Florida, small, just a little clean, crystal turquoise water. And the kids went up there. And we built, the first things that we built were out of cardboard. And you'd cut a triangle. And you'd tape the triangles together. And you had suddenly built a geodesic dome. And the kids loved to sleep in those. And then if it rained, you could throw some plastic over it. And what wound up happening was a very self built grassroots situation which is right up my alley. It's like the whole thing. It's like what, let's do it ourselves. And let's make it user friendly and... The kids will learn as they do everything. They'll learn, we've got some electrician coming in. They're gonna learn a little bit of how to wire and... A little bit of a, we're gonna learn how to grow things. And we just learned everything from scratch. It became more and more sophisticated. And after 30 years, it was doing some very sophisticated challenging... What's the word I'm reaching for here?

- Hi-tech.

- No, it was, it still wasn't very hi-tech. It was kinda low-tech, but it was kind of like, trying to redeem kids that were going off the edge. So the clientele stopped. It was, of the, state chain. The clientele changed. Instead of our kids who had all graduated by then, it then became the kind of schools that used on Dr. Phil that he's sending people to. These kind of and it's cross between life skills and coping skills and wilderness skills and everything.

- So these are troubled kids.

- It became a school for challenged kids eventually but not while we had it. So we were out of it by then. But the same, some of the kids, some of my partner her kids are running those programs somewhere else.

- So the school itself is no longer.

- Stone Suit School has been privately sold just within the past eight years. But it lasted for 30.

- So that was probably your first really activist thing. That you started a school that used to provides alternative education to what you would give you in turn to a regular school.

- Yep, right.

- So where is your feminist consciousness or, I mean you're, okay, you're already, now you're attracted to women and you've, and you're married to a gay man, so. So your lesbian consciousness was ahead of you probably.

- At about, I'm gonna say, I'm gonna say in the '70s, early '70s, I went to my very first women's festival. I believe that it was the fourth national.

- In Bloomington.

- And I'm not sure that that was Bloomington. I'm not sure where it was at that point. But anyway, that is, it is, it was the national. And I went to it. We, I had discovered dulcimers. I took my dulcimer. My partner was playing the dulcimer. We played together there.

- Did, were you there as a grass woman or in the art selling art or anything?

- Neither.

- You just took your dulcimer.

- I was a camper. Yeah, I was an, we had a tent some place.

- So it probably wasn't Bloomington, 'cause they were always in dorms in Bloomington.

- Okay. Anyway it was, I believe it was the fourth.

- Okay.

- And at that one I discovered, I went to workshops. Polly Near, Jenny Clemens are the two people that I, that just had a huge impact on me.

- At that festival or (faintly speaking).

- At that festival, workshops at that festival. And Polly Near particularly her activism.

- Activism through her song.

- Everything, her workshop was all about how to get a community or individuals to think a certain way, how to work it, how to work it.

- Okay, so.

- She was really powerful.

- So the '70s is also when a whole lot of, there's '72 is when Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance formed, all sorts of consciousness raising groups were going on, domestic violence shelters, women's clinics, ERA. Were you involved in any of that?

- I got involved in the NOW group.

- And where are you living now?

- I'm in Winter Park, Florida, which is actually is Orlando. But I was also teaching at Stetson which is up in DeLand. And I was teaching at the Orlando Art Association. And I was teaching at Pine Castle Center for the Arts. So, I was a teacher.

- Is Pine Castle one word or two?

- Two, I mean one, one word I guess so.

- Okay.

- I had my, when I discovered dulcimers I started writing songs, and I collected songs. And we started program, I mean, we'd produce a program right away. We weren't shy about getting up and making mistakes. And we figured.

- Just you and your, is this your partner too?

- No, these are, no, these are... That partner that I went to the festival with was part of the band.

- Okay, so you formed a band.

- I formed a band, yep. And we started doing material that embarrassed. And I got my feelings hurt about that when she told me that she was embarrassed to do that stuff. And, so anyway, I'm over myself a little bit.

- Okay. So it really came, go head.

