

INTERVIEW WITH CAROL FISCHER AUERBACH

DECEMBER 2, 1993

**TRANSCENDING TRAUMA PROJECT
COUNCIL FOR RELATIONSHIPS
4025 CHESTNUT STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19104**

INTERVIEW WITH CAROL FISCHER AUERBACH

INT: Hello. How are you?

CAROL: Good.

INT: Since this is the current identifying information, you should give your name with your maiden name.

CAROL: My name currently is Carol Auerbach and my maiden name was Carol Fisher.

INT: And you are how old?

CAROL: Fifty. Almost fifty-one.

INT: Fifty and a half.

CAROL: I'm not counting.

INT: You are not counting and your birthday is?

CAROL: January 19, 1943.

INT: And you were born?

CAROL: In Manhattan.

INT: In Manhattan. And you are presently not married. You are a widow. Your masters' degree is?

CAROL: Masters in education and certification as school psychologist.

INT: And you are employed. Why don't you give sort of a description of the variety of things that you are involved in.

CAROL: Although I am a consultant at The Center for Psychological Services in Ardmore, in addition to that there are other things that I am doing: Being Vice President of the Institution for Mental Health Initiatives, a Fellow at the SCI Center.

INT: Which is? SCI?

CAROL: The SCI Center is really is a group located within the Wharton School which is trying to take a look at management in the 21st Century.

INT: And you are also connected to Children's Network.

CAROL: Yeah, I chair the Board of Philadelphia Children's Network.

INT: And you are also involved with Federation.

CAROL: I'm the Chair in Resource Development Committee and Vice President of the Endowment Corporation, on their Board of Trustees and I guess also on their Executive Committee.

INT: And your children are?

CAROL: Philip, who is age 25 and lives in Philadelphia, and Rachel, who is 22 and is currently also living in Philadelphia.

INT: Is there any organization you belong to? Temple Beth Hillel, and are there any other specific organizations that you belong to? You don't belong to Adult Children of Holocaust Survivors?

CAROL: No. No.

INT: Are there any other, unless Federation or?

CAROL: Well there are other Jewish communal activities, but they are really, they become to be too many numerous at this point.

INT: So your mother and father we know are both alive and they are living in Florida, and your father is retired, and they are practicing Jews, and their education was the high school level.

CAROL: Right.

INT: And I'm trying to remember your mother's, she has a sister and a brother and your father has a very large family as I recall.

CAROL: By comparison; two brothers who currently live in Jerusalem and a sister who had died.

INT: Okay. Now while you were growing up how did you view yourself, your parents, your relationships with them, with your brother? You have a brother whose name is?

CAROL: Michael. And he is eighteen months younger than I.

INT: And he?

CAROL: He lives in Upstate New York, in Clifton Park.

INT: Right. And what does he do?

CAROL: He is an engineer.

INT: And so your extended family, what was your sense of what it was like growing up, what...

CAROL: It was a very warm cohesive family. We lived in Kew Gardens which was predominantly the Jewish neighborhood in Queens. And I certainly remember, although we did belong to a synagogue there, a Conservative synagogue during my younger years, and when I was a teenager even became involved in our Orthodox synagogue simply because they had the most social activities that were going on at that particular point. So we even went to services fairly frequently, but I must say I am not sure it was as much out of religious as it was again out of social reasons. But there has always been a very, I wouldn't call us a very observant family, although we always observed all of the holidays without question, but we were extremely well identified as being Jewish.

I mean I remember as a child if my brother or I ever talked about how, you know, it would be interesting to maybe celebrate Christmas as well as Hanukkah. My father's adage would always be, "when our neighbors will light a menorah then we will get a Christmas tree." So there was never any question in our household and I think that we, there was never any dissention. We were all very proud to be Jews. Certainly living in Kew Gardens facilitated that because on the High Holidays everything closed. Also although I went to the public schools, on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, it was very easy not to attend school and to go to services because so many people and teachers were Jewish as well. When I moved to Manhattan I had culture shock when I realized that the world really did not go on on the Jewish holidays. I mean all of Kew Gardens closed down on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. That was not obviously the case once I left Kew Gardens.

INT: And which is interesting because your mother lived, her families life in Germany was very much one that was integrated into a German culture, although your father's was not. But when they chose to settle and have children they chose to live...

CAROL: In Kew Gardens. And I suspect that was as a result of my aunt first living in Kew Gardens in that apartment. And when she and her husband moved to Easton, Pennsylvania, we moved; I was actually born in Manhattan. We moved when I think I was age four...perhaps it was five...to that apartment in Kew Gardens where everyone really...and my parents' friends continued to be primarily German, but German/Jewish.

INT: Very good. And so you viewed yourself as Jewish and your parents and your relationships with friends and....

CAROL: All of my friends were Jewish. I mean I remember there was one young man who

was not Jewish, although ostensibly I think someone may have said he was half-Jewish, and I remember we got into a lot of trouble because we tried to get him on the basketball team of the Orthodox Synagogue, and it was found out that he was not Jewish. But he was the one person really, who, as I recall was not, and there was such a strong feeling and we were not even permitted to date. I mean my parents were fairly strict about my only dating people who were Jewish and that was made very clearly. And even when I was in graduate school and someone did fix me up with someone who was not Jewish, who as I recall was Lebanese, my father was incensed that I would go out with him even on one date.

