5-5-2015

Interview with Karen Jacobs-Lona

Karen Jacobs-Lona

Heather Oriana Petrocelli

Portland State University, hpetrocelli@gmail.com

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HP: This is Heather Oriana Petrocelli interviewing Karen Jacobs-Lona on May 5th, 2015 in Portland, Oregon in her home. Karen, do I have your permission to record you for the Carole Pope Oral History Project?

KJL: Absolutely.

HP: Would you please state your full name, date, and place of birth?

KJL: My full name is Karen Jacobs-Lona, my date of birth is 6/17/55 and I was born in Mulberry, Arkansas. Road trip! I came to Oregon when I was two weeks old.

HP: The first question I’ve been asking everybody is how they came to know Carole Pope.

KJL: I met Carole somewhere in the seventies; I’m not exactly sure when. A friend of mine had gotten out of prison and needed some help getting established in the community, so she called Carole and we met her in a park, at Mt. Tabor Park, and she gave her bus tickets and resource guides. That was before Our New Beginnings had really gotten a building or anything. That’s how Carole kind of started was by meeting women in parks.

HP: So was it just a happenchance, you guys were walking in the park and she--

KJL: No, she called her. She called her and made arrangements to meet her in the park.

HP: Do have memory of how she would have known to call Carole Pope?

KJL: She did prison time with her. [laughing] She knew that when they were in prison they used to sit around and talk about how Carole was really dissatisfied with the way prison was for women, and she felt like it was really dehumanizing and that it didn’t help change women’s lives, and so while she was in prison she used to talk with the other women in the dorms and
discuss what would make their lives better and what could help them be successful when they got out. And one of the things was resources, so that’s how she started.

HP: So from that moment of the more simple side of resources, bus tickets and such, how did your relationship develop with Carole Pope? Clearly you knew her beyond that.

KJL: Right, you know I’m kind of foggy because I was in addiction back then, so I would meet her through various people as they were getting out of prison. I was kind of a late bloomer when it came to going to jail and so my friends would get involved with her and then end up going to see Carole. I don’t know how we got really to know each other where I knew her number and knew how to find her. I think through a friend of mine who got in some trouble and got sentenced to her program. I think that was the final straw, where I had her number. But that’s how I really got to know about Our New Beginnings and Carole at a deeper level.

HP: When you said you were a late bloomer when it came to jail, what does that actually mean?

KJL: Well, a lot of my friends started going to jail and prison when they were very young. I didn’t start going to jail until I was almost thirty. So that’s pretty late. I started using drugs at ten and I was shooting dope by fourteen, so, to not go to jail until your late twenties is atypical.

HP: Is it something that you and Carole ever talked about? Because she would have been a late bloomer too because I think she first went to prison at thirty too.

KJL: I don’t know that we ever talked about it. I don’t think so.

HP: When you got to the point where you had her number to call her, did she actually help you transition out at any point?

KJL: [laughing] Well, so, here’s how it went: I went to jail and I called her hysterical and said “Carole! I need help! Will you get me out of jail!” And she said, “What are you willing to do?” And I said, “What do you mean?” She goes, “Are you willing to go to residential treatment?” I said, “The only treatment I want is methadone!” And she hung up on me. And when you’re in jail and your ace-in-the-hole just hangs up on you – you’re devastated. I couldn’t believe it. I had to wait a few days, it seemed like weeks, but I think it was probably only a few days when I called her back. At that point I said, “I’ll agree to whatever it takes,” and she got me out of jail.

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HP: What I’m curious about is, it had to have been like you said a devastating moment when your ace-in-the-hole hangs up on you--

KJL: [agreement]

HP: Did you spend that time thinking about why she hung up on you, or did you spend that time being angry at her?

KJL: I actually spent that time trying to figure out what she wanted to hear so she would get me out of jail. [laughing] If truth be told, I was exactly really ready quite yet. I was like, “Oh my god I really blew it! She was my way out; what can I do? What does she want to hear from me?” But I had another county hold so she agreed to, but I had to go to another county prior to coming to her.

HP: And so when you came to her was Our New Beginnings established?

KJL: It was, it was up in Northwest Portland.

HP: 1814 Hoyt?

KJL: Yes.

HP: So what were your first impressions at that juncture of re-getting to know Carole? Like what were your first impressions of Carole?

KJL: [laughing] She would always kind of let you know the seriousness of your situation. She didn’t joke around. She was not a warm fuzzy type when she first met you or anything like that. So you would come in, and she had this big, purple chair. It was purple velvet because purple was her favorite color, and if you tried to sit in any other chair she’d say “No, this one.” And you would sit in this chair. When I came to Carole, I didn’t go inpatient. You could either live at the house or you could access her services on an outpatient basis and live elsewhere. So I was on an outpatient basis because I still had pending charges in a couple counties. So I came in and she sat me down in the purple chair and kind of, you know, would give the “scared straight” talk to you. [laughing] It was not about motivational interviewing or “How can I support you and be loving and stuff,” it was like “You’re in for it!” and “Don’t fuck around!” and “Listen bitch, you better--” It was cut and dried. This was the way it was going to be. She would get
more warm and friendly during the process, but it didn’t start out that way. It was kind of a scared straight situation.

HP: Do you have memories of how you felt sitting in that purple chair?

KJL: Little. [laughing] I pointed to a picture that a friend of mine did that she calls “The Chair Where You’re Seen and Not Heard.” Yeah, you felt really little because it was a big armchair, like a winged armchair, bigger than this one. Or it seemed bigger, of course I was smaller so both of those could play a factor but yeah, it was scary.

HP: After the moment of, you know, doing the time in the armchair, and you’re an outpatient for Our New Beginnings, how would you characterize the help that you actually did receive from Our New Beginnings?

KJL: It was amazing. They made me-- they made me? [laughing] I had to come in everyday before noon and check in physically, because they wanted to see me and make sure I wasn’t loaded. I was drinking and so sometimes I’d come in a little drunk and it took a while for them, for that to catch up with me but it did. Like maybe a month or two? But I would come in every day, I had a case manager, she was very sweet. Also, they assigned me to a mental health worker; everybody got a mental health worker. Also, they hooked up with T.A.S.C., which was Tactical Alternatives to Street Crimes, it was a treatment program that’s no longer available, outpatient, it was a good program, and I had to go there. Also, [laughing] I had to do Council for Prostitution Alternatives. So Carole had groups for Council for Prostitution Alternatives right there in the building. When I was there was in ’87, and that was a time when all the Molalla murders were happening and two of the women I was group with that were Carole’s clients were victims of him. So they sat in a group and I think that that kind of helped me get past drinking alcohol and get more serious about getting clean.

HP: So that was ’87, how much longer after was your clean date?

KJL: ‘87, I got clean in ’87. I’m talking like a month or two that I drank. I would drink-- [laughing] There’s a park right across from New Beginnings and I would down a forty ouner of Olde English and then walk over to group. It wasn’t like I was trying to be discreet or drinking vodka because it didn’t smell or anything; I was drinking Olde English and reeked of it.

HP: Did they ever call you on it?
KJL: Oh yeah. [laughing] I got the purple chair again and this time Carole said, “You got a fucking choice: you can either go to prison, you can go to Alpha House, or you could go to 12-step meetings.” It didn’t take a rocket scientist; I went for the 12-step meetings and it worked for me.