- A huge thing with them. A huge thing was newsletters. At the festival there were people they brought their newsletters. At the festival, must be in connection. And I found out about this whole national network. So, went home, started a newsletter. So that was my another activism thing was to get a local newsletter started. And we had about eight names from the local, there was a rap group.

- And that's your newsletter distribution to start with.

- To start with. And then I distribute it to the whole NOW chapter. And the NOW chapter in the next county and then the NOW chapters through the state. What I found out was for a girl on a budget, I could get an exchange subscription going with Denver, Atlanta, San Francisco, LA, Chicago, New York. And I had their newsletters coming in to me to read first and foremost. It was for me. And then I took that information, and it was kind of a cut and paste thing to put that together into the newsletter that went for Central Florida people. And it was very informal cut and paste. You could just slap it together and take it to a printer. And what, we had a lesbian printer, Pronto Printers, Pronto Press whatever. Anyway, and they did it for the love of the community and just a little bit of money. And there was an abortion clinic there locally. That woman supported us. She was our only ad sometimes. And, we, I did that for eight years, putting out a newsletter on a monthly basis. Right at the end is when Sarah and I broke up. And I was menopausal, broken hearted, and a danger to myself. So, I came up to Pagoda. I kind of severed a lot of things. I went out to vo-tech and enrolled in the architectural drafting class at vo-tech here to kind of keep my an architectural love alive. And I thought maybe I'll do that maybe I'll actually do it. So at 50, with that drafting course. Then I met Dori Rotunda at the Pagoda. She says, I'm an architect. I said, you need an apprentice don't you. She says, well okay. So, her studio was in Melrose in the log cabin.

- This is Corky's Dori. The Dori that Corky talks about all the time.

- The same one.

- Okay.

- So, I would come over to the log cabin. And Dori and Martha were a couple. Martha lived out here in Saint Augustine. She was the therapist. So I think it was for about three years that I worked for Dori. And we did design and build the house that I showed you. Then.

- That beach house.

- The beach house, yeah.

- Say that again, so I'll have it right here.

- Okay. It was, the clients were Jean Adele and Kaimora the psychic. And Kaimora--

- How do you spell, Kaimora?

- It, I put it one word, Kaimora. K-a-i-m-o-r-i-a.

- Okay.

- Kaimora.

- Okay. And this is the lithe.

- It's one of the beast.

- It's the Southern most light.

- It is.

- Okay.

- It is.

- Okay.

- Now, let's see.

- So now you're at the Pagoda. You've, wait a minute. I'm a little confused on the chronology here. You're 50. You've broken up, you're broken up with your girlfriend. You've moved into the duplex. Okay, let's say that (mumbles), so.

- Now, and living in the duplex with a fence up that you see the privacy fence that you see now wasn't there. So all that was the big parking lot up there, right inside the gate. So anybody that came to visit, I thought, all right, there was, I had my drawing table the way I have it looking out the back. At that time it looked out into Pagoda parking lot from the duplex. So I kept meeting the most wonderful lesbians. And, Marilyn and Irene, let's bring them into the story. So they came and.

- Ann Murphy and Irene Weiss.

- Yes. So they were driving in a small RV in those days. Now later they're gonna upgrade that for sure. But that was the first one. And they came in and they were just real congenial and open and coming over anytime. Do you want coffee, tea or milk or you know. I mean, it's just welcoming and generous and sweet. Plus, they were culture vultures. They were big fans of whatever I was doing. They gave me so much support. They were in touch with artists and writers all over. And they were networking that.

- Now, the hou, the cottage they bought. They bought, must've bought that later 'cause it's '84.

- '84 and '88 for.

- Okay.

- Okay, four years later is when they bought that. Then they were to be there that would be seven years they were doing that cottage, the hills.

- Okay.

- (mumbles) straw on that.

- 1991, 1998 to '91, okay. And did they sell it to somebody or what? They just start renting it?

- Okay, they were renting it to a woman named Jennie. And, now this is gonna be off the record.

- Okay. Okay, and this is stories of the '84 to.

- Well, I'm not sure it, but so title it.

- Okay.

