

C. Quintero

Q: [This is Kathy Staley] on March 2, 2010 with Carol Quintera. And we're going to start with demographic questions. Your name, age, where you were born.

A: Are you ready for me?

Q: I am ready.

A: And it's Quintero. Carol Q. All right. Carol Quintero. I am 50 years old and I was born in Miami, Florida.

Q: All right. Before you moved to Avery County, the High Country, where did you live and what did you do there?

A: Actually, I don't live in Avery County. I live in Watauga County.

Q: Didn't you first move to Avery, though?

A: Yes. I did first move to Avery. And I had been living down in Pembroke Pines, Florida, which is kind of near Ft. Lauderdale and did the same thing down there as I do up here. I'm a financial planner and have been for 20 years.

Q: OK. Could you describe when and how you came to move to Avery County?

A: Yes. I had met my new sweetheart and I, at the time, had known that I wanted to move to mountains and asked her if that appealed to her and at some point later in our relationship, she mentioned that she actually had a small

cottage in the mountains, so we came up to visit it, and I thought it was adorable and really liked what I saw of the community and am very aware that I can do what I do from anywhere as long as I have a phone and a computer, and suggested that we move up here and after thinking about it for about a month, she decided that that sounded like a great idea and we moved up.

Q: What were the appealing features of living up here?

A: Well, the beauty of the surrounding mountains. Absolutely to me is a stronghold and a tremendous draw. The genuineness of the people who live here. The kindness of the people who live here. The courtesy of the people who live here. The wonderful, wonderful activities that there are to do here. So many things for free. So many things at reasonable costs. I just love it.

Q: And, did you live part-time up here and then in Florida for a number of years?

A: No. Actually, I kept my home in Florida for a year. I had never lived in a cold climate and wanted to make sure that I would be OK living in a cold climate. So, we came up here and just took it one season at a time until we had done it for a full year and decided that I was totally OK with that once I acquired all the correct clothing. And,

the correct vehicle. And so I sold my home in Florida and made it official.

Q: And what years are we talking about?

A: We've lived up here for five years.

Q: OK. So around 2005.

A: Yes.

Q: Did ASU's presence, Appalachian State University's presence, determine whether you wanted to move here in any way?

A: The only way, and I do mean literally the only way that it influenced me being here is that it brings such phenomenal cultural programs. I love the arts and so their summer and winter programs are sensational and we take full advantage of that. So I would say that, yes, that definitely plays a key role.

Q: So another county in Appalachia may not have been able to offer everything that you wanted.

A: Exactly.

Q: Yeah. Could you talk about what your life has been like in this area as a lesbian?

A: I haven't had any problems as a lesbian. The closest thing -- let's see, a couple of things come to mind. One, I remember when my girlfriend and I moved into her cottage, there is an old couple across the street and she would see

me and put her head down like she thought I was the devil or something. And so I would say, hi, good morning, and continue doing that every day and every time I would see her and saw that she was -- she looked like she was probably in her late 60s or early 70s, and she was wearing these flat-soled shoes and sliding around when she went to get her mail and so I went up to her one day and I said, have you seen these things that you put on the bottom of your shoes so you don't slip and she said, "no, I haven't," and so I said, "well, what size shoe do you wear," and she told me. So the next time I was in town, I bought her a pair and I brought it over to her and she was just delighted. And then she started raising her head and waving hi when I said hi and I'd come over and bring her brownies if I made them or whatever. And when we actually moved from Avery over to Watauga, I went to say goodbye and she said, "I'm so sorry to see you girls leave." She said, "you're the nicest neighbors we've ever had." And so that was really awesome to see that change. You know, she and her husband would invite us, would invite me in to chat and so I'd visit with them from time to time.

Q: Did you ever talk about the initial discomfort that they had?

