

Carole Pope/Our New Beginnings Oral History Project

Narrator: Janice Wilson (JW)

Interviewer: Heather Oriana Petrocelli (HP)

Location: Portland State University Library, Portland, Oregon

Date: July 16, 2015

Transcribed by Rhiannon Cates, August 20 – October 16, 2015

Audited by Carolee Harrison, November 12, 2015

Total time: 01:16:39

HP: This is Heather Oriana Petrocelli interviewing the Honorable Janice Wilson on July 16th, 2015 in Portland at PSU, Portland State University. Janice, do I have permission to record you for the Carole Pope Oral History Project?

JW: You do.

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

JW: Janice Rose Wilson, April 14, 1954, Medford, Oregon.

HP: Ooo, an Oregonian!

JW: Native-born.

HP: I've been starting all the interviews basically asking people how they first came to know either Carole Pope or Our New Beginnings.

JW: I first met Carole in connection with a lawsuit sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union concerning the censorship of inmate mail. Rick Haselton was a lawyer at the law firm I had just joined, Lindsay, Hart, Neil, and Weigler; Rick and I had met when we were both clerking for federal judges. So in the fall of 1981, I came to the firm and Rick told me about this lawsuit he was working on for the ACLU and asked if I wanted to help and it sounded interesting so I said sure. He introduced me to some of the people who were involved. It involved, as I said, the censorship of mail at the Oregon prisons, and it was a class-action so there were representatives, both inmates at each of the prisons and people outside the prison who were corresponding with the inmates. Carole had started out, I believe—it was before my time—I believe she had started out as a plaintiff when she was still in the prison and she was a paralegal in the women's prison. She was out on parole when I first met her; she had switched over to being part of the class that was corresponding with the inmates. So Rick introduced me to Carole as well as all the inmates that were participating in the lawsuit. So that's how I met Carole.

HP: Do you have memories of your first impressions of Carole?

JW: She was very intense, clearly very bright, very articulate; I knew she was well-educated. But at the same time, a little rough around the edges. I mean she was an ex-con, she would call herself an ex-con, so there was that aspect too. She was very intriguing and although it wasn't directly related to the lawsuit, you couldn't meet Carole without learning very early on about her dream and her goal with Our New Beginnings.

HP: So by the time you met her, Our New Beginnings was already a little fledgling in her hand?

JW: It was. Again, this is before my time so this is based on Carole's story. But the story as Carole told it to me was that New Beginnings was formally, legally incorporated when Carole was still in prison. The paperwork forming the corporation was smuggled out of the prison by a part-time counselor who I will not name, you know to take to the Secretary of State's office so that it could be incorporated. So Our New Beginnings was incorporated when Carole was still in prison and I'm sure you've heard this story but I'll tell it too, if you like, about what the impetus was behind the formation of New Beginnings. But at the time I met Carole in the fall of '81, she was working for a living as a paralegal at a small law firm, English and Metcalf, she was an investigator and paralegal for them and was devoting all of the rest of her time to trying to get Our New Beginnings off the ground. At the time there was an organization called Northwest Ex-Offenders, which was men out of prison trying to help each other and support each other as folks got out. She knew some of them and they had some office space on the mezzanine floor of what was then the J.K. Gill Building downtown—it then became the Gladys McCoy Building later. They had given her a little corner of their mezzanine area and she had a desk and some boxes of donated clothing for women coming out of prison. So that was the status of Our New Beginnings when we first met.

HP: So, after you met her, Our New Beginnings already had a little bit of a history going. You said she was at the office of English and—is that Katherine English?

JW: Katherine English, yes, and Janet Metcalf.

HP: Metcalf.

JW: [agreement]

HP: How did you—the reason I'm asking is that I know that in her oral history she says that you became partially like the legal counsel for Our New Beginnings, so how did your relationship continue with her after the ACLU case was... closed? Is that the--?

JW: Well it took a while for the ACLU case to get resolved, but it was resolved ultimately by a consent decree. I was so intrigued and impressed with Carole's vision and goals with regard to New Beginnings; I wanted to help. That was part of the power that Carole had and part of the power that her vision had is that hardly anybody she met or talked to about it didn't say "Wow!" and want to help. She was, Carole Pope was the most charismatic person I have ever known personally in my life. I'm sure there are people out there who are equally or more charismatic in the wider world but in my personal experience in my life she is the most charismatic person I ever met. She just—the passion, the fire she had was contagious! You hear her talk about the problems of women coming out of prison and cycling over and over again which was why New Beginnings was founded in the first place. Carole herself came out on parole, violated that parole, was revoked and went back to prison. And she saw that happening over and over again; you know recidivism is a huge problem. The inmates themselves were talking about the lack of support and how could they help each other stay out once they got out. There was already this organization for men—that is with so much in the criminal justice system; the women were just completely overshadowed by the men! I've said before that the Oregon Women's Correctional Center, the women's prison in Salem, was both literally and metaphorically in the shadow of the Oregon State Penitentiary. And resources for job training and education and so on and so forth within the prison were just miniscule compared to what was available for the men, and the same thing was true for resources when people got out. You layer on top of that all the cultural and societal reactions to women offenders and it just is much more complicated. Men are much more likely to have family and community resources on the outside when they come out. Not all of them do, obviously they need a lot of support too, but they're more likely to have those resources to a family that welcomes them back or something, than women are. So the needs were great, the needs were somewhat different, and so there's this—how can we keep people, these women, from just recycling over and over and over again and actually reclaim their lives?

HP: So what did you, for your expertise, how did you help?

JW: Well, most of my assistance really early on wasn't legal. I mean it was moral support; Carole and I became involved personally. I helped her financially; I helped New Beginnings probably financially as New Beginnings grew. My expertise was litigation, which fortunately New Beginnings wasn't involved in, but I was at a firm that had lots of other expertise, so when it came to negotiating lease for space, you know, I got help with that at the firm, that kind of legal advice.

HP: She did say in her oral history at one point that you pulled them out of one of their first early financial crises with the personal support of paying phone bills off, that kind of thing.