INT: And do you think that any of that was because of their experience?

CAROL: I am positive. I suspect very definitely. I mean there was a feeling that we have to stick to, with our own. That would be much safer. We needed to perpetuate being Jewish.

INT: And do you think that was ever specifically said or it was just a feeling or belief that permeated?

CAROL: I think it was said. I think clearly if there was discussion as to dating, my parents both; I think that there really was no dissention. It was clear that that was what their preference was going to be.

INT: And so that was their message that you got from them. Did you get other messages about what kind of friends and what school should be like for you, and what your interests should be and leadership and those kinds of issues?

CAROL: They were really fairly supportive, and I guess I was lucky they liked my friends, and there was a tremendous closeness amongst us, and we really did remain friends throughout my elementary, middle school, high school and then even college. So it was a very stable growing up.

INT: So you felt encouraged by your parents.

CAROL: Encouraged, supported, not even pushed. I mean they were not necessarily the typical Jewish parents that said you must even go to college. We were not in a financial position for my parents to afford to send me away to school. In that sense I was very lucky and living in New York and having the opportunity of going to some wonderful school, namely Queens College, which provided a fabulous education for next to no tuition. In that sense I was very fortunate that I did live there because it would not have otherwise been something that my parents would have been able to have done. And when I say that they are not typical in terms of Jewish parents who are constantly pushing their kids, they wanted me to be happy, I think to be married, to have children. That was something that was important, but they didn't see a professional life necessarily as something being terribly important for them, for me to be able to accomplish. I think that perhaps they may have thought it would have been a good idea if I wanted to become a teacher. But that was something that again, one could always count on. And I know that when I

decided to go onto graduate school, if anything they were concerned would there be someone who would marry me with all of this education?

INT: This was before feminism and more traditional roles versus....

CAROL: And my mother really ended up...she was always a homemaker and stayed at home and they were not highly educated. And I don't know whether it came from some concern on their part of my going beyond them; they never took issue with my brother. So I mean I think there were some sexism that was there, and yet as soon as I mentioned that this was something that I wanted to do there was never any argument. They certainly supported my being able to do that.

INT: How did your family handle things like responsibility, decision-making, money, celebrations, problems, feelings, death, illness? And what were the family roles to either your mother or your father or did they do it together? Who had the power in your family?

CAROL: Yeah, it is an interesting question. I think that my father probably saw himself as being the patriarch, but my mother I'm sure had a wonderful way of being able to do and to get what she wanted as well to persuade him. And honestly I think I can remember only once in my growing up, really hearing them have a very heavy argument. Money, as I said was not something that we had an abundance of, but even though my mother had come from a very affluent Jewish family, I have to say that I really never ever heard her complain that she was not able to go out and buy clothing, or to have a housekeeper. I think that she was just so thrilled that she was alive and well and married and had two children. And certainly we always had more than sufficient food that was on the table, but theirs was not a life of excess. I think my father brought his lunch to work everyday. Neither one of them spent a great deal of money on themselves, nor did they spend a great deal, or it was not there to be spent and we were encouraged. I don't know about my brother in the same way, but I know that I was able to babysit and started at the age of eleven, and basically started to earn my own spending money and began to...

INT: So they began teaching you responsibility early on?

CAROL: Well I would say so. I mean they certainly encouraged me to do that. I remember the first thing I ever purchased was a tennis racquet from the money that I had earned and then continued to be able to use that. Worked all, I guess, beginning in high school, as a senior in high school worked, then after school and on Saturdays and really basically bought all of my own clothing at that particular point and it was not necessary for my parents to give me an allowance.

INT: And do you think that that independence was encouraged because of any of the experiences that they had had?

CAROL: I don't think that there is necessarily a linkage to those experiences. I think it may

just have had to do with the pragmatics of the fact that...

INT: The economic situation?

CAROL: The economics of the situation. I think it certainly was a useful one for me to know that I could stand on my own two feet, but I wouldn't say that that was linked specifically to their backgrounds.

INT: I was interested in what you said before, that you only heard them once having a very big argument. Do you remember what that was about? I mean was it a very...

CAROL: No. I was in bed and I remember thinking, "Oh, my parents are going to have a divorce." But that was truly the only time. I mean my father, you know, now in his later years is not always as patient and I think I hear them sometimes bickering a bit more, but he really was very easy. He would also when it came to discipline, that was very hard for him to do. He would ask my mother to do that. He really, with that all he really did not like to do that, and yet they had very strict rules in terms of curfew and you know we definitely knew what we were supposed to be doing and when. And it came really out of a sense of caring. I never felt that it was too oppressive. But I think on the other hand they were very fortunate because both Michael and me I think were very well behaved.

INT: And your friendships growing up. What kind of friendships did you have and what was the nature of them? Were they important to you outside of your family?

