

Hudson Area Library Oral History Project

Interview with Paula Mixa Millar

Conducted by Annie Reynolds

May 22, 2024

[BEGIN STREAMING FILE]

REYNOLDS: [00:00:00] Okay, this is Annie Reynolds. I'm here with Paula Mixa Millar on May 22, 2024. Um, we're at the Hudson Area Library recording an oral history for the Hudson Area Library Oral History Project. I'm so happy to be with you here today, Paula.

MILLAR: [00:00:08] Well, thank you Annie. It's an honor and a pleasure to be here. Thank you.

REYNOLDS: [00:00:23] Thank you. Um, could you introduce yourself, please?

MILLAR: [00:00:26] Certainly. I'm – my name is Paula Marie Katherine Mixa Rickborn Millar. But I go by Paula, Paula Mixa Millar, right now. And, uh, I was born and raised here in Hudson. Been here for most of my life. I moved to Florida back in 1985 and spent twenty-one years down there, had a son, and came back home to Hudson, 'cause I always knew that I would be coming back here. It–It's home for me. And, um, people have said to me – you must be crazy coming back to... to the Northeast, after being in Florida. However, there's nothing... there's nothing like this area. It's – they call it God's country, and I think it is. It's beautiful. And you want to be around your family and things that are familiar, so.

[00:01:23] And, uh, so that's... that's a little bit about me. Um, and I have a lot of family history here. Both sets of my grandparents – I'm second-generation, here – came through Ellis Island, and, uh, settled here and raised families, and a lot of tradition on either side of the families. So I'd like to share that with you too, if you'd like to ask questions, and I have some photographs and other things that, um, that are very important to my family lineage and history, and, uh...I believe in sharing that, you know. It's a part of this community as well.

REYNOLDS: [00:02:05] Can you share an early tradition that makes you think of your family?

MILLAR: [00:02:11] Um, it's – the traditions are... are based around holidays. However, it wasn't just the holidays. We're a very close family. Every Sunday, we had Sunday dinner, and the dinner was more – it was more afternoon, between one and two o'clock, and the *whole* family would congregate at my Baba's house. And at that time we lived in Greenport, my Baba was upstairs and we were downstairs, but all the aunts and uncles and – if they were available – and my cousins would come, and my Baba would cook for *hours*, and even the day before. And she never wasted anything and there was oodles of food, and my Baba would sit back in the corner and just watch us all enjoy.

[00:03:06] And then we would go out and play, and it... it was beautiful. It was really lovely. And then we would maybe sometimes come into the house and all the elders – we called them elders – would be speaking... now I know it's Ukraine Polish, it's almost... maybe it would be, in New Orleans, like a Cajun kind of language? So it's like a dialect? And as soon as we would walk in, they would stop. So we *knew* that it was – that it was something they were talking about another family member, um... So the Sunday dinners was a huge tradition. Food was love, um, we grew up with a... My grandfather had, and my father had, property in Greenport and it was a vegetable garden, so I was eating farm-to-table before, well. [stutters] That's how you lived then.

[00:04:02] So those were traditions, we'd get together as a family and play horseshoes and, um, polka and sing and... not necessarily sing. But a lot of joy. And then the holidays, of course, were based around, you know, going to church, and again, food, and all getting together, so. And it was... it was beautiful, it was really nice. And, uh, and we'd go to the lake and – anyhow, it was a wonderful childhood here and I'm grateful, and I'm lucky to have had... have had that here.

REYNOLDS: [00:04:44] Yeah. I'd love to hear more about what it was like growing up in Hudson.

MILLAR: [00:04:49] Uh, growing up in Hudson was... very, very different than what Hudson is now in 2024. When I was growing up, Hudson was a very small town – actually, nobody wanted to be here. Not that they didn't want to be here, it was... it wasn't looked upon as it is now, like a wedding Mecca or, um, now it's a hub for tourism. It was – there were industries here. There was the Pocketbook Factory, the Mushroom Factory, the Cannonball Factory. There were V & O Press out in Greenport – Canada Dry was here! Um – and it was just different. It was a tight community, um – there was a lot of churches. And uh, we would congregate there.