A: No. No, I didn't. And if she would say, "well, your friend is doing this or your friend is doing that," I'd say, "you mean my girlfriend." And, you know, letting them know that she is my girlfriend and we're very clear and open about that and we would walk around the neighborhood holding hands and things of that nature. But we've never had anything derogatory literally said to us. When we moved over to Watauga County, we had a great big birthday celebration and I went down the road and went to put balloons on the stop sign and a sign saying party with a directional arrow and the man that lived down the corner said, "you can't put that there." And I said, "yes, I can." And he said, "that's my property." And I said, "well, you might own the land but this stop sign is for public use and doesn't belong to you." And he said, "if you don't take those down, I'll shoot them down," and I said, "you do what you have to do and I'll do what I have to do." So I put up the sign and hung up the balloons and then when some people came to the party later, I said, "is that there. Are the balloons and the sign there" and they said, "no." So, he was really a jerk and I spoke to his grandchildren about it, who were my neighbor, and I don't know if they did anything about it or not but that was the only thing that I experienced kind of derogatorily here

where we live, and I asked one of the neighbors about it who came to the party and they said, "well, it's because you're queer." So that man clearly knows that and isn't OK with it and doesn't want to have anything to do with promoting it and so forth. But, I would say that those two situations are the entire limit to what I've experienced from a negative perspective about being a lesbian -- an open lesbian in the High Country.

Q: OK. What about positive experiences?

A: Well, I would say that that, the neighbor saying that we're the nicest neighbors we've ever had and I'm so sorry to see you go, certainly would be nice. I like when people are comfortable enough to ask questions, like one of our neighbors where we live now said something about, "you know, do you mind if I ask you, is she your husband and you're the wife" and -- I said, "well, thank you so much for feeling comfortable enough to ask me that. And actually, no, we're both women. There's no male here in this relationship. And that that's really a very common misunderstanding and that I can't speak for other people's relationships, but certainly in mine, there is not a male presence. We are both women." Oh, well, I can think of the lesbian community itself. When we moved here, we didn't know that there was a lesbian community. That

wasn't important to us that there be an established lesbian community. It would have been nice if there was, but there wasn't. So Laurie, my sweetheart, started a dining out -- my sweetheart started a gathering place for women to chat and I started a dining group, both for lesbians, exclusively, and have gotten absolutely glorious feedback from the women who participate saying, "thank you so much for bringing the community together because there is actually quite an extensive lesbian community up here." There are over --

END OF AUDIO TRACK 1

START OF AUDIO TRACK 2

A: -- gosh, at this point, over 300 women that we know about that live up here. And it's really extraordinary and for people that want to have a way to get together socially and to meet other women, it's worked out really great and the women that participate have told us time and time again how thankful they are that there is an established social network of women that want to be friends with other women.

Q: Could you describe how the two of you started your groups?

A: Well, my sweetheart had her discussion group -- she calls it a chat group -- she started that by putting an ad in the

newspaper actually, saying that it was a women's discussion group specifically for lesbians and we started meeting at one of the local area churches and that was strictly by word of mouth and that newspaper advertisement. Then at some point when that space was no longer available because they sold the building, we ended up subsequently having it at someone's house. So we don't advertise it in the newspaper anymore at this point. We have enough women's email addresses, which is how we communicate with everyone, to just broadcast that we're doing that. I love to dine out and it started very simply where one night we were going out to dinner and I called a bunch of friends and said, "hey, we're going out to dinner. If you want to join us, come on." And as circumstance would have it, that place was closed for renovation. (laughter) I hadn't made a reservation or anything like that, clearly. And so we all ended up going someplace else. And then I did it again a second time and called a bunch of people and said, "hey, if you want to come out, we're going out for dinner," and a bunch of people came, and believe it or not, that place had closed. And so I said, "OK, there's clearly a message here. I need to get RSVPs of who's coming and I need to make a reservation." And so it started just that simply where I said, wow, everyone said "gosh, this is really

great. We should do this every month." And so I thought, "well, that would be a lot of fun, because there are always new places that are opening here" and so I had business cards printed up and every time I saw a woman that I identified as a lesbian, I would go up to her and introduce myself and give her my card and say, "if this appeals to you, and you'd like to know about it, please give me your email address and I'll keep you informed" and it's grown substantially. So in the wintertime we have 10 to 20 women for dinner. And in the summertime we have 20 to 40 women for dinner.