CAROL: Yes. And one of them was someone who, again, all of them were Jewish, but one in particular was with whom I had been very, very close came from a family where they really considered themselves to be atheists. And Joanie was the only girl who I knew who did go to school on the High Holidays. So with it all there really was an appreciation, even within the Jewish context of where we were living, that not everyone practiced in exactly the same way and she came from a European background. The other friends all really were Jewish but came from American homes. Their parents had been brought up here.

INT: So their atheism was in reaction to what has happened to them in the Holocaust do you think?

CAROL: It may have been, but they may have been from the very beginning. I'm not sure even when they left, and they too, I guess in using your definition would probably have been considered survivors as well. But they definitely did not adhere to anything.

INT: And had they lost their family and mother?

CAROL: I think yes. I don't recall if Joanie had grandparents living in the United States either. My sense is that yes, that everybody was lost in their family.

INT: And we know that your father came from a rather poor family and that they were Orthodox and that as soon as Hitler came into power in '33 that his family packed up and went to Palestine and there was no question, they would not stay there. Your mother's family which was wealthy and well-integrated into German society and culture, that they stayed, and had very good neighbors, people who looked out for them, and in some ways attempted to protect them and so on. But both of them were strongly identified as Jews, I mean in your mother's family even though they [unclear], they lived as Jews. And we talked about their education and their status prior to the war and then your mother's family began to lose their status, their...

CAROL: Economic. Yes.

INT: Their economic status as the businesses were nationalized and so on. What other experiences do you remember? I did get some from your mother, but if you could give me as much detail as you remember being told.

CAROL: About her experiences?

INT: About her experiences.

CAROL: Probably in my growing up she did not say very much. I may have gotten more information from the television programs or her reactions to them.

INT: Like what?

CAROL: I do recall there had been a program about Hitler that was broadcast on television and that may have been the second argument that I do recall now between my parents. My father was very curious and wanted to watch and my mother really could not tolerate it. It was far too painful for her to watch, and I don't recall exactly, but it is possible that she might have even cried. She certainly left the room. She chose not to watch it. So that for me that became translated to the fact that the whole experience for her was something that was really much too painful. In my recollections it was really, I knew that she had to leave Germany, and that she was about age eighteen, and I think that I didn't really fully appreciate what that meant until I too was eighteen, and realized what must it have been like to have left home, and parents not knowing whether you would ever see them again.

And actually it was only during several years ago when Isaac and I were being honored by Ben Gurion University and it coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of Kristallnacht and my sense that I really definitely wanted to mention that and then interviewed my mother. That she then told me that whole story about her neighbors, which she also relayed to you. But prior to that it was not part of, just it was not conversation that we would have around the table.

INT: And so the neighbors had come into the house and told them that what was going to be happening or that the Nazis were coming?

CAROL: My understanding was that their neighbor's son, who was an officer with the army had called his in-laws, told them to warn my grandparents who either came over or called them, and told them what was happening, and at that particular point my mother who had been ill, left with them. They were going to just walk, and it was a woman in the bakery or...who saw them and knew that my mother had been ill, who offered to take my mother in to hide her, but could not do that for my grandparents. And again I thought you know, really how horrible that must have been for them, and frightening to my mother not knowing again whether she would see her parents or not.

INT: She said that when the final decision was made that she had to leave, that she waited until after your grandfather's birthday. She didn't want to...

CAROL: That is not even something I had ever heard.

INT: Oh, so you didn't?

CAROL: I did not know. No. I suspect that, you know, we were probably careful in what we decided to discuss with her knowing that it was painful in much the same way that having visited the Holocaust Museum as frequently as I have, I think that out of my concern of this being too painful an experience for my mother would not necessarily encourage her to do that. And maybe that is being overprotective on my part, I'm not sure.

INT: I'm not sure. I mean from what she said to me that she wouldn't want to go.

CAROL: Right. I think it really would be too difficult for her. My sense is that I'm not sure how she has truly processed her...what actually happened to her parents. I think that she survived and did so not necessarily by denial but probably a certain amount of repression.

INT: Yes, not really thinking about it.

CAROL: Or not thinking about it. Well, and she does that to this day if you think about it in terms of her health, also. I mean in that sense denial or just really going along thinking that things are, making the most of what she does have, has served her well.

INT: And also I think the story about her saving money so she and her sister were sending a check that very afternoon to her brother in California and that he was supposed to send the money to Germany so that your grandparents could leave.

CAROL: Right.

INT: And her brother not sending the money, in fact returning her check to her six weeks later and saying that he had not been able to collect his part of it. And so he didn't send anything and then of course her parents were taken away and perished in the Holocaust. And she has, it seems, directed a lot of her anger towards her brother, whom she has never seen again, and will

not although I understand that you at one time were encouraged to look him up when you were [unclear]?

CAROL: She did. No, she did. She did meet him once or twice.

INT: Oh she did?

CAROL: She did, but obviously, and so did her sister, but a very superficial relationship, and I think you know we have no idea as to whether he is alive at this point or not.