[00:5:43] And growing up was – was fun. You didn't... we rode our bikes everywhere, and we had the Blue Anchor, and, um... And then Thursday night was a big night, because everybody got paid on Thursday nights, and so Hudson was – it was alive on Thursday nights. It-it was fun, there was a certain sense of innocence. And I'm sure it's not just Hudson, the city of Hudson – other small towns. So, um – and then, it was just... We had the countryside as well, so we were able to ride our bikes up to Claverack and swim in creeks, and maybe go up to Newman Road if we could, like sneak into the quarries... And we found things to do, and we were – everybody was, was together. And uh, it's different now, right – however I think, because of technology just evolving, and you know, things are different. So that's, uh... And my childhood was good. It wasn't always perfect, but I have to say that I enjoyed it. I really did. I had a tight family, tight, close-knit family, my sisters... um, were older than I was so I always looked up to them. And their friends were very kind to me, and I just, um, learned a lot. Uh, my brother was a year younger, and we used to fight quite a bit. But then we became friends. And then our friends became friends, and we just – And the cousins were together, and it was nice. And your friends became family. Um, so that's what I'm used to, and I think that takes you a long way in life to have that... And so we had – oh, gosh, dance recitals and we had parades and, there was a lot of activity.

REYNOLDS: [00:07:52] What were some of your earliest interests?

MILLAR: [00:07:56] Uh, dance. I – oh my gosh, I was so incredibly shy when I was younger, and I was chubby and I was very insecure. And I was – I have to say, I was kind of a big baby. I never wanted to leave home! And the first thing that they started me with was dance lessons, and

I would go to – oh my gosh, it was Saturday mornings and I was *awful*. I would cry and my sister Patty would have to get me dressed, and I remember *exactly* what I wore, like the black leotards and the, you know, the bodysuit. And I went to – uh, it was Roslyn Schemmel's, and at that time it was a little – she gave dance lessons in her cellar studio. And my sister dropped me off, I remember crying, I was a nervous wreck, and then I started dancing and listening to the music and that was my – I enjoyed it, I really enjoyed it. And I continued that – I took a break when I was... probably when I was in Saint Mary's, but I started up when I was in middle school and pretty much danced right up until high school, and I really enjoyed it.

[00:09:13] Um, my mother when we were younger would take us to Hugo's, which was out in the country. It was a horse – we went horseback riding, and that was a lot of fun. So those were the two interests, and swimming, we were just very active. We were – my mother would put us outside in the winter and... [laughs] not lock the door but kind of, and say, "Go out! Go on out and play!" Because fresh air and sunshine. And so we were always busy. As I got older it was skating at Oakdale or sometimes I played hockey, my brother played hockey and I would, you know, join sometimes. Um, we would swim, we'd go to Lake Taghkanic, we'd go – my aunt and uncle lived on the reservoir in Philmont. So those types of activities – constantly on a bike, you rode a bike everywhere. So those were – those were my early interests.

[00:10:11] And you know, growing up here, you found things to do. Uh, we would drive around – we'd drive around, look at old homes or look at different views, or we'd go up to Olana. That's where we would go, we'd walk around – in the winter, we would sleigh ride and go ice skating, we were able to have, like, a little bonfire there. And the kids would come, we'd have hot cocoa... So that's, uh, that's the type of – that's how we grew up. And [like] I said, very different now. And everything's a little different. So those were my early interests, and I still enjoy dancing. We were very involved with our church back then – it was Sacred Heart, a Polish church here, just off of Robinson Street at the end. Which is no longer a church. And then my dad was also a member of the Orthodox Ukrainian church here in Hudson.

[00:11:11] And the church activities were... it was the whole family involved. They'd have picnics, and that was also a big part of our lives, um, was church and the congregation, and just

all being together. So – so basically that's childhood. My brother and I played a lot, we skied, spent time with our cousins. Of course with your, you know – with my baba, oh my gosh. I was with her pretty much all the time, she practically raised me, so. My mom was working, so being younger – baba was upstairs, so that's where I would go. So yeah, it was really nice.

REYNOLDS: [00:11:57] Could you tell me a little bit about your baba?

MILLAR: [00:12:00] Oh, gosh – I could cry. She was, my baba was... she was from Poland, Ukraine, Austria – they were changing the borders all the time. And I don't think she ever had – she didn't have a mean bone in her body. She was the kindest person in the world, she would give you... she would probably give you the last bite of food from her mouth. She was a very good woman. And she was very proud of her family, and she did everything for her family, everything, and – from her children to her grandchildren, and for others. Um, constantly cooking, there was always something on the stove. She loved her flowers, she had flower gardens all over. And loved animals, she was a very kind woman. And I was so fortunate to have her – to have her there. She would talk to me – they were called bajki, and bajki are little stories.