JW: Probably! [laughing]

HP: I'm just curious, like kind of just backing something up just more out of curiosity because of what you have done for many years now as a judge—I know that she went in, like when she went in to her court date for theft and forgery, I know that the recommendation, which I'm not a hundred percent sure how that works, but the recommendation was supposed to be probation and restitution, but she physically walked in and got a ten-year sentence for a twenty-three hundred dollar theft and forgery charge. Just in your purview of what you've done, was that extreme? It sounds extreme from my point of view but I just don't know.

JW: Yes. Now, of course we have sentencing guidelines for felonies now that weren't in existence when Carole was convicted. So the judge had much broader discretion on the maximum penalty for each of the two counts that she faced, they were both C felonies, so the maximum penalty was five years, but for a first time offender, for a property crime, a C felony, that was extreme. That was very much extreme even for those days. Now, in those days too, a judge might say they want somebody to get some prison time, they knew that the parole board would apply the matrix and the judge—prosecutor would look good saying "Give her the maximum," the judge would look good *giving* the maximum, they both knew this person going to prison was going to be out in six months because they'd be matrixed by the parole board. So, part of what was behind the sentencing guidelines was truth in sentencing, for other reasons too. Even so, in those days, it really was extreme and obviously I wasn't there at the time, don't know what the details were, but the story that Carole told me, which rings true, is that the judge just thought "There is *no* excuse for someone with your level of education, your job skills," and so on and so forth to have committed this crime. Whether or not the fact that she was a lesbian and this was her partner from whom she had stolen the money was a factor for the judge, who knows.

HP: She thinks it was, I know that from her—

JW: Right.

HP: I'm also curious, if, I know it was before your time with Carole, but, in your experience—she had made a comment that they put a "H" on her uniform for homosexual. Is that something that you know is practiced in—

JW: I don't know, on a prison uniform, I don't know that I ever saw that. She refers to it on her—you'll hear the reference to her jacket and that doesn't mean uniform. So if she said "There was an 'H' on my jacket," that means her file, not her uniform. And there probably was that notation on the file. I never saw it in an inmate's file, personally, but it wouldn't surprise me at all. I would expect that probably in terms of inmate management that they did have that kind of a notation on inmate files.

HP: Decoding it for me! She does say on her jacket, I just always assumed that was clothing.

JW: Right. No, the jacket's the file.

0:12:17

HP: All right. So, those are things I just kind of wanted you to clear up just 'cause I've always been curious and when you have someone's expertise... Now moving back to Our New Beginnings, you and Carole became personally involved, you did help with what sounds like moral support, some financial support, what were your—did you have daily or weekly interactions with the actual, physical space of Our New Beginnings?

JW: Probably not daily, but probably at least weekly. It went from the little desk over in the corner on the mezzanine of the Gill Building to the—I don't even remember how this happened exactly, but they got a small house, I think it was in Northeast Portland. I was definitely more involved when they got the house at 18<sup>th</sup> and Hoyt. It was owned at the time by Robert Jarvis, for the old-timers that was "Beep, Beep Portland Jeep" Jarvis, who is an interesting fellow too. So that started out as a lease of that space and then substantial remodeling that was done and ultimately they acquired the deed to the house. And I was involved in that.

HP: No memories of the—it was on 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Alberta and Killingsworth—

JW: I remember being there once or twice, but I wasn't there every day or on a regular basis.

HP: Well, for the Hoyt house that you do have more vivid memories of, what are your memories of the physicality of Our New Beginnings?

JW: Well, it was mildly chaotic. It was whatever the antithesis of institutional—I mean, I mean that in obviously the living space, the women's rooms, the residences. But most of the stuff everywhere, office and rooms and everything else was donated, and so you had that kind of mish-mash but Carole's office was also full of stuffed animals as well as books and files and stuff all over everywhere because she was just always—she was not the most orderly person, let's put it that way.

HP: Did you get to know some of the women?

JW: I did, I did. That was a huge thing for me and in my life. I had a very sheltered upbringing. I think I had some cousins who had gotten in trouble with the law once upon a time or something, but basically I had a very straight and narrow, so to speak, upbringing and sheltered existence. So meeting and really getting to know some of these women involved in the criminal justice system was like, "Oh! They're just people." You know, they're people who

have very life stories than mine, made different choices, had different experiences, didn't have opportunities, and so on and so forth. But it was tremendously important to me in terms of it being a humanizing experience, if you will. And the other part of it that was so helpful to me, in getting to know a lot of the residents or clients personally was—that made a huge difference to me when I became a judge, was—I remember one day in particular I was sitting around with several of the women on the stairs or something, some Saturday work project; I don't know what it was. We were chatting and someone was asking me about my life, my work! And I talked about, you know, my daily and weekly routine, getting up and going to work in the law office, and you know, they were asking me how much vacation time I had and that kind of thing. And the reaction, this anxiety started rising in all these women, that felt so restrictive to them. They couldn't imagine having to do that all day, every day! And at the same time, I'm talking to them about, "Wow, when I drive down the street, if I see lights on a police car or anywhere behind me [gasp] you know, I'm like oh my gosh, have I done something wrong?" The whole idea of even being stopped by the police is just terrifying. I have been socialized the way we hope people are socialized! Right? And so for many of these women it was like "No big deal." I mean it's just no anxiety associated with it, or very little I should say. Nothing compared to what I had. It was part of their life, it was part of—everybody they knew had been arrested, been in jail, a lot of them had been to prison. So, the anxiety that we hope would be a deterrent just had no place for them. And I thought, "This is just fascinating!" and how people like me think that others will respond to in terms of changing their behavior or deterring behavior *does not apply*. And I learned from—something that Carole had told me, certainly a lot of her clients confirmed that especially those who were involved in prostitution, a street life, often associated with drugs and drug addiction—for them it wasn't rare that being arrested was a relief. It wasn't just a lack of anxiety; it was a relief. They got off the street, maybe away from a pimp, and got, as they say, "three hots and a cot." So, it was almost a respite for many of them. And for prostitution in particular, for that level of offense, they weren't going to prison and the jail terms weren't going to be very long. I thought, "Wow," it was a little eye-opener for me.

