

Carole Pope/Our New Beginnings Oral History Project
Narrator: Sharon Franklin (SF)
Interviewer: Heather Oriana Petrocelli (HP)
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Transcribed by Carolee Harrison, December 12-15, 2014
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[Semi-verbatim transcript]
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HP: This is Heather Oriana Petrocelli, interviewing Sharon Franklin on December 3, 2014 in Eugene, Oregon, at her home. Sharon, do I have permission to record you for the Carole Pope Oral History project?

SF: Yes, you do.

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

SF: Sharon Franklin. My date of birth is July twenty-seventh, 1945, in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

HP: Could you start just by telling us a little bit about your educational background?

SF: Sure. I graduated from UCLA with a degree in English and then did a fifth year and got my teaching certificate. So, after teaching for a year in California, I moved to Eugene, and ended up getting my master's in Library Science and was a school librarian in the Eugene school district for about ten years. After that, I kind of got intrigued by educational technology and computer education right at the very, very beginning, and ended up then editing a computer education journal, and after that two other journals for teachers that had to do with writing and technology. And then I started an educational non-profit and did that for about ten years, and developed software and educational materials. I still do some educational writing at this point, but I'm mostly retired.

HP: Nice. Is the writing--your being an educational writer--is that how you came to know Carole Pope? How did you come to know Carole Pope?

SF: Well, it was quite an interesting coincidence. I was taking--because a friend and I had a non-profit together, and we were developing educational materials, I was taking a three-year small business class. One of the teachers in the class knew Carole from her time in prison, and it was such a coinci--well, so, I didn't even know that. All I wanted to do was write a grant, and Jean Names, the professor, said, Oh, I know someone in Portland that has a lot of knowledge of Oregon foundations, and maybe I could--she's not feeling really well right now, but I could call

her and see if she'd be willing to meet with you. Oh, great, I said. So Jean called and made the phone call to Carole, and Carole said sure, Sharon can call me, and--so then it was really funny, because then I didn't call her. And Carole and I talked about this afterwards and she said, Why would I care if someone that I didn't even know didn't call me? But for some reason, she said, it really irritated me that you didn't call me. So she called Jean Names back and said, Why isn't Sharon calling me? And the reason that I didn't call her was that I was so busy. I had several writing contracts at that time, and they all had deadlines, and I really didn't have my own thoughts together about what I wanted to write the grant about, and I wasn't about to go up and talk to her and have no ideas in my head, really. So then, when Jean told me that Carole was a little miffed that I hadn't called her, I felt compelled to call her. So I did, and then I thought, Oh, my gosh. Hearing her voice on the phone was--she has a pretty gruff, no-nonsense voice, and I'm thinking [eek]--I'd better do my homework! So, as best I could, I thought about what I might want to write a grant about, and went up and met her for the first time at her apartment.

HP: Where was she living at the time?

SF: She was living at Clay Towers in southwest Portland, and I don't think she had been there too awfully long. She had had to move off her houseboat, which she loved, because she was so ill, and her friends were afraid that she was going to have another little stroke and fall into the water. So they moved her to--it was a place for older adults with not-too-much money, and it was a sad time for her. When I met her she had just had her second stroke not long before.

I remember taking the elevator up to the twelfth floor and walking down this dark hallway, and she was right at the end of the hall, and knocked on the door, and there was this voice: [gruffly] "Come in!" So I opened the door into this teeny-tiny little living room that was just full of stuff, and she was sitting in her chair in the corner, which is the chair she always sat in, for the whole fourteen years, I think, I knew her. I just looked at her and my knees almost buckled. I don't know what that was about, but it was such a response I had to seeing her. So without even trying to explain what that was, it was quite a meeting.

She told me a lot about her life and the work that she'd done, and we barely talked at all about my grant, which was fine, and really, I never wrote the grant. I ended up writing a book with her about her work, and she became one of my greatest teachers in my life. I will always be grateful for her.

HP: There's a couple things you said. When your knees buckled, when you first met her, was it something that you guys actually discussed?

SF: Yeah. We did discuss it, and--but it was--I just kind of looked at her and she just--she felt so familiar to me in my life, that's all I will say about that. I remember having the thought in my head, Oh my gosh, it's so good to see you again. Without analyzing it any further, that's kind of what it was.

HP: Did she feel the same way, since she normally wouldn't care that someone would not call? Was it something that you both acknowledged, that this was a two-way connection?

SF: Yes, it was strange. I mean, she didn't feel the same way at seeing me at that moment, for sure, but yeah, she always laughed at, like I said, why she would bother to make sure that I was going to come up there and have that meeting with her. Yeah, it was very interesting.

One of the things that came out that was a surprise to both of us was our love of music. She talked to me a lot that very first time about music and her playing the piano. The next time I saw her, which was in about a week, I brought my flute up and we actually played some music together, which was really special.

HP: How old was Carole, roughly, around this time?

SF: Oh, gosh, when she--so she died about two years ago, when she was sixty- ...[pausing] She was in her late fifties, I would say.

HP: So you met... what year was this?

SF: In about 2000.

HP: Before, because of course I want to ask more about the book you wrote together, but I also--Jean Names is someone who's come up multiple times. Can you tell me just a little bit more about the class you were taking with Jean, and how you knew Jean?

SF: Sure. This small business class went on for three years and it was for people that have all kinds of small businesses in Eugene. It was through Lane Community College. There were two teachers for the class, and she was the one that I was paired with. Her connection with Carole was--and I, as much as I can recall now--she was volunteering at the prison when Carole was in prison, and got to know her, and was one of the people that was quite instrumental in connecting her up with various foundations and taking her out of the prison to go talk to people about getting funding for Our New Beginnings. She was on the board for a good long time as well.

HP: Is this someone--do you still keep in contact with her?

SF: I saw her not that long ago. Yeah, I'm not entirely sure if she's still in the area, but I suspect she might be, so yeah.

HP: So, after you met, can you tell me about how this book--can you tell me more about the book that you wrote together?

SF: Well, that was a long time in coming, I mean it was probably several years after we met. Carole would talk to me a lot about--it was part of my education about incarcerated women,

and she focused on the women. A lot of the issues of women are issues with men as well, but for her, in her life, her focus was on the women.

She got letters and phone calls--I would say she would get two or three letters a week, long after the program closed, from women who had heard about her; not just women who had known her and had questions, but women that had just *heard* about her somewhere and had a question about custody and their kids and what was going to happen, and they were in prison and they were scared that they were going to lose their parental rights and... And Carole would tell me that this would happen over and over again, and that a lot of times she witnessed women who signed away their parental rights because they just weren't told--either told the truth, or weren't given a full range of choice, and didn't understand what was going to happen when they signed a piece of paper. And there are a lot of other things, too, just in terms of who was having custody of their kids when they were in prison--there are a lot of big questions. She would talk to me about how not only was this so hard for women who somehow wanted to keep in touch, and wanted to have a relationship of some kind with their kids when they were in prison, but you're talking about a whole other generation of children, because when parents go to prison, the kids are kind of stuck in the same scenario. They have a lot of anger, a lot of times abandonment issues, tons of questions; they just don't know what's happening. For all of those reasons, there are a lot of reasons to keep women and children connected when it's appropriate to do so, and somehow keep that bond going. Prison doesn't make it easy for that to happen. So, given all these long letters that she would get from the women, we decided to take a lot of those questions and a lot of those issues and write a book that we hoped would be in all the prisons and jails in the state of Oregon. That's what we did.