HP: Those 12-step meetings, were they facilitated in Our New Beginnings?

KJL: No, but the meetings that started there – I was the one that started those meetings. Relapse Prevention Group? I was the one that--Carole wanted to get Relapse Prevention. I was the counselor that ran those. That was later.

HP: Alright, so you have your clean and sober date in 1987, when you do reach that marker in Our New Beginnings, is there any kind of celebration?

KJL: There wasn’t for my clean date, although Carole did acknowledge time if you’d tell her; there was a lot of women around so she wouldn’t remember everybody. I want to say her sobriety birthday was close to mine. Our birthdays are like a day apart and I want to say our clean dates are really close too. Mine is at the end of March and I think hers was in April. I’m not positive on that but I’m pretty sure. They were really close together so she’d kind of remember mine more than she’d remember other people’s because it was really close to hers. She would acknowledge stuff. The biggest one, and I’m kind of getting ahead of myself, was when I had five years clean. She got me this awesome--it was a pyramid that had a medallion in it, a five year medallion in the center of it, it was like plastic and it was floating in the center. It was beautiful. I kept it for years and then when my son got sober, now he has it. When he got five years sober he got it from one of the women I sponsored.

HP: The reason I was asking was because earlier you showed me a tassel that now I’m realizing--

KJL: Oh, that’s for graduating! This is for, let me see.

HP: I realize the date was the same, that’s why I had asked.

KJL: This is for graduating Our New Beginnings. After, I think I was with their program, I want to say about nine months, and then she’d have a graduation ceremony. It was a huge deal. It was up at the Northwest Service Center and she had dignitaries there: Gladys McCoy gave me
this. Oh god, that makes me want to cry, but it was a big deal. You got to have your families there. [pausing with emotion] I didn’t see that one coming. For people like me, although I graduated high school, I graduated an alternative school and so I never went to any ceremony or anything; that seemed really lame to me. So this was the first time I had anything like that, with my family and it was pretty cool.

HP: You got us both crying.

KJL: It was big. Carole understood ceremony so much and what a huge part it played in healing. I think that’s why she made such a big deal over holidays? I don’t know if anyone’s talked to you about her thing and the holidays; I mean she would go totally nutso over every holiday: Easter, Christmas were the two biggest ones. I mean everything, Fourth of July, and she’d find stuff always in purple and she would have these incredible parties and make sure that everybody got gifts, because a lot of the people that went there didn’t really have happy memories of the holidays, so she really wanted to create that. For people it was the family that they never really had.

HP: Would you consider that foundational to her, for lack of better terms, her methodology for healing, giving that basis of stability and family?

KJL: I think that, oh yes. I mean, and we’ll get to this in a minute when we talk about when she hired me to work there, but I think that her creating a sense of family-- nowadays they would say Carole had horrific boundaries, she did have bad boundaries, there’s no getting around it. When you worked for her you were encouraged to give your home phone number to your clients because she wanted them to be able to get ahold of you 24/7, and the expectation was if they called you on Sunday at 4 o’clock in the morning, you’d answer that phone. That would never fly nowadays; it would be considered unethical, but it was a really effective practice and it worked really well with people and it made them feel like you really cared. So... I don’t know. [laughing]

HP: We’ll come back to that when we get there.

KJL: Absolutely.

HP: Before we move onto when you became in a leadership role at Our New Beginnings I just had a couple questions: did you stay a non-resident outpatient the entire time?

KJL: Yes, I did. The only switch was Carole rented me an apartment. She rented me my first apartment clean and sober. Actually, the first one she rented me I was just getting clean and
sober because I remember detoxing in this apartment, and it was right up the street from her program. But I negotiated with all the utilities to work with me on payment plans, but the gas company was really resistant to that; they would not work on a payment plan and they would not turn on my gas and in ’87, was the silver thaw, I mean it was really cold, and so I had no heat. So she had to move me out of that apartment and move somebody in that could get gas in their name. She moved me into another apartment and paid for that for me that had steam so I didn’t have that issue.

HP: Is that a service she provided for--

KJL: A lot of women. Nowadays we would call it “responsivity issues.” Carole knew how to address responsivity issues and dynamic risk factors for women like housing. She knew about drugs and alcohol, mental health, getting them stable on meds, getting them jobs; she knew the importance of that stuff to stabilize somebody’s life patterns so that they could get a grip.

HP: For the resident population, as a nonresident, was there a mingling?

KJL: Oh heck yes. I used to come to the house for all the parties and every now and then they would have something like a special meal or something, like I can remember fried chicken. I knew who was working there so since I lived in Northwest Portland you know, I would like go there when it was like really good food, when so-and-so was the House Mom for that night you knew that the food was going to be better, maybe somebody else didn’t cook quite as well. You just knew when there was going to be a barbeque or something like that, yeah. And the groups! The Prostitution Alternatives groups, they would be a mix of people that were living in residence and people that were considered outpatient.

HP: So the groups would have mixes. Do you have any memories of how you characterized life as a resident? Do you have a takeaway? Did you ever feel like you wished you were in the home?

KJL: I really feel like I had it pretty good not being in the home, just because I had a lot of freedom and I had a lot of space and the idea of living with all those women and the children, you know she had kids at that house. [laughing] And they were not well contained, well-mannered children; these were screaming, tantrum-throwing— I mean some of them, not all of them, but you know, it could be a nightmare. I could leave when it got crazy there.

HP: Do you have memories of the physicality of the NW Hoyt house? Can you describe some of the things that were there?
KJL: Oh god, yes. I remember the whole layout. I tried to buy it and I still get the feeling of it when I walk by that house. You would walk in the door and to the right was the offices and then you would go in the one room that was probably the living room initially and then you’d go into the dining room and then Carole’s office was the next room and then the UA [urinalysis] room. She had her own UA machine, so if she was thinking you were doing something—and it was the first time I ever knew about peeing in a hat, that we had to pee into hats. You pee into a hat so they measure your urine so they know that you’re not cheating on your urinalysis. And sometimes, I would have to pee like this [hands up] because sometimes you could rig stuff for urine, so if you pee like this you don’t have your hands free to-- [laughing] But I got clean pretty quick so I didn’t have to go through that much. I was scared not to.

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HP: So you said it was about nine months to graduation?

KJL: To when I completed Our New Beginnings and I would say I probably was drunk the first three months I was there and then I got clean and sober.

HP: For completing the program, is it a track that many people are on at the same time or is everyone’s track an individualized track?

KJL: Everybody’s track was individualized but the ceremony, everybody that had completed would get recognized and honored at that thing and given opportunity to get up and speak because when you go up and get your tassel, you had an opportunity at the microphone to talk a little bit about New Beginnings and Carole.

HP: Do you have any memory of what you would have said or what you did say?

KJL: I know it was really emotionally charged for me. I don’t remember specifically what I said but I do know that I felt like she saved my life. And I still do. You know, having two people in my group strangled in a short timeframe was kind of an indicator of that. Like this is for real and what you’re playing with is life and death.

HP: For that TASC, I forget the exact name of it, the Alternatives for Prostitution Task Force?

KJL: There’s two different programs: T.A.S.C. dealt with alcohol and drugs, C.P.A., Council for Prostitution Alternatives. That was to get people--they were kind of in competition with Carole,
because back then, funding pools for women were so limited that you would all be bidding for the same money. It would sometimes pit really good programs against each other, so C.P.A. and Carole sometimes got pitted against each other because Carole wanted to get money for having her girls so groups there and they wanted to get them to come over to C.P.A.

