

Preserving Meaningful Life on Earth – Transcript

Interview of Carol Urner by Natalie Ramsland on October 6, 2018.

Natalie Ramsland: Well, just to get a little bit of your background, I remember that it was 1961 I think that you move to Portland?

Carol Urner: 1958, because Jack had just gotten a his PhD. I got my PhT as we used to say: Working Hubby Through. And so I was also very busy because I worked for the YWCA [as a] teenage program director and that took a lot of energy.

Natalie: Oof. Yeah...

Carol: And it was back of the yards in Chicago. So there was that horrible stench of dead cows. And I visited that place and those cows don't want to die. They scream. So, it was awful, but I loved the chance to do a job like that instead of just filing or, you know, being a clerk, typist. So Jack, he also worked. So we worked him through. Anyway...

Natalie: What I remember you saying in one of the interviews was that it was in the early 60s at some point when you wrote the letter... [referring to a letter to the editor of Portland Reporter regarding nuclear threats to humanity]

Carol: 1961.

Natalie: Okay.

Carol: But we'd been in Portland since 1958. I came when Kirby was eight months old. So he learned to walk here and all those exciting things. So I knew I was a mother. And I wrote a poem about "I thank God for these my woman's years" or "woman's years" and I don't remember things like that, but I can always look them up. But it was true, I was very thankful for them.

But I wanted to do more because in Chicago while I was working Jack to get his Ph.D... I married him for love of his dream. I don't know if I was in love with my husband. But I was in love with his dream for what he wanted to do and I wanted to help him do it. Well, like most arranged marriages... because I probably said in one of those interviews, that one night when we were talking this voice clearly said "Marry this man."

Well, I found it in a old journal I wrote back in 1957 or 1958, much closer to the time. And that voice said more than just "Marry this man," it turns out. I have a pretty long quote...

Natalie: Wow!

Carol: ...from the voice. But anyway, it was real and it was authoritative. And I think of myself as rather timid or at least I used to. I guess I've given that up! [laughs] But that's

when it all started, was in - that would have been 1952, I think - when this voice said this so clearly to me. I never heard a voice like that again.

Natalie: I was going to ask you, had you before had you ever again?

Carol: Never again.

Natalie: Well, maybe you were already on your path?

Carol: Yeah, I knew because I feel... I felt, I sensed it. Each of the projects I got involved in, I knew I had to do it. But it wasn't a voice. That was the only time in my life that I can ever remember ever hearing a voice like that.

Natalie: And I have a question: Was it that the words came to you or it was at that you heard what sounded like a voice that you could point out? Like, that voice was a voice that was familiar to something...

Carol: I have it in my drawer, but it wasn't a voice I recognized. It was just an ordinary sort of a voice. But it was very authoritative. So even though I'd never heard voices and I would have been very suspicious of them because I was suspicious of everything from college. This was the year after college.

Natalie: Yeah, things like that aren't supposed to happen, right?

Carol: They're not supposed to happen or if they do...

Natalie: And then it means something about you, right?

Carol: Yeah, right. Which it probably did. It was probably my own subconscious or something, but it decided I'd better hear it play! But I've known what I had to do without a voice to tell me. And so this was an unusual experience, but I did it.

Natalie: Do you think that experience deepened your willingness or ability to be obedient to your inner guide?

Carol: I think I acted on it, which I never would have had the courage or anything if I hadn't felt it was so authentic. I think I sent him a card the next day. He'd just had all his wisdom teeth pulled. Have I said that before?

Natalie: No...

Carol: Oh, all four wisdom teeth out at the same time and he was at home recovering. And, um, so I didn't call him on the phone, but I wrote him a note. And I found that note here. I made a little booklet card and I cut out a little person that had big swollen cheeks and it said "I love you."

I said that to him and he never told me he loved me. So I didn't know if he loved me or not, but I told him I loved him. And that, um, I love him this way, I think I'd love him that... And I cut out a little scrawny old guy... I mean I was pouring it out! Because I found the card... I must find it again. I keep losing things. But I guess I had someone take it to his house the next day. Or I might have even dropped it by, I don't know. I didn't drive yet. He taught me how to drive.

But his mother saw it. And she liked it. She'd heard about me. Because I was famous then! [laughs] I mean, I'd been chosen the most promising freshperson - *freshman* - already. And some other awards I'd been given already. I think I already I had my Phi Beta Kappa. I got that as a junior and he didn't get his until... He didn't even have one yet. He got his on graduation. But he got one too. So it wasn't too bad. I just beat him!

Natalie: Right, you beat him to it. No big deal!

Carol: So he knew! But I didn't take as difficult courses. I knew that. I majored in writing and creative writing. So I didn't even have many literature courses. I just got graded on my writing, which is something you said you enjoy, right?

Natalie: Yeah.

Carol: So that's something I can do very well and that I enjoy very much. And I wrote a lot for Friends at one stage in my life. In the 80s. But anyway, I did all these things I'd never do.

And I'm going to come to the end now, but just recently - recently in our lives together - not long before he was killed he said something to me about who proposed anyway. And I stopped and thought about it. I proposed! I assumed it was going to happen! I didn't even propose. I just was so sure it was right. And he never even said he loved me!

He dated me but they weren't special dates. I didn't know if they were special for him. But I knew I wanted to marry him and be there for him. As I said, I think I fell in love with his vision of what he wanted to do in the world. And I always loved that and I did help him do it. So maybe it came from my subconscious but my subconscious was pretty smart!