HP: When did your book--when was it published?

SF: It was published in [pausing]... I don't know. I'd have to stop and look.

HP: That's OK. What was the title of the book?

SF: It's called *A Resource Guide for Parents Incarcerated in Oregon*.

HP: Was there a... what was the distribution method of getting it out to the people who needed to get it?

SF: It was a challenge. And it was an education for me, I will tell you that. It wasn't making the phone call to Coffee Creek [Women's Correctional Facility] and saying, Hey, we've got this great book, can we drop off a couple hundred copies and you'll just distribute them to everyone? Oh my gosh, it took so many meetings, so many phone calls, and then we'd go back, and if you didn't keep on it every second, there would be a closet full of books and they weren't helping anybody. So you had to just keep asking, Now where are the books? Are they being given to the women who need them? I think we were pretty successful, and I think at one point they were in every prison and jail in the state of Oregon, but of course, closets don't count, so. And there was a way of, at some point, putting it on computer systems so that the women inside,

and I think men, could have access to this information. And there were a lot of forms in the back that helped them, and ways to keep a journal of contacts that they've made, and just keep track so they would have data to show somebody. So there was a lot of good information in that book.

HP: Is that book still currently available in correctional facilities, do you think?

[15:07]

SF: That's a super-good question. If I were a betting person, I would say no. But, maybe. I'm sure there are a few copies around someplace. I think at this point one of the things that I could choose to feel guilty about is that the legal piece of the book, that somebody at U of O School of Law wrote, I'm sure it has to be updated, about the family court law and statutes and stuff. So that is something that really needs to be done; but all the social and emotional issues, and a huge part of that book would not be outdated. It's just another thing I could put on my to-do list. [laughing]

HP: Do you have any stories, or did you--or Carole--have stories that came out of creating that book together? I want to call them success stories, but did you ever have any connections with people who used your book?

SF: Oh, well, people would write her all the time and say thank you. Just, I mean, really heartfelt--notebook paper, not typing on a computer, just by hand--handwritten letters, just saying how much it meant to them. And then people would write and say, Oh, I heard about this book and could you please send me a copy? So we were always sending copies to people. Sometimes in other states, too, but just letting them know that they would have to do the digging about the absolute law in their state. I think we got a lot of good feedback about how valuable it was. And the women had a part in that. It was printed at Coffee Creek, so that was neat. And the drawings in it were done by the women.

HP: What was it like working with Carole?

SF: [laughs] Oh, my gosh. Well, everybody that knows her will probably--would stop at that question. She was brilliant. She had a brilliant mind. And that mind was with her until the very last time I saw her before she died. Honestly, she was one of the brightest people I've ever met. And she could try your last nerve, so--and she was completely funny, and really stubborn, so you just put that all together in this little teeny-tiny body, this super-dynamic person. It was a roller-coaster ride. We had this process of--my office was in the downstairs of my house, and she smoked, *all* the time. She couldn't smoke in my house, so, my computer was by the door out onto my deck, and she'd go out on the deck in the summer and leave the door open, huff-puff-huff-puff. And she would just be dictating to me like a mile a minute, and I was just in there typing, and finally I'd go, "Will you just stop and take a breath and let me catch up? I have some questions, and I'm thinking, I'm trying to think a thought but there's barely time to think a thought." That's how we actually did the whole book. It was exasperating and

fabulous. Both. I think we were really proud of it at the end, and it was a good thing to do together.

And really, something that not very many people know, is that, at the same time I'm working on a lot of educational projects, and I remember working on one book that was writing--fiction stories based on famous people. I hired her to do some of the research and writing, and she was so proud when these books came out, and she could find the people that she'd researched and wrote about. Actually, I don't think she necessarily did the writing, but she did all the research for it. So it was kind of another little way that we collaborated along the line.

[19:54]

HP: How long did you guys do those books?

SF: Oh, it was probably a year-long project.

HP: I'm curious, you met because you were looking for help guidance for your grants; you didn't--you said you didn't wind up doing the grants? Is that something that just--the relationship blossomed in a completely different way, or was there some... Was she helpful when you tried to approach her for the grant help, or did it just parlay into something else?

SF: It just didn't even interest me anymore, and that was a fact. I went through the entire three years of the small business class but really my business partner and I--we had never been in the same state, even. She was going off in a different direction, I was going off in a different direction, so we ended up just dissolving our corporation and that was how that ended. I just began to do the writing that I wanted to do on my own. Grant-writing was never my favorite thing anyway, so... OK.

HP: You mentioned that effectively you shared the gift of music. Could you talk a little bit about your relationship to music, what you know of her relationship to music, and how you made music together?

SF: Well, Carole was a prodigy on the piano. I can't even imagine what it would have been like to hear her at her best. I can tell you that music has been a part of my life since the age of four, really, and I took piano lessons for a long time and then I started playing the flute in the third grade, and I still play flute. So I know a lot about music, and we started talking about it and she told me that she had really wanted to be a concert pianist, but in those days women were not thought to be worthy of the time to put in to be trained, because they'd just get married and have a baby. Which always really pissed her off. She ended up doing what a lot of very talented women did, in this country, which is get her master's and end up teaching music at a conservatory, which she did in the Midwest. She wanted to go to Europe and--because her piano teacher in California had told her that if she went to Europe she could find a teacher who would take her seriously, and she was good enough to follow that path--but her father wouldn't allow that. Her extremely abusive father. That was just one of the many ways that he

impacted her life. At the time that I met her, here she is in this little apartment, but there was a little spinet piano downstairs for everyone to use. So I cajoled her into going down there and playing with me, and I--well, not with me, I was playing, actually, with her--and she just put her fingers on the keys of that piano and started to play, and it made me cry. I think every single solitary time I ever heard her play the piano, all she'd have to do, she could be in so much pain, and her fingers would hit those keys and I know that she wasn't near as good as she once was, and you still got--oh my gosh, it moved me more than anything. I wish so much there were somewhere, somehow, a tape of her playing could be found.

She was hired at about age sixteen, I think, to be the rehearsal pianist for the San Francisco Ballet. That's how good she was. She sat at the piano bench with Arthur Rubenstein, which was one of her most cherished memories. She also talks about how she really had a little attitude because she knew she was pretty good and so she'd just come sort of out and--show up to a rehearsal sometimes whenever she wanted. And at one point--I think it was him, he just called her out and told her that she had a choice. That she could leave or she could be serious and show up on time. So I think she started to actually just walk out. He followed her, and just talked to her, and she came back, and kind of learned an important lesson that day. Anyway, she had plenty of music stories, and she wrote a song for a partner of hers who had passed away, and I put a flute part to that so we would often play. She titled it "Beth's Song." We would play that together on the piano with the flute. It was good; good times.

HP: Going back, I'm curious of your first impression of Carole, and your lasting impression of Carole, and if there's a major difference, or none?

