

**INTERVIEW WITH A LESBIAN
(1970s)**

David: We are aware that there is a great deal of prejudice in our society toward homosexuals, and I wonder what impact this prejudice has on your life.

Carol: The fact that being lesbian or a homosexual is against the law has a very real definite impact on my life. When I commit a homosexual act, I am subject to \$5000 fine and 20 years imprisonment in the State of New Jersey. Although legal enforcement of that law on women is not very great, the possibility is always there. My house can be busted into. I can be taken off to prison. So that is terribly oppressive. Plus the thought that your life-style is illegal is oppressive.

David: It must require a good deal of courage or strength in order to persist in that life-style with the attitude of society against you.

Carol: Right. And I think that this is where we get into a choice situation. I don't believe that people can choose to be or not to be homosexual. But I do believe that they have a choice as to whether or not they will live what is a natural life-style to them or not. Now, there are many people in the society who are not capable of putting up with the pressures that the society presents to us and therefore lead unnatural heterosexual lives. I have chosen not to do that.

David: Some psychologists discuss how homosexuals are less psychologically healthy than heterosexuals. It strikes me that the neurosis maybe a result of the prejudice and the oppression, not the result of the homosexuality.

Carol: I think the first part of your question is interesting. I don't believe that I have read very many studies where these gifted individuals have analyzed healthy people. I think they usually take their samplings from people who are in therapy. Now when you talk to a person who is in therapy, admitting that she is lonely, it is very easy to say, "Well the person must be lonely because they are homosexual." I totally reject that. I think that, if some of these gifted people were to interview homosexuals that are participating in their life-style openly and honestly, you would get a very different point of view. And I do believe that you are right. I do think that the oppression is incredibly difficult to put up with, and frankly there is a lot of times I walk away from a speaking engagement and I will say to myself for an instant, "Wow! Am I really fucked up or what?" I know that I'm not, but because my head and my heart tell me that I'm not. But when you are exposed to constantly being told that you are wrong, every once in a while you get to the point where you ask yourself, "Are you?"

David: Have you found yourself more distrustful or suspicious of other people or defensive because of the anticipation of rejection?

Carol: I haven't personally. I know a lot of people who have. I think it is totally irrational that people don't recognize the fact that I am a full-grown woman and I am capable of deciding what is and what is not good in my life. I think that the whole assumption that I have to follow a norm is insanity. I think that society has the responsibility of making space for people who feel that they don't want to go along with the masses.

David: How do your parents, your brother and sister react to the fact that you are a homosexual?

Carol: I have been gay for about 15 years now. So I will have to go back about 10 years. In 1960, when the Cubans decided that they were going to have missiles in Cuba, there was a real scare as to what was going to happen. My background pretty much pressured me into joining the service. I joined the United States Marine Corps. I signed up for two years. I didn't complete that period of enlistment because, about two months prior to my discharge, I was asked whether or not I was a lesbian, and I said very frankly, "Yes, I am." I was given an undesirable discharge. They sent a letter home to my folks explaining to them that I was no longer in the Marine Corps because I was a lesbian, so that, by the time I got home, my mother was sitting at the kitchen table, as it were, with this thing in her hands. Now, I think that that is criminal, frankly. I think that my rights were not respected. I think that it should have been up to me to decide when to approach my parents. It was completely taken out of my hands. It acted as a catalyst and it probably kept us from fooling around for a couple of years. We were forced to sit down and discuss my sexuality at that point. My mother and father felt that it was totally their fault. This is another level of oppression, actually, because in effect what society is saying is, not only will you be oppressed personally, but your parents will suffer very heavy oppression because of your sexual orientation.

David: Also some guilt.