- But let us say that in '88 that was when we bought the North Pagoda, four cottages, four ocean lots or was it three ocean lots? The pool, we got the pool finally. And, Marilyn and Irene moved into their cottage B. And I was Rainbow in D. And Nancy Breeze was in C. And Paula and Dorothy were in A. So it was a great North Pagoda gang. These were all, we were all enthusiastic about meeting together instead of feeling like the drudge of it meeting together, which had, as it become sort of a feeling of duty to have to go to a meeting. This was a new, we were enthusiastic about meetings. We were the North Pagoda. This was gonna be different. This was a new vision. And it was more a, it wasn't hard psychological work. It was come bring food on Sunday morning, sit and enjoy Southern cooking. And we'd sit in a sook or circle and we'd go around in a consciousness raising go around sharing each person telling. We usually would have a subject. Marilyn and Irene would come up with ideas for the subject. Sometimes it would be how does the money work in your family or what's your, what's, what are your background stories. What's your grandma's story? What's your mama's story? What's your hard, the hardest thing? I mean, it could be anything. We talked about stuff in a way. We... This was open to the community as well as residents. So this is a way for somebody to come in and meet each other in the candy.

- You're talking about women, right. This was women or, not just lesbians or was it just lesbians?

- No, I'm talking, yeah, no I'm really just talking about the local, the international with the local, whether they wanna call 'em lesbians or not. We called ourselves lesbians, but.

- Whether they call themselves lesbians or not.

- Yeah, right. They can, they, if they wanted to come out to Pagoda and see what it was all about. We had a huge project was to remodel the center. Bring it up to date. It had been suffering from benign neglect for years. And Marilyn and Irene had some rich friends in California that helped us finance that. They took... They solicited the funds to do eight and to make the wheel, the theater existed beautifully. But we did not have a bathroom on that ground floor that I can remember. So, we undertook to make a wheelchair

accessible apartment downstairs next to the theater. The theater was abundant with performances, readings. We had a Pagoda writers, readers group that I've got a film of that one.

- Of a reading done by the Pagoda writers and readers group.

- I've got an old videotape of that. It was Pagoda culture club was alive and well. And people who came to see Marilyn and Irene were... It's like they knew everybody from everywhere. And they were gracious and welcoming. And they just made sure everybody had a good time. Marilyn wrote her book putting together her articles. And it was published. They bought a big RV to take that book around to different places and do the readings on the road. While they were on the road they ran into that community called Superstition Mountain Pueblo. It's two RV parks across the road from each other. And I've been out there. I saw it. I think it was in '94 or something that Sammy Carr was my partner with an RV. And we went out there. I met her. She was a dulcimer woman. So, we went out there. Her RV was difficult for me, 'cause she had four cats. And I wasn't allergic, but it was just that I couldn't do the smell.

- Meaning you partner with Sammy Carr on the RV, meaning you bought it together.

- No, no, no, was her RV. That was her cats. And it was summer time, and I was invited to travel with her.

- Okay.

- So. We got to see Superstition Mountain in Pueblo. And it was after Marilyn and Irene had moved out there. And it was after Marilyn had had I'm gonna call it a stroke, because we didn't know. It was one of those kind of silent destroyers that what she said to me was Linda I can't write. And I said, it'll go away. It's just a writer's block. Don't worry about it. You, you know, you'll be able to write. Don't worry about it.

- How old was she? Not that old.

- I don't know. Not that, I mean, but who's that old? Nobody's that old.

- One of them has died. Which one has died?

- Marilyn.

- Marilyn. She's gone, yep. And, when she, after they moved out there, and Marilyn had had her stroke or whatever it was. Irene took care of her. The sisters, Marilyn's four sisters didn't come through for her at all. This is, don't put this in the record. This not what one of those things I've got okay.

- Marilyn and Irene are very important to that North Pagoda experience.

- Yes. It could never have happened without them. And that whole remodeling the building couldn't have happened without them. Now, we're gonna footnote this article, Lesbian Ethics, volume five, number two.

- I didn't get that.

- You wanna scan this for you.

- Yeah.