HP: Well then, I think a very natural way to go is: kind of talking about your career, because I'm curious, basically, how that window into that psyche, that reality of a completely different population, how that informed your work. I think I know from Rick's interview, that you were the first in your class at Willamette?

JW: Yep.

HP: So, I'm just curious, can you kind of take me through the journey of like—people become things for different reasons; what was your motivation to become a lawyer? Did you know you wanted to become a judge? And then, ultimately, how did getting that very intimate kind of relationship with those women inform, because you spent over two decades on the bench, right?

JW: I did, yes. Well, when I was in high school, a good friend of mine and classmate said to me one day: "You should be a lawyer. We should both be lawyers and we can practice together." I didn't know any lawyers, personally; there were no lawyers in my family. I knew Perry Mason and Bobby Kennedy, you know? [laughing] Those were my lawyers! And E.G. Marshall on *The Defenders* on television! But I thought: "Huh, that sounds intriguing." I mean, I was involved in student politics, I was on the debate team, I liked to argue in all kinds of other forums. [laughing] So, I thought—it sort of clicked that, "Oh! Law! Okay!" So off I went, I went to Willamette as an undergraduate. There was no particular pre-law major, but I knew that's where I wanted to go if I could get there. I went right through undergraduate, four years, and entered Willamette Law School and fortunately I did well. It was one of those, you know 'cause I did have this panic: "What if I'm no good at this? Then what am I gonna do?" I had the incredible opportunity to clerk for a federal judge for two years when I graduated. And this was for Otto Skopil, who when I started my clerkship with him, was the Chief Judge of the District Court for the District of Oregon which is the trial court. Partway into my clerkship, he was elevated to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. So, I got to work a year on the trial court with him and a year on the Ninth Circuit; it was just a phenomenal experience. And, of course, working for Otto Skopil *anywhere*, doing anything would have been an incredible experience. He was just a remarkable man and a remarkable judge. A lot of people think that either I knew I wanted to be a judge when I sought the clerkship, or the clerkship made me realize I wanted to be a judge, and that's not true, at least not consciously so. I mean a seed may have been planted, but I had no ideas that said, "Oh, I want to be a judge someday."

Instead, as I said, I went to work at the law firm. I had wonderful colleagues like Rick Haselton and others, and I was given fantastic opportunities as a baby lawyer, but it's all civil. It was all civil litigation; I did no criminal work. But as time went by, I know this sounds kind of odd but, as wonderful as the experiences were that I had, I started getting this nagging feeling that there was something else that I was supposed to be doing. Some people, by that time, were saying to me, or asking me, "Have you ever thought about being a judge? I think you'd be a good judge." [laughing] So, that got me thinking about whether that was something I would want to pursue and I talked to some judges about it. Now, there's a definitely a connection here with Carole Pope and that story, because I really believe I would not have become a judge but for Carole and *Our New Beginnings*. Working with Carole and *New Beginnings*, I met Mike Schrunk, the District Attorney, and some other rather powerful and important people in the community. I mean, Carole was hobnobbing with Arlene Schnitzer [laughing] and Jane Bryson; all kinds of folks! And it was Carole who introduced those folks to me. And because of what I saw with *Our New Beginnings* that I knew from that work, something about the corrections side and the *community* corrections side, what was going on in terms of parole and probation, work release in the community, and that kind of thing. So, I got involved, I was appointed to the Community Corrections Advisory Committee. In fact I became Chair of the Community Corrections Advisory Committee. So I learned quite a bit about the corrections side and sort of

that part of the criminal justice system from that side without ever actually having practiced any criminal law.

But because I knew Mike Schrunk, through that exposure, when I decided I wanted to explore maybe becoming a judge, I talked to Mike because they had a program in the District Attorney's office at that time—I don't remember what the formal name for it was, but the people called it "D.A. for a Day." It was designed to serve two purposes: one, to help out the D.A.'s office, but also to help out especially newer lawyers in the big firms doing civil litigation practice who never got to go to court. You know, they could spend big chunks of their career in the library and writing motions and maybe going to court to argue motions, but they never got to try a case. Part of what was going on was civil cases or trials were going away in general anyway, but it was a great fit! So these younger, newer associates could come in, pick up for a several week period, one day a week, pick up their files the evening before for a bunch of trials, misdemeanors, scheduled to be tried the next day, come in early the next morning, meet with the witnesses, who were mostly police officers, and go in to court and sort out with the defense attorneys what was going to happen! Some of them ended up in pleas and so on but usually, if you were lucky, you had some trials that came out of them. So you got your little—the trial that took a day, the misdemeanor trial. So even though by that time I was a partner and had been a partner at this firm and had tried some significant civil cases, I knew I was missing that piece, the criminal trial side. So I talked to Mike and I said, "Could I do the 'D.A. for a Day' program?" And he said sure, so I had the opportunity to actually get a little bit—fill that gap, that blank spot on my resume when it came time to apply to be a judge. I first applied to the court to be a judge in 1990.

I don't know if you want the background, but most, in Oregon, state judges are elected to six year terms. But the way most of us become judges in the first place is by appointment when there's a vacancy because people don't, generally, I mean it happens, but it's not common for somebody to run against a sitting judge. If that judge has done a decent job. It's kind of hard to unseat them. [laughing] So, anyway, there was a vacancy, Neil Goldschmidt was still Governor, I applied and, not surprisingly, didn't get it. Lots of people apply many, many times who are highly qualified and might never get to become judges, so there's a lot of luck. I always acknowledge that. Anyway, in fact, Roosevelt Robinson was appointed by Governor Goldschmidt to that vacancy. And then Barbara Roberts was elected and there was a vacancy that came up then in the spring of 1991 when Robert Kirkman was caught up in a bigamy scandal. [laughing] Anyway, so he stepped down and there was a vacancy on the District Court and I applied again, and I was the first judge appointed by Barbara Roberts to the District Court and then two years later there was a vacancy on the Circuit Court. Now, the District Court was consolidated with the Circuit Court several years ago, but at that time we had a District Court and a Circuit Court and so Governor Roberts appointed me again to the Circuit Court. But, not only did I have the support, at that point, of Mike Schrunk and other people that I had worked with in the community corrections side, but, you know, I knew—I mean, I had been involved in



a lot of bar activities and other community things and so on as well, but the introduction that I had to both those activities and those people, influential people, through Carole was quite significant. I mean, I met Barbara Roberts through Carole in the first place! [laughing] She knew all these people! So not only would I probably not have become a judge, but for that relationship, but that experience that I got with Carole and New Beginnings very much influenced how I viewed the world and the people who were appearing before me.