Natalie: I'll say! Yeah, it was ON it! Well if I have any questions... I'm going to be doing a little - before the interview, there's usually a little blurb introducing you and saying why we're about to be enraptured by what you say in the interview. So if I have any questions I can just ask you later.

Carol: I'm here until about the 15th of November. And then we have the gift of the Internet.

Natalie: It's true. It's true!

Carol: And that includes telephone, talking on the telephone. I never worry about calling in the U.S. I don't call overseas, but other people call me overseas and they don't worry about it.

Natalie: Well, as long as neither one of us goes overseas, it'll be fine. So when you had gotten up at the rise of meeting, to speak to your concerns... Well, I just want to give you a chance to just have at it. Just, without further ado say what it is that you wanted to share with Quakers. [referring to the announcement made at the rise of meeting in July in which she spoke about the UN Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty]

Carol: Well, of course, I don't remember but I can guess. Because what I am very concerned about is the survival of the human race. And for all of us, for everything we love. I mean, it's just right there all the time. It could go any minute. Now we have a president with an itchy finger!

Kirby has a cartoon he made up there, even before Trump even announced he was running for president, I think that he did it. And he has his finger over the, over the computer. He just has a computer, but he's saying "Should I...*punch* it? I wonder what Rosie O'Donnell would think?" I don't even know her, but she's a commentator or something?

Natalie: Yeah, I think so....

Carol: And so I think she'd probably already been talking about Trump and the button. And so he was just hovering over the button." What if I punch it? What will Rosie O'Donnell think then? Should I make her day?"

Natalie: Oh my goodness. Terrifying stuff.

Carol: So that's my son's cartoon.

Natalie: Well, I remember you speaking to the UN treaty, the ban on nuclear weapons, and the need to ratify that.

Carol: Oh, yeah. Well, that is what I'm working, trying to work on, specifically. And trying to do something everyday. Though I know I can't do very much. But whatever I can manage. So yes, let's take that then. And this: I'm a member of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom which is an organization, when it founded itself, didn't know that you needed a shorter name that people could remember and you also needed an acronym. Now our acronym "WILPF"- now say that without spitting! [laughter] So it's an awful acronym!

Natalie: It is! It's a humdinger.

Carol: But we say it and laugh. But anyway, this is *our* treaty. This is something that WILPF was working on...well, it's always been working on that. Once the nuclear weapons actually materialized back in 1945, I don't think they had a real hint of that particular weapon yet. But they were against weapons and war from the beginning. Their purpose, our purpose, is stopping war. That's in our constitution. That's a very first purpose. And disarmament. Because if you have arms you can always start a war by accident which actually is kind of what happened with World War I and WILPF grew out of World War I. The women gathered - you know all about this?

Natalie: No.

Carol: Oh in 1915, we were in war but the US had not joined. But the world was in turmoil about this war because Hitler was advancing. The European countries were being bombed. And it wasn't the Russians that were doing it was the Germans. And so women - wasn't the men - it was the women who were mothers, many of them. But I think women - this is me talking now - I think women do have a special sensitivity about things like that because they are mothers. Or they have whatever it takes to be a mother and so they identify with lives for their *own* children. They want their *own* children to grow up. And they identify more readily with all children, whatever their belief, their country, anything. It's just in their makeup. That's what I think.

So women then, by 1915, were networking with each other, even though we had no computers. I guess we had telephones but they didn't use them as we do now. They certainly didn't have cell phones. But they were communicating with each other by mail that was carried by ship across the ocean sometimes around the Horn of Africa or something. So it was slow communication not like now. But they were communicating, communicating "We've got to stop this. It's crazy. What can we do? How can we do it together?" So somehow they organized a conference in Geneva, which was neutral. About the only nation in Europe that wasn't involved in some way on one side or the other. And so this conference took place something like April 27th, 28th, 26th. Anyway, it was scheduled for three days, maybe four days in April. And women actually came to it from all over the world. So I have photos of the group by lists of who was there what countries were represented.

It was a huge. There were a thousand there who had been chosen by their organizations to come. There might have been a few who chose themselves. I don't know. But they came and they met and they chose Jane Addams. Do you know Jane? They chose her to be the chairperson because she was known worldwide and they trusted her.

So she chaired it. And imagine chairing a meeting of a thousand women and coming up with a plan of action. And doing it! Could men do this?! I'm very fond of men myself. I don't think the world be worth much without them and we wouldn't last very long even if we had little vials of sperm it wouldn't work. [laughs]

Anyhow, what the women decided to do was to go in groups of - I don't know how they big, maybe three or four - around to all the heads of state. And different women would go to different heads of state, but they'd all go with these, I think it was 18 points or something, on how to stop the war. How to make sure afterward that no wars occurred again. Ever. What they proposed was not the United Nations, but the forerunner of that...

Natalie: Is that League of Nations? Yeah.

Carol: And I know that as well as anything, but I'm thinking about a lot of things at once. Anyhow, that's what they did. And I think Jane Addams herself was involved in the one to Wilson and he actually took from their points. I think they had fourteen points or something and he took some of them. [He] decided to join the war, which they would not have done, but had the points as some of the points as what we should do after we won the war.

And so they did go around, they did do this. And now I'll stop there. But it was part of the process to winding down the war. And it was the beginning in that was 1915... In 1918, after the war was finally ended with the defeat of the Germans, the women organized a second conference, the same slow process. And they held it in Zurich, Switzerland. And that's when they founded WILPF.