Carol: Some guilt! The guilt trips that they went through were absolutely incredible. The problem is that too many of these people who come out with theories about aggressive mothers and passive fathers are listened to and believed. It's incredible how built in that is. I have a sister who is my senior and a brother who is my senior and they are both heterosexual, and yet my mother felt that somewhere along the line she changed her approach to me, and it was all her fault. My father really didn't know how to cope. I don't think he knew really what lesbianism was. This is true for many men. Men don't know what lesbians are, and I think the reason for that is that women are not supposed to have any sexual identity at all, even on a heterosexual level. So to have a homosexual sexual identity is just beyond words. You just don't approach it. It took us about three years to rap about it and to talk about it and to scream about it and for me to assert myself and to say "Ma, I'm sorry, but I'm a big kid now, and I have to do what I have to do," and her wailing and thinking that I did it for spite. It was just incredible. The one thing, I

must say, is that my folks never threw me out, and, when it came down to the very basis of our relationship, the fact was that they loved me and that they supported me as much as they were capable of, and they do much more now than they did before.

David: Do you feel that they have dealt with the problem now?

Carol: When you say deal with it, I think that they have very little to deal with. They do have to deal with the fact that their daughter is not part of the majority of sexual people in this country. But other than that, there is really nothing for them to deal with. That is pretty much what I have been trying to tell them for the last ten years or so.

David: For example, you have a lover. Do they invite both of you over?

Carol: Yes.

David: Have you ever stayed with them overnight?

Carol: Yes.

David: They handled that without any problems?

Carol: Right. I think they would feel better if we were legally married because, way back in the recesses of my mother's or father's mind, when we go into my old room to go to bed, I think that they would probably feel better if we had some sort of legalization about being in bed. But they understand that the society hasn't given that to us yet. If the State of New Jersey would say to me tomorrow that you can legally marry I would because, if nothing else, I would like to derive the economic benefits that the society offers to married people.

David: You don't completely buy the idea that particular kind of parents produce particular kinds of children?

Carol: I didn't say that. I think that particular kinds of parents probably do produce particular kinds of children. But I do not believe that parents have anything to do with their sexual orientation. In other words, I am a part of my parents. My body structure is. My head structure is. My parents have helped produce me. But on a sexual development level, it seems to me that they certainly didn't teach me to be homosexual. They certainly didn't sit back and say, "Ok Carol. When you grow up I want you to fall in love with a woman!" Anything but.

David: Did they want a girl when you were born?

Carol: Well, they had a girl. I think my father said he wanted a girl first because, when he was a child, he was the eldest boy in four boys. They didn't have any girls. I don't have any aunts; just uncles. My mother was adopted and had no siblings at all. I do know that they wanted a girl first, and they had my sister, which was very good for them. Then my mother wanted a boy because it was very important to her, never having had a family. She attached herself to the name Smith, and it was very important for her to carry that name on. And it was her desire for immortality, I think. That she would create a being that would carry a name on. I do remember that they really didn't plan on having me. I suppose that if my mother got pregnant now, in this current ethic, she might have an abortion. My father kids around that he has both, which is a very real indication of his programming too, because he doesn't. He has a girl, a woman, a daughter.

David: What were you like as a child? Do you remember?

Carol: Obnoxious as hell. Trying to get away with everything I could. Not very interesting, average, into physical stuff, and sports, and having fun. I am not academic. I could never get it together on that level. A very sensitive kid. Always wanting to have things go cool. Always enjoyed very much when I was approved.

David: Do you feel you could be described as a tomboy in any way as a child?

Carol: I guess you could say that, yeah. My sister was five years my senior and when I was 12 she was 17, so there was very little contact. My brother is three years my senior and we almost seemed to be on the same level all the time. So we really hung around a lot together, and he taught me how to climb trees, and we were into the same kind of stuff. When my father took my brother hunting, for example, he also took me. Although I remember doing the kitchen chores with my mother.

David: So do you feel that your parents encouraged you to be a tomboy, or discouraged you?

Carol: I don't think that they cared one way or the other. I don't think that at that point they ever thought that they should do one thing or the other. I think what they wanted me to do was to be reasonably behaved and do my own thing.