HP: My last question before we move on to you being hired is: for the classmates you graduated with, did you ever keep in touch with any of them? Was there a particular bond with graduating with that group?

KJL: There was some, but a lot of them moved, like they didn’t stay in the Portland area. I’m still connected with some of the women that were my clients there and some of the women I worked with, so they maybe were a little ahead of me or a little behind me. Because I was not in the residence, it was really hard to--who came first? I didn’t think of things like that. Most of the people I got close to were the former residents and residents that came after me, for whatever reason. The ones I tended to like that were at the same time as me were up to no good, so they’re the ones that really attracted me, so I started like hanging out with ones that came a little before me because they were a little more stable and that worked for me and I think that most of the women that were really successful did that also. They tended to generate over to more mentor-types, watching other people and seeing how they did it and stuff.

HP: So how did you wind up becoming employed at Our New Beginnings?

KJL: [laughing] Okay, so my mental health counselor was named Grey Wolfe, and she was awesome and I kept in contact with her, and she called me. I was working for quadriplegics and I was also working in a restaurant or had been working in restaurants. But she called me and said, “Carole needs somebody to do a relapse prevention group to introduce recovery into the house; I think you’d be really good at it, will you come up and interview?” And I said, “No! Heavens--” well, I didn’t say “Heavens,” I said, “Hell no! People that try to help people are just people that are untreated codependents, and I had worked too hard to take care of myself and I had enough problems; I didn’t want to deal with anybody else’s’ problems.” And she said, “Well, I really think you’d be good at it,” and I said, “Well I’ll think about it Grey,” and she said, “Okay.” And then Grey called me back the next day and said, “You have an appointment the next day,” and I said “I never said--” and she said, “You got an appointment with Carole, if you wanna miss it...” and I said “No, I’ll go.” So I went up there and Carole was so nice to me and said, “I really want you here and I think it’d be really good,” and I was so excited that I was going to do it that I didn’t even ask her what I was going to make. I said okay, I agreed to do this group once a week up at her house. I had to come in after the fact, after it started, and say
“Carole, what am I making for this?” And I don’t even remember what it was but I just was really excited. So that’s how I got in the field of what I do now today.

HP: So you started with doing a once-a-week group, did you have training?

KJL: No, it was coming in and doing a drug group about what was working for me, passing out what I did. It was probably in violation of all sorts of programs and stuff like that. It was probably loosely around—I had a couple years clean—around 12-step, so we would talk about recovery and what I was doing to stay clean, and what they were doing to stay clean, and who was supportive and we would just kind of identify what was support. It was really loosey-goosey, but I liked it and the women seemed to like it; it was okay. So that’s how I started and then Carole was going to start a program across the street, and it was a Moms and Babies program and she asked me to come be a House Mom at the Moms and Babies program when she opened that, so I went over and did that. And so that was my first full-time job with Carole was going over there. It was a great job, it was great house. It was moms and their kids. There were one, two—it was very few moms, like maybe four or five moms in the house and their kids, depending on how many kids were in the house. I would go to work at, I want to say after dinner, like six or seven, yeah, it was seven to seven. So I would go there at seven and I would check their chores, we’d hang out, watch TV, I’d play with the kids, then I could go to sleep; I had my own little bedroom there, and I could sleep and I would wake up and I would get everybody woke up in the house and started on breakfast and morning chores and then I would go. And what was really fun was after a while, I would walk in and sometimes, there were two little toddlers in the house when I was there, and they would race for me and say “I want a one-on-one; I wanna tell you what she did!” And they would be like tattling on each other and so I’d have to go mediate toddler traumas and it was really fun. It was a great job. She got some funding for that, but it got messed up; the funding for that and the funding for the big house got messed up so it wasn’t in existence a really long time. I want to say maybe a year, nine months, a year, and then it went belly up and so then she brought me over as a case manager in the main house and that’s where she could look right out her office and see exactly what I was doing. [laughing] And that’s when I became a case manager at Our New Beginnings.

HP: First, for the Moms and Babies program, was it physically across the street from Our New Beginnings?

KJL: Physically across the street. It was kind of an interesting barn-y house and it was in the basement, we had the basement but it was really nice, it had natural wood, it was, I want to say open beam ceilings; it was a pretty amazing place. It had a big room, had a kitchen, and one,
two, three--I want to say only four bedrooms other than the room that the staff went in. It was not huge and I think that was part of the problem, that it didn’t accommodate enough moms.

HP: So for adult capacity you had four rooms?

KJL: There was one woman in each room, she did not double up on the Moms and Babies program.

HP: What was the impetus for starting the Moms and Babies program?

KJL: [laughing] One thing about Carole is that she always wanted to catch the people that slipped through the cracks in the system, which was one of her greatest strengths. Carole bending the rules was really one of her greatest strengths and so if somebody showed up at her doorstep crying, they were likely going to have a place to sleep that night, and so they weren’t always the women that she was funded to serve. Carole was really good at writing grants and Carole was really good at getting funding sources; I think Fred Meyer’s bought the house for her--which I’ve heard, Fred Meyer’s is not easy to get money out of. She just would get these women in, she would work them in and really they weren’t getting funding so it would kind of be a “robbing Peter to pay Paul,” but one of the things that she was a real sucker for was when somebody would come there pregnant and really messed up or doing prostitution. Carole had a [laughing thoughtfully] passion for helping prostitutes and women that were out there in really vulnerable situations. She also had a baseball bat in her office, so when pimps would come, because sometimes when you have a house that has a lot of former prostitutes in it--not everybody in the house was a former prostitute but there was a large number--you’d end up with pimps outside your house and she would just go out with her baseball bat and say, “Look motherfucker!” and start swinging her bat and they were terrified of her so she got rid of the pimp problem pretty quick. It didn’t last real long. She never hurt anybody or anything, she didn’t have to, she just was really scary, and angry Carole with a bat was pretty terrifying so she got rid of the pimps pretty easy. Anyway, so she was susceptible; Carole was guided by her emotions. So if you came in, she would help you. I’ll give you an example: I had a family member who got in trouble who had never been in trouble in her life and was in jail. So I went in crying in Carole’s office and gave her the whole story, you know like, “Oh my god! La-la-la, she’s never been in trouble, she’s never done anything!” and Carole just looked at me and said, “What the fuck you want me to do about it?” and I said, “I want you to get her the fuck out!” and she made a call and two hours later my cousin was released to me and she had to do Our New Beginnings. She wasn’t on my caseload, but she was recogged to me.

HP: Was it effective for her?
KJL: Yeah! Now she slipped years later, but she got back up on her feet. She stayed clean twelve or thirteen years and then slipped and then got clean again. She didn’t slip for a long time but she never got in trouble with the law again.

HP: Do you have any idea what she did? Carole?

KJL: To get her out? You know I don’t know if she called a judge. I don’t know if she called recog. We were a jail alternative back then, we were a designated jail alternative so we had the capacity to be viewed as custody units so I don’t know what she did but she made it happen.

HP: That made her a residential--

KJL: She wasn’t residential. She got her out, just recogged to me with a commitment that she would make sure she’d show up for court dates and stuff. She got her out.

HP: Is your story, and I know I can only ask from your perspective, but is your story an anomaly or would she go for that length for anyone?