We say in 2015 because...

Natalie: You mean 1915?

Carol: 1915. Because the germ was there, but...

Natalie: Not the, not their wonderful acronym yet!

Carol: Yeah, but the actual name of it, how it would work, its own rules, etc. None of those and not even the promise of organizing and organization was there in [1915] so WILPF really started in [1919]. But the recognition, by women, that "Hey, maybe we can do this!" was there. And so they did it.

Natalie: What was the year that you became a member?

Carol: When did I become a member? My husband became a member. Very early, I think 19... when he began and graduate school or maybe even before. So that would be in about 1950 to 1953 or maybe even before that. And he wanted me to become a member all the time that we were in Chicago. He wanted me to become a member and we were there until 1958 when Kirby was born. So he'd been after me to become a member for six years. But I was too busy putting him through college. I couldn't. I mean through his Ph.D... I couldn't picture doing something more. I couldn't, I couldn't.

And so I... And then we moved to Portland and I just kind of forgot about it. But then a go-to woman in Portland had already organized the WILPF here. I didn't know anything about it. But it was Eleanor Davis. Does that name ring any bells?

Natalie: It doesn't, no.

Carol: Okay. She was the wife of Charles Davis, who was one of the two men who gave us our Meetinghouse. Charlie Davis. And so it came from a source of... And she was Charlie's wife. So it came from a source that I didn't recognize yet, but related in the sense because Jack at that point had his first employment. I mean *career* employment. But his dream was always to work overseas in very poor countries. We called them developing countries then but now I say many of them are a lot more developed than we are! In the things that matter. But anyway. So for six years, our first six years, it was within our first seven years of marriage, because I worked him through in Washington, DC. It's... now I forget the name of it, but it's very well-known school in Washington, DC that's very practical for people going into the oil business.

And it was the only one or two universities in the whole country that offered a degree that had any pertinence to Jack's career plans. It was between that and Tufts. I don't know anything about Tufts, but he decided being in Washington, DC would be a better location. So he chose SAIS, School of Advanced International Studies.

But [it] existed to prepare men for the oil industry overseas. So that's a very important fact in our existence. I married SAIS. And I've already said I think, that years later, not too long before he was killed, we were talking about something and he said to me "Who proposed this marriage anyway?" And I'd never thought about it that way! But I realized it was not only a proposal, I just assumed it was going to happen. Boy, and I don't *do* things that way. I don't believe in voices! So anyhow. I don't know. Maybe it was a real voice...

Natalie: Well, either way it seems like there was a rightness to it.

Carol: Whatever happened happened as it should. And when I look back on my life I could believe in predestination of a sort, because every stage was like preparation for the next stage. Well, I don't think it's that precise, but once on the path that's the way it worked. And I think for Jack also.

Natalie: I'm wondering if you could speak to what it is that you feel that Quakers in particular need to understand about the work that you find most important around non-violence and anti-nuclear...

Carol: I think the thing about Quakers now, our kind of Quakers, is that they're open to most anything! [laughs] I say some people call us - people in Multnomah Monthly Meeting - part of the Anything-Goes Quaker movement. And I don't know if anybody else has said that. But I get that feeling sometimes. Anything goes. But then I also feel that way because I feel anything can contribute or destroy. And so we have to walk through the ice floes.

I'm just thinking of this now. But this is kind of what it's like: We're crossing a bridge. The icy waters, if we fall in, could kill us. But we have to cross from ice chunk to ice chunk. And sometimes we even have to leap, not really knowing if we'll get there. And so I think that's kind of like it is.

But anyway. Yeah, so about Quakers... I think it is this openness. I don't think all Quakers even believe... Well, I know they don't! My husband was an atheist! And he was raised to be an atheist. His mother was an atheist and that's how she raised him. And yet, he also believed in his own way. And he became a Quaker. But the draft board are always suspected he became a Quaker in order to be able to get out of the draft. That was partly true. He didn't want to be forced to kill. And he said I didn't come to the university to learn how to kill people. And so he resigned from...he had joined... What do you call? The Reserve Corps...

Natalie: Rights...Quaker Voluntary Service? No, that's a different thing... What is the...?

Carol: He didn't know anything about Quakers. He'd never heard of Quakers, but he joined the... He had to do something to get him in university, it was required that he do some military thing or he couldn't go. So it's the Reserve Officers Corp.

Natalie: Oh, yeah...

Carol: ROTC. So he signed up for that. But then, in one of the first sections, ..the instructor pulled a gun out of the top drawer of his desk and he said "I'm here to train you..." I don't know if he said "kill" or "how to use this."

But that just hit my husband. He couldn't! And so even though he wanted to go to the university more than anything... But then he didn't know what his career was going to be but he had the beginnings. The seeds were there. And he just heard himself inside, "But I didn't come to the university to learn how to kill!"

And he walked out and he resigned. And he didn't know. So that's like taking a leap. When you don't know what's going to happen... So he took the leap and it worked. He leapt right into the arms of the YMCA/YWCA, the Student Y which served off campus.

So we had to go off campus to go to it, but it was definitely pacifist. And there a person like Jack could get counseling and get help. And so he did. And he had backup of that kind. Someone to listen to him and listening through and help him decide and very much believing in not serving in the military. So that saved him. So that saved me too. I didn't know about all this.

But I think I did know by the time I heard that voice. I already knew my subconscious knew...I didn't think about it, but it was - I figured it's back here. [gestures to back of head] It was thinking about it.