- Okay.

- I have to bring the scanner in.

- Okay, but anyway, let me just mention what this is.

- Okay.

- Okay. It was found that the person who was doing. (loud beep and phone rings) This is my business partner. I'm a take it.

- Okay. Rena. Great. Rose Norman is here. And we just been talking about after Marilyn and Irene came to Pagoda. And I'm giving her my very biased outlook on how wonderful that was and how that was a cultural bonanza for us. And if you ever have one of the things that nobody's written down is all the performances, blah, blah, blah, all the performances.

- Entertainers, guest speakers.

- Rena's got 'em, and she's a good archivist. So, all right good. Well, hang on to that stuff. She could scan things, but you're there. She's here, so.

- I'm gonna go get a scanner while you're talking.

- Okay. Okay, all righty is all well. Okay, let me do one brief little, I just wanna do one brief little Pagoda gossip, okay. There was in the FGI parking spot a hippy, a cute hippy van, VW bus, with what's the gallery that marsh... She's also, but also what she was doing is, she was outside the outer gate, the outer wall. She's got a nice fresh coat of peach painted on her wall. They were working on a landscaping out there. She's just got an (mumbles). And I told Rose to send roll down the window and holler at her. And this is my peace making mission. So I hollered at her looking good. And she says thanks. Yeah. Yes my darling. I ought. Okay. Now. Now didn't you get confirmation by from my phone or Di? 'Cause my phone...

- This is a timeline of Pagoda events.

- Okay, it starts basically I'm a big fan of Shorty Reese the pilot. So I found in the city directory that 1927 his name was in the city. In 1934 was when he built Reese's Cottages.

- 1934.

- 1934. It's my birth year. And, an open lane.

- It's called Reese's Cottages.

- In 1974, he sold it to Jane Chilling who was a pilot and a realtor. She named it Pagoda.

- Jane.

- Jane C-h-i-l-l-i-n-g.

- Just like a German Chilling.

- A German Chilling. I thought it was a amount of money. A shilling is a.

- Well that's English without the C. Without the C it's English shilling, but with a C it's either an Austrian or a German.

- Where do you get all this? Just out of your head.

- Yeah.

- Okay, Jane Chilling named it Pagoda by the Sea. We loved it. We kept it. In 1977, the feminists arrived. In 1988, Jane Chilling sells the last ones.

- Cottages probably.

- Four cottages, three beach lots, a pool, and a lot. That was called the North Pagoda. And it doubled our square footage.

- We need to find out how many acres that is.

- It's on, I mean, sure it's on the tax rolls. I'll look it up. In 1999, Fairy Godmothers purchased the center and the pool from Temple of Love.

- Which is their 501 3C right?

- Yes.

- Is Fairy Godmamas are 501 3C?

- No, we're a corporation.

- Okay, a corporation formed by.

- Four lesbians.

- Who are you.

- I'm not gonna give you the other names.

- And three others, okay.

- All right, 'cause they can do that themselves. 'Cause you know really, I gotta be careful about that one.

- Yeah. Okay.

- Okay. That's the timeline.

- In what and today, yesterday you sold your cottage.

- And isn't that amazing? Yes, November 8, Rainbow sold her cottage after about 26 years in that cottage. I was 20 years, almost 30 years out there. I found this place. And you haven't even been to the river yet. We'll save that.

- When did you find this place?

- 2005.

- So you weren't living in it full time after 2005? You just had the cottage. You moved here in 2005?

- I started remodeling this one first. When I first, it was a knockdown price. And I, that's what like to do. I like to buy the orphan and then fix it up. And... The things that give it personality are the things that are the fixes. So, and I get a creative high doing that. So what can I say? It's such a big turnon. (Rose laughs)

- And you're in your 70s when you did that. That's a big job just somebody to take on in their 70s. Most people are looking for a rest home. (Rose laughs) So you sold your cottage yesterday.

- Yeah.

- And, when you left... When 2005, when you began remodeling this, who was still living at the Pagoda? Or who is still living at the Pagoda?