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HP: [pausing] Sorry, I'm just thinking about just the implications of something like that; it makes it a very profound thing in its own way. So, just for timeline thing, you guys met in '81—when did you guys part ways?

JW: It was kind of an amorphous process, so that's a little hard to pin down, because she had moved—we were no longer living together for several years before it was pretty clear that... we were done, the relationship was really over at the personal level. And that was pretty clear by 1990.

HP: So, your relationship in a way did span almost the entire history of Our new Beginnings though.

JW: Mhm.

HP: Did she, when you were appointed, like, I'm just curious about your, you know, because you have the—

[phone ringing]

JW: Oh, I'm sorry.

HP: [laughing]

JW: That's mine; I apologize. I should have thought of that before we started; put that on your checklist!

HP: [laughing]

JW: [phone stops ringing] I'm so sorry.

HP: That's okay, it's added to my checklist for the future! [laughing] I was...what was I asking? I was asking about your guys' relationship, it went for almost the length of Our New Beginnings... what was I asking? Did I ask the question?

JW: No.

HP: Darn! Well I guess what I'm curious about, ultimately, is: you got to know a side of her that no one I've talked to got to know, because you had a personal relationship with her in a different kind of way. The stories I get of Carole are—you say certain things that absolutely almost everybody else has said, you know, the charisma, the fierceness but with the playful side. So I'm curious that when Our New Beginnings started to fall apart in '91, which is the same year you were being appointed to the bench, were you guys still in contact, like was she happy for you? Did you guys talk about—

JW: Oh she was thrilled, she was my biggest fan and probably happier than anybody else when I got that appointment. Yeah, she was beside herself. I got little congratulatory gifts from her and from New Beginnings, you know, for wishing me well on my way.

HP: I'll go back and ask you more questions about Our New Beginnings, I'm just curious of your point of view on it, but New Beginnings fell apart shortly after that—do you have memories of when you first did hear that it was kind of “closing?” For lack of a better term.

JW: Well, I knew that there was a struggle. Things were never easy for New Beginnings or, frankly, a lot of programs like it. I mean getting it started, getting people interested, getting grant money, getting—establishing the credibility for, eventually for contracts, for work release and those services. New Beginnings got a grant from the Oregon Community Foundation, seed money grant that was enormously helpful in getting started and, I'm sorry, from the Fred Meyer Foundation! I'm sorry, but she knew Judith Rooks and other folks on the Oregon Community Foundation; she knew all those people too. But, yeah, no, Fred Meyer was enormously helpful! But, seed money means seed money, it means that we're going to help you get going. This is not intended to be ongoing operational funds that you can count on forever. We're going to help you get on your feet, once you're on your feet you're going to be finding the money from elsewhere. Which is sometimes hard to do! And even though grant money from other sources is, for operational expenses, is often available on an ongoing basis, I mean the way the world works is: sometimes you're today's shiny, new thing that everybody wants to give to, and then you're not the shiny—not that you've done anything wrong or haven't done exactly what you'd do with the money or aren't showing great successes, but just because you're not the shiny new thing anymore and another shiny new thing has come along. It's harder to keep the money coming. And on the contract side, for example providing work release and treatment and so on for the residents, it was difficult to get contracts for the length of service that Carole thought was essential. She would often use the word “Band-Aid” and

she'd say, "I will not do Band-Aids! I refuse to do Band-Aids! There are no 'ninety day wonders!" That was another one of her phrases. "You know I won't do those kinds of things! It's not going to be effective and I don't want a contract that limits me, is only going to pay me to provide those limited services." So she was constantly fighting to get contracts that provided things more extensively.

And there were problems too because I think that Carole's view—and of course you know what Carole herself said about it—she felt that she was betrayed by the government agencies that were contracting with her to provide these services and they were just sort of using Our New Beginnings temporarily while they were building all these prisons and once the prison beds were there, they needed to fill those beds and weren't interested in having people at New Beginnings anymore. There's probably an element of truth to that, you know, as there often is, the way things go, but I think it was much more complicated than that. It was, at a certain point a program like New Beginnings can't just run on the energy of one woman and conversely at some point, one woman, even a woman with the energy that Carole Pope had, can't sustain it herself on her charisma. And people expect things to be a little bit more "regularized" and institutionalized, if you will, which is something Carole always balked at horribly, you know, that was just not her style. And so that caused, you know, frictions and tensions. The ideal I think that everybody had would have been to get a little more regularized or institutionalized; figure out what's working: "Can we figure out what this is? Can we write it down? Can we describe it? So that other people can come in and run it? And do the same thing?" And that was very hard to do. It's hard to, you know, pin things down. Carole wanted it, but she also didn't want it. I mean, it was so much a part of her identity that I think she had this horrible tension in her own life about that, about bringing people in and letting them take over what needed to be taken over.

She, as I think you know from other people, had a great deal of difficulty taking care of herself. That was apparent early on in our relationship. I mean she was just running herself ragged because she smoked like a chimney. And, but, you know, she'd get a call in the middle of the night from a client who was in trouble and needed to be picked up someplace, and Carole would go! And not pay attention to her own needs, her nutrition, or anything, I mean she lived on nicotine and caffeine and she was still drinking actually in early days. She stopped. I don't know that she ever really dealt with her own alcoholism. She stopped drinking—that's a different thing. But I think she was afraid if she stopped, New Beginnings would fall apart and I think she's afraid she didn't know what would happen, become of herself. That was what *she* was. It was so much part of her identity and I think being a martyr became part of her persona and identity. So, I think it's not uncommon for an organization that is founded on somebody who's incredibly charismatic, that a lot of, I would guess a lot of those organizations aren't sustainable. So that was part of it. Part of it was the political part, and the financial part, part of it was not being the shiny new thing anymore, other organizations picking things up. Some of it was—New Beginnings being, if you will, a victim of its own success in terms of educating people

about needs, in terms of persuading people about what was necessary for treatment programs, especially for women. In terms of identifying the fact that the vast majority of the women in the criminal justice system, regardless of what their crime was, had been the victims of abuse, sexual abuse, often as children. And that you could do all the regular drug treatment you want, you can do all the regular whatever treatment you want, but if you don't address that underlying issue and acknowledge that and take it on, you're not going to get anywhere. And other treatment programs started recognizing that. So some of the other drug treatment programs and so on, substance abuse treatment programs were starting to address some of those other issues too. I would call that a success! But it means there was sort of that competition, if you will, for what New Beginnings was providing.