I have a *lot* of faith in my own body and my own brain in this part back here, which doesn't think. Supposedly, it's thinking all the time. It's a connection. It's connected to this part up here, [gestures to forehead] which is supposed to do the thinking. So they work together. And I'm just trying to express it! Anyway...

Natalie: Anyway... So I would like, I'm going to have you imagine that I have just handed you a megaphone.

Carol: That what?

Natalie: That I've just handed you a bullhorn to speak into and that you are addressing the Quaker readership of this magazine. And you have one chance to tell us about your convictions or your leadings around your work in non-violence and and the Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty. Because this will be this will appear in a magazine that's going to have a focus on weapons and I want to make sure that we're getting kind of a crystallized sense of of what your take is.

Carol: Okay. Well, I believe that most of us as Quakers don't want to have anything to do with weapons. Some Quakers probably do enjoy hunting, but it's hard for me, to think they do or to believe they do. Or that they've finished with all their connections [gestures to back and front of head] that has made them Quakers.

But taking life, any life... I find it hard even to kill an ant that's crawling on my kitchen sink because it's doing what it's meant to do and is doing it so well, and it's going about it so proudly! No. Killing is not something that Quakers are good at. And so I think rejecting weapons is easy for us.

What's hard is to explain that to other people who are thinking about self-preservation. I'm sure we also think about self-preservation, but that's not the way we do it. We want to preserve meaningful life, life on Earth. And some of it's going to be bad life and kill other people, but we want to make room... I say we want to *love* those people too. We want to connect with anybody we meet and seek out in them the best we can find in them, to be open to *that*. And I think with all of us that's there.

We try to find the best in each other. And we *will* have conflicts we *will* have disagreements and that's often the way we have to grow. But to actually think about killing anyone or defending ourselves with a gun, or with a nuclear weapon... One nuclear weapon, fired in fury and anger or by accident could end up destroying, starting the destruction that would destroy everything we know and love.

And if I had time... You're giving me only five minutes or so to address everybody. But I'm going to put a URL here. I'm going to ask you to look at the story of Stanislav Petrov. Or maybe it was Petrov Stanislav.

But this man, who was given a \$50,000 posthumous award in either, Washington, DC or New York last week because he stopped World War 3 before it happened. And that was quite a few years ago now.

And he never accepted that he was a hero. But you need to know about him and you need to know what he did. And you need to know how close we were to that final conflagration. And he knew he probably would lose his job for doing what he did. Maybe even put in prison, but he did it. And he did not allow World War 3 to even have a chance of starting.

Because he knew it would be the last war that never happened on Earth. Anyhow, I hope you read it. And I'm glad we're all against weapons. And I think we need to support every positive step on the way. And for me right now, that means the new Nuclear Weapons Ban Treaty that we've gotten through the United Nations.

And that something like a hundred and twenty-four nations joined in negotiating and as soon as 50 have ratified it - it's up for signing and ratification now - then it will be international law. For everyone.

And I don't know if laws will do it, but they can help change our world. And our world needs changing when it comes to weapons, any weapons, but especially nuclear weapons.

Natalie: Hmm. Well said.

Carol: Okay!

Natalie: Okay!

Carol: I have told them! Now they will do it!

Natalie: Now they have been dispatched! To rattle the cages of the all of their leaders and make them sign... So I wanted to ask you how did you... Well, I feel like you've sort of addressed how you first felt led to do this work...

Carol: What?

Natalie: How you first felt led to do non-violence and anti-nuclear and anti-war work. Does it kind of go back to that voice?

Carol: Well the story I tell is playing with neighborhood boys. And I would have been about four, five or six years old. I don't know. I can't date it exactly. But just by remembering where I was and the surroundings I think I have it pretty [close]. It's maybe five years old. And I was playing with the neighborhood boys and there were two of them, but they always like to play cowboys and Indians, of course, so they'd chosen this game to play with me.

And I was the only one they were aiming for. So they told me to run and I think that's what they told me. But anyway, they pointed at me and I don't remember if they had a toy gun, or if they just did that [makes hand into a gun] because boys will do that. But they said "We shot you! Your dead! Drop down!" Something like that. So dutifully, I dropped down. And I lay there on the green grass and I felt the warm earth below me, because it was... The grass was green, I remember that. And the blue sky was up above.

And I thought "What would I even be thinking if I were dead? I wouldn't be thinking anything! This is wrong. We mustn't kill!" I don't know the exact words or feeling, but in a sense I would have known it since birth. I think was born in me. But that was when I realized it. After that, in that neighborhood and other neighborhood, I was *always* the leader. And we always played nonviolent games.

Natalie: Well done.

Carol: You know, we acted out stories, but since I was the leader I never let them break down in violence. So I conducted nonviolent training from a very early age!

Natalie: That's wonderful. You know, I'm going to.... [end of first recording]

Natalie: Okay. So when you look back on your decades of activism, do you...

Carol: OK? Say it again? I'll put my ear phone in properly. Okay.

Natalie: Okay. When you look back on your decades of activism, what would you say are, well... do you find any threads running through the work that you were doing? Anything consistent?

Carol: Well, I've already told you about childhood or about action story games. I think this is the way people play.

I'll just insert here, but it's not for the interview, really. When I was nine years old the major trauma of my life occurred. And my best friend, who I loved as my best friend...Because she was so smart! She was, I'm sure, the smartest girl in our class. The smartest person. She was smarter than I was.