- Okay, I've got a list I'm gonna show you and I'll. This list is the earliest eight that I can find.
- Okay, let's see, earliest eight. Rena.
- Morvana, Cathy, Suzy, Ellen, Sherrie, Vicki, Pat, Barbara Lavender.
- V-i-c-k-i.
- No, don't give last names on this.
- Barbara, this is Barbara Lew.
- Yes.
- Lavender, Vicki and Pat, right?
- Yeah. Do you know Vicki?
- No, I was just think I was put couples together.
- I've just been crushed out on her all my life. So that was the earliest.
- It was Morgana was with Cathy then?
- Suzy Chance.
- Suzy, okay.
- Suzy. Okay, then I put together this one. And is that? They were nine.
- That's nine.
- Okay, 'cause I, I'm gonna change this, 'cause I found one more, see. I found Pat Krause. Okay, now in 2010, this list says around 1996, Rainbow, Nancy Breeze, Marilyn and Irene, Sheila Weinstein. Sundy and Garnett in an RV camper.
- Is this Garnett Harrison?
- Yeah.
- Really.

- Yeah.

- I didn't know that. She's one of the people I interviewed. Her story's kind of.

- Awesome, awesome.

- Truly.

- She is so awesome. Talk about an activist. My God, and she was out there for a long time and beautiful, wonderful Cindy is her wonderful support. We give them the rest on this list.

- You were at Garnett and Cindy.

- Rena. Morgana and Faye Ann. Edith and Joycey. Alethia. Alecia is right here with her computer. And she's the subject of that... We discovered who was cooking the books. Lavender and Barbara, Emily and Karen. Lem and Madeleine.

- Gettin' ahead of me. Emily and Kent, Emily and Kim.

- No, Karen.

- Emily and Karen. And then.

- Lyn.

- And Barbara.

- No, Lyn and she was with Madeleine. Karen and Lane Townson. And Shefay. Okay, now how many is that?

- Okay, Nancy, Marilyn, Irene, Sheila, Cindy, Garnett, Rena, Morgana.

- And Fay Ann. Edith, Joycey.

- Edith and Joycey.

- Alethia, Barbara.

- Alethia, Lavender.

- Emily, Karen, Lyn, Madeleine, Kim, Delrey.

- 21 with Shefay. And there's only 20 people on that mural.

- 'Cause of Elaine Thomson isn't on it.

- Okay. So I should write myself a note here. All but Elaine, is that her name?

- Elaine Townson. I think that she was over there. She the note, update on her is she now has her doctorate, S say South Carolina.

- You said you did that mural at a festival.

- No.

- No.

- I did it for, I did it to take to a festival, so I could roll it up and take it.

- Yeah, okay.

- And I, that was for the East Coast Lesbian Festival that two of those people produced right there. So, (mumbles) were the producers of East Coast Lesbian Festival which is a huge responsible undertaking. And they kept going broke on. And they kept scrounging more money and doing it again. And I had a terrible attitude about Lyn. Don't put this in the notes. I was up in the Pennsylvania woods some place and really difficult to find. And I never, one of my complaints was that nobody could ever gonna give me a good map. So we just spent a lot of times looking for it. Let's get back to that the number issue. So, we got nine the earliest. Then we counted.

- 21.

- 21 right there.

- And that's probably the most residents.

- Okay, now I'm gonna count last year. One. Two, three, four, five, six.

- Call the names out so I can.

- Seven, eight, nine, okay. At some point last year when I was counting heads. And there's couples I'm not gonna name.

- Okay, but you'll just say person.

- Okay, person to person.

- Okay.

- Cynthia. I don't know who that person is.

- But I count 'em.

- Yeah, count her. You said she's a lesbian. Marney, something like that. Sandy, Marie, Maria. Dorothy, Calayne. Cathy Marsh, Marty, Shefay. How many did they? Last year.

- Okay. Rainbow, Cynthia, Sandy, Marie, Miriam, Dorothy, Colleen, Cathy, Mar, Shepay is nine. Do you had three other persons?

- Okay. That was lesbians living there last year.

- Okay.

- In 2003.