You know Carole's view of what she wanted, what she wanted to be able to provide. I recently came across a radio interview that she did at New Beginnings' tenth birthday. She described her vision of finding a place in the country, a rural setting, and having, she called them "her women," out there for like, you know, eighteen months and then bringing them back to a house in the city for six months to kind of get that acclimation piece. But, boy, you think you're going to find someplace, how are you going to get the funding for two years to provide that kind of support for people? I'm not saying it wasn't a great idea—it would have been a wonderful thing—but when that's where the vision's going, and she's pressing for longer and longer, it just wasn't going to happen.

HP: Working counter to the reality of how our society is structured now. When—and not to make it too dramatic, but—kind of your career was hitting a high moment, while hers was hitting a very low moment, did you worry about her, what she would do next? Or was she the kind of person that you didn't—you just knew she'd find something else?

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JW: Well, you know, oddly, I may have been one of those people who, even seeing the handwriting on the wall, just couldn't quite believe it was actually going to completely go away. [laughing] Somehow, there was going to be some new savior who was going to come in. I hadn't—it's not that I had withdrawn my support; New Beginnings had gone way beyond my being the person who picked up a bill now and again or made sure that Carole was okay, even if she couldn't draw a salary. It was way past that. But Carole could always pull a rabbit out of a hat and I had, by the time things were *that* bad, I mean I was still in contact with her, but not nearly as frequently, and I was not as involved with New Beginnings affairs; I wasn't on the board anymore. I was kind of in an advisory, much more removed, advisory capacity. But I think, in my memory, the critical thing was that she—New Beginnings needed some additional money to make the last payment on the house when they bought it or something? I don't remember how it worked. And it just wasn't there; it wasn't to be had. They had to give up the house. When you give up the house, everything's gone in terms of any opportunities for

contracts, work release, there are no beds, and so on and so forth. So, I think I didn't realize how bad it was until it really went. And of course Carole's health problems were getting, from what I heard, worse and worse, things coming and going, but—

HP: Yeah, I was curious, well you had used, to kind of like tie a couple questions I have into one kind of, you had mentioned the energy of one woman and kind of like this sort of cult of personality, an entire thing built on it. I had read that she had several strokes and a heart attack, did any of that happen in your time?

0:42:02

JW: Yes. Well I don't know about several but she had at least one stroke when we were together, in fact not very far into it because I told she was running on caffeine and cigarettes and not taking care of herself. We had a conversation and I said, "Carole you can't keep doing this! You're *going to have a stroke!*" And within the next year, she had her first stroke.

HP: Did it change her behaviors?

JW: Nope.

HP: It's interesting because I—what I wanted to ask you about, but listening to you talk, I wanted to ask you: when she went to prison, this is a woman who had—she was a child prodigy on the piano, she had two master's degrees, was it Music and German Literature? She goes to prison and her identity quickly, instead of becoming this accomplished woman, becomes the ex-con.

JW: Right.

HP: But she finds a purpose. When she gets out she has a drive and a passion and an anger, even a rage I think she describes it, for this cause. So you actually got to be a person very close to her. What I want to ask is what was it like watching that bloom, but it seems like that blooming came at a cost to the human who was blooming, if that makes sense.

JW: Yes, it's a fire and it's consuming. And I don't know, as I said, she's the most charismatic person—I've not known personally any other creative, any other *geniuses* in that way. She was a genius! There was no question in my mind. But from books and movies, I think that's actually may not be that uncommon for that passion to consume the person who has it. But you talk about the change in her persona and that's true, but part of what was amazing and fascinating about Carole is that she still had those sides. I mean, I learned early on, she told me early on, that you know, she'd play the piano, I heard that she was teaching piano when she was convicted, committed her crime and was convicted. But I didn't really, you know, I thought, "Oh

well, okay, there's some people who are kind of musical in my family." And then, one day, we went to a piano store, into a piano store. And Carole had been into this piano store before. I went with her because when you see the pictures, she's kind of scruffy looking! And rough looking! You know, I could imagine that the first time she walks into this piano store, somebody steps in front of the grand and you know, [extending arms] says, "Can I help you?" But because she had been in there before, she didn't have that kind of reaction and instead, she sits down and starts playing. And it was just amazing. I mean it was amazing. My jaw dropped. Not just, you know, she could sit down and be pretty good, she sits down and starts playing the Rachmaninoff piano concerto. So, again, that was part of her attraction for me! Honestly! It was like [whispering] "Wooooow!" But because she could speak. She wasn't just the con or the ex-con, although she could play that because for real she had been there, perfectly, she knew the language, she knew the register. You know, she could speak that way which gave her enormous credibility with the clients. But it's the person that sat down at the piano that played the Rachmaninoff piano concerto; who developed the relationship with Arlene Schnitzer and developed credibility with Mike Schrunk; because she could speak as this highly educated, very articulate, intelligent person depending on where she was.