[00:13:13] And I was... not sickly, but I would have earraches all the time, and I remember my baba would – and she just had an innate ability, also, for healing. She would take a hot rag with salt and hold it on my ear, and then she would rock me and she would, you know, tell me bajki. And half of it was Polish-Ukrainian, and then she would break it up a little bit in English. But I understood what she was saying! And, um... and she always had an apron on. Always. Always had an apron on, always cooking, she never wanted – she was like me, she never wanted to leave home. And the few times that she did leave home... oh my gosh, we went to see my aunt and uncle, at that time they were in Massachusetts. My baba brought a – it was a brown paper bag, like a shopping bag that you'd get from back then, it was Grand Union or A&P. And she was gonna stay the week there, she didn't make it. She had to go home with my mom.

[00:14:18] So... yeah. She was just – she was just a very kind person and lived for her family. Um, so they're very fond, fond memories of... of my baba. I remember being – I think it was like seven years old, and she lived upstairs – I remember one night I wasn't ready to go sleep,

and I was thinking, I was like, “Oh my gosh, she’s gonna die one day.” And I just started – I was crying *so* hard, and I remember my mom coming and saying, “What – what’s wrong?” And I said, “I don’t want Baba to die!” And she was like, *oh my gosh* – my Baba wasn’t sick or anything, but I couldn’t... the thought of not having her in my life, maybe someone had just passed or, um, maybe I started realizing that-that people die. You know, coming out of your – that age of innocence, possibly. And, um – so I was just very, very close with her. Very close with her. And-and my grandfather too. I would go out in the garden with him and – that’s what, that’s what you did, you were outside all the time. And, um, I remember him digging, uh, digging the holes for the um... oh my gosh, for like, potatoes, and then I would go out and I’d put the potato in, and he’d take the hoe and would put the dirt on. And it was just things like that, it was just really a magical childhood – not magical, it-it was a nice childhood with my grandparents. And my Baba was very, very, very special to me. Um – she had the bluest eyes, and she was very kind.

REYNOLDS: [00:15:57] She sounds like an amazing woman.

MILLAR: [00:15:59] Oh – thank you. She was. She was.

REYNOLDS: [00:16:02] Were these your maternal grandparents or your paternal grandparents?

MILLAR: [00:16:05] Um, the – my maternal grandparents, yeah. My um, my mother’s parents. So it was Ana and Steven. They came over Ellis Island as well. My-my – I know my grandfather, um, he was listed on his, his papers as “Bohemian,” and it was so interesting to see his paperwork, too, because it – the way they described people then. And the boat the he came over on, I believe it was the *Barbarossa*? And my Baba came through Ellis Island as well, and I’m not quite sure what – which ship she came in on, so.

REYNOLDS: [00:16:43] So before, um, before we started the interview, you were showing me some very special artifacts that you brought with you.

MILLAR: [00:16:52] Mm-hm.

REYNOLDS: [00:16:53] Um, that... come from, uh, when your family came over from Ukraine and from Poland, and I wondered if you wanted to speak about some of those objects.

MILLAR: [00:17:05] Um, sure – well, th-the one here is – and it's not open, it's in a frame now, um... did a tribute from my dad last year. But this is the um, this is the – it's a package, I guess it would be a passage pouch, and this is th-the ship that they came on, my grandparents came over from, and – and this is, I believe, the name of the ship. You open – it's burlap, and when – it's trifold or maybe more than that, and when you open it up and inside is written, all in Ukraine... I-I really don't understand, but there is a dollar amount on there you can see, it gives the date and the year, and you carried it around and it had a – there's a string on it, so you have it all the time, it's on your neck. And I'm sure there's immunization papers in there and other very very important documents.

REYNOLDS: [00:18:03] And when would this have been from, what year did this happen?

MILLAR: [00:18:08] It must have been – it had to have been the 1800s. Yeah. 'Cause my – my dad was born in 1923. 1800s, yes. And that's when – that's when people were coming over from Europe, and other countries but primarily, you know – Italy and Ireland, and you have your Polish-Ukrainian and – anyway so that's, that's what my dad had, he always had it with him. And a file, and um – but it's really interesting and we'll open it up sometime, you can take a peek at it. I'd love to – I would love to know what it says, so you know, maybe we could get somebody to translate it someday. But that's – so that's one item. And then – and this photo is my – on the paternal side, my grandfather Paul, and my grandma Motra, and this one is my grandmother Motra with my father, Peter. Petronya. Um, and so – my paternal grandparents came over on the, on this ship. And uh, I keep it close because it-it's starting to fade a bit, so that's – I have that, and then, my dad.