And I ranked - in my... that was my third grade class. I ranked them by smartness. She was the very smartest. A boy named Lowell was next smartest and then came me. So that was my hard work. Anyway, she was smart. But she did something that wasn't smart on her ninth birthday.

She played in the attic with another friend because I'd moved away. I was in another part of town and because it was her birthday she was to come and stay with me that night. But in the morning she played with another friend your mother went to work. Her grandmother was charged with watching her but she was downstairs.

And Lori was up in the attic with another friend and they started playing with matches and candles. And they were dressing up in costumes. And the dress of her other friend caught fire. So Lori immediately grabbed her and hugged her and put it out with her own body. But then, of course, *her* dress caught fire.

And her smartness failed her. She didn't lie down on the wooden attic floor. It was paved with wood and she could have put it out. But she didn't do that. She panicked and she ran down three flights of stairs to her grandmother. And of course by the time she got there she was a flaming torch.

So later that day the mother called us from the hospital room to tell us the Lori wouldn't be able to come tonight and what had happened. And they already knew - though she didn't say it - that there was no hope. But she said that Lori wanted all her friends to know how much she loved them.

So she lived four days in that hospital bed. But for me, that was, as I said, the trauma of my life. And I missed her so much and left this huge gap in my life. And I also began looking for another friend and I had a bicycle. And my daughter now thinks my mother shouldn't have allowed it but I took my bicycle everywhere to work out my grief and to visit other girls I thought might eventually become friends. So that went on. I mean this gap and not having a friend went on. I mean a real friend, a dear friend, went on all through college.

But boys! Men were just returning from war. So I had plenty of men courting me. I had 14 marriage proposal. I thought that was pretty good.

Natalie: You're kidding me!

Carol: No, really! Marriage proposals! And that but my husband never proposed...

Natalie: That was for *you* to do!

Carol: That was why that was so funny when he said "Who proposed this marriage anyway?!"

Natalie: That is amazing.

Carol: So anyhow, that was the trauma of my life and a weapon could not save me. Anyhow, where was I?

Natalie: I'm well, I feel like we've picked up on bits of what I wanted to ask you with that. So I'm going to move on to another question. Okay? Okay, so as I was thinking about the, about "nonviolence" and "anti-nuke." Those words describe a not-this kind of vision and I'm wondering if you could articulate the positive vision of what you'd like to see in the world.

Carol: [laughs]

Natalie: I love that you laugh.

Carol: I rejoice and every step that to me seems like a positive step. I like Putin and I say so. Because he's sensible. And I can understand why he does what he does and I know we're supposed to hate him, but I can't hate him. That doesn't mean I want to live under him. That doesn't mean I agree with him. I agree with him on some things.

But I can't hate him. It's impossible for me to hate him, but then I can't think of anybody I hate. I think when I hate becomes impossible... and we're all trying... Or it doesn't even take all of us, but enough of us, are really trying to see what love can do, then there's hope. And that's what we need is hope and trying what love can do. And not thinking so much about *our* power. What *we* are going to do, but we can help our planet. How we can reach out to each other so you ask me how I envisioned a world the works. It's that. The more people that are willing to try what love will do - it's pretty hard to love somebody when you're pointing a gun at them - the more hope we have for a world that works.

Natalie: Yeah.

Carol: I think it works much better on love than on hate. I don't think it works well. even people that do hate, if you hate them in turn, it doesn't help. You have to look for what's good in them? And try to draw that out and even if it doesn't rescue them, that's what we all need to do.

Natalie: Amen. Oh, here we go! I want to draw on your wisdom and your experience in life: It seems to me that many people in my generation, friends of mine, are freaking out. We feel that we're living in extremely perilous times.

Carol: Say that again?

Natalie: That we feel like we're living in an extremely dangerous, scary time, a perilous time, and I'm...

Carol: It's always been that way I think.

Natalie: Go on...

Carol: I'm reading a book... I have it here... That's about when America began. It's told from the point of view of the Indians, the Native Americans. It's heart wrenching. And it's very objective. Anyway, this is it. [holds up *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*]

Natalie: Oh, yes.

Carol: Have you read it?

Natalie: No, but I know of it...

Carol: Kirby remembers that I had it in Rome. And that would have been what over 50 years ago. And he still remembers that the book was there - but not this one. So it sounds like I may have read it, but I think it's more likely I bought it but never had time to read it.

That's one of the things I love about going on ninety.

Natalie: Yes...

Carol: I have time! I'm reading books I never had time to read or I'm looking back on books I've read but still need to do something with. You ever seen this one?

Natalie: No.

Carol: I don't know if I read... This is written by her husband, who loved her very much and loved her vision. And she's a Marshall Islander who was exposed as a baby to the first nuclear bomb. And she's not ever thinking about, or worrying about, having been exposed.

She's teaching young people how to be health workers, how to work with other people to help them be healthy. And she sings a lot. Plays the banjo, ukulele, guitar - I don't know what. But she does get cancer when she's in her early 40s. Probably from, well the testings going on up there ever since. So it's probably...

But anyway, he writes this about her and her work and what she's done. And you know, it's a love story. Because his very writing it is a painful experience, but you just know how much he loved her, and how much... He's a white male from Mainland USA, but they met at the University in Hawaii where she was on a scholarship.