SF: Good question. She changed a lot in the time that I met her, really. She was sick the entire time, and there were periods of time when she was extremely ill. I'd drive up to Portland and take her someplace and I would have to feed her because she couldn't quite get the spoon to her mouth. She would have TIAs [transient ischemic attacks] a lot, and I learned to kind of handle those and not be so scared. She--so, yeah, the part of her being sick and in pain was always there.

That tough exterior of hers and--it was kind of like a little in-your-face attitude, I've never known anybody else like her. She didn't care who she saw. She wasn't going to *dress up*, and she swore a lot. She wasn't trying to make an impression in that way, and I think it was, for a lot of people, it was a shock at first to meet her, but she--for some reason, you didn't form those, I think, lasting judgments of her that made you then stop listening to her.

She made you want to keep on listening. And when you listened, you learned so much from every encounter with her, I swear. She had an incredible life and an incredible amount of information in her head. So all the things that were first impressions for me were there at the end. I just also knew a soft and vulnerable part of her. Over the time that I met her, I think she got less scared; I think she almost had post-traumatic stress in a certain way. She would be--she hated surprises, thanks to her father, but really you had to be--I remember having to be really careful not to ever come up from behind, and just--not even to surprise her. It would

startle her so much and she would be incredibly angry when that would happen, so I would have to remember to just kind of announce when I was coming into a room and be aware of that. She got much better with that toward the end and I think it--there was something kind of completed about that for her. She also forgave an awful lot of people, including her father and mother, and really, forgiveness is a good thing--I would have stopped prior to them. I honestly don't understand how she did that in her head. She had a hard time always with people who she thought had wronged her, and she could kind of write them off pretty easily. Life could be very black-and-white for Carole a lot of times. So we'd have a lot of talks about what was possible in between those extremes.

For the most part, I just consider her not a perfect person. I don't immortalize her in that way. She was just a person that challenged me and taught me things that I really wouldn't have known otherwise.

[30:06]

HP: Can you elaborate on some of the things she actually taught you?

SF: Well, she taught me to--well, first of all, she--I had no background in the prison system. I consider that a good thing. I don't have family members or--I think I had one friend, in the sixties, that was in prison for a very short time, but that's about it. So what happened to women in prison, and how it was for her going into prison, was a real eye opener for me. Going into the prison was one of the very scariest things that I've ever done in my life. I think--I don't remember if I was at Coffee Creek two or three times--for meetings, and once for a tour, but every single time I would come home. It would take me about three days. I would be so depressed. It would take me a really long time to get over that experience. So it made me look at a whole segment of the population differently.

She used to talk about how there are so many people in society that are just invisible to us. They weren't invisible to me any longer. She taught me that.

She taught me a lot about just having guts and what it means to just show up and fight for something, and keep fighting. There will be people that would say her tactics weren't always--you can really criticize sometimes, maybe she could have done things a different way; she could have, I don't know, gone about something in a different way, whatever. She could have; we all could have. But she achieved an incredible amount, and the courage that it took to just continually walk up and face-to-face just confront a system, and work for change: Wow. That's a pretty amazing thing. Those were the kind of people we were writing about in that little series of books for kids. She should totally be in one of those books. She taught me a lot about that. I don't know. I just--I really do consider her--I had a lot of good teachers in school and all that, but none better than her.

HP: How open was Carole about discussing her own past? Do you know a lot about her childhood, her life before prison, in prison; was she open about that and talked about that?

SF: Yes, and it took a while. It wasn't because I just asked probing questions. Really, as we just got to know each other and spent more time together, I knew a lot about her childhood. And again she had, in my own experience--and it isn't even personal experience, but, of anything I've ever heard--she had the most abusive father I could ever conceive of having. Just the fact that she survived him and survived that household is remarkable.

She talked a lot about it in terms of her starting drinking, which I think--you know, she started drinking when she was about ten--you'd *have* to drink. You had to have some way of dealing with the fear and the pain of living in such an abusive environment.

She talked a lot about her Irish grandma, who she just adored. And her grandma lived some ways away from her parents, but while her grandma was alive, if things got too scary at her house she could call her grandma and her grandma would high-tail it--Carole said her grandma was about four foot six and illiterate, and she would just high-tail it over there and gather up Carole and--"Carole Ann"--she would talk with this very Irish brogue and take Carole Ann back to her house with her and tuck her in her big feather bed and take care of her. She was really her protector for a very long time and it was a sad day when her grandma died.

Carole had a very scary, awful childhood. She got a--and, her father was the person who started her in music; he was a musician and he was her first teacher. She gives him credit for that. He bought her a piano, and then she got too good to play--when you're really, really good, you outgrow your teachers, you have to find another teacher; and it was time, she knew. I don't know how old she was, a teenager. It was time to find another teacher and she talked to her father about that; her father was having none of it. She came home one day and the piano was going down the steps. He just got rid of the piano. So then I guess she found another practice place, and she ended up getting a full ride--being offered a full ride scholarship, and her father wouldn't--to Berkeley, and her father wouldn't sign the papers, so she couldn't go. So she emancipated herself at sixteen and went to work, I think at Procter and Gamble.

Quite a life. And then, in the midst of all that, she was dealing with her sexuality and had just horrific experiences of what it was like to be gay in San Francisco at that time. She was shot at, and had some pretty frightening experiences, but also, just the liberation of at least coming into your own about your own sexuality and finding company in that. So, yeah. In fact, one time we took a retrospective--we took her on a little retrospective trip in the car and we went to Alameda, and she showed me the house she grew up in, and her grandma's house, and it seems like we went to a cemetery. She had to think a lot about whether or not she wanted to go back and see those places; it was like that whole PTSD thing was just kind of kicking in, but she was like, No, I want to do this, I need to do this, I need to kind of finish it. So we did that.

HP: How was that shared experience?

[38:01]

SF: It was good. We took pictures, and we had conversations. And I think the fact that she had somebody to do it with--that was like an anchor for her, it meant a lot. We weren't going down there just to do that; we had many an adventure on that trip. We went to Disney--I took her to Disneyland. That's like taking your golden retriever puppy to Disneyland. She had never been, so I thought she should get to go, so we went to Disneyland and Sea World and saw some friends of hers along the way. So it was Carole and Sharon's great adventure, and it was. That was fun.

HP: Do you know the history of how she wound up in prison?