David: It seems that, rather than them programming you to be this or that, they were sufficiently free to let you be what you wanted to be.

Carol: Yes. The only thing we couldn't do is to express affection outwardly. I come from a Scottish family. Very stiff, cold people. I think that that is the only thing that I can ever remember as a child being held back. It wasn't a good thing to cry, for example. It wasn't a good thing to go into rages. You have to be very contained and very cool.

David: Did you feel that the affection was there?

Carol: Oh sure. Every once in awhile my father would run up and grab me. I always knew I was loved. But it was something that had to be a very personal deep thing rather than a squishy thing.

David: When did you begin to think of yourself as a homosexual? In particular, did you feel that there were signs of it when you were a child?

Carol: When I was a child? No, absolutely not. I mean what child of ten thinks of himself as a homosexual, or a heterosexual for that matter. I mean you just are, and you just do your thing and go on from there. I look back and I think that I was totally taken by a fourth-grade teacher who happened to be a woman. Now I don't know whether or not I would have felt that way too had I turned out to be a heterosexual. Now that I am homosexual, my sexual appetite is toward women. Women sexually arouse me. So that when I look back into my childhood I wonder whether or not that was an indication of my homosexuality. I think probably not, because when I discuss it with my sister, who is a heterosexual, she also tells me that she was very taken by women teachers in school. I had my first homosexual experience when I was about 17, and it was such a good, positive experience that it never occurred to me that there was anything really wrong with it. It was just a good positive experience.

David: With what kind of person was it?

Carol: It was with another woman, obviously. She was about a year older than I, and she was my best friend in school. It wasn't really what you would think of as a lesbian experience because neither one of us were professed lesbians. And neither one of us had any expertise in sex whatever. We were together, and we were very good friends. I remember that we were in a situation where we were alone, and we started holding hands and we started kissing one another and fondling one another. The experience was very sexually arousing to me, and I got a great deal of reward from it.

David: I think that's rather nice, because we do not have the myth of some older person seducing some younger person into this life-style. It was two young people discovering themselves.

Carol: I don't have any proof to back this up, but I don't think that you can really induce someone to be a homosexual. For example, I think that you can inflict a traumatic sexual experience on someone. That is possible to do. But, if I were attacked, for example, at age 16 by an elder lesbian, I would totally reject all lesbians. I would hate it more than most people do. I don't believe that being touched by a lesbian would cause me to be a lesbian.

David: That's also true in heterosexual experiences. If a girl was approached by a man in a scary situation, it would probably be a traumatic situation for her and create a lot of anxiety for her about sex.

Carol: I am totally against sexually traumatic experiences. I think that they are devastating. But I think it is interesting to note that most child molestations are made by the heterosexual man, and that is statistically backed up. Homosexuals do not molest children.

David: That's true. The act of coming out, of making the decision that you are a homosexual and declaring it, is often described as a traumatic experience for the homosexual. A time of turmoil and distress. How was it for you?

Carol: I actually had two comings out. I had one personal coming out and one coming out as an activist. The personal coming out wasn't as difficult as for most people. As I said, I had this very good, positive experience, and I just developed that. The Marine Corps experience wasn't terribly nice. I was accused of being anti-God and anti-country because of my sexual orientation. That is totally irrational. I was expelled from Marine Corps. That leaves a bad taste in your mouth. The term "undesirable" didn't do a whole lot for me. I came out as an activist about two years ago. That was much more difficult because, in effect, this society really allows homosexuals to hide and survive. If you promise never to tell anyone, to sneak around, and never to suggest to any one or confront any one about your sexual orientation, you can make it through ok. But the society says "Naughty, naughty, naughty," if you decide you want to change things. So when I went to my mother and father and said to them, "Oh, by the way, now that you have accepted the fact that I am a lesbian, I would like to tell you that I am going to be an activist." Total havoc resulted. My father thinks I am absolutely insane to expose myself this way. A relationship that I had broke up because of it. It has been a very difficult time. I have come out at work. It has taken me about two years to come out at work, slowly but surely. Each day I risk being fired. I haven't been, but each day there was the risk.