And you know, her family was very poor, but she was smart and somebody recognized it and gave her a scholarship. And he fell in love with her there. And he went to the Marshall Islands and he fell in love with all the people on the Marshall Islands. And of course he hated

- and I said hate doesn't help - but he hated what we'd done there. And so he felt that. So his love for her had to do with what happened at the Marshall Islands. There she is as a high school student [points to a photo in the book]

Natalie: Oh my goodness.

Carol: And so it's memories of her through her life. And *Don't Ever Whisper*. I'm not quite sure where that appears in it, but shout it out!

Natalie: Right! Indeed. So what you were beginning to say that it's always been like this.

Carol: About what? Wait a minute, wait a minute... I forget I'm deaf.

Natalie: Okay, so I was telling you that my generation feels like we've never lived in a scarier time than this and you were beginning to say well it's always been like this.

Carol: And this [refrencing *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*] is a very scary time. Pioneer America the pioneers coming across in covered wagons. They were always afraid of being ambushed by Native Americans. But this tells you why the Native Americans reacted. And it shows you that they were always offering peace and they were saying "There's enough land here. We can live here together. We just need to abide by certain rules." And it's hence a very true, tragic story because this is their side of it. And quotations from them and about the treaties that were broken by our side again and again and again. I don't think they ever broke a treaty. Or not first anyway.

And so that was what I was saying. That was a perilous time. This came out of a perilous time. It's a perilous time now. There's no shooting war going on here now. We still have a chance. There are people right outside. We lived in perilous times let's say in Bangladesh. I've got... I'll just go fast people were worried about us going overseas.

In Rome we lived on... Well, I won't go in on what was perilous there, but it was. And that was after the war. In the Philippines, it was very perilous and I was often in situations where I could have been killed easily. And I was doing very controversial work, but I went to the Embassy and I told them what I was doing and I said, "I'll tell you everything I do. And I'll be completely open, but it will be nonviolent." And I spoke to a top man in the political... The top political officer in the embassy. And my husband was working as the head of a big US aid project. So what I was doing was also threatening his job I could have thought. But he didn't take it that way.

I guess he'd already seen FBI reports on me!

So he just said "We can't support you, of course. But we will interpret what you're doing." And I think that's what has happened. My phone was obviously tapped. I heard it. And I don't know if it was Marcos government tapping it or who was the US government tapping it or both, but somebody was tapping it. And well, I won't go into that but...

I've talked about that at. In that meeting last October, but I didn't talk about these things. So I've never had a chance to really tell the story. But I've told the parts that are hope-building because there are those always too. I did a pamphlet on that. A Quaker pamphlet.

But anyway, I could go through every country. And there were perilous things that happened. If people wanted to worry, if they'd known about them. They'd have worried. My mother - we tried to get her come with us, but she was too scared to even come. Finally with my father, they both came to Egypt to visit us there. It took all the courage they had. They came dressed in their best clothes. But my father turned out to be in pain and the pain was getting worse and worse. And I suspect he pressed her to come because he knew it might be his last chance. But I don't know. But it turned out he did have cancer, cancer of the kidneys. They thought from his lifetime of smoking.

Which could have killed me too, but I I'm still here. But it's not good to smoke around children, because that can end their lives prematurely. Anyway, all times are perilous I think. And sometimes they are perilous, but we were lulled into complacency.

Natalie: Is that where we've been?

Carol: So we can be scared. Or we can be complacent or whatever. But I think. there's also he's been plenty perilous. And we may avoid looking at. But it's still there. So your friends are right. They are perilous times. But they've been perilous all along. It's a miracle was the human race is still here! I don't believe it! That's my my mantra [points to a picture of Ghandi] with Ghandi in the middle. I don't put Jesus in the middle. He's been kind of ruined by too many people. That doesn't mean I don't find him very important.

My Bible is right here. And that's the only part I read anymore usually, is just the words in red. I have to have a Bible with what Jesus is supposed to have said in red, but we don't even know if he really said any of that. But *that* man [Ghandi]... We've got lots of books about him. We've got lots of what he actually said. People were transcribing it. So it's all right there and you can see him. And you can look and so I put him in the middle.

Natalie: Well, you know, it's like you were anticipating my next question because I did want to ask you. Where do you find inspiration? And where do you experience the movement of the spirit?

Carol: There's lots of inspiration because there are so many people that are trying and doing wonderful things. But yeah, I would say if there's one person who's the most it's that man there. And that's the one I turn to. But I have his complete writings in paperback books. It's a bookshelf about that long in paperback. It's down in Whittier. It's behind my bedroom door. So every time I almost close the door because this is the way I usually closed doors. I'm still claustrophobic. From childhood, so I don't like to close it all the way.

Natalie: Yeah, we're both like that.

Carol: And I can see the dust that needs to be cleaned yet and all that stuff, but that is the man who's given us so much of his own life and let us see it. He lived transparently, so you can reject it if you want to. And I don't agree with everything he says but basically he's one.

And there. See that white photo?

Natalie: Yes, I do.

Carol: Those people - they're all fading away and I'm in the middle and my wheelchair there. That's in South Africa, the last place I stayed, which was not a hospital but a, like a nursing home. A place to recover. And my doctor wasn't yet ready to say I could fly home. But I was put there to recover and I stayed there to recover. Even a little while after he said "Okay, I think we could let you fly now."