KJL: Everyone, everyone. She did have her favorites, I’m going to tell you right now that she did have her favorites and I never felt like I was one, but I think I might have been. In retrospect I think I might have been and I think it was because I would go toe-to-toe with her. We would have screaming matches and it’s kind of bad because what I learned from Carole a lot was that if you believe in something and you feel passionate about it, to fight for it and not let go of it; sometimes I’m like a dog with a bone if I think something’s right. I’m going to fight for it and that hasn’t really served me well in my career, like I will never be a manager, I will never be proper and like say everything that’s expected and wanted to be. I will always be the one on the room that says what everybody else is thinking and nobody wants to say out loud. But I’m glad about that. I don’t want to short-sell my integrity and I think she gave me that. I think she fought for what she believed in. [laughing] We used to line up, she would call judges on the phone or judges would call her; the judges loved her. She’d talk to them horrible! And I used to think, “Oh my god! Who’s she talking to?!?” and they’d go, “Judge so-and-so.” I remember this one time she was talking to this judge and goes, “What the fuck, Rambo! I ain’t no fucking Band-Aid! What the fuck do you want from me?!” and I’m like, “Oh my god!” You know because she wanted them to give her enough that she could actually make a difference with people, and sometimes they would just want to stick somebody there to get them out of sight and she wanted more than that. She wanted them to be successful.
HP: So I’m curious: you started your career at Our New Beginnings,

KJL: I did.

HP: Could you kind of give me a trajectory of your career?

KJL: [laughing] Oh yeah, okay so Our New Beginnings: so I worked at Our New Beginnings and then financial matters got worse, and as financial matters got worse it got to a point at Our New Beginnings where we all were fighting as to who would get paid first and whoever got paid first would run to the bank, Carole’s bank downtown, because the first two or three checks in be okay and the ones after that would bounce. She didn’t pay my Social Security one year either. It was a bad year and it was financial stuff. I remember Carole coming to me and saying, “You know, I need to know you’re going to ride this out,” and I said, “Carole, I love you and this means a lot to me but here’s the thing,” you know, “I’ve got my kids and I can’t go down with the ship, I’ve gotta support my children.” When I came to Carole, I had a guardian for my kids. I lost my parental rights but while I was working at Carole Pope’s, they reopened a case on me; I petitioned the court and got custody of my kids when I had four years clean and so they came back to me and I ended up raising them. Carole really believed in reuniting families. She loved the kids and the kids loved her. Nana, they all called her Nana. That was her family.

So I went from that job and I went to Project Network. Project Network at that time was overseen by Emanuel Hospital and it was an African American women’s treatment program to deal with pregnant and post-partum women but their target was African Americans. It was started by Emanuel Hospital in response to all the crack babies that were born back in the eighties. They wanted to figure out a way to address that within the community. So I went there to apply for a job for driving women around, to meetings and stuff like that, just doing that stuff. They told me that they thought I was overqualified, which, you know, I don’t have a lot of letters after my name. I tell people all the time that I have an “HSD,” you know: high school diploma. I said, “I don’t have any qualifications.” They wanted me to come back and apply as a counselor; they said that they didn’t have any white counselors. They said they were looking for something really specific with the white woman that they were going to hire, and they thought that I had what it took on the inside and that they were willing to give me the clinical training, and so they wrote a variance and hired me so I was the first white counselor at Project Network.

And I did that for two and a half years, and then I applied for Multnomah County and the first time I applied they wouldn’t give it to me. It was a job in the jail, working as a counselor in the jail. The second time I applied I made it to background and they kept telling me they couldn’t
hire a felon, and I kept telling them: “It’s not going to go anywhere, I’m not getting my record expunged, so I don’t know what you want to do about it, but I’m a felon,” and they said, “Well, we really like you.” Anyway, they hired me, so I’ve worked for Multnomah County for the last twenty-plus years. About half of that, about nine of it, was in the jail as a counselor there. I worked at a program called the In-Jail Intervention Program that did pre-treatment to get people ready to go be successful in treatment, and then I worked at Work Release and I worked at Close Street supervision and then I got demoted because of cuts and the budget, and then Department of Community Justice, Parole and Probation opened a secure residential treatment—oh, and while I was there I got certified for alcohol and drug treatment, so I got a C.A.D.C. II. So they opened up a program, Community Justice did, for secure residential treatment center for men. It was called River Rock and I got hired to work there so I went from the Sheriff’s office over to Community Justice and then that was open for, I don’t know, a couple years and it was really expensive. Programs that work are expensive. It got closed down and I went to Day Reporting Center, and that’s where I work currently. I work at the Day Reporting Center, which is when people are not doing well on supervision, they refer them to us. The P.O.s [parole officers] refer them to us and so they get counselors and we try to remove barriers and address criminality; we provide groups, we try to help them get housing, mental health meds, treatment. We do stabilized assessment for basically—but that’s changing somewhat now; the job description’s changing but that’s what I do now.

HP: What’s the name of it one more time?

KJL: Day Reporting Center.

HP: So my question is, based on this long purview in this field, going back to the beginning of your career at Our New Beginnings where, for lack of better terms, the boundaries were “loose,” to what you do and have done for about twenty-five years after, not to put it up as an opposition of which is better, but how effective did you find Our New Beginnings—not just your story, but working as a case manager--how effective did you find those methods?

0:43:17

KJL: It was incredibly effective. I mean, there are so many people; I still am in contact with people that I knew from Our New Beginnings on Facebook--well on Facebook now you can be in contact with everybody, unless they’re dead, which there’s a lot of that. But I think that Carole’s ways were so--she was so ahead of her time. You know, my history was that my father was a judge, he was a Portland police officer, and then he was a deputy district attorney in Clackamas County, and then he became the deputy district attorney in Pendleton in Umatilla County and
then he became the D.A. in Pendleton for many years, and then he was a judge. He was tough; he was fair but he was tough. But what I saw with him was he would come—he came to my graduation at Our New Beginnings. He came and saw it and he would call me about some of his cases like, “What resources do you have down there?” because sometimes smaller counties used to send people to Portland to get help because there weren’t a lot of resources in other counties. So her way worked. Carole used to say she had an 80-85% success rate and there were a lot of successes. In fact, I’d like to give you names at the end of this of people. I just thought of somebody that would be a really good interview. But there are people here that have lives and a lot of the people she helped have helped a lot of people too. I know you’ve already interviewed Laurie. Laurie has helped a lot of people and I don’t know if you interviewed Linda, but you should and I’ll tell you about her. Write these names down: Linda and Leah. [laughing] Just to trigger my brain for later.

But Carole had a way of making you want to do better; you wanted to please her, you wanted to do better and she was really devastated when she lost New Beginnings. I mean one of Carole’s downfalls, I believe, is that she had a lot of health issues and she really needed to delegate. She had a really good staff but she didn’t delegate well. She would try to do it all herself and it was just too much. She just couldn’t let go. She couldn’t let other people do stuff and I think that that probably was one of her biggest undoings. If she would have trusted some people to take care of things and make things keep going and keep doing fundraising and stuff—but she didn’t. It was her baby. She birthed that in prison and she couldn’t let go of it and I think that that probably was one of her biggest undoings.