REYNOLDS: [00:19:34] Could you – for someone who's listening, who can't see these beautiful photos, could you describe the images that you're about to speak about?

MILLAR: [00:19:42] Oh –

REYNOLDS: [00:19:43] What you see?

MILLAR: [00:19:44] Yes, yes. So – in this image here is my father. I believe it was – he was graduating, it was right before he went into the service, into the – he enlisted, like most [of], as they called it, the, “Greatest Generation.” He went in at 19. So that’s a photo of him. And uh, he’s very handsome, if I do say so myself. And-and this is a photo of him as he [laughs] as a child, I would say he’s probably, like, maybe four or five there? And that – and it was customary to have your photo taken on a pony, and so there he is on-on a pony, and uh – it’s like a little Shetland pony. And uh, he doesn’t look very happy, he’s got kind of a little bit of a scowl on his face. But, uh, very sweet. And um – so I keep those two together, and I’ve had it in this frame for a very long time. I believe it’s the original frame, that’s how I found it. So that’s, um, that’s my dad. And hence th-the Mixa. So I’ll put these down here.

REYNOLDS: [00:20:52] So I know you have done a lot of research into your ancestry and family history. What else feels important to share about – maybe something you’ve, you’ve learned about?

MILLAR: [00:21:08] Um... the history itself? Well – I know *some* of the history; I know that my – on the paternal side, my, the Mixas, along with other Ukrainian families. When they came here to – a lot of them came through, they were over in the Pittsfield area. And my father was actually baptized in Pittsfield, and I have the original birth certificate and it has th-the correct writing of his surname, which is – it’s really, “Miksa.” Um – because they, they were in Pittsfield, and then a lot of the Ukrainians came here to Hudson and they were over, they – on Newman Road, where the quarries were. They had little – they had, like, stone cottages. I don’t even know if they had – they may have had dirt floors, like a serf, ‘cause my-my Baba before – when she, from Poland, Austria... Like I said, they were changing the borders all the time, but they say Poland. Uh, she grew up as a serf. So that-that I found was very interesting.

[00:22:17] And they were – they were gypsies, they had the bonfires and they danced and they sang, and... and, um, my father actually has a – my sister has it, the little velvet vest and she has, you know, the shoes, and because they would dance. And um – and that's where they, that's where they lived. And they may have worked the quarries back then, I'm not – I'm not quite sure when they started mining that, you know, that area. Um, and they also just – they worked wherever there was work. And they also just – I know they went to the Orthodox-Ukrainian Church, I know they had larger picnics, and there – [stutters] at that time, when there would be – when the babies were born, they went to Pittsfield. I believe because it was – there was only one Ukrainian Church there, because the religion was a very important – you know, it was a part of their life.

[00:23:10] Uh... and on my maternal side, you know, my Baba as I said had this innate ability to heal, and my grandfather was – went everywhere working as well. My great-grandfather... was it my – ? Yeah, my *great*-grandfather, uh, passed away in Canada. We're not quite sure what he did, but my grandmother went to – bought a plot in Cedar Park, and went up to Canada to bring his body back home. It's just very interesting, things like that, so I could go off on many different things with this, so – but um... I learned – I learned a lot when I opened up the file that-that I found these photos in, and that passage. And wh – and I would ask my aunt, my aunt Lizzie, is my mother's sister, so. And she knew a lot of the history I would ask her, because they all grew up together.

[00:24:19] Um, so it's a – and every, every – just last year I found out that my great-grandfather was even buried here. I didn't know he – I didn't know that he even came over to the country. My mother told me – and god rest her soul, my mom passed away in January. Um... I was talking to her, and – because I had, I was looking – we have a family plot, and I had to do some research on it. And uh, I said, "Mom, there's – I went to the cemetery and there's eight plots! And they're giving me all these names, who's – ?" She goes, "Oh, yes, th-that's Baba's father." I'm like, "Oh my goodness, I didn't even know that he had come over to this country!" And she said, "Oh yeah, he was working up in Canada and he got killed" – or died, I don't know if it was a – probably an accident while working. And um, that's why my grandmother bought the plot, back in... 1915, I believe.

[00:25:15] So uh, and – and you learn something new all the time. I mean you have to – if you have elders in your family, ask them questions. Because a lot of this – they don't even think, they don't think about that. Or they do, but you have to kind of jog their memory. So, um, so yeah. That's kind of – not constantly, but you find something new. You have to ask questions.

REYNOLDS: [00:25:42] Do you remember when you started asking those kinds of questions?