And the last week, I think, before I already had my tickets and I was going to fly back. And I could walk with a slow walker - I wouldn't have been able to use that yet because that can go fast.. And I go fast! But one of those light aluminum ones, I could walk already with that. And I'd practice by walking out in the dining room. Walking, I say around, but actually they're long oblong, they're long rectangles around it. So I was still recovering and I was working on strengthening my legs and so on. So I wasn't wasting time right but that's a picture that was taken about two days before I left. Or maybe two weeks. I don't remember. But it's a wonderful picture that I love and I was so stupid not to have something done with it, even just a good copy on a photocopier before it started to fade away.

I should do it now, so I have at least something because it's on the way out. Those are the people I worked with last in Lesotho. And that was our last posting, though I felt like it was also South Africa because we only lived about 300 meters from the crossing gate so we could get out easily.

When we did have civil war in Lesotho, it was near the end. But before our accident, obviously. We were able to escape on that day. Because nobody was there. They were all busy with having a civil war.

Natalie: Right, that can keep a person busy...

Carol: We just walked out the gate to the other side. Or I guess we took our car out to the other side and drove to a friend's house in South Africa who was welcoming for all of us. Anyhow, that's another story. But but it was perilous. It was perilous being there. The youth on the side that was rebelling had put a barricade across our street going toward the embassy which was also quite near. And they were up there whooping and hollering and dancing and being victorious, so we couldn't go that way.

So, but nobody had thought to block the exit. So fortunately we were able to get out right. And the war lasted maybe three or four more days. Anyhow, that's another story but yeah, well, it's always perilous times. But look for the good. And I think that's all we can do. Build on what's good.

Natalie: Well here again, you're anticipating what I was going to ask you.

Carol: Oh, wait a minute, I let it [hearing aid] fall out... And thanks for technocrats. They're needed!

Natalie: They sure are! So, I wanted to ask you what advice or encouragement when you give those who are coming up behind you in the work to end violence and war...

Carol: Who's coming up behind me?

Natalie: Yeah, those who are taking on the work that has meant so much to you.

Carol: Yeah. Well, of course WILPF was my main outlet and I still have them on my email. I don't often feel the need to answer. But my co-chair is now... She's had two others joined her to take my place and the three of them are working together, beautifully. And one of them was pretty nasty. She knew everything and she was working for a law firm so she was very legalistic as well. But we kept her on and she had key responsibilities. And she's gradually changed and now she's just wonderful. She's wonderful. And then another one that took my place is from Vermont.

And her family is very wealthy. The Lloyds. And I don't know just what where their wealth comes from but it's a lot. I was looking last night on the internet on a feature that Microsoft has on the wealthiest families in each state. And that was interesting.

Natalie: Oh I bet.

Carol: And I thought that they might come up for Vermont. But I think they are a lot of very wealthy people in Vermont.

Natalie: Yeah, I think you might be right!

Carol: So they are not the wealthiest ones but Bernie's in fortunate State because he has a lot of wealthy, very wealthy, very progressive families there. Okay. So I'm being perilous. I was talking about all times are perilous.

But I won't go through the perils in each state, but there was civil war in Lesotho when we were there and supposedly people would be worried about it they knew about it, but who cares about Lesotho, anyway? Every country we were in there were perilous times.

Natalie: So I was asking you about what advice you would give to...

Carol: Say it...?

Natalie: Yeah, I was asking you what advice you would give to younger activists...

Carol: Right, who is taking up the agenda?

Natalie: Exactly.

Carol: Okay, we're out of perilous times.

Natalie: Are we? I hope!

Carol: They're still very perilous! They are! Your friends are right, but how you react to it is not to worry, not to sit down, not to weep, not to say nobody can do anything. Let's forget all that! All times are perilous. So find the best ways to respond.

Okay, so who's picking up? And so I started with WILPF and I started remembering. There are now three people while for a long time there were just two of us who were co-chairs, myself and Ellen Thomas was the other one. You've never heard of her, but she sat out in front of the White House for 18 years and slept on the sidewalk and had a tarp over her because she'd encountered a man who was doing that. And he'd already been doing it. She did it for 18 years; he was the original one.

And she saw him and what he was doing and it spoke to her "We've got to do something! What can we do? If nothing else, we'll sit on the sidewalk across from the White House and hold up our sign and talk to everybody who walks by who's willing to stop and talk." So that's what he was doing.

So she fell in love. Maybe not with him, but with his vision, with what he was doing. And she decided to join him. And week later she married him. And he lived... Well, he lived... They sat there together them for another 18 years. And then with her, she was a natural. "We got to do something! Do something!" So she started going off for short periods, and then he started doing it and they started taking turns and they started finding other people to sit in for them when they had to go off and do other things. So she actually traveled to Japan and to Vietnam because people had seen her there from Vietnam, from Japan, and they probably would have brought him too. But he wasn't the same kind of person Ellen is and she went and so they'd escorted all over Southeast Asia. I can't remember... She went to Europe, I think it was Asia. Because the US, was just with Obama in my time, was just shifting.

Well anywhere, I won't think about all that now, but we've been shifting our forces more and more to the Pacific and they felt more and more threatened. And so that is all inside me now, too. So WILPF is small, when you say the acronym you spit, but it's great and I just feel very secure with WILPF going on. And I can't communicate very much, but they know that I'm watching everything they do and every now and then I do manage to communicate.

And then there are other organizations. And until 2017, I was going often to Washington, DC and to New York, to the UN and to the Capitol Building in DC. I don't know, one time not too long ago I counted nine times I went back east. And I went to either or both of those places each time. So, I was able to be very actively involved, not because I had the money, but because the FSC paid my way to go to Philadelphia. So all I had to pay was round trip bus ride or train ticket to Washington DC and an occasional taxi cab if it was too far to walk. But I did an awful lot of walking in both New York and Washington, DC and walking is a good time to think so it's not wasted time.