David: Do you still feel the risk there now?

Carol: No.

David: Why did you decide to become an activist?

Carol: Because the society needs modifying. I am an activist because I don't like lying. I didn't like it when I was 20. I discussed it with my folks, so I wouldn't have to hide and lie to them. I certainly don't like it now. I am an adult, mature person, and I have the right to express myself to the best of my ability. The society restricts me from that. The society has to be modified on that level.

David: But why do you feel that you are one of the people that has to do that?

Carol: Because very few others are doing it. If out of the 22 million homosexuals in the society one hundred thousand stood up and said "Ok folks, we are going to change this around," I would be very happy to sit back and enjoy that. The fact is that we don't have very many active people at all on any level. We have very few active homosexual people, and there is a need for activism.

David: Has being an activist helped you deal with society's attitude toward you?

Carol: Not really. It's put me in the position where I have exposed myself much more. Being an activist has not really done a lot for me. I hope that it is doing something to modify the society, but I haven't derived a whole lot of benefits out of the activism business.

David: To move to a different area, would you describe yourself as an exclusive homosexual?

Carol: That's a difficult question to answer. I would like to describe myself as a growing person. I call myself a lesbian as an activist because it is a political statement. It happens that the majority of my sexual life has been spent with other women. I don't see any indication that it will change. But I don't limit myself to only that course. I would like to think of myself as being a growing person, who would be able to experience anything that I felt was good and of benefit to me in the future.

David: How would you describe the quality of your heterosexual experiences that you have had?

Carol: I have had some heterosexual experiences that were much better than homosexual experiences. But on the whole, my homosexual experiences are much better than my heterosexual experiences, and I think it is because it's where my head is at. I prefer women sexually. I think it is interesting that you ask that question with the assumption that I have had heterosexual experiences. That is another thing in the society that really ticks me off. When you talk to a lesbian, the natural assumption is that in order for her to validly choose lesbianism, she has had to experience heterosexual sex first. I don't think my mother, for example, experienced lesbianism before she married my father. Nor do I think my sister experienced lesbianism before she married her husband, and there wasn't even the assumption there that she should.

David: From Kinsey's data, a large proportion of people in society have had homosexual experiences and heterosexual experiences in adolescence. They may not have experienced the lesbian life-style, but they might have had some sexual experience.

Carol: I don't think that that is a homosexual experience. I think that is a sex experience. Now we are splitting hairs. I think that the reason I am a lesbian is because I prefer women. There is something that makes me feel naturally homosexual. It makes me naturally attractive to the same sex. That natural attraction keeps me from wanting to participate on a sexual level with members of the opposite sex. The same way in reverse. Homosexuality is usually assumed to be a phase. At best a phase and at worst something that you won't involve oneself with if one had a conscious choice. Ok, so everyone wants me to go out and have a man sexually so that I can avail myself of a conscious choice. The fact is that there is no choice. You are what you are. I am a lesbian and I happen to enjoy it very much.

David: If the quality of your heterosexual experience had been different, might you have chosen a different life-style?

Carol: That's the "divine rod" explanation. I don't know. The majority of my heterosexual male friends feel that, if I had just had the right man, that he probably could have convinced me that the penis is much more sexually gratifying than a woman's body. I just don't buy that.

David: I guess the important thing is that you didn't flee from heterosexuality, that you decided that you were homosexual. It wasn't the result of negative experiences.

Carol: Right. I am not a lesbian because I cannot function with men. I am a lesbian because that is how I developed. And because I am a lesbian, I don't function as well with men as I do with women.

David: You said that you would like to remain open to the experience of heterosexual relationships. You don't want to see yourself as narrow. I think you implied that?