Q: Because there are more people here for the summer months?

A: Exactly. Exactly.

Q: OK.

A: That, and as well as the weather, you don't have to worry so much about the weather. Sometimes here, when I make the original RSVP to a restaurant, I'll make it for 10 in the winter saying, how many can you accommodate at one or two tables, maximum number, because I realize that if it's snowing, some people will still come out and others won't. And then I give a final, updated count a couple of days before we're supposed to go there so that the restaurant knows that we're coming and of course I do not identify

with the restaurant that it's a lesbian group. I just call it the name of our dining out group.

Q: Can you describe what types of responses you've got from the newspaper and card distributions in terms of what types of people are responding and what they're saying about it?

A: Well, from the newspaper, you know, it's so interesting. I was just telling my brother who is visiting with us the other day, there's one couple in particular, one of the women was born and raised in this area and she saw my girlfriend's notice about the women's chat group and came much against her sweetheart's wishes and her sweetheart's experience with other lesbian groups were that people would be backstabbing and trying to steal each other's women and she of course didn't want her to come in fear of that happening. And her girlfriend had such a great time at the chat group and said, "you've got to come with me the next time it happens" and her girlfriend did come and they were the only lesbians that they knew of up here. Just the two of them. And now they have a tremendous social circle and are very active and involved and come to all of the gatherings and have a fabulous time and have told us, again, on many occasions, "thank you so much for what you've done. You've changed our lives. Now we've got a whole bunch of friends and have a great time." And so I

think of that -- we didn't get anything -- I was very cautious that somebody would call because of course we did have them call to find out where the meeting place would be and I wanted to make sure that we weren't putting anybody in jeopardy since it did clearly say lesbian. But I never got any problem calls. And like I said, she doesn't advertise it in the newspaper anymore. At this point, it's just word of mouth. As far as my dinners go, what did you -- what was your question with regards to the dinner?

Q: Well, in regards to the cards. Can you talk about how you did that?

A: Oh. So -- you mean, like what do the cards say?

Q: Yeah, and the response of people when you pass them out.

A: Oh. I have the name of the dining out group on there and it has my name as the organizer of it and my email address and I've actually only handed it to one woman that said, "actually, I'm not a lesbian," and said, "I do know a lesbian and would it be OK with you if I gave her the card." And I said, "absolutely." But other than that, my quote-unquote gaydar seems to work really well and it's not that I would recognize everyone that's a lesbian as a lesbian, but when I do feel that somebody is, I've been pretty dead-on in my guess of that. And, typically I would say they're really, really happy. As a matter of fact,

it's so interesting, Kathy, that I have a woman that just wrote to me that said a year ago, you and your sweetheart gave me your card when we met at a play. They were actually in the same row we were at. And she said, "I wanted to say, thank you so much. I keep looking at all of the fun things that you all are doing and I'd love to come out and join you, but there's always been a conflict. However, I think that I'll finally be able to come out for the women's brunch" because we have a women's brunch once a month, a potluck brunch, and so she came and was just so thrilled that I had, you know, been so bold as to give her my card. We also had someone a couple of dinners ago that said three years ago at Boone Pride, you gave me your card and I've been getting your emails ever since but I finally got my nerve up to come out and what a fabulous time I've had and this is really great. There were 24 women out for dinner and she said this is just awesome. So, I personally find most often that people are absolutely thrilled that I reach out. As a matter of fact, I call it "picking women up." My girlfriend and I were at the grocery store last month and I saw a woman I was convinced was a lesbian and gave her our card and she said, "oh my God, this is great. I just moved here. I don't" -- she said, "it looks like there's lesbians everywhere," and I said, "well, actually,