Which is why, I'm sure, many people had had the idea of something like New Beginnings, developing some kind of support network for women coming out of prison, had seen the need for it, but couldn't carry it out because they couldn't develop the credibility with the sources they need, either for funding or with judges, who with early on she'd go to court with a client, encouraging the judge to put this person on probation and let Carole work with her, let her work with New Beginnings. She knew how to talk to the judge and establish that credibility. And of course her actions were essential to maintaining that credibility and she did have it. She speaks in this radio interview about sort of sitting on the fence, or being on a fence all the time with regard to her actions. And that is—the clients had to trust her to come with her and stay with her. But the judges had to trust her. And the parole and probation officers had to trust her. That if there was a problem, if there was, you know, misbehavior, if there were violations, Carole wouldn't tolerate it. She would, as she'd say: "drop the dime." And I heard Carole say more than once to a client, you know—if New Beginnings' success and Carole's success boils down to anything, it's this—this was true. Carole would say to the client: "I will do anything for you. I will do everything I can to help you." Stuff that was beyond anything anybody should have been doing! [laughing] Carole didn't know boundaries very well. But: "...anything I can to help you. But if you screw up, I will drive you back to prison myself." So she scared them to death. On the one hand she had them because they knew she meant it when she said she'd do whatever she could to help. She would literally give somebody the shirt off her back and obviously she did! At a tremendous personal cost to herself and her health. But it was also true that she'd pick up the phone.

What I later learned, this was also a really important lesson for me as a judge, was that those weren't always conflicting statements. Let me try to explain that. I saw both, of women who'd

gone through New Beginnings and also, a couple of times, I was on a panel once with some folks, women, who had not been to New Beginnings, but they were talking about—it was an education setting, a panel—and they were talking about what made a difference when you were successful and when you weren't. You know, if you'd been to prison and you were out and you violated your parole and went back in, you came back out, you were ultimately successful—what made the difference in your success? I mean, is it just burnout? Which sometimes it is; people age out of the system. But what makes a difference? And in all these contexts there was a theme that I heard. It was, "Someone cared about me." And clearly you see that that would be what the people that were at New Beginnings would say and that was Carole, and other members of her staff, who really deeply cared. But sometimes, someone would say it was a judge or it was a probation officer, but here's the part I'm getting to: they'd say, "This person cared about me enough to send me to prison." Now doesn't that sound strange. But what I took from that, what I learned from that was it meant that, "This person cared about me enough and thought enough of me and *believed* enough that I could do better. That they held me to that standard." And when I say that influenced, definitely influenced me as a judge and how I dealt with people I sentenced and people I had on probation.

And if I could just take a minute to—I mean it's not a New Beginnings story but it comes directly out of this. I was leaving the courthouse one day over the noon hour to go out for lunch and I heard somebody say, it was a guy, say "Judge Wilson? Are you Judge Wilson?" and I'm like, "Who wants to know?" [laughing] You do have to worry a little bit about your personal safety. And I said "Yeah," and the guy looked kind of familiar but I couldn't remember his name and he was wearing you know, chef's hound's-tooth check pants and a white shirt and, anyway, he told me his name and he said, "You sent me to prison, you revoked my probation and sent me to prison. And it was the best thing that ever happened to me; I want to thank you. Can I give you a hug?" I've actually had some other stories that weren't quite that dramatic, but similar, along those lines. So we talked for a few minutes and I remembered that case and I remembered what happened and when he was in, and it wasn't the first time he had violated his probation. He's in court and his mother's there and his mother's like "Oh, my poor baby, and he just you know, he's not, don't send him to prison, he's not a criminal!" Which was an occasion, one of many occasions when I had to say, "You don't understand. You know, people are in prison who've committed crimes. Your son is by definition a criminal; he's been convicted of a crime. Being a criminal doesn't mean you are a worthless person." But clearly, she had been trying to protect him and defend him, but also she does not hold him accountable for his own behavior. And he reminded me that at that hearing, he said, "My mom was not being helpful to me and you turned to me and you said: 'I know you can do better than this! I know you're capable of doing better than this and not engaging in that behavior that you're doing. I'm sending you to prison not because I think you're worthless and we're going to throw you away; I'm sending you to prison because I'm holding you accountable! I know you're better!'" He said that was his life changing experience. I won't say I changed his life, but that's because I learned that lesson from Carole and from New Beginnings. I think that what she did and the approach she took, I

mean mine was actually much more, you know, intimate and direct and personal with Carole and with the other residents but I think it influenced a lot of judges.

0:52:56

HP: I know there's stories of judges calling the house and asking, you know, calling Carole and asking, "I have so and so," kind of, "What would you do?" Did you ever, were you ever privy to any of those kind of conversations of people asking her opinion on a particular case?

JW: Oh I knew she—I mean she didn't give me details but I knew she did get calls from judges about clients or somebody that she had.

HP: For the, kind of consumptive fire as you kind of put it, did it spill into your personal life and like did clients come to your home or did you always go to Our New Beginnings, to that home?

JW: Clients rarely came to our house. I mean it's not *never* but it was rare. It was mostly you know my, or our, going to New Beginnings and having contact there and elsewhere.

HP: For a number of the former clients, some of whom became employees of Our New Beginnings, I know that holidays were a really special, big thing for them. They talk about stories about how it was clearly a drive in Carole to have these very festive celebrations. I know that she was quoted in her oral history of saying she wanted to give them a childhood that many of them didn't have, basically. So my question to you, as someone who has the intimacy with Our New Beginnings, the intimacy with Carole, was it also, was she trying to—I know she had a very, you know, using the scare quotes: a very "tragic" childhood with the abuse and the alcoholism—was she giving herself the childhood she never had?

JW: Absolutely. I mean, I shouldn't say absolutely. I think so; it certainly looked that way to me. She wanted it not only for them but for herself and much of what she did, I think she was trying to save herself. I don't think she realized that but it was trying to make sure that... You can't undo what happened in somebody's childhood or prevent what happened in their childhood, but to finally have the redemption, the healing, that she never had.

CP: Was she playful as a person?

JW: Oh! [laughing] Another one of the incredible parts of her really complex personality is that she could be very playful and very childlike. I said her office was full of stuffed animals; that wasn't just, you know, the "therapeutic stuffed animals for the clients" stuff—that was Carole! Especially if it was purple! [laughing] People would give her things, but she would see them and want them and have them for herself! And she loved puppies and kittens! [laughing] Very much, very much that way. Often very, I would say childlike, sometimes *childish* a little bit. It was like "Whoa! What's this about?" But she just did everything full heartedly, not just wholeheartedly: *full* heartedly. I think there's a—it's a little bit different quality there.



HP: I had heard stories that she either raised, had, something with horses? Did she have horses?