INT: I think that she feels as though she really almost doesn't have a brother because that was such an "unfamily" thing.

CAROL: Well, and it was such a wrench at that point, that even though, I don't think that they either have made any attempt to make contact with either my mother or sister.

INT: She blames him for her parent's death, and so that there is this little [?] directed?

CAROL: I think both she and my aunt share that feeling.

INT: And her experience then at being a domestic in England or had spent a year there until she earned enough money then to come....

CAROL: To the United States.

INT: ...to the United States. Her sister had come directly here?

CAROL: Right. She had married while she was still in Germany, and her husband's family had been able to provide the visa to bring them. So one of the reasons my mother needed to stay was also to wait for the visa that my aunt could send her to come to the United States as well, you know, perhaps the saving of money to make the trip possible.

INT: And did she ever talk to you about her working here in the United States, and saving money, and spending that check?

CAROL: Yes.

INT: She told you all of that?

CAROL: Yeah. That I had heard about, although I heard a slightly different rendition. I had heard that when she was married to my father she had no money. I mean she really worked in a factory and I thought the fact that she said that they had been asked...she must have before she got married wrote to her brother who she knew had not sent this money...asked him then for the money that she had in fact sent to him, and he said that he didn't have it any more was the

version that I had heard.

INT: Well that is interesting.

CAROL: So now I'll have to clarify with her which one it was.

INT: I thought she said to me that after six weeks he sent her check back to her.

CAROL: I remember, I mean that was a story that was relayed to us.

INT: And she was going with your father at the time as I understand, and she didn't ask him for the money, and he said that she could have asked him, but she never did.

CAROL: Both of them are very proud people. It does not strike me as being something incongruent with her.

INT: Can you talk a little bit about that proudness?

CAROL: I think that they each have had a tremendously strong sense of themselves and I think particularly in my, well in both cases, but I think truly particularly in my mother's case there is a certain strength. I mean I think it took a lot of courage also to leave as she did and to have to work as a nanny, and then in doing piece meal sewing, and she did it always, I think with great dignity, instilled pride. I mean she knew that it was something that she needed to do to survive, and that was critical, and always did it again, making the most of what it was that she had, and obviously this could not have been tremendously satisfactory to her. I mean it was such a different life. I mean she did say that what she missed...because she had been very social in her growing up in Germany as well...and when she went to England it was extremely lonely for her.

And when she came to the United States, my aunt was married. It was not as though she had a tremendous support system here and nor did we in growing up because as I mentioned to you we moved to Kew Gardens as my aunts and uncles moved to Easton. So we really didn't have, we had aunts and uncles, my father's aunts and Uncles lived in Brooklyn and they were probably the closest. But whereas you might be accustomed here to having grandparents looking after children to free them up, that really never occurred for my parents. And so vacations even were family vacations that until I was eighteen my parents really never left us alone to go on a separate vacation. My brother and I have always been included.

INT: [Question unclear]

CAROL: No, I think that they, number one, to begin with couldn't afford to be able to do that. We didn't have the supports in place to have somebody come stay with my brother and me.

INT: I wonder if your mother would have left you though, given her...

CAROL: I think that, no, I don't think that that would have been an issue because what was always clear for me, too, in my growing up is that the most important. I mean my parents were there for one another. Clearly my brother and I were very important people in their lives, but I can't say that they were overprotective or over solicitous, that I still think that they were, that they were the two most important people to one another if you would like, you know, and they were clear in terms of what they wanted. I'll give you a very silly example. We talked about this in terms of white meat/dark meat. Clearly they loved dark meat. I think my brother and I, had we wanted it, we still wouldn't have gotten it. You know, so for me if there are some parents who will do everything and anything for their children and will sacrifice all, I never had that feeling with my parents.

INT: Yeah, it is very difficult that for a woman her husband is to come first before her children.

CAROL: And I never took issue with that. I mean again, we never felt as though we were being slighted; but I don't think that we came first in their lives. We came a very...the concept of family was extremely important, but they never lost sight of one another as being important to that picture. As I said you started by asking about my mother's characteristics or my fathers. He also had tremendous pride and would not take anything from anyone. I mean he was very proud of what he could accomplish on his own.

INT: What did your father do?

CAROL: He was a furrier.

INT: Furrier.

CAROL: And he really truly struggled. I mean it was not always...there were many years where that was not something that was terribly easy. But again, he did so I think, you know, we lived with great dignity and pride in what we did have, and not lamenting what we did not have.

INT: Was Shabbat observed? Do you remember?

CAROL: Most often not. No.

INT: And so there was not a great deal of communication about the Holocaust to you from your mother. You don't have a memory of that. You were taught to be responsible, to even as young as eleven to babysit and to then begin paying for your own clothes. Your discipline....

CAROL: Was structured. Was definitely provided.

INT: Provided. And your view, the family view of outsiders, was there such a thing? I mean you are talking about; actually their closest relationships were with family, your father's family...