MILLAR: [00:25:46] Uh – well, when we were younger, we always had – my mother and my aunts and uncles were always telling stories of their youth, and growing up. And I always asked questions and my sisters did too, 'cause our-our heritage and our family's very important. Um, I asked more questions – my mother was, her health was failing, and... last year, the last two or three years, I asked as many questions as I could. Um, for instance we were listening to a country-western song, and there was something [laughs] It was a song about a mule, and uh, and I had asked my grandmother – or my mother, I said, "Did grandpa – did you have a mule when you were growing up?" She goes, "Oh yeah! Of course we did," you know, 'cause they had animals, and – so things like that.

[00:26:36] And um, so there's always something to learn, 'cause they... you know, they had very interesting lives, because things were so different then. Um, so... Yeah, it's uh... like I said, there's so much more. And you can – you can ask me a question and it can jog another memory for me.

REYNOLDS: [00:26:57] Do you recall one of those early stories that one of your elders told you that really stood out to you, or made an imprint as a – as a younger person?

MILLAR: [00:27:08] Um... [stutters] There's a few of 'em. Th-The one that – that I... that I think about a lot is my – with my Baba. My uncle Ray had... he did something, and he practically sliced a finger off. It-It was – they thought he was going to lose it, the finger. And my Baba went – you know, very calmly – she went out to the field and picked, um, plants, and made a salve, made a salve out of it. Cleaned his hand, put the salve on, wrapped his hand up, and...

you know, just took care of it. When he took the bandage off, th-the wound was completely fine – no scar, nothing. So I – stories like that, and just making something out of nothing, uh, as far as food goes. Um... [mumbles] ...there's anything else. Oh my gosh. I-I can't really think right now, there's so much more – my mind is racing 'cause it's – 'cause this is so exciting. And um, yeah.

REYNOLDS: [00:28:28] Yeah. Is there another, um, another – we've spoken about your Baba and your grandfather on your maternal side, is there another elder that you wanna speak about?

MILLAR: [00:28:37] Um, w-well – so I did, I'll talk about my paternal side. I never... I don't – I never met m-my grandfather, Paul. Uh, he had passed away before I was born, actually – I believe it was a few months before I was born. And my – and my grandmother, Motra, I don't – you know, I'm sure she held me as a baby, but I don't remember spending time with her. Uh, I think she had passed before I was able to have those memories. Um... and then my – I had my, on my father's side, my Aunt Meli, my Aunt Amelia, she was a wonderful baker. She was over in Pittsfield too, with my uncle Mike. Uh, w-we didn't spend all that much time with them because we were primarily with the – uh, the Himmels, my mother's side of the family. 'Cause Baba was always cooking and...

[00:29:36] And then on my mom's side, all of my uncles and aunts were very special. My mother was the oldest, Bronya, although they named her – they called her Bernice, because when she went to school they couldn't pronounce her name. It's Br-Bronischlava, and they called her Bronya for short. Um, my uncle Ray, Raymon, good – all just good people, we all just spent time together. And then after uncle Ray was my – was, uh, Stanishlacz, my uncle Stanley. Who actually went to the merchant marines and, uh, was very different than the other... four. Five. No, four. And then after my uncle Stanley was... my aunt Lizzie, who is – who just celebrated her 90th birthday, we had a big party for her this past weekend. Very, very close with her as well. And uh, she was Lizbeta – as I said, they couldn't pronounce her name, so it was Elizabeth or Liz. And then my uncle Steve, my – and God rest his soul too, we lost him during Covid. He was the baby.

[00:30:45] This is a cute story. So it was – it was probably Stefan, as they pronounced it. So there were – there were five of them, and they grew up during the Depression. So sweets, food – it wasn't that it was scarce, but they were sharing things, like my uncle Ray would say – he'd steal my aunt Lizzie's, he called her babe all the time, he'd steal her bottle to drink her milk. It wasn't – it wasn't anything bad. And so my mother – I guess my grandmother had gone away, maybe to a midwife? Or – or maybe she was in another room, I'm not quite sure how or where she was. But the children were there and they – my grandmother had come back in and she had a bag, and they heard, like, [meows] like a cry, like a cat. And they got all excited, they thought they were getting a pet cat. But in the bag was a baby, it was my uncle Steve, and they were like, "Oh no! It's not a cat!" [laughs] However it was – it was the baby, and they – they all, I mean they were, they were all like puppies together. They – you know, it was just another child. You know, they were like, "Oh my gosh, another baby!" Um, but I just thought that was really funny – they were all like, excited that there was gonna be a cat in the bag, and there was my – my uncle. And he was the baby of the family, so... the day that we lost him, that was – it was sad. As all deaths are.