JW: She didn't have any horses when we were together.

HP: Had you heard stories about them?

JW: I heard stories that she had horses when she lived in Missouri or something. I mean, you know, before. And she had an affinity for horses but it wouldn't surprise me if, you know, she had a friend who had acreage and had a horse and gave one to Carole or Carole got one or something! It wouldn't surprise me at all! Wouldn't surprise me at all. But I don't remember; either I never knew the details or I don't remember. I couldn't keep up with all that stuff.  
[smiling]

HP: Well how about rocks? Did she collect rocks when you were together?

JW: Oh, yes! Yes. M'hm.

HP: Is it something she spoke about? Or is it just something that you just knew? That Carole was into rocks.

JW: Well, how about seeing them? You know, the thunder eggs, you know, things she'd pick up, the crystals, the geodes, especially, again, amethyst! Had to get amethyst 'cause it's purple! You know, she'd have those things all over.

HP: Was it just something that she—in the analysis of someone in collecting something, was there anything behind it that she ever spoke about? Or is it just a connection to the Earth and the Sun?

JW: Not that she ever spoke about to me, so I couldn't analyze it for you.

HP: Did you guys have pets? Or you had Our New Beginnings?

JW: We had *many* cats.

HP: [laughing]

JW: We had—what's the poster day? "I'm one cat short of being a cat lady?" [laughing] We might not have been one cat short! Yeah. At one time we had seven cats.

HP: Did Our New Beginnings have pets?

JW: You know, there was a small dog who lived at New Beginnings. I can't remember the dog's name right now. It was a little blonde dog that was there for a while. I can't remember if there were any cats there. It's always more challenging with cats because more people have allergies.

HP: I know that people—Carole became like "Nana"...

JW: Yes!

HP: ...to a number of people?

JW: Yes, yes.

HP: Was that something that you also had, a connection with some of the children of Our New Beginnings?

0:58:43

JW: The first human birth that I ever witnessed, the *only* human birth I ever witnessed, was a New Beginnings client delivering her baby at OHSU [Oregon Health & Science University]. I had known the client and so she was comfortable with my being there. When she went into labor I went with Carole and there was somebody, another staff person, I think, who was there with her. It was kind of one of those classic moments, too, where labor's very painful and she's saying, "I can't do this!" and everybody's saying, "It's too late for that, sweetheart!" [laughing] It was, boy, again, all the clichés apply to what an incredible miracle it was. But, that was the only birth I was there for but I was definitely around for when other clients had children. There was one who was, you know, called at the time a "crack baby," with some of those incessant crying, difficult to comfort, behavioral things that Carole decided to take on personally. But yeah, she was very much attached to those children and they to her.

HP: When a person like Carole or an organization like Our New Beginnings like leaves your life in a big way, like, you know, not being a daily or weekly part of your life, was it a felt loss to you? Did you miss anything about Our New Beginnings?

JW: Yes. It's complicated, but it's all complicated. One of the things about New Beginnings and my role with Carole and New Beginnings—and Carole and I actually talked about this—is that I was sort of the ballast in the ship, or, we had two other analogies we used: I was the anchor, or the tail on the kite. You know all of those things are trying to provide—are actually trying to hold something back and provide balance. I think the kite one is one that Carole and I used more than once because a kite without a tail will fly, but it will fly all over everywhere and be not very stable and hard to direct, and so on and so forth and the tail kind of helps [gestures; laughing] So that really was a lot of my role and I was proud to help Carole to help New Beginnings in that way, to be a part of this thing that I thought was amazing and phenomenal. That was a great gift to me and my life to be *able* to help in some little way. But you know, being the anchor or the tail on the kite is kind of a drag! [laughing] Metaphorically and emotionally as well as physically! And it was hard because Carole could not be confined or you know, "kept," or, frankly, even really stabilized. So it was extremely wearing. Glad to be helpful when I could be, but, you know, Carole wouldn't always take my advice, often *wouldn't* take my advice, and to see her being consumed by that fire, to see her being unable to take care of herself; you can't be very long, you can't be forever with somebody who can't take care of herself. She can't really be a full participant in a relationship and it became obvious to me that

was, you know, that was the way it was going to be. You've probably talked to other people who were close to Carole who felt that that relationship sort of burned them out. They just couldn't deal with that intensity all the time. So that happened to me, but it's hard not to miss being with and around that kind of energy or program that really is making those kind of miracles. If I actually hadn't read some of the material, know that it's out there, sometimes I would think, "I must have dreamt this stuff up," because that couldn't have really happened. You know, the Hollywood folks coming and talking about doing a movie. I do remember sitting around joking about who was going to play me! [laughing]

HP: Who would you cast?

JW: I wanted Vanessa Redgrave to portray me in the movie.

HP: Good choice, excellent choice.

JW: But anyway, so we were joking about those things, but you know, the *Time* magazine stuff, the "unsung hero" Christian Science Monitor articles, and—wow, wow! But, it's not that I missed sort of being around fame so much as that positive energy and that—boy, seeing lives changed and saved in a really profound way.

HP: Yeah, being too close to that fire; it gives lives, it takes lives and you stand too close you get burned.

JW: Yep.

HP: For what Our New Beginnings did, like my understanding is that it had, you know: mental health counseling for drugs, alcohol, incest, prostitution, it had parenting classes, it had job training, it had financial literacy, it had life skills classes, it had medical and dental, which I'm assuming for many of those things listed it was the first time that some of these women ever had any of that in their adult life or maybe, potentially, in their life period. I don't know exactly everything, you know and I'm not a hundred percent sure how the judicial system works, but from what you did on the bench, and knowing that Our New Beginnings was completely gone by '92, maybe it trailed on a little bit with Carole's activities into '93—

JW: [agreement]

HP: Do you see or feel there is a great need for something like that today?