a lot of them are just mountain women and they're not lesbians. But, if you want to be certain of women that are lesbians that are very friendly and love welcoming new people, then please join us for our dinner." And it happened to be that same night that I met her and so she came out, happily, and has joined us now for two dinners, I think, and a brunch, and said, thank you. Thank you so much. Because, honestly, there are no lesbian bookstores here. There is no lesbian bar here. So unless someone is approached in some way to know that there is a group of women, or sees us, I actually had a woman come up to us at a dinner out and she said, "is this the group of lesbians that I've heard about," and I said, "well, if it's about eating out together, yeah." And she said, "can I -- I want to find out about it. I want to be on your list." So, unless somebody saw us, how would they know? So I find that my girlfriend isn't necessarily too crazy that I go up to women that I'm convinced are lesbians and give them my card, but my perspective is I would rather every lesbian know about us and make their decision whether or not they want to join us than not know.

Q: Could you talk about what types of people are attending the brunches and the chat --

END OF AUDIO TRACK 2

START OF AUDIO TRACK 3

Q: -- and the dinner nights out? Like, ages, what types of jobs, race. And, whether they're first homeowners or second homeowners or just visiting the area because it's a really nice place for the fall.

A: Well, we don't do the chat group during the winter. Don't find that the turnout is as good. And so my girlfriend only does that in the summertime when the lesbian population swells by second home owners. And there are, in the summertime, many retirees, and that doesn't mean by age. We have retirees that are in their 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s -- I'm not aware of anybody in their 80s, although that certainly is possible. I know we had a woman that was advanced in age for a while, but she passed. I don't know exactly what her age was. There aren't -- unfortunately there aren't many black women up here. So there is one that we know of. There were two, but one moved away. And they've participated from time to time and are always welcome and one of them actually is a musician and has performed for us. We have -- we try and have a concert, an outdoor concert every year, where we invite the women, and one of them has performed for us, along with somebody else,

and everybody really enjoyed that very much. So as far as blacks, unfortunately, that's limited, but I think that's just due to the demographic of who's up here. And I actually -- as a matter of fact, that's such a funny story. I went up to her at the place where she works and I said, "are you a sister?" And she's black and she looked at me and thought -- she told me this later -- she said, "what's wrong with her. Of course I'm a sistah." And I said, "because I'm a lesbian and this is my girlfriend and, you know, so I just wanted to tell you about our group" and then it dawned on her that that's why I used the term sister instead of sistah, which is what she thought, and so she's enjoyed having our acquaintance. We have students. Not very often, though. I think that our age group is a little bit older than the students, but we certainly welcome them. But they maybe come a couple of times and then find students or people of their own age that they seem to enjoy more. I would say young professionals to retirees. We have many friends that we've made that join us for different things, be it the brunches or pool night, because we do that also, maybe once a month we try to have a pool night and go out for dinner. There is a local establishment that is very, very happy to have our business. And we've never had anything derogatory happen

there either. And so we try and do that, not only because it's fun and we get good attendance, but also because we're helping the local business owner and we like to do that. But, like I said, from young professionals, a lot of people employed at the university. A lot of people who aren't employed at the university. I don't really find that people who are closeted come out to our dinner gatherings. Perhaps because people are just themselves and they don't want to be worried about being outed, but when we have brunches, because they're in people's homes, and there is no concern about being outed because it's a private gathering, or when we have the concerts it's a private gathering, people will tend to come. People who are concerned about being outed are more comfortable coming to those. So, I've talked about -- we have a lot of second home owners in the summer. I've talked about that they are all ranges of professionals. We have people who work in the nursing field. We have people who work in the educational field. We have people that work in the psychological field. We have business owners. People like me that are fortunate enough to work from home.

Q: Do you have many people who are native born?

A: I know one woman is from Tennessee. And, I think of that as a native solely because of it being from the local

mountain area. And then the one woman that I mentioned that was born and raised here and didn't know of any other lesbians. That -- well, you know, there's another woman that we met at the farmer's market and befriended and she is from the area and I just have the nagging feeling that she was a lesbian, even though there wasn't anything that she said or did that made me certain. So one day I just asked her. And she said, yes, actually, she was. She has not joined us for anything yet, unfortunately. She is an older woman. Probably in her 60s or 70s. And she's lived here her whole life, but is not out. So, I'd say that those three women are all that I'm aware of that are specifically from this area. But I've never really asked people that question. It's been more if it's come out in conversation.