[00:32:17] Uh, so... yeah, so my – they're all very special to me, um, in different ways. Everybody had a different role to play in your life. And right now, my aunt Lizzie is – out of all five, she's here now with us, so I try to spend as much time as I can with her, and uh, and I ask her lots of questions. And she can still speak a little bit of Polish, yeah. And uh... yeah. It was nice because our – our aunts and uncles were our godparents as well. And that – that maybe doesn't mean anything to people now, but it was very important to have that. They interacted with us, we grew up as a family. Yeah, and my father's side and paternal side, it was more – my aunt was in Pittsfield, so we didn't get to see her that often. And um, with my uncle Mike, we went to visit him – and then we just weren't as close. But my cousin Barbara is a very – you know, she's a Mixa, and I enjoy seeing her and spending time with her, she's a good soul. And my cousins... oh my gosh, Patty and Nancy.

[00:33:46] Um, so yeah, it was uh... a close-knit family. Just different relationships with different people, because of logistics and so on and so forth.

REYNOLDS: [00:33:57] You mentioned, um, your grandparents house as a place that was important to you, and the church. What other places in Hudson have been meaningful to you?

MILLAR: [00:34:09] Uh, in Hudson... probably... When I was a little bit older, it was the Blue Anchor, and – because you were, you were... you know, that's where all the cool kids hung out. And... so it was Blue Anchor, and then going to the theater when it was *the theater*, the Commun – I think it was the [stutters] it was a big, white gorgeous theater that then became a tennis court, and then I think Marina Abramovic was going to do like, an art – a moving art studio there. And I think [Eric Galway?] recently purchased it. So going to the movies. There wasn't much – there was really not much to do in Hudson. It was – it was different. They had businesses there, it's not – there weren't really restaurants in Hudson, there were some bars and things. And we were younger, so there – there really... you know, except for going to school and maybe some shopping. And you had everything here; you had shoe stores, you had dress stores, you had corset shops. And um, so it wasn't necessarily Hudson, in general, um – the skating rink, the roller skating rink, which was... I believe it was on Fairview Boulevard when I was growing up. That was a big deal, going – going roller skating. And... I really can't think of anything in Hudson. Because it wasn't – it really wasn't, it was the Blue Anchor where you hung out, and you went to friends' houses. And you know, they had pools, or you just had fun.

REYNOLDS: [00:35:54] You've mentioned a few times the changes that you've noticed in Hudson, especially after leaving and coming back.

MILLAR: [00:36:00] Mhm.

REYNOLDS: [00:36:02] I'm curious to know more about that.

MILLAR: [00:36:04] Uh, well – so, growing up here was... it was more community-based. Um... it was a working community, and it was tight-knit, and it wasn't, it was – it's very different now. It's now a tourist – a hub for tourism, which... Quite frankly, I'm not happy with. Um, I-I understand coming into... mm, there's a lot of history here. So, I-I understand it brings into the community, or the businesses, um – income. And so that's happening, and there's a lot of

new... a new generation, or new people coming in. And that – I'm trying to say this without sounding like *that*. Um... growing up here, we were – it's not even... I'm trying to find the right – we were modest people. Um, people that worked hard, and just enjoyed life.

[00:37:22] When I tell people that I'm from Hudson, they look at me and they're like, *really?* Like I crawled out from – like I'm a hillbilly or I crawled out from under a rock or something. And I find that insulting. And I find that the people that are now living here – not all of them, I... not all of them. But I find that there's a – there's a sense of entitlement. And, um, arrogance. Um, I find that they – they've raised the prices of our homes, and our taxes. I probably couldn't afford to buy anything here now. My son couldn't move – couldn't afford to rent a one-bedroom apartment. Um, the traffic, the people, the litter. I live in Hudson proper, the alleys are destroyed from the construction. There's no topography. I'm watching things kind of crumble around me. Um, I was a construction project manager for about twenty years, and I understand construction and all of that. And – it kind of breaks my heart. It really does. And um, I try to get involved, however you can only get involved so much. And... so that's what I see happening.