Carol: I would like to leave myself open to growth experiences. If that happens to be on a heterosexual level, so be it.

David: How long has it been since you had a heterosexual experience?

Carol: About five years or so. As a matter of fact, Alan Brown, who is the co-director of our Speakers Collective, and I happen to be physically attracted to one another, which, when you think about it, is rather weird. We banter back and forth the thought and the possibility of having a sexual involvement and probably we will. Probably we will. I find him very attractive.

David: It is sometimes claimed that homosexuals have an aversion to men. That apparently doesn't seem to be true for you. Are you an exception?

Carol: I don't think so. I think that people like other people. I do believe though that, when people are overtly oppressed by what seems to be a particular segment of society, they get very leery of that segment in society. Homosexual women find that straight men, by and large, oppress them more than any other group. So what they try and do to save their own skins and their own hides is to shy away from men. Their feeling is, if they can run away from the confrontation, they won't get hurt, which is a pretty logical point of view. It doesn't change anything. It doesn't help it. But it saves one's hide.

David: How do you feel about children? Would you like to have children?

Carol: As a matter of fact, I wouldn't because I'm too selfish. I am a very self-oriented person and the thought of having a child, having to devote the work and time necessary to that child, never enters into my life-style. No I don't.

David: Again, is that typical?

Carol: I don't think so. I think women are usually programmed in this society, no matter what their sexual orientation, to see children as a natural occurrence for women, that pregnancy is something that should happen. I know many lesbians that are mothers, and there is a very strong movement now, lesbian mothers, that is establishing itself in the metropolitan area.

David: Do you have a lover right now?

Carol: Yes, I do.

David: Has it been long-term?

Carol: No it hasn't. I have had two love relationships in my life. The one lasted a period of ten years. The reason that it broke up was because the woman could not accept my participation in activism. She just couldn't accept the overt oppression of my being openly homosexual. We discussed it for over a year and a half and finally she came to me and said "You really have to make a choice at this point, and you have to choose a comfortable living with me or your activism." I just couldn't give up the activism. So we parted, and we parted as very, very good friends. I see her very often, and I miss her a lot. About a year ago, I met a woman who is a marvellous woman. She absolutely blows my mind. We have fallen in love, and it is truly a good, warm, solid relationship, and I'm very happy with it.

David: We have a myth in our society that homosexuals do not enter into long-term relationships.

Carol: I think there are two reasons for that. One, society doesn't ever validate a homosexual relationship.

David: What do you mean by that?

Carol: Well, we are not allowed to get married. In other words, we cannot go to the State of New Jersey or the Federal Government and say we legally commit ourselves to be together for the rest of our lives. We don't have that option. Society would rather see us apart. So we get no support from society. In other words, when a man and a woman are having marital problems, they have marriage counselors to go to. They have parents to go to. They have priests to go to, churches to go to. A world of places to go to sit down and rap about those problems. Homosexuals have very few places to go. Friends maybe, if you are fortunate to have friends that support your relationship. So what happens is that the people find it terribly difficult to relate. Now heterosexuals are finding the very same thing to be true, when you realize that now one out of two marriages fail before the first three years. If that's true, on a heterosexual level, with all of the support that society gives them, you can well imagine the conflict that goes on in relating on a homosexual level with no support.

David: Do institutions like family service associations take homosexual couples?

Carol: I never had the occasion to seek that kind of professional support. I really don't know. I know that we are making very good progress in talking to people on hotlines. For example, Friends Hotline in West Orange has asked us to go over and rap with them so that they will be better able to deal with hotline homosexual calls. Seton Hall's hotline does the same thing, and we are very active on that level.

David: Do you think there is a difference between male and female homosexuals in the stability of their relationships?