Q: Yeah. One of the questions that I've had that's in the back of my mind is how has the influx of new people who are LGBT into the area affected Appalachia, but also the flipside, have native-born people started becoming more out as the society shifted toward being more open and your experience there. Not knowing very many local people and at least one of them being closeted now and then another not having those ties to a larger lesbian community until

she found something in the newspaper, seems to ring true with some groups of people. Not necessarily everyone.

A: Actually, there is somebody else who comes to mind that I forgot about. Because she doesn't socialize with us at all. But she is from the area and I have met her on several occasions and she is really nice, but she is very closeted. Her whole family is up here and so it's a big secret. I actually like to walk around town holding my girlfriend's hand and kissing her in public and things like that. I want people to know that there are out lesbians and that there hasn't been consequences for it because I feel like, and of course this is just my opinion, that if you have someone that's comfortable and confident and not concerned about losing their job or whatever, that can be open and out, than perhaps it would let other people feel comfortable about being open and out as well. So I kind of like to set the example.

Q: Right. Has anyone ever told you that they appreciate your public displays of affection?

A: No. No, as a matter of fact, I actually heard -- there was a group of woman that we had gone out to dinner with that did not appreciate my public displays of affection. And, they were -- they are a closeted and have no desire to be seen in public with anyone that does do public displays of

affection. But that's OK because they weren't my kind of people anyway. So there wasn't really any love lost and them not wanting to be around us and us not wanting to be around them. I would say that the outings that we have are for women that are comfortable with their sexuality and in an open way. And, they don't have restrictions on public displays of affection to be a determining factor to whether or not they're comfortable being together. Like for example, when we go play pool, I don't walk in holding my girlfriend's hand. I don't kiss her throughout the night, but if I feel like giving her a quick kiss, I do, and I don't do it in the bathroom and the women that come out and do things with us socially seem to be OK with that, because if they're not, they just don't come. But it doesn't seem to negatively affect the numbers of attendees that we have at things. So I would say that the women that want to be closeted or need to be closeted, because I'm sure some people wish they didn't have to be, but, or because of their jobs, that they will pick and choose either not to associate with us or to associate with us at functions--

END OF AUDIO TRACK 3

START OF AUDIO TRACK 4

A: -- that are not in the public's eye.

Q: Right. Has living in the Appalachian region affected you at all in how you behave, either toning it down slightly, I know you haven't toned it all the way down, or increased your displays of affection?

A: Well, I hadn't been a lesbian for very long when I got into my relationship with my sweetheart. I had had only one relationship with a woman prior to that and that was for maybe like five months. And so I hadn't determined that I was a lesbian when I was with the other woman. I considered myself at that point to be bisexual and really didn't do the public displays of affection thing. I don't know whether it was just not being comfortable or not having made the determining factor that this was what I wanted to do, but by the time I moved up here with my girlfriend, I decided that I did not want to lead a closeted life. That I did want, if I was going to be a lesbian, I wanted to be an open lesbian and an out lesbian, and have had, you know, done so since I've moved up here. So, as far as toning it down, certainly if I go to the pool hall for example, and there are parents there with children, I don't do any public displays of affection because I don't want to impose what I'm doing in such a small, family atmosphere. But it doesn't stop me, for

example, if I go to Walmart. There's loads and loads and loads and loads of people and I will hold her hand and if I feel like giving her a kiss, I'll give her a kiss and I don't care who's looking. But in a small, more intimate atmosphere, I try and be aware of that. We went camping -- a bunch of people went camping and it was a family campground and there were loads and loads and loads of children there and their parents so I didn't do any open displays of affection there because I felt like these people were trying to have quality family time with their children and I didn't need to impose my sexuality upon them. I didn't really think that was appropriate. So I just try to be courteous, but in the broader scheme of things, I'm more out than closed.