[00:38:41] And... I-I can't afford to go to most of these stores. It-It's really nice to have certain places, but, um, you have to also think about the people that really live here. And – and it's not just my family, y'know. And when I say, literally, blood, sweat, and tears, I mean that. Now I'm watching the architecture, and it – it was *historical* Hudson. It's not so historical anymore. I don't think so. I'll drive down certain alleys and I'll see... houses, or – and I just shake my head. Everything that – that people come, maybe kept coming to Hudson for, the architecture, the quiet, and all of that, is kind of going away. And um, you know, I came home for this. I came home so I could be home. And... and it's different now. And I know – I know eventually that there will be - I hope there is - a happy, you know, some kind of balance. But right now I don't see a balance, I really don't. I see that more and more people are getting squeezed out, and um, yeah.

[00:40:06] And if I see another [frustrated laugh] hotel, or a brewery, it's like, enough. Fix your infrastructure first. There's no place to park, they're trying to fix the compromised natural gas lines, there's the water lines, streets are crumbling... and um, so before – this is the way I look at

it. They're putting the cart in front of the horse. You know, slow it down. Take care of what you got here, assess what's going on. And then, you know, grant permits or whatever, for whatever business, but I – I just don't see another hotel, or a condo, or development here. Um – and I'm passionate about it, I really am. And I – people argue, "You shouldn't say that!" Well, I-I can. I suppose – what is it, the First Amendment? And I don't even mean it like that, but I – people ask me, and I tell the truth. And that's how I feel about it.

[00:41:11] I met a lot of people that are wonderful. However, there's – there's a lot that... that's all I'm gonna say. But that – I really, truly believe that, you know, the expansion of everything needs to just *halt*. And then catch up. And uh, so that's the difference. Very, very different from when I was growing up. Very different. Um... you knew your neighbors, you were kind to your neighbors. We watched out for each other. But you don't see that here. My neighborhood is like – I have neighbors that are *amazing*, so. And I've said enough about that, or I'll... I don't want to get in trouble, so. Nor that I would, it's just – you asked my opinion, and I'll, I speak the truth.

REYNOLDS: [00:42:00] Are you in touch with, um... any of the folks who you grew up around in Hudson?

MILLAR: [00:42:07] Oh, yeah. My – so my, so the one – so I have some, my *first* first best friend is - um, it was in kindergarten - Patrice O'Brien [check] who actually works over here at the... uh, for the city, it's at 401 State Street. We went to Saint Mary's together, and I see her occasionally. And, uh – but not keep in touch like that. We – uh, everybody has their lives, you know, she has a daughter. But when I see her, it's heartwarming. And my high school friends, I try to keep – I try to see them when I can, although every... As I said, people now have grandchildren and... or they, you know, they're retired and they're doing things. But when I see them, it's – it's like I just saw them yesterday. Um, my – my first best friend in high school was, um, Laurie Garcia-Warden, and I just was texting with her today, and I do, I do see her. Um, she's – we were like, people thought we were sisters, we kind of looked the same. So I do keep in touch with her.

[00:43:16] And my other best friend is, um, I see him all the time, and he's – he is, I say to people: if there's one person that knows everything about me and my life, and I mean *everything*, it's him. And that's, uh, that's Robert Cranna, Bob – Brown Cranna. And um, who's – his brother's portrait is here in the room. And he and I are very, very close. Um, a friend once said to me, you're – “You're one soul in two bodies.” [laughs] So – and that's how we are. [stutters] Some people – he's, our relationship is, uh, I don't know what I'd do without him, really. He's been, he's been a very dear, dear friend. I wouldn't even marry my first husband until he met Brown, so. Mhm! And everybody was in the wedding, so.

[00:44:09] It's a, so I'm trying to think – and then I occasionally, I run into my other, uh, friends that I... that I grew up with when I see out, and it's just, it's... it's wonderful. It really is, 'cause we share memories. My friend Coz, Paul Kosnick, he's a contractor, he's working at a house down the – you know, a few doors down. And he comes over, and it's like, old school, you know? He'll pop over... later in the afternoon and just, you know, back then we would drink, like, Jennie Cream Ales [check], nothing fancy. And we'd just sit there and we'd talk, and that's it! And so... yes, I-I do. I keep up with as much – as many of my friends as I can. And there's more people out there too. Um, and then I, you know, I make new friends as I – I say my formative years were primarily down in South Florida, so. Um, but yeah. So I, I get to see them periodically.

REYNOLDS: [00:45:17] As we look towards – towards the end of the interview, um...

MILLAR: [00:45:21] Mhm.

REYNOLDS: [00:45:23] Is there anything else you want to talk about?