SF: Oh, yeah, I know all about that story. Well, first she was in Kansas. And so she got a job at a music conservatory there, so she was teaching graduate students. I don't know, she must have been in her early twenties, as much as I can--I'd have to do the math. She met a woman named Beth at that time who was a cellist, so they had all this music in common and I guess just had a great relationship. Beth played in the--I think she played in the symphony and maybe she taught at the same college, I don't know about that. I think all in all that was a really happy time in Carole's life. They had a little farm. One Christmas, they were invited to a Christmas party, and it was real snowy and icy; typical, I guess, Kansas Christmastime. Beth kept calling Carole's office and saying "Are you ready to go, you ready to go?" and she was like "No, I have more papers to grade. You go on, and I'll meet you there." And so finally Carole got done with all of her papers and she gets in her car and she's driving to the party and she sees a bunch of flashing lights on this bridge and she drives past, because that wasn't the way she had gone to get to their friend's house. And she gets there and Beth wasn't there. Come to find out, Beth's car skidded on the ice and hit the bridge, and I don't know the details--but she died. And that was three days before Christmas. That was...that was a really--how can you sum up the death of your partner who you love? It was a horrible thing for her. And at a certain point, she was just kind of going through the motions, finally, of being there. About that time, her--I don't know the sequence of time, but her mother was dying--oh, her father had finally shot himself and sent her a nasty note about it, that she would get after the fact. Her mother was falling apart, so she went to Alameda to try and help her mom, and kind of gave up on that one. And got a job in Portland--and I'm not quite sure where she was working at that time, but she met a woman--[coughs] excuse me--who at that period of time, I think it was in the early eighties, people were buying silver bars as investments. Carole had a little money from her mom's estate, so I guess they each put like five thousand dollars or something into these silver bars, and put them in this woman's safe-deposit box. This is all on the subject of how she ended up in prison.

So then a few--I don't know how long after that--Carole was like, I really shouldn't have done this. I really want to go back to my little farm now. She asked the woman if she could have her silver bars back, and for whatever reason, the woman said no, you can't. Carole was really mad about that, and she told me that she thought that the woman kind of wanted to have a different kind of relationship with her, *more* of a relationship with her, and she absolutely wasn't into that with her. So I think that maybe that was one of the reasons why the woman was angry with her and wanted to keep her there. So Carole had been drinking, and she told

me that she would typically drink like a fifth of Chivas a day. She was just someone who could function at a pretty high level, apparently, and while having that much alcohol in her system.

Well, maybe she wasn't functioning so well that day. So she went to the bank, and signed her name, and signed the woman's name under it, or signed the woman's name and her name under it, and some new employee at the bank let her in the safe-deposit box. She took all of it and went home, and then thought, oh my gosh, I've committed a crime, I have to turn myself in. So she goes down and she takes all of what she has--hers and the woman's--and she hands it all back, and says, You have to charge me with something; I've committed a crime. And they were completely, kind of flabbergasted there in the police department--Well, we really don't usually don't have people come in like this. And they couldn't think--nobody had reported a crime--they couldn't think what to charge her with. So they finally--she really kind of like made them think of something--so they charged her with a couple of things and sent her home.

She got a lawyer, and the lawyer said, Well, you don't even have a parking ticket on your record. You're a music teacher, so probably what's going to happen is you'll pay restitution and you'll get probation. So she parks her car outside the courthouse that day, and they walk in, and the judge isn't there. Apparently, you only have to wait a certain amount of time, like in a college class, and then if the teacher doesn't appear, you get to leave. But her lawyer kept saying, We can go now, and Carole was like No, we're going to stay until that son of a bitch gets here--probably that's how she said it. So they keep waiting, for a really long time, and finally the judge comes in. I guess he had been at his brother's funeral. This sounds like a Camus novel. His eyes were all red and he was obviously upset, and hers was the only case on the docket. I don't know, maybe there were others and they left, but at any rate, at that point hers was the only one. So he looks at this and he says something like, as I recall, "This was a lesbian crime of passion, and you're well-educated; you're highly educated and you should have known better. I find you guilty on two felony counts." And, boom. They handcuffed her and took her to prison.

So that's how she ended up at the women's prison, which at that time was in Salem. She talked about how when she went to--when she got there, she was just in a state of shock, and she was so scared. She said, "I was this meek, little music teacher"; it's hard to imagine her as that, but you have to take her at her word! She said, over time somehow, the women just really helped her. They would bring her a coffee cup or a little plant or just things to make her feel a little more comfortable. That was how Carole's life just took a huge detour that turned out to be the path of the rest of her life, really. It changed everything for her.

[47:27]

HP: Out of her experience of being incarcerated came the birth of Our New Beginnings?

SF: Yes.

HP: Can you talk a little bit about how she talked about that? Did you know her at Our New Beginnings at all?

SF: I never knew Our New Beginnings. I met her several years after the program had closed. I wish I had known.

It just was one of those things where she's there and she's curious. She's bright, and she's curious. I think what happens is you get--imagine if you're in the woods, and you're lost and you're kind of dazed, and you can't see anything, but if you're there a little bit longer, you begin to be really where you are, and then your senses begin to be more attuned to your surroundings. I think that's what happened with her. She began to really look at the women who were in prison with her. At that time, there were so few women. There were--I think she said, I could be wrong, but there were something like sixty beds in the women's prison, and they weren't all filled.

There were about, I think eight women or so that she got to know. And she just asked them questions, like How did you get here? What kind of things happened to you? What could have made a difference to you, that maybe this would not have happened? She ended up with these other women creating a program together that they thought would have helped them and would help other women, and that became Our New Beginnings.

HP: When Carole talked about Our New Beginnings with you, since you met her after the program's closure, how did she remember it? Was it something--was there a bitterness to it because of its closure, was it a warmth because of all the lives she helped change, was it matter-of-fact?

[49:57]

SF: You know, I think it was another loss for Carole. New Beginnings' closing was a really hard thing for her. I also think that she--and, you know, this was part of what you get to do as time goes on, and you can look back on things--I think she could see that she wasn't good at giving parts of the program to someone else, and so it was all her. She was New Beginnings. Oh, and by the way, there's a funny story about that. The women had named it New Beginnings, but I think they had to change it to Our New Beginnings because New Beginnings was already taken by like a Christian dating service or something like that. [laughing] I always liked that story.

So, she didn't think of New Beginnings fondly. She thought of it as--it wasn't that she didn't have fond thoughts, she just was so upset that there was so much work yet to be done, and now the program had been--it ceased to exist, and now new prisons were built right and left to house hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of women, so there wouldn't be any need for a program like New Beginnings that had this amazing success rate. But she had a million stories to tell about--that's what she loved to do, was tell particular stories about things that happened with the women at New Beginnings. I never got tired of hearing those stories.

HP: Was she a good storyteller?

[51:59]

SF: Yes, she was a great storyteller. One of the things that I just am so sad about is, I used to tell her that she had all these Midwest, I used to call them Kansas expressions. She had the funniest expressions that I've never heard. It was like, oh my gosh, there's another one; I wish I had kept track of all of them. I could have had a whole little book of them at this point. When she'd tell stories they were just peppered with all these funny little things. Yes, she had lots of stories; she had such love for the women; she did everything in her power, I think, to help them. Paid for several of their college educations, and abortions, and birth costs, and, you know, it was almost like whatever they needed. This wasn't stuff that was coming out of grants, this was coming out of her.

HP: Did you meet women who...?

SF: Yeah. I met a number of women over the years, and one in particular is just really--I consider her a really good friend.

Yeah, she kept in touch with women; we were--one woman that she cared a lot about died of leukemia and her children--she had three children, a single mom, three children all with different fathers--and the oldest was sixteen at the time and then two younger girls. When Joy died, Carole called me when she was close to death, and wanted me to come up, so I came up to Portland. We were at Joy's bedside when she died, hanging on to the kids. So she kept track of women and they would call her and come and see her. She was respectful; she didn't seek them out, and really gave them the space to not even say hi to her if she saw them on the street; let them speak to her first.