Q: OK. Are you running tight on time?

A: No. My sweetheart just brought me some homemade guacamole and chips.

Q: Oh.

A: But I told her I'd wait.

Q: I wanted to ask a couple more questions and --

A: We're fine with time.

Q: OK. What would you consider to be the biggest differences between the Appalachian rural lesbian community here in

northwestern North Carolina and where you have seen in other places such as -- were you in Broward County?

A: Yeah. You mean like Ft. Lauderdale, San Francisco, things like that.

Q: Right.

A: Yeah. Actually, not as many open women here. I mean open as in walking down the street holding hands. I think hardly have I seen any other women walking down the street holding hands and I'd say the answer to that is no. Which is a shame. Because I do see that in Ft. Lauderdale. I have seen that in San Francisco. I have seen that in other large cities that I've been to when I was in Portland, Oregon and they were all over the place and it was just so beautiful and wonderful to see that they felt comfortable enough to be out with, you know, a public attachment to another person of the same sex. So, I haven't seen that here. Which is a shame. But, at least there is a very established community here, so I'm real thankful about that because we have wonderful social gatherings. And, you know, I spoke to a woman from Charlotte and I said, "you must have a huge lesbian community here" and she said, "I have no idea." And so I said, "well, I actually heard that there is a lesbian community in Charlotte. Would you like me to put you in touch with them." And she said yes. I

had actually met this woman at the airport. And I saw her again when I was traveling a few months later and she said, "thank you so much. I'm having such a great time and I had no idea that these women were here." And the same goes for Asheville as well. So, sometimes the big cities are so big, you see that there are other lesbians but you don't necessarily know about stuff that's happening with them as a community. So I guess it's nice that for women that want to find a lesbian community here, there is one.

And so that's really great because before based on what women have told me, there really was no place to know to go to meet other lesbians. And so I'm thankful that our community has that, but I would definitely love to see more open couples, you know, like I said, walking places holding hands, to let the community know that there is a presence here.

Q: Why do you think there are so few -- I guess I've seen a couple of students, but you're right, the professors I know who are on campus who are couples they don't display public affection. And in fact, in more private settings, I don't see them holding hands or anything like that either. Why do you think that is up here, even in settings like ASU

(Appalachian State University), which is supposedly more progressive than the town?

A: Either they're not affectionate people, which is quite possible because certainly, I mean, I was raised with public displays of affection. I was affectionate in public with my family, with my boyfriend, with my friends. I have always been a very physically affectionate person, and so when I decided if I'm going to be a lesbian, by golly, I'm going to do public displays of affection with my sweetheart, because I always did them with the men I was with, so why wouldn't I naturally do them with the women I was with. So that's me. So one thing is maybe they're not physically attentive people. That they don't normally show affection in public and have been raised not to show public displays of affection. That's a possibility. I know that those people certainly do exist. Another is that maybe they're really afraid of the consequence of the public, that somebody will hurt them or seek them out or say something mean and derogatory and if they are clearly not doing that public display of affection, then they're not putting themselves out there for it so it's safer and maybe that's why they don't. Other people may feel like it's nobody's business. I want it to be people's business. I want people to know. I feel like, as a matter of fact, I

told my sweetheart when we moved up here, in regards to holding hands in the neighborhood and talking with those people who thought that we were devils with horns or something, I said I really feel a lot of people either see the flamboyance on television or in movies of gay people with feathers and 10-inch heels and big wigs and whatever, that that's what they associate, or they think that people don't have regular relationships, loving relationships, or they don't think of them as professionals, the neighbor next door, and so I want people to say, "oh my God, that person is a lesbian and she was really nice and she was really intelligent and -- or she was funny or I really enjoyed her company or whatever it is." I want them to know that there are people in the community that are normal, that are regular, that are in loving relationships, that, you know, whatever it may be, and my thought is unless we're out, then people aren't going to know that. And I use the people that live in our neighborhood, it's actually -- it was a family-owned mountain before we bought here and there are other people who live on the mountain as well, but they're just summer residents and so aside from this family who is born and raised in the community and have lived here their entire lives, we are the only other people who live here in the winter and they are very