MILLAR: [00:45:26] Um... n – I'm just trying to think, th-there's so much. We talked about my childhood, and... my past, I did a tribute for my dad last year, he was a World War II hero. We can talk about that another time, I have – I have a lot of information. There's a lot, um, that I have compiled – or actually he had, and the file was passed onto me. Um, and basically, that's it. My childhood here was great, I'm happy to be back here. I hope I can stay here – and I will, I

don't, I don't plan on going anywhere. Um... and, no. I just... I guess, well, we can do another chapter, I have so much more to share with you. There's a lot of family history here, and I've, um – it's like digging for truffles, I guess. You know, when I find something it's a – they're gems, they really are. So... um, right now, I think we've pretty much covered what we could. Um, you wanna talk more, we can.

REYNOLDS: [00:46:43] Thank you so much, Paula. I learned so much about your life and Hudson's history, and your family.

MILLAR: [00:46:46] Thank you, you're welcome. I enjoyed this implicitly. And I look forward to doing this again – like I said, there's so much more. And, um... yeah. I think – I think there's stories that should be told as part of this community. Thank you, Annie. I appreciate it.

REYNOLDS: [00:47:06] Thank you.

[END OF RECORDING ONE]

[START OF RECORDING TWO]

REYNOLDS: [00:47:09] This is Annie Reynolds, I'm back with Paula Mixa Millar, and, um, we had a couple other stories we wanted to share, after getting off tape. So, you were just telling me about... the Basilica, a historical Basilica moment – the factory.

MILLAR: [00:47:26] [crosstalk] Yeah, i-it was a factory – I'm not quite sure if it was the Basilica, there were a few factories down there – so it was either the Basilica or one a little bit closer to it. However, m-my grandfather – my Baba's husband, my mom's father, was – back then it was during the Depression, so you went wherever the work was. And he was working one night, he was on a night crew, and he was – it was, they were shoveling something back, and I don't know what factory it was, and... the wall, the stone – brick, stone wall collapsed on them. And my – no one was, no one was killed, I believe. However, my grandfather was underneath the rubble all, like, all night long. And was, you know – broken bones, and as I said it wasn't just my

grandfather, it was a few other men. And – I’m 99% certain that no one lost their lives. So that was – as I said to you, what’d I say: blood, sweat, and tears went into this town. It wasn’t just my family. But it – it did. They – those stories happened, and um, so that’s why those are very important, this history here’s so important to me.

[00:48:41] And then my grandmother, my Baba, her first marriage, um... she – she had three, three or four children, and her son was twenty-one years old, and he was working at one of the cement plants – I believe it was, I think, I’m not certain – I believe it was Lone Star, but one of the cement plants here because we have that – that limestone. And... he and a few other workers, other young men, were working and they were in the steam room, and – there was an explosion, and he was steamed to death. And, uh, my Baba had gotten a settlement from it – from that. And kinda moved on from there, and moved on from that daily – there was, you know, some [stutters]... personal stories, so. Uh, however – yeah, so as I said, it was... you know, industries here. And... that’s why, you know, we’re passionate about things. So – but you know, she moved on, and um, lives were lost here, and – oh, you want me to tell the story about my aunt? Oh gosh.

[00:49:50] Um – not certain of all the details – my father’s family, they were living on Newman Road, and you know – they were calling them, “gypsies,” at this – you know, “gypsy’s” not, not a bad thing, but. However they were – they had, uh, there was no heat in their home, so you had big bonfires and you’d... possibly cook, and that’s where you kept warm. And... I have two versions of this story. The one I’ve always heard is that my aunt Stella, and I believe she was thirteen or fourteen years old – and back then your hair was, would come down to maybe your calves. Your hair was long, very long. And the story that I know is that there – one of the cinders from the bonfires gone up and landed in her hair, and her hair caught on fire and she burned to death. And... so – and my aunt Stella is buried in Cedar Park, my Motra is buried next to her.

[00:50:50] And then I saw my cousin Patty, my aunt Millie’s daughter – just this past February, my mom passed. And at the – at the funeral we were talking and we were talking about different family members, and she said something about Stella and I said, “Yeah, her hair caught on fire –” and she goes, “No, someone pushed her into the fire.” And she had told me that she had – the story, she had the paperwork or something. I was like, “Oh my gosh!” So I, um – you know,

since the death of my mom, just kind of transitioning to things and coming up for air to... spend some social time. But I'd like to – I would like to clarify that story. Um, so it's – those are some family stories. Tragic, but – tragic and true. And, um, I have happier stories as well. And that's, um... well, that's part of our family history.

REYNOLDS: [00:51:55] Thank you.

MILLAR: [00:51:55] You're welcome, Annie. Thank you.