If she would have trusted some people to take care of things and make things keep going and keep doing fundraising and stuff—but she didn’t. It was her baby. She birthed that in prison and she couldn’t let go of it and I think that’s unfortunate. She was bitter about Our New Beginnings closing. She was mad at me for years that I did not stay until the bitter end. I mean I’d still go over to her house because that’s one thing about Carole’s house, I don’t know if we talked about this, the houseboat, but we’d all go over there and go swimming and she’d have barbeques there, and I’m talking about when you were a client and when you were staff. She would have these parties there and it was really fun. So I knew where she lived and it was right over in Sellwood, so I’d go right over the bridge and go down and see her and she’d go, you know, “What do you want?!” but she’d let me in and I knew if she really didn’t want to talk to me she wouldn’t have let me in. I would ask her, “Don’t you see what a ripple you created? How many lives you touched that are touching so many people’s lives? That’s because of you.” “Ah, fuck that. They stole Our New Beginnings,” you know. I think there was a part of her that was really happy about it, but there was a part of her that was still really bitter.

The last time I saw her alive was when she was living up in Southwest Portland and I was working at River Rock which was up on like 12th and Main, and there was this bar and she used to go in there for breakfast a lot. It was right down the street from her; she liked the steak and eggs in there. I would run into her in there and she was very nice to me when I’d see her in
there and she’d talk about how she was doing stuff with Penny Harrington, I don’t know if you remember Penny Harrington, but she was doing stuff, developing women’s programs for female officers down wherever Penny was. So we would talk and she was always looking to do other stuff. I don’t know. She was pretty amazing. Nowadays, I think that the field has shifted. It’s kind of hard for me because I work for criminal justice and I’ll say, “Well that won’t work; this’ll work;” and they’ll say, “Oh, we have studies that indicate,” and I really want to stand up and say, “I’m a felon who made it out of the system; I know what works,” but it’s very hard to fight that battle sometimes. Right now the way criminal justice has gone is evidence-based practices, which—I agree with evidence-based practices, but one of the problems with Carole’s approach: it’s really hard to get empirical data that supports relational models, and I believe for people with trauma, and minorities, and women, a relational model is crucial but it’s only as good as you are. You could say, “The relational model doesn’t work because so and so over here couldn’t establish a relationship,” but they don’t ever look at “Well this person was an asshole!” That’s why it didn’t work, not that the model didn’t work; the model was fine! The person was a jerk. So there’s a trend.

Now, the good part of where community corrections is nowadays is some of the stuff they’re kind of recycling back. They have something called “MCG-ERP;” it’s kind of similar to giving supportive wraparound services when somebody gets out, getting them out of jail, and trying to help them get jobs and treatment and housing and stuff. But the bad part is, in my job as a counselor, the emphasis is on dealing with the criminal thought process like, “That’s where you need to spend your energy and if you’re not doing that, you’re not making a difference, you’re not a good counselor!” and I said, “You know, when somebody’s chin is on their chest it’s really hard to do work on their cognitive impairment if they’re not awake!” There’s been a trend to just deal with the criminality component because evidence says if you don’t—and I totally agree that you can’t take antisocial behaviors away from somebody and not give them prosocial behaviors; you’ve got to give them something to replace it, otherwise they feel empty. You’ve got to give them something that works better or they won’t stick with it. But I think first things first; I think Carole’s way of getting somebody an apartment, getting somebody a mental health counselor, getting somebody on meds, making somebody go to therapy, getting them treatment; those are what you call “responsivity issues and the dynamic risk factors.”

Oh, and jobs! We had people that used to call us at Our New Beginnings, like a laundromat would call or a dry cleaners would call us and say “We got three positions; send three people down,” or the rag factory or the junk mail people; they would call us and tell us when there were jobs available and we would send people down and people got jobs! People were working! She kept people really busy. She did not believe in not keeping people busy. Although I think that you have to address the criminality, I don’t think that that’s the first focus. I think
that if you don’t let people know that you care—you always knew Carole cared, you always knew—and I subscribe to the theory that, “If I don’t think that you care, I don’t care what you know,” you know? If I don’t know that about you, then I don’t give a shit. You can talk all day long about all this theory and stuff over here; it’s not going to hold water. So we’ll see. It’ll come around full circle again I think.

0:53:15

HP: I think your career has a very interesting purview, the same way Laurie’s has.

KJL: [agreement]

HP: There’s this level of professionalization in your industry that has happened where I don’t think that, kind of like you said, that even really legally you couldn’t get away with--

KJL: No, I’d lose my license.

HP: But it seems that there was a lot of effectiveness.

KJL: [agreement]

HP: I guess my question is, or the yous and the Lauries and probably, maybe, depending on what Linda and Leah are doing, like the people who had that core mentorship and development under Carole Pope: what are the things that you would say that you carry into your work that you can carry in without being able to carry the way she did everything that was kind of “boundary blurred”?

KJL: Well, one of the things that I think I get an advantage of, because I’m in recovery, one of the things is that I have worked with people on jobs that have been my former clients! You know I’ve been clean twenty-eight years; I’ve run into people, I’ve gone to parties. I don’t leave a party because a former client comes in! If they’ve got fifteen years clean and they’re running a program somewhere, what am I going to do? “Sorry, you’re still not good enough, you’re a former client?” It gives a really bad message, so what I do is if I have a potential boundary, I just report it to my work. I just write it up and say “Look, I used to sponsor this woman, she relapsed, she’s here now, I’ll stay away from her while she’s in the system, but just to let you know, there’s a dual relationship.” That’s the best I can do. So I guess what Carole taught me is that you don’t get too good to have relationships with people. You know people are people, so I try to respect professional boundaries and I’m pretty good at it. Like I don’t Facebook friends
with people, but then again, there are people, like Laurie, I guess she was never my client; we worked together at the same time. But there are people; I’m trying to think of somebody: Linda. Like Linda, if she agrees to see you, she’s probably been clean, I don’t know, twenty years or something, but you know, I took her to her first meeting when I worked at Our New Beginnings so, I mean, what do you do? At what point do you think that that’s kind of ludicrous?

0:56:00

HP: From your time at Our New Beginnings to what you’re doing currently today, are there certain moments where you see, where you know the effectiveness of some of the things that happened at Our New Beginnings, but you can’t implement them because of the way the structure is and the professionalization has happened today, where you, kind of to mimic Carole Pope, want to hit your wrists on the table out of frustration because you know something could be effective but you can’t--

KJL: You can’t do anything you used to be able to do! I mean, you can’t mandate people to go to 12-step meetings anymore for one thing. You can say, “Go to a support group,” but whether they choose to go to S.M.A.R.T. [Self-Management and Recovery Training] Recovery or A.A. or N.A. or church or wherever they want to go. She was very specific and I’m avoiding what specific things she told me too but she was very specific about “I want you to go to this.” Back then you could do that. I think between—[laughing] —Carole and Dorothy Baker, I don’t know if you guys know about Dorothy Baker. Dorothy Baker started the D.I.S.P. [DUII Intensive Supervision] program in Portland for repeat alcohol drivers and she was just as crazy as Carole, and they were really close and they would also get in screaming matches. So you’d sit in her court room and you’d hear them back screaming at the top of each other’s lungs and then they’d come out and they’d act like nothing had happened, but everybody in the court room heard what they were saying. She would demand people go to specific things: “You go to A.A., you go to N.A., you go to—” and Dorothy Baker would walk out into the courtroom and go to the family and go, “And you’re part of the fucking problem!” Judge! I think she got asked to step down [laughing]. She would go out to the family and say, “You’re not helpin’ anything! You let him just keep coming back home whenever he fucks up!” Carole and her were like peas in a pod and they did a lot to change people, because people didn’t want to let them down and they were scared to let them down too.