Natalie: No, I agree.

Carol: Yeah, so anyway, that's the way WILPF works and their main thing now is that treaty. That's their central focus and it's liveliest thing going on in WILPF and everybody in WILPF is getting involved in it. Even though I think we have about six areas we've been working in. Environment is one, for instance. But they're all adding into promoting the Ban Treaty also, even if it's not their main thing there there.

And it's getting very strong. But then I started to say, when I do go back or did go - because I think that's not likely to happen anymore - unless they're gonna carry me on the stretcher and pay for it!

I have been able, even without much money - I've been living on Social Security now, from Social Security check to social security check for basically the last four years - but before that I had some income from stocks. But I got rid of all the stocks because I didn't want to live on them either or support the stock market. So anyhow, it's worked out. And there are a lot of other great people at work in one way or another. And I've met many of them in both, Washington, DC and New York.

But I'm in email touch with many more in many more organizations and on networks. So, I'm not out of it. And I don't even have to say much because *they're* saying it. And I don't know, a lot of them don't even know I'm supporting them, but that's alright other people are. I mean, it's a movement and its strong.

That's one thing I will say more. I'll just be sure I stick this in.

Natalie: Yes, please...

Carol: That it was in 1961 when you thought we maybe came [to Portland] That was when I was so upset at what was going on. And I hadn't joined WILPF yet. I'd worked for the AFSC. But the AFSC wasn't doing much on stopping war or nuclear weapons.

So that was when I was really inwardly mobilized sd women sometimes are. I mean it was a woman's thing. And then I wrote that letter. And I don't have a copy of it anymore. But it's in the Congressional Record if I could look, you know, get up and get the time I could look for it. Because my congresswoman saw it in the paper and she entered it in the Congressional Record.

So it's there! Permanent record in the United States. But, it's just part of a movement that's not my movement but women are very much a part of it. I think men are too - we don't give men enough credit. There are wonderful men out there. I married one of them. And we were different.

But we agreed on everything except sex, because I was born to be monogamous and he thought of sex as a way of communicating on a deeper level. So he needed that communication.

But he was there for me when many other men would have divorced me. Because I have had a lot of breakdowns. Up until my last one in 1942 when we were already enrolled. And then I've never had another psychotic breakdown. You know, "breakdown" covers lots of things but a psychotic... I had about five or six psychotic breakdowns.

And he had this vision of working in developing countries. So I'm sure he wondered: was I going to be able to take it? But he decided to try it. He made the leap. Knowing he might lose me in the icy water. Because he had to do what he had to do. And it all worked out, so that sometimes I even wonder if it was real voice from somewhere else. Because it all fit together. But I don't wonder about it very much. I just lie back in my bed, and I let the memories flow over me or I read books. I've never had time to read before.

Natalie: It's wonderful, right?

Carol: So it's a wonderful time. I'm loving being almost 90.

And I'm trying to get there and then I'll have all year to say I'm 90. And then after that, I don't know what happens.

Natalie: Well, 91...Or something else.

Carol: Yeah, I could say it.

Natalie: Yeah. So any last thoughts about... Imagine that that the readership of *Western Friend* is getting to the end of this interview and you want to leave them with some thoughts about how to continue.

Carol: Well it's probably better if I thought about that tried a sentence or two.

Natalie: Sure! Do you want to email that to me?

Carol: Yeah, and send it to you by email.

Natalie: That's great. That would be perfect. But like that it says we "Thank you Mother Carol, woman of many helps". No "woman" isn't there... "of many helps" because this is from my time Lesotho, our last posting. And for five, almost five years, I actually worked for money. I was volunteering almost all of my life overseas. But I worked for money. I was paid at the local rate - \$100 a day, I think. Anyway, I don't even remember what I was paid. But I helped community development projects and that's of my awards in Lesotho.

The top two there were arranged by my ambassador at that time. And he had come up... He was a black man. Actually, a nice color of brown... And he had come up through the ranks, starting as a private. Maybe drafted. I don't know. Back when he was - I don't know if he'd even been to college. I don't know, but he started at the very bottom and gradually worked up. And one of the last things he did when he became a general - they made him a general -

not a top general but, there's a whole ranking of generals, but he was high, a pretty high general. And he was a leader in the negotiations with Russia on the weapons disarmament.

So my thought is his heart was always in the right place. He loved his family very dearly. His wife would not come with him. She has a career of her own but he was able to bring two of his children over at different times and they were college-age and both fine young people. And he kept them there for a couple of weeks or something each. And so those top two are awards he worked out for me. He liked what I was doing. And I was about the only thing the Embassy was doing then. All right, there was... I was paid by US Aid, as I told you to do that it was a local pay. But I wasn't a volunteer is actually part of the staff.

And so he worked those out for me to get. And the staff appreciated it and when I was fired - because I'd overstayed my welcome.... I mean the rules of the Embassy [was to to stay] for three years in any place and I was just moving into my fifth year. So it was a Republican that was in charge; it was Republican, I think, both House and Senate at that time.

Anyway, the Republicans had the power. So somebody sent a former... someone who'd come up through the ranks.

[End of recording]

Carol Urner and Natalie Ramsland are both members of Multnomah Monthly Meeting in Portland, Oregon.