Carol: That's a toughie. I don't know. I think there is a difference between men and women. I think that men are programmed and brought up differently than women are. Alan and Bob, for example, have been together nine years, and they expect to be together for another nine more. I think that probably men and women have the same long-term relationships. I would think, but I don't know this to be statistically true, that homosexual men are probably much freer sexually than lesbians are.

David: Why?

Carol: Men are brought up to be aggressive sexually. Men are brought up to be the chaser and the aggressor. They do on the surface level have the responsibility of maintaining the look of monogamy, but everybody knows that, when they are off on their Thursday or Friday night, they are able to do whatever they want to do.

David: When I read the popular press or magazine articles about homosexuals, the cruising scene is stressed so much. The implication I get from you is perhaps that this is exaggeration or distortion.

Carol: I think that it is an exaggeration because the press loves to sell newspaper. Frankly, if you took a reporter down to our group, it would be so boring and so conventional that you probably wouldn't sell three papers with it. But if you took a camera down to 42nd street and saw a man floating along in chiffon, that's eye catching and that probably would sell papers or get a person to look at the news channel. That is terribly oppressive to us because we are not getting a fair shake on the media level. I think that the reason that there are cruising areas is because the society doesn't provide facilities for homosexuals. In other words, we can't go to our churches and participate in church suppers as gay people. We can't go to universities and have social clubs and groups as homosexuals. So what do we do? We need sexual contact, if we are not involved in a relationship, and we go cruising, which is much like single bars. There is not very much difference. I've been to both.

David: That's what I was thinking myself. Except we don't deal with those in the popular press in the same way.

Carol: Right. Well for you it's not dirty.

David: One of the stereotypes in the society is of the role relationship in the homosexual couples - that someone has to have the masculine role and someone has to have the feminine role. How do you feel about that?

Carol: I think that was very true twenty years ago. I think that it was somewhat true ten years ago, and I think it is practically vanishing from the heterosexual scene. In a heterosexual involvement, there is a woman that must be feminine, whatever that means. The reason that they are able to get together is because the masculine and feminine attract one another. I was brought up in a heterosexual home where I saw role-playing every day of my life for 18 years. It was a natural assumption to me that, when I left my very comfortable, secure home the same type of approach should be taken, because I was never taught or even exposed to any kind of idea that it wasn't necessarily true. When I was in my first relationship, we were involved in a role situation where I was the masculine, dominant partner and she was the more passive partner which I found very restrictive because I like being both. I like being very aggressive when it turns me on, and I absolutely adore being very passive when I'm into it. In a role situation you are kept from that. You have a specific area in which you can maneuver, and you cannot go out of that area. I find that very restrictive. I am now involved with a 21 year-old woman whose head is very into the feminist movement and who totally rejected roles about three or four years before I met her. So we don't have roles in our relationship.

David: Many of the homosexual couples that I have known there is quite an age difference between partners. That seems to be true of yours.

Carol: Only this one. There was only a year age difference in the last one. My lover was a year older than I was.

David: Some psychologists have speculated that maybe some of the motives behind one's choice of mate is that one is looking for someone who is younger, maybe symbolic of one's self, who will realize what you would like to be. Do you note any of that in yourself?

Carol: I don't think so. It happens that the woman I fell in love with is nine years my junior. I could have easily fallen in love with a woman my age or a woman nine years my senior. My sister, for example, is married to a man that is 15 years older than she is and my brother is married to a woman who is three or four years younger than he is. My first lover was a year older than I. I don't find myself terribly attracted to young women. As a matter of fact, most young women totally bore me to death. Maggie happens not to. I don't know why. Sometimes I think she is older than I anyway.

David: How about the relationship between homosexuality and transvestism?

Carol: It is difficult for me to answer that because I don't know a whole lot about transvestism. It is just something I never gone into much. It's my thinking that transvestism is where a person derives sexual gratification from cross-dressing. It is also my understanding that the majority of people who are in that type of sexual involvement are heterosexual men not homosexual men. I think that society becomes confused because homosexual men get into something that is spoofy, where they dress up in chiffon, perhaps at Halloween, and they carry on in crazy, lunatic ways. But I personally don't know any men who involve themselves in cross-dressing.