But with Carole, it was really that she was kind of like a mom. She would have bristled at that, but she was kind of like all of our mom; she parented us in a kind of gruff, loving way. She would do nice things for us but she would also hold us accountable. So, yeah, I guess I’m a little
bit luckier in that because I’m in recovery, people see me at meetings. I go to meetings still, with twenty-eight years clean. I don’t go to a lot of meetings where my clients are going to be; I know where they go and don’t go. But sometimes I’ll go to a sobriety birthday or something and my clients go, “Oh my god! You do go to meetings!” and I go “I told you! Go to enough and you’ll see me!” So, I don’t know. I don’t have an answer for that. I think there is something to be said, but there’s also a burnout factor that goes for the care provider. And there’s also a danger, because for everybody that felt close—I’ll give you an example: when Carole would do the holiday things she would get these incredible gifts sometimes for people. Sometimes certain people got better gifts than other people and some people felt really left out. So there’s always a flipside to that coin, you know. There’s always the like, “Oh this is so wonderful!” and this was like, “Yeah, but I got fucked.” [laughing] Which is probably part of the reason there are professional boundaries.

1:00.03

HP: Yeah, you kind of mentioned it, I was curious about what you said about the physical toll and the emotional toll it took on her--

KJL: [agreement]

HP: While you were still a case manager and employees were running to the bank, which means aren’t going great financially--

KJL: Right.

HP: When you’re in that moment, did you believe that Our New Beginnings could function exactly with its parameters without Carole at the helm? Could it have still accomplished, in your opinion, what it was trying to accomplish without that cult of personality at the head?

KJL: I think she needed to be there. If she would have let us help, she could have made it. As much as Carole didn’t want to admit it, I think she made a choice to close it down. I think there were things that she did that put that situation in place. I think it could have gone on. I think it could have survived her death, had she done it right. But she would have always been the figurehead; there would have always been her presence. There always needed to be Carole Pope’s presence, I think, because she’s what brought us together. She was the one common denominator that we all had, that made us all want to come together and do something.
HP: Even in the moment when you’re there with her, did it take any hindsight to look back and know how you felt about Carole or did you feel it in the moment?

KJL: Oh no, I knew I loved her. Scared of her, but that was only when I was screwing up. I wasn’t scared of her when I wasn’t screwing up.

HP: Like a tough love scare.

KJL: Yeah, a tough love scare. But, the other part is she wouldn’t let you go. I never got fired! I would ask her--how many jobs can you have where you have screaming matches? “Fuck you! I’m not doing it!” And you don’t get fired? You know, you just slam doors and then you get through it and then you do what you’re going to do and then you talk it over, you get to some sort of resolution. But we did have a few screaming matches, not a lot, but.

HP: Delegation wasn’t a strong point of hers?

KJL: No, no. Like Laurie went to school to be the administrative assistant. She was presented with what her job was going to look like and it really didn’t ever materialize in the way she had hoped for I think. I think she felt underutilized. Then there was another person, Mac, who was like Carole’s right-hand man. Speaking of that, did you know Carole had one male client? Mitch. Crazy Mitch. He was crazy and he had heard about her program being a jail alternative and he came down there and he talked her into letting him do his community service there. And he was very proud that he was the one male client she ever had and he just did work outside the place. Bet you didn’t know about that either! [laughing] Mitch. He died a couple years ago. He stayed clean for fifteen years or something, so she even had an impact on ole Mitch. And he was crazy.

HP: You had mentioned you had regained custody of your children?

KJL: Yes.

HP: Was Carole instrumental, or Our New Beginnings--

KJL: Oh god yes! They opened a case up on me. When I petitioned the court I had four years clean or I don’t know if I had quite four years clean when I first petitioned. I got them back when I had four years clean. But they interviewed my boss for what kind of person I was, they came out and they came out and inspected this house to see if it would be enough for four kids, or three kids. Four kids? No! Yeah, she played a role in me getting my kids back.
HP: Is that something she did for others?

KJL: Oh god yes. She worked really hard with trying to reunite families and trying to keep people together. Like I said, Carole was way ahead of her time. The staff she hired was so--she had a methadone counselor that worked there, she had two mental health counselors that worked there full-time and I think there was maybe one or two that were like maybe practicum students, then she had case managers; she had people from a variety of backgrounds all working together. She had people in recovery, people not in recovery--not that they weren’t in recovery but they weren’t addicts or alcoholics. She did a really good job. She had a really intuitive sense of who was a really good employee and she had an incredible staff, I believe, that were really passionate about helping women. We really worked our butts off to help women. She just didn’t know how to let go. She’d probably let Mac, but Mac was kind of very impersonal. Mac had been put in Our New Beginnings, now this is my recollection, that she’d been put in there for murder, for killing her husband, but it was deemed as a domestic violence situation. She never really got close to anybody but Carole. She was always there; whatever Carole needed, she would do stuff for Carole. I think she was so grateful with Carole for getting her out of having to go to prison.

HP: There was this familial feeling, with her kind of as this mother figure, did you know her family or stories of her family?

KJL: I heard stories about her family, the alcoholics, well that’s what I heard, and stories of her being a classical pianist. That’s when you knew Carole was in a really good mood: there was a piano there and she would play the piano at all these functions and stuff and everybody kind of waited for it. But yeah we would hear little bits, snippets of things but not everything.

HP: She didn’t put her life as an open book before you?

KJL: Not a lot; pieces of it. It was more like if you got into a situation, she would recall something from her past, if it were targeted information. She would give you a specific thing.

1:07:40

HP: So, what would you say--this is more on the fun side of things--like what would you say most surprised you about Carole that you learned?
KJL: About Carole. I think there was something about her being--what did she open for somebody? I mean she was a really good pianist. [laughing] I mean I knew she could play the piano and stuff; I didn’t know that she had been like a protégée and all that stuff. I didn’t really know. I mean people talked about it, there’s some stuff I heard at her funeral, at her memorial, that I didn’t really think about.

HP: What struck you about her memorial?

KJL: There weren’t very many people; it was a very small room. But there were quite a few judges in the room, I did recognize them from my time! And Janice was there. There weren’t enough people. I don’t think it was well publicized, her death. Because there were people when I told them that she had passed, they didn’t even know it. To me, Steve Duin should have done something in the Oregonian, it should have been on the nightly news. It should have been big because she had a profound impact on a lot of women’s lives. It was small, I thought it was small. She touched a lot of people’s lives, so it should have been big.

HP: I’m curious, going back to ’87 and then it took a couple of years before you actually were working there, did you stay in contact and think about Carole?

KJL: Oh yeah I was there all the time. Yeah, I’d go up I don’t know how often. I want to say once a week, it might have been more, it might have been less, depending on what I was going through, but yeah I would go up there. Plus, whenever I’d have a friend or something that was struggling I’d take them down to Carole. [laughing] “Carole, help!” “Ah, what!” I wasn’t the only one that did that.

HP: I guess I was more curious I guess in the sense of was she a person that was a physical presence in your life from the moment you met her, in some capacity until when she died?