CAROL: No, no, no, their closest [relationships?] were with friends. They had a very, very strong group of friends who lived, who they played [with]; they saw almost every Saturday night. They would entertain or be entertained by friends. There was rarely a Saturday night where they weren't at someone's home and they loved playing poker or canasta, and it wasn't for dinner. People would just come over and then have dessert afterwards. But...

INT: So they did have a certain...?

CAROL: Oh absolutely, a very strong one and some of these people, we did have a summer home on Lake Kapatcon, [editor: I think this was Lake Hopatcong in New Jersey] and I think I was five when my parents bought that. So all of my summers were spent there and I remember that there were even one of these friends rented at a very modest amount, we added an extra bedroom.

End Side 1- Begin Side 2

CAROL: ...weekends and spoil us by bringing us candy. And in some ways where the grandparents almost played, if you think about the role of the grandparents might play.

INT: But these were friends.

CAROL: These were definitely just friends of my parents with whom we were very close. And there were others. Another couple in our building who also were childless, who I was very close with, you know, and I would just go in and talk to. But in each case they were all survivors. You know as I think about it, but the stories that they would tell were more stories about growing up in Europe. It was, yes, that they had to leave, but I think that they were all managing very well and....

INT: Were they survivors who had gotten out early as your mother did or?

CAROL: Most of them, I think maybe. You know I don't recall any of them having really been in a concentration camp. I do remember my mother's cousin who would come to visit us periodically was the only one who I remember definitely had been in a concentration camp and had, we remembered the stories too of how... Well maybe she wasn't in a concentration now that I think about it because I remember her escaping underneath the railroad car and hearing stories of how she had escaped. But this was a woman who would sort of come and go in our lives, lived in New York for a number of years and was an unmarried.

INT: So you heard these stories. Had she told them to you?

CAROL: Yeah, or through my parents.

INT: So that was something your mother did tell you?

CAROL: Yes, that one I do recall. We definitely knew that she had escaped. The woman was a survivor.

INT: And so were there messages that were relayed to you because of the Holocaust? I mean messages about trusting or beliefs or?

CAROL: I think just the importance of remembering that you were Jewish no matter what and probably in appearance to remaining Jewish was more important to them than it may have been in their growing up, especially my mother's family. Although I think in my father's family being Jewish has always been an integral part. Clearly I think he would have always thought that he would have married somebody who was Jewish. I am positive that that would not have been necessarily as an important value in my mother's family.

INT: And so what your father's having seen himself as a patriarch, perhaps even has a strong will to create that feeling.

CAROL: And I think as a result of my mother's experiences there was no argument that she was certainly very amenable to that. So I never felt that there was dissention. It was just that as a result of her initial growing up, had Hitler not come to power, her life could have been very, very different.

INT: And so your self-esteem certainly was enhanced by your parents who encouraged you and gave you responsibility, were not overprotective of you, and although you see that maybe perhaps some of that was economics.

CAROL: I am sure that it was all interrelated in some ways, but it was never...I certainly would not want to necessarily redo my childhood, even some of the difficult parts of having to grow up and struggle a little bit more financially. I think it's probably served me well simply because it's so simple, although I adore living the way I live now. But I think that it's possible what it has done is it indicated to me that it's possible to live far more simply than I live now, that I know that I can also manage if I would need to and to do whatever it would take to survive, and could live, again, and it wouldn't alter my values at all. I mean I realize that growing up as I did in my household and visiting with then aunt and uncle who, he was I guess the first self-made millionaire that I did know. And when I would visit with that family and I would see how intimidated my cousins seemed to be of my uncle, I realized that you know I was living with much less in terms of financial stability had a much happier, easier life. I felt very comfortable about talking about anything and everything with my parents. So with it all I felt always as though we had a really comfortable easy family life.

INT: And what were the problems when there were problems in the family? How did they get solved?

CAROL: I think you know they varied with whoever it was who was having the problem. I who was always very talkative had no problem in just being able to discuss it with whomever.

My brother who is very different than I and far more introverted, tended if there was something, would perhaps sulk or come home and with my mother's urging to discuss it, he would refuse to do that, which was far more frustrating for them. So there were probably more arguments having to do with him, simply, not because they weren't available to him, but because his personality was one that said you know, leave me alone, I can handle this, and did not have the same kind of rapport with my parents.

INT: This is a personality style and perhaps your being the oldest, maybe were a little more independent.

CAROL: He was independent, but I...and certainly was very self-sufficient, went to school, was an excellent student, went away. But I think it was more stylistic in terms of personality that I tended to be more extroverted, he more introverted. He could play for hours all by himself building, creating magnificent structures, becoming an engineer, ultimately, you know. I chose to go into the field of psychology. I mean our interests were very, very different.

INT: But stylistically the way you describe yourselves you both selected fields that lend themselves very well.

CAROL: True. And we are supported in that way by my parents. I am trying to think if they had difficulty. I think that they would again, I mean obviously there were times they would have disagreements. My father tended, again, in his very....

INT: Forceful?

CAROL: Forceful, ...I mean I do remember, you know we were encouraged, we could sit around and listen while the adults were talking, but I do remember his always saying that children should be seen but not heard. So that if there were discussions we were not encouraged to really participate because then children were not thought to have...