David: And you never have yourself?

Carol: I wore a tux once, just because I wanted to wear a tux once and feel what it felt like. And they are the most uncomfortable things I have ever been in. It's like smoking cigars. Cigars are disgusting. They smell disgusting and they taste terrible. I don't care for them at all.

David: What about transsexualism. In your experience of homosexuals, is there a desire to switch sex?

Carol: Not me. I have never wanted to be anything but a woman. I wanted to be a slightly masculine woman on occasions, and I also experienced wanting to be a feminine

woman on occasions. But I have never had the compulsion to have a penis and to enter into manhood. I am very happy and content with what I am. I am a woman who enjoys other women. I am a lesbian and I want to stay that way. Becoming a man isn't going to solve any of my problems. That would create problems for me.

David: My feeling is that a lot of the gay activist groups would not be very friendly or sympathetic with the transsexuals.

Carol: That happens not to be true. We find in this society that the reason we are oppressed is because minority groups cannot come together and demand equality. Our feeling and my personal feeling is that this society has the responsibility to create space for all its inhabitants. If it happens that a man likes dressing up in women's clothing and is a consenting adult and isn't harming anyone then he has every right in the world to do that, every right in the world, and our organization would fight very hard for that person's right to do it.

David: So what you are saying is you see a kinship between you and transsexuals in so far as you are both oppressed by society. Do you see transsexuals as homosexuals?

Carol: I don't know. I don't know any transsexuals. I see a kinship between our group and every other minority organization because the minorities in this country are oppressed and we are all fighting very hard to stop that oppression and I think when we recognize the fact that oppression comes from the same bases and for the same reasons, we'll get somewhere.

David: I asked the question because, from what I have read, transsexuals do not see themselves as homosexuals. I would suspect they would have a tendency to reject any affiliation with a homosexual organization.

Carol: See. That's the problem. Again, we are all programmed not to trust each other. Transsexuals feel threatened by homosexuals because homosexuals are oppressed. But we are all oppressed. Let's stop being oppressed by our black brothers and sisters. Let's stop being oppressed by our poor brothers and sisters and let's stop being threatened by our women friends. Let's all get together. Let's everyone get together who is oppressed and sit down and try to figure out where the oppression is coming from and stop being oppressed by the other oppressed groups.

David: In what you have been saying you make implications, about the causes of homosexuality. You have said that your parents weren't responsible. It wasn't a choice for you. That implies you were born a homosexual.

Carol: I think what it implies is that we are sexual people. When someone comes up with conclusive study as to the causes of sexuality, I would then be interested to see whether or not we could try and determine the causes of different types of

sexuality. But the whole approach in the society is incorrect. They don't ask what causes sexuality. They ask what causes homosexuality. And they ask that question so they can figure out how to prevent it from happening. I see absolutely nothing wrong in having 10% of any society homosexual if that society would stop oppressing that 10%.

David: But you avoided the question. From your personal statements you still seem to be implying that, although we don't know the causes of sexuality and, therefore, of homosexuality or heterosexuality, you have implied that you were born a homosexual.

Carol: I am totally convinced that I did not choose homosexuality consciously in the same way that I am totally convinced that people do not choose to be sexual consciously. They are.

David: Are you implying that maybe you choose unconsciously?

Carol: I don't know. What I am implying is that I am not qualified to answer the question. I have done no personal studies on the cases of either homosexuals or heterosexuals. I am not qualified to answer that statement and I don't know anyone who is at this point in our development. The danger of that statement is that if I were, for example, to have some crazy idea in my head about what caused my homosexuality, someone might very possibly take that up and decide that that must be what caused every woman's homosexuality, which is totally ridiculous. Now Maggie and I, for example, have sat down on quiet winter nights when there hasn't been anything better to do, and we have done comparative studies. She is an only child; I am not. She was adopted; I wasn't. Her parents were much older than she was; mine weren't. Her father and mother weren't aggressive; my father was a very aggressive man. It's just impossible for me to sit down and say that some similar combination of events caused both Maggie's and my homosexuality. I don't know.