Christian and I'm sure the last thing they would have liked would have been lesbians moving into the community. And so I really work at being very nice in my interactions with them, being very friendly, being very warm, being very courteous --

END OF AUDIO TRACK 4

START OF AUDIO TRACK 5

A: -- being very thoughtful so that they can say, "you know what, I never met a queer before, but those girls are pretty nice" and I don't know if I've gotten off on a tangent, but that's a big reason why I choose to be out because I want people to know who we are and say, "wow, those are really nice girls."

Q: Could you talk, changing gears, back to the chat group and the dinner group, what you would consider to be your greatest successes and challenges?

A: The greatest success for me is when people have written to me and said, "I've heard about your dinner group and I want to be added to the list." People that I didn't say, "here's my card." That, to me, when that happened the first time, I was gleeful. I was so excited. When I had a restaurant person contact us and say, "I've heard about

your dining group and I'd like to let you know that we'd love to have you at our restaurant," that was huge. That was wonderful.

Problems. Not a one. Not a one. We've never had anybody say, "you're a bunch of lesbians. You'd better not come back." They're so happy to have our business. When I make the reservation, I say, "you know, because of the size of our group, please tell the server to add 20% gratuity to the bill" so the servers are happy that we're there, the restaurant owner is happy that we're there because we're bringing business. As a matter of fact, the dining group that we just had this month that I actually had to miss because of being sick but my girlfriend has always been able to go when I haven't, when we're not going together, and when I called to make the reservation I said, "do you take reservations," and the server that answered the phone said, "no, we never take reservations." And I said, "may I please speak to the manager." And I talked to the manager and I said, "I have this dining out group of women and every month we go to different restaurants and I'd like to have a dining out group at your restaurant. However, I have to make a reservation because we don't just show up and wait for a table." And he said, "no problem, we're

thrilled to have you." And clearly expressed that to my girlfriend when she went there for dinner. Was that he was so happy that we were there and was thrilled to have our business. So I have found nothing but people happy to have us and it's been nice, especially going out with a group of women, we try each other's food and share things and not always of course, but if we're like, "oh my God, this is so good, you've got to try this" and we pass it around and here, would anyone like some calamari. So it's nice for people that either like to be social, Kathy, or women who just like to try new restaurants. In the four years that I've had this dining out group, we've only eaten at the same restaurant once. And that was at special request at one of the women who comes who said, "I loved it so much can we please go back." But it's just been fun to try all the restaurants and, you know, especially for the singles because we're so happy to have singles or couples, for singles to be able to go out and have other people to dine with and try the restaurants has also been very successful. And that's another thing that we've heard also, from people who are single. That so often they're excluded from social gatherings because so often it's just couples doing things with other couples, but we've made a point with everything that we do that there are singles and couples welcome and

we don't discriminate and it's been really nice for people that are single that are looking. We've had some successful matches come out of our gatherings, or just again from the single women to have other people to socialize with.

Q: Right. To shift gears again, your group is for specifically for lesbians and one of the comments that I got when I was doing my master's thesis about ASU's LGBT population was "where are the men?" Where are all the gay men? They've got to be here. 10% of the population. How has the reaction been from the gay men with regards to your groups? Have they wanted to participate or what has happened?