INT: So when there was a problem or there was conflict to be managed your parents decided between them...

CAROL: how to handle it. And I think it was really only as I grew up and then came into my own that I was probably then more forceful in doing what I wanted to do.

INT: And how do you think that their relationship affected you in your...

CAROL: Relationships?

INT: relationships and when you were married?

CAROL: Probably did. I mean if you talk about, you know, passing things on from generation to generation, on some unconscious level the fact that they are eleven years apart and my first

husband and I were also eleven years apart. I think that there was always something about someone older, although I think it was my father's stories that he would also, he and his friends, his male friends would talk about all of their dating experiences and how only men were out to get me. And important as it was to be Jewish, it was also important to be aware that young men were only interested in women sexually, and to be very careful. And I think that that had a lot to do, honestly, with my being more comfortable with men who were a little bit older because they were not quite as crude. The young men that I did go out with who were my own age, I found that they really were very crude. And I don't know whether it was the European upbringing, but there was something that was a little bit more gracious about it, and certainly it was not crude. I mean there were things, I mean, I never heard a vulgar word in our house.

Well, cursing, that was just enough, something that I heard and I do remember when I went to college, I hated, and that's I guess [because] I was protected; but it was just not being exposed to it. I remember being invited to a college out of town and going to a fraternity party. I absolutely hated it. It was probably one of the worst weekends in my life. It was not something that I had been exposed to. So how did their relationship affect me? I knew that the two of them loved one another. Well now it was not articulated verbally to this day you probably heard the closest. The other day when my father acknowledged how wonderful it was to be married, but saying I love you was not something that was easy for either one of my parents to do, nor did they ever do it to one another, or to my brother or to me. However, there was not a morning that my father did not kiss my mother good-bye as he left, nor did he...he always kissed her when he said hello. So I always have, I knew instinctively that they cared a tremendous amount for one another and really loved one another and...

INT: So there was an atmosphere of affection and love.

CAROL: Oh tremendous. Absolutely.

INT: But there was not much verbal expression.

CAROL: So I think clearly for me it was important to have also a loving relationship and I think I was fortunate.

INT: And so, how about...you haven't talked much about your mother certainly being fearful for you and so...

CAROL: No.

INT: And so that was never something that you felt or that you would then....

CAROL: Pass on?

INT: pass onto your children. And how about attitudes about child rearing and decision making and those kinds of things from your parents too, I mean.

CAROL: I certainly think that I feel as though parents need to be in charge and I suspect that I was with my children as well. I think that where I altered a bit is I really wanted my children to feel as though what they have to say was very worthwhile. I think that that was a major difference and my parents would probably say too that I was far more patient with my children in being able to tolerate them, perhaps talking back to me, and permitting them to be angry with me than my parents might have ever permitted me to have been.

INT: Do you think that has something to do with your education as a psychologist or do you think that it has something to do with feeling that in some ways you weren't permitted?

CAROL: I'm sure I think it was probably the latter; something that I wanted to make certain. Because the one part that I think really did bother me as I was growing up is to feel as devalued when it came to my opinions about certain things. If I would just talk about my social life that was fine, but if we talked about politics, you know, or things that were more worldly, I think it was then that my father felt that we didn't have anything or I didn't have anything to contribute. And I think that that, it was from that point of view more than anything that I felt that I wanted to make certain that my children would feel differently in growing up.

INT: And so you had told me about this time in your life when you were a young adult and you were dating a young man and your father interfered. Could you elaborate on that?

CAROL: That was a turning point in my relationship with my father because I think up until that time I had always felt that there had been mutual respect on the part of my parents to me. And I remember that summer I probably even had written them a letter thanking them for how I had been raised and being just so pleased at how respectful I thought they were of me too. But here was a man that I was dating and I knew it then and I still know it now that my father did it, again, out of tremendous love for me, probably too much love for me, but he was concerned about what this man's intentions were. Did he plan to marry me because he knew that this was, I mean the first time that I was as smitten. So...

INT: You were how old?

CAROL: I was in graduate school. I was my first year in graduate school, so I had to have been nineteen.

INT: First year of graduate school?

CAROL: Graduate school.

INT: You would be twenty-two, twenty-three?

CAROL: Well I got married, I'm just. Well it was '65. So if I was twenty-two? That's right. I was twenty-two. I was in my first year of graduate school because I remember if this man asked

me to marry him, I think I would have even given up graduate school. That is how I recall that. But my father had called him unbeknownst to me to meet him, which he did, and to ask him what his intentions were. And then came back and relayed this to me and I was furious at my father. So furious that I mean now it was incredible that he could have done that. And I didn't, I mean it was hard for me to speak to him for six months after that.

INT: Were you living at home?

CAROL: I was living at home and I went through all of the motions, but I was just so upset with him that I could not deal with what he had done. Although I knew that he had done it meaning well, I just felt that it was so inappropriate for him to have done it.

INT: And were the communications such that you were to say all of this to your father?