David: How do you feel about genetic theories of homosexuality?

Carol: I really don't know. Maybe we are born this way. You feel it is not a very good answer, but it's the only answer I can give you. I developed on a homosexual level. I assume I was born sexual. Perhaps I was born homosexual. I don't know. Or perhaps I had spinach at 7 o'clock on Tuesday afternoon on May 17, 1946 that was slightly tainted, and my sister and brother did not have that same gourmet delight.

David: Maybe it had extra vitamins.

Carol: I don't know.

David: You have mentioned to me in other contacts that there are a lot of myths in society about homosexuals that you would like to dispel. What are some of them?

Carol: One myth is that lesbians are ugly; or that lesbians are lesbians because they can't function with men on a sexual or intelligent or emotional level; that male homosexuals are tremendously promiscuous and child molesters; that we have no capacity for love and that we are immoral; that we are not able to carry on long-term relationships; that we lurk in bathrooms waiting for unsuspecting people to come by so that we can accost them. I have never lurked in a bathroom in my entire life. That lesbians must still use dildos for sexual involvement since everyone knows that you cannot have sexual gratification without the penis. That is totally false. All of these things are totally false. Perhaps I should not say totally false. Perhaps there is one person, or five people or 1000 people, who do such things. But I suggest the majority of homosexuals are not at home now thinking how they can molest their next child. It is not statistically true.

David: I can imagine someone reading this and saying, "Maybe this particular homosexual is ok. She doesn't fit the stereotype." In your experience do you find that you are an exception, or that the people in activist groups are exceptional group?

Carol: Not necessarily. I think it is important for people who do read this to sit down and say, "Well maybe this person is an exception," because then the natural line of thinking would be that, if one person can be an exception, maybe 50% of the homosexuals are exceptions. Maybe what we have been hearing isn't really true at all. It is not a question of my being an exception. Maybe the textbook impression that is so rampant in our society really is oppressive and really is untrue. Maybe homosexuals, by and large, don't involve themselves in things like that.

David: You said you had been to gay bars. Do you find the people you meet there similar to you?

Carol: I haven't met very many activists in my life, which is a tragedy. There aren't many people who are interested in changing things. Most people are interested in surviving as comfortably and as pleasantly as possible. I go to gay bars because I enjoy drinking occasionally. I enjoy dancing very much. I enjoy just getting it together with the friends that I have who enjoy that atmosphere. I do it maybe one or twice a year at this point, probably because I don't have a lot more time. I might do it a couple of times a month if I had more time. The people I meet in gay bars are the pretty much the same as those I meet on the street, the people I meet in my office. They are generally average, everyday people. Some are tremendously interesting and intelligent, and some are as boring as can be. Everyday kind of people.

David: One final question. Some homosexuals take a very extreme stance and talk about how homosexuality is better. You are not really healthy unless you are homosexual. The homosexual has something above and beyond the rest of us. How do you feel about that?

Carol: I think that is pure defensiveness on their part. What happens is that you are told so often and in so many quarters of this society that there is really something wrong with you, and so you do one of three things. You either accept that, and you go in for years and years of therapy; or you just discount it and you do your own thing, and you just go ahead and do what you would have done anyway; or you get to the point where you have to prove that you're not really sick by telling everybody that you are superior. I just don't buy that. I don't believe, because I am a lesbian, that I am necessarily superior to anyone else. But I don't believe I am necessarily inferior. I think we are all just what we make ourselves. I wouldn't think that the 10% of the society who are homosexual are anymore creative than any other segment, or anymore sensitive, or anymore anything. I think we are just people.