KJL: You know, I kind of am fuzzy on the years I was using, but she must have been because I knew exactly where her house was, I knew exactly what her phone number was; I knew all that stuff and I’m not quite sure how I knew it all, because like I said it was little fuzzy. She was a presence.

HP: Perfect lead-in; using just basically adjectives, how would you describe Carole? What are the words you would use to describe her?

KJL: Wow. Powerful. Compassionate. She was a woman of her convictions. I mean she would fight, she was a fighter. She would fight for things she believed in, really hard. And she made a
lot of difference. She was a mover and a shaker and she did not sit back and like quietly wait for things. She would make commitments to be there for people. There were people, back when AIDS was—when we weren’t talking about people “living with AIDS,” it was a death sentence. She would be there for people and there was one person I can’t even remember that she really wanted to not have die in prison, that she really fought to try to have her in her house so that she could die not in prison. And there were women in the house that had AIDS, so she really fought for women to have a humanizing life experience and death experience and she would support them to the end. To the very end.

HP: For someone that strong, and something you had said earlier and something I’ve heard before from other people, is that she didn’t seem to be super talented with self-care?

KJL: [laughing] She was horrible! Yeah, she was horrible. She was horrible. I don’t even know, I’m trying to think of something we did that was nice for her to make her do some self-care. She had her birds; that was kind of her self-care, she liked birds; she had a parrot and a macaw, military macaw. She had her fish, she loved fish. She had a huge aquarium in her houseboat and she had aquariums at Our New Beginnings too. So, there were things she liked. She liked playing the piano, but I don’t know that she—I think at one point she did go to therapy for a while, I think she talked to me about that, about going to see somebody, because she was really struggling with some stuff. But it was a hard sell and if you did it with Carole, you’d have to like be ready to go through the wall to address her self-care stuff. You could do it, but it was going to be a battle because she really viewed everybody else’s issues as more important than her own a lot of times.

HP: It would be hard to tell her to take care of herself.

KJL: I know! She didn’t want to hear it.

HP: Do you think that there’s still a need, well let me first ask: for the populations you work with, is it both male and female?

KJL: Right now? Yes.

HP: Specifically speaking of women, since I didn’t know about Mitch--

KJL: Mitch is the one! You ask anybody that was connected: most people knew Mitch because he was always doing like yardwork or something. She would give him little jobs and he was a quirky guy. He did scrap and stuff like that. His mental health precluded him, he was
bipolar and not on meds usually, and his mental health would keep him from like working too
many mainstream jobs. He’d maybe get a little contract jobs or do some stuff or he would work
on stuff for Carole or something but, yeah.

HP: Other than that one man, her whole thing was for women.

KJL: Women, yeah.

HP: Do you still think that there is a need today for an institution or organization like Our
New Beginnings?

KJL: Oh god yes. We’ve lost all our women’s services. I mean we used to have transition
services for women, we used to have C.P.A., Prostitution Alternatives, we used to have Our
New Beginnings; there was a lot of programming for women. There isn’t anymore. I mean,
really, a lot of it’s lost.

HP: Just because of cuts?

KJL: Because of cuts, because--I’m not sure why. You know, when I got hired at the In Jail
Intervention Program, it was a grant program and one of the reasons we got funded, one of the
stats they said was we were number one in the nation with drug related crimes for women.
Number one, and that was back in ’94? So that was percentage-wise but when you work for the
system, there aren’t very many women. They get kind of lost in the system I think sometimes.
There’s more services for men. Didn’t used to be like that.

HP: Do you see the need with your--

KJL: Usually the women that come in, their needs are multifaceted. They’re hard work. Most
people would rather work with three or four men than get one woman on their caseload
because they tend to have issues: mental health issues, trauma issues, maybe children issues,
relationship issues, drug and alcohol issues, going on and on and on and on. And so, it’s a lot.
It’s a lot to try to deal with, to try to find services for, and they’re aren’t very many services out
there for women like there used to be. Carole Pope used to be able to get women in her
program on the same day. You can’t do that anymore with any program. If I’m trying to get a
person in residential treatment, they might have to wait six or eight weeks to get into
residential. What do they do in the meantime, you know? I mean, what do you do?

1:17:11
HP: Are these people who are actually--

KJL: In the system, and they’re better off than the ones that aren’t in the system. When I was in the jail, when we had Oregon Health Plan, treatment centers were so full that sometimes people would wait in jail eight or nine months before a bed would become available for us to get them at a treatment center. Not always, depended on the treatment center; some were quicker. But, yeah.

HP: So there’s a need for this kind of modern-day Our New Beginnings. From your purview of what you do now, do you think there’s a possibility for existing?

KJL: I think that people would have to look at how they determined who gets services within the system. I think that the current way they evaluate, only High and Very Highs, with the risk factor High and Very High in community justice qualify for being funded for services. So, for instance, if I had somebody that was a low risk to reoffend, I couldn’t help them. Carole didn’t do that; she took anybody that was willing to change. It could be your first offense, it could be your fiftieth offense; she would take them and try to help them if they were ready. She went more on the level of change, rather than how high of risk factor they were, but because of the way the funding is nowadays, they tend to only want to address the really high risk for recidivism people, which leaves a lot of people kind of out in the cold.

HP: I have a statistic from Carole Pope’s actually--

KJL: Okay.

HP: Her oral history where she had said, like you had basically alluded to the same thing, she said that there was a 84-90% success rate.

KJL: Wow.

HP: In your time as a case manager, did you see that?

KJL: I think it was dependent and I think, you know when you say success rate, now remember this with Carole: people would fuck up. That doesn’t mean they wouldn’t get it eventually. I saw people be successful. I saw that it worked. Carole used to say that her dream was that someday she wanted to have like a farm out in the country that was self-sustaining where women could come and they could live there as long as they wanted to or needed to and
they could leave when they wanted to leave and then if they needed to come back, they could come back. But that there would be jobs there and stuff where they could make a living, like honey or making quilts or breaking horses or whatever. She really saw a need for that. She saw some women as needing the ability to come back and get support over and over and over again. I know that when I worked at Project Network, all my work was overseen by a psychiatrist, and one of the things she used to say to me was that one of the indicators that somebody had mental health issues was when they didn’t stay clean longer than about six to nine months and then they’d relapse, and then they’d stay clean for six to nine months and then they’d relapse. She said that was an indicator for mental health issues and I think Carole recognized that some people were so traumatized in their lives and had such horrific life experience that sometimes they’d get clean for a while, and stuff would start getting really real and they couldn’t really handle it and they needed to escape and she had the ability to let them come escape to her place. I think that’s something that we don’t have any more. We don’t have very much mental stuff anymore either.

HP: Only a few more questions.

KJL: No problem.

1:21:41

HP: You had to be there towards the end. When you were doing case management, were you also involved, like did you know the greater structure of how she was getting funding, you know, contracts she was picking up with the Department of Corrections, like were you part of that?

KJL: Oh yeah.

HP: So, I know from her oral history she basically, for a lack of better terms, blames the contract she got with the Department of Corrections for work release.