CAROL: Oh, I'm sure. I'm positive by that time, I could definitely tell him. I think he felt. I remember him coming home and crying to me that this man was not willing to say that he loved his daughter, to put it on the line. And he was so upset with this man who he thought was going to be hurting his daughter. So it was very, very painful for my father, but for me the painful part was that he had done this without ever saying anything beforehand to me.

INT: And what happened to that relationship?

CAROL: That was it. That was the end of it. You know I think it was probably as awkward for this man as it had been for me. So that had been the end.

INT: And do you think that your father's perceptions were a lot [unclear]?

CAROL: Possibly, but I think that also would not have been inappropriate for me to have proceeded bottom line and found out. So I would have found out six months later or whatever on my own. I think that was really the most overprotective act that I can recall either one of my parents ever doing.

INT: I'll bet your father never did anything as intrusive again.

CAROL: Never. Never. Never.

INT: When you came home and said you were going to be married?

CAROL: No, that was...I mean by that time I think he really fully understood that you can't protect someone from being hurt. And then it really is okay to permit that to happen as well. And I suspect that he didn't realize how much he was going to hurt me. I don't think that he thought it true that what he did was going to hurt me. Although it was not permanent, it did hurt our relationship which must have hurt him because I had been extremely close to my parents. So this was the time in my life then for the first time where it was very hard for me really to

communicate with them openly about what I was. They knew I was upset and they probably were able to say that. And then they also saw me not going out for a few months. I mean using all of that time I then devoted my energies to my schoolwork, which was good because then it got me a fellowship for the next year. So it was sublimated appropriately, but they had to observe all of that also and realize that what he had done was truly was inappropriate.

INT: And so do you have any memories in growing up of any dreams, any family loss that happened or difficulties while you were growing up?

CAROL: No, I mean in that sense I was very sheltered, again by experience more than anything I do remember when letters came to my father indicating that each of his parents had died and seeing him cry, which was a hard thing. I was the only time I'd ever really seen him cry was when he received word of his parent's death. And other than...

INT: Had you met his parents?

CAROL: I had only met my grandmother and I was very, very young. She had come for a brief visit from Israel when I was maybe five years old or six years old. She was a very difficult woman at that time that we discussed. She didn't like me at all.

INT: She didn't like you? Why was that?

CAROL: No, and I understand we were just discussing this. She must have thought that both my brother and I were very spoiled, which we really were not. But she really...she was very difficult. Whether she really didn't want to come to the United States, whether she was resentful of my mother, it never was really clear, but it was sort of this little window that I had had with her. I remember we shared a bedroom with her. But it was not, that was not a warm wonderful visit. And I never met my grandfather, so I really in that sense, you know...And certainly never met my mother's parents.

INT: And so successes and failures that your parents had and how that, what that meant to you and how that got integrated in your mind, successes, mistakes that were made.

CAROL: I think it was really...it was more as I said, my father was a furrier. I think when I first grew up he did very well working very well for a particular person, but then decided to go into business for himself. He would probably be the first to the bid. He was really not a wonderful entrepreneur. He had wonderful skills as a furrier, but he really was not one who could make a business thrive on his own and knowing exactly what that took or what he lacked I'm not certain. But because it was when I grew up that he then began to work also for a very well known furrier that he began to thrive again. And I was thrilled for him that he had found a niche for himself where he was fully appreciated. I guess I was sorry, he was a fabulous and still is a wonderful, wonderful photographer, but I think that the only frustration that I could always sense in his development if you would like is that he was never able to make it as a photographer professionally. I think that that had been something that he would have loved to have done when

he first came to the United States, but didn't have the entre in which to do that as a journalistic photographer which would have been really...

INT: [Unclear]...

CAROL: Well cameras, yeah, he had a Leica camera.

INT: He had a Leica.

CAROL: He had to Leica it from that he brought along with him which I think my brother then lost at like a...I think dropped the bottle. [Editor's note: The meaning of the previous sentence is unclear.] But I mean oh yeah, he was really terrific about that. And that was a frustration. But what they learned from it, I think I learned that you could struggle but still maintain the integrity of oneself and of the family. I think there was only a very brief time where my father was unemployed. There was a very brief time that I think my mother tried to work. And I remember my father sort of being home and making Campbell's Tomato Soup and making it with water and not milk and it tasting terrible.

INT: Oh, your mother tried to work?

CAROL: She tried to work for very few weeks, but, she and I were talking about the fact that she used to always say that she had two children and that was not a time that I think employers were willing to take too many risks with young mothers; with a woman with young children who did not have the wherewithal or the supports to have anybody care for us if we were to become ill. And I think that she and my father decided that she was not going to earn sufficient money for her to work and that his preference, even though we might have to skimp a little bit more was for her to stay home and to be available for my brother and for me.

INT: So they had traditional values.

CAROL: Very.

INT: And certainly in religion as well.

CAROL: We did go to Hebrew School, briefly. But my father then taught us Hebrew.

INT: ...because he had lived there?

CAROL: He had lived there and actually I learned probably more of the Hebrew reading and speaking and writing from him in a week that I might have learned in the several years that I had gone to supplemental school.