- Including the people who aren't named were lesbians.

- Yeah.

- Okay.

- There's never, so here's our talent. Here's our census. There's never been less than nine. As far as we know, there's never been more than 21. But here's the meth that we don't want. We don't wanna perpetuate the mess. But there's no lesbians there. We don't wanna perpetuate the meth that Pagoda's gone. It's greatly changed. But in some ways, it's like it's vibrantly alive out there. Look at the color. Gosh.

- Their young people out there right? Those women, well they're next door. They're not at Pagoda. The two women that you saw and spoke to today are neighbors. Are they at the duplex? The two women who were working outside when we, you hollered at 'em.

- Outside the gate. Those were not young women, okay.

- Really, they looked young.

- Okay, all right. I'm really I'm not sure who one was. The youngest one I'm not, I don't know. She was doing landscaping for Cathy Marsh. So that's all I know. Cathy Marsh was there. Cathy Marsh is way over 50, so.

- Is there any young people there? I guess it's really not affordable for a young person.
- The youngest would be the tenant that lives in the big house. She'd be the youngest. She's a waitress, not a lesbian. She's an artist, waitress. The woman that she rents the downstairs to, I don't even know her. I've never met her, so. Shefay at produced concerts. She'd be a source for you for a list. Now, Rena said she saved flyers. So maybe that'll help.
- And where does Rena live?
- The white house that's opposite my corner.
- She lives on the land.
- Except that she's not, she's gone this weekend.
- Okay.
- She just called down, but.
- Well, I could probably get somebody from Gainesville to go over there and with a scanner. I'll talk.
- Now, I'll tell you what. She might have a scanner herself.
- And she might be willing to just do it.
- She's just a techy girl.
- She's just a techy girl.
- Well okay.
- Yeah. The thing is, it's gonna be, the issue with her is gonna be the time element. She might not have time to do it. She'll be back next weekend, 'cause we've got our corporation meeting, our annual corporation meeting next weekend.
- Well, if she would be willing to just mail it to me, to pull some stuff together and mail it to me. I'd mail it back to her.
- Okay, that pull stuff together is probably.
- That's the hard step.

- That's probably is like, she knows where the stuff is and what boxes and everything. But actually going, pulling.

- That's gonna be--

- That's gonna be very time. And I'll tell you what, it's like she can do it. She's got such a head for detail. And she's been involved since the beginning, so.

- Well what's, give me her phone number and email, and I'll see if I can figure out a way.

- Email, RenaCarny@gmail.

- Okay.

- What's odd is. Don't put me on just yet. I have to.

- Okay. Say that again. I hope everything I do is good.

- I hope everything I do is plausible.

- And maybe you could say a little bit more about the political elements of your art that they're specifically and deliberately about.

- Okay, I'll talk about my favorite icon is the Statue of Liberty. And I see that that gesture that she makes with her arm held high, I got the wrong arm up. That arm, I guess, it's her right arm. And it, it's a victorious gesture. It's a, I won the damn thing. So, I proclaim myself. I like that one. I haven't used that. I proclaim myself. I'll use that for a title now. But, her, that right arm just thrust as high as it goes. And then in her left arm she carries a book of knowledge or a heart, a glove, 'cause the love has to go with the strength for the power to be righteous. But, I mean, if we're not fighting against the patriarchy, gosh, 'cause they can just take us down with just a little dismissal, a little dismissal of feminista, something like that. They can take down a lot of serious work. Diminishing our sincere efforts.

- So the that icon of freedom. But you also have women and goddesses in your work. And when did they begin to come into your work? Course the Statue of Liberty's a woman, but and a goddess I guess.

- Okay, all right. Okay. I think I have to back up and say that I was pretty serious in my art manifestations for a long time such as portraits, paintings of people. But when you look at all these portraits in my home they are just women and family so that the males are my family members. So my art that I was making. I'm awfully rambling about this.

- It's okay. I can fix it.

- Okay. I would, I think I was kind of serious in quotes for a long time. My craft, my love of being a craftswoman in double number 66 we went to Mexico. And I got a master's in crafts at the San Miguel Allende Institute. They give a master's degree in crafts. It's not available any place in this country, so.