1:05:15

JW: Oh absolutely. I mean there's just no question. You can see a defendant, whether it's at—especially at sentencing in the first instance, but then if they're on probation and problems develop, that there are enormous needs here. For all kinds of treatment and education and so on and so on and so forth. Easy to say, hard to do. And, what do we do, as judges, is put somebody on probation and list a number of conditions: "Well, you need to do this kind of—you have to successfully complete this treatment, do this kind of counseling, get this, do that,

do that, do that.” But there aren’t the resources out there to get them! To help them! To find them! And you got probation officers who are overwhelmed, focused for—for reasons of policy decisions; I’m not going to get into criticizing those—on more violent offenders because of the community safety risk. They’re not spending the time on the lower-level offenders and as time went by, especially as budget cycles went as they did and they went down, resources and support for the lower-level offenders got worse. Even having a probation officer with the time to help somebody find, to hook them up to the resources, even if those programs are out there—that was one of the other wonderful things about New Beginnings: one-stop shopping! Instead of “Okay, where do I find a program for this? And where do I find a program for that?” People try to develop resource lists, but things change and “Who’s got a bed now for this? Who’s got an opening for that? What does it cost? Are there subsidies for a particular kind of program?” I don’t know if I can navigate that stuff sometimes! I really do, I think about that.

One time, early on in my days as a judge, I just thought, “I’m gonna pretend that I was just sentenced for some misdemeanor, D.U.I.I. for example, driving under the influence, and I know what the standard conditions are, and I’m going to go see what it’s like to try and sign up for this stuff and comply.” Go down and stand in line at the window on the first floor, and of course they didn’t have the right paperwork, but anyway I’d say, “I’m supposed to do blah blah blah,” and see what kind of information I got and how hard it was to navigate. And it was hard! [laughing] And that’s with my level of education and that’s for me not having all kinds of other stresses in my life, including having just been convicted of a crime and told to do all these things. We know that having a lot of stress impairs peoples’ cognitive abilities, regardless of how well they measure up. You *lose* a whole bunch of I.Q. points when you’re under stress, so it’s harder to navigate. So, my gosh, I saw the lack of that kind of thing *many* times as a judge.

HP: Well, kind of wrapping up sort of here, getting towards the end, I have a number of questions of just like—what is the most profound memory you have of an actual event happening at Our New Beginnings?

JW: Oh, boy.

HP: Or is it more just a sea of memories?

JW: It is! I can’t—you know it wasn’t a big—I mean it was momentous to get a new contract, but the biggest part of the memories are the, you know, the emotional memories.

HP: This might be a harder one even—make ‘em harder here—how would you verbalize how knowing Carole changed you?

JW: [long pause] Hm. Well I’ve already described in many ways how eye-opening it was but... [pause] and how it changed my perspective as a judge and a person. Hm. How am I different? What I could say is, you know: “I got to touch that flame. I got to touch that flame.” That was pretty amazing. Part of me feels guilty for not having sort of hung in there and—I don’t think I could have saved New Beginnings even if I did—but I’m also grateful that I got to be a part of

Carole's life and a part of New Beginnings and see that really up close and personal. So, I did, you know, as I said, I sort of feel guilty about part of that, but part of it is in hindsight too and looking back and thinking, "You know, I helped." I'm not saying that somebody else wouldn't have been there, and New Beginnings couldn't have made it, and Carole wouldn't have done what she was able to do if I hadn't been there personally, if it hadn't been me. But it was me.

HP: It was you!

JW: I did have a role. Carole saved lots of lives and I helped! [laughing]

HP: Did you guys remain friends?

JW: We did. We didn't have a lot of contact, you know, we'd talk on the phone from time to time, saw each other occasionally but not very often, especially as she got more ill. We'd get together for coffee but... those were even—the phone calls were emotionally exhausting! [laughing]

HP: Could you see, like I mean, if you did have that contact, did you see a decline in health in her?

JW: Oh yeah, yeah. She just... looked... horrible.

HP: Did it kind of happen quickly after she lost New Beginnings?

JW: [sighing] Well, I'd say the decline had started actually before that. And who knows what was cause and effect in that, whether it was—as I said, she could have pulled a rabbit out of the hat yet another time, but for the fact that her health was declining or it was the loss, it just was such a blow—I mean no question it was such a blow; it's what did her in. But yeah, it was definitely more precipitous after New Beginnings closed.

HP: What was your take away for her memorial service? Did it seem like a representative gathering of her life? A celebration of her life?

1:12:46

JW: [pause] Yeah, I thought it was very well done. In some ways I think the scale was too small for who Carole was and what she did. I mean, really it should have been in the Schnitzer auditorium. [smiling] So, the things that were said and the materials that were out there for people to see and look at, you know, it was fine as far as it went. And I was so grateful that people organized it and did that, but really, for who she was and what she did, it should have been even bigger. It should have been at the Memorial Coliseum! [laughing]

HP: Two more questions—actually, no, I have one more question.

JW: Okay.

HP: Which basically is that do you have any—if you were telling the history of either Carole or New Beginnings, how would you write it? What is something that I’m not asking you that I should have asked?

JW: [pause] I can’t think of anything; I think you’ve been very thorough.

HP: Yeah, I mean I have this, you know, having you sitting across the table is one of those things where I’ve asked so many of the other questions, but you know everything from a completely different—you know the *home life*. Everyone knows that fire, that went through in her purple shirt in her purple chair that either was a great chair for some people or a horrifying chair to other people. [laughing]

JW: [laughing] Mhm.

HP: But you know, you got to know the woman in a different way. I guess I do have a question—

JW: Mhm.

HP: Did she ever just break down? Or is that something she wouldn’t allow herself to have?

JW: You see, “just break down,” to me that is the description of someone who is just sobbing in a puddle, which I never saw Carole do. Did she cry sometimes? Yeah, she did, but very rarely very publicly. You’d see more tears of anger than tears of frustration or sadness, that loss, in a public way. But the other part was there. I’m not a psychologist, but I think that part of it was—I mean publically Carole had to keep that tough persona, but even at the personal level, I think she had so much, so many wounds, so many internal injuries, that she was never able to really touch that. Even at that personal level, she couldn’t fully go there; I think she was afraid she would never come back out. So even with me and I think I got to see more of that than anybody else did, but even there she couldn’t really go there.

HP: Do you have any final comments on Our New Beginnings or Carole?

JW: Nope.

HP: Well you said plenty; it’s awesome. Thank you.

1:16:38