HP: It's easy to look at someone's life--there seems to be--you had mentioned it, the sense of loss that permeates. She had a loss of a childhood, in a way; she had a loss of her family when people either died or she decided to not deal with them; she had a loss of her lover; she had a loss of her freedom; then she had a loss of Our New Beginnings; and then she had a loss of her well-being in the end. Was that something, knowing her, was that something that she was verbally aware of? Did it permeate any of her sense of being?

[55:17]

SF: It definitely was something that she was aware of. I think it would have--I think at times she was really depressed. It was kind of a miracle, and I haven't mentioned this, but she stopped drinking when she went to prison, and she was sober for the whole rest of her life. She kept track, I mean she kept in contact with, her sponsor, sometimes daily I think, and she read her book and she would get over there--I don't even know how she--she would still go to meetings. I don't know when she was finally on a walker, I don't know if she would go on a

walker, but she--to keep her sobriety was one of the very most important things to her. So... I forgot the question that you asked?

HP: Well, I'm curious, with someone who has that much loss, on so many levels, if there was something--she lived the experience, but I was curious if she was able to vocalize what it was like living through so many tragic losses.

[56:37]

SF: She talked a lot about it, and I think she was very depressed a lot of the time. New Beginnings was really the toughest loss for her, even though it was--New Beginnings really was responsible for her failing health, to a large degree, as well. The stress of running that program for such a long time and wearing so many hats. So yeah. [facetiously] Drinking could have been a really good solution for Carole, [becoming serious] had she been wanting to go that route, but she absolutely wasn't.

I do think that as she got toward the end of her life, though, she also became... I don't know, maybe to say she became more grateful, or could see the cup half full, would be too strong. But I think she did just begin to just let go of some of those things, a little bit. Just enough to also appreciate things and to be able to laugh. She had such a great sense of humor. Honestly, it was a lot of fun to be around her. I think that was something that I didn't know about her in the beginning; it just kind of came with getting to know her better.

I introduced her to my parents and she--my dad was a wonderful person, and my dad just kind of--I was taking care of him here and he had kind of beginning Alzheimer's and he loved Carole. So he became kind of like a dad to her, and they would joke and tease each other, and it was funny to be around them. So, yeah. We had plenty of fun times, I think, and those things that could lay down some good, positive memories for her in her life, as well as all the loss. She had her share of that, no doubt.

HP: How would you characterize Carole as a mentor/teacher for the women who went through New Beginnings?

SF: You know, I'm probably not a very good person to answer that question. Most respectfully, I would say I'm not sure.

Now, I can guess. And what I would say is that she was scary, and--I mean, she was in a position of authority, she could send your ass back to prison with like a phone call. She had that over all the women that were there. They were there either because she was like the least bad of two bad choices, so it was like, Okay, maybe they'd rather have a root canal, but they'd go to New Beginnings, but if they stayed there long enough, I think that many of them--and it would be interesting to talk to them now, because they might be grateful, but who knows. All I know is that they had a chance to learn a ton about themselves, to get counseling help in a million different ways, to get jobs, to have some stability, to feel like they could make decisions and

learn to manage money, and learn some parenting skills, and all those things were part of that program. That wasn't going to be happening in prison.

HP: Maybe it was unfair to ask you that question that way; maybe a better way of asking it is: When you did see her interact with people who, long after New Beginnings was gone, could you sense a special bond between her and the women she helped, or the women's children she helped, that was very evident to you?

SF: Yeah. Sometimes, that's true. There's always a little bit of deference. That kind of surprised me. I think for them it just--it would be like having a really stern teacher, you know, when you're ten, say. And you meet this really stern teacher when you're thirty, and it's like, Okay, I'm thirty now, I don't have to feel like I'm ten! But you kind of do. So I think for the women there was a lot of that, but also love and respect and caring. The babies--there were about a hundred babies, I guess, born at New Beginnings, and some of those kids now are, gosh, I have to do the math again. I don't know. I guess they are in their twenties. I've met several of them and again, there are--even to identify them, it should be them to identify themselves, but a lot of those kids have gone on to do some pretty special things. And one young man just adored Carole, and he knew that she really liked him. He was the youngest--I mean he was the oldest of the three kids whose mom died of leukemia. And he had a really rough time after his mom died; he was very close to his mom and didn't feel at all capable of keeping a family together at sixteen. [He] got into some trouble, but Carole would just keep in touch with him, and he would keep in touch with her. He said--he came and spoke at her celebration of life, and I will just never forget it, tears were just streaming down his face. He said, I always knew that Gramma Nana, Gramma Nana was there for me, and that she wouldn't judge me, and that I always had a place in her heart. It meant the world to him. He's now doing really well. She would be so happy to know that.

HP: Do you have any--I think you actually asked me to ask this question, so I'm very curious--is there something, some anecdote, some story that you have that we would find surprising, about something that we would learn about Carole from the story?

[1:04:14]

SF: Well, I can think of two things. They're probably more in a whole different realm, but... [laughing] So one time at New Beginnings--well, she got really sick of the pimps coming around and wanting to take their women "back." She would go down on the streets and look for them, if they didn't come back to the house and stuff. So finally she said that she walked into the Top Hat bar, I think it was. She was like, "The only thing whiter'n me in there was the napkins," and just like marched her little body up to the bar and talked to all these guys and just told them to keep their hands off her women, that once they were in the program, she just wanted to make a deal with them. She wasn't going to go recruit women off the street to come into the program, but they couldn't have any of the ones any longer that were there. And so one day one of them just drives up to New Beginnings in his big low-rider car and was like "Where's my woman, I'm here to get my women." I guess she kept a--I don't know what it was, a baseball

bat or something inside the front door--and it was the middle of winter, an important detail, very cold. So she comes out and she just tells him to get the hell out of there. And she said, "I stood on his car. I climbed up and I stood on his car." And then she said, in this funny little humorous way, "And you know, I *barely tapped* his windshield with that bat, and the windshield completely shattered, and just fell into his lap." [laughing] And she said, "I just sort of turned around like I meant to do it or something, and walked back into the house," and probably locked the door. Yeah. So I guess he didn't come around again. And then for a while she said there was a contract out on her life, and she was *really* pissed off because it was only something like, I don't know what it was, five hundred dollars, and she thought she was worth a whole lot more than that. There was that story.

And then, on the other hand, entirely, taking her to Disneyland, where she was just like this crazy little person in a--I think we had a wheelchair for her, so I pushed the wheelchair so we got in the front of the lines, which she loved. Kids would look, like, What is wrong with this woman? Because she looked more excited at all the rides and all the stuff than the six- and seven-year-olds were. Taking her out in public to something like that was just--you had to be ready for her, because she wasn't going to hold back her exuberance one little bit. That was always a fun thing.

She had--things that she did, people would--I think a lot of people don't know she trained Arabian horses and showed Arabians, so she had a--I don't know how many Arabians she had in her life, but she had a colt, a horse and a colt when New Beginnings closed, and lost her horses that she loved.

She dug rocks and gemstones and had an amazing rock collection, and she knew all the stories about how she came to have every single one of these rocks. That was kind of a surprising thing about her.