- That's in Mexico.

- Mexico. I was very blessed to get it. And it enabled me. I suddenly felt that I could do clay. I could do sculpture. That I could take it to the foundry and cast it in bronze. I had so many, I learned to weave on a floor, I mean a room size loom. I learned to do batik in Mexico which I then... It's like I came back. And I was so excited about everything that I began to spend three years concentration in each of those media. Now the pottery I went about eight years in that. And, I have a few of my pieces up here from the, that Chinese checker thing. This from my pottery era. And I have some teapots and things. But I was about eight years being a potter. Then I wanted to change and do something else. So, I went into fabrics and started doing batiks. I did beautiful silk batiks, wax resist. I have one to show you in Ben's room. I don't have anything on display from that period of my life. And those were message batiks. I had political... I don't wanna call 'em political. Let's call 'em personal statements of belief.

- Like what?

- Once I saw the sun... I'm sorry. Once I heard the sun, once I heard the sun. We'll leave it there. That says, was it once I heard the sun was one of them. I had, I can't remember them. But I had, I learned to letter, learned to do lettering. And lettering, every single one of these has either some kind of label on it, messages.

- Usually in scrabble tiles, right?

- Yeah, I use a lot of those. I have this one and a yardstick with my home town.

- And is 1934 the year that that, 1990. That's me, your born, okay.

- That's me. Yep, that's me. Take a look at this one right. (faintly speaking) This is a wedding. This is a wedding too. (faintly speaking) 50, 66. 66 and then 59. Okay, in '69 is coming (faintly speaking) for myself. (faintly speaking) So that's the only thing I have. I did.

- Did you sell one?

- I need to, no. I need to sell one of these (faintly speaking). I really can't do it. While we're in here take a look at Chaz. My thing with him. (faintly speaking) And this is him. Not recently. He's a lot older now. He's, he just turned 80. I'm about to turn 80. And here we look. That's my daughter. And this is May.

- Wow.

- Yeah.

- Your daughter's.

- (faintly speaking) funny. Ain't she something?

- Yep.

- Now here's, here's some of the family. Hannah and Trevor and there goes Chaz again. And I just don't think, I don't think I have anymore batiks. But, finally put... Never put meaningful words on them. Yeah, so, I think that was political.

- So the goddesses and the, when did they start?

- Okay, I was gonna tell you that I was kinda serious about art.

- Okay.

- Then I was doing dulcimers. I was making dulcimers. And it's just like what you have to do to make a dulcimer is so damn demanding that I kind of think I went all the way on seriousness to the end. And I said my God I wanna do something that's ju real loose. What I'm doing now it doesn't get any looser. I mean, this is loose stuff. This is.

- And this is the, you're doing the found objects.

- Yep.

- You think that was in this chair? I think that came out of this chair. I mean, it might've been part of the back. It might've been holding this.

- It doesn't matter, 'cause it's a found object. We'll put it in a bowl. So that's the thing. It's like I go, went to the edge of the craftsmanship with the dulcimers, and I said now. It's like now to kinda like exercise the part of me that needs release from all that, screwing all that tension. And I went all the way, I started doing very loose found object, put them together, so.

- But still is that the first time you were doing goddesses, the found objects, the goddesses?

- I don't think I was calling them goddesses.

- You were calling them cupie dolls or whatever.

- I, no I wasn't, I was, I mean, I was okay, let's go one more place, one more place. So, cigars and cigarettes

and so forth. So, she always had access to cigar boxes. Cigar boxes were something that charmed me all my life. I could put Crayolas in them. I could put letters in them. I could put whatever memorabilia. I could store my favorite stuff, marbles or whatever in boxes, and I used cigar boxes as a child. And my mom sold them. So, there you are. And they smell. They smell wonderful.

- They smell great. They do, they smell so much better than cigars.

- I know, I know. But that, the cigar box.

- And they were all wooden or were they?

- Always, no, they were always in those days they were always a very aromatic cedar, so.

- Okay.