

## **Peter Byrd (PB) and Lisa Roland (LR)**

PB: My father was a football coach, not only undefeated at Morgan, but they were not scored upon for four years. And he was very big and very bold and very smart and very masculine. But if he would drive home and I'd be on the porch combing Barbie doll's hair, he never said a word. He never skipped a beat.

LR: Talk a little bit about when you knew you were gay and kind of how you came out and what that process was like for you.

PB: When we were four, five, six years old, my father would put us on top of the lockers to get us out of the way. And I was aware of all of these guys, all of these jocks, naked and snapping towels. And it hit me just like somebody grabbed my throat, and I just started crying. That was when I became aware -- if you're like that, people can beat you up. If you're like that, the teachers won't protect you. If you're like that, the ministers don't like you. It was just the beginning of trying not to be something that got your behind kicked all the time.

LR: When they told you you were HIV positive, what was the first, your first thoughts or feelings?

PB: I didn't really care. I thought it was inevitable. All of the hopeless that I had been garnering since I was a little double-dutch-jumping boy [LR laughs] was--it's over. Now, it's over. Three months after I was diagnosed, I went to a reader in D.C., and she told me, "Stop worrying. This is not the end. This is the beginning for you." This was three months after I was diagnosed, she said that "This is gonna save your life." And I was looking at her like, "You are so wrong. [LR laughs] If I knew where you put the money I gave you, I would take the money back, [LR laughs] because you've never been wronger than you are now 'cause I'm not telling anyone this horrible secret." She told me not

to worry about where I was living and, “You’re not going to be sick.” And she said, “This is gonna be your life.” [Laughs]

LR: And here we are. [Laughs]

PB: And it is. [Laughs] I used to have waitlists for fools in my life, because then I could be a fool too. [LR laughs] But the team of people in my life are the most supportive, the most learned, the warmest, most loving friends. A lot of people don’t get a chance. I’ve had a million chances. And so I really want to honor all that has been given to me by how I treat people, how I embrace the world, how I keep myself safe, how I feel loved, how I give love.