A: Actually, that's a great question. One of our acquaintances said, "you know, it's not fair that you guys do everything with women." And I said, "well, I started it. It's for women. And if you want to do it, why don't you start one for men." And he did. So there is a dining out group for men. And they dine out once a month as well, which is fantastic. And he's gotten a great response to his in addition, and every time --

END OF AUDIO TRACK 5

START OF AUDIO TRACK 6

A: -- female brunch, where we said, let's have a co-ed brunch and make it available to everyone who wants to participate. We had it at our cottage in Avery County and there was a small turnout of men. There was a much bigger turnout of women. There were maybe eight or 10 guys. I think the timing was bad for some reason. Maybe a lot of people were on vacation, but I liked it very much and so did my sweetheart and we want to make that an annual event where once in the summer we will have a co-ed brunch, a potluck brunch, and hope that the turnout is better. We've also talked about having a fundraiser -- I would love to do a fundraiser for the Gay and Lesbian Film Festival [Appalachian State University's Queer Film Series]. And we talked about doing something with bingo and making it open to the entire community and not just the gays and lesbians but transgendered and whoever wants to come. We've talked about it. It hasn't come to fruition yet. But I think that that would be really awesome. And I also have talked with my sweetheart about maybe opening the annual concert that we have, the outdoor concert, to all of our friends, so it would be straight couples as well as lesbians as well as gays, knowing of course that if they are our friends, they're gay and lesbian tolerant anyway, so nobody would

have to be uncomfortable. And, because I like that idea predominantly because we have so many heterosexual couples who are friends that say, gosh, you guys do the most fun things and how come we're never invited, to let them be able to participate in things as well and also because when the musicians come here to play, we don't pay them to come here to perform but we do ask for donations. And you know pass the cup around and suggest that it's \$5 or \$10 per person. So we want it to be a financially successful event for the musician as well. So the more people that we open it to, the more likelihood of that happening. So that's another reason.

Q: Could you talk about the Queer Film Series and a little bit more about the concerts you've had in the past?

A: Well, the Queer Film Serie is wonderful. The first event that we went to was in a small theater.¹ I don't know how long they'd been putting it on at that point, but it was standing room only, which was fantastic. I think they literally had to tell people that they had to leave because of the number of people, that it would be a fire hazard or something like that, and that was really wonderful. Now of course it's held at the Library. Some movies get more attendance than others. My girlfriend and I do participate

¹ Appalachian State University's Greenbriar Theater

in that every year. We go. We don't necessarily go to every movie. Either because it doesn't interest us or we've seen it already or we have other social plans, but we definitely will maybe see at least three of the films that they have running if not all of them. And like so much of what the community does, we go to support it and to support the efforts of Kim [Hall] and Jill [Ehnenn] who started it and brought it to the university and we think it's wonderful. As far as you said talk about something else --

Q: Oh, the concert.

A: Oh. So I love music. I absolutely, absolutely, love love love music and there are so many talented musicians up here and I used to love to go to concerts in Ft. Lauderdale. And, I said to my sweetheart, "wouldn't it be fabulous if, you know, every summer we have an outdoor concert" and she thought it was a great idea. So, the first year we had two women. The black woman that I mentioned and -- so I thought it would be great and my sweetheart agreed, so the first concert that we had, I think there were like 35 women and they just said, "oh my God, this is fabulous." And so we decided to have it again. The concert that we had this year was so well attended that we invited a woman that we heard perform at Boone Pride. She was sensational. And invited her to play and we just loved it and everyone that

came loved it. And, it is my hope to continue doing that every year. Whether it's a lesbian or just a woman. We haven't done it where it's a man, although there is a guy we had perform at our birthday party, playing the guitar and singing, who I thought was absolutely sensational, so if we do decide indeed to open the concerts to everyone that we know, that would like to participate in it, then I would definitely feel comfortable inviting a guy to sing as well because clearly there will be guys there and he was really a talented musician, which is what we're looking for.

Q: Great. Do you have any closing remarks about what life is like now or how things have changed or what direction you see Watauga LGBT life going towards?

A: I just think life up here is blissful. I think it's beautiful and wonderful and again, I wish that more people were open and out and walking down the street holding hands. And hopefully that will come with time. You know, I really don't. I just think it's a great place to live and I'm certainly as a woman, there is a growing, thriving, wonderful lesbian community here. That's it.

Q: All right. Great. Thank you so much.

A: Thanks, Kathy.

END OF C. QUINTERO