She loved purple. That wasn't a surprise to anybody who knew her. If you wanted to make her super happy, give her absolutely anything with purple and she would like it. She loved to cook, and she would make all these things when she lived in Clay Towers for people in the building. She was taking care of a lot of people in that building. She knew the people that didn't have enough to eat, and people that had problems would come and talk to her, so she kind of continued her work with a different population of people when she was there as well.

HP: A natural caretaker.

[1:09:13]

SF: Yeah. She was. And it was hard for her to take care of herself. She never thought that she was doing enough; she always--she was [of] Catholic upbringing, which she really completely could do without. She actually had a cousin at the Vatican who was a nun, and she used to--every once in a while she would talk to her cousin and [on the verge of laughter] she would always say--I think her cousin's name was Regina--"Oh Regina, go talk to your boss!" And

Regina would go, "Oh, Carole Ann, don't say that." [laughing] "Don't speak like that." She would...[in a low voice] I don't know.

HP: From your perspective, what drove Carole?

SF: You know, I think that in a way it felt almost like guilt, but it should probably have a different word, I'm not sure what. She was really ashamed. She thought she--she never forgave herself for going to prison. And it was interesting because her previous life was all about music and she kind of felt--it felt to her like she'd dirtied that beautiful music that meant so much to her by overlaying her experience in prison. So she played the piano some at New Beginnings and stuff, but very--I don't think very many people knew the extent to her musical background and how good she really was, and how professional.

I think she always was trying to make up for that, and do more, and it always seemed like she never thought she had done enough, and toward the end of her life I would look at her sometimes and go, "You know, you have done more than many people in a bunch of lifetimes, and it's OK. You can stop now and just have a little rest." And I don't really think that she could take those words in very well. I came to think that maybe it was because it also kept her alive, that fighting spirit. If she had rested, there would have been no reason to live, but while she was still fighting, still making phone calls, still getting letters... I bet she got letters from somebody somewhere about something, asking her to do something on their behalf, probably the week before she died. She got them all the time.

HP: I find it interesting for someone who spent the majority of her life caring for others, and fighting for others, and fighting, trying to give a voice to the voiceless--you said she wasn't good at self-care? Does that relate to your whole--the word you use is "guilt," but it's not quite the right word--but something that happened to her driving her. Do you have an understanding of why she couldn't take care of herself in the same way she fought for others?

[1:13:22]

SF: Well, I think it's a very common malady, and women really are kind of genetically inclined to be really good caregivers and often don't take such good care of themselves. So in that way, it's not super surprising. It was just, I think, the level to which she work-work-worked for other people but could not seem to... I don't know, maybe it's not fair, either, because I can't think of examples now. It's not like I could say, oh, she should have got more exercise, or those things we say about ourselves. It wasn't that. I think she just didn't think that she mattered all that much; that other people in general mattered more than her. So I guess the thing that happens when you do that is that other people have to take care of you. And many other people did. There were an awful lot of people that would show up for Carole Pope in different ways all through her life. She deserved all of that, and they did it in many different ways for her, very open-heartedly, because we all felt that she was worth it.

HP: Was she very open to the help and love?

SF: Yeah. I think she was really grateful. A friend that we met--gosh, I forget how we met him--but he bought her her walker. I don't know why I'm thinking of that right now. I'm trying to think--she probably didn't get all weepy, like I would have: [tearful voice] "Oh, thank you, what a lovely gift," she would have said something kind of [gruffly] "ruh ruh ruh" about it, but you would have known that she really--that it meant a lot to her, and she said many a time that that was a really cool thing for Steve to do. So you had to translate a little bit.

HP: To be kind of forthright--we're here doing the Carole Pope oral history project--my understanding is that you brought the Carole Pope papers into the Portland State University archives and Special Collections. Can you talk to me about how--did you say she passed away two years ago?

SF: Yeah.

HP: Can you just tell me a little bit more about how that all came to be?

[1:16:27]

SF: Well, she was getting just sicker and sicker, and losing weight. My nana had an expression [...] about something being put together with spit and baling wire and I felt like that was a very apt description of what had to be happening with Carole. I think she was existing on coffee and... less cigarettes, because she couldn't keep anything on her stomach. I think she probably had cancer at that point. I don't even know what all was going on, there were so many things. And the pain levels were increasing. She had the means to end her life; she had asked her doctor, a doctor very early on, that when everything got--the pain got too bad, and she just--the quality of life was just not there anymore, that she could end her life. And she couldn't do it. She just felt like that was a chicken way out. I used to actually talk to her sometimes and go, "You know, it's OK. Nobody's going to be mad at you. Nobody's going to be disappointed in you if you do this. We all will understand." But she was--that was, again, the fighting part of her.

So anyhow, I usually would talk to her on the phone just to check in with her, almost every day, for all the years that I knew her, at least once. Sometimes, now, she would, toward the end, she would be sleeping or she would just be in enough pain--and she could barely walk. You were always afraid that she was going to fall in this apartment, and she had her walker right there and she was pretty careful, but--so if she didn't have her phone right by her, I know that it was sometimes not possible for her to get to the phone. But she didn't answer and she didn't answer, and it was a little unusual. Every once in a while there might be a day when I didn't talk to her, so I thought, a day, OK. Finally I just called the office, but they couldn't do a wellness check anymore, who knows why. So I called her friend Judith and asked if she would drive over and check on her, and then she found her in her kitchen, and she had passed away. She'd probably been gone--I don't know--half a day, or a day. I guess she was up on a stool trying to reach something, probably cat food or something like that.

So then there was the question of all the stuff in her apartment. It was just filled with stuff, and there wasn't very much time to go through it; we weren't given very many days. There were a couple of people that helped me, most particularly this wonderful woman who was the maintenance person at Clay Towers, was so helpful. I doubt that she was supposed to help me, and she did, because she loved Carole. I just did the best I could to save as many papers as I could, and make piles and figure out how all this stuff was going to get out of a twelfth-floor apartment, and who--what things should be given to people. She had no family, but what friends might want--you know, it's like a lot to do. But it got done. And so then I had all these boxes of papers, which I didn't really know what I was going to do with, so I put them in my storage unit! And there they sat until about six months ago.

HP: There was no directive; Carole didn't have the thought that, "Oh, I did important work and these should be deposited somewhere"?

[1:21:14]

SF: No, she--what she did say to me many times is that she didn't want the idea of New Beginnings to die with her. Carole Ann Pope was a really--she was a person that could lean on you, and she could extract promises from people right and left, I swear. So I, in kind of a weak moment, I think I just said--and really sincerely, I wasn't just saying it, that--OK, I would do something. And I know I'm thinking, What in the heck am I going to do? I don't even know what I will do. But, sure. I'll try my best. I think I said, I'll try my best to do something. I wasn't going to start another New Beginnings; I didn't even see the first one. But I always knew that I'd made that promise, and I really wanted to keep that promise. And I didn't really know how until kind of series of circumstances with me came up where I was creating a project and--well, it started with keeping my word to myself. That was one of the things I was focusing on. I kept telling myself I was going to get out of my storage unit, so, I thought, I'm going to keep my word to myself; I'm going to get out of my storage unit. I got out of my storage unit and suddenly I had about fourteen boxes of Carole Pope's papers in my living room, all smelling like cigarette smoke. [laughing] So then I thought, Oh, no, what am I going to do now? So then I thought, Maybe somebody would want to archive these papers, and Portland State seemed like the logical place. I thought, I'll just start right with my first and best idea, and see if I can't create that possibility, and sure enough it happened.