INT: Confronting the issues of the Holocaust and the fact that certainly your mother did not want to talk about them [her parents?] and that he probably protected her by not bringing up the

subject. The changes that have happened since the war in Europe and in Israel and so forth, that certainly doesn't seem to have kept you from your interest and involvement in the effects of the Holocaust and in immersing yourself.

CAROL: Absolutely. And not with the necessarily negative view of persecution, but of feeling very committed to the fact that we do need to remember who we are and being proud of being Jewish; making certain that there is a viable Jewish community here, and making sure that Israel exists so that if people want the choice that it is there for them. And every time I visit the Holocaust Museum, even the last time that I did it, has made even stronger the commitment, but this is really why. And I'm sure was one of the reasons, although I think probably the other reason that I am as involved as I am is that both my husbands...one then had been involved with Jewish student issues in Australia, and had come from a very committed Jewish family, and he in his own way had been very involved in those things being Jewish, and I knew was doing things to help Israel, almost made Aliyah actually as well. But had done things quietly; he worked at the United Nations.

I'm certain that that contributed to my also feeling as though I needed to be part of the community, and marrying Isaac, who was very much immersed in the Jewish community. So I think each of these pieces worked together to make it really clear that it was possible to be very involved. It is interesting; neither of my parents were actively involved in the Jewish community in my growing up in Kew Gardens. It was only once I was in college or even, I think even married that my mother became involved in Jewish Council or the Council for Jewish Women. And other than that neither one of my parents...it is not a role model that I saw in terms of active communal involvement at home. And even philanthropy was not something that I had seen and it is not an excuse I think at that point to say that you know, we didn't have the means. Although we did have a tzedakah box, that traditional blue, it was the...kind and it wasn't...

INT: Tin.

CAROL: Tin...that blue tin...that we did have always have it up on our counter. So we probably did do something but again, it was not an important, important thing. I think the feeling of communal involvement in philanthropy has definitely come from both the relationships with Ben and with Isaac.

INT: It has been sort of interesting that you've seemed to have gotten two messages, one that you have a strong Jewish identity and that you be part of the community and so forth, but that it really wasn't talked about on the other hand about the Holocaust or a lot of what was repressed or what was too painful for your mother to talk about. So that kind of combination had to have had an effect in some ways even to highlight for you the pain of the Holocaust.

CAROL: I'm sure that's true and I think also the feeling of wanting to make certain or doing whatever is within my limited power of trying to make certain that a Holocaust would not occur again. And you may be right that it may have come out of recognizing, you know, how painful it has been for my mother. I know that we struggle as we try to communicate what this has meant

to my children. And I'm aware that I didn't experience what my mother experienced and here you have another generation that is removed who has lived very differently, you know from the way in which I have lived. I think that what you are doing in terms of trying to capture this and what the Holocaust Museum is doing, I think is imperative. And I feel fortunate enough to be able to participate and to try to make certain that we do have the Jewish community for the future.

INT: So as you look back at all of this, of your life and how the Holocaust impacted on your parents and then you and on the next generation and your children, do you have any reflections that you might want to share?

CAROL: I think that there is this one really, again, of strength and commitment more than anything of wanting to make certain to pass onto my children and hopefully they will feel as committed to pass onto their children the importance of being Jewish. The continuity issue, the historical perspective and again the hope that we can create a world in which a Holocaust will not occur again, where people living as Jews can live freely. I guess there is a frustration and a sadness that we are not able to do this. Here we are, I say this at the one hand and then I think of a Bosnia on the other hand, where there are people in the world who are being persecuted. So we also know that one has to remain vigilant, and I think at the very least, although I would love to be able to do more to rectify what is going on. I think that there are many people who would join me in that in terms of what is going on in Bosnia. But what I do feel I have more control over is what really goes on in my own family, and even there I know that I have limited control. But I will do whatever I can within that limited framework and the framework of our community to make certain to the degree that it is possible, that we do not have the replication of another Jewish Holocaust.

INT: So all of the pieces that fed into that, I mean it is not just from your own personal growing up experiences, but to men you've been married to also have very strong commitments to that.

CAROL: And I suspect that it's not a mistake that I ended up marrying them; that they had values that were very important to me in terms of sharing it and then that was something. And I realized even within my limited framework if I think about it my friends are primarily Jewish. I mean 99% and maybe 100% of my closest friends are Jews because I feel as though I really do have a shared value system with them, and I am most comfortable.

INT: And you've transmitted these values to your children. I mean some of this already you are involved in leadership and stuff.

CAROL: I hope so.

INT: Well, do you have any comments that you want to make about this that you didn't...

CAROL: I'm impressed and I really would be interested in the results that you come up with because I think that the whole concept of survivorship and resilience and what permits some

people to be able to do that is really is very important as we go forth, not only for. Well it will just provide more information I think to try to understand why some people were able to do this more successfully than others.

INT: And you know that you will be getting copies of the transcript, copies of the tape. [unclear]...will be interested in your...

CAROL: ...my comments, on my comments. Thank you.

INT: Thank you.