KJL: Yeah, back then it was different because it was state and county. So back then misdemeanors were supervised by the county and felonies were supervised by the state. So they had parole and probation. So it was two entities. So she was a jail alternative for probation for a long time and so she was getting funding for that. They would call her and say “Hey, I’ve got somebody that’d I’d like to place in your program in lieu of jail time.” So if one of those people would come into our program from the county jail, we would have to call within x amount of time they walked away from the program because it was considered an escape. So
Carole got this idea that she wanted to do that, she wanted to do trans-leave for people coming out of prison, women coming out of prison. So she met with the State and they came in and they inspected the house and there was a lot of stuff, the alarm system, I don’t remember all of it but it was expensive. She had to finance the house, which the house had been given to her, so there wasn’t money owed on the house, because Fred Meyer’s had given her the house for the program. So she refinanced the house to be able to accommodate felons, basically, coming out of prison. We only got one woman who transitioned out and then they cut the contract. One woman. So, I want to say I don’t remember how much it was; it was a lot of money. I don’t remember if it was fifty thousand, a hundred fifty thousand; whatever it was, it was a lot of money for that time and that was the most catastrophic of the final situation. That’s what she said brought her down. I’m not sure. I think she could have weathered it, but I think she was really tired. I think she was exhausted and I think she would have needed to get support from other people and I feel like her board was waiting for her to show that and she didn’t show that. I think it was really her decision to close. I think she was tired.

1:24:32

HP: You just mentioned the board--

KJL: It was a hell of a board. I mean Arlene Schnitzer--they had all these politicians on this board. You know I met so many political people. They were all on her board: judges. Arlene Schnitzer was the biggest one to come to functions. She’d come to the Christmas parties and stuff like that. Who was the judge? There was a lot of judges on her board but anyway, I think she just kind of gave in to the board. Carole had the most power of all of them, more than the judges, more than any of them. She used to--well that’s probably another story, but she used to get into it with Joanne Fuller, do you know who Joanne Fuller is? Joanne Fuller is now the head of, is it Human Services? Used to be Head of Corrections, but back then, he was the Head of Women’s Transition Services and had a lot to do with the Council for Prostitution Alternatives and stuff, so they would war back and forth about money and stuff. I think Carole just got tired. [addressing her dog: Ruby! Leave her alone honey!] I’m sorry, she’s like had it. She’s been very good for all this time. She says, “I’m not used to this; I’m used to being pampered.”

HP: Leaving was her decision.

KJL: I think it was more Carole’s decision than Carole would admit. I think there were ways that Carole could have pulled it out. I just don’t think she had the discipline to do it and I think the board kind of let her run carte blanche for too long; I think they should have held her accountable a little bit. I think they should have kept her on a little shorter leash.
HP: After it did close, you moved on before it closed but not too long beforehand--

KJL: Not very much, no, like six months.

HP: I know you had mentioned that she was, you know, peeved with you?

KJL: Yeah, she was pissed. Really pissed. She felt betrayed. She felt betrayed because she literally had saved my life and then I wasn’t there, but you know I had kids I was raising; I couldn’t. I needed a paycheck. I loved her, but I needed money. [laughing] I needed to support my children.

HP: Do your children have any memories of her?

KJL: I don’t know that they do; they were pretty young and I didn’t bring them around. I didn’t get them back until I had four years clean and I want to say that was right when things were falling apart at Our New Beginnings. I would take them up there sometimes, but they were little, they were little kids and I don’t think they really knew what it was up there. I didn’t take them up there much.

HP: When you were living the moments at Our New Beginnings, first as a client, then as a case manager, did you actively characterize her as your mentor?

KJL: I knew she was my mentor. I don’t know that I called her my mentor or anything but I knew. Carole let people know that if she could make it out of the system, you could make it out of the system and that really struck me. She really let me know that it made a difference to her whether I made it or not. That was important to me. So, I don’t know if that’s mentoring, I don’t know what it is but she mentored me. I don’t know if I recognized it back then. I knew she saved my life. I think it was bigger than just a mentor to me back then; I think she was God. [laughing] Pretty much.

1:28:59

HP: She talked about being in prison a lot.

KJL: [agreement]

HP: Did the other workers or clients, did they know much about her personal life?
KJL: You know there was always rumors and innuendo about her personal life. I don’t know that we knew a lot about it. I knew who her P.O. was, I knew Kim Johnson was her P.O. [laughing] I knew that Janice was her partner. There was a lot of rumors about her, because her boundaries were so bad, she opened herself up for people speculating on who she had affairs with. My opinion is I think a lot of that was homophobia, my personal impression of that. That’s not to say: if a woman showed up at Carole’s house that she wouldn’t take her in and let her spend the night. I mean she kind of opened herself up for that, but I didn’t have any firsthand knowledge of her breaking boundaries in that particular fashion. So, there you have it.

HP: That’s a good point though, we’re talking about, for easy math mainly the eighties and homosexuality was viewed differently than it is today.

KJL: It is.

HP: Was it a thing?

KJL: Well people were always saying Carole was having affairs with her clients. They were always saying that and I’m not sure that they would have said that if she was a man running a program for women, I don’t know. Maybe they would have, maybe if a man was having women come over and spend the night and stuff, but I just think it was wild speculation. I think there was a lot of innuendo about that. People always would say “Well, she had really bad boundaries.” Well I’m not going to argue if she had bad boundaries; I’m the first one to say she had bad boundaries. I am also the first one to say I didn’t have any awareness of her having an affair. She was with Janice, I mean that’s it.

1:31:01

HP: These people talking, is it people outside of Our New Beginnings trying to discredit or--

KJL: Or jealous girls that would go “She’s a favorite,” “You must be sleepin’ with her.” You know, kind of like that. I don’t know what came first, the chicken or the egg but it was there.

HP: I’m just trying to imagine a house full of people--

KJL: Wounded people.

HP: Yes, a lot of trauma!

KJL: A lot of trauma.
HP: Coming together must have made for some sparks here and there!

KJL: Oh god, yes, sparks! I remember one of the women who I suggested put her arm through a window at Our New Beginnings. Because anger, that’s how trauma tends to show its little face, when you start addressing it, it tends to be rage. So, yeah, “Let’s get them all together in a house together and then throw in some kids!” It could be pretty lively around there, but you know most of the time it was pretty wonderful. Most of the time, it was pretty wonderful and I’m looking at this little dog and I’m remembering one of the women had a little dog that was in New Beginnings!

HP: Women, children, dogs.

KJL: Yeah! She let her have a little dog! I just thought, Mary Lou had a little mongrel in her house and Carole let that happen. Like I said, Carole was ahead of her time: she knew about the therapy of pets, she knew about building relationships, she knew about--methadone was never her first choice, but she probably accepted it quicker than others in the field, so it was an option but it was never her first option.

HP: Methadone?

KJL: Yeah, but she would help some women get on methadone as a lifesaving thing, and back then there weren’t a lot of programs that would do that. They were like “Oh no!”

HP: So, final question: do you have any final comments, memories, anecdotes you want to share about Carole, Our New Beginnings, anything else?

KJL: Oh, wow. That’s so big! I just get this whole bunch of memories, you know, coming at me all at once with that. I’ll probably think of a hundred of them after you leave here. I don’t really think so, but I do know that I wouldn’t be where I am or who I am without her and I do know that she didn’t get there by being quiet and when you’re not quiet and you have a voice, you open yourself up to very close scrutiny and she did pretty well with it most of the time. She usually landed on her feet, I just think she got really tired. But she was amazing. I’m really sad that there isn’t a place like that now here. I think Laurie’s working on doing something like that and bravo – she needs to because women need it. Women are kind of lost in the system now I think. That’s it.

HP: Thank you.

1:34:28