HP: What's your vision for the Carole Pope oral history project?

SF: You know, my vision, I think, is a couple of things. One is to keep her alive and really honor her life. She lived a life that deserves to be honored, and she certainly was a role model for me. She could be a role model for an awful lot of people in an awful lot of ways.

In large part, you could sum it up by saying what it means to never give up. I was working on a political campaign some years ago, and I was making phone calls reminding people to vote, to get their ballots in, and I talked to one young woman on the phone and she was twenty-

something, and she said, "Oh, I voted once, and it didn't work, so I don't plan on voting again." So I was thinking of people like Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who worked for their whole entire lives to get the right to vote for women, and never really lived to vote themselves. So I was like, "Yeah, I know, it really sucks when the people you vote for don't end up winning, but..." and told this story. Well, Carole is another person like that. She worked for so long to have--just to shine a light on a group of people that in our society are often not even seen at all. They're just invisible. And they're invisible because they're over there in some buildings with bars. She proved, she really proved--not a hundred percent, but the statistics of her program were like [an] eighty-five percent success rate--that when you give somebody a chance, and sometimes maybe a few chances, and you give them some tools, like to put in their tool box... Not everybody grows up with getting [a] great education and great parenting skills and great this and great that, but it doesn't mean they can't learn it. It doesn't mean they're not smart. It just means they need a chance. And when you do that it's like--the possibilities kind of are endless for those people suddenly. And society doesn't have to keep them all locked up and then let them out and expect that they're all going to live amazing lives when they have no more skills than they went in with.

Anyhow, I think that to know her, just to know about her life, would be enough in itself. I also think that we are obviously a country that incarcerates more people than pretty much any other place on earth, so--it hasn't gotten us very far. We've done away with a lot of community-based programs in a lot of ways, to just fund great big prison programs. It would be pretty cool if people could come and just see that way back in the olden days there were programs. There were these programs. And women would come to them, and it was a big old Victorian house. And in that house amazing things would happen. Women would be able to deal with their addictions, and with the results of abuse, and they would learn how to parent their children and they would learn that, in part, because they would be parented. And Carole used to always say that; she said, I would do things with the women--she'd take them to the ball game, she'd take them, like I took her to Disneyland, she would take the women to the ball game and they'd all get little pennants and all the stuff you have to eat at the ball game and whatever... caramel corn and all that. And take them to the circus and take them here, and take them there, and bring them out to her houseboat, and she'd buy big blow-up water toys and all these women would be playing in the water. And their kids would be there, and they'd dance and they'd have a barbecue, and the people on the moorage would come, and--all these things would happen.

At the house where New Beginnings was, she would--she really got to know the neighbors, and they just got to love the women. They'd be passing hamburgers over the back fence. And the foundation people weren't just sending big checks to run the program; they loved to be there. They loved to show up, and hold the babies, and talk to the women, and be invited places, and help decorate the kazillion Christmas trees that Carole would have every--she loved Christmas--I think she said they had like fifty Christmas trees in New Beginnings, and every woman got to decorate them. Some of them never had, so all the ornaments would only go up as high as they could reach, or the kids could reach, and it didn't matter. Those are the kinds of things that went on; that was a program. It was a program where... there was like a celebration for days

when somebody got a new position at Taco Time, and got a new title with that. I don't know, there are just so many things. So many things like that happened there that I think were kind of magical, and they're not all big--I'm not saying they felt like that to the women--they still were in a place that wasn't like out in their neighborhood with their friends, you know, hanging out. But when you think of it, it was pretty remarkable. So, there's no reason why there can't be programs like that again.

HP: Agreed. I'm curious for someone like Carole Pope, who, you've described the physicality of, the being of energy that she was, the tenaciousness, the fighting spirit... I just wonder how it would translate or parlay with a whole different individual doing that same work.

SF: Mm-hmm.

HP: Because it'd be its own story.

[1:31:09]

SF: It would. It would be just be different, that's all. I think she would say that it can't depend on her, even though she made it very dependent on her, just because she was a completely hard act to follow. Or even be with at the time, although the people that worked--that she hired that worked with her loved being there, loved doing it. Yeah. It would just be different. But the world is full of individuals and it's a different time and it will be what it will be. It's not going to be Carole Pope's Our New Beginnings anymore. It will just be something else. But it would be a chance, whatever that--whatever those ideas are that great creative people with energy and intelligence and passion come up with in the future. It's something that's giving people a chance, that's like kind of--she used to always talk about leveling the playing field, that it's hard to succeed in a society where you're dealt a quarter of a deck, and that's only getting worse.

So there are a million variations on that theme. Maybe there aren't even New Beginnings programs; maybe somebody's looking at it and going, Oh my gosh. What I see is that in schools we need to create more programs where we're dealing with a whole host of problems and issues. So that would be--I think that would be another benefit of these archives. I think that what I got--I guess another thing that I got from just knowing Carole is--what it means to really get out there and fight for the things that you believe in. She fought until the bitter end.

I have a great story about that, because she was--she had to go get some bloodwork; they were always drawing blood, I don't know how she had any more blood to draw, but--they seemed to love her blood. She took a cab with her little walker and was at one of the hospitals in Portland, I forget which one, anyway--Emanuel, maybe? So she was coming out, she was waiting for the cab, and it's kind of a seedy area. She had her walker and she had her little bag on her shoulder, and this guy came up to her and he knocked her and grabbed her bag. She called me about this that night, and I just couldn't even believe she was telling me this story. She said--she weighed about seventy pounds at that point--she didn't fall. She fell kind of back against

the side of the building, and as she did that, she picked up her walker and she just threw it at this guy and broke his nose! [mirthfully] And so, she said, "I just kind of like the idea that this little gang wanna-be is running down the street, and there's this trail of blood that's just going down the street, and he's going all the way back to--trying to explain how some little old lady clobbered him with her walker." [laughing] That was Carole.

HP: A fighting spirit. Did she have any--hindsight's always that special view...

SF: Yeah. [laughing together]

HP: When she was looking back, with the closure of New Beginnings being such a traumatic experience for both her and the women who were involved, you said that she knew that it probably shouldn't have been just the "Carole Pope show" in a sense, but did she ever acknowledge that she should have done things differently that could have made it not be all on her?

[1:35:45]

SF: She did. I can think of analogies in my own life--it's one thing to say it and understand it intellectually and it's another thing to do it emotionally. Yeah, looking back, I think she knew that it would have been really good to begin to train somebody to kind of take over, and to not try and maybe wear *all* those hats herself. But she was such a passionate person, and she just couldn't... Many people who have small businesses get it. It's your baby. And that was her baby. The women, and the kids that were there, were all her children; she said, "I never had children," she said, "These were my..." So she fought for them with every inch of her life, and she had a hard time giving up control.

I think probably there were people on her board that might have--and I'm not the person to be saying this, because I don't know--but I can imagine that they had a lot of disagreements, and it was really hard to disagree with Carole Pope. You'd really better get a good night's sleep, that's all I'm going to say. But then she had kind of an intuition on a lot of levels, too, where sometimes, in my experience with her, you'd--I'd think she was just not right about something, but I'd listen, and listen, and listen, and finally I'd really kind of come to see that she really had a point. So I don't know. Life is challenging, and it's not always black and white, what can I say.

There is something I wanted to mention about how it was for her working with the judges and things like that, people like that. In the beginning, I mean, here's this very brash, kinda talks like a sailor I guess, person showing up, and who is she? A couple of the judges in particular really didn't want to give her the time of day. They actually learned, after a period of time and got to know her, that they just valued her opinions so much that a lot of times they would call, even in the middle of the night, and they'd have a woman there, and they had to figure out what to do with her, if they were going to send her to prison or if they were going to do something else. And they'd say, I don't really know. Will you come down? You can come down and decide.

And so they'd completely let her decide what she thought would be good to do. And just go with it.

HP: Carole would do that? She'd get up in the middle of the night and go do that?

[1:39:14]

SF: Yeah. Oh yeah.

HP: There was no... It was her life; there was no separation, it was everything.

SF: Yeah.

HP: I was going to ask you about that, because she has that interesting background where--I know when you watch videos of historic news segments on her or *Our New Beginnings*, everyone has to qualify: "*Ex-con* Carole Pope." But this was actually a master's degree student who had lived this life of a teacher; bad choices got her incarcerated, and the incarceration led to the creation of *Our New Beginnings*. But she could relate to a large swath of people, although it sounds like she had that--how do you characterize that personality? That... spitfire?

SF: Yeah. It's hard for me to imagine her as a meek little music teacher. I honestly can't. Because she said she really changed when she was in prison, like she found her anger and she found her voice. That's what she said a number of times. She had plenty of reasons for the anger, that's for sure. And she found her pur--really, I don't know if it was her purpose, but it was so right for her that it's kind of hard to just see it as *a* purpose. I used to kind of think out loud with her sometimes about--what happens if we're just like lah-dee-dah-ing our way through life, and it's all a very nice life and all, but really maybe there's something else that even we have somewhere back in us that we really want to do? But we're so far from it, how would we ever be doing *that*, because we're doing *this*? I always thought of the analogy of jumping the tracks. You're at Grand Central and you're on track A, and you should be on L, and how do you get there? And, boom! That's how Carole did it; she went to prison. And it changed everything. It just changed absolutely everything right there. So here she was doing this work that she certainly was perfect to do. And super hard and challenging, but fulfilling for her in an awful lot of ways. I don't know. Life is mysterious, right?

HP: When you knew her, did she seemingly hold on to that anger that she found?

[1:42:05]

SF: Oh, she had a lot of anger, toward the system, and toward how women were treated, and the things that happened in prison, and how many of them are abused, and--still, having so many problems with keeping in contact with their children, and who could be facilitating that and isn't, and not having a way for women to express their grief and their emotions really in prison, and the whole thing of not touching. She got that changed at Coffee Creek to some

degree, so that there could be a time when a woman's mom dies, that she can a) express emotion, like cry, and that her friends can hold her, and it's not considered a--you're not getting written up for it being a sexual act. There are just awfully barbaric things going on, but she kind of kept track of them.

One thing that I didn't mention that was so important was just her whole--how she got to be so knowledgeable about the law. When she went to prison, she had the job of dusting the law books, and she goes, So I read the damn books. Then she--I think this is how it happened--she could go over to the men's prison and use the law library, and she would do research and stuff, and she just couldn't figure out why there wasn't a law library in the women's prison. It just--nobody got around to it, but she read the books and there was supposed to be, so she sued the prison, as an inmate. As I recall the story, she arrived in court in her orange jumpsuit to argue the case for the women to have a law library, and there were like three states' attorneys and their attaché cases and nice suits that walk in, and she argued the case and she won. The women's prison was fined like three thousand dollars a day until they got the law library set up.

Another thing about Carole is that she kept being friends with these people that--like two of the superintendents of the women's prison are a couple of her close friends. They laugh about this now, like what a stinkin' thing that was when she did that! But the law library got set up. And then she became the first inmate paralegal in the state--maybe the first women's inmate paralegal in the state of Oregon. I think that they must have had paralegals in the men's prison that were men. Many people said that she could have just passed her way through the first two years of law school with the knowledge that she had of the law. People in the legal profession were really impressed. I think she had one of those minds that, she reads something and never forgets it.

HP: I had read something where she said she knew she was gay at six years old. Was her being a lesbian something that was very--was it just who she was? Was she political about it? I know that she lost her partner when she was in her twenties, and that's a very traumatic experience; did you ever know, did she ever have other partners, or was Our New Beginnings like the partner she wound up having?

SF: She had another partner. I don't know for how long; for quite some time, I think. That was really--when that relationship ended, kind of mutually, not super happily I think, but--that was probably her last real relationship. But your question's a good one because really New Beginnings was her baby and her family, and it would have been really hard to be in a relationship with her because she was always--that was her first focus, of her attention. Yeah. I guess that's all I will say about that, but it's... She was never withholding about her sexual orientation. It was simply who she was, and people could like it or not.

HP: The question I always ask to kind of wrap things up is, Is there anything that you want to say that you haven't said about Carole Pope, Our New Beginnings, the prison industry, the Carole Pope oral history project...? I'll give you a moment to just... [pausing]

[1:48:13]

SF: Well. I mean, I can't think of any... There are a million more anecdotes that I could probably bring to mind, but I think Carole Pope was just a person who doesn't come along very often. It's good to pause and take notice a little bit. We're a very fast-moving society and this project was a way for me to pause and take notice and just have a look back at such a short amount of time that I knew her, really. And honor her in the doing of that, and what's been so fantastic is to meet other people and have this project for other people who are totally excited about her too, and they didn't even know her. So that's the beauty of this. It's a way of just passing on somebody's life, and really, in that way, just keeping them alive. We need a hell of a lot more Carole Popes in the world, and it makes--many a time, her voice is in my head, and she makes me just kind of find my bravery. Like, *Really?* You can't do that? Of course. Go ahead. Just do it. She may have that--someday, maybe other people will listen to--read her papers, listen to the tapes, watch the tapes, listen to interviews, and something will shift in them because of it.

And then, I will never forget the funny parts of her. Here she was, not--I'll just end with this. She stopped drinking all these many years ago, and sometimes I would think, for all the pain medication you're on, and the point you're at in your life, I don't even know why you're not drinking. Wouldn't drink. But she *loved* St. Patrick's Day. I could figure about the time that she would be calling and going, "Are you going to come up and take me to Jake's?" She always liked to go to Jake's, like the craziest place she could go to on St. Patrick's Day. So what she liked was to collect all the necklaces and all the stuff, and then go in and order--how would she? Oh, she would order an Irish coffee without the Irish! [laughing] And then bust out laughing. And she'd do this every year. So, you know--that was funny old Carole. So, yeah. I don't have anything more.

HP: Thank you.